

Our Young Folks.

The Little Prisoners.

BY MISS F. A. PERCY

In a queer little house, as round as a ball, And hung high in the air, Without any doors or windows at all, Some little things lived the long summer through; And, strange to declare, As fast as they grew their house grew too. Summer had painted their little house green; For she felt very sure That a prettier color never was seen. But when Autumn came, she said, with a frown: "Green I cannot endure," And so she painted the little house brown. Prisoners they were without any doubt, No light could come in, And there wasn't a crack where they could look out, So they had no way of knowing at all How fair to be soon Was the wonderful world beyond their dark wall. But when Jack Frost, a jolly old chap, Came along one day, On the little brown house he gave a sharp rap And the walls snapped open! The prisoners were free! And out and away They went with a bound, the fair world to see. In a moment more they were all on the ground, Enjoying the air. But scarcely had they a chance to look round, When two furry creatures, coming that way And spying them there, Ato them all up without any delay. What was the house as round as a ball, First green and then brown? What were the names of the prisoners small? Who were the creatures that came that way And gobbled them down, So they lived not in freedom even a day?

Anagram.

R S T E Y B I N P E R A.

Arrange these letters to form one word. Rearrange them to form three words, describing the one word. (Answer in two weeks.—Ed. B.A.P.)

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN

SIR.—My children have dissected Montreal, with the following result, and have asked me to send their list to you for insertion in your paper.

MONTREAL.

More, Moren, moan, mort, moral, mortal, mote, moat, morn, monte, me, met, meat, meal, mean, meta, mentor, Merton, Melton, mental, mon, melon, melt, metal, mat, ma, mate, mar, mart, mater, male, man, name, marous, malt, mare, malo, manor, moet, morale. O, on, or, o'er, ore, oat, oaten, oral, omer, ornate, Orme, one, omen, Out, Omar. No, nor, not, note, Nore, Nora, Noe, Noel, neat, near, net, Nero, Nat, name. To, tare, torn, tore, toe, Tola, Tom, ton, tone, tomo, ten, tear, teal, team, tram, talon, tame, tar, tar, term, taro, ten, tale, teon, tan, tare. Rat, rate, ran, ram, Rao, rant, real, ream, relm, reut, roe, rot, rote, roam, Rome, Roman, roan, role, Rena. Elm, eat, ear, era, eta, earn, earl, Ema, etal. A, are, ale, am, an, art, ant, at, ate, alto, ante, Amou, alone, almon, Ano, Arle, arm, also, alter, atom, alert, altern, amen, almoner, arne. Let, late, Lar, lame, lo, Leo, lot, lean, learn, lone, lore, loan, loane, Lear, Lamont, Leno, Lene, lone, lant, laue, lorn, Lorno, Laon, later, lamer, Lora, lemon. 178 words from a word of eight letters, none of which were looked for in the dictionary. R. [For the gratification of "two children who enjoy the PRESBYTERIAN very much," we gladly make room for the above.—Ed. B.A.P.]

DEAR SIR.—To the 127 words formed from the word *Incompatible*, by Thomas J. Martin, you may add the following 186:—Imp, inapt, inept, income, impale, impact, Inca, incompatible, Nile, nil, nip, niobe, nab, nation, nap, nape, noble, Noe, nonce, cent, cit, cito, cition, camp, eat, climate, climb, complaint, camel, cape, cap, compel, caiman, calm, capitol, catnip, clam, clan, cob, cobalt, coal-mine, client, combine, complement, cot, omen, open, oil, oat, oaten, obit, melon, maple, Mabel, menial, mop, malt, mantel, mantle, mine, mice, pile, paint, Pat, plain, plan, place, palet, pain, pane, pet, pent, pie, pine, pant, plaint, pact, am, amble, ample, ate, alien, aim, alembic, ailment, aome, abet, ace, act, action, acoutie, tire, tib, team, tape, talon, tip, tan, Tom, Tim, binomial, bole, bin, blot, Ben, bet, berit, bacon, beat, bean, beam, bleat, blame, bat, blaine, bilobate, bite, bait, bemoan, beal, beacon, belt, limp, limb, lime, lit, lobate, late, lice, lace, lace, elicit, elliptic, eat, encamp. I have no doubt that a great many more words might be got out of it very easily. A BRASSIDE BOY. Note des Neiges, Brasside Academy, Feb. 21, 1876.

