

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON XLV.

SAUL'S CONVERSION.

COMMIT TO MEMORY, vs. 3-6. PARALLEL PASSAGES—Acts xvii. 6-9, and Acts xxvi. 11-14; Eph. iii. 7, 8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—A new heart also will I give you.—Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

For the persecuting career of Saul we turn to Acts viii. 1, 3, 4. Hence in v. 1, "yet," This man was well born, Phil. iii. 5; well-educated, Acts xxii. 3; zealous and sincere, Phil. iii. 6; influential, Acts ix. 1, 2, could "get letters" from the high priest, i. e., well-known, v. 18; very energetic, v. 22; and very determined against Christ and His cause (Acts xxvi. 11).

He was born in Tarsus (v. 11), in Cilicia (Acts xxii. 3), brought up a Pharisee (Acts xxiii. 6), and like his namesake in the Old Testament, a Benjamite (Rom. xi. 1). The Jews were numerous in Cilicia, and Saul's family was free and probably wealthy, as they could afford a good education to Saul, who had the best prospects as a learned man.

The points to be made clear to the pupils from this lesson are the following: (1) Saul has supplied to him what the other apostles enjoyed, that he might be an apostle. He saw the Lord, heard His voice, beheld His glory.

(2) Everything about his conversion shows its reality. It was against his education, tastes, interests, pursuits. He had no prepossession, and no selfish aim on the side of the despised Christians. He was publicly pledged to be their foe. It is impossible to account for his change on any common motive.

(3) But the conversion is like other conversions, in itself, namely, the turning of his heart and will towards Christ when he is revealed to him. The miraculous and supernatural did for him what education, friends, teachers, the Bible, have done for us. We are not in doubt about the reality, we claim, work and authority of Jesus. We are at the point already to which Saul had to be brought. Now, are we proceeding with him to trust and obey this Redeemer? What we know are we doing?

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Saul's occupation—his birth—training—tribe—character—mission—errand—arrest—on the way—mode of it—the fitness of the light—effect on him—his questions—replies—meaning of his condition for three days—effect of it—his relief—why Ananias—lesson of this—the hesitation of Ananias—how removed—the opened eyes—the precious gift—the new name—the confession of Christ—and the three great lessons for us.

LESSON XLVI.

SAUL'S EARLY MINISTRY.

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 20-28. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Gal. i. 17; Acts vi. 8, 9, 10, 11, and vii. 59.

SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With vs. 19, 20, read Acts xxvi. 10, 20; with v. 21, read Acts xxii. 19; with v. 22, read 2 Cor. xii. 9; with vs. 23, 24, read 2 Cor. xi. 32; with v. 25, compare Josh. ii. 16; with v. 26, read Gal. i. 18, 21, 22, 23, 24; with v. 27, compare Acts xiii. 1, 2; with vs. 28-30, read Acts xxi. 39.

GOLDEN TEXT.—He which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyeth.—Gal. i. 23.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—"Saints believe, and ye shall speak."

At men were left to choose their own path, Saul of Tarsus would never have been (a) a preacher of Christ, and (b) to the Gentiles. But Divine grace, besides saving him, wrought these two wonders for the proud Pharisee. Here we find him entering on his work at once, v. 19 being a note explanatory of his passage out of a preternatural into an ordinary condition, and introductory to the account of his first efforts as "meat" food; was strengthened by it, and regained his natural energy. He remained for a short time only, "certain days" or "some days," at Damascus, in fitting company, "with the disciples" (or "came to be with"—a new fellowship for him). Like all Christian workers, he has his encouragements and his discouragements. This grouping of the facts of the lesson may aid the memory and be a fitting division.

I. ENCOURAGEMENTS. It was a proof of his earnest sincerity that "straightway" he preached Christ (or Jesus, as many read) in the synagogues, "where opportunities were given to strangers to speak, and where piously-inclined Gentiles often attended. The tense of the verb for "preached" implies that he was in the habit of doing it while he remained. The one test question was, Is Jesus Divine, the Messiah or not? All turned on that point then, and Paul preached Him as "the Son of God."

