

Months' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, December 22nd, 1867.

Acts xviii. 11-22: Paul arrives at Rome. Esther ix. 1-16: Haman's son slain. Recite—1 CORINTHIANS I. 27-31.

Sunday, December 29th, 1867.

Acts xviii. 23-31: Paul preaches at Rome. Esther ix. 17-32 x. 1-3. The king's greatness. Recite—LUKE II. 1-10-14.

Praying and saying Prayers.

Jemima was a little girl

Who many prayers could say

But Of she had a wandering heart,

And, therefore, did not pray.

She kneeled beside her little bed

"Our Father" to repeat,

The while she twisted into knots

The corner of the sheet.

Her roving eyes, as she there knelt,

Were never closed at all;

She'd count the roses on the rug,

The stars upon the wall.

And "gentle Jesus, meek and mild,"

Her careless tongue would say,

When all her thoughts were of the doll

That on the pillow lay.

Al! 'twas no wonder that she grew

Ill-tempered, proud and rude,

For if a child should never pray,

How can a child be good!

Dear readers! shun Jemima's faults,

And heed the words I say;

When you kneel down to say your prayers,

Be certain that you pray.

December.

Old December has come round again with his white locks. He is very pretty cold. He is almost freezing. His very breath has Jack Frost in it. But how cheerful he makes things. The sleigh bells are ringing; sleds running; skates are on the ice. He brings merry Christmas; and what heaps of presents for the children! Nor does he forget little Bare Toes and Ragged Knees. He nips them to be sure; but only to make us remember. Remember what? Why, to look in our drawers and find socks and gannets to keep them warm. So go and look, please. Do not forget the poor. That is what December whispers through the keyhole, breathes on the window-pane, and howls round the house. It says that.

And it also says this: Make home happy. Brothers and sisters round the same fireside, get out your pretty games and nice books, and see that you spend the winter evenings in a way to make each one all the happier and better.

Winter.

Cold the wind is blowing, Fast has it been snowing! The Lambs are in the shed Well housed and fed.

To warm some child or other Have I no clothes, dear mother, That you can send away On this bitter day?

Christmas night.

In the old, old times, men who owned large flocks of sheep were obliged to watch them, both by day and by night, lest any of them should stray away and get lost. Those who watched their flocks in this way were called shepherds; and as they went out in the quiet night under the stars, away from men, many of them became thoughtful men and wise in religious things.

One night, a party of these shepherds were watching their flocks on a hill in a far-off eastern country. Suddenly, in the middle of the night, when all the land was still, they saw a bright light appear in the heavens. The shepherds had heard it said that some day, not far distant, a great Prophet and King should be born to their nation; and when they saw this light in the sky, they said to each other: "Perhaps this foretells the coming of our King." So it did; and an angel told them where to find him.

Then the shepherds left their flocks, and taking the long crooks with which they tended the sheep and which served them also as staffs, they set out to follow the direction of the angel. By and by, they came to a large town. They found the place full of people, for there was a great gathering from the country round, and all the houses were overflowing with guests. Some had even taken lodgings in barns and sheds for want of a better place. Into one of these the shepherds went, and found a young mother with her baby on her breast. As soon as the shepherds saw this babe, they knew him to be a wonderful child. There lay the mother and her infant son on a rude bed made of the hay which the cattle ate; and the shepherds, leaning on their staffs, looked down on him and blessed him, after the Eastern custom. Then they went away; and from the glad sky voices

seemed to sing hymns to them, of which the chorus was, "Peace on earth, and good-will among men."

Who was the little boy whom the shepherds found so strangely born in a manger among the hay which beasts feed upon?—Child's Paper.

Items for young Naturalists.

SAGACITY OF A CAT.

The following is one of many instances of the sagacity of the cat: A gentleman informs us that there was a small cupboard in his father's house, in which were kept milk, butter, and other requisites for the table; and the door was secured with a lock, which from age and frequent use could easily be made to open. To save trouble, the key was always left in the lock, in which it revolved on a very slight impulse. It was often a subject of remark that the door of this cupboard was found wide open and the milk and butter greatly diminished, without any imaginable reason, and notwithstanding the persuasion that the door had certainly been regularly locked; but accident led to the detection of the offender.

