

Our Young Folks.

Brave Little Florencia.
A TRUE STORY OF MEXICAN LIFE.

Florencia Tomayo is a brave girl—a brave girl, and only thirteen years old. She lives in a country where there are no schools, and has not the benefit of such instruction, nor the enjoyment of such pleasant surroundings as the children of this country possess. She is an orphan, and lives with her mother in a poor little village in Mexico called Guantla Morelos. Yet beneath her dark skin she has a heart full of sympathy; and despite her surroundings and an uncultivated life, she is truly a noble little girl. She is bright and intelligent, quick to understand, and just such a companion as you would like to have join you in a game of romps. She knows as little about playing tag and croquet as you do about minding sheep or grinding corn. Far off in Mexico the little girls are not of much consequence, the people think, and they are valued only as they can do a good day's work—draw water in buckets from a well, and carry it on their heads in earthen jars, or sit on the ground all day and turn around a large flat stone, under which the yellow maize, or Indian corn, is ground into meal. To vary the occupation, perhaps she has to carry her little baby sister or brother in her arms for hours together, while her mother hoes the corn in the field, or plows the ground, holding by the handles a great wooden plow, which is drawn across the field by one or two bullocks. Little girls in that country work as soon as they begin to walk, and they never cease working until they are dead.

Dress? Oh yes! they have dresses, but I hardly think you would like to walk with the best clad among them for half a block in our streets. They have but one garment, and that is a long cotton robe, with a hole open in the top, by means of which they can slip it over their heads and let it fall gracefully about their bodies. When they grow up to be women, then they come out in their full attire—in gorgeous array for holidays and *festa* days—by adding a prettiness and a shawl folded across the breast. If they are very rich, they have ornaments of gold and silver in their hair, and perhaps wear finger-rings and necklaces.

As to their houses!—well, I hardly think a respectable goat would like to live in one of them. They are not by any means as good as a dog-kennel, and yet these peasant people sleep and eat in them. The walls are made of mud, baked hard in the sun, and the roofs are thatched with the leaves of the yucca-tree, which are long and narrow, like a sword-blade, and have at the end a long black thorn. Sometimes the houses are made of large flat stone, built low, so that the earthquakes shall not overthrow them. There is no such thing as a floor to their houses, except the earth; nor are there any windows or chimneys. The fire is built on the ground, and of course the smoke fills the hut and blackens the walls, and a portion of it escapes at the open door. Perhaps a few of these houses have one window out in the wall under the roof, but without any glass in it! The family usually eat, dress and sleep in one room, as well as cook their meals and receive their friends therein; in fact, as there is but one room in the dwelling, they can do naught else. As for beds, the leaves of the yucca are plaited together, and make nice mats, which are rolled up in the day-time and at night are spread out on the floor of the hut. This is the kind of bed used in the eastern countries, and it is very easy to "take it up and walk," as the man did whom we read about in the Bible.

Food is plentiful, and it would seem as if the more nature provides for the people, the less work they do themselves. Cattle are abundant; goats, sheep, game and fowl are plentiful. The Indian corn grows everywhere; potatoes, yams, coffee, tobacco, barley, and the like are also cultivated. Then in other parts of Mexico are to be found the tropical fruits and plants—orange, figs, bananas, olives, sugar-cane, palm-trees, apples, and guava—so that the country is rich, but the inhabitants lazy. The women do the hard work; the men smoke, hunt, and too often plunder travelers.

Now, in such a country lived our little friend Florencia. She had no father, and perhaps no brothers or sisters; so as soon as she was large enough, she began to help her mother take care of the house and field. One day, when she was twelve years old, she heard a man who was gathering a crowd about him in the streets and talking to them. Drawn by curiosity, she followed him, and heard him tell of a good man who had at one time lived on the earth. She heard how this good person had been kind and forgiving to his enemies—how men had orally treated him, and yet he returned good for the evil he had received. She was interested; it was the first time she had heard of the Saviour, and she eagerly followed the missionary about and heard him talk to the people, until at last, from being a heathen, she became a Christian girl.

