

Sunday Reading.

For the Christian Messenger.

Voyaging.

Old man, I am coming near you,
Sailing, sailing on the tide,
Wait a little for me, old man,
And I'll soon be by your side.

How the years have sped and vanished;
Seasons chase each other round,
Children seem to hurry youthward,
Youth reach manhood at a bound.

Northward fly the birds of passage,
Backward from the land of snows,
But my bark has no returning,
Ever on and on it goes.

On the misty path behind me,
Wrecks are strewn and treasures lost,
Lonely move I on, and oftentimes,
Hard beset and tempest tost.

Yet the fruit of compensation,
Clusters round this life of ours,
Manna falls but in the desert,
Flowers spring where flame devours.

Nature throbs with vital yearning,
Graves cannot retain the dead,
Life begun is life unending,
Onward, stars are bright ahead.

Leave me, all unhappy memories,
Let my heart no more repine,
Youthful hopes, fly back to young men,
Cheer their lives, as ye did mine.

Sink and perish, baser passion,
Love and faith with me abide,
Wait a little, happy old men,
And I'll soon be at your side.

S. S.

Not Lost but gone before; or the Resurrection and the Better Life.

BY TYRON EDWARDS, D. D.

Years ago, I somewhere met with a beautiful apologue, said to be from the German if I remember aright, bearing on the resurrection and the future and better life; and it was so full of instruction and interest, that I have often looked for it, but in vain. And finally, I have thought I would try to reproduce it, in outline, at least, though it may be but imperfectly as it is only from memory.

We have all seen the dragon-fly, with its long, slender body, and its silvery, gauze-like wings. And we may have noticed it flitting, at times, close over the still surface of the quiet pool or shallow lake, and at last, at some one point remaining stationary for seconds, if not for minutes together, its wings moving so swiftly that their motion is invisible and they seem perfectly stationary, while its body appears like a permanent fixture in the air itself.

Now this dragon-fly, it seems, deposits its eggs on the stems of the reeds and water-grasses a little below the surface of the water. And when the larvae are hatched out, they are, for a while, only water-grubs or insects, living and feeding in the dark, and it may be turbid, waters of their birth, until, in the progress of their growth, they are, in due time, led by instinct to crawl up the water plants to the air, and then their backs open, as with the larvae of the locust, and the beautiful dragon-fly comes forth to a new element, and to a new and higher life, where the air is clear and skies are bright, and existence in the glorious sunshine, is full of vitality and joy.

Now the apologue referred to says that these water insects, down in their murky habitations, had, floating among their traditions, the story of a brighter and better world above them, which most of them believed, though not a few of them doubted. And as one after another of their number crawled up the rushes and disappeared, it was said among them that these had gone to a new and higher life, and to a brighter and better world. But not a few of them were still doubtful about the matter, and some even denied and scouted the idea altogether. They said they were entirely satisfied where they were; that all their wants were supplied in their present abode, and they very much doubted whether there was any better world, and whether their departed companions could have gone to it. One especially was loud in his denial; for he said that, to test it, he had crawled up the rushes for himself (as he had done before the proper time), and that the moment he had got above the water and came to the air, he had fainted and

fallen back again into his native element; and he was ready to declare from his own experience, that all these notions about a brighter and better world were but dreams and fables. And sceptic as he was, he had not a little influence with some of his companions; and they, like himself, were satisfied that the watery world they were in was about as good an abode as could be desired or made.

Still the old rumour prevailed, and was very generally believed; for one after another of their number was continually crawling up the rushes and disappearing, and coming back no more. So finally they all agreed among themselves that the first one, and in fact every one that went up, should, if possible, come back and tell them whether the rumour was true or false, and whether the brighter and better world was a reality or only a fable and a dream.

And so, continues the apologue of the dragon-flies, as they remember their pledge and promise, are forever flying over and near to the surface of the water, and close to the old haunts they have left, hoping to be able to hold converse with their former companions and to tell them of the blessed realities which, in their own experience, they have found, and to assure them that there is a better life and a far brighter world than the one they left, and if possible to hasten their old associates and friends to come and share it with themselves.

