

Our Young Folks.

Rough and Smooth.

There are some people who are always scratching you by their short answers and impatient ways if things go at all wrong with them. They are like a rough, unplanned board, if you don't handle it with the grain, you are very certain to be annoyed with the splinters.

A gentleman, at an eating house, asked the person next to him if he would please pass the mustard.

"Sir," said the man, "do you mistake me for a waiter?"

"No," was the reply, "I mistook you for a gentleman."

That man, the moment you touched his pride, threw out his sharp words as the porcupine does his quills.

Kind words cost nothing, and they say a word of worry and fretful feeling. They have a wonderful knack of smoothing over the rough places in our play and work.

Children. Give Attention.

We are old, and know some things, and have forgotten a great many more. Our text shall be a short one—it is, *pay attention!*

1. Pay attention to what you see. Our eyes were given us to see with, and a thousand things are around us all the time to look at. If we would know a good deal, we must learn to attend to what we see.

2. Pay attention to what you hear. Our ears were made for hearing. We may pick up a great deal of knowledge from what we hear if we will only give our attention.

3. Pay attention to what you read. Books are made up of what other people have seen, or heard, or know. By reading, therefore, we may learn all about the world in which we live. We may not be able to go to Europe, or Asia, or South America. But we can take our maps and look at them, and then we can take our books and read them, and then we can come to know a great deal about them. Our sermon is a short one, and we close with a short application.

If boys and girls become wise and wish to know a great deal, they must learn to pay attention to what they see, what they hear, and what they read.

Some boys look at ever so many things and really see next to nothing. Some girls hear much, and it only goes in one ear and out of the other. And girls and boys, and men and women, read many books and remember very little. They fret and scold about it and blame their memory, when the fault is all their own. They have never learned to pay attention.—*Parish Visitor.*

A Miracle Proved.

There is an Eastern fable of a boy having challenged his teacher to prove to him the existence of God by working a miracle. The teacher, who was a priest, got a large vessel filled with earth, wherein he deposited a kernel in the boy's presence, and bade him pay attention. In the place where the kernel was put a green shoot suddenly appeared; the shoot became a stem; the stem put forth leaves and branches, which soon spread over the whole apartment. It then budded with blossoms, which dropping off left golden fruits in their place, and in the short space of one hour there stood a noble tree in the place of the little seed. The youth, overcome with amazement, exclaimed: "Now I know that there is a God, for I have seen his power!" The priest smiled at him, and said: "Simple child, do you only now believe? Does not what you have just beheld take place year after year, only by a slower process? But is it the less marvelous on that account?" Suppose at rising in the morning we found a loaf added to our provisions, which we could be certain that neither we, nor any human being had put there, we should then have no difficulty in saying that the Lord had sent it. Yet we actually find such a loaf every morning added to our provisions, and it is equally true that God has sent it.

Children Doing Good.

I am sure you will find out ways of showing kindness if you look for them. One strong lad I saw the other day carrying a heavy basket up a hill for a little tired girl. Another dear lad I met leading a blind man who had lost his faithful dog.

An old lady, sitting in her arm-chair by the fire, once said, "My dear granddaughter, there is hands, feet and eyes to me."

"How so?"

"Why, she runs about so nimbly to do the work of the house, she brings me so willingly whatever I want, and when she has done she sits down and reads to me so nicely a chapter in the Bible."

One day a little girl came home from school quite happy to think that she had been useful. For there was a school-fellow there in great trouble about the death of a baby brother.

"And I put my cheek against hers," said her companion, "and I cried, too, because I was sorry for her; and after a little while she left off crying, and said I had done her good."

A LEAGUE has been formed by English Ritualists for the purpose of agitating in favor of the disestablishment of the English Church.

CHAPLAIN McCABE has ciphered out the problem that if each of 2,000,000 communicants and adherents of the Methodist Church in this country should give one cent a day for denominational work, the Church would receive annually \$7,800,000, thus securing a liberal endowment of all its Boards.

