

Our Young Folks.

Singing for the Master.

Sing on, sweet voice! the Master hears And owns the service given, Though thronged amid seraphic choirs That throng the courts of heav'n.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

LESSON IV.

Jan. 28 } ELIJAH THE TISHBITE { 1 Kings xviii. 1-16

COMMIT TO MEMORY, vs. 5-7, 13, 14. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Luko i. 17; James v. 17.

SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With v. 1, read 2 Kings iii. 14; with vs. 2-7, read (on draught) Dent. xi. 16, 17; as to his safety, read Ps. xci. 9, 10; with v. 8, read Ps. xxxvii. 23; with vs. 9, 10, read Luko iv. 26; with v. 11, read Matt. x. 41, 42; with v. 12, read Lum. iv. 9; with vs. 13, 14, read Prov. iii. 9, 10; with vs. 15, 16, read Matt. xv. 28.

GOLDEN TEXT.—In famine He shall redeem thee from death.—Job v. 20.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The Lord provides. The first thing for a teacher to do in teaching this lesson is to explain the situation. Pains should be taken here. Much light is thrown on all the life and acts of Elijah by the moral condition of his people and time.

Nations do not, any more than men, grow wicked suddenly, but step by step. Abab was a bad, but not always a weak man, strong enough when his conscience did not make a coward of him. He married an idolatress and openly conformed to her ways, set up an altar (and a numerous priesthood, 1 Kings xviii. 19), and made Baal-worship the "established religion." (See last lesson.)

Then in the blackness of this night Elijah suddenly flashes out like a comet. Jerobam had broken the second commandment as to the mode of worship. Ahab broke the first, and changed the object of worship. Evil polly, like evil men, waxes worse and worse. The gods are reinstated, for worshipping which, the Canaanites were driven out of the land of Israel; as if the American people should set up Indian idols in New York and Washington. Israel had apostatized from God.

To understand Elijah's blunt message, we must remember two things:

(1.) Ahab, like Jerobam, was aiming at power, and making religion subservient to it. He wanted the strength of the Zidonians, that he might hold his place. To keep the Zidonians and Israel good friends, he married Jezebel, whose father was the murderer of his own brother, and a priest of Baal. The daughter was fierce, bigoted and unscrupulous, like the father. He and she then set themselves to make the two nations one in religion, the firmest bond of union, as Jerobam realized. So Baal, the male, and Ashteroth, the female, deity, were set up.

But (2) Baal represented one of the many forms of sun-worship, and Ashteroth nature, and both were linked in the worshippers' minds with good crops, abundant rains, favorable weather, growth in numbers, and material prosperity. If Baal and Ashteroth are good for anything, they can secure these benefits to their zealous devotees.

But here starts up an obscure and solitary man, the representative and prophet of the rejected Jehovah, and, defying alike Baal and Ahab, declares, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall be no dew, or rain these years, but according to my word" (v. 1). His previous history, like Melchizedek's, is unknown. His name is significant—"My God Jehovah." He is a Gileadite, one of a race of rude Highlanders. Why he is called "the Tishbite" is not certain. He asserts his own office—"before whom I stand" the covenant with God—"Lord God of Israel;" the self-existence and personality of God—"liveth." He is not a law, nor a principle, but a person. He announces a judgment which would (a) prove God's supreme power as against Baal, and (b) punish the people and king for their sin.

We now come to see

THE LORD'S PROVISION FOR HIS SERVANT.

His danger was great, from the anger of king and people. God directed him to a brook, the very site of which is a matter of controversy, from which we may infer that it was obscure, and therefore safe for him. God often sends his people into retirement, that by prayer, meditation, and living with God, they may gain strength for service among men. See the cases of Moses, David, the Baptist, and the Saviour himself.