(V. 21.) As might have been expected, great surprise was felt. Paul's course made the best kind of "sensation." We seem to listen to the conversation of the Christians and others at Damascus, and we learn from it: (1) That calling on Christ's name was a description of a believer; (2) That Paul's character and mission as persecutor, were known beforehand; and (3) That they could hardly believe this to be the same man.

(V. 22.) Power and strength are favorite words with Paul (Eph. vi. 10; 1 Tim. i. 12; Heb. xi. 34). He gained force of conviction, expression, and persuasion as he proceeded in his work. His first sermons were not his best. He evidently grew, and became a stronger man in the intellectual and moral sense in which we employ "strong." Work helps the worker. The Jews were bewildered (see Acts vi. 10) as he laid the prophecies of Scripture side by side with the facts of Christ's life and death.

II. HIS DISCOURAGEMENTS (v. 28). The "many days" are not precisely numbered, so that room is left for all the time spent in Damascus, and in that region, if necessary so to reckon. See Gal. i. 17, 18.

Damascus is unhealthy during part of the year, from the extensive irrigation,

honor put on him! A lowly teacher may be forming a mind that is to evangelize China. If any of us should visit Damascus, we could still walk up the "Straight street," now called the "Street of Bazaars," dividing the city into two parts. There could be no risk in going to Saul now, "for behold he prayeth," the sign of a new man, a God-fearing man. He was prepared in vision for Ananias' visit (v. 12) as Cornelius was for Peter's. His visit was expected, and his character was known at Damascus (vs. 13, 14). But all is changed (v. 16). He is a "chosen vessel" (no wonder Paul made much of God's choice, Eph. i. 4) to carry God's name far and wide (see the fulfillment of this to the end of the Acts). Then comes an antithesis, "He came to inflict suffering on you for my sake," but (v. 16) "I will show... he must suffer."

So Ananias simply obeyed; announced himself, calls Saul "brother," laid his hands on him, imparted the Holy Ghost, while his sight was restored, soul as it were, either literally or figuratively, falling from his eyes. There, in the house, probably at once, he was baptized, as all other believers in Jesus were, so confessing Christ.

To escape eye-disease and intermittent fever, the inhabitants who can afford it, go to high and dry ground at the unhealthy seasons. Divine Providence may have so ordered it that in this way Saul should have quiet and retirement for self-study, growth in knowledge, meditation, and that deepened spirituality which it is so hard to acquire in the stir and bustle of common life. His work would be resumed on his return to Damascus, and then came the effort of those who could not meet his arguments to silence him by murder. They counted on his trying to escape them; obtained from the city governor for a time a watch for the gates, and while they were actually guarding them incessantly, he was enabled to escape either by a *kiosk*, or chamber running from a house over the wall top, which is common enough, or (which is also to be seen in Damascus now) through a window in the wall, meant to give light to a house inside the wall and built against it. See the apostle's account of this in 2 Cor. xi. 32, and which serves to show that an account of an event may be true though not giving all the details, and is not put in doubt, but confirmed by other particulars given incidentally in another connection. "By the wall" is the very Greek phrase Paul employs in 2 Cor. xi. 32, and "basket" is the word employed in the Greek translation of Josh. ii. 15.

(V. 26.) A second discouragement met Paul at Jerusalem, in the very natural hesitation of the disciples to receive him. His name as a persecutor was better known, in the absence of means of spreading news such as we have now, than his name as a preacher. This would the more readily occur from a great part of the three years having been spent in retirement. He sought to "unite with the church" immediately on coming to Jerusalem—an example to all Christians. He did not say, "My letter is in Damascus, and I am looking about for a little." Bad reports travel fast and far, the good slowly. Even conversion will not save a man from the inconveniences that follow former follies.

(V. 27.) His difficulty here is removed by Barnabas (see Acts iv. 36, 37), who appears so characteristically here and elsewhere as a high-minded Christian gentleman. He took Saul as his companion, introduced him to the apostles themselves, told his story and secured for him their brotherly confidence. Saul was a converted man. He had obeyed the Lord faithfully. The Lord had talked with him and, says Dr. J. A. Alexander, "He to whom the ascended and exalted Saviour had appeared and spoken was fit company for any man." This settled the point.

