

Our Young Folks.

HOW DO YOU DO

How do you do? "I do with my might just as I am told, when told to do right. I strive for promotion by doing my best. My mother and teacher can tell you the rest. I speak when I'm spoken to, come when they call. And strive to be kind and respectful to all. It is nothing to boast of, whatever I do, I wish it were more and were better, don't you?"

How do you feel? "Sorry and mean, When I do a wrong act, whether hidden or seen But I feel like a bobolink, joyous and bright, When I take the straight path and try to do right. It sometimes seems hard, but it turns out the best. And then I feel glad and can laugh with the rest. I can caper, and jump, and turn somersaults, too, It may not look nice, but I like it, don't you?"

What do you know? "Very little, it's true, Compared with my elders, but that's nothing new. If I study in earnest, I hope to know more, When I get to be twenty and on to four-score. Wisdom may come with gray hairs, if not now, When wrinkles of cares settle deep on my brow, And boys will look up and honour me then, When I am a judge and stand among men."

What do you do? "I study and work, I don't want to be a mean sneak or a shirk. I have my home duties, and do them with care, In that and everything try to be square: Tobacco and liquor I shun as a foe, And stand by my colours wherever I go. What more can I do, except love and obey My Maker and parents, and heed what they say?"

THE EARLY AND THE LATTER RAIN.

In the climate of Palestine there are two rainy seasons on which the harvest especially depends—the autumnal and the spring rains, called in the Scriptures the early and the latter rain. The early rains of the Scripture usually commence in the latter half of October or beginning of November, not suddenly, but by degrees, which gives opportunity for the husbandman to sow his fields of wheat and barley. The rains come mostly from the west or southwest, continuing for two or three days at a time, and falling especially during the nights. The wind then chops round to north or east, and several days of fine weather succeed. During the months of November and December the rains continue to fall heavily; afterwards they return only at longer intervals, and are less heavy; but at no time during the winter do they entirely cease to occur. Snow often falls in Jerusalem, in January and February, to the depth of a foot or more, but it does not last long. Rain continues to fall more or less through the month of March, but it is rare after that period. At the present time there are not any particular periods of rain, or successions of showers, which might be regarded as distinct rainy seasons. The whole period from October to March now constitutes only one continued rainy season, without any regularly intervening time of prolonged fair weather. Unless, therefore, there has been some change in the climate since the times of the New Testament, the early and the latter rains for which the husbandman waited with longing, seem rather to have implied the first showers of autumn, which revived the parched and thirsty earth, and prepared it for the seed; and the latter showers of spring, which continued to refresh and forward the ripening crops and the vernal products of the fields. In ordinary seasons, from the cessation of the showers in spring until their commencement in October and November, rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene.

THE TIME TO BE PLEASANT.

"Mother's cross," said Maggie, coming out into the kitchen with a pout on her lips.

Her aunt was busy ironing, and she looked up and answered Maggie:—

"Then it is the very time for you to be pleasant and helpful. Mother was awake a good deal of the night with the poor baby."

Maggie made no reply. She put on her hat and walked off into the garden. But a new idea went with her—"The very time to be pleasant is when other people are cross."

"True enough," thought she, "that would do the most good. I remember when I was ill last year, I was so nervous that if anyone spoke to me I could hardly help being cross; and mother never got cross or out of patience, but was quite pleasant with me. I ought to pay it back now, and I will."

And she jumped up from the grass on which she had thrown herself, and turned a face full of cheerful resolution toward the room where her mother sat soothing and tending a fretful, teething baby.

"Couldn't I take him out to ride in his carriage, mother? It's such a sunny morning," she asked.

"I should be so glad if you would," said her mother.

The hat and coat were brought, and the baby was soon ready for his ride.

"I'll keep him as long as he's good," said Maggie, "and you must lie on the sofa and take a nap while I'm gone. You are looking dreadful tired."

The kind words and the kiss that accompanied them were almost too much for the mother, and her voice trembled as she answered:—

"Thank you, dear, it will do me a world of good. My head aches badly this morning."

What a happy heart Maggie's was as she turned the carriage up and down the walk! She resolved to remember and act on her aunt's good words.

"The very time to be helpful and pleasant is when every body is tired and cross."

ONE THING AT A TIME.

"Early in the morning," relates a gentleman who has spent many decades in the service of God and his fellow men, "I learned from a very simple incident a wholesome lesson and one which has been of incalculable benefit to me."

