

that a Christian could not run excursion trains on the Sabbath.

My father was a deacon in the Orthodox Church, and, just before going to my work, I went to him and told him the story, reserving my decision to myself, and asking his advice what to do. I knew well what he would say. What a look went over his face as he spoke! "But," I said, "Father, will you help me to get something to do. I shall lose my place. I have devoted nearly my whole life to this business, and now I must turn to something else." "Trust God, my boy," he answered promptly, "and I will help you, too."

I returned to the office and walked up to the manager as he sat, and said in a respectful tone, "I have been detailed to run the circus train Sunday morning, and I cannot do it on the Sabbath."

Imagine my astonishment, as he looked me full in the face and said: "You! been detailed to run Sunday trains! I am surprised! You go right home, and don't you worry about Sunday trains."

I have never been detailed for Sunday work since. But the men who offered to do work for extra pay upon the Sabbath have long since been discharged.—*Conductor, in the Congregationalist.*

BILL STOVER'S CHRISTMAS DINNER.

BY MARY DWINELL CHELLIS.

"There, now, Sally Jones, you've just been and gone and told, and spoilt all our fun."

"Told what?" asked the dark-haired, dark-eyed girl thus accused.

"Told about Christmas."

"Me, I ha'n't neither. Ha'n't told a word, so you needn't say I have."

"Ha'n't you, though, honor bright?"

"No. What made you say I had?"

"Cause father knows. There's something the matter with him."

"Does he scold awful?"

"No, he don't scold any. When he come home last night he was 'most as pale as mother used to be, and he just looked around and asked where you was, and when we told him he didn't say a word. An't you tired 'most to death taking care of that baby?"

"Course I am, but I'm earning something for Christmas. What you got for supper?"

"Bread and potatoes father brought last night. He had a pitcher of coffee, too, but he didn't give us any. I tell you, though, it smelt good. This morning he asked us if we knew how folks had Christmas, and we told him we read about it in a paper."

"I guess we'll show him. Now I must go. It's only two days more, and then we'll scrub and wash, and have everything clean. Good-by. Have a good fire when father comes."

Sally Jones was so intent upon her anticipated happiness that she did not observe a man who was approaching her until he called her name. It was Bill Stover, whose whole appearance justified his reputation as being the worst drunkard in town.

"Gone out to work, ha'n't ye?" he said, resting his hands upon the knotty stick he used as a cane.

"I'm taking care of Mrs. Smith's baby," she replied.

"You an't big enough for that; it's too hard work for you. What makes you?"

"Cause I want to earn some money."

"Where's your father? Ha'n't seen him nowhere. An't he to home?"

"No, sir, and I don't know where he is."

"Well, I guess I can find him. I know where he's likely to be when he an't anywhere else, and I want to see him."

"I wish you wouldn't find him," said Sally with a quivering voice—"I wish you wouldn't."

"Why not, child? I was always friendly to your father. I'd do him a good turn any time."

"Would you, Mr. Stover? Do you really mean it? 'Cause you can."

"Tell what 'tis, and I'll go right about it soon as I can."

"Get him not to drink any more rum. You can, I know, if you try. I'm earning money to make a Christmas, and we'd be so glad if you'd get father not to drink any more rum; will you?" Sally waited for a reply, but as none was made she said sorrowfully: "I hope you won't tell what I said about Christmas, 'cause it's a secret."

Then she hurried on, leaving the drunkard where she had met him; and had she

passed again that way in half an hour she would have found him still standing there. He was thinking of the task set for him and of his own wasted life. "Is it too late? Is it too late? Is it too late?"

Three times he repeated this question slowly and emphatically. He looked up to the blue sky and around upon the fair landscape.

"No!" he shouted at length, and turned to retrace his steps.

He was the worst drunkard in town, and when sober he was the best mechanic in town.

"Got anybody to do the job you wanted me for?" he asked not long afterwards, accosting a man who was just harnessing a horse.

"No, I'm going after somebody."

"Needn't go unless you want to: I'll take the job if you'll pay me every night. I know what you think, but you'd better let me begin to-morrow morning on my own terms."

"You may; you may begin now."

No one knew the pledge he had taken; no one knew the effort it cost him to keep faith with himself; but he received his wages regularly, and his employer said he had never worked better. Christmas morning he went to the village store and purchased various articles which the merchant thought could be of no possible use to him, because he was not a family man. From the store he went to the house of Mr. Jones, where he received but a cold welcome.

"Paul, you and I have drunk a good deal of liquor, and I guess we've drunk enough," he said, after a silence of some minutes.

