

Our Young Folks.

Day Dreams.

Boys and girls dream a great deal, and that too in broad daylight. They dream of the fairies of their favorite stories; they dream of the countries of which they read, with their strange boasts and birds; they dream of being men and women, and doing wonderful deeds such as the great men and women who have lived did in their time.

They dream of being men and women who have lived did in their time. People sometimes laugh at these dreams and call them "air castles," meaning of course, that they will never come true.

Some of them can't, of course, come true, as we all know when we dream them. We never expect a fairy to meet us in the woods or on the bank of the river. Indeed, we should be very surprised if anything of the kind were to happen.

There are dreams, then, that may come true, that are, in fact, but the shadows of things that are going to be, one of these days. Men and women, as well as boys and girls, dream such dreams.

Perhaps we ought not to call them dreams, for dreams come to us in the night without being called, but these imaginings wait for an invitation.

They are unpainted pictures, unwritten poems, and unbuilt palaces. You must have read the story of Michael Angelo, how he found among the rubbish of a ruin a block of marble that the rest of the sculptors had thought worthless, and said, "There is an angel in it."

You have, perhaps, read how Mozart used to hear his symphonies in his mind before they were written, so that when he came to write he only had to remember what he had just heard.

Would you like to know how to make a dream come true? Let me tell you about Martin Luther. When he was a little boy singing in the streets he used to say that he wanted to be a priest.

When he was a little boy singing in the streets he used to say that he wanted to be a priest. When his foster father sent him to school he studied with all his might, because he wanted to be a priest.

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON III.

OMRI AND AHAB. (1 Kings xv. 25-27, 33, 34; 2 Kings xviii. 9, 10.)

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 25, 30, 33. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—2 Kings xviii. 9; Micah vi. 16; with v. 24, read Acts viii. 5; with vs. 25-27, read Prov. xvi. 12, and compare with vs. 13, 14; with v. 20, read 2 Chron. xxi. 13; with v. 30, read Jer. xxii. 22; with v. 32, 33, read Ex. xxxiv. 14, and with v. 34, read Josh. vi. 26.

The following persons require to be known: Omri, Jeroboam, Ahab, Jezebel, Hiel, Josabab.

The following places are to be ascertained: Tirzah, Samaria, Zidon (v. 31), Jericho.

GOLDEN TEXT.—But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.—2 Tim. iii. 13. CENTRAL TRUTH.—Wicked men grow worse and worse.

This lesson is occupied with a melancholy history. It illustrates the progress of evil, the folly of wickedness, the danger of bad connections, and the Divine patience. With how much the God of Israel bore long! (Neh. ix. 17.)

Jeroboam was a leader out of the right way. Nadab (1 Kings xv. 25) followed his father. Baasha killed him (1 Kings xv. 28) and reigned, but equally wickedly (1 Kings xv. 34). Then came (1 Kings xvi. 8) Elah, who was assassinated, while intoxicated, by Zimri (1 Kings xvi. 9), who lived long enough to massacre all the house of Baasha, in punishment by God for their corrupting influence (1 Kings xvi. 13).

He died a traitor's death (vs. 19, 20), burning the palace over his own head, and giving place to Omri, who was captain of the host (v. 16), and who put down a rival, Tibni (v. 21). But all the previous tragedies were without any effect on him. He was "worse than all" (v. 25). On his death, his son Ahab succeeded (v. 28), and dared new forms of crime.

In v. 23, 24, we have Omri's success. His previous career is learned from the preceding verses, which should be studied. He was captain of the host (v. 16) under Elah. On the murder of Elah, and the seizure of the throne by Zimri, who made Tirzah his capital (v. 16), the army which was just then besieging Gibbethon proclaimed their general king, and quitting Gibbethon, besieged Tirzah, and it (v. 18). After subduing another aspirant to the throne (v. 21), whose attempt shows how the kingdom was being demoralized, Omri began his reign, and founded the third dynasty. From a comparison of v. 16 with v. 28, it has been inferred that this war lasted four years. Tirzah probably was not a strong place, and such a king required a capital that could be easily defended. This doubtless led to his setting up a new civil capital. (Bethel remained the religious capital.)

There was a rich man otherwise unknown (how many are only by their possessions!)—called Shemer, owner of a fertile, beautiful, and tolerably high hill, standing in a basin surrounded by hills yet higher. It is about six miles from Shechem, which was the ancient capital of the people. He paid for it two talents of silver, roughly estimated at four thousand dollars in gold, erected a city, which he called from the former owner, and made his capital, reigning there six years. There he died and was buried. The after history of Samaria is closely linked with the history of the kingdom of Israel. Its erection marks a new departure in policy, and a wider separation from the ancient traditions of the kingdom.

The next topic to be noticed is THE CHARACTER of the king. It was religiously bad (v. 25)—worse than that of his predecessors. There was less excuse, too, for him than for them. He had seen the evil that came upon them, and he had been favored, in God's providence, with marked success. His sin was therefore aggravated. The families of Jeroboam and of Baasha had been destroyed. (See v. 1-4, and 11, and 1 Kings xv. 11.) And his course as a king, outside his kingdom, seems to have been unjudicious. For example, we learn incidentally that he made a treaty with the king of Damascus (1 Kings xx. 34), giving up to him some cities—probably to buy his alliance—and "making streets" (which is supposed to mean providing a residence for a Syrian embassy) in Damascus. This was humiliating to Israel; but sin and digression are apt to go together, just as loyalty to God and honor go hand in hand. Yet he had a certain kind of "might" (v. 27), for he left the kingdom without opposition to his son Ahab, and the family he founded reigned for three more generations, till exterminated by Jehu. He was polite and unprincipled, and doubtless kept on good terms with all around him he made the alliance which led to Baal-worship, and which (B.C. 919 Omri was reigning; Micah flourished B.C. 710) two hundred years after, Micah (vi. 16) denounced as the "Statutes of Omri."

His son succeeded in peace, and pursued to its natural end the policy of his father (v. 29). He, again, was worse than his father. Previous Kings had done no more than maintain the calf-worship, after Jeroboam's example; but Ahab went further. The image worship was bad enough ("as if it had been a light thing," v. 31), but he married Jezebel, a princess of Zidon, a Baal-worshipper, and followed his wife's way of worship—a thing which came easily to one of his character, after having deliberately broken the Mosaic law in the matter of marriage. What more natural than to break with a religion which he had broken, and whose penalties must have troubled his conscience. Having taken the step, he could urge, doubtless, the desirableness of family peace. His wife had strong convictions, or feelings, etc.; he had not. And besides, it would be for his worldly advantage. It was desirable to keep on good terms with the kings round about. The character of his father-in-law, according to Josephus, was bad (a fratricide and usurper). He was ambitious, and probably he aimed only at getting a "good match" for his daughter. Her god, the Baal, or

the lord, called Belus, Bel, by the Babylonians (Isa. xlv. 1, and Jer. li. 44), was the sun-god the source of life and fruitfulness, and was so worshipped. We need not wonder at the ideas of that time, when we find the following account of creation given by a modern scientist (Oken, died 1851): "Light shines upon the water, and it is salted; light shines upon the salted sea, and it lives." When the "world by wisdom does not know God," it would be natural in the need of some object, to worship light, and the sun is its natural representative. Columns and pillars were set up (2 Kings iii. 2) rather than statues, though our version commonly speaks of them as "images." The images came later; so the "grove" seems to be really the asherah, or image, or pillar of the Astarte, the fabled wife of Baal. (See 2 Kings xxi. 7, and xxiii. 6; Ex. xxxiv. 18. Actual groves, however, were the earliest worshipping places, at least of false gods. When men think of God as like to themselves, they sink in their forms of worship. Lust and nameless crimes came to be connected with this worship. No wonder that it is added, "Ahab did more to provoke," &c. (v. 33).

An instance is given of the general disregard of God's word in Israel at this time. Jericho was rebuilt as a fortification. It was on Ephraim's border (Josh. xvi. 7), and was allotted to the Benjaminites (Josh. xviii. 21). When they parted from Judah, of course it became a part of Israel's possessions, and being a frontier, a strong place, and commanding the passage of the Jordan, it was an object to strengthen it. No doubt Hiel the Bethelite, who did it had the approval and support of Ahab; but the word of the Lord was not to be set at defiance with impunity. He showed by the exact fulfilment of His word as to the circumstances, that the curse also might be expected to come. (Compare with this the prophecy of Joshua vi. 26.)

We may learn from these brief Chronicles: (a) The nature of evil. It grows—advances step by step—one concession to it being made the ground of a second. First came separate places of national worship. Then new and forbidden representations. Then Baal and Astarte.

(b) How social influences and religious blend, and so social matters need to be looked to. The wife of Ahab is the daughter of a priest of Baal, and her influence goes toward perverting Israel. (c) The nature of apostasy from God. It was not needful to throw off all honor to Jehovah, though that was done in time. It was enough to set up false gods "besides" Him. This denies His supremacy, makes Him not the God of heaven and earth, but one of several. The next step is to oppose and persecute those who will own and worship Him.

(d) The next thing to expect is a Jehu, though in great patience God may "bear long."

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

The father ruling families—the history of Omri—position—how called to the kingdom—first steps—fall of Tirzah, and the rival king—his accession—first capital—second—from whom site obtained—name perpetuated—reasons for choosing—character of the King—his success—his son's name—marriage—evil of it—his character—influence—names of new objects of worship—effect—a "sign of the times"—Joshua's prediction—how fulfilled—probable reason for rebuilding—and lessons to be learnt.

Muscular Christianity.

The two great men of the Brooklyn pulpit are splendid men physically, and they never could have been the powers they are had they been otherwise. Dr. Chapin and Robert Collyer, though fine and strong in intellectual fibre, are not so exceptionally remarkable in that particular as to account for their long, strong hold upon the public mind. The Boston preachers who draw the largest crowds, Mr. Phillips Brooks and Mr. Murray, are men of entirely exceptional physique—hard to be matched anywhere in the world, for size and strength. It is an inspiration to look at them. Their presence is magnetic. They exercise a charm which can only come from complete manhood—the equipoise of thought and intent with voice and might. If we turn to our own city, and see where the crowds are, we shall find them at Dr. Hall's and Dr. Taylor's. Mr. Hopworth's church, too, is usually a crowded one. It is no dishonor to these men to say that the people do not flock to them because they preach the best sermons to be heard in New York. There are a dozen pulpits furnished with as good brains as these. The simple truth is that if they were called upon to preach with a slender physique and a weak voice, their crowds would leave them. They are large, strong, healthy men. America does not produce enough of these, and so we were obliged to import some of them. The Brick Church has called a pastor from London, and he is one of the same kind—strong enough not only to do an immense amount of pastoral work, but to preach without fatigue, perform the duty of a professorship, take charge of school matters in his own district, and carry through all the side work that comes to a man in his position. The church went for that man simply because it could not find him here. It is no dishonor to our theological institutions to go out of the country for such men, because America does not raise enough of them for her own use. When we produce them in sufficient numbers, we shall not be obliged to import them. And when we fully comprehend the fact that the body has quite as much to do with pulpit usefulness as the heart and the mind, and that one of the first conditions of that usefulness is high physical vitality, we shall give physical culture the attention that it demands, and ultimately raise our own preachers.—Dr. J. G. Holland, in Scribner for January.

Is my heart made of stone, that it can read of the sorrows of Christ and not melt within me? Blessed Jesus, smite the rock, and let it pour out new streams of repentance and of affectionate gratitude. I was dead, and Christ died to bring me to life again.—Watts.

Powerful Teaching.

BY THE REV. J. A. R. DICKSON.

That there is such a thing as powerful teaching in the class as well as powerful preaching in the pulpit, no one will dispute. Teaching that enlightens the mind, that quickens the soul, that renews the life. In one word, teaching instinct with divine energy. Now, what is the grand element in such teaching? We answer, prayer. Such teaching is steeped in prayer; begun, carried on, and followed with prayer. The lessons is studied in the spirit and power of prayer, even though that extend through the whole week, as it ought to do. The teaching is done with uplifted heart to Him who can make the world effectual unto salvation. And after it has been taught, it is followed by prayer that it may prosper in the thing whereto God has sent it. Such teaching is always powerful teaching, because through prayer it rests entirely upon the gracious power of God; and since God is faithful and cannot deny himself, it is therefore armed with power.

