

Our Young Folks.

VACATION DAYS.

The school-bell rings with cheerful sound,
To hasten the slow, late comer;
"To-morrow we'll play,"
It seems to say,
"Hurrah for the first vacation day!
Hurrah for a merry summer!"

The faithful bell, now the school is done,
Must pause in its daily swinging.
Does it miss the noise
Of the girls and boys
And long to echo vacation joys
With a peal of its widest ringing?

Soon, over the country far and wide,
There are ripples of happy laughter;
For the children know
Where the berries grow,
Where the purling streams through the meadows
flow,
And the hurrying brooks speed after.

They know where the mountains lift their heads,
By the great sky-curtain bounded;
And their voices leap
To the craggy steep,
And wake the echoes from out their sleep,
With shouts that are thrice resounded.

They know where the sea lies blue and calm
In the bright midsummer weather;
And they love to stand
On the shining sand,
Where the tide rolls up—and the hand in hand,
To plunge in the wave together.

They love to loiter in leafy woods,
And list to the squirrel's scolding,
As they climb to a seat
Near his safe retreat,
Or fall on a couch, all spicy sweet,
Of feathery ferns unfolding.

But, by and by, in the autumn days,
Ere the bee has deserted the clover
When the sound of the bell
Shall rise and swell,
Will the little folks laugh—now who can tell
To hear that vacation is over?

THE FEAST OF CHERRIES.

I have been reading about a curious custom in Hamburg, Germany, called "The Feast of Cherries."

War, with its cruelty and suffering, the clash of weapons and dreadful shedding of blood, is something with which little folks might well fancy they have nothing to do. But there was one war in the olden time in which the children not only played an important part, but through them a great city was saved from destruction, and a long and cruel war brought to an end.

Some of you who have travelled may be familiar with the great city of Hamburg, and know its streets and palaces, its beautiful gardens, and the active, industrious people who dwell there. It is a very old city, and in days long gone by it was attacked many times by its enemies, and long and bitter were the struggles of the inhabitants with the armies that sought to destroy their beautiful town.

In the year 1432 it was surrounded with a great Hussite army, and the commander (Procopius the Great) had been so successful in defeating the German troops in battle that he felt quite sure the city could only offer a feeble resistance, and that very soon he could march through the streets at the head of his victorious soldiers. For years the war had lasted, and one town after another had been taken; so Procopius formed an encampment about its walls, and sat quietly down to await the moment to surrender.

Within the city there was terrible consternation. The inhabitants saw the army drawn up in front of its gates, and knew that for a short time only could they hope to resist the besiegers.

"There is none to succour us," they said. "We and our wives and children must perish with hunger and thirst within the walls of the city, or the men must go forth to be slain by the sword."

Suddenly some one cried, "The children! the children! Behold, the children can save us!"

"But what can the children do?" cried another. "They are young and tender. They cannot fight; neither can they create food that we may not starve."

But this was not the intention of the speaker. "Let the gates be opened," he cried, "and let the children go forth. Let the elder ones take the little ones by the hand, and the tender youths the babes and infants, and let them pass out before our conquerors. Soldiers are but men, and their hearts are often gentle. Let the children go, and their hearts will be melted. They will do them no harm, neither will they destroy us. This is the only plan by which we may save ourselves."

And so it was arranged. You can imagine how desperate their strait must have been—how they must have suffered before the fathers and mothers would try such a desperate scheme, and allow their little ones to leave their sheltering arms and pass out into the presence of the rough men whose business was to destroy and kill.

Fancy the surprise of the conquering army as they saw the gates of the city swing open, and through those frowning portals come, not bands of soldiers carrying weapons and urging their steeds forward, but a long line of little children. On they came in an endless procession, every one clad in white, the elder ones leading the way, and the tiny toddlers cling-

ing to their hands, wondering what the strange scene meant, and why they were thus sent forth alone, leaving home and friends and parents behind.

But the people of Hamburg had judged rightly. The soldiers were but men, and many of them, perhaps, had left behind at home just such little ones as these. When they heard the pattering of the tiny feet and saw the white-robed throng surrounding their tents, their hearts were indeed melted, and all disposition to fight and ravage and destroy passed away. They who had come to rob, to ruin and to kill only desired to take those white-robed little ones to their hearts, and to shower love and kindness upon them.

What could they do for them? They looked around and saw that the trees of the orchards round about were loaded with cherries. With one accord they threw down their weapons, and gathering great, beautiful branches filled with the round, rosy fruit, loaded the children with them, and sent them back to their parents with a message of peace and goodwill.

The victory was won, so far as the safety of the city was concerned—a great, a bloodless victory, won by the children. Back they marched, and from the throats of the waiting multitude rang glad shouts of thanksgiving.