THE Calvinistic Church of Wales has about 100,000 communicants, and is governed by an annual General Assembly and two provincial associations, which meet quarterly. The Calvinistic Methodists of North Wales have just completed a fund of \$150,000 for the families of deceased ministers.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

LESSON XVII.

April 24, 1977. ELISHA AT DOTHAN. 2 Kings vi. 1-17.

COMMIT TO MEMORY, vs. 15-17. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Matt. ii. 8; Gen. xiv. 11.

SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With vs. 8, 9, read 2 Chron. xx. 20; with vs. 10, read Jer. xxiii. 23, 24; with vs. 11, 12, read Eccl. x. 20; with vs. 13, compare Gen. xxxvii. 17; with vs. 14, 15, read Ex. xiv. 10; with vs. 16, read 2 Chron. xxiii. 7; with vs. 17, read Ex. ix. 17, and Matt. xxv. 58; and with vs. 18, compare Acts viii. 11.

This only place to be identified is Dothan.

The only person named is Elisha.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*Fast not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*—2 Kings vi. 16.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—On the Lord's side is safety.

Love of country is countenanced in the Scriptures, and it is not less incumbent because the rulers are not exemplary. Jehoram was not, indeed, as bad as Ahab his father, but he was far from what he ought to have been.

Benhadad, son of Hadad, i. e., dependant of Hadad, being possibly a name for the sun god, whose genealogy is given in 1 Kings xv. 18, now king of Syria, attacks Jehoram. Damascus was the centre of his power. It was part of an irregular warfare, with various fortunes (see 1 Kings xx. 38, 39), between Israel and Syria, whose borders touched. He seems to have been a daring politician, and active monarch, of whom we have considerable knowledge from other than Bible sources.

I. A PERPLEXED KING.

The Eastern armies were very numerous, for obvious reasons. Wandering tribes used to arms can be mustered readily. They have few localities. The camp was of great moment as to situation, water was so important. A "council of war" advised a certain place (v. 1) in which it was expected an attack could be advantageously made on Israel. Or "pass not" may mean "overlook not," and the result may have been that Jehoram forestalled the Syrians in the occupation of a strong point, and this repeatedly (v. 10).

Imagine the mortification of an Eastern king, coming in force to a selected vantage-ground, and, lo! his enemy is there before him, and this again and again! It was vexatious in the last degree, and he could find no one on whom to reflect (v. 11). "His heart was sore troubled." He suspected treachery, most naturally.

Jehoram had made some advance towards reform (2 Kings iii. 2), and the Lord, by his prophet, recognizes even so much good by his supernatural aid, which, given him by Elisha, was another strong appeal both to his head and his heart. Surely he might have reflected how strong he would be if he followed the Lord fully (Ps. xli. 7).

Elisha's fame was beyond Israel. Naaman's cure must have extended his reputation, though it is not necessary to believe, as men will do who must always see the dramatic, that Naaman was the servant who replied (v. 12). In the East, the women's apartments are secluded, and "the king's bed-chamber" is the very strongest phrase to describe absolute secrecy. The king is told that Elisha, "the prophet that is in Israel," is the informant. We may see from this (what is often forgotten in giving credit for wisdom to early nations) how much they had opportunity to learn from Israel. They would know something of a prophet—his office, his claims, his powers, his words, and the cause he represented.

II. A TERRIFIED SERVANT.

The Syrian king—a true autocrat, with an overweening sense of his power as against a mere prophet—says (v. 13), "Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him." (Ps. xxxvii. 32). Either then or after inquiry it was reported that Elisha was in Dothan, which in its own way has an interesting history. The word is thought to mean "double fountain." A little way from the plain of Esdraelon was a fine grassy valley, on the direct road from Gilad by Beisan (later Scythopolis), to Egypt. Here Joseph's brethren kept their flocks—here the boy wandered—here the caravan going into Egypt gave the brothers the opportunity to get rid of him. Here is a mound, ruin-covered, with the spring at its side, and to this day the name *Dothan* is there. It was near Shechem, and seems to have been well known all through the later history of the Jews. There the God who watched over Joseph, and defeated the spite of his brothers, protected Elisha.

