

Junior Department

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Weekly Topics.

Dec. 13th—"A Bible maid who was kind to animals," Gen. 24, 19-28.

This story is a very interesting one in many ways; but the main lesson from the week's study is kindness to dumb animals about us. The "maid" of the story was Rebekah, and the animals were camels. They were evidently thirsty after a long journey, and one may naturally suppose that they much enjoyed the fresh, cold water from the well. It is not necessary to enquire into the full details of the lesson story other than to illustrate the kindness and hospitality of Rebekah's heart, and of her home. Cruelty to animals, by neglect of their comfort and provision, is a not uncommon thing to-day. Many children who do not mean to be cruel to their "pets," are really so because of their thoughtlessness of their welfare. Children should be encouraged to have their dogs, cats, pigeons, fowls, or other pets, but they should never be allowed to neglect them, much less to actually maltreat them. We all remember the nursery rhyme:

"Ding dong bell, Pussy's in the well
Who put her in? Little Tommy Green.
Who put her in? Little Tommy Green.
Trout."

What a naughty boy was that
Thus to drown poor pussy cat."

"Little Tommy Green" is a very common boy. He delights to pelt cats with stones; if he does not actually drown them; he takes pleasure in tormenting any stray pup he can find, or in trying to catch the tails of either cat or dog. Be sure that such a boy is cruel at heart, and very probably a coward as well. He will tease his sister or little brother, or fight a boy smaller than himself; but would run at the first sign of real danger to himself. Girls are more kindly disposed than boys generally are; but it is a true sign of a hard heart and unkind disposition in either boy or girl—if they are indifferent to the care of dumb animals. As the heart of the boy is trained to kindness, will the life of the man display generosity. As the girl cultivates a merciful and loving disposition, will the woman manifest a truly sympathetic nature. Hence, let our juniors be early trained to look upon all God's creatures as subjects of His care, and worthy of our consideration. Animals readily respond to kind treatment, and many times repay the care given them. The following true story, as told in a recent issue of The Children's Visitor, is one of many brave deeds done by an intelligent and devoted dog. Let a junior read it:

Very recently heavy forest fires raged along the border line of Yuba and Butte Counties, in California. As a consequence, much timber and fencing were destroyed, and, in some cases, barns and dwellings were swept away by the devouring flames.

In some localities all the settlers turned out to fight the fires. Many exhibitions of fortitude were recorded, and several of real heroism. But the most interesting was the saving of a most interesting dog, named Florence, three-year-old girl, named Florence Rogers, by Bruno, a fine, large hunting dog belonging to the child's parents. The Rogerses lived on a ranch not far from the town of Marysville.

While the fire was raging in that vicinity, Mr. Rogers and his wife left their house and hastened across the

fields about a mile away, to assist their nearest neighbors. Little Florence was left playing on the floor in the temporary care of the faithful Bruno.

In less than an hour the wind shifted, and, realizing the danger to their house, Mr. Rogers, his wife, and several neighbors started on the run. But their pace did not equal that of the swift-winged flames.

Anxiety, fear and excitement overcame Mrs. Rogers, and the poor mother fainted before she came in sight of her house. But the men rushed on, and when they came to the edge of the clearing they were terrified on seeing that the flames had reached the stables and also the dwelling.

The father was now frantic, thinking only of his little darling Florence. He was just preparing to make a dash through the line of fire when Bruno burst through the kitchen window with a loud crash. The dog was holding Florence by her clothes. He dropped the child for an instant when he landed on the ground; but quickly picked her up again, and came racing across the stubble to meet his master, who was rushing frantically forward to meet him. Florence's face and hands were painfully cut by the window glass, and her clothing badly scorched, but she was not seriously injured. Bruno's hair was scorched, and in places burned entirely off. His feet were also badly burned.

Mrs. Rogers had recovered and joined the party. When she found that Florence was alive, she swooned again for very joy. For his sagacity and bravery in rescuing the child, Bruno was voted a hero.

Make this a story-telling meeting. Have your juniors tell in turn the story of some such deed as the one above, or describe some incident that they have known in animals, and close by pledging all to be merciful to all dumb creatures.

