

Our Young Folks.

CATCH THE SUNSHINE.

Be not gloomy! Catch the sunshine!
Let it brighten all your way,
As through life you onward journey,
Catch the sunshine day by day.
Lead a life as glad as may be,
Give not way to dark despair;
Sorrow courted soon grows gasping,
Marking every day with care.
Catch the sunshine that hope giveth,
Use it as your daily fare.

SOME GENTLE DEEDS.

A young mason, many years ago, had his hand crushed by a stone, and went to the Glasgow Infirmary to have it dressed. A young doctor there—an ungentle student—tore off the bandage hastily. That is a great cruelty when the hand is sore with open wounds. The pain was worse than having the hand crushed at first. And though the lad kept down his crying when he was with the doctor, he no soon-er got out than he turned into a court and sat on some steps inside where he could be out of sight, and burst into sobs. But on that stair dwelt a very gentle lady. She heard the sobbing and came down to see the sufferer. Then she brought him into her into her house, spoke kindly to him—like a mother—made some tea for him, and told him to come to her every day before he went to have his hand dressed. And day by day this mother-hearted lady soaked the bandages in warm water, and made them easy to come off. And this she did to this perfect stranger till the hand was well. Perhaps it does not seem a very great thing to do, but it was a very kind thing. And it was all she was able to do. She did what she could. And the young mason never forgot her kindness. He became a life-long friend to her. And when she was old and lonely he often visited her, and his visits cheered her till she died.

Another gentle deed comes into my memory out of a story of school life. It was a school of black children in Jamaica. A friend of my own was master. He had made a law that every lie told in the school should be punished by seven strokes on the palm with a strap. One day Lottie Paul told a lie, and was called up to receive the seven strokes. Lottie was a poor little thing, and pain was terrible to her. But the master must enforce his law. Untruth is a very evil thing in a school, or in a child's life. So Lottie had to hold out her hand and receive the seven strokes. But her cry of pain when she received the first went to the master's heart. He could not go on with her punishment. He could not pass by her sin. And this is what he did. He looked to the benches on which the boys were seated, and asked, "Is there any boy will bear the rest of Lottie's punishment?" And as soon as the words were out of his lips, up started a bright little fellow, called Jim, and said, "Please, sir, I will!" And he stepped from his seat up to the desk, and received, without a cry, the six remaining strokes.

What moved this brave boy to bear Lottie's punishment? It was the gentle heart. And it was the vision of a heart gentler still, but gentle with the same kind of gentleness which filled the master's eyes with tears that day, and made him close his books and bring his scholars round about his desk, and tell them of the Gentle One, who long ago bore the punishment of us all.

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA.

The scenery from the Great Wall is very fine. The wall is a dividing line between the high, rugged hills of China, which tower above us on the one hand, and the great sandy plains of Mongolia on the other, with dim mountain-summits beyond in the far distance. Over these barren, rocky spurs and acclivities, ascending to their very summits, winding about in irregular curves and zigzags, its serried battlements clear-cut against the sky on the topmost ridges, descending into dark gullies to appear again rising on the other side, the

endless line of massive stone and brick runs on and on until lost to sight behind the farthest range. And so it goes for miles and miles, eastward to the Pechili Gulf, and westward, mostly in two great, rambling lines, along the border of the Gobi Desert and Kansu, until it ends among the foot-hills of the Nan Shan range. However we may regard it, whether as a grand conception for the defence of an empire, as an engineering feat, or merely as a result of the persistent application of human labour, it is a stupendous work. No achievement of the present time compares with it in magnitude.

But it has outlived its usefulness. The powerful Tartar and Mongol hordes, whose sudden raids and invasions it was built to resist, are no more to be feared. The great Genghis and Kublai could not lead their people to gory conquest now as they did centuries ago. The Chinese civilization has endured, while the once conquering Mongols, the people who in their brightest days established an empire from the Black Sea to the China coast, and a court at Peking of such luxury and splendor as Marco Polo described, are now doomed to pass away, leaving nothing behind them but the traditions and records and ruins of a brilliant past. The wall stands as a sharp line of division between the tribes of the north and the Chinese. The latter, though repeatedly subdued, and forced to bear a foreign yoke, have shown an irrepressible vitality to rise like a phoenix, and to reassert their supremacy and the superiority of their civilization.—The Century.

TEACH GIRLS HOW TO USE MONEY.

