

Sabbath School.
BIBLE LESSONS.
 SECOND QUARTER.
 Lesson XI. June 11. Eccl. 12: 17, 13, 14.

THE CREATOR REMEMBERED.

GOLDEN TEXT.
 "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."—Eccl. 12: 1.

EXPLANATORY.

1. Remember now thy Creator. Call to mind who and what He is, and His relation to us; live consciously as in His presence and under His government. Remember Him (1) as our God who made and owns us, and therefore has a right to our obedience; (2) as our Father, to whom we should be loving children; (3) as our Benefactor, from whom comes every good and perfect gift, and to whom we owe an infinite debt of gratitude; (4) as our Judge, who will condemn and punish us if we do not keep His commandments. Remember Him (1) as our God who made and owns us, and therefore has a right to our obedience; (2) as our Father, to whom we should be loving children; (3) as our Benefactor, from whom comes every good and perfect gift, and to whom we owe an infinite debt of gratitude; (4) as our Judge, who will condemn and punish us if we do not keep His commandments.

2. While the sun, or the light . . . be not darkened. The light which brings cheer to the home is taken away by the clouds, and all is sombre and dreary. Nothing is seen clearly; nothing is bright.

3. When the keepers of the house shall tremble. The image is that of a decaying and unprotected house which represents the body in old age. The strong men, the legs which support and serve the body as laborers furnish provision for the household. And the grinders cease. The women that daily grind the corn, whose diminution in a decayed and impoverished house sets forth the decay of the teeth all the more apply in that the action and result of the millstones that grind is greatly similar to that of the teeth (molars) in mastication. Those that look out of the windows be darkened. The eyes are the windows of the soul. The eyes are represented as the windows of the decayed old house because foul and opaque, so that one cannot any longer see through them.

4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets. All the senses that connect the outer world with the soul are dulled. The hearing fails; speech becomes more difficult. When the sound of the grinding is low. This is to be taken in its primary sense, as a fact showing the old man's dulness of hearing. The most familiar and household sounds, such as that of the grinding-mill, are faintly distinguished. He shall rise up at the voice of the bird. He sleeps so lightly that even the voice of the bird waken him early in the morning. An illustration of the sleeplessness of old men. All the daughters of music shall be brought low. The old man loses the power of making music, or loses his love for music, or musical strains seem to him to be low on account of his dulness.

5. And they shall be afraid of that which is high. Indicating the timidity which characterizes old age, or the difficulty the aged find in climbing a hill. And fears shall be in the way. The old man must walk slowly and carefully. And the almond tree shall flourish. This translation is supported by the ancient versions. Dr. Thomson (The Land and the Book, p. 310) says of the almond tree, "It is the type of old age whose hair is white . . . the white blossoms completely over the whole tree; the green leaves do not appear till some time after." And the grasshopper (or locust) shall be a burden. A hyperbolic expression of feebleness. And desire shall fall. Luther's translation, "and all desire falls," appears at least consonant with the sense. The appetites and passions have all diminished in force. Because man goeth in his long home. Not the grave simply, but the other world in distinction from this. An interesting parallel is found in the Assyrian legend of Ishtar, in which Hades is described as the "House of Eternity," the "House men enter, but cannot depart from; the Road men go to, but cannot return." The mourners about the streets. Literally, in the singular, the street or market-place. The words bring before us the most prominent features of Eastern funerals. The words bring before us the most prominent features of Eastern funerals. The words bring before us the most prominent features of Eastern funerals.

6. Or ever the silver cord be loosed. "The silver cord" denotes the thread of life. The golden bowl has reference to the body as a vessel containing the life-blood. The shattered pitcher suggests in particular the destruction of the organs of respiration; and the wheel broken of the distaff implies the cessation of that cyclic action by which the life while it endures is maintained.

7. Then shall the dust. Our bodies, which are made of the materials of which the earth is made. Our bodies shall be resolved into the elements from which they came. The spirit. As distinct from the body, as the "rower from his boat," or the works of a watch from its case. Shall return unto God who gave it. The fact here stated by the inspired writer is simply that the spirit, being separated at death from the body, returns to God. No more is said here of its future destiny. To return to God who is the Fountain (Ps. 36: 9) good or bad, in some sense goes to God, either as Father or Judge.

13. Let us hear. This verse begins in the Hebrew with a large letter (as Deut. 6: 4), as Buxtorf remarks, to excite the

more attention. The conclusion of the whole matter. The sum of the whole discourse; the main thought toward which the whole discourse has tended; the practical conclusion to which, after this wide view of life, we come. Fear God, and keep His commandments. The fear of God denotes internal piety, and the keeping of the commandments of God denotes the expression of it by external obedience. What is meant is that this is the only true answer to that quest of the chief good in which the thinker has been engaged. This is in Greek phrase, the "work" of man, that to which he was called by the very fact of his existence.

