

Teachers' Department.

Sabbath School Scripture Lessons.

DECEMBER 21st, 1856.

Subject.—PETER'S SERMON ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

For Repeating.

Acts ii. 1-4.

For Reading.

Acts ii. 14-36.

DECEMBER 28th, 1856.

Subject.—PETER'S SERMON CONTINUED.—CONVERSION OF THREE THOUSAND PERSONS.

For Repeating.

Acts ii. 32-36.

For Reading.

Acts ii. 37-47.

POETRY IN PROSE.

A GEM IN THE RIVER.

A young mother, with tears of bereavement in her eyes, stood over the river of death, gazing wistfully into its black and sluggish waters, as if she would fain rest her gaze upon some object away down—down in its fathomless depths. She gazed long and wistfully, and the black waves rolled sullenly, sluggishly onward.

And the mother laid her hands submissively on her bosom and wept, and said, "My gem! my gem!"

And a celestial being, like an angel, stood near the hidden door of her heart, and whispered in a silvery voice, like music, "What seekest thou, mourning sister?"

"Alas!" said the mourner, "I once, even yesterday, wore a beautiful gem in my bosom. To me it was invaluable; it was no trivial gem, it was one that kings and monarchs might well have been proud of. The riches of the East could not have purchased it from me. In an hour that was to me evil and miserable, the gem dropped from my bosom into the black night of this deep river. As I saw it floating away from me gently as the coming of an eastern shadow, I reached after it, but it was beyond my grasp; and my gem, my babe, smiled upon me, as it was riding on the waves further and further from me. It began to sink—to sink from my sight, and in a moment my gem was gone—and gone forever!" and she turned sorrowfully away.

And the angel voice whispered again, "Stay, sister, grieve not; look again into the dark river."

She looked as she was bid, and a cry of sweet and rapturous joy burst from her lips. "Thanks to the Father! I see my gem floating in a great black wave. O, may I not wear it in my bosom again?"

"Stay, my sister, thou art deceived; what thou seest in the river is not thy gem; it is the shadow of what was given thee in trust. Look, sister, heavenward, and bid thy mourning heart rejoice."

She looked aloft, and away up in the dark beclouding sky, she saw a single spot clear and blue, and in it a bright star was gleaming, and its silvery rays came down and danced on the gloomy river, giving the black wave a brightness, as if silvered through and through; and away down many fathoms the bright reflection rested, and this the mourner thought was her lost gem. She gazed silently upon the scene, and the star from heaven was shining.

And the voice of the angel came again, like unto the sweet song of many instruments of music, saying, "Sister, the gloomy waves thou seest, though cold, and dark, and terrible, roll ceaselessly onward up to the great gate of heaven, and thither they bore thy mourned-for gem, which the good Father lent thee; the waves have borne it back to him, and it blooms and shines forever near the throne, like yon brightly beaming star!"

The voice was hushed, and the sorrowing mother turned away with her eyes lifted from the earth and gloomy river, and fixed them hopefully and wistfully on heaven.

And the bright star she saw, when tears filled her eyes, mourning for her loss, yet beams brightly, and it shines on her little baby's grave.

Courtesy.

No man is a gentleman who, without provocation, would treat with incivility the humblest of his species. It is a vulgarity for which no accomplishments, and no attainments nor dress can ever atone. Show me the man who desires to make every one happy around him, and whose greatest solicitude is never to give just offence to any one, and I will show you a gentleman by nature and practice, although he may never have worn a suit of broadcloth, nor ever heard of a lexicon.

Crowns of thorns precede the crowns of glory. Robes of mockery and shame in this world will but serve to set off the surpassing brightness of the white robes in the world to come.

Select Sermon.

The Offence of the Cross.

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

"And I brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased," Gal. v. 11.

[Concluded.]

III.—Now we come, in the third place, to SAY SOMETHING TO THOSE WHO ARE OFFENDED AT THE CROSS. In the first place, how foolish it is of a man who does not believe the Gospel to oppose those who do. If a man does not love the Gospel, he might let other people alone that do. You have often heard of the old fable of the dog in the manger, but here is another, here is the dog out of the manger—he does not even lie on the hay himself, and yet he barks at those that come to feed. He does not love the Gospel, and because they do he hates them. Why, surely, what you do not want yourselves, you might let other people have in quietness. You need not oppose those for carrying away what you count worthless rubbish. Why should you be so offended, and so endeavour to stand against the truth, since you cannot get anything out of it, and may burn your fingers for your trouble?

