

Youths' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

(From "Robinson's Harmony.")

Sunday, December 26th, 1869.

LUKE xviii. 1-14: Parables. The Pharisee and Publican.

Recite.—Scripture Catechism, 66, 67.

Sunday, January 2nd, 1870.

MATTHEW xix. 13-15: MARK x. 13-16: LUKE xviii. 15-17: Jesus receives and blesses little children.

Recite.—S. C., 68, 69.



A CHRISTMAS LETTER TO THE LITTLE ONES.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

You are very happy in thinking that the Christmas season has arrived. The prospect of a holiday is pleasant to everybody, and you are looking forward to much joy in meeting with friends and companions whilst the holidays continue:

The bells of time
Ring out the chime
Of merry, merry greeting,
And o'er the earth,
In joyous mirth,
All hearts with love are beating.

The earth and air
All seem to share
The olden Christmas glory;
And now once more
Glad hearts tell o'er
Christ's sweet and wondrous story.

The love of God in the gift of his Son is brought to our mind afresh by the day observed as the anniversary of the birth of the Lord Jesus.

We do not read of Christmas day in the Bible; and we know this is not the time of the year that the infant Jesus was born. We do not therefore feel any obligation to keep it as a holy-day like the Lord's Day. We do like, however, to observe it as a day of social enjoyment amongst friends and relatives. In doing this we are delighted also to think of the birth of Christ, and to sing together the same chorus that the heavenly hosts sing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men;" when they heard the "good tidings of great joy" first announced by the angel to the shepherds, near to Bethlehem:

So let us raise
To him our praise,
Whose love still hovers o'er us,
And sing again.
"Good will to men!"
With heaven's angel chorus.

You may read this beautiful history in the 2nd chapter of Luke. In the early days of Christianity, for the first four hundred years, there was no observance of any day as an anniversary of the birth of Christ. A heathen festival was held about this time of the year in the Roman Empire on account of, what is called, the sun passing its southern solstice, and the commencement of its progress northward, causing an increase in the length of day. It was supposed that by changing the name of that festival, and calling it Christmas—the time of the birth of our Saviour—the people would be pleased, and it might prevent them from such wicked revelling and drunkenness as they had been accustomed to indulge in. If all Christians had abstained from excesses at those times perhaps that would have been the case, but a large part of them continued in the same heathen practices although they called themselves Christians; and there is still much of intemperance in eating and drinking at Christmas time; and men are now but little better than heathens when they do such wickedness.

I hope you will early learn to love the Saviour who lived on earth 1869 years ago, and who now lives in heaven for our salvation. Be temperate in all things, strive to make others happy and good, and you may hope to enjoy a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year when it comes. This is the sincere wish of your friend.

THE EDITOR.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON SCRIPTURE METAPHORS.

Commencing with the letter P.

1. PILLARS. Gal. ii. 9, and Jer. i. 18.
2. PALACE. Applied to the temple of Jerusalem, 1 Chron. xxix. 1; and to the church of God, in Ps. lxxviii. 69; xlviii. 13.
3. PRISON. Of sin, Isa. xli. 7; and of the grave, lili. 8.
4. PRINCE. Isa. ix. 6.

5. PILGRIMS. Heb. xi. 13; 1 Pet. ii. 11.
6. PLANT. Founding a kingdom, Ps. xlv. 2; Jer. xiv. 4; evangelizing a people, 1 Cor. iii. 6; entering into covenant, Ps. xcii. 23.
7. PATHS. God's providence, Ps. xxv. 10; God's precepts, Ps. xvii. 5; actions of good men, Prov. iii. 6; of wicked men, Isa. lix. 7.
8. PEARL. Applied to Christ's salvation, Matt. xlii. 46; truths of the gospel, Matt. vii. 6; and glory of heaven, Rev. xxi. 21.
9. PIT. Share, Ps. vii. 15; sorrow, Ps. xl. 2; grave, Isa. xxxviii. 17.
10. POISON. Rom. iii. 13; James iii. 8.
11. POUR OUT. Of punishment, Ezek. ix. 8; Ps. lxi. 24; blessings, in Mal. iii. 10; and sanctification, Zech. xii. 10.

SCRIPTURE ENIGMA.

No. XXVI.