The apologue is one of exquisite beauty and full of suggestive thought. Does it not prefigure the reality of the resurrection, and of the glorified bodies of believers, as taught in God's Word? Does it not more than hint to us of a brighter and better world beyond the present, to which we are surely going, if we trust in Christ? Does it not whisper that possibly our departed friends may often be near to us—part of the "great cloud of witnesses" spoken of by the Apostle, and that if they could, they would gladly tell us of their own blessed experience in the better world on which they have entered? And, if possible, would they not urge us to be expecting and preparing for that world, that soon we may join them in its blessedness, in the mansions of our Father's house above? How many a cheering thought, how many a confirmation of revealed and cherished truth, may be found in an apologue like this!

—National Baptist.

George Muller's experience regarding Baptism.

About the beginning of April, 1830, when I was twenty-five years of age, I preached at Sidmouth, England. When I was there I heard three Christian women converse on baptism. One of them had been baptized after she became a believer. After they had conversed some time they requested me to give my views on the subject. I replied that I did not think it necessary for me to be baptized again.

Upon this the woman who had recently been baptized asked me, 'But have you really been baptized?' I answered, 'Yes, when I was an infant.'

'But have you searched the Scriptures on this point and prayed over it?' 'No.'

'Then,' she replied, 'I beg you not to speak of it again until you have done so.'

It pleased God to impress me with the importance of this remark. For just then I was in the habit of exhorting many who heard me to accept nothing as true which could not be proved from the Word of God. Notwithstanding, I often spoke against the baptism of believers without having ever examined the Scriptures concerning it, or prayed over it. I at once resolved with the help of God to examine the subject, and, in case I should find infant baptism grounded in the Scriptures, to defend it with all zeal; but if I should be forced to acknowledge believers' baptism as Scriptural then to defend that as the truth of God, and to be baptized myself.

As soon as I found time I set myself to the investigation. At first I prayed again and again that God would give me His teaching on the subject. Then I began to read the New Testament with special reference to the question.

But I had no sooner begun than a multitude of objections suggested themselves to me.

1. Many pious and learned men are unable to agree on this point; is it not manifest, therefore, that on this question it is impossible to come to any satisfactory result?

To this I answered, If the ordinance of baptism is revealed in the Word of God, why cannot I be enlightened in regard to it? For the Holy Spirit still acts as Teacher in the Church of Christ, as He did anciently.

2. Very few of my friends have been baptized. Most of them are opposed to believers' baptism, and will turn against me.

If all forsake me, but only the Lord accepts me, I may well be satisfied.

3. I shall certainly lose half my income.

As long as I am willing to serve the Lord faithfully, He will not suffer me to want any good thing.

4. People will call me a Baptist, and I cannot agree with the Baptists in everything.

But I can be baptized, and still not necessarily go with the Baptists in everything.

5. I have been a preacher many years, and shall have to confess publicly that I have been in error, if I accept believers' baptism.

But is it not far better to confess that I have been in error than to remain in it?

6. Even if believers' baptism is right, it is too late now to submit to it. I ought to have been baptized as soon as God gave me faith.

Better would it be to follow the command of Jesus now than to persevere longer in the neglect of it.

As soon as I reached this state of mind, I saw in the Scriptures that none but believers should be baptized, and that immersion is the only true baptism. The passage which especially convinced me of the former was Acts viii, 36-38: the baptism of the eunuch. The passage which made clear the latter was Rom. vi. 3-5: "Buried with Him by baptism." Shortly afterwards I was baptized. I was greatly blessed in the ordinance, and have never for one moment regretted the step.

Before closing permit me to say a few words in regard to the difficulties which in the outset seemed to surround the baptismal question.

1. It is my firm conviction that of all the truths revealed in the Holy Scriptures none is clearer than the truth in regard to baptism—justification by faith not expected; and that this truth is obscured solely because inquirers are not willing to let the Bible alone decide the question.