Cities in the East, like those one sees in the hilly parts of Italy, are often on a narrow space, and on a high ground, so that to surround them was not difficult. The Syrian detachment—footmen, chariots and horses—in great force surrounded the town by night.

Next morning the attendant on Elisha—Gehazi had no doubt been dismissed—sees with amazement and horror the host compassing the city, and he easily divines their purpose, and exclaims in terror, "Alas! my master, how shall we do?" He had probably not enjoyed the opportunity to see Elisha's former miracles. From the care Elisha takes to reassure and instruct him, we may infer that he was not a mere attendant, but a person intended for future service, perhaps a young man from one of the schools of the prophets. His question is answered.

III. THE THREEFOLD REPLY.

(a) The prophet gives verbal assurance (v. 1). "Fear not." How often this is said to men in Scripture! (It were worth while to find and compare the "fear nots." Ex. xiv. 13; 1 John iv. 4). This is faith, which does not dwell on anything but God's Word, as it reveals His attributes. How, or when, or in what order, deliverance will come is not the point. "The Lord of hosts is with us"—that is enough. (See the three confessions in Babylon, Dan. iii. 16-18).

(b) But the servant had not this intelligent faith. His mind is to be satisfied in

other ways. "Lord, open his eyes that he may see." How often we need to pray this regarding truths, lessons, warnings, lying all around, but unseen, as though not there! And "whether in the body or out of the body," he probably could not tell, but he saw the hill on which the little town was seated, full of horses and chariots, so brilliant and unearthly, that they can only be described as "of fire," and they are "round about Elisha." (See Ps. cxlvi. 7, and xli. 11).

(c) These fiery protectors were not, however, sent by the Syrians, nor were they now to enter into combat with mortal host. So the Syrians—with the light of day—proceeded to "fetch" Elisha. Again in answer to his prayer, the men are smitten with blindness, or illusion, so that they did not see rightly, and infantry, cavalry, and charioteers are all equally at fault, and equally helpless. This, indeed, contemplated more than the enlightenment of the young man. It was meant for the teaching of the Syrians, of Jehoram, and of the people of Israel, as we see from the sequel, in which all parties are made witnesses to the resistless might of the God of Israel (v. 19-23), and the bands of Syrians at that time came no more into the land of Israel. The miracle did its work. Learn that

(1) *Earth is a battle field.* Syrians and Israelites are opposed to one another. The war is on various fields, and with varying success, but it goes on. Now and then the Syrians speak softly to the Israelites, but it is in self-love, and for their own ends. (See 1 Kings xx. 34). And another war is being waged between God and His forces and the devil and his angels. Only opened eyes see this. But it is real. One gets glimpses of it when the Son of Man on earth threw light all around Him. (See Heb. i. 14). What mean the demons, disclosed in their working by the presence of Christ?

(2) *How feeble is the flesh!* Benhadad cannot tell how his plans are disclosed. And how *fretful* it is when baffled! The proud have troubles of their own. And how *self-confident* it is! Benhadad never dreams of his detachment failing to fetch Elisha, if he can only know his place. And how *constantly it is being humiliated*—its plans defeated, and its glory turned into shame. (See e.g., the sealing of the tomb, and the watch; the crucifixion of Christ itself).

(3) *What a blessing is a prophet in Israel!* How strong! how wise! how moderate! (v. 22) how chivalrous! (v. 23) how victorious by magnanimity and love! Our Bible is our Elisha. Let us obtain counsel from it.

