

Our Young Folks.

A Story for the Girls.

Sit down on the porch, children, and let me tell you about Aunt Rachel and the story she once told me. One day, when I was about twelve years old, I had planned to go after strawberries; but Aunt Rachel said to me, "A girl of your age should begin to learn how to do housework. Take off your hat, roll up your sleeves, and help me to do the baking."

I pouted, and sighed, and shed tears, but was encouraged by the promise that I might go after the baking. Under good Aunt Rachel's directions I mixed a big loaf of bread, placed it in a tin as bright as a new dollar, when she called out, "This will never do, child; you haven't scraped your bread bowl clean."

I shall never forget the picture she made standing there, her eyes regarding me sternly, one hand resting on her hip, while in the other she held the untidy bowl.

"It will never do, child," she went on. "It is not only untidy, but it makes too much waste; to be a good housekeeper, you must learn to be economical. You have heard the story of the young man who wanted an economical wife?"

"No," I answered, and I might have added that I didn't wish to hear it either.

"Well," she continued, "he was a very likely young man, and he wanted a careful wife; so he thought of a way he could find out. One morning he went to call upon the different girls of his acquaintance, and asked them each for the scrapings of their bread-bowls to feed his horses. You see they all wanted him, so they got all they could for him. Finally he found a girl who hadn't any, so he asked her to be his wife, because he thought she must be economical. Now," said Aunt Rachel, triumphantly, "suppose a young man should ask you for the scrapings of your bread bowl, what would you say?"

"What would I say?" I repeated scornfully; "why, I'd tell him if he couldn't afford to buy oats for his horses they might starve. I wouldn't rob the pig to feed them."

I suppose Aunt Rachel thought that lesson was all lost on me; but as true as you live, I never knead the bread to this day without thinking of her lesson on economy.—*Detroit Free Press.*

The Gift of Song.

A touching story is told of a little girl sent by her parents from Spain, during a time of religious persecution there, to take refuge with some friends in England. The vessel was lost on a rock-bound coast during a severe storm; but the little girl was saved through the efforts of some heroic men. She was too young to tell her story, but, by a series of providential events, was brought at last to the house of a friend of her parents just as, released from imprisonment, they arrived in England to seek that the mother had taught to her little girl in former days, became the clue that led to their joyful meeting.

A remarkable incident in that of a Scottish youth, who learned with a pious mother to sing the old psalms that were as household words to them in the kirk and by the fireside. When he grew up he wandered away from his native country, was taken captive by the Turks, and made a slave in one of the Barbary States. But he never forgot the songs of Zion, although he sung them in a strange land and to heathen ears. One night he was solacing himself in this manner, when the attention of some sailors on board of an English man-of-war was directed to the familiar tune of "Old Hundred," as it came floating over the moonlit waves. At once they surmised the truth, that one of their countrymen was languishing away his life as a captive. Quickly arming themselves, they manned a boat, and lost no time in effecting his release. What a joy to him after eighteen long years passed in slavery! Should you not think that he would always love the glorious tune of "Old Hundred?"

Children, never let your sweet young voices be employed in using profane or unseemly words. Learn many hymns. Good Martin Luther said "Singing hymns will keep the devil out of the heart." It is a quaint saying, but it is true. Furnish the mind with good things and there will be no room for evil. They will be like nails fastened in a sure place. You know when a nail is driven in tightly you cannot wedge anything else along side of it. But you may have a tuneful voice and love to sing, and yet remain unaffected by the beautiful words. O, how sad if they who sing about Jesus on earth shall not be of the number of the redeemed who join in the "now song" before the throne of God and the Lamb—*Child's Words.*

NEVER begin with obedience, you will never attain it! Begin with faith, and upon faith found this—"He that loveth me keepeth my commandments."

"No man hath a velvet cross," was Flavel's assertion, years ago, and it is just as true now as then. Only He who giveth it to us, and he who beareth the cross, know its weight. God only knows the strength needful for every burden.