Who strove the Holy Spirit's work to mar?
Who spurned the needs of strangers from afar?
Who, summoned to a banquet, went not there?
What must all Christians from their Saviour bear?

Let these initials show a sin
Bitter as human heart can feel,
Which clouds the happy glee of life,
And doth its bloom and sweetness steal.

BLIND JOHN NETHERWAY.

CHAPTER XI.

Nothing could be more affecting than the first meeting between blind John and his old master and mistress.

"I don't see your faces, for God has taken my sight; but I have learnt to see mercy plainer than ever I did before I was darkened; beautiful things come into my mind, and oh, master, I can see the light of this evening time—you said it, you knowed it would be so—and it is light."

Mr. Singleton would have kept him with him for the remainder of his days, but John's pet scheme was to go to the asylum and learn basket-making, then he would be able to earn something to help others, if he wanted nothing for himself. "And sure, idleness, when I could help it, would be a sin, and shut me out from His favour!" he said.

Mr. Singleton at his first entrance into the room, after a greeting too heartfelt on both sides for utterance, had said: "We will give our first words to the Lord, John; and they had accordingly offered the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving."

"Don't it seem now as if we hadn't got nothing to ask for?" said the blind man rising from his knees; "not for this life—hasn't he brought us into a wealthy place?"

Mr. Singleton was deeply affected at his thus identify himself with his restored fortunes. "I cannot give you back your sight," he said, sorrowfully.

"Eh master! I'm so used to wanting it, it comes quite natural; besides, you didn't do it, and nobody could have done it without His will; without Him not a sparrow falls, and he has helped me and led me, and taught me and fed me, and I have wanted for nothing."

"As your day your strength has been," said Mr. Singleton, comparing his weak faith with the child-like confidence of his servant.

"The very thing, master—and the Book! what should I ever have done without the Book! Oh, how often have I been in want of some things that would have made me comfortable in the body, I won't deny, and blessed you for teaching me the words of the Book; and in them dark hours they seemed as if they was writ with a sunbeam in my mind, and I may say it has been light w' me from the beginning to the end."

"Sweet is God's mercy!" said Mr. Singleton. "Sweet! it is honey and the honeycomb—I mean the promise," said John.

"And have you never doubted?" asked Mr. Singleton.

"I don't think I have; what could I have done if I had doubted him? No, he gave me the victory over every doubt."

"Then you d'd doubt sometimes?" said his master.

"Well, this way: when I used to speak out o' the abundance o' my heart, and say that poor as I was, I was precious in his eyes, and he would never hold back from me any good thing, then folks would flout me, and say what a simple fellow I must be to think the Lord would mind my ways and wants, and even put his angels to watch over me; and for all I never went to give in, but stood to it; it were no more nor the word, and I could give chapter and verse for it. When I got alone, sometimes the thought would come—Is it vain-glory, John? are you what you seem to be? are you deceiving yourself?—then searchins of heart were keen upon times."

"And how did you get over them?" asked Mr. Singleton.

"Why, I was puzzled at first, and put about wonderful; but then I thought, this won't do—what is the promise? there's no fault in that being God's word. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Well, I had confessed my sins and repented of 'em, for I hated 'em, and turned my back on 'em; so there was no doubt about that. Then I said to myself that I was a pardoned sinner, and it's all the Bible through that the pardoned sinner is joint heir with the Son, and so he can never want for nothing."

"But that was reasoning, John; had you no witness in your heart?" said Mr. Singleton.

"Why that was in my heart, master," said John. "I couldn't hate sin without my heart being given to the Holy One." And here he

went on quoting in the most logical way portions from the sacred text to prove that he was right, ending with "So I came out of the trial, and I was more ashamed that I had been doubtful of Him than I ever had been that I seemed proud of myself; and by his good help I never doubted no more."

It was with heartfelt joy that Mr. and Mrs. Singleton, received a confession from their son of what Mrs. Haffenden had watched the progress of with delight, namely his attachment to Dora Farquhar, which he felt sure was returned. "If ever marriage was made in heaven surely this is," said Mrs. Haffenden. "They are for each other, and there is nothing in heart, or mind, or circumstances, to separate them."