(V. 28) shows him to us in close association with the Christian labourers at Jerusalem, where he had been known as a public and relentless foe of the Christians. That he was united with them in labour is set forth in

(V. 29, in Jerusalem, no less than at Damascus, and after some years as truly as in the flesh of new-born zeal, he preached boldly (same as in v. 21). The "Grecians" were Jews born outside of Palestine. Paul was one of them, and had their ear; they were more inquiring, possibly, than the untravelled Jews of the land. Stephen was in collision with them (Acts vi. 9). They were true to their character, and as they silenced Stephen, so they hoped to silence Saul. They "went about," i.e., laid plans, or undertook to kill him. Again discouragement is met, and again (v. 30) the danger is evaded. Common peril unites men together, and weakness makes them watchful and cautious, and sets them upon concerted action. The "brethren" had once before interposed with effect. They do so again. They brought him down (from Jerusalem) to the seaport Caesarea, whence he was enabled to sail to his native city Tarsus, where for the present he is left, and this chapter of his history closes. He had but fifteen days' visit to Jerusalem (Gal. i. 18).

The following points may be illustrated from this lesson: 1. God our Father brings us to the knowledge of Himself in Christ that we may labour for Him, as He gives opportunity.

2. He also gives the grace and strength we require; to him that hath is given.

3. Difficulties and dangers are no argument against our labouring; they are not to be counted, and in many instances are evidences that we are to labour elsewhere.

4. The main object to be lifted up by Christian ministers is Christ. That aspect of truth regarding Him which the times require is to be presented. Then, his mission as a divine Messiah was questioned by the world and urged by the apostles. Now, many admit His nature but do not receive Him. We must urge them to faith in Him.

5. Having come to the knowledge of Christ, and acquired, through Divine grace, a hope of eternal life, it is the duty of the believer to join himself to the Church. This duty is often neglected on the ground that "it is not necessary to salvation." But nothing can be more misleading than this plea. To join the Lord's people is necessary as obedience to the Lord. He holds His Church—which came out of His pierced side, as Eve out of Adam's—to be His bride, and He puts honor on her, on her ordinances and ministry, and no one can disregard these without dishonor to her Head and loss to himself.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Saul's earliest Christian friends—his work—where—his testimony—the effect—why natural—his growth—his influence—early opposition—in what form—how malice was defeated—mode of escape—first visit as a Christian—to Jerusalem—difficulty there—how overcome—testimony to his character—and work—effect of it—renewed efforts—the class addressed—their hostility—how displayed—how escaped, and the lessons to be learned from the passage.

THE 81-ton gun is exciting considerable attention in England. It has been removed from Woolwich to Shoeburyness for active trial. There, it has only broken windows and wrecked cottages by the shock of its explosion, and made spectators feel uncomfortable when its 1700 lb. shot went spinning over the waves on the "twist," promising no good to some steamers miles away.

Church Debts.—The object of contracting a church debt is but too often the desire of the builders to pamper their own pride and vain glory. They seek a costly church, with elaborate fittings, which they can claim as theirs. Now, putting aside every other consideration, we believe that it is not held to be particularly creditable among right-thinking people to shine in borrowed plumes. No lady would wish to appear in church with a shawl or a jacket which she had borrowed for the occasion, and which belonged to some one else. We fancy that very few clergymen would care to hire their surplices by the quarter. Yet the same people will sit very comfortably in a mortgaged pew, and kneel upon unpaid-for hassocks, and tread upon a deeply indebted carpet, and enjoy the dim, religious light that comes through panes of which forty per cent. belong to the church creditor. What is worse, they do not mean to pay for their luxuries, but to get the cost of them out of posterity or the public. If it were a question only of time, and all concerned were sincerely anxious to pay by instalments the cost which would come heavy in the lump, there would be less to be said about the matter. But the thing is not so. The congregation of a mortgaged church mean to throw the burden of payment on the "eloquent rector" or the "unrivalled choir," and meanwhile to enjoy their fine building and *et ceteras* at half the just price. This is not creditable to their gentlemanly and lady-like feelings.—Churchman.