Mr. Moody said, in preaching on "Christ as a deliverer," I remember preaching on this subject, and walking away, I said to a Scotchman, "I didn't finish the subject." "Ah, man! you didn't expect to finish it did ye? It'll take all eternity to finish telling what Christ has done for man."

As the Christian advances on his way, a sweet and solemn sense of the unity of life grows upon his spirit. "We are complete in Him." Much of our life is viewed in itself only, would appear purposeless and broken, yet Christ has said, "Gather up these fragments that nothing be lost." We learn to look at life as a whole thing, not to be discouraged by this or that adverse circumstance, remembering, how much there is and will be in that life which is "like frost and snow, kindly to the root, though hurtful to the flower;" fatal to the bloom and fragrance, the lovely and enjoyable part of our nature, but friendly to its true, imperishable life.

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON XXIII.

JUNE 11, 1876. THE APOSTLES BEFORE THE COUNCIL. (Acts 23-42)

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 28, 29, 41. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Phil. ii. 9-11, Acts xiii. 3.

SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With vs. 27, 28, read Acts iv. 18, and Matt. xxvii. 25, with v. 29, read Dan. iii. 18, with v. 30, read 1 Pet. ii. 24; with v. 31, read Isa. li. 6, 7; with v. 32, read 1 Pet. i. 12, with v. 33, read Prov. xxvii. 1; with v. 34, read Prov. xxii. 8; with v. 37, read Luke ii. 1, with vs. 38-40, read Ps. lxxvi. 10, and with vs. 41, 42, read Rom. v. 3-6.

GOLDEN TEXT.—If God be for us, who can be against us?—Rom. viii. 31.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Christ is above all human authority. This lesson takes up the narrative of the last lesson; nothing requires therefore to be said in the way of connection or introduction. Three parties stand out distinctly, each with well-marked features of its own. We have impotent persecutors, restrained by sacred security from the attempted murder of *votivul witnesses* for God. The council is diverted by Gamaliel from trying to slay the Apostles.

First we go with them to the council (v. 27), the composition of which was stated in the last lesson. The High priest was president and spokesman. He recalls the interdict, which was peremptory and absolute. But behold! they were making the town ring with the forbidden name, and charging on the council, including chief priests and elders, the death of Christ! Ah! they are not so brave now as when the cry went up, "His blood be on us and our children!" There was no protest from the council (see Matt. xxvii. 20). They are taken in their own net.

The Apostles did for Jerusalem what we have to do with every town and village—"filled Jerusalem," etc.

V. 29. It devolves on Peter to speak in his own and his brethren's name, and his temperate tone contrasts well with his former impetuosity. He is perfectly respectful. He acknowledges them as the sharers of Jewish privileges—"the God of our fathers,"—but still they are but men, and must own that when God speaks he is to be obeyed against all men. His word makes an end of controversy. The conscience of all men admits this, and until perverted, refuses to be bound by human authority against God. It is of no consequence whether the men be high or low, civil or ecclesiastical. This was the highest national and spiritual body known to Peter, but that made no difference. It was composed of men—and "let God be true," etc. (Rom. iii. 4). This is the spirit that appeared in Luther, Knox, and the Puritans. It is the spirit of religious liberty, and is very closely allied to civil freedom. No nation will long be free that forgets this: no nation will inact on this principle, the Apostles will not take arms against the rulers. When force was used against them, they fled according to the Lord's instruction (Matt. x. 23; 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33), and followed the example of the Master (1 Pet. ii. 22, 23). This rule however, would not bind a people who could act unitedly against despotic rulers.

V. 30. The contrast between God and the rulers of Israel is once more brought out. "Ye slew"—"God raised up." "Ye hanged on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13)—"God exalted with His right hand," etc., when He raised Him from the dead, received Him up into glory. He is King (v. 31), for all power is given" (Matt. xxviii. 18), and by Him He gives repentance and remission, in this sense, that He commands the preaching of both (see Luke xxiv. 47); that in exalting Him He proves to men that Christ's work is finished, and therefore that sinners can be saved by Him: that forgiveness can be dispensed for His sake; that the Holy Ghost, who immediately works true repentance in the heart, is given by Him from His throne; and that, finally, the word, sacraments, ministry, prayer, providences, all derive their fitness to do spiritual good to men from the grace of Jesus Christ.