An Acrostic.

I would be glad to impress the young folks with the importance of beginning early to study the Bible. What you learn of its truths and precepts will dwell in your heart, like a sweet melody, all your life. I give a copy of a very pleasant and profitable manner of searching the Scriptures. I expect to receive so many good proverbs, that there will be no necessity of another from me. The acrostic formed is an old Greek proverb. The subject, WISDOM. K—eep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. N—ow, there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city; yet, no man remembered that same poor man. O—nly by pride cometh contention; but with the well-advised is wisdom. W—isdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding. T—he fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

H—o layeth up wisdom for the righteous; He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. Y—ea, also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool. S—o shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul when thou hast found it; then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off. E—ven a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise; and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding. L—abor not to be rich; cease from thine own wisdom. F—or wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared with it.

The Ministry of Children.

On this subject we find the following in a recent issue of the N.Y. Christian at Work: "The great problem of the world to-day is how to lift up society to a better and purer plane, without violently disturbing its social and industrial life. And the great engine which alone can lift it with such gentle and effective influence as scarcely to be recognized, is the Sabbath-school.

America giving her system of Sabbath-schools to the nations of Europe! How beautiful the idea! How God rewards and compensates work done for Him! When Martin Luther, a name that ought to stir every American heart, nailed his celebrated thesis to the door, the hammer stroke vibrated round the world for liberty. It gave note to all who were persecuted for truth's sake and liberty's, that in Germany there was a safe asylum in which they could prosecute their work, and from Antwerp and Worms went forth Tyndall's first complete edition of the English Bible. And now we give them back the American Sunday-school, with its revivifying and life-giving spiritual power. Geneva and Calvin—inseparable names. It was Calvin who laid the foundations of religious freedom; it was Geneva that gave the first impulse to civil liberty all over the world. Who should prize these gifts more than the people of this country? and how fitting that they should receive from us a purer religious instruction through our Sunday-School system and by the ministry of children.

Nothing leads up to liberty more surely than an open Bible. There is nothing from before which more swiftly flies all error and forms of wrong doing than the Bible. Europe is to-day in a hand-to-hand fight with the Papacy, and there is but one weapon that can successfully compete with the wily foe, and that is the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We believe that the nations are to receive it through the institution of the Sabbath-school—that through the ministry of children Christ is to come into His kingdom, and so shall be fulfilled the prophetic words of the Redeemer of men, uttered nearly nineteen centuries ago, as He rode to His cross—"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise."

Be Kind to the Aged.

Age, when whitening for the tomb, is a worthy object of reverence. The passions have ceased—hopes of self have ceased. The old linger with the young—and oh, how careful should the young be to reward them with tender affection and with the warmest love, to diminish the chill of ebbing life. The Spartans looked on reverential respect for old age as a beautiful trait of character. Be kind to those who are in the autumn of life, for you know not what sufferings they may have endured, nor how much of it, may still be their portion. Do they seem unreasonably to find fault or murmur? Allow not your anger to kindle against them; rebuke them not, for doubtless many have been the crosses and trials of earlier years, and perhaps their dispositions, while in the spring-time of life, were less flexible than your own. Do they require aid? Then render it cheerfully. Forget not that the time may come when you may desire the same assistance from others that you render to them. Do all that is needful for the old, and do it with alacrity, and think not hard if much is required at your hands, lest when age sets its seal upon your brow, and fills your limbs with trembling, others may wait unwilling, and feel relieved when the coffin has covered you forever.

May Christians Dance?

Yes, if they dance according to the directions of the Bible. The Bible speaks of dancing—"a time to dance"—and tells how it was done, and where it was done; and if we go by the Bible, then we may dance.

