

Youths' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, November 4th, 1866.

Acts ii. 14-26: Peter's sermon. 1 Kings xxii. 37-54: Jehoshaphat's reign.

Sunday, November 11th, 1866.

CONCERT, or Review of the past month's subjects and lessons.

Poor Betsy Rayner.

BY MRS. SEWELL.

'Twas twelve o'clock one stormy night,
The rain was falling fast,
And wildly swayed the bending trees
Before the sweeping blast.

No star relieved the midnight gloom,
The traveller strained his eyes,
To keep the beaten path aright,
So pitchy dark the skies.

The turnpike man gave short reply,
And quickly closed the gate,
And said, "Good luck, this is a night,
For men to ride so late."

The village lights had died away,
The folks were all in bed,
Save here and there, a single ray
Its feeble lustre shed,

From some lone chamber where the sick
Heard every hour pass by:
Or woman plied her needle still,
To feed her family.

A tap is on the blacksmith's door,
The man starts from his dream;
"There was a noise, my dear," he said,
"I thought I heard a scream!"

"'Twas nothing but the wind, my dear,
It shook our chamber door,
Go, sleep again, don't wake yourself,
I'm sure 'twas nothing more."

"The night is wild," the good man said,
"For sailors on the sea;
God keep them all from wreck and harm,
There's none can save but He."

A second tap is on the door,
He started from his bed,
And held the shaking casement wide,
As he put out his head.

"Who's there?" he said—"who's there below?"
"For God's sake take me in!
Good Mr. Sparks, do open your door,
I'm wetted to the skin."

"Now shut the casement quick, my dear,
I know what 'tis about;
'Tis Rayner's wife—she's drunk again,
And he has turned her out."

"He could not do a thing like that,
To-night; I'd house a foe,
In such a dreadful storm as this,
We cannot let her go."

"She can't come in, I say, John Sparks;
The wife spoke with command,
The man had here, the tender heart,
And she, the master hand.

"My pity will not reach so far,
The creature's bad, and bold,
Now shut the window, come to bed,
You'll catch your death of cold."

Then slowly Sparks the window closed,
And slowly came to bed,
But rest had left his weary limbs,
And sleep, his troubled head.

His thoughts were up, and wide awake,
And would not be denied;
So thus, to move his better half,
His eloquence he tried—

"To think of her—shut out of doors,
In such a wretched case—
The sweetest girl I ever saw,
The pride of all the place.

"I've often thought, that she and Bell,
(A foolish thought you say)—
Were just like two sweet moss-rose buds,
That grow upon one spray.

"Our Bell, you said, was more genteel,
And had an easy grace;
But this poor child had certainly
By far the prettiest face."

"Don't talk about her pretty face,
'Tis pretty they, who do
What pretty is—I cannot bear
To hear men talk like you."

"There's much to say, wife, much to say,
I know Joe Rayner well;
And what she has to bear from him,
I guess 'twere hard to tell.

"I've seen the tears upon her face,
Her spirits brought so low,
Nor do I wonder much myself,
At what she's come to now.

"Beside—her mother was to blame,
When she was first confined,
She gave her beer, and spirits too—
It often pained my mind.

"To hear her press the child to drink,
And say 'twould make her strong,
I warned her then—says I—you will
Repent of this ere long."

"I know a heavy reckoning lies
With doctor, and with nurse,
They cure one ill, may-be, and bring
Another, ten times worse."

"Well, now, if you have done, my dear,
I have a story too;
There are two sides to every case,
It you'll keep that in view.

"When I went to the grocer's shop
As day was closing in;
The shopman said, 'There's Rayner's wife
Is drunk again with gin,

"She's reeling down the pathway now,
You hear the shouts and noise—
And there was your 'moss-rose-bud,' John,
And after her the boys.

"She look'd a little bit ashamed,
And turned away her face;
I thought about her husband, Sparks,
And of his wretched case.

"So when I'd paid my reckoning up,
I just came home that way;
The sight I saw, I'll ne'er forget,
Until my dying day.

"The young ones cried about the door,
As if their heart would break;
And such a house! good lack-a-day!
A heart of stone would ache.

"And there was Meg, that pretty child
You talk so much about,
And she screamed wildly, 'Father pray
Don't shut poor mother out!'

"He drove Meg in—the man was mad—
And banged, and locked the door—
'Your mother, child!—she's none to you—
'She'll enter here no more.'

"The clamour that arose within!
I trembled as I stood;
The father's oaths, the children's screams!
It fairly chilled my blood.

"Now she's the cause of that, I say,
Whatever you may think,
No wonder if a man is cross,
Whose wife is fond of drink?

"There's much to say, John, much to say,
When wives bring such disgrace,
Why husbands should be surly too,
Despite a pretty face.

"I'd like to know, I'm sure I should,
What my good man would do,"
"My dear, don't say a word like that;
There's nobody like you."