V. 32. The justification of the Apostles in disobeying the rulers, is in their relation to Him. "We are witnesses," not only having seen the facts, but appointed to report them. What should they do, but tell the truth? Nor did they stand alone. The Holy Ghost on Pentecost bore the same testimony, in the supernatural gifts to those who obeyed the Saviour's command, and believed on Him. For obedience to the known will of God brings more of the Spirit's power, as disobedience forfeits it.

THE EFFECT OF THIS SPEECH. "They were cut" (to the heart) by its penetrating and irresistible truth, but instead of owning their guilt, and repenting of their sin, they set about planning for the killing of the witnesses (see Rev. xi. 3-8). Men who mean to reject the truth will resent the telling of it, and treat its friends as their enemies (see Gal. iv. 16). They were on trial, but they speak like judges, and their judges feel like criminals, as so often happened with the Apostles. Perhaps it was something in their bearing, or in the message they uttered, that brought out an

UNEXPECTED ALLY, (V. 34) in the person of Saul's instructor, a Pharisee (the Sadducees were the persecutors), of whose eminent learning and moral weight we know from the Talmud, by name Gamaliel, the son of Simeon (supposed by some to be the Simeon of Luke ii. 25), the son of Hillel, founder of a great school of Rabbinical learning, and one of seven most eminent Rabbis. He was learned, polite, cautious, but beyond this, his advice had no moral value, and he gets more credit, we think, than he deserves. He had the Apostles put out, that the deliberation might not be overheard by them; he advised a let-alone policy as safest, not as just in itself. He adduced the instances (v. 38) of Theudas and Judas (v. 37), two of the many insurgent leaders who led Jewish malcontents in abortive

efforts for freedom. He did not think well of them, of course, and their failure possibly shadows that of the Christians. He argues that, if this movement be of man, it will come to the like end, without their involving themselves. True, he may have thought better of it, and only used this argument, "knowing his men, to get his point carried. On the other hand, if it be of God, they fight against it in vain. He urges them, therefore, to do nothing.

But what was he for? What was the use of elders and a council, if not to weigh evidence, discern and receive the truth from imposture? This policy would stay all missionary effort, and this argument would show Mohammedanism, Brahminism, and other established systems, to be of God. Historically it is not true that God's work can never be put down in the persons of its friends. Think of Spain, Italy and France. The witnesses can be slain (Rev. xi. 7, 8). Whatever may be thought of the man (and his teaching of Saul was hardly favorable to toleration), this argument, though it gained his end, is far from being safe. It illustrates the fact that we may have an inspired report of a speech that is not inspired.

THE ISSUE

was like all such compromises. Either they were innocent, and should be freed, guilty, and should be severely punished. But they called them, had them beaten, dismissed them with a renewed injunction against speaking in the name of Jesus. The beating (of thirty-nine stripes, 2 Cor. xi. 24) was probably an assertion of the council's authority—a declaration that they were not to be taken as "giving in."

V. 41. The strange sight is now seen of men scourged and bleeding, rejoicing, not in the pain and shame by themselves, but in the evidence they gave that they were in the way of duty, fulfilling the Master's will, treated as His friends, and resisted by His enemies. They were suffering "shame for His name."

Now what will the Apostles do (v. 42)? Call a meeting and descant on their wrongs, and crown themselves with the glories of martyrs? No; but they proceed to "teach and preach Jesus Christ" daily, publicly, "in the temple, and from house to house, as they had opportunity. This was their answer.

(a) We have the conduct of the council—wholly bad—in the work of persecutors, in which they have had many successors, even in the Church.