On watching very carefully, the cat was seen to seat herself on the table, and by repeated patting on the side of the box of the key, it was at last made to turn, when a slight pull on the door caused it to move on its hinges. Nine hundred years ago cats were held in such esteem in Southern Wales that Howel the Good, king of that country, instituted laws respecting them. One of these was, that "if any person stole the cat that guarded the granaries of the Prince, he was to forfeit a milch ewe with its fleece and lamb."—Merry's Museum.

AFFECTION OF THE SHEEP.

Mr. James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, tells a singular story of the affection of a sheep for the place of its birth. It was born at Harehope, in Tweeddale, and sold and driven to a farm in Glen Lyon, upwards of one hundred miles distant. In process of time she produced a lamb; and then it seems the memory of her early days was before her, and she determined to revisit the scenes of her youth. She had never travelled the road, except when she was first driven from home; yet she set off with the lamb following her, and which she was often obliged to hurry on by impatient bleatings.

She was heard of in various places: she was always pursuing the direct road. She safely reached her native farm, where she died of old age in her seventeenth year.—Id.

THE LEARNED PIG—A FABLE.

A pig that had been taught every accomplishment by his master, was visited by an old acquaintance from the country, who expressed his admiration at the evident popularity of his learned friend, and congratulated him on his attainments.

"Your lot," said the country pig, "is indeed a happy one; you are able to spell hard words, to count, and to play skillfully at cards. You are the envy of your own race, and the admiration of mankind!"

"Alas!" said the other, "I am still a pig. I cannot forget the delicious acorns in the wood, nor the roots and herbs of the field. I should like, above all things, the sight of a ditch, or a pool of muddy water. I might be pleased with the society and praise of mankind, were I not a pig."

True it is, that education does not imply a change of nature. A boorish man may become learned, and yet be a churl. No mental gifts or attainments can atone for or obliterate radical defects of character.—Paul Peregine.

Temperance Definitions.

- What is Drunkenness? Darkness. What is Moderation? Twilight. What is Total Abstinence? Mid-day. What is Drunkenness? Slavery. What is Moderation? A chain. What is Total Abstinence? The power that breaks the chains and sets the slave free. What is Drunkenness? A fire. What is Moderation? That which kindles it. What is Total Abstinence? That which puts it out. What is Drunkenness? Death. What is Moderation? The way to it. What is Total Abstinence? Life. What is Drunkenness? Ruin. What is Moderation? Danger. What is Total Abstinence? Safety.

Our Houses.

We always look upon our houses as mere temporary lodgings. We are always hoping to get larger and finer ones, or are forced some way or other to live where we do not choose, and in continual expectation of changing our place of abode. In the present state of society, this is in a great measure unavoidable; but let us remember it is an evil, and that so far as it is avoidable, it becomes our duty to check the impulse. It is surely a subject for serious thought, whether it might not be better for many of us, if, in attaining a certain position in life, we determined, with God's permission, to choose a house in which to live and die—a home not to be increased by adding stone to stone and field to field, but which, being enough for all our wishes at that period, we

should be resolved to be satisfied with forever. Consider this, and also, whether we ought not to be more in the habit of seeking honor for our descendants than our ancestors; thinking it better to be nobly remembered than nobly born; and striving to live so that our sons, and our sons' sons, for ages to come, might still lead their children reverentially to the doors out of which we have been carried to the grave, saying, "Look, this was his house; this was his chamber."—Ruskin.

An Incident.

