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Calendar.

CALENDAR WITH LESSONS.

Day	Date	MORNING.	EVENING.
S.	July 23	1 Sam. 16	17 1 Th. 5
M.	24	Eccl. 5, John 1	Eccl. 6
T.	25	7	5 2 Th. 2
W.	26	8	10
T.	27	11	13
F.	28	Jerem. 1	2 1 Tim. 1
S.	29	8	4

Poetry.

THE RAIN.

A blessing on the rain!
A blessing on the clouds that bring
Their silver vials from the sea,
And from beneath their darkening wing,
Drop offerings on the lap of Spring,
To make it glad for you and me!
To brighten all around the while
With more than morning's fleeting smile!
A blessing on the rain!

A blessing on the rain!
For, though it may shut out the sun,
And keep the anxious wanderer in,
Its countless treasures, one by one,
It scatters all the day is done,
As gifts which you and I may win,
When in a thousand forms we see
The worth of raindrops on the lee,
A blessing on the rain!

A blessing on the rain!
Nor is the blessing mine alone—
Each blade of grass a blessing gives,
Each drooping flower by moss-clad stone,
Each leaf on bush and tea-top grown,
Is blessing when it drinks and lives;
And everywhere the thirsty earth
Bears witness to the rain-drop's worth.
A blessing on the rain!

A blessing on the rain!
I love to hear its pattering song—
Its pattering at my window pane;
I should not weary all day long
Of listening to its minstrel throng,
Though mournful seems its low refrain!
To me it has a pleasant voice,
Which can but make my soul rejoice.
A blessing on the rain!

A blessing on the rain!
It comes, dropped from "God's hollow hand,"
As gently as might fall a tear,
And blessing all the waiting land,
The rock-bound waste, and desert sand—
I feel that God himself is near!
And thus I render thanks to him
Who gives, with shadows dark and dim,
The rain—the blessed rain!

Religious Miscellany.

THE MISSION FIELD.

The palmyra is one of the stiffest and least elegant of the family of palms, but is, perhaps, the most useful member of the family. It grows to the height of from 60 to 90 feet, almost as straight, though not as smooth, as the mast of a ship. Like other palms, it is totally destitute of branches, but it is surmounted by an erect plume of fan-shaped leaves, each of which is so large that it may be regarded as a branch. Each leaf is shaped like a fan, not pinnated, like that of the cocoa nut palm, whence it has received its botanical name of *Borassus flabelliformis*, or "fan-shaped Borassus." The leaves are much less graceful than the long, drooping leaves of the cocoa nut, but of all leaves they are the most serviceable to man. They are not only used for thatching the houses of the middle and lower classes, but are also used for making mats, baskets, and vessels of almost every description; and a single leaf, folded in a particular manner, serves even for a bucket for drawing water with. But the leaf of the palmyra is put to a still more remarkable use: slips of the young leaf form the ordinary stationery of the Hindus in every part of India. In India the "leaf" on which people write is literally "a leaf." Each ray, or vein, of the fan-shaped leaf comprises two long slips, and each of these strips will suffice as writing material for an ordinary letter: a collection of leaves strung together constitutes a book. The leaf requires to be smoothed or pressed, or any other process of preparation. Just as it comes from the

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tree it may be used for writing upon; and as nearly a hundred such slips are supplied by a single leaf, and as a cart-load of leaves may be had for a few shillings, the Hindus are provided with the cheapest species of stationery in the world. It is written upon with an iron pen, or graver, an instrument with a sharp steel point, with which the penman rapidly graves or scratches the characters, and though the "olei," or palmyra leaf, is not as durable as parchment, or even as paper, yet I have seen documents written on it which were at least two hundred years old.

The palmyra is the only palm tree of which the wood is of any value, and the rafters and laths made of the palmyra are regarded as the best of their kind; but the high estimate in which the palmyra is held is chiefly owing to the value of its products as articles of food. The young root is edible, and so is the ripe fruit; the unripe fruit, however, is greatly preferable, inasmuch as it contains the purest, most wholesome, and most refreshing vegetable jelly in existence.

These articles sink into insignificance when compared with the saccharine sap or juice of the tree, which is by far its most valuable product. The "pashani," or unfermented sap, without any cooking or preparation, is very nourishing,—during the period when it flows most abundantly, the poorer classes get visibly sleeker and more comfortable, and you might almost see your face in the skin of the children. Just as it comes from the tree, the sap forms the breakfast of the Shanars and lower castes, who drink it in a cup formed of a palmyra leaf.—The supply of sap is greatly in excess of what is required for this purpose, and most of it is boiled into a hard, black mass, called by the English "jaggery"—a kind of sugar cake, which forms the mid-day meal of the same classes. Their evening meal, the *phani*, of all Hindus, which is generally of rice, with some curried additions, is procured by the sale of the superfluous "jaggery." The greater part of what is made is sold, and it always commands a ready sale. Some of it is sent to be refined into white sugar for the European market; and by varying the process a little, the people themselves make a very good sugar-candy. It is the unfermented juice of the palmyra which is used as food; when allowed to ferment, which it will do before mid-day if left to itself, it is changed into a sweet intoxicating drink, called "cal," or "toddy." This is the liquid which is generally used in India as yeast for leavening bread, but is also used by the Pariahs and other low caste Hindus, especially in the vicinity of large towns, for the purposes of intoxication. The Shanars, the cultivators of the tree in the southern provinces, are rarely known to make use of it for this purpose; as a caste, they are strictly temperate, in which respect they differ from all low caste tribes, and claim to be ranked with the higher castes. One may travel for miles through the thickest part of the palmyra forest, without meeting with a single tree that is licensed to be used for "toddy." Between Edoykoody and Sawyerparam, a distance of thirty-two miles, which I have very frequently traversed, and which is thickly planted with palmyras throughout, I have only noticed the existence of one licensed tree.

