

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

AUGUST 17.

ABSALOM'S DEATH.

2 SAM. 18: 9-17; 24-33.

1. The rebellion of Absalom was at first successful. David escaped from Jerusalem, leaving Absalom in possession. After the incidents recorded in 2 Sam. 15 and 16, David crossed the Jordan and came to Mahanaim. See Genesis 22: 2. Mahanaim had been fixed upon as the royal city by Abner, when he endeavored to perpetrate the lynx-yaw of Saul in the person of Ish-bosheth (2 Sam. 2: 3, 9). Here David settled for the time, several persons providing necessities for him and his friends. 2 Sam. 17: 28, 29. Absalom's army forthwith crossed the Jordan to do battle with David. The battle was fought "in the wood of Ephraim." (2 Sam. 18: 6), called by this name in recollection of the slaughter of the Ephraimites by the Gileadites (Judges 12: 1-6) as Dean Stanley thinks from the location of Ephraim with the trans-Jordanic half tribe of Ammanaim. The slaughter of the battle was a heavy one, the dead in it, "the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David." Absalom himself, escaping upon a mule, was caught by the hair of his head (2 Sam. 18: 9) in the branches of "an oak," under which he passed, the mule leaving him suspended there.

2. In Absalom's death the law of retribution may be seen. He himself was a violent man. He had shown this by following to the death his eldest brother for his shameful crime. His branding of Joab's head-field to compel attention of Joab to his request to secure reconciliation with the king, is another evidence of his violent disposition (2 Sam. 14: 30). The retribution against the king in which the life of David was sought by his son, is a third illustration of this temper. David, when Saul was in his power, refused to stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. Absalom is not restrained by filial duty, or by the fear of the Lord. His death may, therefore, be regarded as being under the Divine Providence, retributive in its character. It may illustrate the teaching of our Divine Master, "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7: 2). Let us remember that the exact natural and providential law of retribution is at work in our own lives. "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul; but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh" (Prov. 11: 17). "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."

3. Absalom's death was a beneficial death. He might have been a blessing to the nation, but his power and position were misused and his death further trouble and grief were averted. The people rejoiced at his death. "If Absalom had lived," said Joab in his expostulation with David, "all we had died this day" (2 Sam. 19: 4). Some deaths are beneficial because great actual benefits arise from the death. The benefit of Absalom's death was in a sense negative in its character; it stayed evil. The benefit of some deaths is positive; they create good. Of Abel it is said, "He being dead yet speaketh." (Heb. 11: 4). "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The words of Caliph meant that the death of Christ would be advantageous in the sense that it would prevent trouble; under Divine control, they were really the strongest proof of the death of Christ would bring positive blessing. They were, in fact, an announcement that many to the announcement. (John 11: 26).

4. And yet, although the people rejoiced, there was one heart stricken with grief. The father poured out his sorrows in touching lament (2 Sam. 18: 33). David was the father first, and afterwards the king. Perhaps, indeed, as in the case of Eli, tenderness restrained too effectively the hand of faithful parental rebuke. His eldest son had been allowed to go unpunished, until Absalom took vengeance upon him. When Absalom rebelled, the heart of David yearned for him, and after Absalom was permitted to return to Jerusalem from banishment he was allowed to do much as he liked in the city. When Absalom came against him at Mahanaim, thoughts of personal safety of his son were far more pressing in the mind of David than hopes of victory or fears of defeat. The lament "Would God I had died for thee," finds its Christian fulfillment in the death of Him who "for our sinful men and for our salvation" became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5: 8).—*Wesleyan from W. M. S. S. Mag.*

CANNED PROVISIONS.