"Then John, I think that folks like me
Their character should keep;
Nor countenance such shameful ways,"
She settled then to sleep.

And Rayner's wife is in the street,
The storm beats in her face,
Her dripping clothes cling round her limbs,
And check her hurried pace.

Again she's at her husband's door,
Her strength is nearly gone;
And as she leans against the wall
She hears the clock strike One.

"And they are sleeping now," she said,
"Whilst I am standing here,"
She press'd her ear against the door,
To hear what she could hear.

She listened, with her lips apart,
And wildly straining eye,
And then she heard, or thought she heard
Her own poor infant cry.

"I must get in, I will get in!"
She beat upon the door.
The wind blew loud—she only heard
Her husband's heavy snore.

"Oh, my poor babe! my pretty one!
My darling, do not fret;
Come to your mother's arms, my love—
You don't despise me yet."

"Oh! wretched creature that I am,
Whatever shall I do?"
She wrung her hands in agony,
And fast her tears did flow.

The infant's wailing died away,
And all was still within;
And there the wretched mother stood,
The victim of her sin.

She could not stop, she could not rest;
She did not feel the rain;
And down the street she went again,
Urged on by shame and pain.

A dim light streamed across the road—
She hailed the welcome sight;
"Oh! will that good soul take me in,
And shelter me to-night?"

She tapped—it was a gentle tap,
It need not sound afar,
For Mercy had been watching there,
And left the door ajar.

A hasty view the matron took
Of that degraded form;
"Come in," she said, "Come in, poor thing,
I'll make you dry and warm."

She took her dripping clothes away,
And clad her with her own;
She drew a chair beside the fire,
And there she set her down.

No words were ready at the time,
The neighbours knew the case;
And with a tearful eye she look'd
On that dejected face.

Then, all her pity rose at once,
Like that of His, who came
To rescue ruin'd, sinful souls,
From misery and shame.

Some food was on the table placed;
She pressed her shivering guest
To drink some warm, refreshing tea
Before she went to rest.

"Oh no! Oh no!" poor Betsy said,
"You do not know me yet;
I'm Rayner's wretched drunken wife;
Your kindness you'll regret."

"I know it all, my dear," she said,
"And I do not despair;
The way is open for you still
To seek a Saviour's care."

"No, not for me, I've sunk too far
For Heaven's love to stoop,"
"Oh! say not so—'tis wide as sin;
My child, there still is hope."

"You do not know me—you are good;
'This sin has bound me fast;
'Twill keep me from the way to bliss,
And ruin me at last."

"Oh, I have tried, and tried again
The mastery to gain;
But strong temptations overcome,
And I fall back again."

"And all good people look at me
With horror or neglect;
It must be so, when I have lost
My proper self-respect!"

"My neighbours point at me and laugh;
The children do the same;
And 'Drunken' is the word that goes
With Betsy Rayner's name."

"Have courage, child, and try again,
There's strength for those who need;
Our Saviour never quenched the flax,
Nor broke the bruised reed."

The fervent pressure of her hand
On Betsy's arm she lay;
Then kneeling down, she gently said,
"Dear sister, let us pray."

That kindly word, that tender touch,
The Spirit's melting power,
Brought back her own true woman's heart,
In that sweet solemn hour.

Then followed many cheering words,
Encouraging and wise;
And morning light broke in the east,
Ere Betsy closed her eyes.

Then long she slept—her fevered frame
Cried earnestly for rest;
And that good friend had not the heart
To rouse her weary guest.

At length she woke, and sudden came
The thought of all the past;
And on that sympathising friend
Her tearful eyes she cast.

"God bless you, child," she kindly said,
"Look up and comfort find;
Begin your life anew to-day,
And leave the past behind."

"And if temptation should assail,
And you are nigh to fall,
Then come to me, and we will tell
Our Heavenly Father all."

"Oh! Betsy Rayner, God is good,
And stronger than your sin;
His arms are opened wide with love,
And He will take you in."

"We all are sinners—none may say
'Behold me, I am pure';
By God's free grace we only stand,
By that alone endure."

"No man may take the Judge's place,
Nor thrust his brother by;
For God abhors the proud of heart,
But hears the humble cry."

"Have courage, Betsy!—fearful heart!
Ne'er gain'd a victory yet:
Now you must go, and humbly ask
Your husband to forget."

She reach'd her home; she saw her babe;
The children round her crept;
She strained the infant to her heart,
And rais'd her voice and wept.

The words she would have said, her tears
More eloquently spoke;
And Rayner, in a softened mood
His wife's submission took.

The warfare with that cruel sin
She did begin that day;
And often came her faithful friend
To cheer her on the way.

And she o'ercame, as all will do
Who pray as well as strive,
And have a christian friend to keep
Their faltering hope alive.

And often did she bless the night,
That night without a star,
When Mercy kept her lonely watch,
And left the door ajar.

