

Religious Intelligencer.

BIBLE SOCIETY, MISSIONARY, AND SABBATH SCHOOL ADVOCATE.

McLEOD, Editor.

That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ—PETER.

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Religious Selections.

Warning to Sabbath-breakers.

As I was walking down a street, on my way to church, I saw a party of young people going on before me, whose voluble conversation I accented with the sanctity of the Sabbath; and just as I was passing them I heard a young man say, "Indeed, I think we shall do wrong if we go to church on the Sabbath." "There can be no harm," replied another, "in taking an excursion on the Sabbath; especially as we have resolved to go to church in the evening." "I must return," said a female voice, "my conscience condemns me. What will father say, if he hears of it?" By this time they had reached a river, and one of the party was busily engaged with a waterman, while the rest stood close about for the space of five minutes, when they all moved forward towards the water.

I watched them going down the stairs, and I perceived an air of peculiar melancholy in the countenance of the female who had objected to the excursion, but whose business gave way to the ardor of importunity. Two of the gentlemen stepped into the boat, and the females were handed in, one after another; but still I could perceive great reluctance on the part of the one who had previously objected; till at length, being surrounded by all the gentlemen of the party, she yielded, and the boat was pushed off.

It was a fine morning, though rather cold; the tide was running in at its usual rate; many were gazing on them, like myself, when a naval officer standing near to me called to them and said, "A pleasant voyage to you." One of the gentlemen suddenly rose to return the compliment; but, from some cause which I could not perceive, he unfortunately fell into the water. This disaster threw the whole party into the utmost consternation; and each one, instead of remaining his seat, rushed to the side of the boat over which their companion had fallen, and all were instantaneously plunged into the deep. The shriek which the multitude of spectators gave, when they beheld his calamity, exceeded any noise I had ever heard; several females fainted; boats immediately put off; and in a few minutes I saw the gratification of seeing the waterman rescuing one, and another, and another, from their premature grave. Having picked up all that they could find, the different boats rowed to shore, where some medical gentlemen were waiting; but when the party met together, no language can describe the horror which was depicted on every countenance when they found that two were still missing.

Where's my sister? said the voice which said, only a few minutes before, "There can be no harm in taking an excursion on the water; especially as we have resolved to go to church in the evening." Where's my sister? said a female who had appeared the most gay and sprightly when I first saw her.

At length, two boats which had gone a considerable distance on the river, were seen returning; and on being asked if they had picked up any, they replied, "Yes, two." This reply electrified the whole party; they embraced each other with the tenderest emotions; they wept for joy, and so did many others who stood around them. "Here's a gentleman," said the waterman, as he was coming up to the foot of the stairs, "but I believe he's dead." "Where's the lady?" said her brother; "is she safe?" "She is in the other boat, sir." "Is she alive?" "She is spoken for." "No, sir, she has not spoken, I believe." "Is she dead?" "O tell me!" "I believe she is, sir."

The bodies were immediately removed from the boats to a house in the vicinity, and every effort was employed to restore animation; and some faint hopes were entertained by the medical gentlemen that they should succeed. In the space of little more than ten minutes they announced the joyful news that the gentleman began to breathe, but they made no allusion to the lady. Her brother sat motionless, absorbed in the deepest melancholy, till the actual decease of his sister was announced, when he started up, and became almost frantic with grief; and though his companions tried to comfort him, yet he refused to hear the words of consolation. "O my sister, would to God I had died for thee!" They were all overwhelmed in trouble, and knew not what to do. "Who will bear the heavy tidings to our father?" said the brother, who paced backwards and forwards the room, like a maniac, broke loose from the cell of misery; "O who will bear the heavy tidings to our father?" He paused—a deathlike silence pervaded the whole apartment; he again burst forth, in the agonies of despair. "I forced her to go against the dictates of her conscience—I am her murderer—I ought to have perished, and not my sister. Who will bear the heavy tidings to our father?" "I will," said a gentleman who had been accompanying in his attention to the sufferers. "Do you know him, sir?" "Yes, I know him." "O, how can I ever appear in his presence? I noticed the best of children to an act of disobedience which has destroyed her!"

