

Months' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, May 26th, 1867.

ACTS XV. 22-41: Paul and Barnabas separate.
2 Kings xvii. 1-23: Hoshea's reign.
Recite—PROVERBS xiii. 1-4.

Sunday, June 2nd, 1867.

ACTS xvi. 1-21: Paul's vision. 2 Kings xvii. 24-41: The strange nations in trouble.

The bad mark.

A man came up to a master-workman of a large establishment to get a situation for a neighbor's boy.

"I've got a new boy for you," he said to the foreman.

"Glad of it," said the other; "who is he?" The neighbor mentioned his name and residence.

"Don't want him," said the master, promptly. "He's got a bad mark. I meet him every day with a cigar in his mouth. I don't want smokers."

It was a bad mark, indeed, for any boy, though I dare say he thought it made him appear very smart and manlike. It was certainly like the men one sees about the benches and doors of taverns and liquor-shops. They usually have a cigar or an old pipe stuck in their mouths. But they are not very good models for our young men and boys. They can find a great deal better ones.

When a boy strolls off for a walk on Sunday, instead of going to the church or the Sunday-school, it is "a bad mark."

Two boys, who studied side by side in day-school, and who were about on a level as scholars, sharing about equally in the regard of the teacher, went forth into the world with apparently equal chances of success in life.

John pursued his studies for a term of years, and was at last ordained as a minister of the Presbyterian church. Five days after, his old friend and classmate, Henry, was hanged.

What could have made such a fearful difference in their future, when their early years gave such different promise? While John was a faithful Sunday-school scholar, as well as a regular attendant at church, Henry was always strolling off on the Lord's day with irreverent companions. He had a "bad mark upon him," and you see to what it led.

Oh, there is a great record-book, in which all these marks are carefully noted down. What marks are you having recorded there every day?—*Presbyterian.*

Judging others by Ourselves.

A few days before Christmas a lady had purchased several things she did not wish to be seen by the family till the proper time. So she went quietly into a spare room and laid them in a bureau drawer. To her surprise, on turning to leave the room, she saw her little pet of the house, who, having heard her come in at the front door, had followed her and seen what she wished to keep private. Then she showed him the articles, and charged him to say nothing of them, as she wanted to surprise his father and sister.

He prided himself greatly on his power of keeping a secret, which was so wonderful for a fellow of six years that he was often made the confidant of others, who felt sure that anything was safe with him. As he turned to leave the chamber with his mother, he said:

"You had better lock the drawer, mamma."

"O no," she replied, "no one uses this bureau but myself."

"But the chamber girl will look in and see them," he said.

"O no, my dear; Katy wouldn't look into my drawers, unless she were told to do so."

"But I know she would, mamma," replied the little fellow very confidently.

"Did you ever see her prying into drawers or trunks, my son?" asked the mother.

"No, mamma; but I know she does."

"It is a very mean act you charge Katy with, my dear," said the lady, "and if false, it is very wrong in you. Now tell me how you know that she does such things."

"I know she does," replied the young gentleman, hanging down his head, "because—because I would if I was a chamber girl!"

Now this is a very natural way of judging other people, but it is not always just. When, therefore, you hear a person accusing another of meanness, or of acting from wrong motives, unless the charges are well proved, you may safely decide that the accuser has come to his decision from looking into his own heart. But one heart is not a true mirror of all others. Some are as clear as crystal, having nothing to hide, and nothing they need be ashamed of. This is the character every child should try to cultivate.

A really noble nature is rare, but not impossible of attainment. Every one should guard against the little steps called "meanness," which so surely lead to open sin. The child who will peep into a secret drawer, or read another's letter, or listen at a door, to gratify idle curiosity, is in a dangerous place. A person once remarked:

"I would as soon dare to steal money from a man's purse, as a secret from his letter."

Our little friend, who made this honest confession—that he would peep into drawers if he were a chambermaid—only revealed what is in the human heart. The lessons he received then

will be as a guard set over him, and lead him to overcome that nature.