(b) We have the course of Gamaliel—"rowing in two waters." If Christianity was divine, he should have owned it; if an imposture, exposed it. How absurd to wait, in a cause of this kind, for the issue to determine it. What about dying men's souls in the meantime?

(c) The course of the Apostles—wholly good—to be admired, and in our time, enthusiastically copied.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

The council—the prisoners—their plea—the reversal of the order—who were "cut"—his rank—reputation—argument—illustrations—plea—good in it—bad in it—its issue—the council's course—objection to it—the effect on the disciples—what they felt—what they did—and the lessons to us.

PREPARATION FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER MUKAY, D. D.

The individual Sabbath School teacher is responsible for the success of his class and School, and to the thoughtful and prayerful preparation he makes for it. Every teacher before meeting his class should carefully read that portion of Scripture which forms the lesson; and consult his Bible dictionary, commentaries, and other aids that may be within reach to ascertain the meaning of word and phrases. He who undertakes the office of instructing the young, must feel the obligation of a diligent and systematic perusal of the word of God. Although long practice has made him familiar with the Scriptures, and given him much facility in expressing his ideas, yet he should not neglect the study of his weekly lessons. Some teachers trust to their fluency of language, others to the information they gather at the teacher's meetings, and others to the notes in the lessons which they purchased, instead of solemnly setting apart a portion of their leisure hours for the examination of the lesson. Such extempore teaching is as objectionable almost as extempore preaching. Were a preacher to open his Bible at his text without having ascertained its meaning, and without previous study, how long would he be popular or useful, Vagueness, differences, repetition, and a want of freshness are the inevitable results of such teaching. The truths of the Bible are too precious to be handled so carelessly, and we need not wonder why such teaching yields so little fruit. Those who sow sparingly shall also reap sparingly; mixing so much chaff with the wheat, shall we be astonished that little grows. A teacher who habitually neglects to study his lesson will soon degenerate. The cistern that is always letting out and taking little in, will soon be empty. It is from neglect to study that there is so much vague teaching; what he teaches may be all true, and in its own place useful enough, but it is altogether destitute of point. His closing remarks might have been as suitable at the beginning as at the end; and it is quite apparent at every stage of the lesson that such a teacher has not apprehended the truth which his subject illustrates, or understood in what way it may benefit the class. He who expects to be a useful and successful teacher will study the lesson very carefully in the course of the preceding week. Lists of lessons which are now published, such as the international series, may be an advantage and convenience to the teacher, for by these he will always know what will be the lesson. By a thorough preparation he will be enabled to go through the exercises

with much satisfaction and profit to himself and the scholars. He will thus go to his work with a mind fraught with information, and will bring into the class an interest and favour that will make his labours attractive and beneficial. Such preparation will enlarge and enrich the teacher's mind; by carefully studying his lesson, he is led to acquire fresh knowledge. Every book he reads, every paper or magazine he takes up, every event that occurs in the home circle, or elsewhere, will be regarded with an eye to his class. Every feat or occurrence that comes under his notice, will be carefully treasured up as capable of furnishing him an illustration for his class, and of being an hand-maid to sacred instruction. The devoted teacher is not satisfied with his present attainments in knowledge, his path is like "the shining light shining more and more unto the perfect day." He gives attendance to reading. He is an householder who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old. However great his attainments or however consummate his abilities, to teach others carefully, he must continually lay up in his mind new stores. Dr. Arnold's testimony on this point is very important, not merely on account of the great weight attaching to his name upon all subjects affecting instruction, but because he explains the rationale of the matter. Some one asked him why he continued to study for his pupils, "as though he should not have enough to give them." "It is not," was his reply, "because I fear I should not have enough to give them, but because I prefer that they should be supplied from a running stream rather than from a stagnant pool." The well equipped teacher has not only to acquire knowledge, but he must also by the aid of reflection systematically arrange, carefully classify, and properly treasure his mental resources. He must choose for his class what is suitable to the lesson, and omit what is extraneous and not to the point, and keep to what is within the capacity of the children, remembering that all children are not alike. A teacher should cultivate the art of teaching. If he would interest children he must try to think as children think and talk as children do. Let the thoughts be as good and sublime as we choose, but let the language in which they are conveyed be level to the comprehension of a child. Plain English words such as a child use, and familiar images such as children understand should be sought out. The best specimen of this style is perhaps Dr. Todd's lecture to children. And whilst the language is adapted to the capacity of their charge, let their spirit be devout and cheerful, and your demeanor irresistibly winning. Thus shall they be "a guide to the blind, a light to them that are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes."