The brook was in the meantime to give drink; as for food, the ravens were to bring it. The attempt to put "merchants" or "Arabs" in the place of ravens, in order to avoid the difficulty of the miracle, or of the uncleanness of the birds, cannot be sustained. It was as easy for God to send food by the ravens as by men, who would hardly keep so valuable a secret as Elijah's hiding-place without a continued miracle; and as for the element of uncleanness, Elijah did not eat the ravens, but what they brought. Even if he had eaten the ravens, the divine order would have justified him; but their bearing the food no more made it unclean than did the patriarch's asses bearing corn from Egypt made it unclean.

Many a question might have been put by Elijah as to the "how" and "how long," etc., but like Noah (Gen. vi. 22), he did as he was commanded.

There, in some glen with a slender stream trickling in its bottom, and its limestone sides containing caves over which the brambles threw their screen, Elijah remained in safe retirement, till the brook dried up, and another form of provision became necessary. He had a lowly, lonely resting-place, but he was safe, and he had humble fare, but God smiled, and it must have been sweet to him. Every one who is kept "in a quiet place," and with nothing to spare, should study Elijah at Cherith.

The second form of provision is found at Zarephath (Serapia in the Greek) in Zidon, where a widow (possibly a Gentile) is to sustain him. The place and the person must have seemed unlikely enough, but he obeyed (v. 10). The poor town on the site retains the name Serapia. Divine direction does not preclude the use of one's faculties. No sign had been given to identify the widow woman. Meeting a woman at the gate of the city, he tries to find out

if this be the person appointed, by asking for a little water. She is complying with his request, when he further asks for bread. She shows by her reply that she believes in Jehovah, and recognizes him as a prophet, or at least as an Israelite. She solemnly explains her sad condition (v. 12), with nothing in her house for herself and her son but a little meal and a little oil—the last repast (v. 12), apparently, they could have. The famine extended to Zarephath. The prophet comforts her, and—directed by the Spirit—tells her to provide for him, which if she did, he might be sure she was the appointed person, and gives her the promise of an unfailling supply (v. 12, 13). She did as directed, in simple faith, and the Lord's promise was made good to her (v. 15, 16). If faith was dying out in Israel, here was a pledge that God could raise up believers among the Gentiles.

The teacher may select and enforce such as may seem to be suitable of the following lessons:

(a) God raises up the right men at the right time, with fitness for their work. Elijah was adapted to the times, and to the enemies of God's truth with whom he had to contend. As we judge him are we to judge the Reformers, Luther, Knox, Calvin, Latimer, and later men like Wesley, Whitfield, etc.

(b) God provides safety and provision for His people. They have enough, but no more. They live on Him. A "brook" only, and when it dries up, a poor widow woman; but yet enough is given. And the place He will make suitable. Elijah has safety, retirement and fellowship with God. What honor God puts on the widow woman whom He "commanded," etc.

(c) Nor do the poor lose by obeying God's commands in faith. Her darkest hour had come, and then daylight! She proved (and she stands the test) by the seemingly inconsiderate request of the prophet. There is a fitness, itself from God, in the instruments He employs. Many a widow He has employed for good work.

(d) Elijah could speak from experience to her of God's faithfulness. He had proved it himself at the brook Cherith.

(e) Faith, that is to do much, needs to be exercised. Elijah is sent across a wide region of Israel into the land of the Zidonians, and—beyond Israelitish ground—the land of Jezebel.

(f) God serves many ends by one act. Israel is punished by the prophet being sent away. Indeed the act is prophetic.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.—The state of Israel—character of its kings—advance in sin of Ahab—his character—his wife—her lineage—character—his aims—the prophet's words—their signification—the provision for him—why needed—the place—the food—the drink—the recommendation of this refuge—the reasons for removal—the second provision—the new place—where situated—by whom sustained—her trial—service—blessing in it—the lessons we may learn.

Edinburgh and the Scottish Reformers and Martyrs.

