

the ranks of what is called "the world," raise any social objections to a woman's identifying herself with religion and religious works. And many quite worldly young men will look for their choice within the orbit of the Christian Church, on the principle that a woman is none the worse for a little religion, and that if she has an inconvenient quantity of it, he can correct that after marriage. Now, it is to be feared that there is a little of the converse feeling on the part of Christian young women, and that they act on the idea that a young man is none the worse for a little irreligion, and that if it runs to excess she can correct that after they are man and wife. There is far more danger of the Christianity being "improved" out of a lady, than of its being infused into the gentlemen. And if a social premium were not placed upon masculine indifference to higher things by the licence and encouragement given to it by professing Christian ladies, we might hope for a little more steadiness and seriousness among our young men, and, as its ultimate result, more respect for and manifestation of, the Christian profession.

As to the "working class," as we call them, this is an age of great professional solicitude about their interests. Philanthropy is active in trying to teach them how to live, what to eat, and what not to drink; but my little bird suggests that we begin too late, and that if we could teach them how to marry, and whom not to marry we should save many a bruised bosom—the brand of the drunkard's fist. In Lancashire and Yorkshire, where working people swarm most thickly, we see sights which are a burlesque on all that is beautiful in love and sacred in marriage. A boy of eighteen will go on sparrow-catching on a Sunday afternoon into the fields, and he will see a girl of sixteen whom he has never seen before. Perhaps he will sheepishly twitch his forelock to the hoyden, and she will drop a curtsy, and after a little giggling, they agree to meet again on Monday. On Tuesday they go to a "hop" together, get tipsy, and arrange to "get wed," as it is poetically termed. If the man, on getting sober, manifests signs of repentance, his Philomela does her best to make him drunk again, and makes him buy the thickest wedding-ring that can be found, and then they go and get married after three days' acquaintance. Then they turn out into the street, the bride with a market garden of white flowers on her bonnet, and the bridegroom with a sunflower and a cabbage-rose in his button-hole to match a red-and-yellow necktie; and the bliss of married life begins over sundry "quartens" of rum at the "Dog and Partridge." What must be the result? That thick wedding-ring is not the pledge of a husband to a wife, but the pledge of a sot to his "uncle," and stands as the passport to the pawnshop. It is a common enough tale in Manchester, that when about sixty or seventy couples were getting "wed" one Easter Monday in the "old church," the groups got rather mixed, and one of the swains who had been hustled to the outside of the crowd, stood upon tiptoe and cried out to the officiating clergyman within the altar rails "Halloo, hold hard, old chap, you're splicing that fellow with the wooden leg to my Polly." "Never mind, my friend," said the descendant of the apostles, "you can sort yourselves when you get out." I dare say the story is pretty near the truth. If so, it is not so much a thing to laugh at, as to weep over. The little bird looks very glum as it tells the tale; for, with its "bird's-eye view," it looks beyond the grotesque jostling at that altar-rail, to contemplate the future lives of people who have to "sort themselves" as best they may, after having scrambled through a beery farce and called it marriage. The farce comes first, but the tragedy comes afterwards. In high life, the outcome of the many heartless pacts and loveless unions which disfigure social life, is veiled behind the summaries of divorce suits, or in the deeper secrecy of broken hearts. In low life, it speaks with the voice of women's blood and children's tears beneath the profaned altar which should have ratified a holy vow; it is heard in the cry of pain, the curse of hatred, and the blow of cruelty; and the moral of the wreck is pointed in the piercing note with which the bird chirps its lament, reminding all who would love with a true love, and lunk in a lasting happiness, that such a love and such a happiness are only surely guaranteed by One name under heaven among men; and that there is no real union of hearts which Christ has not united.

Woe to the double-minded of God's own; they make a share, half to Him and half to the devil. Indignant at such treatment, that the devil should be admitted to share, the Lord departs, and so the devil gets all.—Augustine.

GOLDEN TRUTHS.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS FOR THE SUNDAYS OF 1877

BY REV. THORSTLEY SMITH.

