

Our Young Folks.

Willing to Do Anything

A bright, handsome boy, who had just lost his father, and with him all means of support, had tried long and in vain for a place in a store.

It had cost him a fierce struggle to leave the High School, where he had been one of the best scholars, but his mother was ill, and he was her only child, and their little home was their sole possession; so that it seemed a necessity, and he was willing to do anything for her support.

Hoping for business in the opening spring, he at length, in despair, set off to try his fortune at peddling light articles from door to door.

First he tried stationery—ruled, plain, embossed, pink, blue, green, tinted, and white. But the ladies either would not see him, or they had more stationery than they wanted; and the servants—when he tried the lower doors—did not care to buy more than three sheets of paper and three envelopes out of three different packages. This was a failure.

Then he tried fancy articles—perfumery, cheap jewelry, fancy fans and the like. But people who had plenty of money "did not buy such things at the door," and others said "the times were too hard to buy any thing but articles that are absolutely needed."

This business was not only unprofitable, but also most distasteful to our high-spirited young hero, but he would not sit still. He would try this till he had found something better. He had resolved to try.

One day an irate Bridget, vexed at the trouble he gave her by ringing the bell, cried, "No; we do not want any such trash. It'll nather save our souls nor yet our bodies. G'lang wid ye!"

"I'm sorry to trouble you," said the bright-eyed boy, with scarlet cheeks.

This civility softened Bridget's heart, and smiling on him, she cried, "Heaven bless yer bright eyes! I wish I had a wash tub full of money, and I'd throw it all away on yer trash to see ye smile. This house is full and running over with finger rings and fans, and every thing but rat pison! Oh, dear lad, my heart's just broke entirely with these same villains. They eats up my bread and cake, and last night when I was looked up that they ought to eat—they were civilized creatures—didn't they dig a great hole in my watherfall, as ye'll see if ye look on my head—I havin' just left it down stairs to rest my head. Faith, I'd give a hape of me own money to revenge myself on them scoundrels!"

"I'm very sorry for you, and when I have rat pison to sell, I'll call on you," said Harry with a smile. "Good morning."

"Heaven love yer bright eyes! Happy's the woman ye calls mother! I lost my boy, and my heart's broke after him!" cried Bridget, in plaintive tones.

Harry bowed, and the door closed behind him.

When the young daughter of the house went into the kitchen to give some order (for the mother had recently died), she found her brave helper in tears, and heard the cause of her woe.

"O, dear heart, there's been such a jewel of a lad here, sellin' jewelry, fans, and like trash; and spoke 'hat it's just brought back my own blessed Pat, as died in the 'optimal four years ago, and would ha' been just like him if he'd lived to this day. Oh this lad was just a beauty of a boy! I wish ye could 'a seen him."

"I wish I could, Biddy," replied the young lady, "but don't stop to cry over him now. Next time he comes, call me, and I'll buy a brass ring and chain of him. There's to be company to-day, and I came down to talk with you about dinner."

Poor Harry trudged round for another week with his "trash," as Biddy called his merchandise, and hardly made money enough to pay for the wear of his boots. He was getting heartily sick of the effort to keep busy and earn a little till spring should open.

One day his eye fell on an advertisement of an article for exterminating Biddy's foes, and he struck out in a new line of business. He carried back his "trash," filled his leather bag with bottles wrapped and labelled, and sought her as his first patron, meaning to offer it mainly at poor-looking houses.

One might have thought him Biddy's long-lost Pat come to life again, by the joy he manifested at seeing him. Her joy was increased when she heard what was in the bag.

"Wait till I call my young lady!" she cried. "She promised she'd buy some jewelry when you'd come again."

"No, don't call her please," said Harry. "I have no jewelry to-day, and don't want to see ladies. I'm calling at lower doors now with rat pison."

"Well, then, let me run up for some money, and ye watch that nobody steals the silver while I'm gone," and she darted off as fast as her huge proportions would allow, leaving a stranger to guard the treasures of the dining room.