First, then, the dances spoken of and approved of by the Bible, were religious dances, mixed with songs and praises to the Redeemer of the world. Miriam and her damsels went forth in dances and songs. (Ex. xv. 10.) David danced before the Ark of God. (2 Sam. vi. 6; 1 Chron. xv. 29.)

Second, the sexes always danced apart. Now, gentlemen, when you wish to have a Scriptural dance—and all others are wrong—rent a large hall, light, warm and ornament it if you will, gather as many of your sex as you can command, have your harps or cymbals, take one of David's psalms, or if you can dance to one of Watt's hymns, or some of the "Gospel Songs," all the better; and then with hearts full of love to God and gratitude for His mercies, you may dance to your heart's content. No other kind is approved of in the good old Bible.—Our Faith.

Men are often accused of pride because their accusers would be proud if they themselves were in their places.

Trials that come upon us are only the faithful performance of God's everlasting engagements.

He that approacheth the valley of humility goeth down the path of human weakness and through the ante-room of failure.

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON X.

March 5, 1876. GOD'S COVENANT WITH DAVID. { 2 Sam. vii. 16-29. COMMIT TO MEMORY, vs. 27-29. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—2 Sam. xxiii. 5; Isa. lv. 3. SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With v. 18, read Ps. vii. 4; with v. 19, read Ps. ciii. 17; with v. 20, read 1 Chron. xvii. 10; with v. 21, read Ezek. xxxvi. 22; with v. 22, read Ps. lxxxix. 8; with v. 23, read Dent. xxiii. 24; with v. 24, read Dent. xxvi. 18; with vs. 25, 26, compare 2 Sam. vii. 13-15; with vs. 27, 28, read 2 Cor. i. 20; with v. 29, read Ps. cxix. 49. GOLDEN TEXT.—Of this man's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.—Acts xiii. 23.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—By grace we stand. To understand our lesson we must recall David's character and temperament. He was a man of vigor and action, ready to plan, and fearless and untiring in carrying out. He could not sit still and do nothing. He was zealous, energetic and forward to do good. While the power of the Philistines was unbroken he had enough work. When this was taken out of the way, he turned towards work at home, and thought of the permanent good of the people.

He did not think of beginning at the outside with plans of trade, commerce, or alliance with other nations, but at the heart of the nation, with a scheme for more and more honoring the God who gave stability and prosperity. It is with Him God first and God most of all. He knows nothing so good for Israel as to establish God's worship.

There is a certain fitness in buildings. They express the estimate we have of objects. A bank, an insurance company, a merchant will erect a costly and handsome house. What would be thought of our estimate of our religion, if our ethos abounded in these, and in tasteful private dwellings, while the churches were mean, cheap, and unsightly? Just so David thought and said (v. 2). He meant action, when telling Nathan, and was encouraged to proceed (v. 3). But there were good reasons why he should not actually build the house. God, however, accepts His will for the deed, and conveys His mind in so gentle a way as not to discourage, but gladden David (vs. 5-10). All this came by Nathan (v. 17).

What our lesson calls "God's covenant with David" is the grateful acceptance by David of the Lord's gracious promise. We shall mark off one by one the features of that acceptance, pointing out the verses sustaining each. Teachers can take this order, or in the less advanced classes, follow the order of the verses of which an explanation will be no less fully given, than in the ordinary way. While men in speaking to God do not think of order, logical or otherwise, we, in studying and remembering their words, are not forbidden to arrange them in order.

I.—ALL OF GRACE.

In v. 18, we have David in the attitude of devotion before God, galled sitting. So Eli "sat" before the Lord (1 Sam. i. 9). In the modern East there is a peculiar way in which men combine sitting and kneeling. The body rests in part on the knees and in part on the heels behind. It is the position both of homage to the superiors and of worship. The various forms in which saints have worshipped show that the state of the heart and not of the body is the main thing. David is deeply moved by a sense of God's condescension. A true servant of God, instead of being lifted up in pride is humbled by great favours from the Lord. "Who am I, O Lord God," etc.