How the old man received the intelligence, or what moral effect resulted from the disaster, I never heard; but it may furnish me with a few reflections, which I wish to press upon the attention of my readers. As the Sabbath is instituted for the purpose of promoting your

moral improvement and felicity, never devote its sacred hours to the recreations of pleasure. He who has commanded you to keep it holy, will not suffer you to profane it with impunity. He may not bring down upon you the awful expressions of his displeasure while you are in the act of setting at open defiance his authority, but there is a day approaching when you must stand before him. And can you anticipate the solemnities of that day, while going on in a course of sin, but with the most fearful apprehensions? You may, like many others, suppose that that day is very far off; but you may be undeceived by a sudden visitation of Providence, and in a moment be removed from among your gay companions, to appear in his presence. If you should, with what terror-struck amazement will you look on the awful scene around you; with what agonizing despair will you listen to the final sentence—Depart!

Resist the first temptation to evil, or your ruin may be the inevitable consequence. I do not think we shall do wrong—my conscience condemns me—I must return, said the unfortunate female, when she got near the edge of the water, but having yielded to the first temptation, she was induced to overcome all her scruples—and within the space of half an hour from that time she entered the eternal world. Had she refused when her brother solicited her to leave her father's house, she had still lived to bless and comfort him in his old age; but by complying, she lost her strength to withstand temptation, and then her life. What a warning!

And is this the only one which the history of crime has given us? Alas, no. Have not many, who have ended their days on the gallows, traced up their ruin to their profanation of the Sabbath? This is the day in which the foul spirits are abroad, enticing the young and the thoughtless to evil; and if you wish to avoid the misery and degradation in which others have been involved, devote its sacred hours to the purpose for which they were appointed. Attend some place of worship, where the pure evangelical truth of the Scriptures is preached with pathos and power; and attend regularly. He who regularly attends a place of worship, who engages with reverence in its devotional exercises, and receives the truth which is preached, under a deep conviction of its excellence and importance, enjoys a high mental feast on the Sabbath, and becomes imperceptibly fortified to resist the fascinating seduction of the world; while he who spends the consecrated hours in the society of the impure, amidst scenes of gayety and dissipation, becomes an easy prey to the worst of temptations—often retires to rest reproaching himself for his folly and impiety; and is gradually led on, from one crime to another, till "iniquity proves his ruin."—Am. Tract.

The Apostate's End.

Soon after my settlement in town of N. I was called to a sick-chamber, where a man of sixty years was apparently near his end. His short and quick breathing, and his frequent groans, indicated an acute disease, accompanied with sharp pain; and the physician informed me that he was dying under a severe attack of pleurisy. The sick man was at first reluctant to converse with me, but his deep sighs soon betrayed that remorse was preying upon his spirit, and that in his intense mental agony, bodily suffering was almost unheeded. Finding it difficult to learn anything definite of his past life or his present feelings from his constrained and ungracious answers, I read a portion of the Scriptures, talked plainly with him on the probability of his speedy death, and after prayer, left with a promise of repeating the visit on the next day.

In the meantime, I learned from a neighbor his sad history. He had once been an active member of the church of which I was pastor, and for a year after his professed conversion had been noted for his zeal in the meetings of the church, and for his faithful warnings to unconverted friends. But after a brief season of devotedness, he had grown lukewarm in feeling, had neglected the means of grace, fallen into bad company, and at last been excluded from the church for intemperance and profanity. For twenty years he had been an apostate, running into sin, profaning the Sabbath, and mocking at all sacred things.