Harry wished when he heard two persons instead of one coming down that he could run off, this seemed such mean business. But a sudden light would have made him seem a thief. So he straightened himself up, and tried to look very brave.

When the door opened, two young faces dashed up, and each of them said, "Oh!" The young lady was in the same Sabbath School with him, she being teacher of a class of little boys, while he was in a Bible Class of almost young men. He knew her name, and what her father's business was; and he always received a smile and a bow from her when they met at sociables and picnics.

"Oh, you are not the one that Biddy called me down to see?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes, ma'am; I am sorry to say I am. I had no idea of meeting any one I knew, although, of course, I need not be ashamed of trying to help my mother, and—"

whose opinion is worth having will despise you for it—if it is the best thing you can do; but is it so?"

Harry's face turned scarlet, and the young lady, pitying him very much, sat down by him and said, "I'm afraid you are in trouble. Now talk to me just as if I were your grown-up sister, and perhaps I can help you."

"No, Miss L., you can not," replied Harry.

"I'm not sure of that. I can do a great many things you never heard of. Have you left school since your father's death?" asked the kind lady.

Then Harry told her the whole story—of the great necessity there was for his earning money, and of the persistent and ineffectual efforts he had made to do so.

"Well, leave as much of that stuff in your bag as Biddy wants; carry the rest back for some disabled soldier to sell, and come here this evening and see my father. If there's any situation vacant in this city, father can help you into it," she said.

Those kind words were worth more to Harry than gold found in the street would have been; for it was honest work the boy wanted, and not charity.

He supplied Biddy with what she wanted from his bag, carried the surplus back to the "manufacturer," as the man called himself, and went home with a light heart to his mother. He could scarcely speak for joy.

That evening, neatly dressed, and feeling more like himself than in the morning, he was ushered into the fine parlours of Mr. L. What a change there was in his feelings from that hour in the morning when he tapped, timid and blushing, at the door of Biddy's domain!

He was met as a gentlemanly boy by the gentleman of the house, who, after questioning him closely as to his ability and his habits, engaged him as an entry clerk in his own store, at a salary of three hundred dollars for the first year.

The merchant was greatly pleased, for he liked boys that were "willing to do anything."

Harry's ambition would hardly suffer him to sleep. He longed to be entering goods, and bustling about the store in the interests of his kind patron. He thought day would never dawn; but like all other days it did dawn; and Harry set out on his business career with a full determination to do his best for both his employer and his mother.

Time, I am sure will show that the boy, who was willing to sell even rat pison rather than be idle or beg, will make a noble, honorable merchant. Harry says, "If I ever get ahead myself, I'll help poor boys who are looking for places in every way in my power."—The Companion.

Five Points of Calvinism.

This expression grows out of the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians which give rise to the famous Synod of Dort. These points are somewhat variously stated, but the following is suggested as presenting them in logical order, and with sufficient fulness. The first relates to the sovereignty of God, and involves the idea that He does what He wills, and that what He now wills He has willed from all eternity; here comes in the doctrine of Decrees, and of Election, and Predestination. The second refers to the fallen state of man, and involves the doctrines of the Covenant of Works, of Original Sin, and of Imputation. The third takes up the problem of the reconciliation of fallen man to his offended God, and introduces the questions of the nature and extent of the Atonement. The fourth relates to man's ability to avail himself of the benefits proposed by the grace of God; and here comes in the question of the Holy Spirit's work, and of man's attitude in Regeneration. The fifth has regard to the permanency of this work, and considers whether the saints shall all finally persevere and be saved.

Now Calvinists believe that their whole creed on these points is taken out of Scripture. When told, therefore, that modern thought has repudiated such views, or that they are repugnant to the advanced thought of the nineteenth century, the objection makes, on their minds, not the slightest impression; for they never dream of measuring their creed, which they suppose to be divine, by any human standard whatever. So, when told that their church holds a terrific, and therefore false doctrine of hell, Presbyterians are perfectly unable to see the point. They very well know that the Scriptures reveal many terrific truths, and that the constitution and course of nature are herein analogous to Christianity, and therefore a terrible doctrine does not impress them as necessarily a false doctrine, nor a pleasant doctrine as necessarily a true doctrine.

