

money to build railroads to ride over, but now the railroads are riding over the people, and over all laws human and divine. What is to be done? An international convention is to be held in Pittsburgh, in December, to consider this question, and to devise, if possible, some method of co-operation between the States and Canada, to arrest international Sabbath profanation on the through lines of railway. The problem which the Christian people in both countries have to grapple with is one of gigantic difficulty. Our Sabbath Observance Committee are requested to send representatives to Pittsburgh, and are appealed to for suggestions as to some practical form of international co-operation. I trust some of the friends of the Sabbath throughout the Dominion may be able to suggest to our Committee some measures that may prove to be of value. Our great need in Canada is a Sabbath law fund to defray the expense of putting the law in force. Private persons cannot risk the costs of legal action against strong corporations.

W. T. McMULLEN,
Joint Con. Assembly's Sabbath Observance Com.
Woodstock, Sep. 19th, 1881.

WHAT IS AGNOSTICISM?

This word, now so common, is, I think, comparatively new. A well educated and intelligent young lady was reading, a short time since, a work in which the word occurred, and appealed to me, who happened to be present, for its meaning. I was surprised on turning to Webster and Worcester Unabridged, to find that neither of them had the word—a fact which shews how recently it has come into use.

It is a Greek word, compounded of the verb signifying to know, with the prefix of an *alpha*, which is privative in its force. The word thus constructed means much the same as our "know-nothing." It expresses, therefore, a system of denials. An agnostic is one who professes that nothing is positively known. Is there a God? The agnostic replies, I neither affirm nor deny. I do not know, neither does any one know. Is there a future life? He answers, No one knows. There may be; there may not be; we have no data on which to determine. Is there any standing of right? None that is known. Thus on all the great questions of human belief and conduct, he aims to overthrow, to pull down without building anything in its place. Of course an agnostic is an infidel. He rejects and discards all revelations. They teach that which is positive. The man who accepts and believes the Bible has positive knowledge. He knows something, knows much. He can say of many things, and those the highest and most momentous, I know them. He has a faith which is the evidence, the realization, of things not seen. The agnostic, the man who knows nothing on most momentous questions, is to be pitied. He is going forward into intense darkness, with no guide, no hope. Uncertainty here, and oblivion beyond. What can any disciple of this dark and cheerless unbelief hope to do by spreading his views or his *no-views*? Does he think the happiness of persons and homes and society would be advanced by the spread of this cold, cheerless unbelief?

One of the most popular agnostics, lecturing to crowded audiences, asserts his wish to free men from the trammels and fears of Christian beliefs. He thinks men would be happy if they could only be freed from a belief in a personal God. It is this belief which trammels and terrifies men all over Christendom. Does he know this? How? Has he the testimony of believing men and women that their beliefs make them wretched? Of course he cannot testify from his own experience. It is a question of fact to be tested by experience, and settled by testimony. Where are the witnesses who say that Christian doctrines have made and are making them wretched? that the belief of them is a bondage, a slavery? Where? Bring them forth, and let them testify, and let the world be the jury to weigh the evidence. The question is too grave and momentous to be flippantly discussed and carelessly decided.

The teaching of the agnostic is fearful, if true, spreading a pall of gloom and sadness over this bright universe. No greater calamity could come on humanity than the spread of this agnosticism. But it will not spread. Christianity has the ever-living God for its author and sustainer. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Everlasting arms are its support and defence.—*Watkinson*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS—Rev. Dr. Reid has received the undermentioned sums for schemes of the Church, viz.: Anonymous, Innisfil, for Foreign Mission, \$50. Thank-offering of one restored from illness, Muskoka, for Foreign Mission, \$10. Thank offering of the one restored from illness, Muskoka, for Foreign Mission, \$10.

FROM the published statistics of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, for the year ending 31st Dec. 1880, we learn that the number of congregations in the body was 549, the total membership reported, 173,982; the total income, £326,547; the total stipend paid, £128,836, or an average of nearly £235—equal to \$1175. The average contributions per member was £1 17s. 6½d., or \$9.37½.