Very probably, much careful attention is given to the preparation of the scholar, and to its right impartation to the scholars; what is wanted in addition to this, urgently wanted, is, that it all be invested and penetrated by prayer; that clothes it with power. A prayerless ministry of the word is always a powerless ministry. The Christian in the ordinary business of life is to be instant in prayer; to pray without ceasing,—but how should this spirit concentrate and deepen when he comes to the performance of his high duty, that touches the salvation of the soul? Our Lord, who is our great example in all Christian service, began and followed all his work by prayer. The apostles gave themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Observe the place prayer held in their work; it was principal! A very notable fact that,—a fact, too, that gives us the key to their marvelous successes. They knew that God gave the increase. They knew that it was not merely by intellectual might nor by illustrative and expository power that good results followed their preaching and teaching, but by the work of God's Spirit upon the heart, opening the heart and applying the truth, therefore they gave themselves continually to prayer, etc.

Payson gives us his experience thus: "Since I began to beg God's blessing on my studies, I have done more in one week than in the whole year before. Surely it is good to draw near to God at all times." "Was quite dull and lifeless in prayer, and in consequence had no success in study." He had three rules for the regulation of his life; one of them was this, "To consider everything as unlawful which indisposes me for prayer and interrupts communion with God." Payson was thus careful of his devotional spirit because he knew how everything depended upon it. Writing to a brother minister he says: "If we would do much for God, we must ask much of God; we must be men of prayer; we must, almost literally, pray without ceasing. You have, doubtless, met with Luther's remark, 'Three things make a divine—prayer, meditation and temptation.' My dear brother, I cannot insist on this too much. Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, and the third thing necessary for a minister, especially in season of revival. The longer you live in the ministry, the more deeply, I am persuaded, you will be convinced of this. Pray, then, my dear brother, pray, pray, pray."

Dr. Andrew Bonar tells us that Mc-Cheyne had constantly on his lips that mighty, arduous prayer of Rowland Hill, "Master, help!" This was the secret of his power—a power that is felt far and wide to this day, and will be to the end, for a prayerful and concentrated spirit is imperishable.

George Whitfield, who had, as the fruit of his faithful ministry, "a constant levee of wounded souls," tells us that he read the Holy Scriptures upon his knees, laying aside all other books, and praying over, if possible, every line and word. "This proved, he says, 'meat indeed, and drink indeed, to my soul. I daily received fresh life, light, and power from above. I got more true knowledge from reading the book of God in one month than I ever could have acquired from all the writings of men.'"

Robert Trail, one of the old Scot's worthies, in a sermon on the question, "By what means may ministers best win souls," says, "Ministers must pray much if they would be successful. . . . A minister should pray for a blessing on the word; and he should be much in seeking God particularly for the people. It may be this may be the reason why some ministers of meaner gifts and parts are more successful than some that are far above them in abilities; not because they preach better, so much as because they pray more. Many good sermons are lost for lack of much prayer in study."

As another illustration of this important truth, we may add this story which is told of Wilberforce. He was introduced, by his uncle, when only twelve years old, to the good John Newton. Fifteen years after, when his life had been dedicated to the Master, he sought again the society of this excellent minister. What was his surprise to learn that from that early introduction Mr. Newton had never ceased to pray for him in private! And how was the good old man's heart gladdened to see this blessed answer to his prayer of fifteen years!

Oh, it is prayer that engages God on the side of the teacher! and clothes his word with enlightening, regenerating, saving power. Let us never forget that. It secures those conditions that are favorable to success, it opens the eyes of the understanding to perceive and handle the truth aright, it fills the heart with love, it tunes the tongue to tenderness, it inspires the word spoken with wisdom, and it prepares the heart of the hearer to receive it gladly. We may set this down as an unquestionable fact, and as a grand maxim in all Christian ministry, that a prayerful teacher is always a powerful teacher.—S. S. Times. Toronto, Ont.

The Eternal Home.

BY J. FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER.

Alone! to land upon that shore! With no one sight that we have seen before— Things of a different hue, And sounds all strange, and new No focus of earth our fancy to arrest, But to begin alone that mighty change!

Alone to land alone upon that shore, knowing so well we are never to more. No voice or face of friend, None with us to attend! Our disembarking on that awful strand, But to arrive alone in such a land!

