

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

JULY 22, 1883.

ISRAEL DEFEATED AT AI.

JOSHUA 7. 6-26.

1.—The plain of Jericho was a low-lying, hot, enervating place, and it was therefore desirable to push on to the more elevated country. There were also other reasons. The Israelites were charged with two duties at the earliest possible time. One was to bury the bones of Joseph in the sepulchre of his fathers at Shechem (Gen. 1. 25; Ex. xiii. 19; Josh. xxiv. 32); the other to read the law with its blessings and cursings on mounts Ebal and Gerizim (Deut. xxvii. 1-8). At lay on the way to these places, and seems to have been a central position in which they could temporarily establish themselves with a view to further conquests. That the spies reported it easy of conquest led to the small expedition being sent on in advance for the purpose of taking it. It is too evident that they were thinking of the matter from the military standpoint. Had the Lord been with them, three hundred men would have done as well as three thousand; but the Lord had withdrawn Himself, and thus the three thousand sustained an ignominious defeat. The whole incident affords a sad comment on the weakness of human nature. The victory at Jericho had produced a spirit of vain confidence, and at the first disaster their superficial courage vanished, and they sank to the lowest point of despondency. It is always thus with a confidence that does not rest on the right foundation.

2.—When tidings of the defeat were received, Joshua and the elders of Israel prostrated themselves before the Ark of the Lord in mourning and prayer. The misfortune implied that the Lord had permitted them to be defeated for some wrong of which they were ignorant. Perhaps their distress was aggravated by the thought that they had neglected duty in not enquiring of the Lord before they sent the expedition to Ai. Very many evils might be averted if we remembered to enquire of the Lord in time; but too often we neglect this until troubles come; then like Joshua, we cry out in great distress. We discern in his language something of the peevishness of pain—something of that bitterness of impatience which is rather the sharp outcry of a wounded heart than a remonstrance with Jehovah. A child may call out sharply under the touch of the hand that tends him in some infirmity, but a mother never mistakes the cry of her child's distress for the utterance of dislike to herself, or for the expression of rebellion against her authority. Thus God ever discerns between the outcry of a wounded heart and the irreverence of a rebellious spirit. Joshua may speak, not as he should speak, but in the hastiness of disappointment and the bitterness of pain; God has not a word of rebuke for this; He simply proceeds to say, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?"

3.—The word rendered accursed is idolatry for devotion to the Lord of idolatrous persons or objects, a His inalienable right, which involved their utter destruction, or their consecration to religious uses (Deut. vii. 2; xx. 17; 1 Sam. xv. 3). In this case this principle had been plainly laid down, and a special prohibition issued against taking anything, it being expressly stated that disobedience would bring a curse and trouble (chap. vi. 17-19). Achan's sin was, therefore, not a mere act of disobedience, but a willful breach of a prohibition publicly made immediately before the city was taken; and as the things he took were part of those things he consecrated to the Lord's service, he amounted to sacrilege. To have taken things devoted to destruction would have been bad enough; but to take what was devoted to the Lord's treasury was robbing God. The special heinousness of the sin, however, was that Achan knew that even if not found out, his conduct could not fail to bring the trouble threatened upon the community at large. We cannot sin, however secretly, and limit the consequences to ourselves. Human society is so constituted that the innocent have to suffer with and for the guilty; and the guilt of the guilty is thereby greatly aggravated.

4.—The mode employed to detect the wrong-doer was Divinely ordered, and in accordance with the customs of the times. Where the Israelites were instructed or permitted to use it, God guided the lot in the right result (Prov. xv. 33). We have no authority in Scripture for supposing that casting lots is a right mode of determining any difficult point under ordinary circumstances for us. Under the exhortations of Joshua the culprit confessed the whole; and he and all his possessions were consigned to the punishment appointed by the Law for such cases. The Law held—(1) That Achan had made himself and his people to be devoted by taking of the devoted thing (chap. vi. 18; Deut. xv. 26); (2) that those who were thus sentenced to die should, as for other capital offences, be stoned (Deut. xiii. 10); (3) that such individual persons as were not to death should be stoned without the camp (Lev. xxiv. 14); (4) that all the possessions of devoted persons, including the bodies of their slaughtered cattle, should be burnt, and that their own bodies should be consumed with their goods (Deut. xv. 17). Abridged from the W. M. S. S. Magazine.