2. Not one of my real friends in the Lord has, as I feared, turn against me. On the contrary, most of them have since been baptized themselves.

3. Although I have lost worldly goods by being baptized, still the Lord has richly compensated me for the loss.

Finally, my example has led many to examine the question of baptism, who as a result of the examination, have been baptized on the profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus. As this truth was made clear to me from the Word of God, I felt it my duty to speak on this as on the other truths of the Bible and in the twenty-three years of my residence in Bristol more than a thousand believers among us have been baptized.

BALKY CHURCH MEMBERS.—Those who have owned balky horses know that they are extremely hard to manage. They have a peculiar knack of having their own way, and will go backward and forward at their own will, while no amount of coaxing can induce them to change their course of action, when once they have determined upon it. If they happen to take the backward movement, all has to stand still until their fancy changes, when they spring forward with force enough to carry the whole load themselves, without aid from their mates. We have seen church members who remind us of balky horses. They will stand still and do nothing themselves, and prove a hindrance to others: then all at once forward they spring all ambition to work. They cannot do enough while the fit lasts, and they begin to whip up the members who have been pulling steadily all the time, and who accomplish more than an army of these balky workers, who go by fits and starts.

Essay.

Sabbath School Literature.

A PAPER BY REV. H. BOOL, READ AT THE COLCHESTER AND CUMBERLAND SABBATH SCHOOL CONVENTION.

(Published by special request.)

This subject excites considerable anxiety. Much that flows from the public press is impure, profane, erroneous, and frivolous. We may, however, take courage. Within reach of our schools there is an abundance of books calculated to assist greatly in working a reformation in society, if we can induce young people to read them carefully.

Books, beyond nearly everything else, may be classed as good, bad, and indifferent, and it is sad that so many of the latter kind are contained in the libraries of our Sabbath Schools. I am constantly enquiring why there are so many weak, fictitious books retained therein. The reply is: "The young people do not care to read anything else." This is sad indeed, for, if it be true, then our youth have a perverted taste, and somebody is responsible; and by catering to such a taste matters will become worse. Let me give a simple illustration. My child won't eat bread and butter, meat and potatoes, I must therefore feed him on confectionery—get him lots of those pretty little sweeties with beautiful colours. Every one knows if I persist in such treatment the child will become pale and emaciated, subject to every disease, and, if he reach adult age, he will become a miserable substitute for a man, failing in every effort from loss of appetite for good, wholesome food, losing the pleasure of every repast, and suffering a thousand deaths even before he reaches an early grave. Now the analogy between the body and mind in this matter is perfect, and we must correct the literary taste of our young people in the best manner possible.

In choosing books for the young we should keep in view the end to be attained, which is the proper culture of the mind. I suppose we all agree that the young must have something to read; and, no doubt, the Sabbath School is a very proper place to issue the books. What can be more appropriate than, after efforts have been made to promote the conversion of the scholars, they should be sent home with books calculated to render them better members of society, as well as to prepare them for a brighter world? Let there be no doubt, therefore, with regard to our duty in this matter. Every Sabbath School should have the best library possible which should contain books calculated to awaken, purify, settle, expand, and guide the mind. Let us dwell awhile on these points.

1. The mind needs to be awakened. Many persons are unconscious of the world of interest outside the narrow circle in which they move. Their minds have never been aroused to look beyond, and they have little knowledge either of the pleasures to be enjoyed or of the duties to be performed, apart from the bare necessities of their temporal existence. There is a stolid indifference alike to natural and revealed truth which, in some communities, paralyzes all efforts for moral improvement.

By placing in the hands of the young suitable books, we may awaken an interest which will increase. Their spare hours will be occupied profitably, which otherwise would be wasted, or spent in sin. Books treating on the discoveries of the telescope in the starry heavens, or of the microscope, which discloses the numerous living creatures in a drop of water will be sure to attract. I was intensely interested in my youth by a volume on the "Hive and its Wonders," and another on "The House I live in," a treatise on the construction and functions of the human body, all suited to the capacity of a child.