Mr. Singleton would not allow Walter to resign, as he wished, the pretty fortune that arose from the bond, with its interest, to his sister. He settled on her a portion which enabled the young architect to pursue his art with advantages which lightened the labour, and heightened his enjoyment o' it.

There were also settlements to be made out, for Miss Dodd. And Mr. Dimond insisted on making them. He said a great part of his professional career had been passed in making people uncomfortable, since every case he had gained had necessarily had a losing party: therefore, to have to manage two affairs in which there would be no dissentient voice, but everybody was trying to please all the rest, and voted him thanks for his work, was so very pleasant that he wouldn't "pick the crow" with Mr. Haffenden this time, but let it fly out of sight and out of mind, for having brought him to so much happiness in Clayton.

But all this did not happen immediately. Meantime, perhaps, Isaac Medley believed the same with Mrs. Haffenden, and made sure that a very desirable marriage had come down for him, and that Peggy Diggs would at once see the excellence of the arrangement. So he put on his Sunday clothes, and walked up to Clayton Old Banks, finding she was not likely to return to her cottage soon, and asked to speak with her. Peggy answered the summons, and went to him in the servants' hall.

He looked a little at a loss for a beginning, but cleared his throat and said: "he hoped as floods was over for this year."

Peggy wondered what should bring him there to interrupt her in her work to tell her that; but she hoped the same, please God.

"I was a thinkin', Peggy, what a nice bit o' luck you a' had," he proceeded to say, clumsily letting the cat out of the bag as a beginning.

"I hold, with blind John, there's no such thing for Christians as luck," said Peggy.

"No, but it's just a way o' speakin'." You'll be wantin' somebody to take care o' n', I reckon, like I want somebody to take care o' me an' my shop," said Isaac, waxing bold as he advanced in his subject.

"Master'll put it out for me," said Peggy, coldly, for she did not admire the style of her wooer, and even thought he was, perhaps, rather the worse for an extra portion of beer.

"Ye'd best let me, Peggy," said Isaac, sidling up to her with a very expressive look. "You shall ha' your own way, an' I'll carry water when ye wash, an' there's clothes enough o' poor Debby's to last you your life, you'll never ha' no need to buy, and—"

Peggy put her arm out to keep him from coming too close. He had followed her, as she had receded, to a corner of the hall, and she stopped his enumeration of the privileges destined for his wife by saying—

"I think you must ha' been drinkin', Mr. Medley, to come and talk such rubbish to me. I can buy my own clothes, and carry my own water, and do what I like now; and what needs me to come to you for such like?"

Isaac was daunted. All his debate had been whether it would be wise in him to propose. That he should be rejected, never entered into his calculations.

"You've no need to look so shy at me," he said. "I thought you'd a' been glad of such a settlin'. There's a clear hundred I got in the bank, an' makin' more by the shop besides."

"Mr. Medley, if ever I marry it won't be money, nor a shop, nor any worldly goods but a man that knows the way to heaven better than I do, and can gi' me a lift in that direction. So if you ha' got no more business with me than that, I wish you good night; I can't leave my work."

Isaac was scared, confounded. He muttered something about being forced to be a "regular man in his dooty, bein as he was clerk, and at church twice every Sunday of his life."

"Church! ay, an' the sight of you there would be enough for me, if you had two hundred pound for one," said Peggy.

Isaac looked very blank. He knew in his conscience that he went to sleep as soon as his 'dooties' permitted very Sunday. "I didn't expect you'd be so short w' me," he said, in an offended tone, and picking up his hat. "I came out o' civility."

"It's best to be plain, Mr. Medley. I don't think your 'civility' was for me, but my bit o' money."

"Then you thinks as we'd best bide as we be?" he asked.

"Ay, I do," said Peggy.

"Very good," said Isaac. "Then here's wishin' o' you a good night," and he departed, more offended than pained, and more astonished than

DEXTERITY OF THIEVES.