On my entrance into the room the second day, he stretched out his hand eagerly, and said, in sharp, hurried words "Pray for me! O pray for me! I am a miserable sinner, who have crucified the Son of God afresh, and am fit only for hell." The flood-gates of feeling were now open, and he detailed to me by snatches, his long course of guilt and wretchedness. He had plunged into many excesses, to drown the reproaches of conscience. He had associated only with the ungodly to escape bitter memories of the past. He had not dared to enter the house of God, lest the poignancy of remorse should be beyond control. After unbending his troubled conscience, he shrieked convulsively. "Is there any hope for such a vile sinner? Can such a guilty apostate find mercy?" "Return unto me, and I will return unto you," repeated precious promises from the Bible. "I will heal your back sliding;" "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;"—but all in vain; he found no comfort, and tossing wildly on the bed, and throwing his arms about, as if in despair, he repeated, with faithful emphasis, the words, "Lost! lost! for ever lost!" I left

him with the fear that I might never see him again, and that his own gloomy apprehensions would be soon realized; but calling, on the next day, found him easier in body and calmer in mind.

He said he felt he was too great a sinner to be pardoned on his death-bed, and he had been praying all night that God would spare his life only a little longer, that he might confess his sins to the church and the world, and lead a reformed and Christian life. The intensity of his feelings seemed to be absorbed in the hope of recovery and repentance; and he protested often, solemnly, that if a few years of his life were only granted him, the remnant of his days should be faithfully consecrated to the service of Christ.

Contrary to the expectations of physicians and friends, he did recover, and in a few weeks was able to go out from the sick-room, and attend to his accustomed duties. I watched his progress with great solicitude, finding it more and more difficult to engage him in religious conversation. As his strength returned, his spiritual solicitude abated in inverse ratio. When he was able to go out of doors, I reminded him of his remorse on his sick-bed, and his solemn vows for the future, and expressed the hope that we should see him a regular attendant upon the services of the Sabbath and the week. He listened in silence to my admonitions, evaded all my questionings, and it was too apparent that his repentance was only like the morning cloud and the early dew. I saw him once only in the sanctuary, as listless and unconcerned as the most callous sinner; and soon learned, to my sorrow, that he was gradually relapsing into his old habits, and ridiculing the terror experienced in the sick-room. I felt sadly that all hope in his case was over, and that he was in imminent peril of God's swift judgment.

About three months after his recovery, I was started early one morning by a call from his brother, requesting me to attend his funeral; and on further inquiry, I learned that on the previous day he had walked from the house in apparent health, and failing to return at the appointed time, anxiety was felt and a search commenced, and he was found not far from the house, lying lifeless against a stone wall. He had been struck down by a sudden paralytic shock, and died without consciousness and without repentance. Never before or since have I felt so profoundly the force of the passage, "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

One Way of Doing Good.

I went one day into a country store to make some purchases. Although a large and flourishing establishment, it had nothing remarkable to distinguish it from other stores in the village. It contained the usual complement of dry goods, groceries, and farming utensils, with a large display of white crockery, rolls of carpeting, both rag and ingrain, gay coloured oil cloth, and a variety of brooms and brushes of all sorts and sizes. Farmers and their wives were engaged in trading, and one young housekeeper seemed to be purchasing a new carpet for her parlour. All, both seller and buyer, seemed intent on securing a profitable bargain. As I stood looking upon the scene, and thinking how little the apparent difference between the christian and the worldly in the ordinary business transactions of life, and wondering whether it must be so, a bright spot revealed itself to my eye. A little girl entered and made a trifling purchase, and as she was leaving, the storekeeper reached down from a pile of newspapers, before unperceived, a "Child's Paper," and handed it to her. I then noticed that on one small shelf, such a one as is often used for the display of ribbons, there was a row of little Testaments, and, if I remember right, some small books published by the Tract Society, and on a shelf beneath a pile of "Child's Papers." "Do you sell those books or papers?" I inquired. "Oh, no," said the merchant smiling, "I buy them to give away. The children are very fond of reading them, and sometimes come in to borrow after them." I said no more on the subject, for I had heard enough to fill my thoughts. Here, in the midst of the hurry and bustle of business, of the strife after gain, and anxious asking of the question—"What shall I eat, what shall I drink, and where-withal shall I be clothed?"—shone out that little shelf with its heavenly influences, reminding each child, and even grown persons, of the never dying soul, and of the immortal mind, whose yearnings after happiness can never be satisfied with the vain things that perish with the using. A halo of light seemed to hover over the little shelf with its unpretending contents, which far outshone the gay shawls and materials for dresses which were hanging all about in the most conspicuous manner. My eye ran on to future years, when the little ones who receive from that christian merchant's hand the Book of Life, or the paper or volume filled with pious instruction, shall have taken our place upon the stage of action; when the valuable stock of goods which now seem so all important, shall, with the frail bodies of the owners, be turned to worthless dust. Then will the influence of that "bread upon the waters" be seen and felt; the lessons of religion, virtue and honesty, inculcated in the hearts of those village children, by the means of the books and papers here given, will spring up in a harvest of glorious light and joy, blessing thousands yet unborn. Yes all this may

