

Our Young Folks.

Lies and Lying—A word to the Boys.

"No liar is to be trusted." So, we well remember, ran one of our copy headings in days of old.

Every liar is a burglar, because every lie is an attempt to rob the stock exchange of public confidence.

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This coin is peculiarly made, having a square hole in the centre. They are about the size of our dime pieces, and nearly two-thirds the thickness.

In silver coins they have the five, ten, twenty, fifty cent and one dollar pieces. In gold, the one, two, five, ten, and twenty dollars, which are very pretty coinages indeed.

Next to this come the government stores of paper money, in various denominations, ranging from five cents to one hundred dollars.

This money is made on quite inferior paper to ours, and, from general appearance, will not last like the American money.

It would almost seem as if these Orientals made their currency as they made their language—coined a new piece every time they were puzzled to "make change."

On Commentators. In a recently published volume entitled "Commenting on Commentators," Mr. Spurgeon, in his own original way, dashes off some thoughts which may be found of value, especially to young ministers.

He reckons Matthew Henry "first among the might." "He is most pious and pithy, sound and sensible, suggestive and sober, terse and trustworthy; glittering in metaphors, rich in analogies, overflowing with illustrations, superabundant in reflections; he sees right through a text directly; apparently he is not critical, but he quietly gives the result of an accurate critical knowledge of the original fully up to the best critics of his time."

He thinks almost equally well of John Calvin. Even Arminius himself is quoted as saying: "Next to the perusal of the Scriptures, I exhort my pupils to peruse Calvin's Commentaries! for I affirm that he excels beyond comparison in the interpretation of Scripture, and that his commentaries ought to be more highly valued than all that is handed down to us by the Library of the Fathers."

Poole's "Annotations" are highly praised: "Poole is not so pithy and witty by far as Matthew Henry, but he is perhaps more accurate, less a commentator, and more an expositor, so profoundly learned as to be able to give results without a display of his intellectual crockery."

Of Bishop Hall's "Contemplations," Spurgeon exclaims: "What wit! what sound sense! what concealed learning! His style is as pithy and witty as that of Thomas Fuller, and it has a sacred unction about it to which Fuller has no pretension."

Thomas Scott is spoken of as the expositor of Evangelical Episcopians, even as Adam Clarke is the prophet of the Wesleyans, "but to me he has seldom given a thought."

Bengel's "Gnomon" of the New Testament is the scholar's delight, unrivalled in felicitous brevity, combined with what seldom accompanies that excellence, namely, perspicuity, " terse, weighty, and suggestive, he condenses more matter into a line than can be extracted from pages of other writers." Alford is praised for scholarship, judgment, and candor, "but you will not look here for any spirituality of thought or tenderness of feeling."

"Fall not," he says, "to be expert in the use of your concordance. Every day I live I thank God more and more for that poor half-crazy Alexander Cruden." On the subject of "commenting," he urges his students among other things to avoid pretension; to use their judgment more than their fancy; not to be carried away with "new meanings;" and not needlessly to amend our authorized version, and above all, "give the sense."

For the general run of preachers Barnes on the Psalms is probably the best commentary extant. Cowley's "Psalms" might be reprinted in England "with the probability of a large sale."

Death. We die daily. With each new section of our moral history we give up something that belonged to the section preceding. We are losing continually a portion of our being. We suffer ceaseless dissolutions. Let the mature man compare himself with the budding boy, and see how much of death he has already experienced.

How much of what he was has perished in him and from him, never to be restored! Where now is the careless mirth that lit up the boyish eye? where the sunny peace or gushing joy of the boyish breast? Where the boundless expectation, the implicit faith, the indomitable hope, the buoyant nature, the unshadowed soul, the exuberant life? Is not the loss of these as truly death as the putting off of the fleshy tabernacle? Is it not as much dying to lose the splendor and joy of our young years, as it is to be divested of our morality? The veteran, however blest with "that which should accompany old age," looks back upon his youth as a paradise lost, never in this world to be regained.

O man! that from thy fair and shining youth Age might but take the things youth needed not! This ceaseless death would make existence intolerable, were it not balanced and compensated by ceaseless new births. The true soul gains as fast, or faster than it loses. Life is constant acquisition as well as constant waste, a series of resurrections as well as deaths. If we die daily, we are also renewed day by day. If we lose in buoyancy, we gain in earnestness; if we lose in imagination, we gain in experience; if we lose in freshness, we gain in weight; if we lose in fervour, we gain in wisdom; if we lose in enjoyment, it is to be hoped we gain in patience. If we gradually die to the world, it is to be hoped that we more and more live unto God.—Rev. W. G. T. Shedd, D.D.

