

Our Young Folks.

Be Kind to Everything.

Softly, softly, little sister, Touch those gaily-painted wings; Butterflies and moths, remember, Are such very tender things.

Be Patient.

A little pearl lay hidden in the shell, and it mourned, for it heard that the divers had taken away many of its sisters, and it complained, "Why am I left in silence and darkness, while they are gazed on and admired?"

A Boy and Girl in the Moon.

Such queer things as the birds do tell me! You have seen the man in the moon, and heard his story, perhaps, how he was banished there for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day.

Built of Sea-Shell.

I've just heard of a very wonderful thing. The houses, and churches, and palaces of the big and beautiful city of Paris, are almost all made of sea-shells!

Only a Flower to Give.

"Mother," asked little Phoebe Cary, "have you nothing I can carry to Aunt Molly?" Phoebe's mother was poor, and her cupboard was empty that morning.

I used to pick when I was young; yes, and it makes me think what a wonderful God we have! If this little flower is not beholden His making, and His care, He won't overlook a poor creature like me.

"You've Out Me Deep."

Last summer a missionary, recently returned from India, stepped into a third-class carriage on his way into the country, and seated himself near the door.

The effect of these words on the man was as if he had been shot. He flung himself back in the seat, covered his face with his hands, saying again and again, "You've out me deep—you've out me deep!"

False Zeal.

Our zeal must never carry us beyond that which is safe. Some there are, who, in their first attempts and efforts upon religion, while the passion that brought them in remains, undertake things as great as their highest thoughts; no repentance is sharp enough, no charities expensive enough, no fasting afflictive enough;

Relation of Creed to Conscience.

The practical importance of having a right belief in order to exercise a right conscience, was well illustrated by Rev. Dr. John Hall, in his address at the Semi-Centennial Anniversary of the American Sunday-School Union.

"There is a young man in the Bible who commonly gets credit for a great deal of goodness. His creed was all right, his conduct admirable, and he gave evidence of having an enlightened conscience.

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Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON LXV.

THE FIG TREE WITHERED [Mark ix. 17-19]

COMMIT TO MEMORY. v. 22, 23. PARALLEL PASSAGE.—Matt. xxi. 17-22; Luke xii. 8-9. With v. 12, read Matt. xxi. 18, with vs. 18 and 14, read 2 Peter ii. 17, with vs. 19 21, read 2 Peter iii. 2, with v. 22, read 2 Peter iii. 9, with vs. 23 and 24, read John xiv. 18, 14.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—The fruitless is "nigh unto our ing."—Hob. vi. 8. LEADING TEXT.—Cut it down; why cumberest it the ground?—Luke xiii. 7.

There is no other miracle in the gospel history like this. It is the single example of direct destructive power in the Saviour's hands. He healed multitudes of men. He withered one tree. It was fit that there should be so much goodness, for he came to save; and that there should be so much judgment, for there is "the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 17).

A thoughtful pupil reading this account will ask such questions as these: How could the all-knowing Saviour expect fruit where there was none? How could he blame and curse a tree, which has no will? and how could he find fault with it when "the time of figs was not yet?"

And usually one should reply to such queries, where the answer is within the limits of religious thought; for the human mind usually refuses moral lessons from a transaction, till its sense of rightness is satisfied.

(a) Why should he who knew all, come "if haply he might find (fruit) thereon," when there was none? It is not said expected fruit; but he moved toward the tree, as it fruit might be expected. The leaves were fitted to raise this expectation. He did this for the disciples' sake, exactly as in Luke xxiv. 28, "he made as though he would have gone further," not intending to go further, but to be constrained. He meant here to teach truth to the disciples, not to deceive (which is the essence of a lie), just as he did in his parables where the form is fancy, but the substance is truth.

(b) How could an unreasoning tree be blamed? Why should it be cursed? We all, in our common talk, do much the same, speaking of a "good" and a "bad" tree, of a tree that "ought" to have fruit, or that "deserves to be cut down." And all things being for God's glory, he may well take a tree, and by its destruction teach men great truth; for things material are in order to things spiritual. Who blames a chemist for breaking a bottle to show students the quality of a gas? or for setting fire to an old house to show how fire can be put out?