If our own hearts were pure, how much more generous and forbearing should we be toward others! Judging them by ourselves, we should see the temptations against which they had struggled, and their efforts to overcome; and then, if they were not perfect in all things, we should sympathize with, and strive to help them on in the right way.—*Youth's Companion.*

The "Ransom" sinners.

The sensitiveness of habitual non-church-goers to personal allusions in the service is almost proverbial. None are to blame but themselves, but when such persons, in their semi-occasional visits to the sanctuary, happen to catch a bit through an accidental text or phrase, the effect is necessarily laughable. We knew an honest, but odd fellow, named Ephraim, who had not been to meeting for ten years, and who, being at last prevailed upon by his wife to go, was incurably disgusted by the preacher's text,—"Ephraim is as a cake turned—one side baked and the other dough."

In a New Hampshire town there lived an ignorant, irreligious, worthless family, Ransom by name, no member of which had been seen inside a church within the "memory of the oldest inhabitant." The village pastor, after years of failure, had at length "almost persuaded two of the younger scions to promise attendance for one Sabbath, but the fear that they would be made the subjects of some personal remarks still deterred them. They were in great terror lest they should be publicly upbraided with their misdoings, and called to account for their wickedness. After much exhortation, their fears were quieted, and on the following Sunday the eyes of the good pastor's congregation were astonished at the unwonted presence of the aforesaid Ransoms. All went pleasantly enough until the reading of the second hymn, which was the familiar

"Blow ye the trumpet, blow!" etc.

Imagine the effect when, at the end of the line

"Return, ye ransom'd sinners, home,"

the older of our heroes seized his hat, and, with long strides toward the door, shouted: "Come along home, Bill! I know'd they'd be flinging at us if we came here!"

Be Merciful.

A SKETCH BY MARIANNE FARNINGHAM.

James Captain, wholesale and retail linen draper, was engaged in the not unpleasant occupation of counting his gains. He knew pretty well that he had made a few bargains lately which were likely to tell on the sum total of his profits. He had bought well and sold better, and reaped the benefit. That spirit which makes some men see, as by instinct, which are the safe speculations—call it shrewdness, genius, business capacity, what you like (I call it Providence), had prompted him to take a few of those steps which take a man to the top of the ladder of wealth, as rapidly as hundreds of others get on the first rung. I suppose that, of all the things which make men smile, nothing is more successful than a good balance at the bankers. It must have a sort of tranquillizing effect upon the spirits, and give a rose-tint to the morning landscape. Certain it is that James Captain, Esquire, looked very amiable as he cast up his accounts. And his satisfaction seemed every minute to grow greater, until he looked as if the whole world might be a great account sheet, with the highest figures on the right side.

James Captain was a Christian. His name stood surrounded by due honour on a church book, and it often stood on the top of a list of donations, opposite a sum that he had no reason to feel ashamed of. And as he dived deeper into his accounts, and found them delightfully encouraging, he rose for a minute, and, with his back to the fire, sang or rather hummed involuntarily two very common verses. The one was "Not more than others I deserve," and the other our good old doxology, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow." There was a great feeling of thankfulness in his heart. He knew how to appreciate his blessings, for he had not always been the prosperous tradesman—he had been the poor lad, without a shilling or a friend, who by his own diligence and perseverance, the blessing of God, had risen to his present estate.

After giving a few minutes to the indulgence of his grateful feelings, and a glance back over the way he had passed, he went back to his books. But a change came over his face as he continued his occupation. A shadow arose there, and grew, and deepened, and soon became black as night. He passed his hand over his brow, and started up, pacing the room impatiently—

"My eyes play me false," he said; "I will not believe it."

But again he renewed his seat, and again the fact stared him in the face, the conviction forced itself upon him. A very unpleasant conviction, in truth. For in one of the departments of his business he discovered that the balances were all on the wrong side. Strange as it seemed, and it was very strange, it had escaped his notice before, but certainly there could be no doubt about it now—not in a small amount, but a very serious one, the income had been less than the expenditure.