V. 19 shows us the particular view of God's favour that impresses him. He had been of lowly birth, a shepherd lad. God had raised him to a throne. He had given him a promise making him the head of a line of kings, putting him as if he were a great man. The wording of the verse is less clear here than in 1 Chron. xvii. 17. So when men are raised up to be sons of God, they see more clearly their unworthiness, and wonder at divine grace. See the case of Paul, 1 Tim. i. 13-15, and his word to the Eph. ii. 2, 3.

V. 20 exhibits his view of divine grace. "Thou knowest thy servant," not his goodness, but his unworthiness. So a believer finding out fresh evil in himself may take comfort in feeling that the Lord knew all this and yet pitied and saved him. One has sometimes to sum up all in prayer to God in just this way, "O what use is it to heap up words? "Thou Lord knowest."

II.—ALL SECURED IN THE WORD.

(V. 21.) "For thy word's sake." When God is pleased to speak a promise He binds Himself. He is not bound to speak the word; but when in His grace (or as it is here, "according to thine own heart") He speaks, His people can say to Him, Ps. cxix. 49. So David's reliance as to "a great while to come" in v. 19 is founded on "thou hast spoken." So it is with God's people now. "It is written" gives them hope. They rest on His promises. He made them in full knowledge of what we were. He did not think us good and worthy, and so give them in ignorance of our real character. He is not surprised and mortified by finding us out. He knew all and yet pitied us and raised us up and made us sit together in the heavenlies (Eph. ii. 6).

This same reliance on the word appears in (V. 25.) "Establish the Word." Sense would say, if a promise has been given what is the use of asking? Faith says, ask because a promise has been given (See 1 Peter i. 25.) "Do as thou hast said." The same idea appears in (V. 27.) "Thou Lord hast revealed to thy servant," therefore hath thy servant found in his heart, to pray this prayer unto thee." See the value of putting the promises of God into the mind. Some day they will be by the blessing of the Holy Ghost, turned into prayer and praise. The same idea runs on,

(Vs. 28, 29.) "Thy word's be true;" "for thou, O Lord God hast spoken it." Many do not hope, desire or ask because they do not know God's words. Beyond a general vague feeling that they have need, they know nothing and hence prayer becomes to them a difficult and disagreeable exercise, a service wrung from them by their necessities. They are embarrassed before God. They have not had communications from Him. There is nothing to speak of. But a man who knows God's words has something to say. God has been heard by him and he speaks back to God. See Isa. xl. 8.

III.—ALL TO GOD'S GLORY. (V. 22.) "Wherefore thou art great." Ungodly men think God like unto themselves (Ps. l. 21). The godly think of Him as high and exalted (Ps. ciii. 11). The world had gone after other gods. There was a constant discussion in progress as between the false gods and Jehovah. Israel was meant to learn and show that "there is none like" God, nor "any God beside" Him. He is not only the best God; He is the only God. His treatment of Israel (v. 23) proves this. What one nation has such a history, such laws, such deliverances, such a relation to Him? For He has taken the people to Himself, compare Dent. iv. 7; xxiii. 36.

(V. 24.) "Confirmed to thyself," and "become their god." He had done as he said in Gen. xvii. 7, 8, and Exod. vi. 7. Hence "confirmed." He connected His name and glory with the people, is known by and through them, and inspires them with the desire to honour Him, and lift Him up. Hence the prayer, (v. 26), "Let thy name be magnified," etc. So saints' praises and prayers go together and run into one another. Past mercies are reason for boldness in prayer, and even while praying the heart is assured of an answer in "kind or in kindness," and already begins to praise. See the Lord's Prayer at its beginning, and at its end as illustration. True prayer is opposed to all selfishness. The praying heart goes out towards God, His honor and glory. So in.

(V. 28.) "And now O Lord God, thou art that God," the God of Abraham who chose the people, of Moses by whom they were delivered, the true God, the God of David, the God of all grace. 1 Chron. xvi. 27 gives the sense of the concluding words.

Let it be fixed in the minds of the pupils, that (1) All blessing comes to us as to David, of God's grace (Eph. ii. 8). (2) That all blessing is promised in the sure Word (2 Peter i. 4). (3) That all is for the Divine glory (Eph. i. 11, 12).