"When I was between twelve and fourteen years old my father broke up a field on his farm and planted it with potatoes, and when the plants were two or three inches high he sent me to hoe it. The ground of that piece was very hard to till; it was matted with grass roots and sprinkled with stones. I hoed the first row and stopped to look at the general task before me. Grass as high as the potatoes was everywhere, and looking at the whole from any point it seemed to be a solid mass. I had the work to do all alone, and as I stood staring at the broad reach of weedy soil, I felt a good mind not to try to do anything further than with it."

"Just at that minute I happened to look down at the hill nearest my feet. The grass didn't seem just quite as thick there, and I said to myself: 'I can hoe this one well enough.'"

"When it was done, another thought came to help me: 'I shan't have to hoe but one hill at a time, at any rate.'"

"And so I went to the next, and next. But here I stopped again and looked over the field. That gave me another thought, too: 'I could hoe every hill as I came to it; it was only looking away off to all the hills that made the whole seem impossible.'"

"I won't look at it!" I said; and I pulled my hat over my eyes, so I could see nothing but the spot where my hoe had to dig."

"In course of time I had gone over the whole field, looking only at the hill in hand, and my work was done."

"I learned a lesson tugging away at those grass roots which I never forgot."

"It was to look right down at the one thing to be done now, and not hinder and discourage myself by looking off at the things I hadn't come to. I've been working ever since that summer at the hill nearest my feet, and I've always found it the easiest way to get a hard task accomplished, as it is the true way to prepare a field for the harvest."

THE MUD FISH.

Africa is the home of many extraordinary animals, but there is no more remarkable creature than the mud fish, which inhabits certain of the rivers of western Africa, and, as its name implies, it lurks in the muddy bottoms of these rivers. At first sight there is perhaps nothing especially striking about this animal; it looks very much like an ordinary fish except for its curious, long, slender fins. A visitor who knew nothing about the creature would probably go away with the impression that he had seen nothing out of the common, unless one happens to be encased in a ball of dried mud, lined with mucus from its body, and perforated by a small aperture to admit of breathing. This "cocoon," as it is sometimes called, on account of its analogy to the earthen case fabricated by many caterpillars in which to undergo their metamorphoses, on being placed in warmish water is dissolved and the fish liberated. The habit which the mud fish has of making an earthen chamber of the mud at the bottom of a river is a most wonderful provision of nature for the exigencies of the climate. The rivers which the fish inhabit are liable to periodical draughts. When such a draught is imminent the fish retires to deep water and excavates a pit, in which it lies, covering itself over with a thick layer of mud. It can suffer with impunity the complete drying up of the river. But the most interesting fact about the creature is that during the time of its voluntary imprisonment it breathes air directly through an aperture left in the cocoon, by means of lungs, just like a land animal. When the returning rains dissolve the mud and liberate the fish it breathes by means of gills, just like any other fish.

A SHORT RULE FOR FRETTERS.

A young friend has been visiting me who was a fretter. She fretted when it rained, and fretted when it shone. She fretted when others came to see her, and fretted when they did not. It is a dreadful thing to be a fretter. A fretter is troublesome to herself and troublesome to her friends. We, to be sure, have our trials; but fretting does not help us to bear or get rid of them.

I have lately come across a short rule for fretters, which they shall have. Here it is: Never fret about what you can't help; because it won't do any good. Never fret about what you can help; because if you can help it, do so. Say this when you get up in the morning, say it at noon, and say it at night; and not only say, but do; and that will be, do not fret at all—a fine doing.

"But we have our trials!" my young readers say. Yes, you have; and your little trials are as hard to bear as our big ones. But fretting doesn't help them, nor wishing we were somewhere else or somebody else, or dwelling upon them till they look a great deal bigger than they really are.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

PARABLE OF THE POUNDS.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Unto every one which hath shall be given
LUKE xiv. 20.

INTRODUCTORY.

The Saviour was still the guest of Zaccheus. The parable which forms the subject of to-day's lesson was spoken to the people assembled at the house of the chief tax-gatherer in Jericho. A similar parable is recorded in Matthew xxv., but the occasion and some of the details are different. The reason given by Luke for the parable here is that Jesus was nigh to Jerusalem. It related to the kingdom of the Messiah, and as Christ's visit to Jerusalem had a most important bearing in relation to that kingdom, the sacred city was a fitting place for the offering up of that sacrifice on which God's redemptive kingdom rests.

