

nothing in its place. If an important paper or letter is suddenly wanted, every drawer is pulled out, and the contents tumbled on the floor before it is found, if it is ever found. All the household stores melt away in the most inexplicable manner. No one knows when the chest of tea was opened, or how long the box of candles ought to last. "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand." Generally in these houses all the keys have been lost. There is no such thing here as a memorandum-book for entering engagements and other matters liable to be forgotten, or a "Where is it?" for keeping the addresses of friends. If such little books are ever started, they are quickly lost, or they fall into the all-destroying hands of the baby of the family. If there was once an account-book, it has been mislaid, and has been lying so long without entries that it seems hopeless to begin again. "Money must go," says the housekeeper with No Method, "and I see no use in putting down every penny." Persons with No Method never answer letters. I do not mean that they never write, sooner or later, after receiving a letter; but they never read it over in order to reply to its questions, comment on its news, and respond to its remarks. The correspondence is like what a conversation would be, in which one person were to go on making observations, interesting enough, but without the slightest connection with the other person's remarks.

You know perfectly well that if you lend a book to a member of a family with No Method, you can hardly hope to see it again; or if you do, it will be with its back broken or some of its leaves gone. In fact, the house is a gulf, which seems to swallow up beyond recovery whatever goes into it.

There are no rules or principles in bringing up the children of the household. Laws are occasionally promulgated, as reforms are in certain states when things have reached a dangerous pass; but they are never enforced, and the subjects of the disorderly realm, in the one case as much as in the other, know very well that they never will be. What hope is there of family religion where No Method is the rule? Alas! even family morality too often goes the way of all else. No arrangements are made on Saturday evening for ensuring the sanctity and peace of the coming Sabbath. Sunday morning is chiefly distinguished by every one lying in bed later than on other days; and then, after a hunt to get the late breakfast ready, only a fraction of the family is in a position to be despatched to church, and the rest either toil or dream away the forenoon.

There is no fixed hour for daily evening worship, because "we can't get them together." Where are the boys? Nobody knows. They are "out"; and from that habit of being "out" every night, the parents know not where, flow those miserable consequences which break our hearts and blight our homes. Would our young men go to wreck as they do, taking, one after another, to drink and to vice as soon as they have crossed the threshold of what should be a noble manhood, if there were more method in our houses? It there were regular hours for family prayers and for going to bed, fixed hours after which neither girl or boy is to be "out" of the safe, peaceful, loving precincts of the Christian home? The father and mother are both busy with whatever happens to be the work

of the evening, and they never notice that their sons are "out,"—never notice that to be "out" is becoming the rule,—and suddenly they wake as from a dream, to find (what everybody else has known long) that their boys are far gone in the road that leads most rapidly to ruin. It is too late now to break the habits of sin and woe which have been formed all the time they were neglecting to train them into the habits of Christians (not because they had no wish, but because they had No Method). It is "while men sleep" that the sleepless sowers of evil are busy with their deadly work, and the fallow field bears a heavy crop of weeds.

Such children are sometimes described as "bringing themselves up." Incapable, unmethodical parents even say sometimes, "Our children must take their chance." Tremendous game of chance! They may turn out well; "as well as So-and-so's, who are always being looked after." But suppose they do not? and the "chances" are a thousand to one! When these easy-going parents, who make no rules and exert no authority, having sown the wind, reap the whirlwind—who will they have to blame then?

If family piety has so poor a prospect where No Method is the system, personal religion suffers scarcely less. There is no regular time for private prayer and meditative reading of the Bible. These duties, the very mainspring of religion, "take their chance," like the rest. My conviction is, that the want of method, of having any fixed plan, is one of the most fruitful causes of the want of religion in some, and of its stunted growth in others. "They will not *fringe their doings* to turn to their God." Possibly the devout of the last generation were too much addicted to rule, but we have gone to the other extreme. They had a fixed hour—the first in the day's work—for reading their Bibles. "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" and where the habit is formed of having a definite time for seeking that higher nourishment, the spiritual part of our nature is less likely to starve and dwindle than where this is left to haphazard. Where the whole day is a scramble, a hunt, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" are rarely sought "first," and there is the most serious risk of their not being sought at all.