(4) *What a power is faith!* Sometimes there is only the *form* of it. So the servant barely hopes that somehow Elisha can do something, or get it done. He goes in the right direction, and gets light. But higher far is Elisha's faith. He believes. He has gone through the stage of his servant. It is first the natural, afterward that which is spiritual. And *faith* prays. Twice here. And faith gets answers—*fitting*.

(5) *How safe saints are!* All forces of nature, which is God's servant, all the "innumerable company of angels" (Heb. xii. 22), "all power in heaven and earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18), for their defence.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

The two kings—the advantage to Jehoram—how it worked—the vexation of the Syrian king—the attempt at capture—the place of Elisha's sojourn—its site—history—present name—the paralyzed servant—the prophet's word—prayer—result—the Syrian movement—how defeated—the lessons touching life—the spiritual world—the means of our power—the safety of saints.

For the Presbyterianian.

THE RELATION OF PARENTS TO THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

BY REV. ALEXANDER MACKAY, D.D.

In these days when the qualifications of teachers, and the duties of pastors to the rising generation, are so frequently discussed, there is great danger of ignoring or overlooking the relation of parents to the Sunday School. Parental instruction is of paramount importance. Its necessity is not adequately felt, nor sufficiently acknowledged. The Puritan Divines spoke frequently and largely on this interesting topic. Baxter has somewhere stated that if parents were faithful in the religious instruction of their children there would be little occasion to preach to adult sinners. Flavel abounded in earnest appeals and fervent exhortations for awakening parents to the duty of bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The influence which parents exert over their little ones is far greater than any other agency. The responsibility of pastors and teachers is not to be compared to that of fathers and mothers. The former to a great extent is artificial and secondary, the latter is natural and primary. God has ordained that it should be so. In the parental relation we have a divinely constructed machinery for revolutionizing the whole moral world, and of transforming it after the pattern of the perfect man, Christ Jesus. The Divine command to all parents is, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Prov. xlii. 6. Training is not mere teaching; a child may be taught the art of reading, spelling, writing and ciphering, and yet be untrained. Instruction and education are not synonymous terms; one may be instructed and at the same time be poorly educated. Training or education signifies the development of the infantile powers, the bringing out or leading into the varied examples, experiences and precepts of Christian life. Youth is the time for unwearied activity; habits, tastes and predilections, are as yet not fixed. The faculties are fresh and full of vigor, the pursuits are not so numerous or perplexed as in advanced years. Childhood is in fact the moulding period in human life. If a river is to be turned into a new direction, and begin at the place where it is shallow and narrow, and not when it approaches the ocean. If a tree is to grow in any form you desire, begin with the tender sapling, and not when it has grown bulky and stiff with