A SINGULAR treatment of the ruins of Babylon, and one which might be readily be overlooked in its bearing upon the predictions of Scripture in minute detail respecting this city, has not escaped the observation of Mr. H. Rasam, a thorough explorer of the site: "There is one fact connected with the destruction of Babylon and the marvellous fulfilment of prophecy which struck me more than anything else, which fact seems never to have been noticed by any traveller, and that is the non-existence in the several modern buildings in the neighbourhood of Babylon of any sign of stone which had been dug up from its ancient ruins, because it seems that, in digging for old materials, the Arabs used the bricks for building purposes, but always burnt the stone thus discovered for lime, which fact wonderfully fulfils the divine words of Jeremiah, namely: 'And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolations forever, saith the Lord' (Ch. li. 26)."

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XL.

Oct. 2, 1881. } FREE GIVING. } Ex. xxxv. 25-35.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"God loveth a cheerful giver."—2 Cor. ix. 7.

HOME READINGS.

M. Ex. xxxiii. 1-23.....The Tabernacle Removed out of the Camp.
T. Ex. xxxix. 1-17.....The Tables Renewed.
W. Ex. xxxiv. 18-35.....Duties of the First Table Repeated.
Th. Ex. xxxv. 1-24.... Free Gifts for the Tabernacle.
F. Ex. xxxv. 25-35.....The Workers.
S. 2 Cor. ix. 1-15.....The Cheerful Giver.
Sab. 1 Chron. xxix. 1-19...David's Offerings for the Temple.

HELPS TO STUDY.

In the lessons of last quarter we had under consideration some of the more silent points in the Bible narrative of the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage, their establishment as a nation, their reception of the moral law and their entering into covenant with God at Mount Sinai, their almost immediate failure to keep that law and covenant, and the severe punishment which followed.

We now find them still encamped in the vicinity of the "Mount of God." The covenant which they had failed to keep had been mercifully renewed, and the tables of stone which Moses had broken had been replaced by new tables bearing similar inscriptions. The sternest warnings were repeatedly given against the sin of idolatry, to which the Hebrews' long residence among the Egyptians had made them particularly prone. For a similar reason special emphasis was laid upon the matter of Sabbath observance; not that the Sabbath was then a new institution, but because it had been neglected during centuries of slavery.

While on the mount Moses had received particular directions, and a pattern, for the building of a tabernacle, or movable place of worship; and about this tabernacle, which, until the temple was built, constituted the central point of Jewish worship, all the lessons of the present quarter are grouped.

The materials for this tabernacle were to be finished by the people, as we find in chap. xxxv. 5: "Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; whosoever is of a willing heart let him bring it, an offering of the Lord." The response to this call forms the subject of the present lesson, which may be taught under the following heads: (1) *Willing Workers*, (2) *Princely Gifts*, (3) *Heart and Hand*, (4) *Sanctified Talents*.

I. **WILLING WORKERS.** Vers. 25, 26.—In connection with the building, or rather the furnishing, of the tabernacle there was work that women could do better than men, and the fact that the husbands and fathers contributed did not hinder the wives and daughters from doing their part. It would make no difference in the principle although the work of the women's hands should find no actual place in the building, but be sold, and the proceeds applied as required. See the praise of the virtuous woman in Prov. xxxi. 19-24, and that of Dorcas in Acts ix. 39.

II. **PRINCELY GIFTS.** Vers. 27, 28. While the poorer

people brought boards and cords and skins of animals, the rulers brought onyx stones, and stones to be set, probably of considerable value even in that day. "The more a man has," says the "S. S. Times," "the more he ought to give when the Lord's treasury calls for gifts. A rich Christian ought to be ashamed of himself if his gift to the sanctuary is no larger than that of a Christian of moderate means. His share is perhaps a hundred or five hundred times that of his next seat neighbour. If, then, he gives 'ten times as much,' he is despatchably mean. As a rule, the larger contributions in our churches are the meaner ones, as judged by the comparative ability of the givers. Aside from the exceptional princely gifts to the church charities, the men who give most ought to give a great deal more to be on a par with their poorer brethren. It is not a question of a few hanks of yarn, more or less, from you. Let the poor women bring the yarn they have spun. Gold and diamonds are your share. Pour them out at the Lord's call."