There are no sins we can be tempted to commit, but we shall find a greater satisfaction in resisting than in committing them. HOLD fast Christ, but take His cross and Himself, cheerfully; Christ and His cross are not separable in this life, however they part at heaven's door.

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON XLIII.

SIMON THE BORDERER.

Oct. 22, 1876.

Acts viii. 1-25.

COMMIT TO MEMORY.—vs. 20-23, PARALLEL PASSAGES.—John iv. 39-41; Mark xvi. 17.

SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With v. 5, read Acts vi. 5; with vs. 6-8, read Act xvi. 34; with vs. 9-18, read Acts xiii. 6; with v. 14, read Luke x. 1; with vs. 16-17, compare Acts xix. 2-6; with vs. 18-20, read Matt. x. 8, and compare 2 Kings v. 16; with vs. 21-23, read Heb. xii. 15; with v. 24, compare Gen. xx. 7, 17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Thy heart is not right in the sight of God.—Acts viii. 21.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—"The conscience of the wicked is defiled."

While this book is called the "Acts of the Apostles," it gives not a connected history of them all, but specimens of the manner in which the Church of Christ was set up: the apostle of the circumcision first, and then the apostle of the Gentiles, being the principal figures in it.

The lesson of to-day illustrates (v. 5) the career of Philip; and while one man stands out so prominently in the narrative that his name is given to the lesson, there are really several distinct topics which we shall take in order.

PHILIP'S REFORMATION IN SAMARIA (vs. 5-8). Philip was not of the apostles (they remained in Jerusalem, v. 1.) but the deacon (Acts vi. 8). (See Acts xxi. 8.) He had not been chosen at first to preach; but he had ample authority given him "to do the work of an evangelist" (v. 26).

We are not to regard the city of Samaria as the old and famous capital; notwithstanding under this name at the time of the apostles, but a city of the province or district of Samaria—belonging to the Samaritans. They are naturally brought into the history at this point, as they stood between Jews and Gentiles. They had been for the most part heathen, but had conformed to the Jewish ritual, and become mixed in some degree with a portion of the Jews. Jesus had gathered fruit among them (John iv. 39) and promised more; the fulfilment of the promise is here begun (John iv. 39-41). Indeed, some think Sychar, or Sichem, the city, since Philip is not regarded as bringing some new thing to the people. The Samaritans looked for a coming prophet. To his preaching Christ—an example to all preachers—the people, without distinction of class, applied themselves heartily and generally, influenced in no small degree by the miracles which (a) gained respectful attention, (b) did good to the sufferers relieved, and (c) represented the humane, gentle, and merciful character of that Gospel whose Divine origin (d) they undeniably attested.

Prominent among these miracles were the deliverances of sufferers from fallen spirits, producing in some cases diseases (and hence called by names of diseases), and in all, misery. These facts appearing in the time of our Lord and His apostles, are to be explained by His bringing to light hidden and dark things, and by Satan, the leader of these fallen beings, being permitted to bring forth all his forces in this great conflict with the seed of the woman. But when we have said this much, we must admit that much mystery of necessity hangs over the subject, from its very nature, and that mystery we need not try to penetrate. (See John x. 36, and Luke x. 17, 18; Mark v. 7.) The demons could utter sounds through human organs, but in an unnatural way; and they showed their feelings against the power that subdued them by "crying out." (See Mark i. 26; Luke iv. 41.) It is among the evidences, that human diseases is connected with sin; that the demons could inflit it; and that healing miraculous power so often cured it.

The work of Philip filled the city with joy—as it well might. A new light, a new hope, a new peace, a new power, appeared among the people. (See Isa. ix. 8.) The preaching of Christ, believed, will always destroy the works of the devil, and bring great joy.

THE GAIN (vs. 9-13). As an illustration of the great popular feeling, a case is given; and also because something further came of it that required to be told. Just as a certain element of scientific fact is covered over with a great mass of imposture and deception in spiritualism, so some real knowledge possessed by the "wise men" of the East was overlaid with the much sordid and money-making art called sorcery; and its professors acquired power and money by trading on the ignorance of the people. Simon was one of these, astonishing the people ("bewitched") and announcing himself as "some great one." He was probably making a tour of the province, and had just reached this particular city. He had great success, holding himself out, and being received as, clothed with divine power, Heathenism readily accepted such ideas. (See Acts xiv. 11.) He fascinated, amazed them by his displays of power, which to them appeared supernatural (v. 11).