To the Point.

That old phrase, "Strike the nail on the head," though extremely commonplace, is full of strong, practical sense. This is a world of unmistakable actualities. The one thing that we have to do, the striking exists; the necessity for it to be driven in exists. What sense, then, can there be in random, dreary strokes? "Strike the nail on the head" if you have an arm to execute, and a brain to direct. Do not make yourself ridiculous, and your work of no avail, by pounding at every place but the right one! Hold your point with your eye, then strike!

This hitting wide of the mark, shooting random arrows, is noticed most plainly in much of the writing and preaching of the day. A great many true things are said, and said in a fine way, too; but, unfortunately, much like some men's wit—"too fine to be discovered with the naked eye." A shower of arrows may now and then bring down a bird or two, but what a small return for the power invested! Every single shaft, well directed, is equal to one at least, and often to many times the number by repeated use. Every single word, sent from honest, impassioned lips, denouncing wrong, should bring down its bird of evil! Every line of fearless vindication of right, should drive the nail down solidly in the structure, rearing for truth and God.

And why this aimlessness, this hazy uncertainty, in professions which have such facilities for impressing the world with lofty ideas? Is it that there are no strong points to be made? Is society fallen to such a dead level that there is nothing positive and startling in its present condition—no elevations, no depressions? Or, this being an insufficient ground for the fault here mentioned, can it be a certain pandering to the popular prejudice of pleasing, which causes the defect we notice? We believe it is the latter. Pity we had not a few more brusque truth-tellers like poor old Thomas Carlyle, who would deal an honest rebuke to a King himself, if he chanced to rise his righteous wrath! Laugh as the world may at the old man's cynicisms, it has no one who tells it such wholesome, unvarnished truths. He deals in facts, not speculations, or dreams.

If there is a strong conviction for impelling an author to write, his word cannot have much effect upon the world. If the preacher does not come before his people with some burning thoughts which are ready to leap like fire down among his people, he preaches to preoccupied or listless souls. If he feels any inclination to stop and trim his sentences into fanciful shapes, rather than seeking the quickest, surest way of getting them into those other hearts, he needs to go down on his knees before God himself. All unnecessary verbiage but conceals the true point, which ought to stand out clear before the eyes. The truth should be made to stare the people in the face to produce proper effect, and so should every sermon or article, for the instruction of hearers or readers, be thus clear and to the point. People may be thrown into delightful reveries by elegantly dressed-up discourses, chiefly because it is pleasant to sit and examine fine costumes; but, for any real, practical good to be accomplished, you want the fact which shines through any dress, making you unconscious if it have a dress at all. Give the world such a thought, you who write or speak, else you are not using your privileges to their best advantage.—*Selected.*

Friendship.

The point that we wish to make is, that we should not expect to have the sentiments and actions of our friends and companions always equally satisfactory to us; and after we have once made up our minds that, on the whole, we like a certain person; that we like a train or all of his ways, opinions, tastes, qualities—what we like is that draws us to him, it is rather foolish to be judging him too severely every five days on a new issue. After a man is once a member of the National Academy he should not be subject to the annual weighing in the balance of the Academy's Hatting Committee.