A pamphlet by Dr. J. G. Johnson, of Brooklyn, contains some interesting remarks upon poisoning by canned goods, a class of food which appears to have been on the increase of late years. Many physicians and chemists have looked in the contents of the cans alone for the toxic agent, and sometimes they have found it in fermenting fruits or vegetables, or decomposing meats. But Dr. Johnson shows that there is another source of danger in the manufacture of the cans themselves. He discovered that in many cases it was cast-iron to

fasten on the cap at the top of the can with an amalgam of zinc and tin; that this amalgam was put on with brushes by boys, and the soldering iron then passed around it; that nothing was easier than for some of the muriate of zinc to get inside of the can; and that when there it must become absorbed in the contents, and render the latter extremely poisonous, since a muriate of tin was added to the muriate of zinc by the action of the acid wherever it entered the can. Thus a powerful corrosive poison was produced, and one a quite moderate dose of which would be likely to prove fatal, and in fact has brought many persons to death's door.

The knowledge that the muriate of zinc amalgam is dangerous, however, is really no recent discovery. The State of Maryland has in fact adopted a law prohibiting the use of this amalgam in the canning process, and since it does not seem possible so to guard it that there shall be no danger from its employment, prohibition appears the only certain means of protecting the public. The French Government has taken more pains than any other thus far to surround the canning business with safeguards in the interest of the public. In France the employment of any preparation of lead about the cans is prohibited, and also any cement or amalgam which, though harmless in itself, may, by being subjected to chemical action through contact with the contents of the cans, evolve a poisonous principle. —*N. Y. Tribune.*

USEFUL HINTS

In roasting meat to be salt before putting in the oven, a sack extracts the juice.

Lebig says to put the meat into boiling water, as it keeps the fibres in by rapidly coagulating them on the surface.

An English physician pronounces a judicious vegetable diet, without meat of any kind, a positive cure for rheumatism.

It is said that cold tea is a good fertilizer for house plants, and that occasionally it is a good plan to put some tea grounds or leaves in the earth around the plant roots.

For rice pancakes, take one pint of boiled rice, one pint of flour, a tea-cupful of sweet milk, half tea-cupful of sour milk, one teaspoonful of soda, two eggs, and a piece of butter size of a walnut.

Flowering and seed-bearing naturally exhaust the plants. As soon as the flowers begin to fade they should be removed. If this is done to such annuals as phlox and sweet pea, they will flower twice as long as otherwise, and finer.

For cooking or canning black raspberries need a plentiful supply of water. Also when eaten fresh with sugar a few tea-spoonfuls of water to a saucer of fruit will take away the dry taste, making them much more palatable.

To crystallize grasses, make a strong, boiling hot solution of water and Epsom salts; then draw the bunches of grass through it, and hang up in an airy place to dry. In a short time a very pretty effect will be produced by the crystallization of the salts.

Cut flowers as they begin to fade. The greatest death of the vitality of the plant, as is well known, is the production of seed. When this is prevented there will be a much more certain and perfect bloom. This applies to the rose, geranium, tulip; in fact, all flowers.

For apple jelly, take red skinned apples, wipe clean, and cut into quarters, but do not peel them. To each pound of fruit put three pints of cold water, bring to a boil, then boil rapidly forty minutes. Strain, and to every pint of juice allow one pound of loaf sugar. Return to the pan, and again boil rapidly for thirty minutes.

Cafe au lait is a common beverage among French people. It is made with a quart of clear, strained coffee, a quart of boiling milk, sugar to taste, whipped up with the white of three or four eggs. Rinse the coffee pot with hot water, and pour in the coffee and milk alternately. Cover closely for three or four minutes. Put a spoonful of the whipped and sweetened white of eggs in each cup.

To prevent hay-stacks firing, scatter a few handfuls of common salt between each layer. The salt by absorbing the humidity of the hay, not only prevents its fermentation and consequent heating, but it also adds a salty taste to the forage, which all cattle like, besides, it stimulates the appetite and assists digestion, and so preserves them from many diseases. —*N. Y. Herald.*

Dr. Hunt remarks that farmers are not as healthy as they ought to be. Rheumatism is common among them on account of exposure. Indigestion is also common, and is produced by a sameness of diet—an overplus of one kind of food. They are also beset with malarial diseases on account of a lack of drainage about their homes. The butter and milk business injures the wives. The women suffer more than the men from defective drainage about the house and cellar and from decaying matter in the latter. Keep the cellar dry and clean.

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