But (v. 12) when these persons who had been taken up with the spurious, believed in the things of God (Acts i. 8), and the name of Jesus, who is the true "power of God" (v. 10), they owned him as Saviour and Lord; and, we are left to infer, dropped their interests in the sorcerer and his performances. Both men and women were baptised—a distinction from the Jewish circumcision important enough to be noted. Strange to say, the leader succumbed to the new doctrine, avowed his reception of it, and professing like the rest, was baptized like the rest. The probability is that he regarded this as a new and more effective mystery than his own, desired to be initiated, and to use it, and so keep close by Philip, studying his miracles and signs, and trying to find out "how he did them." Such pieces of subtle selfishness are not without parallel in modern Christian work. The effect on him is identically the same that he produced on his admirers, though the English version does not bring it out, he "wondered"—same word as bewitched, in vs. 9 and 11.

THE DELEGATION FROM JERUSALEM (vs. 14-17). There was joy also in Jerusalem among the apostles, when they heard that the Samaritans had received the Word of the Lord. It was their duty to give aid, to

strengthen the hands of every true laborer, to direct the work, to embrace every opportunity offered. So they sent (after the Lord's plan of two and two, Mark vi. 7), Peter and John. Peter is sent, and makes no protest or claim of superiority. He did not act as a pope. They came to aid in the work, and probably report upon it to the rest. Meantime they prayed for, and the people received, the Holy Ghost. Their praying showed that they had no inherent power; for, while the people had been baptized, no such supernatural results in them had followed as at Jerusalem (Acts xi. 17), and as plainly followed their lying on of hands (v. 17), so that Simon and others could see and be sure of it. There is nothing unreasonable in the idea of the apostles having stronger faith, or greater power from Christ than Philip had received.

THE DETECTION OF A HYPOCRITE (vs. 18-25). Simon, attentively watching this new thing (v. 18), saw how it might serve his ends, and judging of the apostles by himself, he made an offer of money for the right or power to confer this "Holy Ghost," or whatever it was—so he heard them call it—that produced obvious supernatural effects (v. 19). He wished, in fact, to buy apostolic miraculous power. (Hence, in a loose way, "simony" has come to mean buying spiritual position with money.)

Peter's sentence on him (v. 20), like that of Ananias, is not the expression of an angry personal wish, but the just verdict of the Almighty whose grace is thus insulted, and is qualified only by the advice of v. 22. His gifts are not bought with money. It is an insult to Him and to his servants to assume that they are, and to be indignantly resented. This is the force of the words, "Thy money perish," &c. But the offer disclosed the state of mind (v. 21), without the least true apprehension of grace, of God's nature, and with no higher thought than his own advancements in life. He showed that he had no true standing as a believer before God. A child of God would, as by an instinct, feel the wrong of such a course.

Yet (v. 22) is not his sin unpardonable. He is exhorted to prayer for pardon, and some hope of forgiveness is held out to him. For it is not this one sin he needs to confess, but an entirely unrenewed nature—expressed in strong Oriental language. He is enough impressed to ask the apostles' prayer on his behalf, but that proves nothing; and we cannot tell anything certain of his subsequent career. Meantime the apostles (v. 25), preaching the Word as they went, returned to Jerusalem.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.—The depression—Philip—his office—field of labor—mode of proceeding—results—Simon—his calling—his course—his probable feeling—the apostles' delegation—its object—the prayer—its results—the impression on Simon—his offer—its reception—his sin—the exhortation to him and his reply—the course of Peter and John.

The more Prayer, the more Power. "There cannot be a prayerless teacher," said a friend the other day. "Perhaps not," was the reply; "but are we habitually prayerful? do we make prayer for our classes a practice? is it not rather with the majority of us that our prayers are fitful, uttered under occasional impulses of duty, not forming an essential part of daily life and habit?" My friend could not deny the truth implied. Brethren, the majority of us do possess an adequate sense of the power and efficacy of prayer. We have no deep heart-conviction of the truth of God's promises in relation to it. We assign to it a lower place than God assigns to it, and than its nature demands.

We have not the habit of prayer. We might be as eloquent as Paul, enthusiastic as Peter, loving as John; our gifts might be brilliant, even enviable, but they would issue in no adequate spiritual results. Paul planted, Apollus watered, but God gave the increase, and that in answer to prayer. We pray because we ought; but to obtain the blessing we must have confidence, trust in prayer as a real power; we must have the unwrought belief that it is the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man that availeth much; otherwise let us not think that we shall receive anything of the Lord.

Fellow-teachers, if prayer be anything to us in our work, it is the very life of it. If our teaching is to have any spiritual power, if there is to be a Divine force in our words, we must have more prayer; for by this weapon only are Apollyons to be defeated, if our spiritual strength is to be reinforced, our words sharpened and weighted for their work, our minds rightly affected as teachers, and the minds and hearts of our children, as learners, to be opened that they may attend to the things spoken unto them.

Can we expect spiritual health or prosperity if we restrain prayer? there will neither be vigor nor cheerfulness in our teaching, no directness nor force of appeal. For our own spiritual life, strength, progress, and joy, there must be a continuance in prayer. If it be the work of the Lord to fill or even to touch the soul with grace, we must ask Him for it.