I sat down upon a small table near the centre of the room, with men and lads before, around, and behind me; and by way of starting conversation, after asking my old friend Tom if his

ankles were any better after his rest from tread-wheel exercise, I made a remark about the picking of pockets, which was the source of some amusement at my expense before I went away. "I can't help thinking," I said, "that most of the men who get their pockets picked must be either drunk or very slow-witted. I can understand a woman's pocket being picked without her knowing it, but not a man's." "When they aren't drunk, they're flats in a general way," said a bullet-headed lad, who strongly reminded me of Mr. Dickens's "Noah Claypole," the hero of the "kinchin lay." "So I should think; a thief should be welcome to everything except a pocket-handkerchief that he could get from me without my knowing it." Then followed a long conversation, which I shall report hereafter. As I rose to go, one of the young lads who had been sitting near me advanced with a tray in his hand. "I think you have forgotten something, sir." Upon the tray were spread my watch, which he had then unfastened at the snap without damaging the chain, and the end of the chain re-inserted in my waistcoat pocket; also my purse, containing eight or nine shillings, a gold pencil-case, a card-case, a cigar-case, and a pocket-handkerchief. "Why, you snakes," said I, laughing heartily, "which mother's son of you has been clever enough to do this?" "Among the Thieves," by Arthur Mursell, in "Cassell's Magazine."

A GUESS.

"I have had no falling out with the Lord, and guess all will be well," was the language of a dying man in the late summer time, who had lived many years between two sanctuaries, whose bells, calling to public worship, had been unregarded. He had lived towards his fellowmen a moral life, but had no family altar, no Bible read by him. And when the servant of God stood by his bedside, pointing him to eternity and his Saviour King, the only response was, "I have had no falling out with the Lord, and guess all will be right."

What awful insensibility had stolen gradually upon his heart! A life of utter forgetfulness of God and contempt of His claims and ordinances closed with a guess that all would be well—that Jehovah would be as indifferent as he had been to His love and atonement, and means of grace bought with the blood of Calvary.

How blinding is sin! Impenitence gradually but surely hardens the heart and darkens the soul of man. Unpardoned transgression is like some poisons, the precursor of those fatal finished work is insensibility and loss of sight.

No unsaved sinner can tell when this moral malady he cherishes will reach that rock-like hardness and night of the soul which death will not soften or illumine, excepting with the flashes of a near retribution.—Ex.

KISSING THE BABY.

It was once the lot of the writer to dwell in the white tents of Camp Harrison, in Georgia—in that lower part of the state where families are always far between, and much more so in war times. For long weeks we had not seen a woman or a child. At last, the railroad through the camp was repaired, and in the first train there was a lady with a wide-awake, kicking baby. Some hundreds of rough soldiers were around the cars, and Captain Story, of the Fifty-Seventh Infantry, was the biggest and roughest among them, if we judge of the tree by its bark. The lady, with the baby in her arms, was looking from a window, and he took off his hat and said, "Madam, I will give you five dollars if you will let me kiss that baby." One look at his bearded face told her that there was nothing bad in it, and, saying with a pleased laugh, "I do not charge anything for kissing my baby," it was handed over. The little one was not afraid, and the bushy whiskers, an eighth of an ell long, were just the playhouse it had been looking for. More than one kiss did the captain get from the little red lips, and there was energy in the hug of the little arms. Then other voices said, "Pass him over here, Cap.," and before the train was ready to move, half a hundred men had kissed the baby. It was on its best behaviour, and kicked, and crowded, and tugged at whiskers, as only a happy baby can. It was an event of the campaign; and one giant of a mountaineer as he strode past us with tread like a mammoth, but with tear-dimmed eyes and quivering lips, said, "By George, it makes me feel and act like a fool; but I've got one just like it at home."—Appleton's Journal.

A STUDY OF EGYPTIAN BRICKS.

Professor Ungor, the Viennese botanist and palaeontologist, has recently published some remarks on the bricks of the ancient Egyptians, especially those of the pyramid of Dushour, which was built about three thousand four hundred years before our era. One of them being examined through the microscope by the professor, he discovered that the mud of the Nile, out of which it was made, contained not only a quantity of animal and vegetable matter, but also fragments of many manufactured substance, whence we may conclude that Egypt must have enjoyed a high degree of civilization upwards of five thousand years ago. Professor Ungor has been enabled, by the aid of the microscope, to discover in these bricks a vast number of plants which at that time grew in Egypt. The chopped straw clearly discernible in the body of the bricks, confirms the description of the manner of making the latter, such as we find in Herodotus and in the Book of Exodus.