Some months after this, the incident happened which I am about to relate. At Morelos, in the province of Guantla, about five miles from the home of Florencia, was a cemetery. In that place an old custom still prevails which was practised among the Romans hundreds of years ago—the offering of meats and drinks to the dead. On the first of November (All Saint's Day), the people go to the graves of their dead friends, and place on them dishes full of meat, bread, fruit and wine. They have a curious belief that this, in some way, benefits the dead. We know this to be a heathen custom, and consider it a nonsensical ceremony; but in the country where Florencia lived, the ignorant and superstitious people believe in it—in truth, it is a part of their religion. On the first of November, 1875, Florencia went to the cemetery with all the other people from her neighborhood, for a great crowd had collected there. While walking through the cemetery she saw her friend the missionary, addressing a little band of

his people, and she stopped to listen to him. He was telling them that the dead needed no offerings of meats and drinks, and that Christians did not follow such customs. It may not have been wise or generous of him to talk against their custom just at that particular time, when the people were following it as a solemn rite; but he was sincere, and his spirit was friendly, and his aim was to enlighten his hearers. The crowd resented, however, and even as he spoke a man near by threw a stone at him, which wounded him. Then others laughed, and some bad men shouted, "Kill him! kill him!"—and others throw more stones, till he was beaten down to the ground, wounded and bleeding. Five times the poor man arose, and as often was beaten down again. Just then, Florencia saw a man holding a big flat stone, running to throw it upon the missionary's head, which, had it struck him, would really have killed him.

Poor little girl! Her eyes filled with tears. She saw her good friend being stoned to death, and in a moment she rushed through the mad crowd and threw herself down upon the suffering, bleeding man, covering his head with her arms; the big stone intended for him fell upon her and wounded her, but she clung courageously to her friend and shielded him, unthinking of her own danger, and caring only to save his life. In vain did they try to pull her away; she held on with all her strength, and cried for help. In a few moments help came; for the *gens d'armes* drove the assailants away, and took the missionary and little Florencia, both bleeding and sore, to the house of friends, where they were carefully nursed. But for this noble act of self-sacrifice, the man would have been killed. The bravery of this little peasant girl alone saved him. She sympathized with his suffering, and dared to help him at the risk of her own life. Noble impulses of the heart do not always attend on fine faces and gentle living. Many a girl would have run, screaming with fright, from such a scene as that in the cemetery of Guantla-Morelos. But such bravery in a child gives promise of greater things when she becomes a woman; and in the noble Florencia we look for a kind-hearted, self-sacrificing woman, who, under proper influences, will do great good among her country people. She is now only fourteen, and is being educated in a Protestant school in Mexico, away from her wild home, and is growing daily in favor with her teachers.—*Newton Perkins in St. Nicholas for March.*

Hidden and Safe.

One morning a teacher went, as usual, to the school room, and found many vacant seats. Two little scholars lay at their homes cold in death, and others were very sick. A fatal disease had entered the village, and the few children present that morning at school gathered around the teacher, and said, "Oh, what shall we do? Do you think we shall be sick, and die too?"

She gently touched the bell, as a signal for silence, and observed, "Children, you are all afraid of this terrible disease. You mourn for the death of our dear little friends, and you fear that you may be taken also. I only know one way of escape, and that is to hide."

The children were bewildered, and she went on: "I will read to you about this hiding-place," and read Psalm xci: "Who shall dwell under the defence of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

All were hushed and composed by the sweet words of the Psalmist, and the morning lessons went on as usual.

At noon, a dear little girl sidled up to the desk and said, "Teacher, are you not afraid of the diphtheria?"

"No, my child," she answered. "Well, wouldn't you be if you thought you would be sick and die?"

"No, my dear, I trust not."

Looking at the teacher for a moment with wondering eyes, her face lighted, as she said, "Oh, I know! you are hidden under God's wings. What a nice place to hide!"

Yes, this is the only true hiding place for old, for young, for rich, for poor,—for all.

Do any of you know of a safer or a better?—*Dr. Norton.*

Transient Troubles.