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

David's condition—signs of prosperity—feeling—desire—the good in that desire—how it appeared to Nathan—how to God—the message from God—the manner of declaring David's service—the good given him—the covenant—its nature—man's part in it—God's part in it—the spring and source of goodness—the way in which it is assured—the feelings of a believer—the pleas of true prayer—how it passes into praise—the end of all God's ways—the old controversy—Israel's mission—David's desire as to it—the twofold blessing to him, and the great lessons to us.

LESSON XI.

March 12, 1876. ABSALOM'S REBELLION. { 2 Sam. xv. 1-14. COMMIT TO MEMORY, v. 5, 6. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Prov. xxvi. 28; Dan. xi. 21. SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With v. 1, read 2 Sam. xii. 11; with vs. 2-4, read Judges ix. 29; with v. 5, compare Prov. xxvii. 6; with v. 6, read Rom. xvii. 18; with vs. 7, 8, compare 1 Sam. xx. 6; with v. 9, compare 2 Sam. ii. 11; with v. 10, compare (as to Absalom's sacrifice) Prov. xxi. 27, and (as to his guests) Prov. xxii. 8; with v. 12, read Ps. lv. 12-14; with vs. 13, 14, compare 2 Sam. xix. 9. GOLDEN TEXT.—The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.—Prov. xxx. 17. CENTRAL TRUTH.—Sin becomes its own punishment. The Scriptures present us specimens of every kind of virtue and of every kind of vice. They speak to all classes—old and young, rich and poor, and to man in every relationship, parent and child, husband and wife. They show us with inimitable clearness how principles work out effects, good and bad. The subtle influences which we can only guess at with our imperfect knowledge in common life, are here displayed.

David had broken God's simple law of one man and one woman at the head of a household. (See Mal. ii. 14, 15.) This law can never be broken—among ancient Hebrews, modern Mormons, or nominal Christians, without making present mischief. So it was in David's family. Horrible crimes had been committed, and Absalom had been involved and had to flee from Judea to the court of his grandfather (2 Sam. xiii. 37, compare with 2 Sam. iii. 8). Joab had contrived his return (see 2 Sam. xiv.), and this chapter continues the account of his career, having reference no doubt to the warning given by Nathan (2 Sam. xii. 10, 11). What slights, or coldness, or wounded vanity, or family-jars led to his outbreak we are not told; but ambitious men soon find grounds for their own plans. Now let us trace his course.

(V. 1.) He is making an appearance; impressing the common people who like to see pomp and imposing show. See Adonijah's policy, 1 Kings i. 6. The royal state (see 1 Sam. viii. 11) led the people to look for such things in all great men and leaders. The early simplicity of the judges was gone. Running footmen were the attendants on great men, as in 1 Sam. iv. 12, and elsewhere. These were the "guards" of the earliest time (see 2 Kings xi. 6).

(Vs. 2-6.) We see Absalom making his party; and the picture is perfect. The gate was the place for settling disputes—the law-court (Ruth iv. 1). Absalom was

early there. Parties to suits were met by him with most courteous affability, and inquiries as to where they came from. The flattered Israelite told his story, and the handsome Absalom was all ears and interest. He had a good case, no doubt about that, but—ah! then a well-looked sign—there is no proper person to see justice done (v. 3). Then, having won confidence, thus shall we heard "reformer" which, purely, he would have it thought for the sake of justice and his dear wronged friends, that he were "judge." "I would do him justice!" He do justice, the base hypocrite!

Then his condescension was overwhelming (v. 5). Men who came to make their bow were grasped by the courtly hand and kissed, and went away, completely won by such grace and goodness! Such were, and are, the arts of popularity; so obvious to the onlooker, so powerful with the unthinking, whose self-love is flattered.

(V. 7-9.) Absalom making his effort for the throne. "Forty" is plainly a clerical error, very easy when numbers were expressed by letters. The Syriac, Arabic, and Josephus had "four," the correct number no doubt, counting either from the time of his return, or from the time when he began this plan. He pretends to have a vow to fulfil in Hebron. Alas! for religion! how often because of its known goodness, is it made the mask to cover the worst plots!