arise from the contents of that little shelf, now unnoticed amid the display of worldly vanities. This bright spot seemed to mark that country store as the abode of religion, as a place dispensing eternal life, with true missionary zeal. It seemed as if the Saviour of sinners must have whispered in that merchant's ear, as he walked the great thoroughfare in purchasing his stock of goods, "Lovest thou me?" And as he again and again repeated the assurance of his love, must have added "Feed my Lambs."

And yet all these blessings which we foresee with the eye of faith, will arise from the purchase of a few dollars' worth of books and papers; a small sum which many a country merchant, professing godliness, will spend in sight seeing, in cigars, and unnecessary pleasures of the table, in the course of a few days' sojourn in the great city. Why cannot such pious merchant have a bright spot among the shelves of his salesroom, which will dispense light and blessing to the souls of the rising generation. Let no one say "I am poor; let the merchant princes whose fame fills the land, sustain the benevolent objects of the day. I can do little more than live now. If ever I make a fortune, it shall be freely dispensed." Few are too poor to give up one small shelf to the work of the Lord. If each merchant, when he visits the city, would set the seal of godliness on his new invoice of goods, and invoke divine blessing on his gain, by adding a few dollars' worth of tracts and "Child's Papers" to his other purchases, what missionaries they would become. They would spread the news of salvation from north to south, and from east to west, and hasten on the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Thus they may be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, and in the end receive the plaudit, "Well done good and faithful servant."—AUNT KATE.

—N. Y. Observer.

I Must Attend the Prayer Meeting.

1. Because the greatest and best of all my friends has appointed it as the place where I may have an interview with Him.

2. Because I cannot think of a better place—a place of greater honor, profit and safety for the time, than that prayer meeting.

3. Because my attendance on that prayer meeting was included in the vows I took upon me when I pledged myself to be a servant of God.

4. Because my absence will be noticed with sadness by the faithful saints, and may greatly dishearten them.

5. Because my unnecessary absence will comfort Satan in the prospect of success in his next assault upon me.

6. Because impenitent sinners and backsliders will comfort themselves over my neglect, and follow my bad example.

7. Because my faithful attendance is one of the links in that chain of influences which I need to bind me fast and firm to my divine Lord.

Therefore I must go to the prayer meeting. I wish to go. I shall be happy in going. I cannot be denied. No matter who fails, it must not, it shall not be me.—N. Y. Obs.

A Thrilling Incident.