Many of us have troubles all our lives, and each day has brought all the evil that we wished to endure. But if we were asked to recount the sorrows of our lives, how many could we remember? How many that are six months old should we think worthy to be remembered or mentioned? To-day's troubles look large, but a week hence they will be forgotten and buried out of sight. Says one writer:

"If you would keep a book, and every day put down the things that worry you, and see what becomes of them it would be a benefit to you. You allow a thing to annoy you, just as you allow a fly to settle on you and plague you; and you lose your temper (or rather get it; for when men are unburdened with temper they are said to have lost it), and you justify yourselves for being thrown off your balance by causes which you do not trace out. But if you would see what it was that threw you off your balance before breakfast and put it down in a little book, and follow it up, and follow it out, and ascertain what becomes of it, you will see what a fool you were in the matter."

The art of forgetting is a blessed art, but the act of overlooking is quite as important. And if we should take down the origin, progress, and outcome of a few of our troubles, it would make us so ashamed of the fuss we make over them, that we should be glad to drop such things and bury them at once in eternal forgetfulness.

Life is too short to be worn out in petty worries, frettings, hatreds, and vexations. Let us banish all these, and think on whatsoever things are pure, and lovely, and gentle, and of good report.—*Christian Treasury.*

EAST INDIA coins are hereafter to be stamped with "Victoria Empress."

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

LESSON XII

MAR. 25. 1877. REVIEW OF FIRST QUARTER.

The review of this quarter's lessons affords a good opportunity to make the pupils acquainted with some of the changes, political and religious, among the tribes, on the understanding and recollection of which will depend the profitable and intelligent reading of the following portions of Hebrew history, and of much of the prophecies. The position and condition of the Jews of our own time even, can only be understood in the light of those facts.

Some such order as the following might be advantageously followed; but a careful reviewer will only employ it to suggest to his own mind, not to supersede his own effort.

I. ABOUT WHAT TIME did the events we have been studying take place? About nine hundred to a thousand years before the coming of Christ, therefore about twenty-eight hundred years ago; beginning B.C. 975. We can better judge of that remote time by recollecting that Grecian history does not begin so early, and that Rome was not founded till B.C. 753, according to the commonly received history of Romulus. We have no full history of kings and political movements running as far back as the Scripture history. The civilization and institutions of the Jews, therefore, the kingly authority, and the assertion along with it of the rights of the people, the raising of armies, the appointment of generals, the collecting of taxes, and all the orderly plans that go to make up kingdoms, existed in the world among God's peculiar people, long before the Greeks and Romans existed as ruling and powerful nations. Solomon was six centuries before Alexander the Great, and nine centuries before Julius Cæsar.

II. THE GEOGRAPHY OF THIS KINGDOM ought to be understood. The extent of Palestine, not great (compare with known states, for example), but at this time the "kingdom" included all the country from the sea (Mediterranean) to the Assyrian desert and the Euphrates. The division of the kingdom followed geographical lines. Judah and Benjamin lay close together. All the kingdom of Israel was to the north of them, except Simeon, of whom Jacob prophesied unfavorably (Gen. xlix. 5-7), and which Moses omitted in the blessing of Deut. xxxiii., and which tribe, lying to the south of Judah, and divided from the northern, or Israel kingdom, seems to have had little influence or importance. It will be a great help to any school to have unrolled here such a map as Professor Osborn's, and to have the tribes pointed out in their relation to one another and to the great cities.

The pupils may in this connection be asked to recall the various places that have come under notice, with their relations (see the successive lessons); such as Shechem in Ephraim; Bethel and Dan, the centres of the calf-worship; Samaria, the seat of Israelitish kingdom (1 Kings xvi. 24); Jericho, with its strange history (1 Kings xvii. 8); Zarephath, whose widow has a place in the New Testament (Luke iv. 26); Carmel, with its wonderful display of divine power and faithfulness, and of saintly courage; the plain of Esdraelon; the wilderness of Beersheba, in Simeon's territory; Horeb (see Sinai), "the mount of God" (1 Kings xix. 8); Jezreel, across the valley from Carmel, and the pleasant and fertile site of Naboth's vineyard and Ahab's country-palace, called "the seed-plot of God," probably because the soil was so rich.