I. Talents Entrusted. There is no room for doubt as to the application of the truths taught in this parable. The nobleman represents Christ Himself. He is the eternal Son of the Everlasting Father. Christ is of kingly descent and character. To Him all power in heaven and earth is given. The supposition that the colouring of the parable is derived from the existing state of things among the Jews at the time is by no means improbable. The successors of Herod the great went into a far country to receive the right to reign in Palestine. They had to obtain the sanction of the Roman power before they could claim the throne. The nobleman goes into the far country to receive his kingdom. Jesus was to ascend into heaven after His resurrection. He receives the kingdom and is to return. The people there expected that the reign of Jesus was to effect a speedy transformation on the earth. They were eager for its visible appearance, impatient for its beginning. The Scriptures leave no doubt as to the certainty of the coming and glory of Christ's kingdom but the time of its full and glorious manifestation is purposely kept back. The counteractive to what is at best but idle curiosity is given in this parable, as well as elsewhere in Scripture is that we are to be diligent in the discharge of present duty and leave the times and the seasons in the Father's hand. Ten servants of the nobleman were entrusted with ten pounds, one each not different amounts as in the parable of the talents. The pound, the money then current in Palestine, was equal to about \$17 of our money. The instruction given at the time was, in the Authorized Version, "Occupy till I come;" in the Revised, "Trade ye herewith till I come." Both translations virtually mean the same thing. The money with which the servants were entrusted was to be put to profitable use by them. Each one whatever station may be occupied receives from God precious endowments and opportunities which are to be used under a sense of direct responsibility to God. Opportunities may differ, modes of service may vary, the one thing required is the faithful and loyal use of what God has entrusted to our care.

II. Talents Used. It seems marvellous that any should be found who hate the Heavenly King. We know however from the Gospels how bitter was the enmity with which Jesus was regarded by many. Good people are sometimes actually disliked because of their goodness. The sinful human heart is not naturally in sympathy with the sinless Son of God. So there are those who owe Christ reverence, submission, trust and love, who in their hearts say "we will not have this man to reign over us." This was the message sent after the departed nobleman. In his own time having received his kingdom, the nobleman returns and reckons with his servants. A strict account is required of each. The fidelity and diligence with which they had used the money—the gifts and opportunities—placed at their disposal is the subject of strict enquiry. The first that came before the returned nobleman was able to say "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." It was with his lord's own gift that he had been able to work and the result proved successful. This good account he was able to render meets with approval and reward. Faithful service for Christ, sincerely rendered, never goes unrewarded. Here the word of approval is "well done, thou good servant," and the reward follows, "because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." Diligence and fidelity in the humblest sphere prepares for higher and more extended service. The second comes forward and says, "Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds." The language used is the same as that employed by the first, but the amount is only half what had been gained by the first. The gifts and graces God bestows are varied in their measure. It is not the amount gained that is the criterion by which their work is judged, it is their faithfulness in the circumstances in which they are placed. This is brought out in the words of approbation that follow the rendering of his account by the second. The same words of commendation are spoken to him. The reward in this case corresponds to the increase. He is given authority over five cities. He is entrusted with a position for which his capacities are exactly suited. In the heavenly kingdom the servants of the King will be in the spheres for which they are best fitted.

III. The Talent Abused. Only three of the ten servants are represented as rendering their accounts. The reason why the cases of all are not repeated in detail is that the principle of judgment and award is the same throughout. Now we have the case of the one who refused to improve the opportunities given him. He has safely kept what was entrusted to him. The pound he had received was not lost or squandered. It had been hid away for safe keeping, in the manner common then and common still in Eastern lands. It was concealed in a handkerchief. This servant, however, seems to have been conscious that some defence of his neglect was needed and so he lays the blame on the nobleman's character, which he represented as harsh and exacting. This was an unjust aspersion on the character and spirit of the nobleman. Those who neglect duty must have some excuse for it, and they lay the fault on others, not on themselves. Some lay the blame of their failures on God and His providence. That this is wrong is brought clearly out in the nobleman's reply to the indolent servant's explanation. He does not correct the man's mistaken judgment by repudiating the false estimate his words imply, rather he takes the man's own ground for showing him that he had acted both foolishly and wickedly. If the nobleman was such a hard man, why then had not this servant so disposed of the pound that when it had to be given up it might have been accompanied with at least the interest it was capable of earning. The pound was taken from him. He was deprived of what he had. Gifts unused are withdrawn. The command was issued that the pound be given to him who had gained ten. In explanation the nobleman says "That unto every one that hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him." The diligent employment of means, talents and opportunities enhances the power and capacity that possess them.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

Christ is the king who rightfully claims our loyal and loving service.

He entrusts each one with the means and opportunity of rendering faithful service to Him.

Faithful self-denying service will receive the commendation of the Heavenly King, and an exceeding great reward.

Indolence and faithlessness only meet with rebuke and deprivation.

To reject Christ is to court destruction.