(c) How could he find fault when the time of figs was not yet? Of various answers given the best seems to be that the leaves of the fig do not come till with or after the fruit, and that the time of fig gathering not having passed, the presumption would be that having leaves, and the fruit not yet being gathered, there would be figs on the tree.

Now we can study this tree, full of promise, empty of fruit, and withered away. I. A TREE FULL OF PROMISE: on the way side where it invited attention, covered with leaves, raising the expectation that it would also have fruit, for it was not a thorn or a thistle, but it fig tree, whose one use is to bear figs, and being public property by the wayside, a wayfarer as Christ was, hungry, looking at its leaves would also look for figs.

Such are we, called Christians, with Sabbath-schools, churches, societies, and all the means of grace. We may well be expected to have fruit. For what else are we? Such was the Jewish Church, held up to the world, taught, protected, a vine of God's planting, what was it for but fruit?

We are to bear the "fruit of good living," each in his place, as boys, girls, children in day-school, brothers, sisters, and in all other relations in life. All who see us should be able to say that we act from love to Christ and regard for his will.

And over and above this, there is a fruit of good-doing we are expected to bear. We are to think of and work for others, to be our brothers' keepers, and do help actively in all that glorifies Christ where we can. See Merod in Judges v. 23. The unfaithful servant neither robbed, stole, nor lied. He did nothing but keep the pound safe, but unimproved (Luke xix. 20).

II. A TREE EMPTY OF FRUIT. He found none, "nothing but leaves." The promise was not made good. The tree disappointed. As the merciful Master, leaving Bethany early in the morning to resume his work in the city, without a meal, hungry, naturally desired food, so the Lord, who gave the Jews, and gave us, great blessings, care and advantages, naturally desires fruit. The kind of fruit we may gather from Rom. vi. 22. Now read carefully as illustrating the case, and the meaning of this, Isa. v. 1-7.

When we attend Sunday-school, and are at the same time insolent to parents and to teachers, deceitful, vain, boastful, impure in language, vain in dress, envious, jealous, ill-tempered, we disappoint the hopes raised. We ought to be good, and are not. So when men and women join the church and promise to be faithful in every good word or work, when they are selfish, false, proud, greedy of gain, or of applause; when they cheat, or lie, or deceive in any way; when they shirk the burdens they ought to share; when they are far outside and hollow and vile within; when they are smooth to the world and a torment at home, they have their symbol in this tree, "nothing but leaves." So scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, were bringing forth "wild grapes" (Isa. v. 4).

III. THE TREE WITHERED. On one morning Jesus uttered the words, v. 12. It was possibly dark when he and they returned in the evening from Bethany. But next morning, with light to see it (v. 20) the withered tree had "from the roots," attracted Peter's attention (v. 21).

If the tree gave no figs, at least it gives instruction and warning. They wondered at his power. They had seen nothing of this kind before. They need not wonder. They in the exercise of faith, should pay

take of his power. So we see it perhaps, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, and of Elymas. See Acts v. and xiii. 6, 11. And at least God is to be believed when He threatens; "have faith" in him (v. 20). For there is warning in this concerning all the unfruitful.

(a) The Jews to whom Hos. ix. 10 and Joel i. 7, had already pointed under this very figure, and to whom the parable of Luke xiii. 6 had a reference. They withered away, lost their "place and nation," for unbelief and unfruitfulness (Rom. xi. 20).

(c) We are warned also. "We are called Christians. There is nothing wrong, but everything right in a profession. But it does not save. Leaves must have fruit with them. Christ 'comes near' and examines, is not deceived, and sends his judgment on dead professors who hold themselves out as 'trees of righteousness,' but have 'leaves only.'"

Let us ask, (4) What is the fruit we should bear? (See Eph. v. 9; Gal. v. 22.) (b) What is the fruit the Master finds? The Epistles to the Seven Churches shows what he desires in Churches, and the peril of fruitlessness.

ILLUSTRATION.