Japanese Life.—In great essential points, the romance of the Japanese differs from that of Western nations—notably in the predominance given to man over woman. The noblest profession in the estimation of the Japanese is that of arms. The commonest soldier holds a loftier position than the wealthiest merchant; although with the destruction of the power of the old Daimios, and the consequent reform of the national army on the European model, much of this spirit has died out. Every young Samurai, or man of birth, learnt the use of the sword as soon as he could walk; and it was held as essential for a Japanese gentleman to know how to give and receive blows, as it is for an English gentleman to read and write. The sword was then all-powerful in the land; and many a bloody tale bears testimony to the abuses which sprang up from an almost universal habit of wearing it, and wielding it on very trifling provocation. It is now as much the exception to see a two-sworded swaggoner as it was once the rule. The men of Bizen and Satsuma, stern upholders of the old state of affairs, still affect the obsolete custom; but in Yedo or Yokohama, a man with his swords is stared at by foreigners, and laughed at by natives, as a man afraid to go abroad without them.

Hence, at an age when heroic deeds and chivalrous actions were the pride of the nations, the softer art of love became a matter of very secondary importance, and not, as with us, the keystone of poetry and romance. Love stories and songs are of course innumerable in Japanese literature; but every story and song is so framed as to bring out in striking relief, not the woman, but the man. There is an utter absence of that spirit of knight-errantry which makes our mediæval literature so charming. Japanese heroes would perform prodigies of valor in defence of a clan or a family; but in the cause of a woman, never. Take the well known story of Kompaohi and Komuraaki, so delightfully told by Mr. Mitford in his Tales of Old Japan. According to our ideas, Komurasaki, the woman, faithful and true to her lover in all his misfortunes, and dying on his grave, is the fine, pure character of the tale; but to a Japanese reader, Kompaohi, the robber and murderer, the cold and heartless villain, is the claimant for admiration and sympathy.

Woman—with the Japanese as with the Chinese, as with, indeed, most Oriental nations—is very far from sharing the importance of man in human creation. Newly-married couples pray for male offspring; and though it is admitted that woman is necessary in the formation of society, she is regarded rather as a privileged slave than as an equal—much less as invested with the attributes of superiority lavished on her by Western romance writers. So subordinate a part, indeed, does woman take in the every-day affairs of life, that till quite lately—till 1875—women were never allowed to appear on the theatrical stage, and men invariably played the female parts. The great difference, then, between the poetry and romance of the Japanese, as compared with our own, is that whilst our creations treat generally of love, chivalry, and the human sentiments, the Japanese devote themselves to the worship of nature and the supernatural. A reason for this may be found in the fact that Japanese life is altogether of an out-of-door character. To them the word "home"—or the nearest approach to it in their language—conveys none of the simple poetry so touching to Englishmen. There is nothing homely in a Japanese house. By the shifting of a few shutters it can be thrown open to the four winds of heaven; and although the greatest care is taken to keep the wood-work and matting spotlessly clean, a man is far prouder of the possession of a few square yards of garden, than of the noblest paternal residence without a tree or shrub. Of snugness, coziness, the charm of family meetings round a common board, they have no idea. A Japanese household is conducted in an irregular, disjointed style, very contrary to our notions of what a happy, comfortable home should be. Men and women eat when they are hungry, sleep when they are tired; if, after the labour of the day, the good man goes out and stops away all night, there is no anxiety on his behalf; and the same independence of action characterizes the life of the women.—All the Year Round.

COLONEL GORDON reached Marungo, on Mt. Kenia, on the 19th of July, and proposed to start for Mtea's capital, and leave a garrison of 150 men, by special desire of the King.

Scientific and Useful.

CORN BREAD.

Two cups of meal. One cup of wheat flour. One tablespoonful of sugar. One tablespoonful of salt. Two eggs, well beaten. Milk to make a rather stiff batter. Three teaspoonfuls of Sea Foam or other baking powder.

STREAMED PUDDING.

Three eggs; one tæcup of sweet milk; a pinch of salt; one teaspoonful cream tartar; one-half ditto soda; a little sugar, if preferred; one cup of fruit of any kind, and flour to make a stiff batter. Steam one hour, and eat with cream and sugar. Very nice; try it.

RAILROAD CAKE.