"So do I, Bill," was responded.

"Well, I an't going to drink any more."

"I an't either."

"Let's shake hands on it, and have the children for witnesses."

"Agreed." And the two men clasped hands, while Sally exclaimed:

"There's God to witness, and I'm just as glad as I can be."

"So am I, so am I," sobbed the boys, and there was not a dry eye in the room.

But Bill Stover was resolved to have no crying where he was that day, so he displayed his purchases of the previous evening, giving to each a due portion, and then bustled about, making preparations for the dinner, which Sally Jones, through many happy years, has called "Bill Stover's Christmas Dinner."—*Youth's Temperance Banner.*

BETTER THAN SILK.

BY FAITH IRVING.

If there lives a grateful, contented woman on the earth to-day, surely such an one am I. And only yesterday my heart was so full of discontent and sinful repining. The simple fact is, my old striped silk has been worn so long that for some time I have sensitively imagined my acquaintances might recognize my approach by its familiar folds, even from afar off. It has been turned, remodelled and newly draped, each renovation being accompanied by the mental assurance of so soon possessing a new silk that this would speedily take its place as a very respectable second-best. But season after season has passed away, and still the new dress has not been forthcoming. There is only the continued, wearisome cry of hard times, bills yet unpaid, family expenditures increasing, and consequently but little prospect of my being enabled to appear now and then, as all my neighbors present themselves so frequently, in new and fashionable attire.

So when night before last, John—my good, patient husband—told me kindly but decidedly, I must make what I had in the way of dress answer for at least two or three months longer, perhaps it was hardly strange that the effect was somewhat discouraging, and caused me yesterday to reflect on the sad, shady events of life, rather than to realize the innumerable blessings strewn thickly around my path,—so thickly it seems to my grateful heart to-day, that the only wonder is I could ever lose a comforting consciousness of their possession. Some vague, unexpressed sense of certain pleasant surroundings seemed suddenly to flash across my mind last night, when just before retiring I kissed our baby's plump, rosy cheek. The darling! He lay sleeping in his crib, a perfect picture of childish innocence and repose.

Our one precious little boy! just two

years old a week ago to-day. Well,—it makes my heart throb painfully to write it,—it must have been about midnight, when I was suddenly awakened by a strange, hoarse, laboring sound, as of some one struggling, choking, dying. John on the instant spoke in his calm, reassuring tones, "Don't be alarmed, dear, but I think baby has croup." Yes! a sudden attack of croup in the night. And such a dreadful one! The doctor soon arrived and found us trying every appliance of which we could think for the relief of the poor little sufferer. But relief came so slowly! Why is it that in the midst of such distressing scenes the nervous imagination will so quickly present suggestions, and vividly paint pictures to the disturbed mind which almost paralyze one with apprehension and heart-sinking? Let me but close my eyes for an instant during those long, dark hours of suspense, and I could almost see among the notices of deaths in the daily paper one commencing "Suddenly, at midnight, of croup," but oh! not even my morbid fancies could go any farther, and imagine the dear name and cunning age of our little treasure in such a mournful connection.

How I prayed, implored, ay, promised God, all the night long, and I remember with gratitude now, grace was given me to say, "Yet Thy will be done." Well, the fearful pressure yielded slowly at last; toward daylight the child could breathe with some degree of comfort, and by the time John went to his business this morning the dreadful disease had almost left the little frame it had wellnigh conquered. And this afternoon he really tried to play a little. Bless him!

But it is incredible how differently the earth has appeared to me to-day from what it ever has before. Many and many a spring-time the grass has been as green and waved as gracefully, the birds have chattered cheerily, and best of all, the voices of my children have been as sweet and charming as on this particular day. And yet it was only yesterday I was almost insensible of all these lovely surroundings—and quite unhappy,—about what? A mere matter of dress, which to my corrected mind now has become one of the most unimportant matters mentionable. Silk dresses, forsooth! Why, it seems to me I walk the earth to-day a very queen; as Mrs. Stowe would say, still "crowned with the glory of motherhood." What if it had been otherwise, and clad in the sombre garments of mourning, I lamented the loss of the little one so dearly loved? How wonderfully can God by a touch of His powerful, yet tender hand, reveal to us our condition in its true light!

So this is my grateful song of thanksgiving and praise; and, God helping me, it shall be my aim henceforth to recognize and appreciate the myriad blessings constantly showered upon me; and I pray for help to suppress all inclination to repine when little privations come, doubtless for my good.—*Watchman.*

THE PALM TREE.