Interpreter shows in his garden a tree rotten and gone in the inside, and yet it grew and had leaves, like those who profess to be earnest friends of God, but do nothing for his cause. Their leaves are fair, but their hearts are good only for tinder.—Bunyan.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Whence our Lord was coming—whether he was going—how accompanied—the appearance of the fig tree—the Master's sentence—its form—its meaning—its effects—the impression made on the disciples—the accompanying instruction—the object of the miracle—the meaning of the symbol—leaves—fruit—how true of the Jews—of churches now—of individuals—peculiarity of this miracle—difficulties in the narrative—in what sense Jesus looked for fruit—how the tree is dealt with—meaning of "time of figs"—warning to us—and questions we should ask.—Dr. John Hall, in S. S. World.

Difficulties in Reviews.

The general introduction of reviews into Sabbath-schools is a fair illustration of the common belief, that every new and really valuable work is attended with marked difficulties.

Some of these hindrances may arise from prejudice against anything new, or some from the want of clearness and adaptation to the purpose, which often adheres to the conception of any new proposed method or to the explanation of it. Or obstacles may be due to an unwillingness to give the attention and study required fairly to comprehend the thing proposed.

The most simple, printed review, fully planned, with every detail carefully prepared, cannot be given with success by an ordinary teacher or superintendent who neglects to bestow any previous study upon it. To gain sufficient knowledge of one lesson to teach it intelligently calls for no little careful preparation, is a presumption which generally ends in signal failure.

Either for want of the opportunity or of the disposition to obtain a clear view of the topics and lessons to be recalled, the review is sometimes unsatisfactory on the first trial, and is set aside as surrounded with too many difficulties to be attempted again.

Doubtless, also, too much is sometimes included in a plan for a review. What may be obvious to one superintendent, may appear to another very obscure and wholly foreign to the topic. An analysis of the events and teachings passed under review may be quite correct logically and inferentially, and yet be so constructed as to be little better than a puzzle to the average student.

Again, it may be so full and exhaustive as entirely to exhaust the powers of the scholar in attempts to master it, and yet fail to exhaust the subject.

For the average school the plan for a review should plainly present the prominent facts or truths only. These should be grouped together upon a simple and obvious principle, and in a form the more ingenious of the better, provided it naturally grows out of the subjects reviewed, and is easily discoverable by the reader. A fair amount of sense and simplicity in plans for review, and a reasonable amount of study in comprehending them, will make this important phase of the teacher's work pleasant and popular.

Memorizing the Scriptures.

It is becoming quite the fashion with some Sunday-school teachers of "progress" to decry the old-fashioned practice of memorizing large portions of Scripture—as well as of the catechism—as if it were, of necessity, a mere parrot exercise, and unfavourable to a right understanding of God's word, or walking after its teachings. Or the contrary part stands forth Bishop Stevens, of Pennsylvania, and many other conservatives follow his lead, in maintaining the importance of hiding in the heart large and consecutive portions of the Bible. If they are not fully explained or understood when they are treasured in the memory, they are secured for maturer reflection and use. We once heard a well known Doctor of Divinity of the Baptist persuasion say that, when a boy in the Sunday-school, he thus enriched himself with the whole of the New Testament: and his preaching was thus "sanctified by the word of God," full of its language, illustrations and fragrance. Perhaps one reason why so many young preachers are so shy of appeals "to the Law and the Testimony" for expositions and proofs, and quote it so inaccurately in extemporaneous discourse and prayer, is that they did not memorize it in the Sunday-school. And how many of their more aged hearers are pining in vain for the "Thus saith the Lord!"—S. B. S., in Congregationalist.

CERTAINLY, work is not always required of a man. There is such a thing as sacred idleness, the cultivation of which is now fearfully neglected.—Macdonald.

Do not conclude the Lord is not with you, because things go very contrary, and He does not appear for you; He was in the ship notwithstanding the storm.

Miscellaneous.

We hear from the Cape of Good Hope that the yield of the gold fields continues to improve, and that a nugget weighing seven pounds and four ounces had been found. At the diamond fields business was dull. A ten-ounce black stone had, however, been discovered, which from its rarity was thought to be of great value.

A COMPANY has been formed to work the sulphur deposits at White Island a marine volcano 140 miles from Auckland. It is estimated that 100,000 tons of sulphur in an almost pure state are lying on the island ready for shipment. Chemical works are likely to be established soon, and the island leased.