I wish to emphasize this point. We have done a great deal when interest in pure literature has been awakened.—Books for the young must be striking. First impressions are lasting. But let it not be thought necessary to have recourse to fiction to interest a child. There is enough of the beautiful, the wonderful, and the sublime in fact, and reality imparts a vigour to the intellect, which does not grow from the mere invention of the imagination.

2. The mind needs to be purified and kept pure. Our young people are impressed by what they see, hear, and read. There is much to defile in all this, and the mind is predisposed to evil. There is nothing more really alarming than the corruption that fumes in the breasts of many of the careless and indifferent. From thence comes the evil that disgraces our towns and villages. It is difficult for the best of us altogether to avoid these influences. Thank God for grace to resist them! The human mind, especially that of a child, is as sensitive as the glass the

photographer places in the camera. We all carry about with us an impression, according to our experience, of scenes without. (These facts are very much overlooked. It is impossible, for instance, in day schools to educate children in a disorderly, dirty, tumble-down old schoolhouse. They may be instructed there, but instruction is only a part of education.) An excellent remedy for this is the perusal of good books. The mind will be occupied with pure thoughts, impure literature will be rejected, and a disposition will be formed enabling a young man to throw off the influence of evil as Paul shook off the viper that fastened on his hand.

3. Sabbath School literature should aim to settle the minds of our young people. We should choose books containing substance and weight, and such and lead to definite conclusions, or treat of that which is stable. Get biographies of men who have succeeded by sticking to their principles, and keeping their minds fixed on one good purpose. Bring to the notice of our Sunday scholars those who have had patience to plod on in obscurity, as well as strength to keep them steadfast when they have become popular and eminent.

Books, in these days, have a great deal to do in building up character, and the first thing to be attended to is laying the foundation. Just here I meet with the greatest objection to works of fiction. You can't build a solid foundation, for character, of fiction. If you begin with fiction a taste will be formed for this kind of thing, and you must continue and end with it, and the whole character will be a fiction. Consequently fiction will prevail in public and private life; we shall have it in business, politics and religion; fictitious conversions, fiction in the management of the affairs of our churches, with fictitious pastors and fictitious church officers.

There is great lack of the real and the truthful in much of social life, and the lives of some are so romantic as the wild stories of the public print. I see much distrust, dissatisfaction, discontent, and love of change. Society is in a very unsettled state. Many persons are on the wing, with as much uncertainty as though they were starting to seek the Utopia they have read of in fiction.

O, how much need there is that we should cultivate the love of truth! How desirable that natural and revealed truth should be attractive and powerful! This is the only resting place for the soul, the one ark of safety. Well doth he, who is eminently the Truth, say to us, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest."

4. Let us send our young people home from the Sabbath School with books calculated to expand their minds. The connection or relation of an intelligent mind to space and time is very wonderful. Certain writers tell us of the probable occupation of departed spirits, having, however, to fly, with the speed of lightning from one world to another in the survey of God's universe, and contemplation of His handiwork. This may be fiction. It is certain, however, that as science brings to our notice the facts of astronomy, our minds already travel to a vast extent, with wonder and admiration at the innumerable evidences of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. In a similar manner, as it were, we can dwell in every country on the face of the earth. Introduction is given us to all ranks and conditions of men, and free access to all they are known to possess. By the aid of books we may dive to the ocean's depth, penetrate the solid rocks composing the crust of the earth, unfold the various strata as though they were the leaves of a volume, and read in their fossiliferous remains of an antiquity compared with which the hieroglyphics of Egypt are but the records of yesterday.

With regard to time the reader of history is not bound to the brief space of his actual life. He reverts to the time when the foundations of the earth were laid, and in meditation almost hears the music when "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Bible history enables us in contemplation to walk with Adam in Paradise, enter with Noah into the ark, go up with the children of Israel out of Egypt, and enter with them the Promised Land.