Rev. Mr. Jacobs, the Ojibwa Missionary now in this city, related a thrilling incident at the Bowdoin street Vestry, on Friday afternoon. There were two brothers, he said, among the Ojibwas, who were converts. One of them having become a convert to Christianity, renounced the practice of his art. This gave great offence to the other brother, and he declared that he would tomahawk the Missionary the first time that he saw him. A threat of this sort by an Indian is not a vain thing. The conjurer came into a meeting where the Missionary was to officiate, with his tomahawk in his hand. One of the Indians came to Mr. Jacobs, in the midst of his sermon, and requested him to stop, for the man had come into the meeting to kill him; but he still kept on. The conjurer started from his seat to carry into effect his murderous design. Mr. Jacobs requested him to stop until he had finished his sermon, saying that after that he should be ready. He closed his eyes, expecting every moment to feel the stroke of the tomahawk. After a few minutes he heard a cry of distress; and opening his eyes, he saw that it was the conjurer prostrate, and crying for mercy. In about two days, he obtained peace in believing. He is now a preacher of the faith which he once endeavored to destroy.—Boston Rec.

Deserting the Church when in Trouble.

Churches, like individual Christians, have their seasons of prosperity followed by adversity; their hours of joy followed by seasons of sadness. These alterations in their conditions are sent upon them as trials of the faith and patience of those who compose them.—Many who eagerly rush into a church, when she is on a tide of celestial prosperity, when the popular current is in her favor, as soon as that tide changes turn their backs upon her, and are ready to neglect her ordinances and refuse to labor for her advancement. This was the kind of treatment which her divine Lord and Head received when he was upon earth, and we should not be disappointed when she meets a similar fate. At one time the crowd was ready to take him by force and crown him King, and a few days afterwards the same crowd cried, away with him, crucify him; it is not fit that he should live upon the earth. The church must not expect to be above her Lord and Master. If false and half-hearted friends deserted him in the hour of trial, they will desert her too. If they refused to stand by and support him at the time when he most needed help, the same class will treat her as they did him. It is far otherwise with her true friends. The fact that others are deserting her only makes them cling the closer to her. Her unpopularity so far from alienating their affections, only makes her dearer in their eyes. This is true of all real affection the world over. It is only a friend in need who is a friend indeed. Those who desert us when we most need their help we never count among our real friends. The pious Jew, when he sat by the rivers of Babylon, wept when he remembered Zion, and his sorrow was only the deeper because she was then in ruins. He could not sing a song of joy whilst he was in a strange land away from the house of God and his ordinances.—True piety operates in the same way in the hearts of God's people all over the world and in every age.

softly, cautiously, she steals the living child, and leaves her own cold dead infant in its place. They carry the dispute to Solomon, claiming the living, and each repudiating the dead. With a skill that earned for him his world-wide fame, the wise monarch summons nature as a witness. Horrible to hear, he orders the living child to be divided. The sword is raised, and another moment, and interference comes too late. One stands, calm, firm, collected, looking on with a cruel eye. With a bound that carries her to his feet, and a shriek that rings wild and high over all the palace, the other—the true mother—claps her hand in agony, and cries, "Oh, my lord, give her the living child, in no wise, slay it." That is prayer. That cry, that spring, that look of anguish,—all these proclaim the mother,—how different from the cold, callous, unimpressionable frame in which, alas, the best too often present themselves at the throne of grace, as if, when we are seeking pardon, it were a matter of supreme indifference, whether our prayer were or were not answered. Oh, how should we pray that God would help us to pray and touch our icy lips with a live coal from off his altar.—Dr. Guthrie.

Dead Churches.

We do not know in what paper the following first appeared, but it describes a state of things which may have its counterpart in other churches. It becomes such Christians to enquire whether they are not standing in the way of a blessing, and to awake out of sleep.