The vow, if made, was good enough. Such were customary (see Gen. xxxiii. 20; Num. xxi. 2; 1 Sam. i. 11). "Serve" means with a sacrifice, as the event showed. But the end here sought was bad. Yet he only did in his way what David had once done for his own ends (1 Sam. xv. 6). So children repeat their parents' little frauds, sometimes against them, and become the means of their punishment.

There was obviously reason for choosing Hebron. Absalom was born there, would have friends there. It had been the capital. Its people would, not unnaturally, regret the change to Jerusalem, and how naturally he could represent it as the place for fulfilling his vow, as his birth-place! Absalom was a patient, far-seeing dissembler.

V. 10 shows us Absalom carrying out his plan. His "spies" or emissaries are to proclaim him, and his friends are to rally for him as king in Hebron. Meantime he has "called," i.e. invited two hundred leading men, flattered by his notice, as his guests, but made to appear his adherents and partisans. They did not mean rebellion, but went in the "simplicity of their hearts," till they found themselves committed, perhaps in the heat of wine, to his cause.

(V. 11.) He makes influential friends. Ahithophel was the grandfather of Bathsheba (see 2 Sam. xi. 3, and xxiii. 34), and may have resented David's conduct in the matter of Uriah, and been inclined to break with him. His known wisdom carried great weight (v. 81). The conspiracy was strong, and adherents multiplied. Absalom's crime did not seem so bad in the people's eyes. David's conduct in pardoning him but keeping him away from court drew out sympathy for him, and his own plausible manners and schemes did the rest.

Vs. 12-15 shows us David's helplessness. His courage proved against outside enemies, fails. Conscience makes cowards. Here he must have seen God's hand. His sin is coming back on him. Absalom was indulged and spoiled. David, good as a king had, like many otherwise strong men, been weak as a parent. He is punished now. He has no confidence in the goodness of his cause. He urges flight. He had no army. Delay would, as Ahithophel (2 Sam. xvii. 1, 2) and Hushai saw (vs. 7-18), give time to think and weaken Absalom's cause, and moreover in the goodness of his heart he wished to spare the city the horrors of a siege. His servants agreed, and David fled from his own capital, from the face of his own son.

What may we learn from this? Absalom's sin will be seen (next lesson) in the light of its punishment. So we may here see David's. (1) The bad harvest from bad seed. David married a heathen king's daughter. Her son Absalom does not feel much for the peace of Israel, or the honor of his father, or the law of God. "Unequally yoked." (See 2 Cor. vi. 14.) Unity of right aim, feeling and conviction, of prayer and effort is needed to bring up children aright.

(2) How little influence kindness had on bad men. Pardon does not soften or change Absalom's heart. They mistake who think that mere goodness from God will make the bad good. (See Isa. xxvi. 10.) The Spirit of God is needed to convince of sin and to renew.

(3) How easily the people can be deceived! The horses which were common among heathen kings commended Absalom to a people who wanted a king like those of the nations. And the show of goodness and interest in them made them rebels to David. No wise man will set much store by the popularity which is often gained without merit and lost without a crime. What a comment on human wisdom when men gain favor by clamoring for justice, who ought themselves to be in prison! What a heart of secret ambitious pride, he meekly fawns upon the people that he may rule them. (See Ps. x. 9, 10.)

(4) Ambition and hypocrisy, how naturally they go together!

(5) How much need we have of wisdom! The "simplicity" here is not the simplicity of the Gospel, which is wise and cautious. See Christ's word, "Wise as serpents," etc.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

David's faults at home—how punished—Absalom's mother—grandfather—his exile—how brought back—his aim—how accomplished—look of greatness—how assumed—effect on the people—his airs of goodness—in what respect—how the people felt—his aims of religion—to whom—his reason for choosing Hebron—his guests—their folly—his counsellor—his spies—his object—the effect on David—his fears—his concern for Jerusalem, and the lesson.

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