

Our Young Folks.

Winter Amusement.

In an easy thing to establish, either in country or city neighbourhoods, the reading club. Twenty-five young men and women of congenial tastes, habits and social belongings can easily meet in one another's houses once during every week through five or six months in the year. With a small fund they can buy good books, and, over these, read aloud by one another of their number, they can spend an hour and a half most pleasantly and profitably. They will find in these books topics of conversation for the remainder of the time they spend together. If they can illuminate the evening with music, all the better. Whatever accomplishment may be in the possession of different members of the club may be drawn upon to give variety to the interest of the occasion. This is entirely practicable everywhere. It is more profitable than amateur theatricals, and less exhaustive of time and energy. It can be united with almost any literary object. The "Shakespeare Club" is nothing but a reading club, devoted to the reading of a single author, and Shakespeare may well engage a club for a single winter. Such a club would cultivate the art of good reading, which is one of the best and most useful of all accomplishments. It would cultivate thought, imagination, taste. In brief, the whole tendency of the reading club is toward culture—the one thing, notwithstanding all our educational advantages, the most deplorably lacking in the average American man and woman.

There should be clubs of young people established this winter, for the purpose of social and intellectual amusement, with culture in view as the great ultimate end. The exercises may take a great many forms which it is not necessary even for us to suggest. Books may be read, original papers may be presented, musical rehearsals may form a part of the entertainment, products of art may be exhibited, there may be dramatic and conversational practice, and practice in French and German. There is no limit to the variety of exercises that may be profitably entered upon.

Funeral of an Egyptian Princess.

The Princess Hanoum Zeinub—only fifteen years of age—a favorite daughter of the Khedive of Egypt, and wife of Ibrahim Pasha, died recently in Alexandria of typhus fever, following shortly after her confinement. Of the demonstrations incident to her burial, the *Cologne Gazette* gives this description:

The Khedive and his family, as well as his guest, the Sultan of Zanzibar, and the whole city of Alexandria, were much disturbed by the sad event, and the theatre was closed for three days. The body was taken to Cairo the same day, and placed in the Kasr-el-Nilo palace. An immense concourse followed the body to the depot in Alexandria, and hundreds of thousands of hro were distributed among the poor people. The interment took place in the Rihah Mosque on the following morning. Twenty-four bullocks, thirty camels and twenty wagons, were in the funeral procession. These animals were laden with bread, dates, cooked meats, and vegetables; the wagons carried casks of water and ayrap, and all along the route distribution of the provisions was made to the poor. Eunuchs, meantime, threw 450,000 pieces of silver coin to the people who thronged the street. Three thousand priests, some clad in rich vestments of gold and silk, others half naked, followed the wagons, repeating prayers as they marched, and clapping their hands. After them came the family of the poor young Princess and the high officials of State, and then the coffin, borne by officers of rank. Behind this walked three eunuchs, bearing on golden shovels copies of the Koran, to be buried with the deceased. The coffin was of simple, rough-hewn wood, and the corpse was sewn up in linen cloth. Upon the coffin were placed the jewels of the Princess, worth a million and a half of dollars. After the burial the priests slaughtered the twenty-four bullocks before the mosque, roasted them, and ate them up. The priests remained in the neighbourhood of the grave to pray for the soul of the departed. The Khedive was so overcome with grief that he could not receive any visits of condolence.

Everybody's Room.

Not long ago we stopped for an hour at the parsonage of a worthy brother, who was kind enough to insist on displaying to us its various attractions. He had a right to be proud of them for the design of the parsonage, and the labor of begging the money to build it for his congregation, and the work of superintending it, had fallen on the pastor's shoulders, as is mostly the case. After taking us through the commodious, well-lighted and well-ventilated apartments, he said, "The choicest room of all is yet to be seen." He opened the door of a neat and pleasant little room, just over the hall, which, on looking in, we noticed contained but three things—a chair, a table, and a Bible. "This," said he, "is our room for prayer. Any one, at any time, can retire here for private devotions. It is always here consecrated for that object, and used for no other—always inviting those who need it to prayer and communion with God; and, said he, "our experience is, that it is the most popular and most used room in the whole house." Why not? Such a room would soon become a Bethel to old and young. Hallowed by the most precious associations, the very atmosphere would suggest tranquillity and help. It would soon become the dearest place in the whole house, a reminder to duty and a help in doing it.

We recommend that, whenever anyone builds a house hereafter, a room be provided "for everybody." And it would be a good thing if those whose house is already built should set apart for common use, some consecrated spot for "everybody."—*South Western Presbyterian*.

The sorrow which excludeth forgiveness is legal, and ends in death.

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON I.

January 2, 1876. SAUL REJECTED. (1 Sam. xv. 10-23.)

COMMIT TO MEMORY, vs. 22, 23. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—1 Kings xiv. 2, 3, 2 Kings xiv. 18-20. SCRIPTURE READINGS.—For the crime of Amalek, read Ex. xvii. 8-16 and Deut. xxv. 17-19; with v. 11, compare 1 Sam. xii. 14; with vs. 12, 16, read James iv. 16; with v. 14, compare Gen. iii. 11 and v. 9; with vs. 15-19, compare 1 Sam. xii. 21, 22, with v. 20, 21, read Acts v. 14, with v. 22, read Matt. ix. 18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—When he would have inherited the blessing he was rejected.—Heb. xii. 17.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—God has no pleasure in them that turn back. This lesson is extremely suggestive, but extremely sad. What befell a Hebrew king 3000 years ago might seem of little account to us; but God, the divine law, and our nature have not changed, and the rocks on which men then made shipwreck are still as they were then. Let us study this history with meekness and fear.