But whoever affirms that the Presbyterian Standards contain any such doctrine as a dark fatalism, either expressed or implied, makes a statement which is not correct. The Confession of Faith may be searched through and through in vain for anything like this. When the doctrine of Decrees is stated in the Confession, the liberty of man and the contingency of second causes is in so many words fully guarded. And so the slander is an old one, but none the less a slander, that great names in the Presbyterian Church have been responsible for some horrid statements about little children in the eternal world. No true Presbyterian holds to any doctrine which the Bible does not reveal. But whatever the Scriptures do reveal is true, and will stand, however men who hate the truth may knock their teeth against it.

The pride we take in great minds, tells of the brotherhood.

Never let the machinery of your mind turn rusty. The way to keep it sweet is to keep it going.—William Arnot.

We feel sure that the truth of God will prevail and have its final success over all sin, and it is a great comfort to us in times when crime seems to be predominant. But in many persons the thought of truth's destiny begets a carelessness which causes them to neglect duty and thus defeat the end which they have in view. To sit down and wait for truth to prevail is vicious patience.—United Presbyterian.

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON XLVII.

PETER'S VISION.

COMMENT TO MEMORIAL VERSE 17-20. PARABLE PASSAGE.—Matt. vii. 13; with v. 1, read Heb. xiii. 16; with v. 4, read Heb. xiii. 16; with v. 5, read 1 Pt. xv. 12; with v. 7, 8, read 1 Cor. vii. 20; with v. 9, read Dan. vi. 10; with vs. 10, 11, read Acts vii. 55, 56; with v. 12, read Isa. xl. 6; with v. 13, 14, read Lev. xx. 25; with vs. 15-20, read Eph. ii. 14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—God is no respecter of persons.—Acts x. 34. CENTRAL THESIS.—"Christ is a light to lighten the Gentiles."

INTRODUCTION.—A momentous step is now to be taken, namely, the bringing of Gentiles as such into the Church. Extraordinary means are employed to take difficulties out of the way, of which our lesson gives the report. Cornelius has to be directed and encouraged to approach Peter, and Peter to be prepared to meet him. This is the opening of our way as Gentiles to the Church on earth. Let us steady the two visions.

I. TO CORNELIUS. (V. 1-5) The story is continued from the end of Acts ix., Lydda and Joppa leading up to Caesarea. Cornelius is a noble Roman name; "centurion," though strictly captain of a hundred, was employed with some latitude, as we employ "officer," and the "band" was probably a detachment of Roman soldiers less numerous than a legion. He was a very distinct Gentile by birth and calling, and so prominent as to attract attention. All through the providences of God, in the employment of individuals, there is regard to the fitness of things. No unnecessary offence is given to Jewish feeling. So those who are to represent the cause of Christ are the better for having a good reputation with them that are without.

His character (v. 2) was fitted to conciliate Jews. He was a pious man in the Jewish sense, leading his family in godly ways, doing good with his means among the Jews, to whose God he prayed, though not in any formal way joined to them. No personal objection lay against him.

To this man came in a vision, while he was awake and undoubtedly using his senses, about three in the afternoon (it was not a dream,) when no delusion would be likely, an angel, doubtless in human yet glorious form, and calling him by name. Angels and men can dwell together and communicate with one another (Heb. xii. 22).

Angelic and all supernatural appearances terrify men. We are sensible of power above ours; we know not the purposes, and, sensible of our guilt, we fear. So it was here. The Roman soldier and noble was afraid, and inquired timidly, "What is it, sir?" There is no need to translate "Lord," and no reason to suppose Cornelius thought him divine. The answer is reassuring. Prayers and aims, the two common forms of practical religion, have been accepted of God, have come up (like incense), and been like a part of the burnt-offering (Lev. ii. 2), recalling, as it were, the offering. The figure is from the Jewish rites, the observance of which had no inherent merit. But there was insufficiency about his present standing and attainments. To show him what he "ought to do," Peter is to be brought from Joppa. The minuteness of the details has often been noted. The Lord gives the name and surname, and companion and lodging of his servant. The terseness and business-like character of the visit are to be noted. There is no ceremonious display, no gossiping, no curious question asked or information given. Cornelius no more asked questions than did the like-minded Abraham.