The Scripture says: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." Let us see what this comparison means: "The palm grows not in the depths of the forest or in a fertile loam, but in the desert. Its verdure often springs apparently from the scorching dust. It is a friendly lighthouse, guiding the traveller to the spot where water is to be found. The tree is remarkable for its beauty, its erect, aspiring growth, its leafy canopy, its waving plumes, the emblem of praise in all ages. Its very foliage is the symbol of joy and exultation. It never fades, and the dust never settles upon it. It was, therefore, twisted into the booths of the feast of tabernacles, was borne aloft by the multitude that accompanied the Messiah to Jerusalem, and it is represented as in the hands of the redeemed in heaven. For usefulness, the tree is unrivalled. Gibbon says that the natives of Syria speak of 360 uses to which the palm is applied. Its shade refreshes the traveller. Its fruit restores his strength. When his soul fails for thirst, it announces water. Its stones are ground for his camels. Its leaves are made into couches, its boughs into fences and walls, and its fibres into ropes or rigging. Its best fruit, moreover, is borne in old age; the finest dates being often gathered when the tree has reached a hundred years. It sends too from the same root a large number of suckers, which in time form a forest by their growth. What an emblem of the

righteous in the desert of a guilty world! It is not unconstructive to add that this tree, once the symbol of Palestine, is now rarely seen in that country."—*Joseph Angus.*

POVERTY is, except where there is an actual want of food and raiment, a thing much more imaginary than real. The shame of poverty—the shame of being thought poor—is a great and fatal weakness, though arising in this country from the fashion of the times themselves.—*Cobbett.*

IT IS EASY ENOUGH to destroy; and there are always destroyers enough. It requires skill and labor to erect a building; any idle tramp can burn it down. God alone can form and paint a flower; any foolish child can pull it all to pieces.—*Dr. John Monro Gibson.*

Question Corner.—No. 1.

Answers to these questions should be sent in as soon as possible and addressed *EDITOR NORTHERN MESSENGER*. It is not necessary to write out the question, give merely the number of the question and the answer. In writing letters always give clearly the name of the place where you live and the initials of the province in which it is situated.

BIBLE QUESTIONS.

1. Who was Abimelech?
2. What weapon did David obtain from the priest at Nob?
3. After leaving Nob where did David flee?
4. Where is the cave Adullam?
5. How did David escape from Achish, king of Gath?
6. Who were the Gittites, and that all the Philistines were Gittites?

9. Where is the cave of Engedi?
10. Why did David spare Saul's life when he found him in the cave of Engedi?
11. What celebrated man died about this time?
12. Who was Abigail?

BIBLICAL ENIGMA.

I am composed of 18 letters. My 9, 18 was an Amorite king who was defeated and slain by the Israelites under Moses. My 1, 3, 2, 7, 8, 16, 14 is supposed to have been originally a province of Media. My 11, 6, 2, 14, 15 was the son of Japheth, and supposed to have been the forefather of the ancient Thracians. My 17, 9, 3, 8 was the son of Lamech. My 12, 14, 15, 15, 6, 3 is the bark of an odoriferous tree, from which came one ingredient of the holy oil. My 10, 2 was the birthplace of Abraham. Eternal death is the 5, 14, 18, 13, 15, or just recompense of sin; while eternal life is not a recompense earned by obedience, but a sovereign gift of God. My 4, 13, 14, 2 is a period of time. My whole was an exhortation of Paul.

ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS. IN NO. 29.

265. By Samuel before the battle with the Philistines at Michmash, 1 Sam. xiii. 13, 14.
266. For offering sacrifice himself instead of waiting for Samuel, 1 Sam. xiii. 9, 14.
267. See 1 Sam. xiv. 6, 14.
268. "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on my enemies, 1 Sam. xiv. 24.
269. Jonathan, Ishui, Melchishua, Merab, and Michal, 1 Sam. xiv. 49.
270. Abner, he was uncle to the king, 1 Sam. xiv. 50.
271. With the Amalekites, 1 Sam. xv. 1, 3.
272. Because they attacked the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt, 1 Sam. xv. 2, 3.
273. He spared Agag and the best of the cattle, 1 Sam. xv. 8, 9.
274. Samuel, 1 Sam. xv. 22.
275. When he reproved him for not destroying all of the Amalekites, 1 Sam. xv. 34, 45.
276. To anoint another king, 1 Sam. xvi. 1.

CORRECT ANSWERS RECEIVED.

To No. 23.—Gertrude Beckett, 11; David McGhee, 12; Andrew Fraser, 12; Robert M. Grundley, 12.