HURRY, WORRY AND WASTE.

The London Lancet utters its protest from a medical point of view against overwork and worry. We have, it says, too many ironies in the fire, too much business on hand at the same instant, and are far too energetic in our endeavors. With deliberation, calmness and such reserve of strength as result from perfect restraint, a man may do an infinity of work without either trouble or injury. Breathless haste, eager anxiety, and an excessive expenditure of energy are the outcome of modern activity. Whether in this country or on the Continent, the system of "quick returns" has been the bane of literature, almost extinguishing it and substituting in its place "journalism." The same system has revolutionized thought and science, and it is rapidly undermining the human constitution. Statesmen and politicians are kept on the strain of sustained attention, and their brains are for many hours in the twenty-four, whether in or out of Parliament, in a condition of ferment. The brains of speculators on the Stock Exchange, and even the brains of merchants in their private rooms, are equally taxed, and in the same way. All classes of the community share the turmoil. The period is one of brain wearing, impetuosity, of hurry, worry and waste—the waste of cerebral energy and nerve force. The only marvel is that, looking to the utterly unphysiological character of our mental and nervous habits of work, the number of sudden failures is not greater than it is, and that we have not a larger per centage of brain mortality to deplore.

MEDICAL DRUNKARDS.

Let me say that of all persons that have not yet become drunkards, the most pitiable are those who are drinking liquor under medical advice. Others drink it upon their own responsibility, and therefore with more or less caution. But these drink it upon the highest authority, and therefore with no fear of consequences. Other tipplers restrain their appetite through shame of being seen to indulge in it boldly; these drink under the imperious plea that they are but taking medicine. Other tipplers are open to admonition and reformation. In a word, whilst the one, drinking intoxicating liquor without excuse and therefore against conscience—against that voice of God in the soul—may stop ere it be too late; the other, drinking it for health, and therefore with an approving conscience, will probably never stop until life stops. The medical drunkard is led to his grave by his doctor.

USEFUL HINTS.

Feed fallen fruit to swine. This will improve the hogs, and destroy insects. To clean hair brushes, use ammonia and hot water; after washing well, shake the water out and dry on a coarse towel; they will look as good as new. Merely warm the back by a fire, and never continue keeping the back exposed to the heat after it has become comfortably warm. To do otherwise is debilitating. A Californian family, according to The Pacific Rural Press, "were dangerously poisoned a short time since by eating the roots of Lima beans, which they happened to discover are very palatable." A New Jersey farmer reports that a dressing of eight bushels per acre of salt to land badly infested with white grubs, enabled him to raise good crops of corn for three years past, which was impossible previous to this application. In making a common road in the country there should be a depth of three feet from the top of the crown in the centre, to the bottom of the ditches on either side. The crown should be well gravelled for about seven feet in width. When exhausted by severe mental or bodily strain, nothing restores tone to the system so quickly as hot milk. Though less palatable to some than cold milk or other alcoholic stimulants, one who has experienced the refreshing influence which follows almost immediately, will not forego its use for any thing more agreeable to the taste. To most children the suggestion of a dose of castor oil is nauseating. Why not, then, use physic in necessary for the little ones, use Ayer's Cathartic Pills? They combine every essential and valuable principle of a cathartic medicine, and being sugar-coated are easily taken. THE SOURCE OF MUCH ILL-TEMPER.—When your husband comes home in bad humor, jerks off his boots and appears to be generally sulky, do not attribute it to business cares or hard times, but to its real cause—those terrible corns which are constantly annoying him. A word to the wise will be sufficient—buy a bottle of PUTNAM'S PAINLESS CORN EXTRACTOR. His corns will be quickly and painlessly removed, and his gratitude will be unbounded. Putnam's Painless Corn Extractor sold everywhere. N. C. FOLSON & CO., Kingston, Proprietors. Almost every person has some form of scrofulous poison latent in his veins. When this develops in scrofulous sores, ulcers, or eruptions, or takes the form of rheumatism, or organic diseases, the suffering that ensues is terrible beyond description. Hence the gratitude of those who discover, as thousands yearly do, that Ayer's Sarsaparilla will thoroughly eradicate this evil from the system.

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