

would reach them for profit. Yet many do nothing but talk or clip extracts from printed helps for readings. Such must fall to do lasting work that will be of practical advantage in coming days. And while we are considering these matters, may I not ask, "Do you depend on The Era for your treatment of the weekly topic?" If so, you are making another mistake. Our columns are suggestive only. It is our aim to give you material; but not to make your plan or outline. Do that yourself. We have known leaders who depended entirely on printed matter, and read it piecemeal. Surely this is not the best way? Get all the help you can; but let your plan be your own, and encourage in every way original treatment by your leaders and juniors in meeting.)

February 1.—"Decide to-day."—Hebrews 3, 7-13.

Decision to serve God is our "duty." This duty of decision comes to us "daily"—"to-day." It should be a pleasure and a joy to us—"delight." Such daily decision calls for "earnestness" in making up our minds, and for "energy" in working out our resolve. Only when we have deep "conviction" of duty and make daily "consecration" will our decision be "complete." The "importance" of life thus is shown in the Scripture lesson. The Israelites rejected and died. What is this decision? What is our consecration for? "Study" and "service" are our occupations, and in such we are "safe." There is no safety away from God. But if our daily decision is going to be sincere, it must be "intelligent." We must know what we are doing and why we do it. It is our "reasonable service." And if it is intelligent, it will be a daily call to "industry." Jesus said, "I must work . . . while it is called to-day." Such an industrious life means daily "obedience," and this obedience is our "own"—each one for himself, doing the will of God from the heart. It is absolutely "necessary" to make daily decisions because our "need" is daily. Every day brings its temptations, its work, its study. So "to-day if ye will hear" . . . etc. Hence step by step, in easy and familiar conversation you have worked out—

- Duty. Daily. Delight.
- Earnestness. Energy.
- Conviction. Consecration. Complete.
- Importance.
- Study. Service. Safety.
- Intelligent. Industry.
- Obedience. Own.
- Necessary. Need.

(Such treatment is easy, intelligible to the youngest, comprehensive enough for the oldest, and within the ability of any superintendent.) Having it well worked out in your mind, illustrating each successive step, and writing each in turn on the board, you cannot possibly have a dull or profitless meeting.)

February 8.—"What Bible story I like best and why."—Ex. 2, 9-10.

Make this a story-telling meeting. A good way will be to appoint a number of your members to prepare the stories ahead. They may be written in the form of brief papers (say 500 words at most) and read in the meeting. It will add interest if the papers are unsigned and handed in to the superintendent at the opening of the meeting. Let them be read in turn (not necessarily by the writer) and the papers of the readings let a vote be taken as to which is the best told story. At the conclusion, let the superintendent review the "why" of each, impressing the teaching in every case. By careful planning ahead (two weeks are none too much) you may have a most delightful meeting, given by the juniors themselves.

A Merry Heart.

"A MERRY HEART DOETH GOOD LIKE A MEDICINE."

(A short sermon by old Merry.)

Instead of giving you long heads to my discourse, I shall give you short tales. A merry heart is sunshine—a gift of life—the music of the waves—a gift to some, an acquisition to others. It does not belong to the rich more than to the poor, to the clever more than to the dull. It is not the sole property of youth or age. It is not a senseless plant that dies with a breath; it is not an oak that no wind can uproot. It is not a loud or boisterous thing that cannot be tamed; it is not a coy and delicate thing that hides itself like the violet. It is not a thing for ornament, but for use; it is not a creature of circumstances, nor a lord of circumstances. Then what is it?

1. A merry heart is a fairy. The snow was blocking up a doorway, and the poor old woman who lived in the house was trying to roll it away with her poor sticks of skin and bone which represented arms, and couldn't. A fairy descended to the spot, and in short time the heap was removed, and the old woman made her way into the cottage. The fire wouldn't light, the wood was damp, and the smoke beat down the chimney. The candle spluttered, and the wind played draughts with every board in the cottage. But the fairy came into the room, touched with a magic wand the embers on the hearth, caught the thief in the candle and banished him into oblivion, set a screen against the intruding winds, and then threw its magic spell on the old woman, so that her groans were turned into laughter, and her sighs into smiles. Who was the fairy? A merry-hearted boy. His coat was as thin as a sheet, his trousers as ragged as a cochon-china fowl; he knew no book-keeping, the village was his world, and the cottage was his home. But he was a musician; he whistled lively tunes, and though his teeth chattered as he did it on that particular night, it added to the pleasure, for he whistled it as "an accomplishment on the bones;" he was an artist, for a few touches of his hand would make that old hut picturesque; he was an orator, for he had the art of saying happy things in a happy way; he was a preacher, for his life was a sermon on contentment. And the merry heart of that boy made the cottage happier than many a palace, and the life of his old mother brighter and more cheerful than the life of many a fine lady, and converted his own life of toil and penury into a pleasant and good thing, which he was content and thankful to live for.

