

ent day they will not purchase from gentile butchers if they can help it. On this point it would have been impossible for Daniel to satisfy himself without unseemly intermeddling with the lowest menials of the court. He and his three friends took the wisest and safest course—total abstinence. Compare Ex. 23: 2; Josh. 24: 15; Heb. 11: 24, 26. It may be lawful to drink wine and other alcoholic beverages if one is very careful, but no one is safe from the subtle influence that they exert upon the will, and the example set often leads others to ruin.

The portion of the—Omitted in the R. V. The rare and foreign word which was formerly thought to mean "a portion of food," is now believed to signify "princely, or delicate food," dainties. (S. S. Times).

Nor with the wine—It is only honest to say that Daniel refused the wine because of its having been "consecrated," so to speak, by pouring out a portion as a libation to idols. Still the broad principle under which he acted is the soundest basis for temperance teaching. Abstain from everything that is likely to lead you or others into sin, or compromise your Christian consistency. Individually the course taken by these Hebrew youths was productive of the best result: to their bodies. Plain food and no stimulants will minister to health and cheerfulness. The laws of nature are in harmony with the laws of the Bible.

He requested—Had he offensively asserted his scruples, he would have received a very short and impatient answer. Now, as in later life, he tried courtesy and kindness first. Had he been refused, we know, from his conduct narrated in ch. 6, what he would have done. But in no case would he have forgotten to be "peaceable" as well as "pure." (Jas. 3: 17.) Note the moral courage necessary for a boy of 14 to mention his religious scruples to a heathen officer, who would only despise them.

The prince of the eunuchs—Ashpenaz (v. 3) who was directly responsible to the king for these youths. He was the royal "lord chamberlain."

9. God had brought Daniel into favor—The obstacles we dread in any course of duty are all removeable by God. He controls circumstances and influences the minds of men with whom we have to deal. All we have to do is to "go forward." (Ex. 14: 15). Compare the case of Joseph (Gen. 39: 21); Solomon's prayer answered (1 Kings, 8: 50). Read Ps. 106: 46; Prov. 16: 7.

Tender love—such as a father has for his son, (Kitto). R. V., "compassion."

10. Worse-liking—An obsolete form of expression for "in a worse condition." In Job, 39: 4, we have "good-liking." The Hebrew word means morose, sad, pitiful in consequence of inferior food (Keil). Ashpenaz thought that the boys would not thrive on simple fare, and that they would become dissatisfied and fretful.

The children which are of your sort—R. V., "the youths which are of your own

age" or "term" (margin, lit. "circle"). The others who were in training with him.

Endanger my head—An oriental despot would think that he did merely justice if he executed him for disobeying orders. The Shah of Persia, or the Sultan of Turkey would do this without compunction. "Nebuchadnezzar was not a man to take liberties with."

II. TEMPERANCE TESTED. 11. Melzar—R. V. "the steward" or "chief butler," who supplied the daily portion to the youths. Some suggest that the chief of the eunuchs was quite willing to wink at a violation of rules if he were not held responsible. But it is much more in keeping with Daniel's openness of character to suppose that he gave his consent to the experiment proposed.

Daniel—"God my judge," changed to *Beltshazzar*, "the treasurer of the god Bel." **Hananiah**—"Grace of Jehovah," same as "John," changed to *Shadrack*, "the messenger of the god Rak." **Misrael**,—"Asked of God," changed to *Meshaek*,—"a devotee of the god Shesack." **Azariah**—"The Lord is my keeper," changed to *Abednego*, "the servant of Nego." Nebuchadnezzar did his best to make them forget God and serve the idols of Babylon. It would not be out of place here to remind scholars that they, too, were devoted to God at baptism, the time when it is customary to announce a child's name, and that they should feel as truly belonging to God, and bound to serve him, as if his name was combined with theirs.

12. Prove the servants—This was a fair proposal that would endanger nobody. He felt sure that God would not let him suffer for his scruples. The request was so reasonable that the steward couldn't refuse it.

Pulse—The Hebrew word stands for a vegetable or grain food in general. Anything grown from seeds (Gesenius). The English word "pulse" means the seed of leguminous plants, such as peas, beans, &c.

15. Their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh—R. V. It does not follow from this that it is every one's duty to abandon animal food, live only upon vegetables, and drink nothing but water. Daniel and his friends were not governed by mere regard to the laws of health. It was with them a question of principle, (Green). Compare the First Temptation and our Lord's reply, (Deut. 8: 3). It is evidently implied that God blessed the fare in an unusual or supernatural manner.

16. Took away—He saw that there was no danger of harm to himself or his chief. "The prudence of Daniel and his friends deserves to be commended in this transaction, as well as their firmness and conscientiousness. Instead of a contumacious resistance to the king's command, regardless of the prejudices or difficulties of those with whom they had to deal, they skilfully and with admirable tact put the case before them in its least objectionable form, and sought to smooth the way to