JANUARY 7. Morning. GODLY LIVING. (Colossians iii. 12–25.) In this passage we have—I. Qualifications for Godly living (verses 12–17). We must put on, as a garment, bowels of mercies, etc., and especially charity, or love, which binds the several portions of the dress together. Without this *dress of the mind*, we cannot live a holy life, and though by nature we do not possess it, yet ours it may be by faith; for to put it on, is to put on Christ (Romans xiii. 14, Phil. i. 6), who is offered to us as our pattern and our all. This will lead to the *forgiveness of injuries* (verse 13), to *peace and thankfulness* (verse 15); to *holy song*, (verse 16), and to *patience* (verse 17). This last verse is the kernel of the passage, and is to be learnt by heart, as it ought to be by everyone.—II. Relative duties. 1. *Of wives and husbands* (verses 18, 19). The wife is to be submissive, the husband is to be kind, and not bitter or exacting. 2. *Of children and parents* (verses 20, 21). Children are to be obedient, fathers to be gentle, and not provoking. 3. *Of servants and masters* (verses 22–25, chapter x. 1). The lesson should properly embrace the latter. Servants are to please their masters, to do their work heartily, and to look for their reward from God. There is no respect of persons with Him. The master, dwelling in a splendid palace, and the servant waiting on him as he sits at his richly laden table, are both alike to the great Creator, and both amenable to His authority and judgment.

Afternoon. THE KINGDOM DIVIDED. (1 Kings xii. 1–5, 12–20.) Under the reign of Solomon the kingdom of Israel was one, but on the accession of his son, Rehoboam, the ten tribes revolted. Why? First, because Rehoboam despised the counsel of the old men (verses 8, 13), which was wise and moderate counsel; and, secondly, because he took the counsel of the young men, which was vain, foolish, and oppressive (verse 14). The advice of aged and pious men is always to be preferred to that of young and thoughtless ones. The text to be learnt is Prov. xii. 5—"The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceit." So Rehoboam found it; and many a divided kingdom, and family, and school, have proved it to their cost.

Jan. 14. Morning. THE GOOD NEWS. (Matt. ii. 1–12.) In the year A.D. 4, Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. The word means "the house of bread," and He comes to be "the Bread of Life." From the east, probably Persia, came wise men, led by a mysterious star or meteor, to Jerusalem. Persia was the seat of the Zend religion, which contained some remarkable germs of truth, and these wise men, or magi, were priests of that religion. A general expectation existed in the East that about that time one should come out of Judea who would gain the dominion of the world, and seeing this remarkable star the magi took it as a sign that he had come, and hence they left their country, perhaps with a large retinue of attendants, and came to Jerusalem. Here they inquired, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? (ver. 2) Herod the Great, a cruel despot, was now on the throne, and called himself king of the Jews; hearing this he was greatly alarmed, and inquired of the chief priests where the Christ, the Messiah, should be born. Prophecy had said in Bethlehem (Micah v. 2), and thither Herod sent the wise men, telling them to inquire, and saying, but he did not mean it, that he, too, would come and worship Him. The star which had led them to Jerusalem now moved towards Bethlehem, and stood directly over the place where the young child was. Great was their joy when they saw the star again, and still greater was their joy when they saw the child Himself. It was to them like the message of the angel to the shepherds (Luke ii. 10), glad tidings of great joy, and these glad tidings are intended for all people, Gentiles as well as Jews, down to the end of time. Learn and repeat this last text.

Afternoon. THE SIN OF JEROBOAM. (1 Kings xii. 25; xiii. 6.) In what did the sin consist? It was twofold. To prevent the ten tribes going up to Jerusalem to worship, he made two calves of gold, and set them up, one in Bethel on the southern border of his kingdom, and the other in Dan on the northern border, and he caused the people to worship these calves in violation of the law (Deut. xii. 5; Exod. xx. 4). And, further, he made priests to offer sacrifices to these calves, not of the tribe of Levi, which God had chosen, but of the lowest of the