

(and crossing the palm with silver is found to be as effectual with fortune-tellers in China as elsewhere), and the gates are equal—that is, if the station and wealth of the two families are similar—the proposal is made in due form. The wedding presents are then sent, and, if accepted, the young couple is considered as legally betrothed. A lucky day must next be fixed for the wedding, and here our friend, the diviner, is again called upon. Previous to the great day the bridegroom gets a new hat and takes a new name, while the lady, whose hair has hitherto hung down to her heels in a single heavy plait, at the same time becomes initiated into the style of hair dressing prevalent among Chinese married ladies, which consists in twisting the hair into the form of an exaggerated tea-pot, and supporting it in that shape with a narrow plate of gold or jade over the forehead, and a whole system of bodkins behind it. On the wedding morning presents and congratulations are sent to the bridegroom, and among the rest a pair of geese; not sent as we might imagine, by some wicked wag or ineluctable bachelor as a personal reflection on the intellectual state of his friend, but as an emblem of domestic unity and affection. The ladies, too, in China, as well as elsewhere, indulge in a little fashionable crying on the occasion, and so the relatives of the bride spend the morning with her, weeping over her impending departure, or, more probably, their own spinsterhood.—*Popular Science Monthly*.

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE.

Read it through once in course; less for spiritual benefit than to know what is in it, and where to go and find what you want. Such a reading once in a lifetime is enough.

Read it by books. For this purpose it is well to get what is called a Paragraph Bible, in which the divisions into chapters and verses is not maintained. Then read the story of Esther, or of Ruth, or the Epistle to the Romans, or that to the Galatians, through at a sitting. Or get a harmony of the Gospels—there are several such—and read through the life of Christ as you would read a biography of Wesley or Luther. In such a reading Christ's teachings take on new aspects, and the life itself assumes a new significance.

Read it topically. Take a particular subject on which you feel need of instruction. Take the American Tract Society's Bible text book as a basis. Examine every text there classified under the head Atonement, or take a Teacher's or a Bagster's Bible, and examine every text therein referred to, as giving the titles of Christ; learn thus what the Scripture teaches by gathering fruit from all its branches.

Study its spirituality. Study it according to your own mood, your own special need. Do you feel full of gladness? Read its psalms of trust, or its promises of comfort. It is bread—take what you hunger for. It is medicine—take what your soul needs.

Read in other books that throw light on the Bible. Take such a book as "Van Lennep's Bible Lands."

Read it, and as you read examine every reference. You will read slowly, of course, but you will come upon new texts and upon new meanings of old texts. You will be like a traveller going through a comparatively new country, with a guide and a friend.

Sometimes do not read at all. We suppose some of our readers will be shocked at this advice; nevertheless, it is more reverent to the Bible, to go to sleep at the Bible on a single verse, than to read a chapter with heavy eyes, a weary brain, and a nodding head. Sometimes the best meal is on an empty table.

Finally, digest what you read. Appropriate it. It is better to read the one verse, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," and practise meekness for that day, than to read the whole Sermon on the Mount, and shut up your religion between the covers of your gold-clasped Bible, and leave it there. He will love the Bible best who studies most zealously to practise its precepts and imbibe its spirit.

GIVING IS GETTING.

One of the plain paradoxes in the realm of mind, matter, nature and grace, is that true gain comes only through loss; that hoarding is impoverishing; that there is no way of keeping one's hold on a desired good, like parting with it; that acquisition is a result of expenditure; that dividing is multiplying; that scattering is increasing; that spending is saving; that giving is getting. Bodily strength comes from its expenditure, not from its hoarding. Every wise use of a muscle adds to the power of that muscle.

It is the use, not the possession, of any material treasure that gives it its highest value. Money gathered and kept for its own sake increases the discontent and cravings of its holder, while money sought and handled for its beneficent uses gives pleasure and satisfaction to him who employs it. As a rule, men and women of ample means shrink more from the outlay of money for their personal convenience and enjoyment, or for the giving of pleasure to others, and really have less of the delights which money-using might secure, than persons of more limited income who have no desire for money as money; no wish to be rich, in comparison with the thought of living and doing richly. Straitened circumstances are quite likely to increase with growing accumulations of wealth; and unsatisfied cravings for riches are exaggerated by every effort at their satisfying. "There is"—indeed there is—"that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." And the pinch of poverty itself can never nip so sharply as the pinch of withholding avarice.

Our mental faculties gain through their using. Giving out thought in speech or writing increases one's treasures of thought as well as one's ease and power of expression. In our moral nature the same principle prevails. President Hopkins said: "It is of the very nature of the affections that they give, and of the desires that they receive."

