

esting. At every meal this little woman, with her low vivacious voice and ready wit, shunted the conversation on to new tracks of thought. One day it was a rare plant that she brought in; the next, some legend told her by the fishermen; sometimes it was a stirring incident of local history; again a question of politics or of religion.

"These people," she said to me, when I came to know her, "mean well. They have no wish to be wicked, but their minds are like stagnant pools. They grow impure and foul simply from inaction. All they need is some wholesome subject of thought to keep them clean."

"I have always remembered the lesson she taught me."

There is scarcely a day, even in the life of a school-boy or girl, when this lesson is not useful. Conversation is always too ready to become malicious or vulgar, especially among idle people. It is rarely expedient or wise openly to rebuke our companions, even if we are free from their faults. Censure usually rouses opposition and ill-nature.

But when our own minds or those of others become turbid and foul, let us deal with them as with a chamber full of darkness and impure odors—open a window. The brain is cleansed by new and vigorous thoughts, just as the air of a closed room is cleansed by the sunlight and motion.—*Ex.*

A LITTLE CONQUEROR.

BY "MRS. TROTTER."

"It's no use talking," said Alice Peters, "you can't make them honest, and you can't make them truthful. I've seen it tried over and over again, and they are sure to disappoint you in the end. I want to be useful, and I want to do the right thing, and though I don't imagine that teaching in the 'colored school' on the hill is very enjoyable, I would do it willingly if I had ever heard of a single bit of good that had ever been accomplished there. Of course, the colored people didn't have a chance of improvement for generations, but 'what is bred in the bone, can't be got rid of in the flesh,' and how you are going to change their natures, and get the deceit out of their bones which was bred there during slavery, is more than I can see."

"Well," laughed Miss Janet Smith, "I used to think just as you do now. You know I am what people call 'dreadful set' in my way, not that I mean to be; I truly want to see things the right way, and do the right thing as you do, but when I have thought a thing over and made up my mind, it is very hard for me to convince myself that after all I may have made a mistake. I always insisted that the colored people were the most unreliable creatures on the face of the earth; that there wasn't an honest or a truthful one to be found, and that time and money spent in trying to educate or improve them was that much thrown away. We've had some experiences with them which were not exactly calculated to increase my confidence in them. A man that helped in haying time used to come afterwards and help himself to my pet chickens; and another, with the help of his boys, made away with all the finest pears in the garden, and so on, till I made up my mind that the only good colored individual was to be found in the class with the 'only good Indian.' There was a Sunday-school for colored children on the hill behind the town, in which some of the young people were quite interested. The same one you spoke of just now. I always maintained that the hours spent there were wasted ones, and never sent them so much as a frosted cake for the Christmas celebration; for I really believed the little scamps only came for the picture cards and the occasional treats the teachers planned, and that no real good could be talked or prayed into them, when for generations past everything had been against them, but I've changed my mind and this was the way of it:

"I had been baking and stewing as usual all the morning; and when I thought I was all through, I found the red streak apples were decaying fast; so when the fire was started at tea-time I made six apple pies and set them on the table in front of the window to cool. They were for the next day's dinner and the hay-field lunch, and you don't know how relieved I felt that for once I was ahead of the work and might find a little time for a magazine article I'd

been saving to read when I wasn't too tired to enjoy it. After tea I went down cellar to put away some things, and as I came up I saw in the window outlined against a streak of light still in the western sky something that looked like the head and shoulders of a little black ghost. I wasn't exactly frightened, but I stopped a minute on the stairs in the dark to see just what it was. Then I saw a thin, little black hand slowly raised and a finger was slowly drawn across one side of a pie where the juice had sizzled from under the crust and jellied on the side of the pan. The little black finger went straight into a cavernous mouth, and the amount of licking indicated that the taste was good. I saw the black eyes scan the kitchen, and then the head turned and the yard was carefully examined. Evidently no one was in sight, for two skeleton arms were raised as if to grasp a pie, and then slowly fell again, and the little figure turned away. I stepped into the kitchen where I could watch the proceedings, for I couldn't believe, though the child's good angel had triumphed for a moment, but that the inherited tendency would prove too strong to be resisted. I stood still for a time, but the head didn't appear in the window again, and I stole to the door and peeped through the screen to see what the little unfortunate was doing. She sat on the step, her head bent forward and resting on the handle of an old chip basket, her bony hands clasped in her lap. As I looked the lips parted and a beseeching little voice said: 'Lord Jesus, help me not to: I want dat pie.' I felt like a sneak-thief myself for not coming right forward to help her out; but I hadn't much faith in the colored race, you see, and I wanted to see how much that prayer really meant.