Cornelius obeys with soldierly promptitude. Good men get good men around them. He sends a pious servant—soldiers are still assigned to officers as attendants—and two of his household on this great errand. He tells them all, so that they may act intelligently, and despatches them (v. 9). They possibly set out that evening, travelling through the night, as is common in the East, or early next morning, for they were near Joppa at noon. No time was lost (Ecc. ix. 10).

II. PETER'S VISION. The mid-day hour was one of the three stated times for prayer, and the flat roof of the house, being quiet and secluded, afforded a place for devotion to which Peter betook himself.

The elements in this relation all occur. His body craves food, and he calls for it, and it is being prepared. His mind is turned to the subject. He is thrown into a "trance," a preternatural state of mind preparing him for what followed (v. 10). It is in the line of his thought about food—in the opened heaven, a great cloth, the corners held so as to retain its contents and lowered till near him, and showing all sorts of beasts, birds and creeping things (v. 12), clean and unclean. Imagine his surprise at being told from above, from the highest source, though the speaker is unclean, to kill and eat, in defiance of Lev. xi. and all Jewish ideas! He defends his refusal (v. 14); he had never been otherwise than a strict Jew, and had never eaten anything profane.

To his plea, the voice (for no one was seen) replied with a new idea, "God has cleansed these. They come from Him. Do not treat them as common or unclean." Peter replied as a strict observer of the ritual of Leviticus. The word from above sets the ritual aside, and warns Peter against setting it up again.

Nor could this be a delusion or a dream of a hungry man. It was (v. 16) thrice repeated (Gen. xli. 32), so fixed in the memory, and, according to commonly-received ideas, invested with a peculiar solemnity. All this was needed. So we require "line upon line." The Jews could not conceive of Gentiles being received but by circumcision. No common lesson on this point would have availed.

No wonder that (v. 16) Peter "doubted in himself" as to the meaning, but while he was still in perplexity, the messengers who represented Cornelius were at the gate, and (v. 18) inquiring if Solomon Peter

lodged there. The two visions are part of one whole, fitted to each other, and intended to bring together two men for the most solemn of all purposes, and who otherwise would not have come together.

But nothing is left to chance or human caprice. The Spirit of God, the divine Spirit (Acts viii. 29) in the most positive term showed his duty (v. 20). "Arise, therefore, and get thee down," etc. "Doubting nothing" admits of a reading still more pointed, "making no difference" with reference to the vision. The concurrence of the vision and of the men's approach might itself have shown Peter that this was no common coincidence; but the Spirit's word is explicit. "For I have sent them," namely, through Cornelius, instructed by an angel.

In the effort to fix the meaning of this lesson in the mind of the pupils, there are several minute details that deserve notice.

(a) The journey from Joppa to Caesarea required a day to go and one to return (vs. 23, 24). Cornelius probably sent off his messengers in the evening. This accords with the known distance.

(b) The Greek word for "house" is used, but it is so used as to imply the top of the house, and this accords with a vision of a sheet let down from heaven.

(c) Peter is told to kill and eat, not to sacrifice. The idea is, the clean and unclean division of man exists no more, for men, such as stood at the gate, are represented here.

(d) Peter began the work of the Church at Pentecost in the conversion of the multitude of Jews. Now he is used to lead the Church into the second great stage of her effort. Here, at least, is one sense in which he had the keys.

(e) We are not to condemn men in classes. Soldiers are commonly regarded as exceptionally hardened. Yet see the character of every centurion mentioned in Scripture. (The pupils may find the instances.)

(f) Men, not angels, are used to preach the word.