2. Then, how foolish it is to be offended at the cross, seeing that you cannot stop its progress. He who should place himself before Juggernaut's car to be crushed, would be as wise as you who are standing against the Gospel. If it be true, recollect truth must prevail. Yet, who are you to stand against it? You will be crushed; but let me tell you when the car goes over you, the wheel won't be put up an inch by your size. For what are you? A small tiny gnat, a creeping worm, which that wheel will crush to less than nothing, and not leave you even a name as having been an opponent of the Gospel. There have been men that have stood up and said, "We will stop the chariot of Christ." Thousands have looked at them, and have been afraid. Their trumpets have blown loud and strong, and some poor Christians have said, "Stand aside! Here comes a man who will stop the chariot." At one time it was Tom Paine; then it was Robert Owen. But what became of them? Did the chariot stop for them? No; it went on just as if there never had been a Tom Paine or a Robert Owen in the world. Let all the infidels in the world know assuredly that the Gospel will go on just as well with them as without them. Poor creatures! their efforts to oppose the Gospel are not worth our notice. They cannot stop the truth, for it is mighty and must prevail. Ay! sometimes the gnat thinketh to quench the sun. Go, gnat, and do it, and burn thy wings, and die. Some tiny insect thinketh to drink the ocean dry. Drink the ocean; ay, and thou wilt sink, and it will drink thee! Go, ye who despise the Gospel; what can ye do? It cometh on "conquering and to conquer." The more enemies the Gospel has, I always think, the more it will advance. As the old warrior said, "The more enemies there are, the more there are to be taken prisoners, the more there are to be killed, and the more to run away." No! double your hosts, ye opposers! Come on against us with a mightier power still! Rage ye more loudly! Slander ye more foully! Do what ye can, victory is ours! It is predestinated! The iron column of predestination standeth firm, and on its top there are the eagle wings of victory to every believer—victory to the Church of God. God's truth must conquer and shall conquer; wherefore, then, dost thou, as a foolish creature, hope to oppose the Gospel because it offends thee. The stone shall overcome and crush thee that falleth upon it.

3. But another thought, and I have done with this. O man! if thou art one who hateth the Gospel, let me say to thee solemnly how doubly foolish thou art to be offended with Christ, who is the only one who can save thee. As well might the drowning man be offended with the rope which is cast to him, and which is the only means of salvation; as well might the dying patient be offended with the cup of medicine which is put to his lips, and which alone can save his body from death; as well might the man whose house is burning be offended with the fireman who roughly puts the fire escape against his window—as thou offended with Christ. Offended with him who would snatch thee as "a brand from the burning"! Offended with him who alone can quench the fire of hell for thee! Offended with him who alone can wash thee white, and give thee a place with him in glory everlasting! Offended with him! Thou art mad indeed. Not Bedlam itself can produce a maniac more foolish than thou art. Ah, ye despisers, ye shall wonder and perish. Ye are offended with the Gospel because it does not let you have any

merit. Why, you have not got any, and why are you offended about that? You are offended at the Gospel because it does not want anything of you. If it did want anything of you, you would be lost. It is just the Gospel for you; it is made on purpose; it fits your condition; it is adapted to your case—and yet you are offended with it! O, how can it be? Did you ever hear of a man that was offended with a coach that was carrying him because it had wheels? Why should you be offended with the Gospel because it is full of free grace? for it could not advance except on the wheels of free grace. What! offended with the Gospel because it lays you low? Don't you know that it is the very best place for you? for the devil would have you very high. My dear friends, I beseech you by Christ himself, do think a little on this matter, why, you are offended with the Gospel. I know it grates on your prejudices. When you first hear it you do not love it; but remember it is your only salvation. Are you offended with that which alone must save you? Offended with that which can put a crown on your head, a palm branch in your hand, and give you bliss for ever? Offended with that? Then, methinks, when you sink to hell, you will look up to heaven and say, "Ah, Christ! I was offended with thee, and now I see thou wast the only Saviour." I hated thy name, of which it is written, "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. I hated that Saviour who was the only Saviour to redeem sinners from sin."

IV.—Lastly, we offer ONE OR TWO INFERENCES, and the first is this.—If the cross is an offence, and always was an offence, what is the reason so many professed Christians go on so easy from January to December, and never have any trouble about it? Old John Berridge says: "If you do not preach the Gospel, you may sleep soundly enough; but, if you do preach it thoroughly, you will hardly have a sound place in your skin, for you will soon have enemies enough after you." Oh! how is it we never hear of any scandal against a great many ministers? Every thing goes easily and comfortably with them. Nobody is ever offended with their preaching, but people go out of their chapel doors and say, "What a nice sermon! It was just the thing for everybody, and nobody could be offended." They do not preach the Gospel fully, or else they would be sure to offend the people. Somebody says to me—"Do you know that Mrs. So-and-so was fearfully offended with you?" Then I bless God for it. A celebrated preacher was once told that he had pleased his hearers. "Ah," said he, "there is another sermon lost." The most effective sermons are those which make opposers of the Gospel bite their lips, and gnash their teeth. "That preaching is worth little," Rowland Hill used to say, "that cannot make the devil roar. He preaches but very little truth, who does not sometimes set him roaring against him." Depend upon it, Satan does not like the Gospel better than he did, and the world does not like the Gospel one scrap better than it did. And if there be not so much persecution and hatred, it is because men do not come out with the plain, simple truths. People go to hear nice-tongued preachers; they like the minister to prophecy smooth things unto them. "I went to hear that Mr. So-and-so," they say, "for he will be sure to offend me. I could not bear it; I should be horrified." Now what is the reason of this? The one preaches a Gospel that suits your corrupt, carnal tastes, and that is no Gospel; and the other preaches the truth of God. But do men think we want to offend them? Do they think there is any profit to us in driving our hearers out of doors? Nay, God knows, the hard things we often say cause us more pain than they do our hearers. But it is a good thing when we care little for men, and when we have learnt to live above the world. Once let men come out with the plain Gospel, and we shall soon hear the laughter, and scorn, and jeers. It was an ill day when the sons of God made affinity with the daughters of men; and it will be an ill day for the church when the world speaks well of it, and everybody commands it. The sect that is most spoken against is usually the sect where Christ most dwelleth; but the sect that is lapped in plenty, and dandled on the knees of honour is usually the most corrupt. Preach the Gospel firmly, steadfastly, steadily, out-and-out, and you will not be long without hearing something about "the offence of the cross."