"She got up in a minute more and came and knocked timidly at the door. I thought that instead of stealing that pie she meant to beg it, but there was a tear rolling down each cheek when the weak voice said: 'Lady, won't you buy some matches?' I looked in the basket and saw ten boxes. 'Two cents a box,' said the pathetic voice, and I took the ten boxes and gave her twenty cents, hardly saying a word. She turned away with a happy smile, probably she thought she saw her reward for her resistance of evil, already, in disposing of her entire remaining stock; but such a smile could only a conqueror wear. I let her go around the corner of the house, to be sure she did not mean to come back after going a little way, to beg for the pie, and then I called, 'Little girl!' She turned quickly, as if a little fearful of something, and my heart smote me for having so tried the child, but I wanted to be sure that the little thing was a real Christian. When she came to the door again, I took two of those pies and laid them in the basket, adding a big piece of cheese and a loaf of bread with some Jersey butter, and sent her on her way. I couldn't resist going to the corner of the house to see how she went. It was nearly dark and all I could see distinctly was the soles of an immense pair of shoes (evidently not made to order) flying for the front gate in a way which showed that the wearer was the bearer of joyful tidings. I turned away with a sigh for my own shortcomings, and a feeling that the Lord had been very near me and had answered a prayer in a way that almost seemed 'a miracle of grace.'

"I had told the child to come the next day, and bright and early she was on hand, her eyes sparkling. She almost seemed fatter already for those two miserable pies. I set her to work picking currants for jelly, and the way the little imp held the basket between her two drumstick knees and picked with both hands was marvellous to see. I had really expected to find her lazy, but she didn't seem to have a lazy bone in her body and I found her a great help, not only in picking fruit but at other light work as well. I grew really fond of the child as the days passed—for she came each day after that to help me—and when I found by quiet questioning that her love and trust in the Saviour began in the school-house on the hill, and that it had helped not only the child but the mother as well, I changed my mind a little about teaching the colored population. I also found that her father (whom I had reason to believe was none other than the despoiler of my hen roost) had died converted, and on his deathbed professed conversion.

"I am willing to confess that I'm hard to convince, but when my mind is settled as to the right thing I'm ready to lend a helping hand, and now I am an enthusiastic worker in the little school-house of which you say you 'never heard of one bit of good that has been accomplished there.' I have heard people say that the teachers of colored children should come from among the grown colored people, but I wonder if they realize that at this imperfect stage of the development of the colored race, that is a good deal after the manner of 'the blind leading the blind.'"

"It seems to me a little time spent in instructing the growing youth of that race may help the whole country, and we forget that it is 'not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts.'"—*N. Y. Observer.*

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From International Question Book.)

LESSON VII.—NOVEMBER 17.

DAVID'S LAST WORDS.—2 Sam. 23:1-7.

COMMIT VERSES 3, 4.

GOLDEN TEXT.

He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.—2 Sam. 23:5.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The blessed influence of the reign of Christ.

DAILY READINGS.

M. 2 Sam. 22:1-51.
T. 2 Sam. 23:1-7.
W. 2 Sam. 21:1-25.
Th. 1 Kings 1:1-53.
F. 1 Kings 2:1-12.
Sa. 1 Chron. 28:1-21.
Su. 1 Chron. 29:1-30.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

The lesson should be read in poetic form given in the Revised Version. 1. *Raised up on high:* from a shepherd boy to one of the greatest kings that ever lived. *Anointed:* set apart for his work by God. 3. *The Rock of Israel:* God is so called (1) because he is everlasting and immovable; (2) he is the defence, the stronghold of his people; (3) a shadow and shelter for the weary. *He that ruleth:* omit the italics. David sees as in a vision "One who rules over men, just." This is the ideal for all his successors, but realized perfectly in Christ, the holy and perfect king. 4. *As the light of the morning:* such is the effect sought by every good ruler. But the figure illustrates perfectly the influence of Jesus upon the sinful heart, and upon an ignorant, sinful world. He brings light, life, joy, beauty, comfort, wherever he shines. *As the tender grass:* his influence upon men is like that of the spring sunshine and rain upon the wintry earth, bringing forth fruits and flowers. 5. *Although my house:* although David was conscious of imperfections, yet God had made a promise, and all these blessings were to come forth from his house, through Christ Jesus his Son, and the wider kingdom which he brought in, every believer being an heir of the promise of Abraham. But probably this verse should be read interrogatively. Is not my house so with God? for he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things (perfectly arranged) and sure: for all my salvation and all my desire, shall he not make it to grow? 6. *Sons of Belial:* of worthlessness, lawlessness. *As thorns:* and therefore having no part in the garden of the Lord. 7. *Fenced with iron:* armed with iron, fastened on a long staff. The wicked who refuse to repent are not only useless, but injurious to others. There is nothing to be done with them but to turn them as with fire.