III. THE GREAT POLITICAL CHANGE which we had to study—the division of a kingdom united under (1) Saul, (2) David, (3) Solomon. The two kings, rivals, who ruled the divided tribes, Jeroboam and Rehoboam. It cannot be amiss to trace, concisely, the history of the two, and the evidences of character they afford. One, an ambitious, able, unscrupulous man, bent on rising, and turning all things to his own gain, at home and abroad; the other, like many a rich and strong man's son, feeble and inert compared with those who have fought their way upward through dangers and difficulties.

What led to the separation? The main occasions are

(a) Long-continued old jealousy between Judah and Benjamin (which had the kings, Saul and David and his son) on one side, and Ephraim and the other tribes on the other.

(b) The high taxation which Solomon had enforced, in order to carry out his great scheme of building and decorating Jerusalem. (Curious parallel between this and Napoleon's improvements in Paris, and fall.)

(c) The successful ambition of Jeroboam. The ten tribes would probably have had no power to make resistance, but for the energy and tried ability of Jeroboam. He watched his opportunity. He fulfilled prophecy while working out his own plans.

The steps of the process of separation—great conventions—proposals to Rehoboam—his counsellor's delay—reply—the boisterous cry (1 Kings xii. 16) and the division completed—the respective capitals of the two kingdoms, their names, and the two concurrent lines of kings may be recalled and fixed in the minds of the pupils.

IV. THE GREAT RELIGIOUS CHANGE which accompanied this—the golden calves—what they were—by whom set up—why set up—where, and with what results, all set forth in topics for questions. Their location should be made clear, and the alleged convenience of the people explained, with the real underlying motive. (Convenience is not the main thing to think of in worshipping.)

How would this change affect the Levites—the worship at Jerusalem? (Lesson II.) How the faithful worshippers of God in the ten tribes? How God himself?

(See 1 Kings xii. 80.) How is Jeroboam remembered? The difference between true fame, which is "good report," and notoriety for evil, which is infamy. The downward road—the calves of Jeroboam preparing for the Baal of Ahab—how religious life was in any degree maintained by the tribes—by what prophets—their functions—their similarities—the description of the students did they inculcate idolatry? See 2 Kings iv. 1—the prophet's repeated miracles—the use of them, such as at Carmel, Zarephath, Jordan, and the translation of Elijah, all admit of concise and definite questioning and reply.

V. THE USES OF THE HISTORY to us. Here some of the lessons urged during the quarter may be recalled, but it would probably be most to advantage to show:

- (1) How necessary all this record is to the understanding of later Scripture.
- (2) How worldly policy destroys religion when it is employed in it.
- (3) How the beginning of evil ought to be resisted, as when the calves were set up, etc.
- (4) How being good raises, and doing evil casts down, a nation.

Power in Preaching—Bossuet.

The French writer, Bossuet, in his "Two Evenings at the Hotel de Rambouillet," says of Bossuet, the celebrated court preacher: "His words proceeded from the depths of his soul, and all that comes from the soul is eloquent."

Here is expressed the greatest secret of oratory; an "open secret," indeed, tacitly admitted by all public speakers, but really appreciated by few. It seems so much a truism, a commonplace, that it loses its importance. Teachers of elocution would hardly pause to emphasize it, it is so obvious. It is so obvious, in fact, that it fails to be observed.

Were it true of any other art that a certain condition or frame of the mind would certainly secure success, how the fact would be prized! If such a condition would really enable the student to learn a language, or to play on a given instrument of music, would it not be considered the paramount thing? If it would give a positively curative power to a remedy in disease, would it not be one of the greatest of facts? It has, indisputably, an analogous power in public speaking; everybody admits the fact when it is fairly stated, but hardly any student of oratory gives it special attention.