You may say that, after we have known a man well for thirty years—and that is a long lease for a friendship in this mutable world—it is able to talk about its being possible for him to surprise or disappoint us. But did you ever hear of "the old man's disease"—avarice? Do you suppose that an affliction like that comes to the surface late in life, if the seeds have not been deep in the soil all the time? But that is a hard and cruel question. Let us rather speak of a more pleasing and no less surprising development. There was an old woman about whom we once wrote, to prove by an example that it is the disagreeable young folk who make the disagreeable old men and women, and that sweet girls and boys need not be troubled by the nightmare of a sour and crabbed old age. The woman we wrote about had lived out and down three husbands, and was about as unpleasant an old gossip as you might meet in a day's journey; yet the traits of her age were only the traits of her youth, stripped of whatever charm youth must have lent her. But presently, after we had held up this aged person as a warning and a consolation, what does she do but fall into her second childhood, and develop one of the sweetest and gentlest dispositions with which mortal ever blessed his or her neighbor. All she asked was her doll and her prayer-book, and all went merry as a marriage bell. No; we never know our friends. And, curiously enough, while we are going on with our discoveries concerning them, they are making the same observations upon us, and are having the same surprises and disappointments.—*The Old Cabinet; Scribner.*

Romanism in Rome.

A correspondent of the *Christian Union* says of Rome:

"A profound indifference prevails. The churches are open every day from morning until noon, but O, how cold and solitary! A few priests reading prayers, a dozen people kneeling here and there, almost as many lazy beggars at the door, a monk or two with cowl and beads—what were these great ignorant fellows made for?—one or two ladies at the confessional, and a dozen tourists with their guide books—this is the unvaried scene, the summary for Sunday and the rest of the week. There are, in general, no seats; there is little sermonizing. The prayers are in Latin, which the people do not understand.

"The young men of education are, for the most part, rationalistic; not philosophical, indeed, but holding that since modern miracles are but jugglery, the ancient, also, must be thus considered; yet, in one sense, Rome is most thoroughly Romish. The ministry is completely *vaticanized*; the festival days are noted, the *madre benedicta* is venerated; and everybody expects to have the mass performed at his funeral. Protestantism has but a slight foothold among the Italian people. Even many of those supposed to be converted to it, carry, it is said, the beads and image of the Virgin secretly to church with them. The attendants on our churches are mostly foreigners, or persons in some pecuniary way allied to them. Still, with an open Bible we have hope.

"The number of priests is legion. They all wear long black cloaks, silver shoe buckles, and three-cornered beaver hats. Their fresh faces indicate good living more than intellectuality or fasting, and they appear to take life quietly and easily. I lately heard of one who preached but two sermons annually, and spent the year in committing them to memory. Some of them are very bold in their expressions and have quaint ways of doing things.

"While preaching, the other day, one of them turned in his discourse to make a very tender appeal on behalf of a poor man with a large family that needed the immediate assistance of his hearers. He portrayed the necessities of this family in such pathetic strains as to move his audience to tears, and then said:—"Such is the exigency of this case that I will stop here in my sermon and take up a collection." He descended from the tribune and passed the bag around among the people, who, being really moved by his appeal, dropped in the lire very bountifully; but on returning to his place he smilingly said:—"This poor man is the Pope."

The Engagement Ring.

It has been the custom since time immemorial for gentlemen who are engaged to be married, to offer their intended brides a ring, this ring is worn until the wedding ring replaces it. There is a fashion for this as for everything else. The ring varies in value according to the position of the giver. There are certain stones more suitable than others for this purpose. Diamonds are not considered in good taste for a young girl, neither are pearls. The latter because they are perishable, and because it is said, too, that pearls are unlucky stones; in evidence of this, it is stated that pearls composed the favorite parures of Marie Stuart, Anna Boleyn, Marie Antoinette, and the unfortunate Duchess de Praslin, who all met with such terrible deaths. Consequently the stones most generally favored are emeralds and sapphires, the first being the emblem of hope, the second that of endless love, according to the original belief. The emerald was for a long time the favorite stone of the Roman ladies. When emeralds are deep in color they are mounted in open work. When they are pale they are mounted on foil. Unfortunately one thing is against this stone—the facility with which it is imitated in glass colored by oxide of chrome.