"Several months ago, in conversation with an intimate friend, who was at that time pastor of a large and prosperous society, I inquired whether there was any special religious interest among his people. He hesitated a moment, and then replied, 'We have a very strange state of things among us at the present time.' He then proceeded to state that for several weeks there had been an unusual attendance at the meetings on the Sabbath; that the attention to the Word preached was most marked and solemn; that many seemed to be willing and anxious to converse upon religious subjects, and that upon the whole he regarded it as a time of peculiar interest and solemnity. He related some incidents illustrative of the state of religious feeling among the people, and spoke very freely of his own anxiety and labors. But, said he, 'What I referred to, as being strange among us, is this: My church, generally, are as inactive and indifferent at the present time, as if they were dead. They seem to have no interest, no concern. They do not oppose, nor do they help. In my labors and anxieties I have far more sympathy shown me from members of the congregation who are not pious, than from members of the church. They seem more solicitous about my health, and more desirous to have a revival of religion than the church do.' I thought this is 'a strange state of things' surely. And it seemed the more so to me from the fact, that I knew his to be commonly, a truly working church, sympathizing and co-operating most heartily with the pastor. It was something new for them to be in such a state. But thus it was; and no effort of the pastor could arouse them. I have since learned of other similar cases; they are however strange, and I hardly know how to account for them. We often meet with instances where Christians are inclined to 'sleep as do others,' but in these instances they seem to sleep as others do, not, and the Master coming suddenly, does not find them watching. What a fearful responsibility rests upon a church in such a state! A pastor anxious to save sinners, and sinners anxious to be saved, and yet a church inactive and sleeping!"

True Prayer.

Would you see true prayer—would you know what prayer really is? Step into this Egyptian palace where Benjamin stands bound, his amazing and trembling brothers grouped around the lad, Judah advances. He bows himself before Joseph. His heart is full. His lip trembles. The tears glisten in his manly eye; and now, with tenderness thrilling in every tone, he pours forth this plea of surpassing pathos:—"Oh, my Lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: my lord asked his servants; saying have ye a father or a brother? And we said unto my Lord, We have a father an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead; and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him." Thus on he goes; and every sentence goes like a knife into Joseph's heart. And then he closes and crowns his appeal with this most brave and generous proposal: Now, therefore I pray thee, let thy servant abide of the lad, as bondsmanna to my lord; for how shall I go to my father, and the lad not with me, lest I see the evil that shall come upon my father." Joseph's heart, which had been swelling with emotion is now ready to burst. He can stand it no longer; nor any wonder. That is prayer; and could we bring such earnestness to Jesus, oh, how could his tender, much more tender heart, melt like wax before it. Did we approach him with the fervor that glowed and burned in Judah's speech; did we plead for our own souls or those of others, with such tears, in such tones, as Judah's when he pleaded for Benjamin, how would a divine brother discover himself to us? Now turn from that Egyptian to this Hebrew palace. There also is prayer. Two women stand before King Solomon. In the darkness of the night, one has crept, with noiseless step, to her neighbour's bed, and while the mother slept and the babe slept in her bosom,

There lived a man in Samaria, a good man whose name was Elisha. He was a prophet, that is, one who tells beforehand what will happen.

Elisha had a servant whose name was Gehazi. We should think he would be a good man, as he lived with such a good master; but it does not always make people good to live with those that are so.

One day there came to Elisha a rich, great man from Syria, whose name was Naaman.—He was sick with a dreadful disease called leprosy. When people have this disease, the hair grows white and stiff, the voice is very harsh, and the body is covered with scales and sores. Naaman had heard that God helped Elisha to heal the sick and do other wonderful things, and he would cure him.

When Elisha heard he had come with horses and chariots, he did not go out to meet him, as Naaman thought he would, but sent a man to tell him to go and wash in the river Jordan seven times.

Naaman was very proud, and he did not like it that Elisha did not notice him more; and at first he was angry and said he would not go, for he would believe he could be cured so easily, and he thought he could as well wash in the rivers of his country. But those that were with him persuaded him to do as Elisha said, and he did so, and was made quite well.

Then how glad he was, and how thankful too. He went back to the house where Elisha lived, and told him that now he knew the God he worshipped was the true God; and to show his gratitude, he wanted to give Elisha money and fine clothing, but Elisha did not want these; he knew it was God who had healed him, and he wanted Naaman should give God all the glory. So he would not take his present, but blessed him and sent him away.