14. For God shall bring every work into judgment. At the last day, the final judgment. Be also very often long before that. Every one must meet the results of his actions in his character, in their influence on others, in the results of the laws of God in nature. Every one is compelled to meet the results of his life as they go on. With every secret thing. That which is unknown to others; that which may have been forgotten by themselves. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil. We forget many of our good deeds as well as our bad, and that good people do is entirely unknown to the world. The good will be as much surprised as the bad when the hidden and forgotten thing of life are brought to light. (See Matt. 25: 37-40.)

Lina's Silent Testimony.

A few years ago I knew Lina G—, a young girl who evidently was not a favored child of fortune or circumstances. Her parents were very poor, and still worse, her father spent a large part of his earnings for strong drink. She also had a brother who was idiotic, although Lina herself was bright, intelligent child. The family lived in a small house just outside the village in which I resided, and a pretty hard time they had to get along, even with the assistance that their kind neighbors rendered to them.

Lina was also unfortunate in other respects. She had a stooping form, an awkward gait in walking, and also a stammering tongue. Yet with all these drawbacks the child possessed a sweet spirit, and the smile that constantly rested upon her face made one forget all about the ungainly form and stammering tongue.

When about twelve years of age Lina G— made a public profession of faith in Christ, although it was in a community noted for unbelief and skepticism in religion. We thought that she was good enough before this, and were surprised to see the contrition and penitence she exhibited. She however insisted upon seeking for Christ until she found Him, and then she was very happy.

The child was evidently thoroughly converted, and all could see a marked change in her life. She always came to the little prayer-meeting that was sustained by the few professed Christians in the community, and always witnessed for Christ, although in an unusual manner. As she could not speak without stammering, she would rise to her feet and point upward with her right hand. Her lips always moved, and the smile upon her face would deepen until it seemed as if her bright eyes were looking into heaven.

It was a little strange what an influence Lina exerted in the community among the ungodly people. They never sneered at the uplifted hand, for there was something about it that arrested them to silence. Thus the days drifted along and it was evident to all that Lina G— was daily growing in grace, and becoming more like the blessed One that she loved so well.

She was obliged to leave her home and go out to service in a small family. She was of a consumptive tendency, and she took a severe cold which developed into the fatal disease. In a very short space of time it was apparent that she was speedily drifting from the earth. The smile, however, did not leave her pale face, as she went down among the shadows—if shadows they were.

I was with her a good deal, as the neighbors took care of her nearly all the time, and I stood by her bedside when she died. She had not been able to speak for a long time, as her throat was inflamed and swollen. But she was constantly giving her silent testimony of Christ's power to save in affliction and when the shadows of death were falling upon her.

It was morning when she died, just as the fair sunlight was flushing the eastern sky and tenderly falling upon the earth that was covered with sparkling dewdrops shining like so many jewels. All through the night she had tried to say something to me, but I could not understand a single word. She lifted her hand just as she went from us, and smiled in her old sweet way. The smile remained upon her face after we folded the hands that would never be lifted again in silent testimony of Christ's love.

For many years Lina G— has slept in the valley's dust, awaiting the holy resurrection morning. The silent testimony that she so often gave speaks now in living words, for it is written upon human souls. In the fair home in which she lives she will not carry a bent, ungainly form, or speak with a stammering tongue. She worships God among His fairest angels, I am sure.—Mrs. M. A. Holl.

A Palimpsest.

At frequent intervals during this nineteenth-century, antiquarians, searching diligently among the musty manuscripts of ancient monasteries, have proclaimed with well-earned pride the discovery of some valuable "palimpsest." What is a palimpsest?

Hundreds of years ago, long before printing-presses or post-offices blessed and bagged the world, Egyptian papyrus and the more plebeian parchment furnished the groundwork of all literary productions. It was heavy and bulky; but in those days it was a very eccentric or very holy man who knew how to write his own name. Nobody "wrote for the press" for newspapers were, as yet, far away in the dim perspective of the future, luckily enough; else an editor's office must have been located in a warehouse and drays be necessary to return rejected manuscripts.

When the Saracens conquered Egypt, Western Europe cut off from the chief supply of papyrus, and parchment became scarcer than ever. The world was then enveloped in the gloom of the Dark Ages and general literature had well-nigh perished. The monks were the only scribes who used quills, and they had a lofty contempt for anything beyond missals and long religious treatises. Unfortunately, some fanatic inspired priest discovered that the writing on the papyrus or parchment could be erased by the material used for other writings. So perished precious stores of classic literature, vanishing under the ruthless touch of some thick-skulled monk, burning to write his own name on the blank parchment.

Two processes were used by these medieval scribes in the preparation of palimpsests, as these expunged manuscripts were called. If vegetable ink had been used, the writing was removed with a sponge, and the parchment smoothed when dry by rubbing with mineral matter; but if the ink contained iron, it sunk deeply into the body of the parchment, and the writing had to be scraped off with a sharp knife. In the latter case, however, it was impossible to completely erase the original inscriptions, and traces of them can be seen still, even though the entire surface has been cut away. It is this fact which has made possible the recovery of many valuable fragments of ancient classics, though many others have been irretrievably lost.