2. A merry heart is a monarch. A king sat on his throne, around him were gathered his court, and thus he spoke: "Hear, O ye people, I make a decree! Certain foreigners have come to this realm, wearing different dresses, speaking different tongues, and addicted to different habits from our own; they have come as ambassadors from many powers to overthrow the peace of the State. And unless they agree to learn our language, to wear our dress, and adopt our habits, it will be necessary for the peace of our country to take the sword, or, in the event of resistance, to proclaim war against them. Go forth, then, my people, and charm these foreigners into allegiance; bring them to our court, and fascinate them with its attractions; let them be not ready to take the oath of allegiance and accept the freedom of our city, we will drive them forth to their own countries." So spake the king, and speedily his people set to work. Who were they? A merry heart and his court. These foreigners were Ill-temper, Envy, Hatred, Malice, Uncharitableness, and other representatives of great powers,

come on a secret embassy to destroy the brightness of that boy's happy, sunny world. And if the merry heart is not the monarch of the life, and if the monarchy is not despotic, if foreign powers are allowed to come in and to rule in the State, depend upon it, insurrection and defeat will be the result. How doth a merry heart do good like medicine? That poor old man, bent down with age, and his hands trembling on the stick, shall tell you. "Christmas threatened to be a dull day to me. I remembered the time when my good missus used to be here, and that children all the same, and who with mistletoe and music, charades and blind man's buff, mixed pies and plum pudding, we used to have merry times of it. But I was all alone, and sad-hearted as could be, when who should come in but the Floss and Harry. Bless their hearts! They ran about, and sang, and capered, and played hide-and-seek with my snuff-box, and kissed me under the mistletoe after each game. Thus the day which had begun with sighs ended with smiles, and I was thankful to be even a living old man."

Look in at that home where no merry heart dwells. See the mother sitting down by the fire with her work in her lap, and her hair all the same, and smiles, settled into a grim melancholy. See those two children at the table, one a boy with a scowl on his face, as he hides his puzzle behind a book stood on end so that his sister shall not see him put it together. Hear the sharp, pettish questions, and the cold, chilly answers; see the faces without any soul in them, and the games without any life; listen to the voices without any music; feel the home without sunshine, and tell me if a merry heart would not do good like a medicine?

And now in conclusion, I wish to apply my subject: To ensure a merry heart, the heart must be in the right place. It must be attended by a conscience void of offence, by good-will, contentment, and love. It must live in an atmosphere free from the poison of meanness, cowardice, dishonesty, untruth, and spleen. It must live in the pure sunshine of life, away from the clouds of remorse, suspicion, and temper. It must have plenty of exercise, plenty of free play for itself, and it must always be held in bounds by wisdom. Then it will be the joy of childhood and of age; the first thing in life to develop, and the last to decay.

As She Understood It.

There's a three-year-old New Jersey girl who belongs to an Episcopalian family. The first time she went to church she came home and criticized the music.

"It was very bad," she said.

"How do you know?" asked her mother.

"Because all the people said so."

"But they didn't, Kittle," urged the mother.

"Yes they did, too, mamma. Didn't I hear 'em keep saying, 'Lord have mercy on us miserable singers?'"

On another occasion she startled the family by announcing that Episcopallians were people who always did what they oughtn't to do, and that those things they ought to do.—Washington Star.

Tommy was a little rogue, whom his mother had hard work to manage. Their house in the country was raised a few feet from the ground, and Tommy, to escape a well deserved whipping, ran from his mother an ample distance under the house. Presently the father came home, and hearing where the boy had taken refuge, crept under to bring him out. As he approached on his hands and knees, Tommy asked, "Is she after you, too?"