The amount of nourishment which is supplied by the palmyra, without even the trouble of cooking, might be supposed to operate as a premium upon indolence, but in reality we find no premium upon indolence in Tinnevely, or anywhere else in God's world—a hard working world, in which it has been made necessary for every class of people to eat their bread by the sweat of their brow. The Shanars are as industrious a people as any in India; and if this were not their character, the provisions made for their wants are unavailable, for though their breakfast is ready cooked for them, it is at the top of the palmyra, and the palmyra is a tall, slim tree, without a single branch; hence it is necessary for every man to climb for his breakfast before he gets it, and the labor of climbing the palmyra in so hot a climate is one of the hardest and most exhausting species of labor anywhere to be seen. The sap of the tree cannot be obtained, as from the maple, by tapping the trunk; it flows only from the spadix or flower stalk, at the top of the tree. From amongst

the fan-shaped leaves, which form the plumed head of the palmyra, there shoot forth in the season several bunches of flower stalks, each flower stalk branches out into several, and each of these flowering branches, when bruised or sliced, yields drop by drop about a pint per diem of sweet juice. A little earthen vessel is attached to each "paleo," or flower branch to receive the sap as it drops; and it is the business of such of the Shanars as are palmyra climbers to climb the tree morning and evening, for the purpose of trimming the "paleo," and emptying into a sort of pail made of palmyra leaf, which they carry up with them, all the sap that they find collected since their last ascent. The pail is then conveyed to a little boiling-house in the neighborhood, where the women boil the juice into "jaggery." In the northern part of the Carnatic, the palmyra-climbers make use of a sort of movable girdle, to help them in climbing the tree; but in Tinnevely and Travancore the Shanars make no use of any artificial assistance. They clasp the tree with joined hands, and support their weight not with the knees, which stick out from the tree, and of which they make no use, but with the soles of the feet, which they bend inwards like the hands, and keep together by the help of a little band, so as to clasp the tree almost as the hands do,—and then they ascend, not by the alternate action of each hand, but by a series of springs, in which both hands move together and both feet follow together, not unlike the action used in swimming. A Shanar will climb the palmyra in this manner almost as rapidly as a man will walk the same length, and is accustomed thus to climb fifty trees twice a day, or even three times a day, for eight months in the year. The bark of the tree is rough from the scars of former leaves, so that accidents rarely occur, except in high winds, or when the tree is slippery through recent rain; and not often even then, for a man who was sitting upon a leaf stalk, at the top of a palmyra in a high wind, when the stalk gave away, and he came down eighty feet to the ground, safely and quietly, sitting on the leaf which served the purpose of a natural parachute.

No kind of cultivation involves so little trouble or expense as that of the palmyra. The nut has merely to be cast into the sand and loosely covered over, and no further thought or care is necessary till it becomes a tree and begins to bear. The farmer is often relieved even of the trouble of planting by the crows, which leave the nut on the ground after devouring the fruit. Sometimes, for two or three years, no trace of the young palmyra appears above ground: it might be supposed to have perished, but it is busily occupied in working its way downwards in search of water. After about twenty years of neglect, this generous tree—which the Hindus praise as the model of the highest sort of generosity—begins to requit its owner for benefits which it never received.

It is remarkable that the palmyra yields its sweet juice not during, or at the close of the rainy season, when it might be expected to be full of sap, but during the best period of the year. The sap begins to rise when the sun begins to return from the south, and flows most copiously when the sun is right overhead. The sun is vertical in Tinnevely in April, and again in August; and the intervening period—including also March and September—is what is called the palmyra season. When the heat is so great, and so continuous that every blade of grass disappears from the hot soil—when the air is filled with clouds of red sand, hurled along with the land wind, or south-west monsoon, which mucks with showers of sand the earth's desire for rain—then it is that the palmyra yields the abundance of its cool, sweet, refreshing sap, for the supply of the wants of the people. I have dug down through the sandy soil to see where the supply of sap came from, and have found that the long, stringy roots of the palmyra could be traced right down to a depth of forty feet beneath the surface. There, I found them drinking in perpetual draughts of water in the secret springs and channels that lie far beneath the surface of the ground, where the greatest draughts of summer never reach. Even at that depth, I found that they penetrated still lower into interstices amongst the rocks, where I could follow them no longer. Here, then, I found the reason why the palmyra