Our last thought is this. O, my brethren, how much reason have we to bless and extol our gracious God if we have not any offence against the cross. I hope many can unite with me in saying there is nothing in the Bible that offends us; there is nothing in the Gospel that offends us now. If there is anything you do not understand, you do not hate it; if it seems dark and mysterious you do not laugh, but you are willing

to learn. Ah, my God, if all I have ever preached be false, I stand prepared to disown it when thou shalt teach me better; if all I have ever learnt be a mistake, and I have not learnt it of thee, I will not be ashamed to recant it in that hour when thou shalt teach me more of thyself, or show me my error. We are not ashamed to bring ourselves wholly into the mould of Scripture, to take it just as it stands, to believe it, and to receive it; and if you are in that state, mark you, you are saved—for no man can say he receives the Gospel wholly, loves it all, and receives it in his heart, and can yet be a stranger to it. I have heard preachers ignorantly talk about "natural" love to the Gospel. There cannot be such a thing. I heard some one say there was a "natural" love to Christ. It is all rubbish. Nature cannot beget a love to Christ, nor love to any good thing; that must come of God, for all things are of him. There is nothing good in us by nature. Every conviction must in some way or another come from the Holy Spirit. Even if it is a temporary one, it must be traced to him, if it is good. O, let us adore, and exalt, and magnify the mighty grace that has made us love the Gospel! for I am sure, with some of us, there was a time when we hated it as much as any people in all the world. Old John Newton used to say—"You, who are called Calvinists, though you are not Calvinists, but the old, legitimate, successors of Christ, you ought above all men to be very gentle with your opponents, for, recollect, according to your own principles, they cannot learn truth unless they are taught of God, and if you be taught of God, you ought to bless his name! and if they have not, you should not be angry with them; but pray to God to give them a better education." Don't let us make any extra "offence of the cross" by our own ill-humour, but love the cross at all times. Let us rejoice exceedingly that we do love it.

Ah! poor sinner, what sayest thou? Art thou offended with the cross? No, thou art not. It is there, thou wishest to loose thy sins. Dost thou wish this moment to come to Christ? And sayest thou—"I have no offence against Christ? O, that I knew where I might find thou, I would come even to his seat!" Well, if thou wantest Christ, Christ wanteth thee; if thou desirest Christ, Christ desireth thee. Yea, more; if thou hast one spark of desire after Christ, Christ hath a whole burning mountain of desire after thee. He loveth thee better than thou canst love him. Rest assured, thou art not first with God. If thou art seeking him, he hath sought thee first of all. Come, then, thou destitute, thou weary, thou lost, thou helpless, thou ruined, thou chiefest of sinners; come, put thy trust in his blood, and his perfect righteousness, and thou wilt go on thy way rejoicing in Christ, set free from sin, delivered from iniquity, rendered as safe, though not as happy, as the very angels that now sing high hosannas before the throne of the Most High!

Agriculture.

Singular facts about Poultry.

DEAR SIR:—A most singular occurrence has taken place among my poultry, which I thought might be of some interest to you. A fall chicken perfectly black, commenced laying in April last, and laid eighteen eggs; she then wanted to sit, but as she was a young bird, I shut her up for a week or two, and then let her loose. In a few days she again commenced laying, and laid as many eggs as before; and as before, wanted to sit. I shut her up for ten days, then she was let out again. Soon after her neck became covered with gold-colored feathers, while those on the rest of her body were a bright beautiful purple, brighter than any of the cocks'. Her head and legs remained as before, excepting the spurs, which were longer. In October she shed her feathers, and put forth beautiful, brilliant ones with those in the tail longer and brighter than any cock's, her head and legs remain the same. She takes but little notice of any of the hens, and the cock's do not notice her. She has laid no eggs since her feathers changed. Last week I set some hens near each other, and to my great surprise, this hen has taken it upon herself to be their nurse; she sits in front of them all day, and has pecked off the feathers from her breast to line their nests.

S. A. SHUTLEWORTH.

Brookline, April 12, 1856.

Sept. 2.—Since the above was written the above-named hen has laid four litters of eggs, in all about 80, and wanted to set four times, and is now lying again. I let her set in May on 13 good eggs, but she did not bring out a single chick, and the other hens that were set at the same time brought out a full brood. Why she did not is to me a mystery. She is in perfect health, and her plumage is most brilliant, with all feathers like the male bird, changed from black to a rich golden and purple.

S. A. S.