(g) Cornelius was not saved by his prayers and aims, but by Christ, on whom he "ought" to believe for salvation.

(h) Peter goes to Caesarea, the kingdom of God goes to the Gentiles.

(i) Caesarea, the Roman city, is in ruins now, like the Roman empire. Joppa remains, but in decay, like the Jews.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

The preparation for this event—the introduction to it—the honor—nation—profession—character of Cornelius—the vision accorded him—the impression it made—the question he asked—the comforting assurance—the direction given—the prompt obedience—the ecstasy of Peter—the time—place—object seen—accompanying command—refusal—rebuke—meaning of Peter's perplexity—how solved, and the points to be remembered in this lesson.

Who is Responsible for the Success of our Sunday Schools?

(From a paper by Mr. Compton, read at Hastings and St. Leonard's Sunday School Union.) First.—We believe that the responsibility rests with

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

The Christian Church, recognising Christ as her head in all things, is bound to seek the honour and interests of her Lord, by the two-fold relationship she sustains towards Him. Precept and example come down to us from the earthly life of our Divine Lord and Master. Jesus Christ drew little children towards Himself, and pronounced "that of such was the Kingdom of Heaven." To the repentant disciple He not only said "Feed my sheep," but "Feed my lambs;" and in His great commission He not only said "Go, preach," but "Go, teach." Surely these words embrace the young as well as those of riper years.

The Church has various duties to perform in the discharge of her responsibility. 1st.—Suitable school accommodation should be provided. The Sunday Schools belonging to many of our churches are inadequate for the purpose for which they were erected. Gloomy, comfortable buildings, badly lighted, ill ventilated, and without accommodation for either senior or infant classes.

There is a growing taste for beautiful and commodious sanctuaries. Instead of the barn-like structures erected by our forefathers, with latticed windows, brick or stone flooring, and cattle-pen-shaped pews, we now see ornate and conveniently arranged houses of prayer rising in our midst. Our ancestors, often by persecution compelled to erect their sanctuaries in remote streets and alleys, evinced their manly and earnest piety by frequenting such places: but, now, times are altered; meeting houses of ungainly appearance are supplanted by churches, adorned with classic architecture, and even Wesleyans erect their sanctuaries in Gothic style,—the chapel being mistaken by the illiterate for a real church.

We want the Church to recognise that the Sunday School, like the sanctuary, should be adapted to the requirements of the age. The children of 20, 30, 40 years ago were not accustomed to day schools of the character attended by the children of to-day. We ought not to allow unfavourable comparisons to be made between the one and the other. If we are to gain upon the rising generation, and make our work a success, we need good school accommodation. Well-lighted, ventilated, and warmed schools, separate class rooms for the senior scholars of both sexes, and a special room, with gallery, for the infants. Where a church is not ten, it ought to see that the school rooms are supplied with all needful appliances, and also that the rooms present a cheerful aspect;—maps, Bible texts, or pictures, illustrative of Scripture scenes, to enliven the walls, matting down the aisles, to prevent undue noise, and, where it is possible, screens or partitions dividing, during teaching, the classes one from another.

2d.—It is the duty of the Church to provide voluntary agents for the work. The early Sunday Schools were taught by paid teachers, a memorandum still being in existence, showing that at Stockport the teachers received 1s. 6d. each Sunday. During the first sixteen years of the Sunday School Society no less a sum than £1000 was expended in the salaries of