years, for then it will become gnarled and impossible to bend. So parents and guardians should begin early in teaching their tender charge to avoid the wrong and cultivate those habits that are in accordance with the word of God, and when they will become old, they shall be found strengthened, established and settled in the principles and practices of truth and rectitude. If parents were heartily and zealously employed in properly training up their children, and thus co-operate with the teachers, then a greater blessing would descend on the young; they would grow in grace as they advance in years, and God would be greatly honored in families and in the world. In preparing *Moses* for his great work, the Supreme Being arranged that he should be committed to his mother's care during his infancy and childhood, and as Pharaoh's daughter said to that heavenly appointed nurse, so the great Father says to every parent now, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Parents should always remember that in training, nurturing and pruning their tender plant, they may become, by the aid of the Great Husbandman, the means of imparting to it a happy existence, a beauty and glory that shall never fade. It has been truly said that the *arm chair* is the mightiest pulpit, and the *home* the most influential school; these are sources of power, and are perpetually at work for good or evil during every day of the whole year. How little will an hour's teaching in the Sabbath school effort in successfully counteracting the evil habits of an ungodly house, or what will this brief period accomplish if home teaching is substituted for the Sunday school. The command for home instruction remains intact, and as obligatory to day as when given by Divine authority, (Deut. vi. 6, 7.) Parents were not only to store their own minds with Bible truths, but they were to teach them diligently to their children; when sitting in the house with their family assembled together, they were to talk of the commandments of the Lord, or when walking by the way, going to rest at night, or getting up in the morning, the same subject was to be repeated. Still they were to talk of the words which God had commanded them, to remember and observe. If children were thus instructed in Gospel truths, and all this training accompanied with the Spirit of grace and prayer, might we not expect to see Canadian homes pure, peaceful and prosperous. Fathers and mothers are the real educators of their children, but while this duty is chiefly incumbent on them, there are aids for them in this arduous and responsible work, and one of these is the Sunday school. They ought to co-operate with pastors and teachers, and regard the Sabbath school as an invaluable auxiliary for the moral and religious education of their little ones. They should send their children seasonably and regularly to this—the grandest institution in Christendom. If fathers and mothers are negligent or indifferent in this respect, their children may often lose valuable instruction that might be communicated to them. They have more influence over their children than any other class, and if they take personal interest in the school, they will see to it that whatever excuses or hindrances that may be in the way of the children for punctual attendance, will be promptly removed. They will attend themselves along with their children as frequently as possible; in doing this teachers and children would be greatly encouraged and stimulated in their work. As many as possible of the parents should be engaged as teachers, for where else can such warm hearts, sympathetic natures and experienced judgments be found. Who can be better qualified for this responsible office than those who are surrounded from day to day by a group of loving children. But it is to be regretted that the vast majority of parents are seldom or never seen in the Sunday school. Oh! it is distressing to think of the mere medium of pleasure, which generally they manifest in the efforts of those to whom they are entrusted so largely the moral and religious training of the little ones. It ought to be the reverse of this. While the teachers are anxiously and carefully preparing themselves for teaching, let the parents as earnestly prepare their children for it, and go with them as often as practicable to the Sunday school. They should always speak respectfully and affectionately of the Sabbath school teachers. If they do otherwise in the presence of their children, sad results may follow. The hearing of childhood is very acute. They almost intuitively observe what opinion their parents entertain of persons and things of which they speak. Children should be taught to love and respect their spiritual guides, if they are to be benefited by their instructions. The affection and respect of children to their parents is one great cause why the former pay so much attention to the counsels and reproofs of the latter. If parents are careless about their own spiritual interests, and speak disparagingly of religious instructors, no wonder that the children of such would cherish the same feelings of contempt and eventually throw off all the restraints of morality and religion. What must be the fruit of parental irreligious principles, practices and examples in their children, the results may be told with almost absolute certainty. They who cultivate the thorn in their household shall not gather the grape, and they who foster the thistle shall not gather the fig. Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap. The parents should be thoroughly convinced of the beneficial results of Sunday school teaching, and that their children go their to be benefited for time and eternity. If fathers and mothers really and deeply felt this, and speak highly and favorably of this institution, the same feeling of enthusiasm and appreciation will be undoubtedly imparted to the children. Parents should co-operate with the teachers in assisting their children to understand the lesson. They should devote some of their time, labour and thought, in thoroughly preparing their children with their tasks. Many pay no attention to this; all is left to the teachers. The juveniles go and come from school, and no questions are ever asked about their lessons. No rehearsal, no review, no commendation of these things to the children. When delinquent parents neglect home instruction, it is no wonder that

their children are like a garden that is not cultivated, and finally become all overgrown with weeds. They should outdo themselves in their children on every lesson, both before and after attending the school, as far as they are able. Home teaching has not the prominence it ought to have in this age. The good old practice of catechizing in families is now too much neglected. The Shorter Catechism—time honored in our Scottish fathers' homes, and which cannot be surpassed in any respect, should not be displaced. There is not a better text book beyond the Bible for systematically instructing the young in the grand and leading doctrines of the Christian religion. Its conciseness, suggestiveness, accuracy and clearness are worthy of all praise. The repetition of a part of every Sabbath evening with some explanations of its comprehensive statements would be found to be a very profitable exercise in the family school. Domestic catechetical instruction is a means of inestimable power in the formation of character. The chorale lessons studied in the Sabbath school, and afterward repeated in the home circle may remain for life written in the mind, and associated with the earliest and most tender scenes of affection. That household is ill regulated that has not its hour every Sunday night for this exercise. General instruction is useful, but catechisms with proofs is more so. The subjects taught in the Sunday school should be frequently introduced at the family table, and familiarly discussed and explained by the parents; in this way much precious time might be spent very profitably by the whole household. The parents should highly praise the visits of the Sabbath school teacher at their home. The conscientious teacher will occasionally call at the homes of their scholars; he will be anxious to know something about the conduct of his class during the week, and their diligence in preparing the lessons. He may converse with them on the peculiar talents, disposition of their children, and the best way of managing them. He will caution them against profaning the Sabbath day, and visiting places where their morals might be contaminated. The teacher should always feel that he is cordially received and made welcome at the parental home.

(To be continued.)

British and Foreign Notes.

THERE is a religious revival in Syracuse, N. Y., and thus far 1,250 conversions are reported.

SAID Louis Agassiz: "I do not believe that I am descended from a monkey; God is my Father."

EVEN under the most favorable sanitary conditions, eleven out of every 1,000 persons must die annually.

AN effort is being made to organize a Christian Association among the students in the University of London.

THE State Penitentiary of Western Pennsylvania has a library of 4,000 volumes, solely for the use of the prisoners.

MR. SPURGEON has two sons in the ministry—Charles, Jr., and Thomas—for whom a new chapel is being erected.

IN the province of Etchigui, Japan, a church which has now forty communicants, has grown up without the aid of a missionary.

"Hold the Fort" has been ruled out of the public schools in Paterson, N. Y., but the little folks still practise it on the street.

DR. CHARLES HODGE, senior professor in Princeton Theological Seminary, has resigned his professorship after a service of fifty-five years.

FIVE churches in San Francisco have freed themselves from the incubus of debt, by the payment of over \$122,000 during the past few weeks.

IN Sheffield and other English towns, "coffee-cart" companies, are furnishing coffee to the thirsty multitudes for a half-penny a cup.

THE twenty-second International Y.M.C.A. Convention, numbering about 500 delegates, will meet in Louisville, June 6, continuing five days. The General Secretaries Conference, composed of above eighty secretaries, will be held the previous Saturday.

DURING the past four or five years fifty-four journals have been started in Japan, and their circulation is very large, though the prices range from six to eight dollars a year. The paper published exclusively for women has a circulation of 12,000.

THE *Baptist Weekly* says that fifty years ago thirty Baptist Churches in Maryland declared themselves opposed to missions, while two alone took a stand in favor of them. The two increased to thousands, while the anti-mission churches diminished, till they now number seven or eight persons.

THE cry "Hard times" is not confined to Canada and the United States. Germany and Syria utter with equal earnestness the story of little money, work scarce, hundreds out of employment, many unused to beg obliged to do so or starve. Cannot the wise men of all countries help to remedy this trouble? Surely the world is rich in resources, and millions of acres of fertile, healthy lands have no inhabitants.

THE Pope has just reminded the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church throughout Europe that they are bound by the oath of allegiance to make a pilgrimage once in three years to the reputed tomb of St. Peter at Rome. Many of them are consequently expected in the Holy City during the present year.

THE Presbyterians in Australia have taken up the question of revising the standards. The General Assembly of Victoria has appointed a committee to consider (1) whether the *Second Book of Discipline* should not be dismissed from the standards of the Church; and (2) whether the subscription required should not be confined to the Confession of Faith, accompanied by a generally expressed approval of the other subordinate standards.