Would it not be wise if some exercises in the mysteries of money were added to the curriculum of every girl's studies? A boy finds it all out by actual contact with the public as soon as he is out and a part of it; but a girl may become a mature woman, shrinking then through the habit of long protection, and be thrown on the mercies of the world with her money to fall the prey to the first cheat and cozen. She is taught at school the spectre of the stars, and the map of Mars; what pity that she should not be instructed in the workings of life on the planet where she lives! That a knowledge of the nature and meaning and care of money should be made a part of every girl's education is growing more and more evident in this age of enlargement and prosperity, which puts money into the hands of so many women. And in the coming century, the woman's century, as it is already called, in which so many women will be workers and earners of money, it is all the more important, in order that they may be neither handicapped nor too far outstripped, that they should be well instructed as to business movements and investments, that they may be directed in the right way before they set out to earn.—Harper's Bazar.

In the little town of Sonneberg, in Thuringia, twenty five million dozen dolls are made every year, each one of the twelve thousand inhabitants of the place being in the business. The children on their way to school call for or deliver work; the shoemaker makes the tiny shoes; the barber works on the dolls' wigs; the butcher sells suet to the dolls' gluemaker; the tailor and seamstress sell "pieces" to the dolls' dressmaker, and so on through the whole list of tradesmen. Five large firms control the business, and through these sales are annually made in America to the amount of twelve million dollars. But this vast amount of business is far from pleasing or profitable to the poor mechanics who work at this trade. A girl who goes into the factory at the age of fourteen receives seventy-five cents a week, and ten years later considers herself fortunate if she attains the maximum of \$2.50; and the man who receives a dollar a day for making dolls' eyes is said to be an object of envy. A family can only live when all of its members work, and, as one might suppose, they are miserably clothed and insufficiently fed.

Teacher and Scholar.

FEB. 2,
1893.]

NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.

{ Neh. 1,
1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Lord be thou my helper.—Ps. 30; or.

About 70 years intervene between the last lesson and this. In this interval falls what is recorded in Esther. Also a second band of returning Jews had been led back to Judea, some 13 years previously by Ezra. An account of his labours is given Ezra, 7-10. The present lesson tells how Nehemiah's heart is stirred up, so that he devotes himself to the restoration of Jerusalem. As cupbearer at the Persian Court he enjoyed the special confidence of the king, and occupied an influential position as courtier and statesman. He was pious, prudent, patriotic and unselfish. In this book, except in chaps. 8-10, Nehemiah speak throughout in the first person. It has three main divisions, (1) ch. 1-7 Nehemiah labors in fortifying Jerusalem. (2) ch. 8-10. Solemn divine service conducted by Ezra. (3) 11-13. Miscellaneous, ending with a second visit paid by Nehemiah to Jerusalem.

1. Tidings from Judea.—Unlike the other historical books of the Old Testament, this commences with a title that names the author. The date is the ninth month (Nov.—Dec.), in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, ch. 2.1 (445 B. C.), who was grandson of Darius, under whom the temple was completed, and son of the Ahasuerus in the book of Esther. Though born in exile, Nehemiah was deeply interested in all connected with Judea. The arrival of several men from Judah, among them his own brother, Hanani, (ch. 7:2), gave him an opportunity of inquiring concerning Jerusalem and the Jews that had escaped, for thus the pious heart in exile regarded those Jews who had returned to the old country. The answer is disheartening. We learn, indeed, from this book itself that the community had made some progress (ch. 13, 8, 31, 32; 13, 15, 16). But, notwithstanding, the remnant in the province (Palestine was now a province of Persia) are reported in affliction, small in numbers, heavily burdened as subjects, opposed by local enemies, apathetic and self-seeking; they are in addition exposed to reproach, alike from other residents and subordinate officials, by the desolate condition of their city. The walls which Nebuchadnezzar had broken down 142 years before, (2 Kgs. 25, 10), and which the Jews had vainly attempted to rebuild (Ezra 4, 7) still remained a heap of ruins, and no restoration had been made of the burnt gates.

2. Effect of the Tidings.—The tidings so strongly appealed to the patriotism and piety of Nehemiah, that like other exiles (Ps. 137:1) he sat down and wept, with a sorrow intensified by the thought that so little result had followed the recent efforts of Ezra (Ezra 7-10). For a time seemingly, he withdrew from court duties. His religious sorrow found expression in fasting and prayer. Except on the great day of atonement, fasting was not enjoined in the Mosaic law, but from the time of the captivity it became a not infrequent expression of deep grief or anxious foreboding (Dan. 9,3: 10, 3; Esther 4, 16; Ezra 10, 6).