SUBJECT: THE BLESSED KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

QUESTIONS.

I. THE CLOSING YEARS OF DAVID'S LIFE.—How many years did David live after the rebellion of Absalom? How many years of famine? (2 Sam. 21:1.) What error did David commit? (2 Sam. 21.) How was it punished? What do you learn as to the population of his kingdom from this census? What was David doing during most of these years? (1 Chron. 22, 28, 29.) Give a brief account of these preparations for the temple. What were David's last words to Solomon? (1 Kings 2:1-9.) Where was David buried? (1 Kings 2:10.) How old was he? How long had he reigned? What would you say of his character? Was his life a success? The source of it. Describe him as a statesman; as a general; as a poet.

II. A VISION OF THE TRUE KING (vs. 1-3).—How is David described in these verses? Who inspired him to speak the words of this lesson? Why is God called a Rock? How is the true king described? Was this a picture of himself, or of his ideal? (v. 5.) In which of his descendants was it fulfilled? (Matt. 2:2; Luke 1:32, 33; Phil. 2:9-11; John 18:36, 37.) Over whom is Jesus King? What do you find in him that makes him the perfect ideal King?

III. THE BLESSED INFLUENCE OF HIS KINGDOM (vs. 4, 5).—To what is the influence of Jesus compared? Why is it said to be without clouds? In what respects are the sinful heart and the world without Christ like the earth in the night time? What does the sun do for the earth? What thing like unto these does Jesus do for us? In what respects are the sinful heart and the world without Christ like the earth in winter time? What do the sun and rain do for the earth in the spring? What does Jesus do for us like unto these things? Did David feel worthy of such blessings? (v. 5.) How did he know God would do them? (v. 5. See also, 2 Sam. 7:12-16.) Are these promises being fulfilled?

IV. THOSE WHO REMAIN OUTSIDE THE KINGDOM (vs. 6, 7).—By what name are wicked people called? To what are they compared? What must be done with thorns and weeds? Why? How is their injury to others described? Need any persons remain wicked? If they refuse to repent and change, what must become of them? (Rev. 21:27.) Is there any way of escape except by turning from their evil ways? (Ezek. 18:30-32; Matt. 5:20; 7:18, 19.)

LESSON VIII.—NOVEMBER 24.

SOLOMON'S WISE CHOICE.—1 Kings 3:5-15.

COMMIT VERSES 12, 13.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Wisdom is better than rubies.—Prov. 8:11.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

Seek first the kingdom of heaven, and all other things shall be added unto you.

DAILY READINGS.

M. 1 Kings 3:1-15.
T. 2 Chron. 1:1-17.
W. James 1:1-17.
Th. Matt. 6:19-34.
F. 1 Kings 9:1-9.
Sa. Josh. 24:1-16.
Su. Prov. 3:1-18.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