Oh ye, who mourn your sister's sin,
Let not her guilt appal,
For God is ever near to help;
And love may conquer all."

Some of our readers may have seen the above touching stanzas. They will not, however, regret another perusal of them. They convey several important lessons:—first, of caution and avoidance of the steps which lead down to the depths to which poor Betsy had fallen; and secondly, of kind consideration for those who have been unfortunately ensnared by the deceitfulness of that particular sin—drunkenness. The following paragraph from the *London Weekly Record* may form a very suitable moral to the story:—

A WORD TO GIRLS.

Never, never touch, taste, or handle that fearful agent that can rob you of honour, use,

fulness, womanliness and virtue. All our great reformers unite in saying that they scarcely ever knew a drunken woman reclaimed. Even the celebrated John B. Gough, who has an unlimited experience in the reformation of drunkards, states that although he has seen thousands of men reform after signing the pledge, and win respectable positions in society, yet he has never known but two women reclaimed. It is a fact that woman falls so low when degraded by drink, that she rarely rises again. All the better and finer feelings of her nature are blunted and destroyed, until she becomes a blot and a libel on the very name of woman. Will any of my fair young readers become like this? We hope not. May God help them ever to avoid the intoxicating cup, however brightly it may gleam, and use all the power of their influence against it. God speed the day when every girl and every woman shall wage unyielding warfare against the drinking customs of the age.

Agriculture.

AGRICULTURAL PRINCIPLES.—ROTATION OF CROPS.

Considerations of profit or convenience alone too often determine the question what crops are to be put into a given piece of land. Sometimes mere impulse is acted on. But there is no subject connected with practical farm-work that more needs to be settled according to fixed and well-known principles of agricultural science. There need be no difficulty in determining to what use a particular field ought to be devoted. The question what product is it most fit for, will readily settle the matter.

If every field on a farm could be treated each year to a liberal dressing of barn-yard manure; impulse, accident, profit or convenience might decide the use to which it should be put, without any very serious detriment. But only a small part of a farm at a time can be well manured. The crop that is first put in after land is dunged, takes up certain kinds of plant food. If the same or a similar crop be put in next year, more of the same kind of plant food is abstracted, and this course cannot be long pursued without rendering the land utterly incapable of yielding that particular crop. But if after the first crop that succeeds a liberal manuring, a crop of a totally different kind be cultivated, other descriptions of plant food are drawn upon, and the drain upon the soil is less severe. The fundamental fact in regard to a rotation of crops is, that no two plants of different kinds require the same substances in equal proportion for their nourishment. A field which will not yield a second good crop of wheat, may, without another dose of manure, give a good crop of clover, turnips or other roots. Thus it is usually regarded as an important rule in good farming that no two white or grain crops shall follow in immediate succession. This rule is not, however, considered as absolute and literal in its application, for while the Norfolk farmer takes his crops in this succession: 1. clover; 2. wheat; 3. turnips; 4. barley: the Lancashire farmer with equal success grows, 1. grass; 2. green crops; 3. wheat; 4. oats or barley, his two green crops following one another, and his two white crops doing the same. There is, however, in this case a balancing as it were of two grain crops by means of two green crops. It should be a settled rule that the exhaustive crops are never to be grown in succession, unless the land has become to possess a considerable degree of fertility, so as to bear without injury, such a tax upon its productive energies. The chief principles on which a rotation of crops is based are these:—

1. A fertile soil contains all the food required for the nourishment of every description of cultivated plants, but while this is the case, the supply needed by a particular plant is but limited.
2. Some plants draw their nourishment from near the surface, while others obtain their food from a greater depth.
3. Some plants derive a large proportion of nourishment from the atmosphere, while others depend almost, if not entirely, upon what they extract from the soil.
4. Certain crops furnish support to particular insect tribes.

Hence one crop should be followed by another that requires for its nourishment substances differing as much as possible from those that have just been drawn upon. A surface-feeding crop should be followed by one that goes down deeper for nourishment. A crop that derives its food principally from the soil, should be followed by one that draws largely from the atmosphere. A crop should follow its predecessor such as is best calculated to exterminate the insects that preyed upon the previous one. It may be added that by growing a variety of products, the occasional failure of one is not so keenly felt, its place being supplied by others. As an example of the practical application of the foregoing principles, we quote a rotation instanced some years ago by Mr. William Boa, of St. Laurent, and which has been largely practiced with excellent results.

PLAN OF ROTATION.

"Divide the arable portion of the farm, whatever may be its size, into six parts, as equal as possible, with a direct communication from the barn-yard to each field, and from one field to the other, so that the cattle may pass from one to the other when required. This division into six fields, may require on most farms new fencing, and it will be proper, before-hand, to see how this can be done with the least possible expense. I shall now suppose the farm prepared to receive the application of this system, and that is the one which I have found the best for even the poorest settler."