A short time Mr. Captain gave to his surprise, and then, as he worked away at the columns of figures, a new expression of alarm gathered on his countenance. Only a few minutes, and the alarm deepened into certainty. It was clear enough now. He had been robbed.

One of his assistants, trusted, unsuspected, had been guilty of robbing his employer, and by falsifying his accounts had succeeded in remaining a long time undetected. It was revealed now, the skillful alteration of convenient figures, the substitution of smaller for larger amounts, everything, in this close examination and comparison, was brought to light marvellously, clearly, and unmistakably.

You will not be surprised to learn that Mr. Captain found himself gradually working into what is sometimes called "a towering rage."

"The rascal!" he said, "so as I have helped him, and trusted him, and done everything man could for another, and then for him to go and serve me so."

The more he thought of it, the more angry he became, until at last he was wrought up into fury, and rang his bell for an attendant.

"I will have the police at once, and give him into custody," he thought. "Nothing is too bad for him, or any one else who would act as he has done."

His servant appeared in answer to his summons. But at the same instant a still, small voice whispered something in his ear, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

"That is a strange text to come into my mind," he thought, "just now, when I have certainly more need to think of being just."

The man waited his orders.

"You rang for me, sir?"

"Yes, go up to the police-station, and say—"

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful," still again rang in his ears, and filled his heart.

"No, go back, and if I want you I will ring for you."

Mr. Captain went out into his office to look at the man who had wronged him. He was about five-and-twenty years of age, tall, thin, and very pale, unusually so, as Mr. Captain's eyes fell upon him, and rested there. He lifted his own to his master's face, and they fell again, while a deep blush covered his cheeks and forehead. Nothing more was needed to confirm his guilt. Mr. Captain went back again to his private room, and pondered over his plan. What he had better do he knew not: it seemed to him that certainly his duty was to have the erring man thrust into prison, and yet these calming Scriptural words were in his heart calming and making him better and more kindly. Again he rang the bell.

"Ask Mr. Porter to step this way."

He came in, white and terror-stricken, evidently prepared for the worst.

"Then you know all, sir," he said; "I thank God for that."

"They are strange words," said Mr. Captain; "what do you mean by them?"

"You know that I have robbed you, sir. I have been expecting that you would find it out, and I say I am glad, because the suspense and terror of discovery have been more than I have known how to bear."

"Porter," said Mr. Captain, "I have trusted you implicitly. All these years, since, an orphan-boy, you were committed to my care, I have never wronged you. And yet, now I make this discovery. What have you to say?"

He had nothing to say, but that he merited the punishment, however long and heavy it might be. Mr. Captain asked what he had done with the money, seeing that a large sum of money had been embezzled. He confessed that he had for a time been doing that dangerous thing—living beyond his income; and that lately he had betted at cards, races, and so on, hoping to gain, but nearly always losing vast sums. It was to escape from the consequences of this that he had robbed his master; at first, as he assured him, only intending to borrow it, and afterward to repay it. But, deeper and deeper he fell into the pit, until he would have committed the last and greatest sin—that of self-destruction, only that he dared not do so.

"There is not the slightest hope that I can ever repay you, sir," he said, "even if I had the chance. I hate myself for my sin. I have been more wretched all these months than I can tell you. There is no hope for me, either in this world or the next. I shall be glad to go away, a felon as I am, out of your sight, and bear the sentence I deserve."

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

Oh, blessed words, singing their sweet song in the heart of the injured man. They filled him with their peaceful music, it was like the even-song of the summer's sea, or the tiny ripple of the rill by the side of his mother's door. A little while he waited, and he felt, as if for the first time, he could understand a little of what must have been the great joy of the Saviour's devoted life. He felt how unspeakably precious it is to be able to forbear and forgive, and be merciful.

"Porter," he said, "it is in my heart to forgive you this, and give you another chance to hold on to the right. Whether you will do it or not remains to be seen; but I think I shall have a great peace, whichever way it may be."

The man heard as in a dream.