III. **HEART AND HAND.**—Ver. 29.—If heart and hand do not go together the gift is not acceptable. It is God Himself that makes people able to give, and the will to give comes from the same source, so we find that David, in rejoicing over the contributions accumulated for the building of the temple, gives God all the credit, both for the means and the will—"Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee and of Thine own have we given Thee" (1 Chron. xxix. 14). And so we find in all ages of the Church; the true cause of God was sustained and the real work of God, carried forward, not by the proud and the ostentatious, but by every man and woman whose heart made them willing to bring.

The following illustration, by Dr. C. S. Robinson, though somewhat lengthy, is so applicable that we reproduce it in full:

"When the terrible days of panic were over the American nation in 1857, clipping every one of the great missionary societies, so that the cry of retrenchment was borne passionately across to the foreign fields of effort, workers were discharged and missions were closed. Report of the embarrassments came in due course to a small band of Nestorian Christians in Persia. They instantly summoned an assembly to consider how they might act so as to bestow help the most quickly and with most force. The meeting was called to order by an aged believer, who began the conference by a distinct allusion to the costliness of their wedding ceremonies in those oriental lands. He insisted that young people might be married in plainer costume. 'Now here,' he continued, 'is the Church, the Bride of our Lord Jesus Christ, and she is compelled to go unprovided for to her Master's palace! Cannot we join hands to-day to give her a fair outfit?' The figure seemed at once to arrest the imagination of those simple-hearted and loving Christians, and they took it up.

"One arose, saying, 'She ought at least to have a ring; and I am ready to offer the price of one now, just such as my wife received when she was wedded to me.' Another added: 'She needs a veil quite as much, and I will see that the Lamb's Bride does not set out on her journey to her husband's house without it.' Another sprang up with the exclamation: 'She can never go on foot over the mountains; you may look to me for a horse she can ride.' Still another caught the symbol in his grave, sweet way: 'How beautiful are thy feet, O Prince's Daughter! If she rides, she will have to wear a richer pair of shoes; perhaps I might be permitted to clothe her feet.' By this time their invention was put sorely to task. One more spoke out somewhat awkwardly: 'Wedding guns are fired for joy; I will give two cannon, and will supply ammunition.'

"Then the women, who knew more of marriage necessities, began to whisper together. A maiden stood up modestly and said: 'Now for her ornaments! I have some of my own I can spare.' An impulse of affectionate generosity moved every heart. One old man said he had nothing but a mat; but 'perhaps the Queen would deign to put her feet on it when she should alight.' Then said the leader: 'What is she to eat on the way?' One of the landholders answered: 'You may look to me for fifteen outside rows of my vineyard next the sun.' During this excited colloquy there had been sitting in the assembly no less a personage than Mar Yohannan, their ruler. The aged leader in the chair shrewdly asked the question: 'She is a King's daughter and a Prince's bride; who is to give her a crown?' And then the royal guest took the hint, and held up his hand.

"So the churches in America were thrilled with the news that the Nestorians were going to take care of themselves. Oh! when the heart is all right and loving, what is there it will not do for the Bride, which is the Lamb's wife, on her way to her marriage?"

IV. **SANCTIFIED TALENTS.** Vers. 30-35.—We have space left only for a short extract from the "S. S. Times": "The Spirit of God instructed those workers at the tabernacle in the best means of doing their work. A boy who had been sent as an apprentice to a difficult trade, said afterwards that, whenever he came to a difficulty in his work, he prayed silently for Christ's help in it. 'And,' he said, 'the help always came.' Does that seem incredible? Read James i. 5. God is willing to help the teacher in his work of teaching, and the scholar in his work of learning. Remember what Luther said: 'To have well prayed is to have well studied. When a child is learning to write, it makes but poor crooked strokes; but when the teacher's hand grasps its hand, and guides it firmly, the strokes are full and clean. Do God's work with a prayerful spirit, and God's hand will guide your hand.'

HUMBLENESS is peculiar to Christianity. Goodness is admired and taught in all religions. But to be good, and feel that your good is nothing; to advance, and become more conscious of pollution; to ripen all excellence, and like corn, to bend the head when full of ripe and bursting grain—that is Christianity.