

Our Young Folks.

HOW DO THEY GROW?

This is only a blade of grass;
But how does it grow? Does any one know?
The seasons come and the seasons pass,
And with every year the grass we have here,
So green and bright in the sun and rain;
And then it is brown when the snow comes down,
But young and fresh in the spring again.

This is only a little girl;
But how does she grow? Does any one know?
With her hair of gold and her teeth of pearl,
From a baby so wee she will grow to be
A maiden as fair as a blooming rose;
But no one can say, as day follows day,
How a blade of grass or a little girl grows.

A VOICE IN THE DARK.

Early in June, this year, I was sailing for the harbour of Ardrossan, in Scotland. It was quite dark, but I could see the revolving light on the pier, not far off. I had no plan of Ardrossan, but the place appeared on my big chart clear enough to warrant me in finding an anchorage near the town. I was sailing straight for the mouth of the harbour when a loud, clear voice rang out in the gloom:—

"Ship ahoy! Port your helm—you are running straight on to a rock!"

Now, I could see no one, but the voice appeared to come from the spot where stood the revolving light. I had two choices: I could at once make up my mind the words were untrue and a mere joke, or I might quickly decide it was the voice of a trusty Scotch pilot warning us of a real and terrible danger.

Do you think I argued, "Because I cannot see the one who speaks I will not believe him?" No, indeed. I believed the voice, and proved I trusted to it by acting on the advice given. Down went the tiller with a bang that made the *Kingfisher* jump, but only to be put to starboard the next moment when the voice added, "Steady that; starboard a little."

Thus, following the guidance of one I believed, but could not see, in a few moments I was safe in the harbour. In a little while I could see my guide, I could thank him for his timely help, and, what was more, I could see the dark, cruel rock that had barred my passage.

We are in darkness, but out of the darkness a voice is heard. It comes in two ways: first, by the written word of the Lord in our Bible; secondly, by the direct voice of God's most Holy Spirit in our heart and conscience. How foolish are those who, because they cannot yet see a visible God and Saviour, pretend they discredit the message of warning He sends to us.

In our portion to-day we read about the "voice" that came from the excellent glory which the apostles heard in the holy mount. But we are told that we have a more sure word—the "word of prophecy"; and we are to give heed to it as "a light that shineth in a dark place."

Now, as we are nearing the close of another year, may all our young readers determine, by God's help, to listen for the Pilot's voice, to heed that voice, and then to obey the command—be it to "turn to the right hand or to the left"—as He shall guide you.

EYES OPEN.

Rachie went off to school, wondering if Aunt Amy could be right.

"I will keep my eyes open," she said to herself.

She stopped a moment to watch old Mrs. Bert, who sat inside her door binding shoes. She was just now trying to thread a needle, but it was hard work for her dim eyes.

"Why, if there isn't work for me!" exclaimed Rachie. "I never should have thought of it, if it hadn't been for Aunt Amy. Stop, Mrs. Bert; let me do that for you."

"Thank you, my little lassie. My poor old eyes are worn out, you see. I can get along with coarse work yet, but sometimes it takes me five minutes to thread my needle. And the day will come when I can't work, and then what will become of a poor old woman?"

"Mamma would say the Lord would take care of you," said Rachie very softly, for she felt she was too little to be saying such things.

"And you can say it, too, dearie. Go on to school now. You've given me your bit of help, and your comfort, too."

But Rachie got hold of the needle-book, and was bending over it with busy fingers.

"See!" she presently said, "I've threaded six needles for you to go on with, and when I come back I'll thread some more."

"May the sunshine be bright to your eyes, little one!" said the old woman as Rachie skipped away.

"Come and play, Rachie," cried many voices as she drew near the playground.

"Which side will you be on?"

But there was a little girl with a very downcast face sitting on the porch.

"What is the matter, Jennie?" asked Rachie, going to her.

"I can't make these add up," said Jennie, in a discouraged tone, pointing to a few smears on her slate.

"Let me see; I did that example at home last night. Oh, you forgot to carry ten—see?"

"So I did." The example was finished, and Jennie was soon at play with the others.

Rachie kept her eyes open all the day, and was surprised to find how many ways there were of doing kindness, which went far towards making the day happier. Try it, girls and boys, and you will see for yourselves.

