

## BOOKS AND MAGAZINES.

## St. Nicholas.

New York: Scribner &amp; Co.

The February number of St. Nicholas contains abundant evidence that the conductors of this magazine do not flag in their efforts to cater for the amusement and instruction of the young. Julian Hawthorne's fairy tale "Rumpty-Dudget's Tower," Professor Jordan's lively article "A Story of Stone," and the sparkling little poem "The Shining Little House," are some of the special attractions of the number.

## Sunday Afternoon.

The February number of "Sunday Afternoon" contains, as this magazine always does, a large quantity of fiction. This fiction is of a very lively order in style and language, but its teaching and tendency are exceptionally good. Much of it seems to be written by men and women who are Christians of some experience. Besides the stories, the present number contains several articles which will inevitably be skipped by confirmed fiction-readers, but will furnish acceptable food for mind of a somewhat more thoughtful class. The subject of one of these articles is "A Conventional Conscience," and the writer of it is of the opinion that *vox populi* is not exactly what it has been called. The article on "Ministers and Hobbies" is evidently the work of a man of large and long experience in life, whose mind has retained all its keenness and vigour. The writer of the paper on "What is Conscience?" seems to be somewhat of a metaphysician and is pretty successful in his attempts at definition; but he afterwards wanders off in search of a perfect standard of morality, and falls foul of the Bible which he does not know half as well as he knows metaphysics. He cannot find any "perfect standard of morality" in the Old Testament. Instead of that he finds in it "a compromise with actual immorality." In the New Testament, however, he finds "a much higher standard," though he does not seem to be quite prepared to call even that perfect. It is expressed in what he appears to regard as two original commands given by the Saviour, viz.: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself," and "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." We hope there are many Sabbath school children who could point out to him that the former of these commands contains the latter, and that it is to be found in the Old Testament, from which the Saviour was quoting when he used the words. They could also tell him that it is a perfect standard of morality. This writer himself makes a reluctant admission to this effect when he says that it "would seem to contain, in a pregnant way, a standard of absolute morality, if only finite and fallible man could always infallibly apply it. But it is so pregnant, it involves such countless applications, and raises such countless queries as to whether it is applicable at all, and if so, how it is to be applied, that mankind on their present plane of character and intelligence, can hardly be expected to apply it infallibly." The "application" of the two great principles in question, namely, supreme love to God, and love to our fellow-man commensurate with the love of self, is to be found in the Moral Law given to us in the Old Testament, and more familiarly known as "the ten commandments." This is something that some modern magazine writers altogether ignore, or regard merely as a Jewish institution, now abrogated; nevertheless, it covers the whole moral ground, when taken as bearing not only upon action but upon word and thought, and it is applicable to man in all ages and in all countries. We suppose the writer of the article which we are now noticing would be very much surprised to find out after thorough examination, that it is impossible to perform a single good action without in so doing rendering obedience to some one of the ten commandments either in the letter or in the spirit; and that, on the other hand, every neglect of duty, every evil action, or word or thought, is a breach of some part of the same much despised code.

THE Protestant movement in France appears to be gaining ground rapidly. The population of the country is about 36,000,000, of whom 1,000,000 are Protestants and the remainder are reckoned as Catholics, though a great majority are said by Protestants to be wanting in religious belief. Within the past year a decided movement towards Protestantism has been reported from many parts of the country.

## MODERN TEKAITES.

Next unto them the Tekaites repared; but their nobles put not their necks to the work.—NHEMIAH III. 5.

We are forbidden to speak evil of dignities, or we should say some noblemen are very mean men.

It is mean to evade a duty we hold in common with others. What is alike the duty of all, should be felt to be the duty of each. Mean men are often developed when they are under joint obligation with others.

A charge is made in the text against *certain noble-men*. Who were they?