Of course, successful oratory presupposes other things. There must be preparatory study; there must be a suitable subject, suitable style. The speaker, must have something to say, and know how to say it intelligibly; yet, with many such qualifications, he may utterly fail of real eloquence. But the utterance of the heart can never fail to be eloquent. Bossuet was, probably the greatest of French pulpit orators. He possessed a splendid intellect; he was a profound thinker; his studies were large, his style severely elegant; but in the pulpit all his powers were inaudibly with feeling. All would have failed to render him eloquent without this co-action of the heart with the head. This made him irresistible, overwhelming.

That was an age of great preachers in France, as it was of great writers and great capitalists. Around Bossuet stood Bourdaloue, with his subtle logic, his appeals to the reason and the conscience; Massillon, with his fine imagination and fluent style; Flechier, with his grandeur of style and his harmonious periods; Fenelon, with his gentle suaveness and perfect rhetoric; and not a few others. But Bossuet towered above them all in the majesty of thought and the power of sentiment. All these historic preachers maintained distinctively their individuality, notwithstanding their common eloquence. Nothing would seem to be more identical in them than the emotional nature; but nothing, in fact, gives more originality, more individuality to the orator, than feeling. If it is intrinsically the same in all men, it nevertheless brings out their individuality, by igniting, and thereby giving vivid manifestation to their distinctive intellectual powers. It thus gives distinctness even to vocal peculiarities also. The deeply feeling speaker is always himself; for when the well-prepared orator deals out to his auditory, not only the contents of his head, but the powers of his heart, the whole man is in his appeal. He will then inevitably be himself—not another, not a copyist. Whatever is distinctive of him will show itself, and will be empowered by the inspiration of the moment. Yes, his whole self; for his feeling will intone his voice, will give the right modulation, and the right gestulation. It will glance in his eye and play in his every feature. Imitate, then, no model in your discourse; attempt no oratorical artifices. Seek after honest preparation of your subject, only to feel it earnestly, sincerely. Giving your head to its logic, give your heart to its sentiment, and you will be confessed by all, the genuine orator.

The highest condition of feeling, or the eloquence of feeling, must be a moral one—sincere, direct aim in the discourse. He that aims chiefly to be eloquent seldom or never can be. Genuine art of any kind requires sincerity—moral earnestness. Without it the best performance becomes mechanical, factitious; and the factitious in art is essentially fictitious. In the pulpit especially we must have utter sincerity of purpose. We must not ascend to exhibit ourselves by an intellectual or oratorical display. Our subject must be chosen for its lesson, needed by the people; our object must be to teach that lesson to the understanding, and force it home upon the hearts and consciences of the people. Ignoring all oracles in the congregation, forgetting all artificialities of rhetoric (however good as matters of separate study), bearing down with all our powers of heart and head on the one object before us, we must plunge into the subject as men throw themselves into battle. No man can thus mount the pulpit without being eloquent. Even natural awkwardness, if he has it, will give way before such singleness and sincerity of purpose. All the desirable harmonies of head, heart, style—of matter and manner—will come spontaneously into play. This is the easiest, as well as the best preaching.

Let us add, however, that this does not imply that the preacher is to be declamatory, much less clamorous. He will hardly ever be so if he is sincerely fervid. Genuine feeling instinctively takes on genuine expression. Particularly should he not aim at the expression, but only be sure to have the earnest feeling, and let the expression take care of itself. He should aim to be as profoundly calm as earnest in the outset. Heroes are so in going into battle. Bossuet truly says, in speaking of Bossuet, that "fire in the exordium is but a fire of straw."

The chief condition of eloquence, then, being feeling, and the chief condition of feeling, especially in preaching, being a moral one—sincerity and directness of aim—it is clear that personal "consecration" is the final, the highest qualification for the pulpit. We all concede this, but, alas! the concession is so readily made that we seldom fully appreciate it. Thorough study is requisite, but more thorough prayer. The messenger of God should go among the people as Moses descended from the mount among the Israelites, with his brow reflecting the light of the Divine countenance, received in his secret communion with God. The people feel back, awe-struck, before Moses; they will tremble, or shout for joy, before the man that rises among them with the attributes of the Holy Ghost, the "baptism of fire."—*Zion's Herald.*

The Sin of Intemperance.