Alone? No! God hath been there long before, Eternally hath waited on that shore For us who were to come To our eternal home! O, is He not the life-long Friend we know More privately than any friend below?

Alone? The God we trust in that shore, The Faithful One, whom we have trusted more In trials and in woes, Than we have trusted those On whom we leaned most in our earthly strife O, we shall trust Him more in that new life!

So not alone we land upon that shore, I will be as though we had been there before, We shall meet more we know Than we can meet below, And find our rest like some returning dove— Our home at once with the Eternal Love!

Compulsory Education in Scotland and England.

The Act by which education in Scotland was made compulsory, has now been in operation more than three years, having been passed in 1872. By it Scotland adopted the principle of universal statutory compulsion, and school boards were established in every parish, whose duty it was to see that all children between five and thirteen attended school with reasonable regularity. A paper read the other day by Dr. William Jack before the economic section of the British Association gives some statistics of the working of compulsory education in Scotland and elsewhere. It appears that in three years under the compulsory law the average school attendance of Scotland has increased by 90 000 children, being an increase of 42 per cent. In England, where a permissive compulsory law has been in operation for the past years, the results are equally favorable. In the year before that Act came into operation the average attendance of day scholars was 1,152,388, or one in 19 of the population, while it is now 1,887,180, or one in 18 of the population. In other words it has risen 685,000, or 60 per cent. in five years.

But while these are the general results, the results obtained for the working of the compulsory clauses in the great cities, London, Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool, are far more remarkable. In London, up to midsummer, in 1875, or in four years, the average attendance on efficient schools had risen by 69 per cent. The increase in attendance on elementary schools in Liverpool in five years was 21 per cent. In Birmingham in five and a half years the apparent increase had been 188 per cent.; but, says Dr. Jack, "when account was taken of half-timers, according to the modes of computation of the department, the increase in these five and a half years was the prodigious one of 160 per cent." The proportion of average attendance to the roll attendance had also risen from 62 to 70 per cent., and it is a well deserved compliment to say that "those magnificent results would make the record of the first two School Boards of Birmingham memorable in the educational annals of England." In Glasgow "the rise in two years has been 12,572, or 42 per cent.—a rate almost as remarkable as that of Birmingham. The average attendance amounted to 70 per cent. in 1872, 76 per cent. in 1874, 78 per cent. in 1875, of the roll attendance."

These are remarkable figures and prove that the system of compulsory education is doing good work in England and Scotland. A few years of such a system will entirely remove the reproach of being illiterate from the masses of these countries, and the result cannot fail to be most beneficial to the nation at large.

The Pool of Siloam Now.

On the way to the Pool of Siloam we passed the village of Siloam, which is inhabited by about a thousand Moslems—a nest of stone huts and clinging to the side-hill, and exactly the gray color of its stones. The occupation of the inhabitants appears to be begging, and hunting for old copper coins, mites, and other pieces of Jewish money. These relics they pressed upon us with utmost urgency. It was easier to satisfy the beggars than the traders, who sailed out upon us like hungry wolves from their caves. There is a great choice of disagreeable places in the East, but I cannot now think of any that I should not prefer as a residence to Siloam.

The Pool of Siloam, magnified in my infant mind as "Siloam's shady rill," is an unattractive sink-hole of dirty water, surrounded by modern masonry. The valley here is very stony. Just below we came to Solomon's Garden, and arid spot, with patches of stone walls, struggling to be a vegetable garden, and somewhat green with lettuce and Jerusalem artichokes. I have no doubt it was quite another thing when Solomon and some of his wives used to walk here in the cool of the day, and even when Shallum, the son of Colchesh, set up "the wall of the Pool of Siloah by the king's garden."—Charles Dudley Warner, in the Atlantic for October.

Do you ever know anybody to stick to any kind of business, no matter how unpromising, ten years, at most, who did not prosper? Not one. No matter how hard it may be in the beginning—if he sticks to it earnestly and faithfully, and tried nothing else, no matter how hard he may have found it to keep his head above water; still, if he persevered, he always came out right in the long run. Kites rise against, not with, the wind. Even a head wind is better than nothing. No man ever worked his voyage in dead calm. The best way for everything, in the long run, is a side wind. If it blows at, how is he to get back?