For many years, as the day came round on which this great event took place, it was celebrated and called "The Feast of Cherries." Through the streets of Hamburg long processions passed, made up of children, each one bearing in the right hand a branch of cherries.

There have been wars and bloodshed in every age, wild struggles between nations, and great victories, but rarely do we read in history a more beautiful and thrilling story than that of the army of little ones who saved Hamburg.

ON BEING A GIRL.

So you wish you were a boy, do you, my dear? You "feel the limitations of sex," you "realize that brain-power, always honoured in a man, is often despised in a woman," you are "conscious of forces within, that the ordinary course of a woman's life will never call into play"—and so you wish you were a boy? My child, honestly and earnestly, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!

If you were a Chinese girl, doomed to be the slave of your husband's parents; if you were a Hindu maiden already married to a man whom you had never seen until your wedding day, there would be some reason in your sorrowful wail. But for an American girl, with avenues of usefulness and honour opening for her on every side, to utter such a wail—yes, you certainly ought to be ashamed of yourself!

It is a glorious thing to be a girl, and to hold the hope of being a woman a little later on. Do the "limitations of sex" forbid you making the most of any gift you may possess? If you were Mary Lyon, living near the beginning of this century, yearning for an education that would unlock to you the mysteries of science, and meeting with the response of your dearest friends, "You will never be a minister, and what is the use of going to school?"—why, then there might be some reason for complaining of the "limitations of sex." But the limitations of sex did not prevent Mary Lyon from founding Mt. Holyoke Seminary, and giving a noble life to its firm establishment. They certainly will not keep you from doing any fitting and needed works.

It is true, as the orators like to say, that "the age needs men." But the age also needs women. Don't be afraid that your talents must be wasted, merely because you can't sing bass, or drive a nail properly. There are scores of things just as good and useful that you can do if you will. Don't be afraid to use and develop all the brain power that you possess. Strong-mindedness is not nearly so objectionable as weak-mindedness. To be sure, the world wants you to be womanly, just as it wants your brother to be manly; but weakness is no more essential to womanliness than coarseness is to manliness.

If those "forces within," of whose presence you are conscious, will not be called into play "in the ordinary course of a woman's life," why, then, you will have to make the course of your life extraordinary! Only be sure that it is extraordinarily good, extraordinarily true and helpful. Brain-power, in either sex, needs the accompaniment of heart-power.

My dear child, let me implore you to give up wishing you were a boy, and to turn your attention to the work of becoming the best kind of girl! A lovely girlhood is worth enjoying, and a lovely womanhood is worth aspiring to.

SHAVINGS AND KINDLING.

Shavings and kindling are the first essentials in building a fire. It is wasteful economy not to use enough in the beginning, for one burns more, finally, in coaxing the reluctant blaze that had a poor start for want of feeders. Abundance of kindling makes a good bed for coal. It does not warm the room, but is a means to that end; it has little substance, but much utility; it disappears, but serves a purpose: it gets no credit, but it does good.

As curled ribbons of wood and pine splinters are necessary for a fire, so a thousand nameless preparations are requisite for any work worth doing. Much practice goes before perfection, and a multitude of experiments before all manner of successes. Many inked and penciled sheets, "whose end is to be burned," prepare the way for good writing. Repetition gives facility in handcraft and brain work, although visible results cannot be summed up. What matter? That which is burned first supplies the conditions for a steady fire.

Countless little courtesies and kindnesses, self-denials and activities must kindle and consume before the steadfast character can blaze out and grow with light and heat. A great amount of thought and study and numberless incidentals, having small apparent connection with the end sought, must precede life's achievements.

Young people are necessarily much occupied with beginnings. They should be patient and hopeful in the doing of many things worth little in themselves.

Shavings and kindling come before coal. Don't stint the measure and spoil the fire.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

July 16.

LOST AND FOUND.

Luke 15:1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Luke xv. 10.

INTRODUCTION.

In a series of three striking and beautiful parables the great saving truths of the Gospel are clearly set forth in the chapter from which to-day's lesson is taken. In the first parable one of a hundred sheep strays from the fold; in the second, one of ten pieces of silver is lost and in the third, one of two sons leaves his father's home and wanders and comes to want in the far country. Trench, in his volume on "The Parables," says: The possessor of one hundred sheep is in some sort a rich man, and therefore not likely to feel their diminution by one at all so deeply as the woman, who, having but ten small pieces of money, should lose one of these; while the intensity of her feeling would fall very short of the affection of a father who, having but two sons, should behold one out of these two go astray.