"It is a large sum," he said.

"Yes, but you see I can bear to lose it, because God has prospered me. You and I are both orphans, Porter. God has blessed us both, but I have the greater blessing, because I have not been tempted. Go to your work. I think it is not I, but Christ that is speaking to you."

Do you think the man was mad? Ah, you may never have known the joy of forgiving, which is, I think, one of the greatest we can ever have in this world.

Mr. Captain's home had a strange light in it that evening, I think. One came and sat by his side, and spoke to him, and made him feel what heaven would be like when he should get there. Why, he was radiant with happiness.

If he had twice the money at the bank of which he had been robbed, what was the good of that compared with the wonderful peace which came into his heart.

And Porter. Did you ever do a good action, and not find it restored to you fourfold? Porter grew to be his master's best help. A penitent, humble, persevering man, bound to his employer with all his might, never feeling that he had done enough, he restored the money, though it took many years. And I think he paid the debt, for they are both now living together, the forgiven and forgiver, in the heavenly home.

Strike the knot.

"Strike the knot!" said a gentleman one day to his son, who, tired and weary, was leaning on his axe over a log which he had in vain been trying to leave. Then, looking at the log, the gentleman saw how the boy had backed and chipped all around the knot without hitting it. Taking the axe, he struck a few sharp blows on the knot, and split the log without difficulty. Smiling, he returned the axe to his son, saying—

"Always strike the knot!"

That was good advice. It is good for you, my children, as it was for the boy to whom it was first given. It is a capital maxim to follow when you are in trouble. Have you a hard sum to do in school? Have you got to face a difficulty? Are you leaving home to live far the first time among strangers? Strike the knot! Look your trouble in the eye, as the bald lion-hunter looks in the face of a lion. Never shrink from a painful duty, but step right up to it and do it. Yes, strike the knot! Strike the knot, boys and girls, and you will always conquer your difficulties.—*Sunday School Advocate.*

INN SIGNS.—When one of the feudal gentry went into a town, as he carried with him a certain number of household and retainers, he not only occupied a whole, or nearly a whole house, but he required some distinctive mark upon the house which his followers would recognise, so that when they had wandered forth over the town they might know where to return. For this purpose, the knight, or baron, or whoever he might be, hung out of the window his own sign, that is, his badge or crest, or even his coat of arms. As a knight or baron who lived in such relation to the town that he might go to lodge in it frequently would naturally adopt the same house of entertainment, this would become known as his hostel, and the hostler would adopt as his sign the badge or crest of his chief patron. In this way originated all those red lions, green dragons, white harts, blue boars, and other strange and nondescript animals which at the present day figure so largely and so commonly on the signs of public houses.—*The Gentleman's Magazine.*

THE MILKMAN'S PARADISE.—Chalk farm,—Punch.

Late Church-goers.

BY WILLIAM S. HASSALL.*

Of church-going people
There are various kinds,
With notions as many
As the number of minds.
But of all who assemble,
The ones that I hate,
Are the crooked disciples
Who always come late!

Some go very early
To choose a good seat,
And ere service commences
Their friends they may greet;
Though they waste precious time,
Yet their sin cannot mate,
With those crooked disciples
Who always come late!

Others come into church
With a flourish and stride,
To prove that they have
Less religion than pride;
But they come in good time,
And they're better I state,
Than the crooked disciples
Who always come late!

It is not once or twice
They are found in the rear,
That it's always been so
I have very much fear;
Look back and you'll find,
That from earliest date,
These crooked disciples
Have always come late!

When the worship's begun,
And the psalm's being sung;
As praises are swelling
From many a tongue—
Creak! creak! I goes the door,
Who's coming? O fate!—
It's the crooked disciples
Who always come late!

I'm sorry, but their's
Is a desperate case,
When we think of the object
And think of the place;
I'm afraid when the saints
Seek the happier state,
These same crooked disciples
Will find they're too late!

*Published at the special request of Rev. J. B. Simmons, recent pastor of the author of these lines.