3. Prayer of Nehemiah.—This probably is the substance of what Nehemiah was accustomed to pray day by day, until the answer commenced (ch. 2). It embraces the several parts of true prayer. It commences with adoration of Jehovah. As the God of heaven, in distinction from gods of the earth, great and terrible (or awe-inspiring), he is to be approached with reverence (Ps. 89, 7). The prayer passes to invocation to hear him as the representative of the children of Israel, who like himself are Jehovah's servants. Importunity and earnestness are shewn in the full attention besought (1 Kgs. 8, 29, 52), and in the continuous day and night prayer. This was no vain repetition, when the keenly sensitive spirit gave life to every utterance. The invocation passes into confession, an acknowledgment that the cause of their troubles lay in their own sinfulness. Nehemiah not only joins himself with the people, but expressly and special-

ly confesses the sins of himself and his father's house. The mention of his family may indicate that it was conspicuous among the Jews, (ch. 2, 3, 5), and give some probability to the supposition that he belonged to the royal tribe of Judah. In more detail, their corruption and disobedience are acknowledged, the various words designating God's law being practically synonymous. Next follows a two-fold plea. He pleads God's promise (vv. 8, 9), to gather His people from every quarter, when they turn to Him. The words are not an exact quotation, but substantially epitomize such passages as Lev. 26, 27-30, 33-45; Deut. 4, 25-31; 30, 1-5. This is further enforced by pleading God's past mercy. His great power had already been exercised in their behalf in the deliverance from Egypt, and many times since. In this was shewn that He still regarded them as His servants, and His people. In both parts of the plea Nehemiah takes his encouragement from God only. Then, joining with himself all who delight to fear Jehovah's name, he formulates his petition, that He in whose hands are the hearts of kings, will move King Artaxerxes, to favor his wishes, and empower him to restore Jerusalem. Earnest prayer thus voices itself in clear-cut, definite petition.

Lessons.—True religion shews itself in identification with God's people and work. That prayer is best, which has most of God in it. Nehemiah is an example of comprehensiveness, earnestness and perseverance in prayer.

NORTHERN SONG BIRDS.

We have no regular night-singers in Michigan, and, so far as I am able to learn, America does not equal the Old World nightingale, although we have diurnal songsters which excel. The famous English naturalist, Gilbert White, records three species of birds which sing at night in the British Isles. They are the reed-sparrow, which sings among the reeds and willows, the woodlark, singing in mid-air, and the nightingale, as Milton describes it,—

"In shadiest covert hid."

There are several species of owls, which roll forth or screech out their notes at night, and also numerous shore-birds and water-fowl that issue their varied calls, and especially these latter are to be heard during the season of migration, as most birds are partial to night travel spring and autumn. Then, too, our well-known whip-poor-will confines his not unmusical but monotonous jargon to the hours of darkness, while the scream of the night-hawk breaks on the ear between the setting and rising of the sun. But these birds are not, strictly speaking, songsters, although their notes undoubtedly fill their requirements as to harmony and expression. The plain, domestic little chipping sparrow sometimes favours us with its simple reverberating chatter in the darkest of nights. The notes hardly deserve the name of song, but heard issuing from the surrounding gloom, the simple refrain commands our attention from its oddity at the unusual hour. The wood-peewee not rarely quavers forth its plaintive effort, sounding in the deep shade like a wail from a departed spirit. This favourite singer is a remarkably early riser, as he is also late in going to rest, and I have sometimes thought that his musical efforts at night were the result of an error on his part—an idea strengthened by the fact that the notes are rarely heard more than once during the night, and moreover the song is only occasional. Two others, which are sometimes heard to burst forth in ecstatic melody, are the hermit and Swainson's thrushes. They are transients in my locality, but nest to the north of us. If I could describe the songs of birds, so that others could appreciate them as I do, I would feel that a partial acknowledgment had been made to the divine melody issuing from these birds' throats. We often hear that the best singers are the ones of plainest plumages, but this is assuredly not so in all instances. If one is permitted to listen to the sweet song of the scarlet tanager in the night, it will be acknowledged that the brilliant coat of the songster does not compare in point of excellence to the owner's refrain. These birds are the only species which sing during darkness, in Michigan, that I have met with, and not one of them is a regular night-songster.—By Dr. Morris Gibbs, in Science.

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