Dec. 20th—"What treasures can I bring to Jesus?" Matt. 2, 1-11. (Christmas Service.)

The visit of the wise men to Bethlehem is a story of Christmas long, long ago; yet its meaning is as fresh and new to-day as ever before. It teaches us that the best things are not too good to give to Jesus. If He were here again, I am sure we would all try to see Him. But though we cannot see Him, He can see us, and knows whether or not we really love Him. We may know this too. St. John says that we are not to love in word only; but "in deed and in truth." It is not only what we say about Jesus that shows our love; but more, what we do for Him. Though we cannot bring our gifts to Him personally, let us remember that "if ye do it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye do it unto me" is the test He gives. So we may bring our spirit to Jesus by showing His spirit of good-will to all we meet. Christmas is the season of giving. We should not give that we may get something back again; but because we have the mind of Christ, who gave Himself. Let us remember that Jesus wants us each for Him. The topic asks, "What can I bring? What have we each got that Jesus can use?" Bodies! Time! Affections! Influence! Money! Yes, all of them He can use. But we must be willing that He shall do so. If we are not, He cannot know us as His children or servants. The words of the true Christmas are "Give." Because He gave—and as He gave—Himself. Such giving is of the greatest worth, because it represents our best. That which costs us nothing to part with is not of great value. Some people give away only what they do not want themselves. That is not the right kind of giving. To give our very best

to Jesus is what makes our offering precious to Him. This is what "treasures" represent. What we count most valuable will cost us most to part with, and so will show the most self-sacrifice. Jesus loves and treasures such a spirit in any of us. Christmas joys are most real and lasting when we have practised this kind of giving among our friends and neighbors. Let us try to make this Christmas season the happiest we have ever known.

It will be well for the leader to review the facts of the Gospel story of our Saviour's birth. Using the following outline, the juniors may be taught some of the principal features connected with the records given by the evangelists.

Christ's Birth. Luke 2, 1-7.
Happy Tidings. Luke 2, 10, 11.
Rejoicing Angels. Luke 2, 13, 14.
Inquiring Wise Men. Matt. 2, 1-12.
Shepherd Shepherds. Luke 2, 15, 16.
Triumphant Simeon. Luke 2, 28-32.
Miserable Herod. Matt. 2, 16-18.
Anxious Parents. Matt. 2, 13.
Safe in Egypt. Matt. 2, 14, 15.

Dec. 27th—"Things we ought not to put on." Ecc. 12, 1-7.

There are many things that ought to be done promptly, but the one most important thing of all is to remember God, to know and serve Him in our youth. Why? Because life passes by so very swiftly that the time of service is soon gone forever. Just think how quickly 1903 has passed. It seems just a little while since last Christmas, and yet a whole year has gone. Old people tell us that the older they grow the faster the time seems to fly. This is the reason Solomon gives. You will be old and feeble almost before you know it, and then, however much you may want to work for God, you will not be able to. So youth is the best time to begin to serve God.

1. It is the easiest time to commence. Our hearts are soft, our habits are not fixed, and because of these two great facts, if we learn to know and fear God while we are young, it will save us from many sins and failures, and it will soon become easy for us to do His will. Many older men and women say that they cannot break off from sin, and all advise little children not to wait till they get old before they become Christians.

2. It is the sowing time of life. The seeds we sow in youth bear a harvest in later life either for good or bad. What we sow we shall reap. We cannot afford to sow bad seed, for the crop will be bad. If we sow good seed and reap a good harvest we are richer and happier for the gathering.

3. It is the time of activity. The lesson tells us of the weakness that comes with old age. Youth is busy, and if we are active and useful for God when we have the power, it will mean much more through a lifetime, and we will afford us much joy and pleasure when we are old and think like Paul (2 Tim. 4, 6, 7).

These are three very good reasons why all should begin to serve God in youth.

Now, supposing that our juniors have begun to serve God, what are some things they should not put off, and this last meeting in 1903 is a good time to make resolutions. As young Christians facing a new year, for 1904 is not far away, let us resolve something like this:

1. I will not put off daily prayer.

2. I will not put off regular Bible reading.

3. I will not put off public confession of Christ.

4. I will not put off kind words to others.

5. I will not put off doing a good deed because it is small.

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