Some men are noble by hereditary estate, and title, heraldic crest, and shield; while others are Nature's noblemen, born with high aspirations, to do great, and noble deeds, born to forget themselves, and in a life of self-sacrifice, to aim only at the happiness of others.

These nobles of the Tekaites were probably nobles by descent, some of the leading families of their tribe.

These men are handed down to us as having evaded their honest share of the work, while they enjoyed a full share of the benefit.

Now, in every church are good and holy men, who do much less of church work than others, and who yet do more than their share. A penniless widow, in giving two mites, may give her all, and thus give more than they who give largely from their abundance, and yet luxuriate on a large surplus.

All honour to the self-denying poor who do what they can.

The Tekaites nobility, however, did not put their necks to the work. The wall had to be built; they were quite willing to let who would build it, like a balky horse, who hangs back, and lets its willing companion pull the load, and drag him too. It would seem there have been men of this stamp aforesaid, and the race has not died out to-day. Some of them are in every church, and are commonly developed when there is work to be done, like some horses who only balk when it comes to the pull.

It is not always an evidence that a horse is balky when he shrinks from the collar; his shoulder may be galled, or there may be some other cause. So there may be just reasons for a church member refusing to put his neck to the work. But those of the Tekaites nobility may be known by their use of the word "they," and "them," and "theirs," instead of "we," and "us," and "ours," when speaking of the church and church work. They may be known further, by their various methods of avoiding duty. Sometimes they object to improvements, and the doing of anything that involves labour, or responsibility; then they decline work, because they did not vote for the object. Others, of the Tekaites breed, will raise no objection to any scheme requiring money. They simply get out of the way when the work is to be done, or responsibility assumed.

The Tekaites nobles knew the wall would be built, and that they would enjoy the protection it afforded. They were quite willing that somebody should build it, but not they.

So, in the churches, there are usually some who do not like your way of raising money, or your time for raising it; they leave you to pay the church debt, and do the church work, but they will look on and find fault. The Tekaites will not work, and they disapprove of all ways of raising money for religious objects. They do not like to be asked for subscriptions. They do not approve of the meetings. They disapprove of bazaars. They think socials are a nuisance. Appeals from the pulpit are clap-traps which they hate. Personal appeals are a worry. And collections should not, they say, be made on the Sabbath. They believe in *faith* like Muller's, which never gets anything from Tekaites nobles. They like any method that will afford them the opportunity of slipping out of church work, and church responsibility. Anything to save their own necks.

But, as Christianity from its inception by Jesus Christ, till the present time, has consisted in self-denial, and self-sacrifice, for the good of others, it is a fair inference, that they who will not put their necks to the work of their Lord have no interest in Him, and none of His Spirit; and, if any man has not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

THERE are men who no more grasp the truth they seem to hold than the sparrow grasps the message passing through the electric wire on which it perches.—Norman Macleod.

## WORDS OF THE WISE.

NOTHING can be politically right which is morally wrong.—Daniel O'Connell.

SEEMING difficulties generally vanish before faith, prayer, and perseverance.

IF Christ laid down His life for us, is it a great thing for us to lay down our glass for the brethren?—Rev. W. M. Taylor, D.D.

FAITH and works are as necessary to the spiritual life of a Christian as soul and body are to our life as men, for faith is the soul of religion and works the body.—Colton.

I RENEW daily my covenant to become altogether Christ's, and to watch every moment, that I may not lose one opportunity of doing good to the souls of men.—Mrs. Fletcher.

"THU Lord loveth a cheerful giver;" but there's no use chucking a copper cent into the contribution box loud enough to make the folks on the back seat think the communion service has tumbled off the altar.—Argonaut.

I HAVE never been able to discover that a man is at all the worse for being attacked. One foolish line of his own does him more harm than the ablest pamphlets against him by other people.—Macaulay.

HE that knows how to pray has the secret of support in trouble, and of relief from anxiety; the power of soothing in every care, and filling the soul with entire trust, and confidence for the future.—William Jay.