The Martyrs' Stone in the Greyfriars' Churchyard is a very remarkable one. In addition to the epigraph it contains the following historical notice: "From May 27th, 1601, when the Marquis of Argyll was beheaded, to February 17th, 1688, when Renwick suffered, there were some eighteen thousand one way or other murdered, of whom were executed at Edinburgh about one hundred noblemen, ministers and gentlemen, and others, noble martyrs of Christ." At the foot of the tombstone is the memorandum:—"This tomb was first erected by James Currie, merchant in Pentland, and others, 1706—renewed, 1771." Mrs. Stowe, referring to her visit to the Greyfriars' Churchyard, says:—"I was most moved by coming quite unexpectedly on an ivy-grown slab in the wall commemorating the Martyrs of the Covenant." It was in the same unexpected way that the present writer first became acquainted with this neglected monument. He afterwards sought in vain for the monument raised to the memory of the great Alexander Henderson, whose remains lie in the same churchyard; and he would have left the ground without discovering the spot had he not met the recorder at the gate, and asked him to point it out to him. He soon found that the quadrangular pillar, with the urn at the top of it, of which he had been in search, stood in a part of the ground which he was forbidden to approach. Surrounded by grass, it had no walk leading towards it. When the writer asked why this was the case, he was answered that few, like himself, inquired after it.

The monument of that reformer, who was once "the most eyed man in the three kingdoms," and who did incalculable service to Church and State, was disfigured after the Restoration—was renewed at the Revolution—and is forgotten now. Edinburgh, that has erected, near the scene of the old Scottish Parliament, a statue to Charles II., containing a lying panegyric at the base, possesses an obscure memorial to Alexander Henderson, and no monument to John Knox—the glory of Edinburgh and of Scotland. Literature and politics (not to mention moderation and latitudinarianism in the churches) have nearly extinguished the ancient religious patriotism. It were well, however, if the following sentiments of the authoress above alluded to were duly pondered by our men of letters and others:—"People in gilded houses, or silken coaches, at ease among books, and friends, and literary pastimes, may sneer at the Covenanters. It is much easier to sneer than to die for truth and right, as they died. Whether they were right in all respects is nothing to the purpose; but it is to the purpose that, in a crisis of their country's history, they upheld a great principle vital to her existence. Had not these men held up the hearts of Scotland, and kept alive the fire of liberty on her altars, the very literature which has been used to defame them could not have had its existence. The very literary celebrity of Scotland has grown out of their grave; for a vigorous and original literature is impossible except to a strong, free, self-respecting people. The literature of a people must spring from the sense of its nationality; and nationality is impossible without self-respect, and self-respect is impossible without liberty."—McOorick's Tombstones of Scottish Martyrs.

Ritualism and its Martyrs.

Grace Greenwood, whose sharp and piercing many disguises, is in London, has looked into Ritualism, and gives us the following in a letter to the New York Times:

"A Sunday or two ago a singular incident occurred. The curate of the church of St. Alban's, which has been carrying on at an astonishing rate in the line of Ritualism, saw fit to rebel against the ruling of the authorities in forbidding him to wear a stole and cloth of gold cope while administering the sacrament. He felt the hardship and humiliation of his lot in being compelled to serve 'in a white surplice, like a common choir boy,' he said, and in the absence of the rector (who is suspended) he accepted, with the consent of his congregation, the invitation of the ritualistic rector of St. Vedas to make a grand religious visitation—to go out to the Supper of the Lord. So they all moved in a body down Newgate street and Holborn, a solemn procession, headed by the indignant, personted priest, to St. Vedas, which they filled to overflowing. 'Perhaps, as they passed in sight of Smithfield, they thought of the sturdy old martyrs, John Rogers and the rest of the two hundred and fifty Protestant worthies, who perished there, and a mild sentiment of martyrdom stole over them. Yet I doubt if even their leaders would have the pluck to don surplices of smoke and copes of flame, and calmly intone the service amid the incense of their own burning.'"

"Yet, without doubt, Ritualism is making in many directions here determined, though insidious advances. Most people speak lightly of it, as a piece of pious dilettantism—as being, in its most serious phase, a sort of æsthetic asceticism; but mild and dainty as it is, and apparently meek and patient, it is more to be dreaded than Fenianism or a French invasion. It is the old she wolf of Rome in a very sheepish disguise—that is all."