One of the loftiest and purest women who ever lived was in the habit of writing every question and answer of the lessons she taught her class in the Sabbath-school. Many sheets were thus collected. When she came to lie down on her last earthly pillow, she gave her writings to a young friend, who soon after moved into a country district. The young girl's father was engaged in building, and profanity was awfully prevalent in the neighborhood. Among the men who were hired was one preeminent in this bad art, and more especially did he profane the holy name of his Maker. By some accident a stray leaf of this lady's writing had escaped from the window and blew into the building where this man was at work. Thinking it a letter or paper of trading, he took it up and read, "What is the doom of the sinner? Everlasting death and banishment from God. Our Saviour says, 'All manner of sin shall be forgiven; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness.'" The man read and thought, stunned. He went away quiet and humbled. The good which the silent pen does, lives when the hand which held it is still for ever.

Goldwin Smith on Oliver Cromwell.

Cromwell was a fanatic, and all fanatics are morally the worse for their fanaticism: they set dogma above virtue, they take their own ends for God's ends, and their own enemies for his. But that this man's religion was sincere, who can doubt? It not only fills his most private letters, as well as his speeches and despatches, but it is the only clue to his life. For it, when past forty, happy in his family, well to do in the world, he turned out with his children, and exposed his life to sword and bullet in obscure skirmishes as well as in glorious fields. On his death bed his thoughts wandered not, like those of Napoleon, among the eddies of battle, or in the mazes of Statecraft, but among the religious questions of his youth. Constant hypocrisy would have been fatal to his decision. The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. This man was not unstable in any of his ways; his course is as straight as that of a great force of nature. There is something not only more than animal, but more than natural in his courage. If fanatics so often beat men of the world in council, it is partly because they throw the die of earthly destiny with a steady hand as those whose great treasure is not here.

Walking among such perils, not of sword and bullet only, but of envious actions and intriguing enemies on every side, it was impossible that Cromwell should not contract a wariness, and perhaps more than a wariness of step. It was impossible that his character should not in some measure reflect the darkness of his time. In establishing his government he had to feel, to sound men's dispositions, to conciliate different interests; and these are processes not favorable to simplicity of mind, still less favorable to the appearance of it, yet compatible with general beauty of purpose. As to what is called his hypocritical use of Scriptural language, Scriptural language was his native tongue. In it he spoke to his wife and children, as well as to his armies and his Parliaments; it burst from his lips when he saw victory at Dunbar; it hovered on them in death, when policy, and almost consciousness, was gone.

PAPER.—Stones have been touched by the finger of God into Tables of the Law. Rocks riven by lightning and smoothed by the glacier have been ploughed by the chisel into the Doomes day Books and annuals and almanacs of nations. The hardest of gems has furrowed below the harder steel into words of awe and wisdom. Every metal, from the dull lead to the shining gold, has submitted to bear some sign of inscription. The sand on the sea shore has been written on between tide and tide. The clay of the field has acknowledged the stamp, and bound itself by the ordeal of fire to proclaim the truth entrusted to it, so long as it endured. All the unliving things of the sleeping mineral world, except the wild sea and the voiceless air, have served man as paper.—George Wilson.

RELIGION EXEMPLIFIED.—I would not give much for your religion unless it can be seen.—Lamps do not talk but they do shine. A lighthouse sounds no drum, it beats no gong, and yet far over the waters its friendly spark is seen by the mariner. So let your actions shine out your religion. Let the main sermon of your life be illustrated by all your conduct, and it shall not fail to be illustrious.—Spurgeon.

OUR LOSSES AND OUR GAINS.—We lost a human righteousness in Adam; we gain a divine righteousness in Christ. We lost human power in Adam; we gain Divine power in Christ. We lost the paradise of man in Adam; we gain the paradise of God in Christ. We were driven out of paradise in Adam; we shall go no more out in Christ.—Mars.

Agriculture, &c.

Degeneracy of Wheat.

E. S. Todd, in New York Times, combating the idea that there is, as asserted, by some writers, a natural tendency in some varieties of wheat to run out or degenerate, says:—

"On the borders of the River Nile, in Africa, one of the finest regions in the world for the production of excellent wheat, the same varieties are grown from year to year, without the least deterioration, that were cultivated three thousand years ago. And the same thing may be done in this country by exercising the same care in the selection of the seed that is observed by the farmers in that part of the world."