CHRISTIAN faith is a grand cathedral with divinely pictured windows. Standing without, you see no glory nor can possibly imagine any; standing within, every ray of light reveals a harmony of unspeakable splendor.

CHEMISTS tell us that a single grain of the substance called iodine will impart color to several thousand times its weight of water. It is so in higher things—one companion, one book, one habit, may affect the whole of life and character.

WHAT a marvellous salvation is this! Christ takes a worm of the dust and transforms it into an angel; a black and deformed thing, and makes it matchless in glory, peerless in beauty, and fit to be the companion of seraphim! Oh, my soul, stand and admire this blessed truth of salvation by Christ.—Spurgeon.

A SKEPTICAL young collegian confronted an old Quaker with a statement that he did not believe in the Bible. Said the Quaker, "Does thee believe in France?" "Yes; for though I have not seen it, I have seen others that have. Besides, there is plenty of corroborative proof that such a country does exist." "Then thee will not believe anything thee or others have not seen?" "No, to be sure I won't." "Did thee ever see thine own brains?" "No." "Ever see anybody that did?" "No." "Does thee believe thee has any?"

As the tremulous needle, however easily it may be affected by foreign influences, never ceases to vibrate till it finds rest in the centre of attraction, so the sensitive soul of the Christian, too easily disturbed by external forces, finds no rest but in God. If for a moment the enemy is permitted to harass with accusations of guilt, in him it finds pardon and peace. In weakness it turns to Him for strength; in darkness, for light; in trials, for direction. Under all circumstances, it never fails to find in God an all-sufficient and sustaining portion.

It should be pointed out with continual earnestness that the essence of lying is in deception, not in words; a lie may be told by silence, by equivocation, by the accent on a syllable, by a glance of the eye attaching a peculiar significance to a sentence; and all these kinds of lies are worse and baser by many degrees than a lie plainly worded; so that no form of blinded conscience is so far sunk as that which comforts itself for having deceived, because the deception was by gesture or silence instead of utterance, and finally, according to Tennyson's trenchant line, "A lie which is half a truth is ever the worst of lies.—Ruskin.

WHATEVER you try to do in life, try with all your heart to do it well; whatever you devote yourself to, devote yourself to it completely. In great aims and small, be thoroughly in earnest. Never believe it possible that any natural or improved ability can claim immunity from the companionship of the steady, plain, hard-working qualities, and hope to gain its end. There is no such thing as fulfilment on this earth. Some happy talent and some fortunate opportunity may form the two happy sides of the ladder on which some men mount, but the rounds of that ladder must be made of material to stand wear and tear; and there is no substitute for thorough-going, ardent, sincere earnestness. Never put the hand to anything on which you cannot throw your whole self; never affect depreciation of your work, whatever it is. These you will find golden rules.—Waverly Magazine.

WHAT is sin in its nature? Sin is the violation of God's law, and yet to our blinded eyes sin still remains unseen. Would that we could describe sin, but we cannot. Our own vision is too dim to see more than barely its outlines, and our pen too feeble to portray it. Decency and shame are unknown to it. It unblushingly defies and insults the infinite One. It remorselessly treads in the mire man made in the image of God. There is not a virtue it does not despoil, nor a blessing it does not despise. It enters our dwellings and smites with moral leprosy the holiest things. It impregnates with its virus the little child, and sends the youth abroad to work ruin wherever he goes. There is nothing so sacred in heaven that it will not menace it, nor is there anything on earth so pure and beautiful as to find protection against its assaults and insults. Who can number the groans it has extorted from man, or the tears it has made to flow? It has made earth to travail with pain, and to bring forth sorrow. Evil only has sin produced. But so insinuating is sin, and so open to its approaches is our fallen nature, that though man's spirit may be quickened by a touch of the Divine, yet tabernacled in the flesh, he is intoxicated and defiled by it.—The Sabbath Recorder.