By the magic of modern chemistry, invisible characters can be traced from the parchment again, and the patient student of antiquity, delving deeply among the mouldy treasures of monastic libraries, has brought to light many a precious palimpsest.—Watchman.

A "Goose" Table.

I learned accidentally of a table called by the above name, and I felt it my duty to describe it for the benefit of my young lady readers. A venerable professor, on parting with a dear friend and pupil, requested her to write, as a reminder of the happy relations that had existed between them. He received it gratefully, and said, "I shall prize this gift; but," he continued in a fatherly way, "my dear, don't give your face to every man who asks for it. Keep the rest for your husband, if you ever have one."

"For your future welfare I will let you into a secret; some of the boys have what they call a 'goose table,' and I hope that every man who asks for it will give me a goose." "The other evening I called on a young gentleman, who is a society man, and a favorite among ladies. I have always liked him, and thought him a manly fellow, until I saw something that lowered him many degrees in my estimation. I enjoyed my little visit with him until he said: 'O professor, come into my study, I want to show you something unique. We had been looking at fossils and stinking from the earth, and you had some rare specimens to show me, I gladly followed him; but instead of what I expected to see, I was invited to inspect what he called his 'goose table,' with the remark, 'I know you will not give me a goose.'"

"I took the proffered seat before a medium sized revolving table, and on it I saw the faces of brunettes, blondes, girls of sweet sixteen, and I am sorry to say, those of young women whose years should have given them more sense. Among them I saw the faces of many acquaintances and pupils, and I felt grieved as he said flippantly, 'How is that for a goose table?' I said, wishing to draw him out, 'Why do you give it that name?' " 'Why, because they are geese to give their picture to every fellow that asks for it.' "In justice to some I knew and respected I said, 'Young man, that is not true; you alone, with your persuasive powers, would make me give my picture to you, do you not?' 'No indeed; if I were the happy possessor of the only picture I should really prize, no money could tempt me to place it on that table. But I am not likely to get it, unless I can win the original, for he has too much good sense to give it to me.' "Here the professor ended by saying, 'Don't forget the goose table.' "The pupil promised that she would never contribute to one, and I, a bystander, made a remark, 'You and other young ladies should be let into the secret, and to profit by the kind teacher's warning.'—Hilena H. Thomas, in Household.

Commendable Fiction.

Religious teachers are often uncertain what attitude to take as to the propriety of reading fiction. The great majority of the cheap novels now on sale contain little which is of value either intellectually or morally. Many of them are of positively evil tendency. This is so true that a minister is compelled to condemn all novels as evil, and try to dissuade every one whom he can influence from reading any prose fiction at all. To the writer this seems injudicious. There is fiction and fiction. "Prove all things," even novels, and "hold fast that which is good." Among the novels now popular are some which every one who will read them must admit to be morally elevating and helpful, as well as most instructive mentally.

These by George Ebers are of this class. They belong to the highest order of historical novels. Their primary aim is not moral or religious, but educational. They are meant to elucidate important epochs of history. But the author, aware that for nineteen centuries Christianity has been the greatest fact pertaining to man's life, bases most of his stories upon epochs of Christian history, thus making them torches, as it were, to throw light upon the evolving life of the church. Eber's story entitled The Emperor (referring to Hadrian) is really the best picture extant of the Christian life in those times, and is the first half of the twentieth century. No person can read it without receiving a new impulse to his faith. It would be an eminently proper volume for a Sunday-school library, vastly more beautiful and invigorating than the books which are written with a directly religious purpose.

Another writer has become prominent more recently than Ebers, his works being therefore not so well known, of whom I can speak even more highly. I mean the English moralist, Hall Gaine. Hall's novels are extraordinarily powerful as novels; indeed I should rank him among the foremost living weavers of fiction. Yet what has interested me in them most is not their consummate art as stories, but their intense, and even fervent religiousness. Gaine seems to make no effort to impart to them this cast; it is perfectly simple and natural. The author writes like a man fully conversant with the history of the world amid all the revolutions of history, science and criticism, without, however, having at all lost the sense of reverence for the unseen and the past. His "Scapgoat" involves a masterly study in comparative religion, wherein it impressively appears how superior, even now, old-fashioned Judaism is to Mohammedanism, and how much better Christianity is than either. His "Deemster" is a wonderful portrayal of character, good and bad, exhibiting how the Christ-spirit and the world-spirit often get foothold within one and the same family, producing a saint and a devil out of one flesh and blood; and how good may be lost in the deepest places of an unscrupulous life, baffled and overcome, but at last purifying the spirit and subduing even the flesh.

Doubtless even novels like these should not form the entire substance of a young person's reading; but, enjoyed in the proportion to mental activity and diversion of other kinds, they cannot but have a most happy effect. The love of romance is at bottom nothing but our God-given interest in life and Providence. It ought, therefore, not to be snubbed, as if it were intrinsically bad, but chastened, disciplined and used.—Rev. E. Benj. Andrews, Brown University, in the Index.

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