A ministerial friend once, in addressing some teachers on this subject, remarked, "Prayer imparts an air of power and influence of a very subtle and authoritative character, which is felt by the scholars, though perhaps not understood by them. Devoutness in a teacher's spirit impresses the children far more than greatness of knowledge or smartness of speech. Devoutness gives such seriousness to the intercourse of the teacher with his class as to subdue and calm the unruly, even if it does not completely overawe. To have been much in communion with God adds also to this seriousness such sweetness of spirit, that, like Moses when he descended from communion with God in the mount, it doth make the face to shine.

As a rule, too, they who most enter into their closet to pray to their Father in secret will most love the associated prayer of the family, the prayer meeting, and the Sunday school. There is a comprehensiveness in the true spirit of prayer, which brings into a kind of unity every exercise of it. The prayer which is sweet to the spirit when alone is sweet also amongst kindred spirits; and he who relies upon the confident belief of the efficacy of prayer

through the intercession of Jesus Christ, and the power of His atoning sacrifice, makes every possible use of it, because he feels that every true prayer is a power, and the more prayer the more power; the more prayer the more success; the more prayer the more light; the more prayer the more joy; in a word, the more prayer the more Christ.

A call to united prayer in all lands has just been sounded. It is needed. We simply say, remember the dates (Oct. 22 and 23); carry out the suggestions for the observance of these days,—private prayer for your scholars on Sunday and Monday mornings between seven and eight o'clock; meet your co-workers for prayer before the opening of the morning school; be at the gathering of the whole school for prayer in the afternoon; join in the prayers and thanksgivings before or after the evening service as may be arranged; and be in your place at the public prayer meeting on the Monday evening, when Sunday school work will form the theme for supplications and addresses.

Feeling the value of private, social, public, and united prayer, let us pray. Who shall measure the weight of influence which they bring to the work who are "instant in prayer?" Let us pray more, dear fellow-workers. Of all the time we spend on earth, that will bear best the weight of prayer is that which we devote to prayer. And of all regrets hereafter, perhaps the most pungent and overwhelming to a teacher of little prayer will be, "How insignificant the time I have spent in prayer! How much more useful I might have been, how many more might I have led to Christ of the lambs committed to my care, if I had been more prayerful, and had not suffered myself so much and so often to restrain prayer before God!"

Let us pray for a blessing upon the whole Sunday school world. May the reply to this plenary of prayer be the outpouring of the Divine influence in such copiousness upon the teachers and the taught, that both they that sow and those that reap shall rejoice together.

"The Habitations of Cruelty." The Rev. C. De Heer, of Corisco, West Africa, has been permitted to see great changes for the better at his missionary station, Alongo, but the power of witchcraft is not yet overcome. Under date of May 13th, Mr. De Heer speaks of recent cases of cruelty—from which happily there was deliverance. Similar cases, ending in death, are still met with among the heathen tribes of Africa. When the Spirit of God raises up a standard among the heathen, then the wary Devil rouses himself to renewed and active opposition. So we have found in the midst of the good work of grace that has been granted to us here, There has been a great amount of illness on the island recently, and the superstition of the people has been much aroused. In one instance a young man (whose brother had been put to death some years ago on a charge of witchcraft) was accused, caught, and confined, but by strenuous exertion I succeeded in freeing him. About three weeks ago the sub-governor under the Spanish fell very ill. He immediately fixed upon two of his slaves as the cause of his illness, the one on the simple ground that on a recent return from a trade journey he had asked him for tobacco. Through my presence and influence, he was prevented from killing them outright; but I learned that after cruel beating, of which their scars bear abundant testimony, he had banished them to L'eva, a small uninhabited island, to starve them to death. Impelled by the desperation which hunger impels, the man swam the distance between the two islands, and placed himself again at the mercy of his enemies. I apostulated and begged the man to give them to me, to which he consented on condition that I would send them from the island, terms to which I made no objection, as I well knew they would not be safe here. The man was sent, bound tightly and cruelly. The woman I sent for with a canoe, and found her much reduced by hunger and exposure. She had spent days and nights in terror, in her weakness hearing in imagination again and again the cries and shouts of her enemies, come, as she thought, to kill her, hiding herself in the bush, and coming out cautiously to find herself still alone. It was touching to hear her relate how, on the day help arrived, she had lifted up her bleeding hands and cried to her Maker to send her some help before it was too late. When my men came with food, she could scarcely swallow anything. She had been eating a kind of soft stone. But they got her into the canoe, and by kind nursing she is slowly recovering. I shall send her to brother Bushnell at Gaboon, who, I know, will second my efforts to save her."

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