"Will ye look here, Miss Rachie?"

Bridget was sitting in the back porch, looking dolefully at a bit of paper which lay on the kitchen table she had carried out there: "It's a letter I'm after writing to me mother, an' it's fearin' I am she'll niver be able to rade it, because I can't rade it meself. Can you rade it at all, Miss Rachie? It's all the afternoon I've been at it."

Rachie tried with all her might to read poor Bridget's queer scrawl, but she was obliged to give it up.

"I'll write one for you some day, Bridget," she said; "I am going over to Jennie's to play 'I spy' now."

The fresh air and the bird-songs and the soft winds made it very pleasant to be out of doors after being in school all day, and her limbs fairly ached for a good run. But she turned at the gate for another look at Bridget's woe-begone face.

"I'll do it for you now, Bridget," she said going back.

It was not an easy task, for writing was slow work with her; but she formed each letter with painstaking little fingers, and when she had finished, felt well repaid by Bridget's warm thanks, and the satisfied feeling of duty well done.

Our Master has taken His journey,
To a country that is far away.

Aunt Amy heard the cheery notes floating up the stairs, telling of the approach of the little worker.

"I've been keeping my eyes open, Aunt Amy, and there's plenty and plenty to do."

APRON STRINGS.

"I promised my mother I would be home at six o'clock."

"But what harm will an hour more do?"

"It will make my mother worry, and I shall break my word."

"Before I'd be tied to a woman's apron strings."

"My mother doesn't wear aprons," said the first speaker, with a laugh, "except in the kitchen sometimes, and I don't know as I ever noticed any strings."

"You know what I mean. Can't you stay and see the game finished?"

"I could stay, but I will not. I made a promise to my mother, and I am going to keep it."

"Good boy!" said a hoarse voice just back of the two boys.

They turned to see an old man, poorly clad and very feeble.

"Abraham Lincoln once told a young man," the stranger resumed, "to cut the acquaintance of every person who talked slightly of his mother's apron strings, and it is a very safe thing to do, as I know from experience. It was just such talk that brought me to ruin and disgrace, for I was ashamed not to do as other boys did, and when they made fun of mother I laughed too—God forgive me! There came a time when it was too late"—and now there were tears in the old eyes—"when I would gladly have been made a prisoner tied by these same apron strings, in a dark room with bread and water for my fare. Always keep your engagement with your mother. Never disappoint her if you can possibly help it, and when advised to cut loose from her apron strings, cut the adviser, and take a tighter clutch of the apron strings. This will bring joy and long life to your mother, the best friend you have in the world, and will ensure you a noble future, for it is impossible for a good son to be a bad man."

It was an excellent sign that both boys listened attentively, and both said "Thank you" at the conclusion of the stranger's lecture, and they left the ball grounds together, silent and thoughtful. At last the apron-string critic remarked, with a deep-drawn sigh:—

"That old man has made me goose-flesh all over."

"O Dick," said his companion, "just think what lovely mothers we have both got!"

"Yes; and if anything were to happen to them, and we hadn't done right! You'll never hear apron strings out of my mouth again."

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Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

Jan. 10,
1892.

A SONG OF SALVATION.

Isaiah xxvi.
1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.—Isaiah xxvi. 4.

INTRODUCTORY.

The precise historic setting of this grand outburst of prophetic song cannot now be determined. The circumstances in which it originated are not given, but that does not in the slightest degree impair its meaning. It refers to the kingdom of God, and the many blessings that pertain to it. The prophet, divinely inspired, foresees and foretells the establishment of that glorious reign of righteousness which it is the purpose of the Gospel to bring about.