I. **Christ's Audience.**—Christ's ministry was attractive. In the New Testament we learn that people of all ranks and conditions were anxious to hear Him. On the present occasion we find that the publicans, the tax gatherers of those days, were to be found among those who listened to His teaching. In the collection of the public revenue there is nothing necessarily dishonourable if it is justly imposed and honestly collected. The custom was common in ancient times as it is still in the Turkish Empire, to farm out the taxes of a district to the highest bidder. If he is an avaricious man he will be anxious to squeeze all the money he can out of the unfortunate people. The collectors are often still more rapacious and brutal men. In Palestine particularly in our Lord's time the tax-gatherers were a despised and hated race, because no patriotic Jew would take the position. The tax was hateful because its imposition was a cruel reminder of the people's subjection to Roman supremacy. Side by side with these despised publicans the very opposite extreme was to be found among Jesus' hearers. The Pharisees and the scribes, outwardly the best and most respectable people in the community, were nevertheless as much in need of a Saviour as the publicans and sinners who gathered around Him, only they were so self-righteous that they did not know their need. When they looked round on those gathered with them, they murmured, and said contemptuously, "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them," a deeper truth than they either meant or understood. It was to receive sinners that Jesus came. The "sinners" mentioned here were those who had fallen into evil ways and had sunk so low in their degradation that they had lost their self-respect and the good opinion of their neighbours. They no longer kept up appearances. They felt that in Christ and in His words there was the strongest attraction.

II. **The Lost Sheep.**—"Never man spake like this Man." With what wisdom He suited, both in manner and spirit, the objections raised against Him and His teaching. He answers their murmuring by a most interesting and instructive parable. It might be any one among themselves. If one had a hundred sheep and one strayed from the fold, would he not go out to seek the wanderer? He leaves the ninety-and-nine that are sheltered and provided for, and goes in search of the lost one. His search is a persevering one. He does not give up until the lost is found. He is successful in his search. When he finds it he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. He is glad because he has found the lost and because it is rescued from danger and death. So great, however, is his joy that he wants others to share with him, so "he calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me: for I have found my sheep which was lost." The meaning of this parable is transparent as well as suggestive. The sinner is in the desert exposed to danger and death. The Good Shepherd has left the heavenly fold that He might seek and save that which is lost. He searches long and patiently and receives the repentant sinner with open arms and loving heart. One of the principal points is the joy the Saviour felt at the recovery of the lost. This is in striking contrast with the narrow, selfish and churlish ideas of the Pharisees and scribes. They grumbled that despised outcasts should be welcomed by Christ. In answer He says: "I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and-nine just persons, which need no repentance."

III. **The Lost Coin.**—The small silver coin mentioned several times in the New Testament, and sometimes in the English version translated "penny," was equal to about seventeen cents of our money. It was customary then, as it is still, to use these coins as personal ornaments. A woman has ten of these, but one is lost. She searches for it with the utmost care and diligence. Eastern houses are dark, therefore she lights her lamp and sweeps the house, continuing her search till at last she sees the shining metal among the rubbish. She likewise is overjoyed at the recovery of the lost piece of money. It is a joy too great to keep to herself, so she calls her friends and neighbours together and desires them to share in her rejoicing. Again does Jesus say to all who hear Him, murmuring critics and all: "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Here again the Saviour's meaning is plain. The coin was composed of precious metal. The human soul is precious in God's sight, for He created it. In Christ's sight it is precious, for He has died for its redemption. The metal out of which the coin is shaped is precious, but its value is greatly increased because it bears the king's image and superscription. In its original state the human soul was made in the image of God; it bore His likeness. So it is the purpose of the Saviour to seek the soul lost and defiled by sin, and restore to it the marks of the divine likeness. The woman of the parable is understood as representing the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enlightens the soul, revealing the degradation of its lost estate and at the same time showing its preciousness, as well as bringing to light the traces of the divine inscription still discoverable. Before the lost piece is found the house is swept. So the evil habits contracted by the soul, and the prejudices and ignorance by which the searching light is obscured need to be swept away. This the Holy Spirit effects by His enlightening and cleansing power. The joy of the Triune God, the joy of the angelic world at the recovery of the lost is once more emphasized at the close of the parable, conveying to us the twofold lesson that if we murmur when the despised and the outcast come to Christ, we are acting very unlike the angels of God; and that when repentant sinners come to Christ they are welcomed with a joy that heaven shares with the rejoicing Saviour.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

The Pharisees and scribes murmured because Jesus receives sinners. Their objections led the way to a full and clear explanation of Christ's mission.

Christ still seeks and saves that which is lost.

What a compassionate, loving, patient Saviour Jesus Christ is!

All heaven is interested in man's salvation. Into the mysteries of redeeming love the angels desire to look. There is joy in their presence when even one sinner repents.