Secular history cannot be separated from sacred while the latter tells us of Daniel's predicition, connected with the image of the king's dream, the former shows how correctly it has been fulfilled in succeeding ages. By its aid we may view the rise and fall of the four great empires represented by the gold, silver, brass, and iron of which the image was composed; and we now live to see the little stone which smote the image become a great mountain, filling the earth.

This is no fancy sketch, but the actual privilege and enjoyment of individuals

of ordinary intelligence. It is the result of a common imagination, exercised with the facts of science, history, and revelation. No more time is needed to gather these truths than the spare hours allowed to nearly all young persons by the ordinary business of life. All that is needed is the right kind of books and the disposition to study them.

This expansion or development is a sure cure for narrow mindedness, envy, selfishness, and discontent. A person who realizes his identity with all space and all time will pity, rather than envy, the selfish man of property whose sympathies are bounded by his line fence, and who may soon occupy no more than six feet by two of all the land on the face of the earth. What a contrast between the mind of the humblest Christian philosopher and that of the miser, whose affections congeal around a quantity of gold!

5. Lastly, let us give our youth books calculated to guide them aright. Notwithstanding my protest against fiction I am prepared to admit that a good story, as well as parables and allegories, may sometimes be read with profit. Such books may be useful to guide when the path of life is correctly sketched, and persons are seen to walk therein as we should walk. Such books increase in value as they approach to fact. They must be founded on fact, or be true to life. In reading Beaconsfield's late novel it was a relief to my mind, now and then, to perceive that his characters were persons who had a real existence, and acted as he described. I need not add that story books for a Baptist school should be scrupulously clear of error and evil of every kind. The characters drawn should do nothing, for our example, unrighteous or impossible.

After all, I, for one, should not express any concern on hearing of numbers of Sabbath School libraries without any story books at all, except "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." The path of life has been trodden in every part, and the travellers have left their footprints behind them. As far as possible all kinds of difficulties have been overcome. There are innumerable instances upon record of the consequences of evil on the one hand, and of good on the other.

Biographies are useful for guidance, and are attractive and interesting.—There are many "Directions to Young People," and "Guides to Youthful Christians," which should have a place in our libraries for the Sabbath School.

From the commencement of this paper I have not overlooked the fact that all Sabbath School literature should have a religious impress. Our one great purpose should be to lead the mind to God through the mediation of Christ. Here may be obtained the highest culture. "We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus to all good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

In choosing books strictly religious we should avoid the sickly sentimentality that sometimes passes in literature for piety. I don't know how to describe such books. Mr. Spurgeon calls them "the goody-goody sort." I approve of milk for babes, the sincere milk of the word, but if it be nearly all water, or something worse, we had better reject it. I would rather my child should read a volume on the works of God in the creation of a frog than a score of books containing feeble religious twaddle.

With regard to those eminently useful religious works we cannot have too many of them. Such as "Alien's Alarm to the Unconverted," "The Anxious Inquirer," "Come and Welcome to Jesus," "The Pilgrim's Progress," "The Holy War," and others, too numerous to mention.

It is impossible to estimate the value of suitable religious books to our intelligent young people just when a work of grace is going on in their hearts. If I may refer to my own experience, for instance, exactly at the period of conversion I became possessed of three books, "The Anxious Inquirer," by Angel James, Boston's "Four-fold State," and Booth's "Reign of Grace." For a year there was not a person with whom I cared to converse on religion, but while one of those books assisted to keep up an anxious inquiry, the other two volumes furnished me with a body of divinity almost as complete as that of Dr. Gill. Gill's diffuse and cumbersome volumes were carefully studied the second year of my Christian life, and I have spent several years in a college but I gained, one way and another, more useful theology the first year of my Christian career than any twelve months since.

The Sabbath school library should be ascholastics the circumstances require. Whatever advances our young people may have made in pursuit of knowledge, if possible, the Sabbath School library should enable them to take another step forward in the right direction.—