teachers. Were this sum now to be paid to the hundreds of thousands of Sunday School teachers, an annual income of over a million would be required. Voluntary agents are required; men and women, with love to God and love to souls, disciples of Jesus, who teach their altered relationship with Him, no disciples of training up young innocents for His service and glory, and their everlasting happiness. Dr. Tying writes as follows: "The best intellects and hearts of the Church of God should be given to this work. The teaching should not be confined to the young—experienced Christians should be enlisted in the actual work." Again "The Sunday School is worthy of the first place in the affections and consideration of every church. The advantage which it repays make it an investment of no doubtful worth. Do we not see around us to-day, in the advance of materialism, what training can accomplish? In the early days of Tractarianism, or Wesleyan, the Evangelical party in the Establishment evaded the influence of the new party, but they, waiting their time, sowed in the minds of the young their seeds of error, and to-day we see the result—bishops and clerical magnates unable to stay the tide of Popery, in their so called bulwarks of Protestantism. Let the Church of God provide suitable agency for the Sunday School, and from the good seed sown there shall come a plentiful harvest in days to come. Our churches will increase in number and power, and as the workers pass off the stage of life, new agency will arise. I take it for granted that to-night I am addressing those in practical sympathy with Sunday Schools. Oh, for a voice and a power to reach every member of our churches, and enlist their help in this work.

3d.—It is the duty of the Church to furnish the requisite funds for the machinery of our schools. Let me not be misunderstood, as underrating the noble efforts on the part of many churches in this direction. I take it as one of the most cheering signs of the day, in relation to Sunday School enterprise, that the sums annually raised are beyond those of past years; but there are new claims—improved libraries, clothing clubs, sick and benefit societies, which, to be successfully worked, must be liberally sustained.

THE PASTOR

will here feel that the Sunday School has a claim upon him. We are aware that all ministers are not equal in qualification for addressing Sunday Schools. But, surely, none are disqualified from occasional visitation; and where the aptitude is not apparent, practice would lead to favourable results. Pastors can keep, and in many instances do keep, the school, its object, the teachers, their labours, before their respective flocks, and thus do much to bind Church and school together.

We might also urge that among those responsible for the success of our Sunday Schools are

THE PARENTS OF THE CHILDREN,

who ought to be concerned in the punctual, regular attendance of their sons and daughters, and do all in their power to assist the teachers in carrying out the rules of the school, and by example and precept at home give additional force to the lessons imparted on the Sabbath. And not only parents, but employees of young people are to some extent responsible for the success of the work. In the life of Jonas Suggden, a Yorkshire manufacturer, we read that the following notice was posted on the walls of the mills—"J. S. and brothers wish and expect, 1st, that every person in their employ attend some place of worship on the Lord's Day; 2nd, that every youth dependent on those whom they employ attend some Sunday and day schools, from the age of six and upwards; 3rd, that those who are of a proper age, and the parents and guardians of the young, make choice of their own place of worship." Were this only partially carried into effect by Christian tradesmen, employing the youth of both sexes, we should find our senior classes better attended, and less of Sabbath desecration in our streets.

We have incidentally referred to the responsibility of parents and employers, and now come to notice, in conclusion, that the success of our Sunday Schools depends very largely upon the officers and teachers who have given themselves to the work.

To be continued.

Woman's Sphere.

There is a sphere in which woman has moved with ever-increasing usefulness, and with none to dispute her right to be there. In the Church of God she has found a field for all her powers. There her best culture and her fairest laurels have been secured. On woman Christ conferred the greatest possible boon, for he restored to her her long forfeited rights. He gave her the consciousness of self-hood, implying that moral responsibility for her own character which has transformed her inward nature and changed her position in the family and in the State. In lifting woman from that enforced servitude to which heathenism had reduced her, our Lord lifted the race. He inaugurated a revolution which will not cease to roll until the Gospel, through woman's love, patience, and fidelity, shall have triumphed in every land. The chief working force in our churches and Sabbath Schools are women, as the main body of teachers everywhere, in schools and seminaries, are women who have been called of God to this high vocation of teaching. The nature and value of their service in the divine kingdom can neither be defined nor estimated. Paul was not forgetful of those women who laboured with him in the Gospel, and by his grateful courtesy in recognizing their connection with his apostolic efforts to plant and nourish churches has set an example which every pastor may well imitate. Without increasing the question whether there should be deaconesses in the modern church—although we think there ought to be—it is enough for our present purpose to say that those women who wish to adorn the doctrine of godliness, and to exercise their gifts where the most enduring good can be effected, should be enlisted in the ranks of the sisterhood which in every particular church is engaged in doing the Lord's will.—Christian at Work.