The exercise of desire is belittling; that of affection ennobling. Desire brings unrest. Affection brings content.

When a child receives gifts, or selfishly employs what has been given him, his desires are exercised, and by their very exercise they are strengthened and intensified. But when the child gives to others it is his affections which are exercised and which are enlarged by their exercise. As with the child, so with those of us of any age. Only as we give do we get anything that is worth getting. Only in our giving do we find the real pleasure of living. If we find that our affection, our ministry, our presence, is a source of comfort or pleasure, we recognize a blessing just there.

"For the heart grows rich in giving;
All its wealth is living gain.
Seeds, which mildew in the garner,
Scattered, fill with gold the plain."

—*Sunday School Times*.

MY LAST OFFER.

We had a wedding at our house last night,
With throng of guests and maze of flowers;
The rooms were brilliant with their blaze of light;
In song and feasting passed the hours.

My little nephew, four years and a half,
Bewildered, glad and wonder-eyed,
Saw all the glitter, heard the song and laugh,
And ate unwonted sweets beside.

Next day he pondered much, as wise folks do,
Then craved of me a little boon;
"Aunt Jeanie, why don't you get married, too?
I hope you'll do it very soon."

"Dear child," I said, and stroked his curly head,
"You would not wish it if you knew
That I must go away if I should wed,
Instead of living here with you."

His face grew grave, for he had only thought
Of wedding cakes and ices sweet;
But, if with loss of auntie it were brought,
The feast would be a doubtful treat.

He clasped my neck and kissed me on the cheek,
Then said the loving little elf,
"Aunt Jeanie, don't get married till next week,
And I will marry you myself."

—*C. M. St. Demys, in Our Continent*.

WHEAT IN HISTORY.

Dr. E. L. Sturtevant gives the following account of the past of the wheat plant:

"It is supposed to have introduced wheat into Egypt, Demeter into Greece, and the Emperor Chin Wong into China, about 3,000 B.C. In Europe it was cultivated before the period of history, as samples have been discovered from the Lacustrine dwellings of Switzerland. In England it was probably not cultivated by the ancient Britons; but the Anglo-Saxons, when Bede wrote, early in the eighth century, sowed their wheat in spring; and in the days of Queen Elizabeth its cultivation was but partial. Indeed, wheat was an article of comparative luxury till nearly the seventeenth century. In India, wheat seems not to be native but introduced, for its Sanscrit name signifies 'food for the barbarians'; yet three varieties are mentioned in the Bhavaprakasa, one of which, a large-grained, is said to have come from the west, and another, a small grained or beardless wheat, is said to have been indigenous to middle India.

"The first wheat raised in the New World was sown by Spaniards on the Island of Isabella in January, 1494, and on March 30th ears of corn were gathered. The foundation of the wheat harvest of Mexico is said to have been three or four grains carefully cultivated in 1530, and preserved by a slave of Cortes. The first crop at Quito was raised by a Franciscan monk in front of the convent. Garcilasso de la Vega affirms that in Peru, up to 1548, wheaten bread had not been sold at Cuzco. Wheat was first sown by Gosnold on Cuttyhunk, one of the Elizabeth Islands in Buzzard's Bay, off Massachusetts, in 1602, when he first explored the coast. In 1604, on the Island of St. Croix, near Calias, Me., the Sieur de Monts had some wheat sown which flourished finely. In 1611 the first wheat appears to have been sown in Virginia. In 1636 samples of wheat grown in the Dutch colony at Netherlands were shown in Holland. It is probable that wheat was sown in the Plymouth colony prior to 1629, though we find no record of it, and in 1629, wheat was ordered from England to be used as seed. In 1818 wheat was introduced into the valley of the Mississippi by the Western Company. In 1799 it was known among cultivated crops of the Simos Indians of the Gila River, New Mexico."

NOOSING SHARKS.

The Island of Aitutaki, one of the Hervey group, in the Pacific, is surrounded by islets, underneath which are submarine caverns, the homes of sharks. The natives classify them as lagoon sharks, which are comparatively tame, and ferocious sharks, which spare nothing they can seize. The lagoon shark, about six feet long, is esteemed a delicacy, and the natives supply their feasts with the toothsome dish by a remarkable style of fishing.

Arrived over the entrance to the shark cave, the fisherman leaves his canoe to the care of his companions, and dives to the bottom, carrying with him a slip knot of strong cord.

He expects to find two or three sharks at home, well satisfied and drowsy after feeding in the lagoon, with their tails toward the entrance. Selecting the largest, the diver adroitly adjusts a noose over the tail, taking care that it hangs loosely. If he has another noose, he secures a second shark.