Two eggs. One cup of sugar. One-half cup sweet milk. One-half cup of butter. One teaspoonful cream of tartar. One-half teaspoonful of soda. One and one-half cups of flour. Beat the butter and sugar together first, then add flour, cream of tartar, soda, milk, and eggs. Bake in a quick oven.

CLEAN A CARPET.

Shake and beat it well; lay it on the floor and tack it firmly; then, with a clean flannel, wash it over with one quart of bull-dock's gall mixed with three quarts of soft cold water, and rub it off with a clean flannel or horse cloth. Any particularly dirty spot should be rubbed with pure gall.

OFFENSIVE BREATH.

Take from six to ten drops of the concentrated solution of chloride of soda in a wineglassful of pure spring water. Taken immediately after the ablutions of the morning are completed will sweeten the breath by disinfecting the stomach, which, far from being injured, will be benefited by the medicine. In some cases the odour from carious teeth is combined with that of the stomach. If the mouth is well rinsed with a teaspoonful of the solution of alum in a tumbler of water, the bad odour of the teeth will be removed.

THE EYES.

The eyes of many animals—those of cats, for instance—exhibit a peculiar brilliancy, which is particularly remarkable in the dusk. It was formerly thought that the eyes of such animals emitted light independently, as it was also thought that light could be emitted by the human eye, under the influence of passion. This brilliancy, however, in the eyes of these animals is caused by a carpet of glittering fibres, called the *tæpetum*, which lies behind the retina, and is a powerful reflector. In perfect darkness no light is observed in their eyes, a fact which has been established by very careful experiments; but, nevertheless, a very small amount of light is sufficient to produce the luminous appearance in them.—From "Observing the Interior of the Eye," in the Popular Science Monthly for October.

ANALYSIS OF THE HUMAN BREATH.

An account published in Nature of some experiments, made with a view to determine the organic matter of the human breath in health and disease, presents some facts of a peculiarly interesting nature. The breath of eleven healthy persons and of seventeen affected by disorders was examined, the persons being of different sexes and ages, and the time of day at which the breath was condensed varying. The vapor of the breath was condensed in a large glass flask surrounded by ice and salt, at a temperature of several degrees below zero, the fluid thus collected being then analyzed for free ammonia, urea, and kindred substances, also for organic ammonia. Among the various results of this examination may be mentioned the fact that, in both health and disease, the free ammonia varied considerably; the variation, however, could not be connected with the time of day, the fasting, or the full condition.

EFFECT OF TEA ON THE SKIN.

If you drop a few drops of strong tea upon a piece of iron, a knife blade for instance, the tannate of iron is formed, which is black. If you mix it with iron filings or pulverized iron, you can make a fair article of ink. If you mix it with fresh human blood, it forms with the iron of the blood the tannate of iron. Take human skin and let it soak for a time in strong tea, and it will become leather. Now, when we remember that the liquids which enter the stomach are rapidly absorbed by the veins and absorbents of the stomach, and enter into the circulation and are thrown out of the system by the skin, perspiration, and kidneys, it is probable that a drink so common as tea, and so abundantly used, will have some effect. Can it be possible that tannin, introduced with so much liquid producing perspiration, will have no effect upon the skin? Look at the tea-drinkers of Russia, the Chinese, and the old women of America, who have so long continued the habit of drinking strong tea. Are they not dark colored and leather-skinned? When young they were fair complexioned.

HOW TO PUT UP PICKLES.

The season is now at hand when every housekeeper is about "putting up" the year's supply of pickles. And there is nothing so world so aggravating to a thrifty wife as to find on opening her pickle jar, that instead of the firm, crisp and refreshing pickles, so much desired and looked forward to, she has for all her trouble, time, and money, simply a mass of soft, tasteless, and insipid rubbish, that has been rendered so by the use of vinegar lacking proper strength or containing all sorts of mineral acids and deleterious substances.

Four boiling salt water over the pickles, using a handful of salt to one gallon of water; let them stand over night, then drain them off thoroughly and cover them entirely with pure cider or wine vinegar; let them stand a few days, then scald with the vinegar, pour it off and cover them again with fresh vinegar, cold; spice to taste; a small piece of alum may be added to improve the color; keep your pickle jar well covered and you will have fine and crisp pickles for years.