"It is a well-established fact that wheat will hybridize when different varieties are allowed to grow in close proximity. Of course, the product would be a mixture of seed, in which the purity of the variety is gone. Consequently, with a mixture of seed, a farmer would find himself in the same circumstances, with reference to the improvement of his wheat, that he is when he undertakes to improve his domestic animals by breeding from mongrels or from grade stock. It is well understood that such animals—grades and mongrels—when employed as breeders, never transmit the excellent points of desirable form and symmetry to their offspring with reliable certainty, while pure-bred animals never fail in this respect."

"The same facts hold good in the vegetable kingdom, with seed wheat in particular. When different varieties are sown in close proximity, and the product, which will be an impure grain, is again employed for seed, a pure variety of choice wheat may be run out most effectually in a few years, so that intelligent farmers, who were only superficial observers, would be ready to affirm, without any hesitancy, that wheat does degenerate. The cause of degeneracy, and the remedy, may all be expressed in a few words. We have already hinted at the cause, namely: sowing different varieties near each other, so that the grain will hybridize; threshing several kinds together, and continuing to employ such grain for seed from year to year. Herein lies the whole secret of the degeneracy of varieties. If a pure variety be kept by itself with suitable care, and cultivated on good ground, and the grain never threshed with other wheat, the purity of a variety of wheat, with all its excellent characteristics, may be maintained intact as long as wheat may be cultivated. There is no uncertainty about this suggestion. The idea is in perfect keeping with the established laws of vegetable physiology. Cultivating any variety of grain in a slipshod, slack and perfunctory manner, will cause the best variety of wheat the world ever knew to degenerate and run completely out in a few years. On the contrary, if the seed be selected every season with the same care that the originator of the Weeks wheat observed for a decade of years, generations unborn would cultivate the same varieties that our fields now produce, without the least deterioration in either yield or quality of grain."

SCRAPING AND WASHING TREES.

We consider the early winter to be the time for scraping and washing the trunks of trees. It is well known to all observing fruit-growers that the loose bark of trees is the winter quarters of myriads of insects, where they securely remain until the ensuing spring, when the warm, genial weather invites them to quit their cosy homes and begin their destructive operations for the season. We have found a narrow saw, rather fine-toothed, to be an excellent tool in scraping off the superfluous bark. It accomplishes it more uniformly than a hoe, trowel or other scraper; a trowel or a short-handled hoe, however, is very good, when the other may not be possessed. After the bark is removed, the trunks should be washed thoroughly with a preparation of whale-oil soap and water, say in the proportion of a pound of the soap to four gallons of water. It can be applied to large trees with a hickory broom or a stiff white-wash brush, and to small trees, especially dwarfs, with the hand scrub-brush. Sickly trees, which can, at this season, be easily detected by being covered with a species of fungi, or, perhaps, more properly, a peculiar insectiferous deposit—should be scrubbed so as to completely remove this. The mixture will, of itself, benefit the tree, while the removal from the stem of all extraneous and injurious substances will give it new health and vigor the ensuing season—in some instances, to a surprising extent. When whale-oil soap is not obtainable, lye may be used, but it should not be very strong, or it might be injurious to the roots of the tree, if applied plentifully and the tree be small.—Germantown Telegraph.

HOW MANY BUSHELS OF WHEAT TO A BARREL OF FLOUR?

At the annual Fair of the Dubuque County (Iowa) Agricultural Society in 1866, a premium of \$5 was offered for the best barrel of flour made from winter wheat, and also the same made from spring wheat. A firm entered one barrel each, accompanied with the statement that sixteen bushels of winter wheat yielded three barrels and one hundred and three pounds of flour—at the rate of four bushels and fifteen pounds of wheat to the barrel. Of spring wheat, fifty bushels yielded eleven barrels of flour, being four bushels and thirty-two pounds to the barrel. The wheat was a fair quality and no more.

Experience to most men is like the stern lights of a ship; they illuminate the space gone over.