Besides its immediate effect the sin of intemperance becomes one of awful aggravation, as it produces so many other sins; at home, discord and abuse; in company, contention and profanity. More than three-fourths of all crimes of violence and blood are produced by it. It fills our prisons and poor-houses. It is a sin sometimes so monstrous that language cannot describe it. The poor victim of inebriety becomes a very demon of wickedness. In his family a man otherwise amiable has all the terrors of a madman. What a sin to drink for the pleasure of its exhilaration, such a cup as this! Does not self-respect, honor, love of order, peace, every virtue of man cry out against it, from first to last? Is not all this guilt laid upon moderate, social and convivial drinking? Abolish these, and the work is done. Prisons and poor-houses would be comparatively empty; peace and order prevail; homes be filled with abundance and happiness, where now want and wretchedness stare you in the face.

I am sorry to say an attempt has been made to justify the use of intoxicating drinks for the purpose of exhilaration, by an appeal to the Bible. As this is the very thing that leads to drunkenness, and is the beginning of it, we may be sure that the passages supposed to prove it may have another meaning. And so we find it. Eccl. ix. 7: "Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart." The Hebrew word rendered "merry," means "good," "upright," "virtuous." These are the first three definitions. Put either of these meanings in the place of "merry," and instead of the idea of an alcohol exhilaration, we have a sentiment of piety consistent with gospel temperance. The supposed meaning of this text is a mistake. Another is in Ps. civ. 15: "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man." Wine is here spoken of as one of the gifts of God, for which they were to "bless the Lord," and the word translated "maketh glad," is often applied to the worship of Jehovah. So that "maketh glad the heart of man," may mean and doubtless does mean, the same kind of gladness as that felt in divine worship, glad with a happy feeling of God's goodness; and not with the "exhilarating effects" of a partial intoxication. The "joy" in the first quotation produced by eating bread has the same (cognate) meaning as the verb "maketh glad" in the last. Alcoholic exhilarations are entirely different from religious affections. They are sinful in all stages of their development; there is no proof of them in either of these passages.

It is a monstrous thought that the Bible teaches us to drink wine for the purpose of alcoholic "exhilaration!" This exhilaration causes silly mirth, and not joy and gladness; although enlivening, it is a crazy feeling. It is sad that any one should so misunderstand the meaning of these texts. The Bible is always in harmony with itself. It sanctions no evil, nor anything that leads to it. The beginnings of drunkenness progress like any other sins, only more rapidly; in this excitement reason is lost, hence there is less power of restraint, and this diminishes constantly as appetite increases.

Where the word "merry" occurs in such passages as the above, it must be taken in a good sense. "Merry with wine" suggests a bad sense, having happy, crazy feelings; literally rendered, it would be "good" with wine, or as we might say, good drunk.

A good conscience, well instructed in the fundamental truths of the Bible, does not easily mistake its meaning. This will adjust Christian duties correctly in obscure places, though a person cannot read Hebrew or Greek. As an interpreter, it may fail in the letter, but it does not err in the spirit. A good conscience sees quickly the danger of temptation, and marks the lightest shades of sin. It sees the danger of drinking and the sin of the exhilarating effects of wine; it meets drunkenness like all other sins forbidden, at the outset with firm resistance. Once sanctioned the exhilarating effects of wine by the Bible, as some of the advocates of moderating drinking in the Church claim, and where do they propose the sin of drunkenness to commence, this side of a complete debauch? There is sin in making the drunkard all the way, from first to last. And though society condemns only the confirmed inebriate, the sin is greater, if possible, when a man puts himself in the way of becoming such by moderate drinking. When he has acquired the appetite and cannot restrain himself, he is denounced; while he is doing it, he is the high-spirited, free and noble gentleman. The law of God condemns with sin at the outset.—*Rev. J. M. Van Buren, in New York Christian Intelligencer.*