But Gehazi the servant heard it all; and he thought, what a pity that my master did not take anything, when Naaman is such a rich man, and could spare it as well as not. Then he began to wish he had some of the money, and thus he broke the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." Next he resolved to do a very wicked thing. He ran after Naaman, who had got a long way off. When Naaman saw him coming, he stopped, and got out of his chariot and waited for him.—When he came up and asked him, "Is all well?" and Gehazi said, "all is well," and then added two lies. "My master sent me, and told me to say that thy young men, sons of the prophets, have come, and he wishes you to give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.

Now Elisha had not sent him, neither had two young men come, but Naaman believed him, and was very glad to give him all he asked, and more too. He made him take twice as much money as he asked for, and the fine clothes; and then he would not let Gehazi carry them, but sent two servants with them, because they were heavy, and wanted to show his respect for Elisha. But Gehazi did not wish Elisha to know anything about it, so he did not let them go all the way, but just before they got to Elisha's house he took the things himself, and sent back the servants.—After he had hid the money and clothes in a safe place, he went into the house as usual.

How frightened he must have been when Elisha said, "Gehazi, where have you been? What could he say? Alas, he had told two lies, and he thought he must tell another, so he said, "I have not been any where."

But Elisha knew better, for God had told him all about it, and he said, "Went not my heart with thee? Now the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee and thy seed forever."—And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

Was not this very dreadful to be a leper all his life? and his children were to be lepers too. And this was the punishment for his sin in this life only. How angry God must be with those that tell lies, to punish them in such a dreadful way.

Perhaps some one may say that God does not punish liars in such a way now. No he does not just in that way, but he does punish them in this life; and unless they repent and are forgiven through Christ, he will punish them in another world. He is the same God that he was in his words, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth

A Man who Told Three Lies.

There lived a man in Samaria, a good man whose name was Elisha. He was a prophet, that is, one who tells beforehand what will happen.

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Then how glad he was, and how thankful too. He went back to the house where Elisha lived, and told him that now he knew the God he worshipped was the true God; and to show his gratitude, he wanted to give Elisha money and fine clothing, but Elisha did not want these; he knew it was God who had healed him, and he wanted Naaman should give God all the glory. So he would not take his present, but blessed him and sent him away.

But Gehazi the servant heard it all; and he thought, what a pity that my master did not take anything, when Naaman is such a rich man, and could spare it as well as not. Then he began to wish he had some of the money, and thus he broke the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet." Next he resolved to do a very wicked thing. He ran after Naaman, who had got a long way off. When Naaman saw him coming, he stopped, and got out of his chariot and waited for him.—When he came up and asked him, "Is all well?" and Gehazi said, "all is well," and then added two lies. "My master sent me, and told me to say that thy young men, sons of the prophets, have come, and he wishes you to give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.

Now Elisha had not sent him, neither had two young men come, but Naaman believed him, and was very glad to give him all he asked, and more too. He made him take twice as much money as he asked for, and the fine clothes; and then he would not let Gehazi carry them, but sent two servants with them, because they were heavy, and wanted to show his respect for Elisha. But Gehazi did not wish Elisha to know anything about it, so he did not let them go all the way, but just before they got to Elisha's house he took the things himself, and sent back the servants.—After he had hid the money and clothes in a safe place, he went into the house as usual.

How frightened he must have been when Elisha said, "Gehazi, where have you been? What could he say? Alas, he had told two lies, and he thought he must tell another, so he said, "I have not been any where."

But Elisha knew better, for God had told him all about it, and he said, "Went not my heart with thee? Now the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee and thy seed forever."—And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

Was not this very dreadful to be a leper all his life? and his children were to be lepers too. And this was the punishment for his sin in this life only. How angry God must be with those that tell lies, to punish them in such a dreadful way.

Perhaps some one may say that God does not punish liars in such a way now. No he does not just in that way, but he does punish them in this life; and unless they repent and are forgiven through Christ, he will punish them in another world. He is the same God that he was in his words, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth