

"GOSSAMER."

I have two boys—frank, generous little fellows—full of life, yet tender and sympathetic—to their partial mother the noblest and best boys in the world. Fred is just past fourteen, and Johnnie five; the two sisters whose ages come between are not, for God took them. I have always tried to keep my boys by the hand, wherever they went; that is, to make them feel that their mother shared every pleasure and sympathized in every childish trouble; that their joys were not complete without her approval or participation, nor their griefs assuaged until she knew them. So I have always felt sure that whatever my boys might meet through the day, I should hear it all at our "bed-time talk"—and these talks save my boys many a wrong step. Only last night Johnnie said to me:

"Mamma, I got very angry with Sammy Jones today; had my hand all ready to strike him, but I thought how bad you would feel, and the dear Lord too, when I came to tell you to-night, and it held my hand still, so I couldn't strike."

"I thought the 'dear Lord' was nearer to my little one than he thought when his hand 'couldn't strike.'"

"But I have noticed a change in Fred for a few weeks past; he has said he was 'too big to kiss good night.' He turned away when I talked with Johnnie, and told me less of his boyish adventures, and none of his troubles. Two weeks ago the mystery was all explained."

"Mother," said he, "there's a great hole in my jacket."

"So I took the coat to mend it and thought, as I sewed, of what Dr. Cuyler says of the 'little coats' we mother Hannahs make for our children's souls as well as bodies, and of the white garment of purity he gives them in their innocent childhood, but which, alas! it is so hard to 'keep unspotted from the world.' From that my thoughts ran on to the rent in the 'little coat'—the day's rough play had made, and I wondered a little sadly—thinking of his ungracious kiss that night—if the 'little coat' for his soul had not a greater rent, and one that needed far more skill in repairing."

Suddenly, as I turned the pockets of the garment before me in an absent minded way, I came upon something very strange among the usual medley of balls, tops, strings and other boyish treasures. I drew out the package, "Superior Chewing Tobacco," and just below it a half-smoked cigar. I would rather have found a poisonous serpent, it seemed to me. Surely poison is no less poisonous whether it is a serpent's fang or in the hateful narcotic, unless indeed the last is the worse; for did not the Saviour himself say, "Fear rather them which have power to destroy both body and soul?" A sleepless night brought me no nearer to the solution of my great question, "What shall I do to stop this?"—and I began my talk with Fred hardly knowing how it would end.

"Why, mother," said he, "every boy and man around town uses tobacco, at least every one who is anything, and even Mr. Simmonds, whom you think such a good minister, uses it all the time."

"I could not deny this, and thought with an inward sigh how quick young eyes are to notice such things, and how much good one such evil habit counteracts."

"But, Fred, that doesn't make it right for you or him either."

"I know it, but then how can a boy help it, or why need he try to, if a minister and all the rest of the good men don't."

I reasoned on the foolish waste of money. "Every boy spends some money foolishly; I may as well take mine in tobacco." "Peanuts would be more suitable, Fred" but in vain I reasoned; showed him the folly, the uncleanness, the actual sin, the shameful disgrace of voluntarily selling himself into slavery to so low and vile a master. My boy, usually so gentle and tractable, had evidently made up his mind to show himself "manly"—he did not see how different that was from being "manly"—by standing firm against every argument, and went off to school looking as much like a hero as possible.

I could not give it up so, and in the next three evening talks made the best use of all my logic, but to no purpose whatever. I would not bribe him, believing it a wrong and unwise course, and I was loth to lay commands or threaten punishment, knowing full well that a voluntary promise would be far more effectual. But the fourth even-

ing, as we sat round the table, Johnnie read slowly, and with many odd blunders, the story of the children who set out on a pilgrimage to the Shining City; how when they started a pretty fairy threw over their shoulders a shining thread of gossamer, how it grew larger and stronger until it was a cable, under the heavy weight of which many groined.

When they came to the gate of the Shining City the gate-keeper laid them lay if aside, or they could not enter; so they tried to do it, but could not, it was so heavy, and the fairy had changed to an ugly hag who drew them by it away from the gate, so they never got into the Shining City at all. I told him that it meant a bad habit, which at first is like a gossamer thread, and as easily laid off—though put on by a pleasant fairy—but at last it becomes so strong that we cannot break it, and draws us away from the gates of heaven as the cable did the children from the Shining City.

"Mamma," said he earnestly, "are there any gossamers on my shoulders? Freddie there are any gossamers on you?" added he, turning to his brother, and growing mischievous, looking over his shoulders, head, and face.

"Yes Freddie, here's a gossamer end close by your mouth—I thought 'twas a whisker, but I guess it's a gossamer."

Unintentionally he had touched the truth, and Fred flushed deeply as he rubbed off the stain that had called Johnnie's attention.

"He's broke it, mamma," laughed the little one; "he's broke it!" and Fred's face flushed deeper than ever.

Suddenly, as if all my labors and prayers had come over him at once, his own truth and frankness asserted themselves, and he sprang to my side, in his old impulsive way, saying,

"Mother, it is a gossamer and I will break it while I can; I won't let tobacco keep me from my shining city."

I could not speak just then, but Fred understood my look, and his warm embrace and hearty kiss sealed a compact which I am sure he will never break. But I have thought since there are so many boys endeavoring to form this dreadful habit, that our experience—Fred's and mine—might find sympathizing listeners among the mothers and perhaps give the boys encouragement to break the gossamer thread before it becomes a cable.

So I send it to you, with a prayer for that blessing which alone can make it worthy.—Standard.

BOYS' AND GIRLS' TEMPERANCE TEXT-BOOK.

BY H. L. READE.

(National Temperance Society, New York.)

LESSON VI.—APPETITE.

What is a natural appetite? A natural appetite is the desire for, and relish of, necessary food.

For what kinds of food do we have this desire and this relish? First for milk, then for breadstuffs and fruits, and at last meats—things needful to keep the body growing and afterward in repair.

For what kinds of drink do we have this natural appetite? For milk, which is both food and drink, and for water.

Do brute animals, which always have a natural appetite, ever drink anything besides water? They do not. Water is, universally, the natural drink of both brute animals and man.

What is an acquired appetite? An acquired appetite, is an appetite for some food or drink for which there is not a natural desire.

Have persons a natural appetite for alcohol? They have not, except in cases of what is called inherited appetite, or an appetite in the child because the father or mother had it.

How is the appetite for alcohol or alcoholic drinks acquired? At the first by taking a little, mixed with something that covers the disagreeable taste, and lessens the burning sensation when taken into the mouth and throat.

How is this appetite increased and strengthened? Simply and only by the repetition of the first process.

Is there anything peculiar about this acquired appetite for alcoholic drinks? There is.

What is that peculiar? Having made the appetite, the tendency is an ever-increasing demand for drinks which contain alcohol.

To what does this ever-increasing demand of the acquired appetite often lead? To brutalizing excesses, leading its possessor to sacrifice all that is valuable and dear, to appease, for the moment, its terrible craving.

HINTS TO TEACHERS ON THE CURRENT LESSONS.

(From Plumb's Select Notes.) January 28.—Acts 3: 1-11.

ILLUSTRATIVE.

1. "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee." Centuries after Cornelius a Lapide beautifully relates how Thomas Aquinas once came to Pope Innocent IV, at a moment when the pontiff had before him a great treasure of gold. "See, Thomas," said Innocent, "see, the Church can no more say as it did in those first days, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "True, holy father," replied Thomas Aquinas, "but the Church of the present day can hardly say to a lame man what the Church of the first day said, 'Arise and walk.'"—Cornelius a Lapide, quoted by Wordsworth.

11. "The philanthropy of Christianity." All these early miracles are but the type, an earnest, of what Christianity, in seeking to save the souls of men, is doing for their bodies. The day-laborer has more of the best things in the world—books, libraries, churches, railways, telegraphs, newspapers—than the kings have in heathen lands. Dorchester states that 500 charitable societies in London expend \$5,000,000 annually; and in New York city, \$4,000,000 annually are expended. In the United States, 43 institutions care for 5,743 deaf and dumb annually; 30 for the blind, with 2,178 pupils; and 11 for 1,781 idiots. The "Philanthropies" sum up the results of Christian care for the poor, the orphans, little wanderers, insane, sick, foundlings, cripples, drunken outcasts, children, in the United States as amounting to at least \$123,000,000 a year. Besides, the average length of life has greatly increased. So Christ is doing greater works through his disciples than he did himself on earth.—P.

PRACTICAL.

1. Verse 1. The privilege and duty of attending church.

2. Verse 2. The Church the means of help and comfort to the needy.

3. Verse 6. There are many things of more value than money.

4. Those who have no money are not debarred from doing good.

5. Each one must give what he has himself received from God.

6. A motive for being good; because we can impart to others only such things as we have.

7. Jesus Christ is the source and power of all the good works of Christians.

8. Verse 7. Personal contact—sympathy—is a means of conveying the blessings of Christ to others.

9. Verse 8. The first impulse of the saved is praise to God, and to express the praise.

10. Verses 9, 10. The change made in those we know, by their marvellous conversion, is a great proof of the Gospel.

11. The healing of the body, an aid to faith in the healing of the soul.

12. The temporal blessings of Christianity lead men to its spiritual blessings.

13. Miracles of healing and dispossession are reminiscences of an unfallen Paradise, and prophecies of a Paradise regained.—A. F. Gordon, D.D.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

By this lesson we can set forth Jesus Christ as the great Physician of body and soul. (1) The lame man, verses 1-3, showing the effects of sin, the weakness and need of the soul. (2) His cure, verses 4-11, with special emphasis on "such as I have give I thee"; referring all the power and glory to Christ; and the man's expressions of praise. (3) Use this miracle as an object lesson, teaching (a) how Christ heals the souls of men; (b) the continued healing and blessing power of Christianity, always helping the poor and

suffering, removing a large amount of evil, and bringing good out of the rest to those who trust in Christ.

Question Corner.—No. 2.

SCRIPTURE ENIGMA.

Who was it thought much learning made th' apostle mad? Who saw Christ's day afar, and seeing it was glad? What worthy woman once was raised to life again? By whose command at Bethlehem were infants slain? Where Jacob raised an altar what was its full name? And whom did he inter, when they near Ephrath came? Who hid God's prophets in a cave, and fed them all? Who, with Achaicus and Stephanas, cheered Paul? Who from his childhood had the holy Scriptures known? Who once a gallows made, and then was hanged thereon? From whence did Scripture say that God would call his Son? Who trembled at the preaching of a judgment-day? Where was the ark left when the deluge passed away? Who for his unbelief was by his Lord reproved? Who by her cousin was adopted, and much loved? Who was struck blind in his resistance to God's word? Who let down two men safely by a scarlet cord? Who was the grandmother of youthful Timothy? And who his mother, too, of pious memory? What child did God thrice call to tell a high-priest's doom? And who by holy men was carried to the tomb? By taking the initials, there will then appear. What God is unto all poor orphan children here.

BIBLE STUDY.

The word that I think of to-day is suggestive of angelic beings, heathen gods, and myriads of the creatures of this world. I do not associate it with men, excepting here and there a presumptuous individual.

In the Bible it is used principally as a figure of speech, and is full of comfort to the children of God.

The first mention is of the care of the Israelites, and their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The Lord himself is speaking to his servant Moses. The figure is a favorite one with the Psalmist. In St. Matthew and St. Luke we also find it among the most pathetic and loving utterances of our gracious Redeemer.

What is the word? How is it connected with angels? To what heathen deities does it belong? To what creatures of this world? To what presumptuous men do I allude? Give some Scripture references containing the word.

ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS NO. 24.

- 27. Every seventh year the Israelites were commanded to observe as a Sabbath of rest, to sow nothing in their fields nor work in their vineyards. Lev. xxv. 1-4.
28. The Lord promised that the sixth year should produce enough for three years. Lev. xxv. 21.
29. Before. To the Hittites. Gen. xxvi. 34.
280. The battle of the kings in the time of Abraham. Gen. xiv.
281. Because David disobeyed the Lord in numbering the children of Israel. 2 Sam. xxiv.
282. The Lord gave David his choice of three punishments and he chose the plague. 2 Sam. xxiv. 12, 14.
283. The rejoicings of the Israelites after they had passed through the Red Sea. Ex. xv. 26.
284. Jehoshaphat. 2 Chron. xvii. 7, 9.
285. Nebuchadnezzar. Dan. iv. 31, 35.
286. Jeroboam. 1 Kings xii. 26, 33.
287. When Joshua expressed his indignation at two men who were prophesying in the Camp. Num. xi. 26, 29.
288. John the Baptist. Luke I. 17.

BIBLE ACROSTIC.

Cornelius. H-annah. Rachel. I-Isaac. S-tephen. T-ithathias. M-atthew. A-nanias. S-erra.

CORRECT ANSWERS RECEIVED.

To No. 23.—Alma G. McCulloch, 12 ac; Clara Flossom, 12; C. M. Hathaway, 11; Gordon McK. Campbell, 11; John Rattray, 11; Alex. G. Burr 10 ac; Annie D. Burr, 10 ac.

"Dolly Mrs M impatient none cam "Doro Now, was sithi room, wh evidence the neat world D flushed cl over the : interestin age than quired a t mother to horrors of Bœuf to a "Doro "Yes'n Now, D very plea confessed pouting h side Mrs later. "Is you m order, d glancing Dolly still eyes. "No, m and forgc Mrs. M forgetful great tria awake na "You' your boi Bridget l or two to sick, and of Toold- you can v and put your ow order, an have to go play with for his m by eleven sleep." "Down c hoe" with turned cr slamming and stepp manner t peaceable vicious gr rows of warned h vent her o "I don had to w cook's mo Dolly, ma necessary she drop pan of h to break c ful dishes papa wou out of my want to b that. O these disl But "n in scarcel the dishe room du