Evels of Gossip.

I have known a country society which withered away all to nothing under the dry rot of gossip only. Friendships as granite, dissolved to jelly, and then ran away to water, only because of this; love that promised a future as enduring as heaven and as stable as truth, evaporated into a morning mist that turned to a day's long tears; only because of this, a father and son were set foot to foot with the fiery breath of an anger that would never cool again between them; and a husband and his young wife, each straining at the hated leash which in the beginning had been the golden bondage of a God-blessed love, sat mournfully by the side of the grave where all their love and all their joy lay buried, and all because of this. I have seen faith transformed to mean doubt, joy give place to grim despair, and charity taken on itself the features of black malevolence, all because of the spell words of scandal, and magic mutterings of gossip. Great crimes work great wrong, and the deeper tragedies of human life spring from the larger passions; but woeeful and most mournful are the unatalogued tragedies that issue from gossip and detraction, most mournful the shipwreck often made of noble natures and lovely lives by the bitter winds and dead salt waters of slander. So easy to say, yet so hard to disprove—throwing on the innocent all the burden and the strain of demonstrating their innocence, and punishing them as guilty if unable to pluck out the slings they never see, and to silence words they never hear—gossip and slander are the deadliest and cruellest weapons man has ever forged for his brother's heart.

Wanted—Life.

Even the Jews are beginning to feel that a cold religion is not a comfortable one. The Jewish Messenger says:

"We want to see some Moodyism introduced into the Jewish form of service, some enthusiasm, some life—and congregational singing is a simple and commendable step in the right direction. Camp-meetings be sensational and ephemeral in their hold on sinners, but we have frequently wished that a little of their warmth were transferred to our synagogues and temples. If there were less scientific accuracy, and more general participation in the singing in our shrines, it would be better for all of us. A hymn set to a simple melody, sung by an entire congregation, with all their hearts and all their lungs, is true worship."

Religious Papers.

Every family should have one. Christians should take special pains to put them into irreligious families also. They need them, and the cost would be repaid an hundred fold in the religious interest they would awaken among the readers. Much of the irreligion in the land is the fruit of ignorance, or misapprehension. A good Christian paper in every family, would shortly work a reformation, and make them useful contributors of the churches. Secular papers are now publishing considerable religious matter, but by no means supply the place of religious journals. Those families who substitute the weekly Tribune, Witness, Post, or Herald for papers devoted to Christian purposes, make a great mistake. Some are doing it, because the weeklies, made up of matter from the dailies, are cheaper. That may be a good reason for taking both a religious and a secular paper; but a poor reason for dispensing with a religious one. Of course a weekly made up of matter from a daily, can be afforded for one half the cost of a regular religious paper, since it pays nothing for editorial work, nothing for putting the matter into type, making a saving of more than half the expense. Regular Christian weeklies are thus put to a disadvantage, yet the cost to their subscribers is small compared to the amount of solid reading matter obtained. Take and circulate a good, thorough, spiritual religious paper, brethren. Be not satisfied with a diluted, semi-religious, half-and-half affair; take both a secular and a religious paper, and you will find it will pay you well.

Upon High Mountains.

(From the German.) Upon high mountains lies eternal snow, Upon high souls lies an eternal woe. The snow, the grief, no sun can melt away, O'er glaciers leads no path of flowers gay. The purple glow which beams around the ice is but a reflex of a sun that dies. And rays that from a head like glory flow, Are but a bleeding heart's reflected glow.

Mæconas.