It is characteristic of the primitive character of Syrian Christianity that both His Holiness the Patriarch of Antioch and the Bishop of Jerusalem, who arrived in this country the other day, have come without scrip or purse for their journey, and whilst here will be the guests, we believe, of the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel and the Church Missionary Society.

The Grand Council of C. S. Euro is about to consider a petition regarding the suppression of a convent and three other religious institutions. Their combined property amounts to 3,844,000 francs in land, forest, &c., a sufficient amount of which is to be capitalised in order to purchase annuities for those whom it is proposed to dispossess, and the remainder to be applied to the use of schools, communal purposes, &c.

On Tuesday evening an interesting ceremony took place at Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle, the occasion being the Baptism of Mr. Spurgeon's twin sons, who are eighteen years of age. It was computed that there were no fewer than 6000 persons present, very many of whom were youths of the same age as those to be baptized. Besides an impressive address by the pastor himself, there were prayers and hymns especially suited to the occasion.

PRINCE BISMARCK it appears has proposed to Denmark to enter into the German Confederation, and the offer has been declined. It is added that the circumstance was made known to Russia, and greatly irritated her, as she never would allow Germany to hold the key of the Baltic. The recent policy of the Russian Government towards Spain is said to be due to this incident.

There has been a grand procession at Rodez, on the occasion of the departure of 2000 persons from that town on a pilgrimage to Lourdes. High mass was celebrated in the Cathedral. Four canons bore a miraculous silver image of the Virgin Mary through the town. The Bishop headed the procession. The bench, some members of the bar, four clerical deputies of Aveyron, the mayors, thirty committees, and the pupils and professors of the Jesuit College followed.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Nottingham reproved a priest the other day for talking with a woman on his arm, and her hand in his. The priest asked the bishop to whom he was talking. "I am the bishop of Nottingham," said his lordship. "But we have no such Bishop in the English Church," replied the priest. "Oh," exclaimed the bishop, "then you belong to the English Church. I am delighted to hear it, and I beg your pardon with all my life; but I do wish you would not walk about in our uniform."

Of the missionaries who had originally gone to Madagascar, there remain now none except the Congregationalists and Friends. The Anglican Church has just sent out a stately mission, but this means interference and division. The English Independents have done a great work there. The work of the Quakers is less known. In America the work of missions by the Friends, we believe to the Indians, and in this they have appeared rather as government agents than simple missionaries. Everywhere their influence seems to have been good, though we believe they have not won many to the peculiarities of their faith.

A CORRESPONDENT of the Inverness Courier says that, along with Provost Swan, of Kirkcaldy, Mr. Thomas Carlyle visited a school on the Links one day, whereupon the master, anxious to show the children at their best, and to draw forth the distinguished visitor's appreciation, set them to sing songs to him, whereupon the visitors demanded that they should sing him some of Burns'; but the master not having practiced the children in Burns, had to excuse himself and them as well as he could. Carlyle left, exclaiming—"Scotch children singing, and not taught Burns's songs. Oh, dear me!"

A CORRESPONDENT sends the following to the Aberdeen Free Press:—"Last Sunday I worshipped in a quiet little country church, about twenty miles from Aberdeen, and in the pew in which I was seated found the following pencilled memorandum: 'On the first Sunday of May, 1854, there were nineteen women with close matches. On first Sunday of May 1870, there was only one.—J. R.' On making inquiry, I found that the 'one' indicated had also followed the others to her last home, and I could not help thinking that the reverend gentleman who conducted the services so impressively had not far to look for an eloquent text."

We hear much of civilization in China—the following is no indication of this:—A young woman, accused of murder, upon evidence extracted by torture from a girl, has been sentenced to death by cutting to pieces. The mode is as follows, and it will be seen that the wildest North American Indian never invented torture so fiendish:—The prisoner is tied to a cross, and the operation begins by flaying the face, cutting off the breast, exposing the muscles, nipping off the fingers and toes, and finally disembowelling the wretched victim. Some of the "every day" punishments are crushing the fingers and ankle between boards; striking the lips until jellied; scalding with hot waters; inserting red-hot spikes; cutting the tendon Achilles; burying the body up to the knees in lime, while the prisoner is forced to swallow large draughts of water; and making the criminal kneel on a mixture of powdered glass, sand, and salt, until the knees are excoriated.