5. *Ask, etc.:* the answer to his prayers and worship. 6. *And Solomon said:* Solomon grounds his request that Jehovah would grant him the gifts needful for a sovereign upon the mercy shown his father David, to whom God had performed his promises. 7. *I am but a little child:* his humility shows his wisdom. He saw how weak he was for the great work to be done. *How to go out or come in:* i.e., transact the business of the government. 8. *Which thou hast chosen:* it was not only a great nation, but the nation chosen to represent God before the world, and carry out his kingdom, and teach the world his truths. All this was a far greater responsibility than the ruling an ordinary kingdom. *A great people:* 1,580,000 warriors, besides 38,000 Levites (1 Chron. 23:3; 21:5, 6), which would imply a population of 6,000,000. 9. *Give an understanding heart:* true, religious wisdom, applied to the affairs of his kingdom; a clear perception of right and wrong, and skill to decide every difficult question aright. It includes also an aptitude for the acquisition and use of the higher branches of philosophical knowledge, natural and moral, which constituted the learning of his age. In the latter, he excelled the most famous men of his time. 10. *Pleased the Lord:* for he asked nothing for himself, but only fitness for his work. 12. *None like thee:* his knowledge of nature extended to all the kingdoms of creation and the products of every country (1 Kings 4:31-33). He gave special attention to the study of man. His manifold observation and experience he expressed in maxims, of which, according to 1 Kings 4:32, he composed three thousand. Strangers thronged from foreign lands to know the wise king, and to admire his institutions and appointments. 14. *If, etc.:* then I will lengthen thy days: long life was conditional on obedience. Solomon failed in his part, and he died about the age of sixty. 15. *Behold it was a dream:* this passed while Solomon dreamed: but the results show that it was a real choice.

SUBJECT: THE WISE CHOICE.

QUESTIONS.

I. GOD'S OFFER TO SOLOMON (vs. 5).—What great religious festival did Solomon hold? (2 Chron. 1:1, 2.) Who were invited? For what purpose? Where was it held? Why at Gibeon? (2 Chron. 1:3-5.) What can you tell about Gibeon? What was the extent of his sacrifices? What vision did Solomon have at its close? What offer did the Lord make to him? Does he make a like offer to us all? (Matt. 7:7; John 14:13, 14; James 1:5.) Does every one practically, by deeds if not by words, ask God what he shall give him?

II. SOLOMON CONSIDERS GOD'S OFFER (vs. 6-8).—In thinking over what he should ask, how many reasons does Solomon find for making the choice he did? What had God done for his father? How was this a reason for his wise choice? What did he feel himself to be? Was he very young and inexperienced for the great work? Was this humility a good sign? How great a people had the kingdom grown to be? (1 Chron. 21:5, 6; 2 Chron. 23:3.) Has God given each of us a great and important work to do? Do we need the greatest wisdom to accomplish it well?

III. THE WISE CHOICE (v. 9).—What did Solomon choose? Did this prove that he was fitted to receive? What did he mean by an understanding heart? Was it the same wisdom as he describes in Prov. 3:13-16? Did he ask this for himself? Was it a wise choice? Why? Is it a choice we can make?

IV. GOD'S RESPONSE (vs. 10-15).—How was the Lord pleased with Solomon's choice? Why? What did he promise? How was it fulfilled in Solomon's life? (1 Kings 3:16-28; 4:29-31.) What more was given him? How was this fulfilled? (1 Kings 10:1-29.) On what condition should we live long to enjoy all this? Did he have long life?

V. NEW TESTAMENT LIGHT.—What should we seek first? (Matt. 6:33; Prov. 4:7; 16:16.) Will God add temporal blessings to those that seek first his kingdom? (Matt. 6:33; Mark 10:29, 30.) Does the Lord love to give abundantly? (Eph. 2:4, 7; Luke 6:35; 11:13.) Can we ever get the best temporal blessings by seeking them first? Would they be as good for us if we could?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

I. To every one comes the offer. Ask what I shall give thee.
II. What we ask tests our characters and determines our destiny.

LESSON CALENDAR.

(Fourth Quarter.)

- Oct. 6. The tribes united under David. 2 Sam. 5:1-12.
- Oct. 13. The Ark brought to Zion. 2 Sam. 6:1-12.
- Oct. 20. David's Thanksgiving Prayer. 2 Sam. 7:18-29.
- Oct. 27. Sin, Forgiveness, and Peace. Ps. 32:1-11.
- Nov. 3. David's Rebellious Son. 2 Sam. 15:1-12.
- Nov. 10. David's Grief for Absalom. 2 Sam. 18:18-33.
- Nov. 17.—David's Last Words. 2 Sam. 23:1-7.
- Nov. 24.—Solomon's Wise Choice. 1 Kings 3:5-15.
- Dec. 1. The Temple dedicated. 1 Kings 8:51-63.
- Dec. 8. Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. 1 Kings 10:1-13.
- Dec. 15. Solomon's Fall. 1 Kings 11:4-13.
- Dec. 22. Close of Solomon's Reign. 1 Kings 11:26-43.
- Dec. 29. Review and Temperance. Prov. 23:29-35.