Mæconas, better known by his mother's name than that of Olinus, his father, came from an Etruscan stock that had given a line of masters to Arretium. He was better fitted for the council chamber than the field of battle, for the delicate manoeuvres of diplomacy than for the rough work of stormy times. During the years of civic struggle, and while the air was charged with thunder-clouds, we find him always, as the trusty agent of Octavianus, engaged on every important mission that needed address and address. His subtle tact and courtesies were tried with the same success upon Sextus Pompeius and on Antonius, when the confidence of each was to be won, or angry feelings charmed away, or the dangers of a coalition met. His honeyed words were found of not less avail with the populace of Rome, when scarcity and danger threatened, and the masters of legions were away. It seemed, indeed, after the empire was once established that his political career was closed, for he professed no high ambition, refused to wear the gilded chains of office, or to rise above the modest rank of knighthood. He seemed content with his great wealth (how gained we need not ask), with the social charms of literary circles and the refinements of luxurious ease, of which the Etruscans were proverbially fond. But his influence, though secret, was as potent as before. He was still the Emperor's chief adviser, counselling tact and moderation, ready to soothe his ruffled nerves when sick and weary with the cares of State. He was still serving on the secret mission, and one that lasted all his life. Keenly relishing the sweets of peace and all the refined and social pleasures which a great capital alone can furnish, haunted by no high principles to vex his Sybaritic ease, and gifted with a rare facility of winning words, he was peculiarly fitted to influence the tone of Roman circles and diffuse a grateful pride in the material blessings of imperial rule. He could sympathize with the weariness of men who had passed through long years of civic strife, and seen every cause betrayed by turns, and who craved only peace and quiet, with leisure to enjoy and forget. Intinct or policy soon led him to caress the poets of the day, for their social influence might be great. Their epigrams soon passed from mouth to mouth; a well-turned phrase or a bold satire lingered in the memory long after the sound of the verses died away; and the practice of public recitations gave them at times something of the power to catch the public ear which journalism has had in later days. So, from taste and policy alike, Mæconas played the part of patron of the arts and letters. He used the fine point and wit of Horace to sing the praises of the enlightened ruler who gave peace and plenty to the world, to scoff meantime at high ambitions, and play with the memory of fallen causes. The social philosophy of moderation soothed the self-respect of men who were sated with the fierce game of politics and war, and gladly saw their indolent and sceptical refinement reflected in the poet's graceful words. He used the nobler muse of Virgil to lead the fancy of the Romans back to the good old days, ere country life was deserted for the camp and city, suggested the subject of the Georgics to revive the old taste for husbandry and lead men to break up the waste land with the plough. He helped also to degrade that muse by leading it astray from warlike schemes to waste its melody and pathos in the un congenial attempt to throw a halo of heroic legend round the cradle of the Julian line. Other poets, too, Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid, paid dearly for the patronage which cramped their genius and befouled their taste, and in place of truer inspiration prompted chiefly amorous insipidities and senile adulation. For himself his chief aim in later life seemed careless ease, but that boon fled away from him the more he wooed it. The Emperor eyed Terentia, his wife, too fondly, and the injured husband consoled himself with the best philosophy he could. But she was a scold as well as a coquette, and now lured him to her side again, now drove him to despair with bitter words, till their quarrels passed at length beyond the house and became the common talk of all gossips of the town. As he was borne along the streets, lolling in his litter, in a dress loose with studied negligence, his fingers all bedecked with rings, with sunshades and parasites and jesters in his train, men asked each other with a smile what was the last news of the fickle couple—were they married or divorced again? At last his nerves gave way and sleep forsook him. In vain he had recourse to the pleasures of the table which his Tuscan nature loved, to the rare wines that might lull his cares to rest, to distant orchestras of soothing music. In earlier days he had set to tuneful verse what Seneca calls the shameful prayer, that his life might still be spared when health and comeliness forsook him. He lived long enough to feel the vanity of all his wishes. Nothing could cure his lingering agony of sleeplessness or drive the spectre of death from his bedside. But the end came at last. He passed away, and loyal even in his death, he left the Emperor his heir.—The Early Empire, by W. W. Capes, M.A.

SINCE it is more important how we live than how we die, and since death is merely the arrival at the end of a journey—the beginning, progress and history of a journey determining what the arrival is to be—we should do well to dismiss our borrowed troubles with regard to the manner of our departure out of the world, and be selfless only with regard to the right discharge of present duty.