The shark catcher now, with one bound from the white, sandy bottom, rises to the surface, in order to assist his

friends in hauling up the fish. The astonished sleepers beneath suddenly find themselves ascending tail first to the surface. Once inside the canoe, a smart blow from an axe between the eyes or on the tail ends its career.

But accidents sometimes happen to the bravest. One of the most successful shark-catchers at Aitutaki was Reubena, whose ancestors had excelled at this perilous sport. Long practice had made him almost amphibious.

One Saturday morning he started out with two companions in a canoe across the placid lagoon to one of the more distant islets. Grasping in his left hand a noose provided for the occasion, he dove down to the entrance of a large submarine cave.

On entering it, Reubena found several sharks lazily resting themselves. In a trice a slip-knot was skilfully passed over the tail of the nearest shark without exciting its ire. The shark, at this critical juncture, moved so that there was not room enough for Reubena to get out.

He now gently stroked the side of the shark, and succeeded in inducing it to move away, so as to permit his exit. This operation is said to be very agreeable to the fish; but if through nervousness the shark be stroked the wrong way, its anger is sure to be excited, and the diver's life would be the certain forfeit.

Reubena was making his escape, when, in his dismay, another large shark came back from feeding in the lagoon, and blocked up the entrance with his unwieldy body. To get out now was impossible, for even Reubena dared not stroke the head of the monster.

The captive fisherman waited, hoping the shark would go farther in, so as to leave the opening free. Unhappily the huge fish did not move. Reubena's agony became intense; seconds seemed to be hours. Was he doomed to perish in a shark cave?

At last the shark passed quietly into the interior, and Reubena was barely able to get out of the cave and rise to the surface. His associates in the canoe, who had become anxious for his safety, seized him by the hair and pulled him in, blood flowing from his ears, eyes, and nostrils.—*Youth's Companion*.

TRUE GENTLEMANLINESS.

True gentlemanliness includes both manliness and gentleness. The real gentleman combines the tenderness of the womanly nature with the strength and nobleness of high manhood. The lad who aspires to be a gentleman must not be content with lifting his cap to a lady, and showing her deference in his words and actions. That is all well, as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. Real gallantry does not limit its show of respect to those who are of the gentler sex; it is as deferential to age, and as keenly alive to the needs of the weaker of either sex, as it is uniformly courteous and polite towards every woman. But it is a very common thing to see a young man quick to rise from his seat in a crowded car and proffer the place to a well-dressed and attractive lady, when he had no thought of offering that seat to an aged gentleman who had been standing before him for a considerable time. His action proves his attention to ladies, but it does not show his gentlemanliness. Parents who would have their sons gentlemanly must teach them that it is quite as important to give deference to age as to sex. The command, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man," was spoken by God Himself before the command had gone forth to be very quick to give your seat to a pretty girl in the horse-cars.—*Sunday-School Times*.

FRETFULNESS.

Fretfulness is one of the most common and grievous faults of ordinary life. "I dare no more fret," said Wesley, "than I dare curse and swear." Nothing more surely and certainly destroys the peace of a family than the causeless, profuse habit of fretting, grumbling, and fault-finding so common in many families.

"Look into the home of a fretful man or woman, and mark the discomfort, the unhappiness, the positive misery they often cause within its sacred enclosures. Notice a fretful man in his business relations—how disagreeable he makes himself and others, and how much he detracts from his own power to act coolly and wisely. See such a man in church—what an amount of friction and trouble he causes, where all should work smoothly and quietly. Besides the rasping and discomfort such a person occasions, the example he sets is most pernicious. Children easily catch the manners of their elders, and many fretful people have no one to blame but themselves if they have worrisome, teasing, disagreeable children."

"Fret not thyself because of evildoers." Put away grumbling and complaining. Look on the bright side, make the best of everything, bridle your temper, rule your own spirit, and possess your soul in patience and in peace.—*Selected*.

HOW THE ALLIGATOR FEEDS.

An alligator's throat is an animated sewer. Everything that lodges in his mouth goes down. He is a lazy dog, and instead of hunting for something to eat, he lets his victuals hunt for him; that is, he lies with his great mouth open, apparently dead, like the possum. Soon a bug crawls into it, then a fly, then several goats, and a colony of mosquitoes. The alligator don't close his jaw yet; he is waiting for a whole drove of things. He does his eating by wholesale. A little later a lizard will cool himself under the shade of the upper jaw. Then a few frogs will hop up to catch the mosquitoes, and goats light on the frogs. Finally, a whole village of insects and reptiles settle down for an afternoon picnic. Then all at once there is an earthquake. The big jaw falls, the alligator slyly blinks one eye, gulps down the entire menagerie, and opens his great front door again for more visitors.

FOURTEEN Missionary Societies are at work in South Africa.