I. The Song of Triumph.—It is possible that the prophet had immediately in view when giving voice to this song of triumph, the deliverance of the Jewish people from the captivity in Babylon, the return of the exiles to their own land. Even, if so, the glad event serves as the starting point for a contemplation of that greater and vaster deliverance from the bondage of unrighteousness under which the nations groan, to be introduced by the establishment of Messiah's kingdom on the earth. "In that day," a time that was in the days of the prophet, in the distant future. The song was to be sung in the land of Judah. The land of Judah was the then existing type of the theocracy—a God-governed land. The extension of this principle would be a realization of the divine purpose. For this reason the first notes of the joyous song were heard in the land of Judah. "We have a strong city" is the beginning of the hymn of praise. The Jewish people had in Jerusalem a strong city. It was peculiarly well situated for defence. The city of God, the kingdom of His grace, is stronger still. As in cities in the olden time strongly fortified walls and ponderous gates well guarded prevented the entrance of enemies, so around God's city He has placed salvation for its walls and bulwarks. Thus the inhabitants of this holy city have the most ample protection. God is its defender. He shelters His people from the assaults of their foes. He saves them from their enemies. For all who desire to become inhabitants of this glorious city there is a cordial welcome. "Open ye the gates," says the prophet. No one who desires to enjoy the shelter and blessedness of the New Jerusalem, provided he seeks to enter by the gate, in God's appointed way, through the Lord Jesus Christ who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," will be repelled or excluded. The door of entrance stands wide open. The gates are opened for the entrance of the righteous nation. In its fullest meaning that denotes the nations of the saved. For out of Christ there is no complete righteousness. "There is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not." It is through Christ that sinners are justified, made righteous. The righteousness of those who enter the kingdom is exemplified by their keeping the truth. They love the truth, they speak the truth, they do the truth. The prophet, directly addressing the great King, says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee." The peace of every one who trusts all to Christ, is assured. True faith rests on Christ. It is the conscious voluntary repose of the soul on Him and His atoning work that brings true peace, the perfect peace of which the prophet here speaks. Then follows the exhortation "Trust ye in the Lord forever." The Lord is the only sure refuge of the soul. All else in which men trust is sure to fail. Riches take wings and flee. They fail when man needs the consolation that this world cannot give. Health becomes impaired and death's coming is certain. We must have an unchanging object for the soul's trust. The Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. He alone, the unchanging One, can be the stay of the soul at all times, and for all eternity. The Revised Version gives the readings "the Lord Jehovah is an everlasting rock," and "a rock of ages," thus teaching that Christ the Rock of Ages is the only sure foundation on which the soul can rest for time and for eternity.

II. The Overthrow of the Wicked.—To outward appearance great and proud cities look as if they might last forever. They are rich and prosperous, and people may ask what can harm them? God rules over all. Unrighteousness cannot prosper for long. The time comes when the measure of iniquity is filled up. "He bringeth down them that dwell on high, the lofty city He layeth it low; even to the ground; He bringeth it even to the dust." History records numerous illustrations of the complete fulfilment of this prophecy. The great cities of antiquity, where are they to-day? Where are Nineveh and Babylon? Where the great and populous cities of ancient Greece? Tyre and Sidon, once great centres of commerce, are now reduced to the dimensions of fishing villages. Jerusalem itself, notwithstanding all its natural advantages for successful defence, was captured by the Roman power. Natural resources may be great, the inhabitants of a land may be numerous, but wickedness, if permitted to spread, will overthrow the nation that appears the strongest. God's law of eternal righteousness prevails, and here it is intimated that those of God's people who have suffered from the cruel oppression and scorn of the ungodly will have their time of triumph. The poor and the needy shall tread down the overthrown cities.

III. Waiting for God.—"The way of the just is uprightness." The life of the upright is in accordance with the principles of righteousness. They strive after full conformity to the law of righteousness, and follow along the way that leads to its attainment. God, the most upright, weighs the path of the just. His eye is on them. He knows the desires and purposes of their hearts, and His grace is given to direct, strengthen and uphold them. The prophet expresses the confident trust and dependence on God's righteous providential government, which His people cherish. "Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee." He also expresses the longing of the soul for communion with God, "With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early." This language would also be applicable to the longing of the soul for the manifestation of God's righteousness in His providential dealings. In the night of distress and of oppression it is the desire of the righteous soul to see the right vindicated and wickedness punished. When God's judgments are displayed, people recognize His hand in the events as they transpire, "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Those whose consciences are seared do not change their nature however unfavourable to their wicked ways may be their surroundings. They will continue to act wickedly; they will not learn righteousness. "They will not behold the majesty of the Lord."

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

If the observation of existing evil is depressing, let the mind contemplate Christ's coming reign of righteousness.

True peace of mind and soul can only come to the soul through Jesus Christ.

However prosperous wickedness may be for a long time, the end comes and "the lofty city is laid low."

How sad the condition of those in whom wickedness gains the ascendancy.