I do not advocate being enslaved by rule in anything. Rule is a means and not an end, and with the best: plain interruptions come, which, coming unthought, have authority higher than our plans, and must be met with cheerful readiness. "For by so doing," Thomas à Kempis says, "a good work is not lost, but changed into a better." But I advocate arranging our lives, knowing what we have to do, "doing everything at its proper time, keeping everything in its proper place." Not only shall we thus get more done, but what is done will be accomplished in a calm, quiet way, instead of the worried, heated state people get into who are trying to "overtake" a mass of work without method or preconceived plan. William Wilberforce used to keep a book in which his daily expenditure of time was entered under various headings, as devotion, business, recreation, talk, reading, and dressing. This was kept with as careful regularity as the account of his expenditure of money. Every one knows

the amount of splendid work he achieved in life, though all do not know the sunny cheerfulness and unfrilled sweetness of temper with which he carried on his daily and multifarious business.

While we "let things go" and live "just as it comes," our brief allotted span is running out at a fixed rate. Though we have No Method, the sublime processes of Nature move above us with unswerving regularity. "Order is Heaven's first law." The moon waxes and wanes; the sun climbs to its midsummer height, and descends again to midwinter; the constellations vanish, and re-appear; the planets pursue their solemn course, without friction, jar, or change. And all these events, like the steady advance of the hands of a clock, are measuring out our little lives. Only a certain number of times shall we see winter change to spring. I note to-night a certain planet calmly shining in a certain place among the stars: before it is seen in that position again, having accomplished its slow circuit of the heavens, I shall in all likelihood have no more a portion in anything that is done under the sun. Are we, as the gifted author of "Life in Earnest" asks, "to end each day in a hurry, and life itself in a tumult; and when the hurried day is over, and the fevered life is closing, to leave half our work undone?"—*Family Treasury.*

## International Bible Lessons, 1877.

(From The Berean Quarterly).

### SECOND QUARTER.

April 1	The Oil Increased	..... 2 Kings, iv: 1-7
" 8	The Shunammite's Son	..... 2 Kings, iv: 23-37
" 15	Samuel the Leper	..... 2 Kings, v: 1-14
" 22	Gehazi the Leper	..... 2 Kings, v: 26-27
" 30	Elisha at Dothan	..... 2 Kings, vi: 8-17
May 6	The Feast in Samaria	..... 2 Kings, vii: 18-20
" 13	Jehu the King	..... 2 Kings, x: 30-31
" 30	Jonah at Nineveh	..... Jonah, i: 1-10
" 27	The Death of Elisha	..... 2 Kings, xiii: 14-21
June 3	The Lamentation of Amos	..... Amos, v: 1-15
" 10	The Promise of Revival	..... Hosea, xiv: 1-4
" 17	The Captivity of Israel	..... 2 Kings, xvii: 6-43
" 24	REVIEW	.....

### MAY 20.—Jonah at Nineveh.

#### HOME READINGS.

<i>Monday.</i>	Jonah in the sea, Jon. i, 1-17
<i>Tuesday.</i>	Jonah's prayer, Jon. ii, 1-10
<i>Wednesday.</i>	Jonah at Nineveh, Jon. iii, 1-10
<i>Thursday.</i>	Jonah a sign, Matt. xii, 38-50
<i>Friday.</i>	The burden of Nineveh, Nah. i, 1-15
<i>Saturday.</i>	The duty of repentance, Luke xiii, 1-9
<i>Sunday.</i>	The true repentance, Luke xv, 10-32

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

The men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas is here.—Matt. xii, 41

### GENERAL STATEMENT.

In the reign of Jehu a solemn warning of destruction for wickedness was sent to Nineveh. The deep repentance and humiliation with which the word was received averted the coming evil. In the last lesson we see the severe attitude of God toward persistent sin; in this His great tenderness for the contrite sinner.

### TOPICS, WITH NOTES.

**JONAH.**—This prophet is a peculiar character. He seems to have been a mixture of fear and trust, audacity and reverence, boldness and cowardice, selfishness and generosity. He illustrates as fact that God's special servants are not machines, but free agents,

who, like a willing instrument, are used by God to accomplish His purposes.

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