Amalek had been particularly cruel to Israel (see So. Read.), which both God and the people remembered. See in proof Num. xxiv. 7, 26; Ps. lxxviii. 7. So Haman, Agagite, or Amalekite, was a hereditary foe of Israel.

But there was more than an old feud. From ch. xiv. 48, we see that the Amalekites had "spoiled," i.e. made raids on Israel. This was the occasion of the Lord's severe order by Samuel (in v. 3) to Saul to "destroy," i.e. devote to destruction (see Lev. xxvii. 28, 29, and Josh. vi. 17, 18), the whole people. This, let it be noted, implied the destruction of all that could be destroyed, and the laying up before the Lord of what was indestructible, as silver and gold. In part, Saul obeyed; the nation was subdued, but Agag and all that was choice they spared (v. 9). This brought things to a crisis.

I. THE DIVINE SENTENCE, v. 10, 11.

When the Lord says, "I repenteth me," he speaks after the manner of men, and that they may understand him. So in Gen. vi. 6. The word is fitted to the imperfectly instructed people. The Lord does not proceed on what he saw all along in Saul's heart, but what is seen in his life. So in the judgment-day. So in Ps. li. 4. Disobedience to his commands is proof of apostasy, on turning back from following him. (See John xv. 13.)

Samuel's feeling—"it grieved"—is represented as the same with David's (2 Sam. vi. 8) and Jonah's (iv. 1), that he was vexed at the failure of a king whom he had anointed, and the "stir of his prophetic office" (Speaker's Com.). This is extremely doubtful. He had only moved in the affair by compulsion, and was singularly unselfish. More like he was displeased with Saul, and at the turn affairs had taken, as he well might be. He did what all men in trouble ought to do, "he cried unto God all night." Mere human feeling is corrected at the throne of grace.

II. ITS ANNOUNCEMENT TO SAUL.

Meantime Saul was self-satisfied, and had (v. 12) set up some trophy, or monument ("a place," same as 2 Sam. xviii. 18, by a like-minded man), so that when Samuel counted on meeting him, he was at Carmel (now called Karmul), in the mountains of Judah, and on his way back (Josh. xv. 65). At the moment when a sinner is lifted up in mind, the Lord is preparing to cast him down. He can never be secure, or have "perfect peace."

Flushed with victory, he had made some display ("gone about, passed on, and gone to Gilgal"). (1 Sam. xi. 14.) He did not report to Samuel, as might have been expected. Did he "go about, and pass on," to avoid a meeting with him? or do the words refer—as the Septuagint takes them—to this going in a chariot, a new thing among the Hebrews? Jewish tradition (as reported in Jerome) makes the "place" a triumphal arch of palm, myrtle and olive.

Samuel came from Ramah (about fifteen miles to Saul (v. 18)). He was received with the courteous salutation of the time (Judges xvii. 2; Ruth ii. 10), and a too prompt and untrue report, as if he meant to forestall any questioning by Samuel, which his conscience might well anticipate.

Saul's device fails. The question of Samuel is most suggestive (v. 14). How often its spirit may be reproduced, as when a man boasts of his integrity with the spoils of sharp trading about him, of his humility, in the midst of "pomp and vanities."

Saul now plays the hypocrite and liar (v. 15). One sin leads to another. "They have"—the responsibility, is laid on the people—the old device, "the woman whom thou gavest to be with me;" they, did it too for sacrifice.

Samuel now delivers his message as received the night before from God; and if he hoped much from Saul up till now, all this hope must have vanished before this base and cowardly equivocation. He delivers his message, as was proper, with some form (v. 16), recalls God's choice of Saul out of a lowly place (v. 17), his plain commission as to the Amalekites (v. 18), described like the Sodomites (Gen. xiii. 13) as "sinners," and demands (v. 19), "Wherefore then," etc. "Is there any reason why sentence shall not be pronounced?"

Saul pleads his case (v. 20), asserting all he has done, with truth in some part; large, stoutly alleging what is not in question, with suppression of what is, in question, is here the same as falsehood, and is direct self-contradiction, against which it was useless to argue, for he knew it himself. If he had "obeyed the Lord," why bring Agag? And if Agag is brought, then the utter destruction has not been effected. And if "the people" been effected, why was his sword? He says, indeed (v. 24), "he feared the people"

—he whose leadership in war promised them so much! But even this was evasion. The account of Josephus is probably true, that Agag, who was very handsome, was saved to grace the triumph of v. 21.

Samuel's rejoinder is in the form of an unanswerable question (v. 22), with a statement of God's rights. Why sacrifice? At God's command. But here is a plain command disobeyed, and why? Because in self-will and vanity Saul chose to magnify himself with a splendid triumphal thanksgiving. God's will was the main consideration. Under pretence of honoring God, his will was set aside, that Saul might make a figure.

Besides, so many bullocks or so many rams signified nothing to the Lord, but as they represented an obedient spirit. This is according to the "law and the prophets." But Saul's spirit was not obedient but stubborn, i.e. wilful, and its display in him was worse than the witchcraft he had in a moment of zeal put down. It was rebellion. And then came the sentence—"Because thou hast rejected," etc.—in harmony with the warning (ch. xii. 15). And so Saul takes his place with the long and sad procession of those who began to run well, but turned aside from the holy commandment. Learn.

1. The greatness of Saul's guilt. He had warned (like Judas, ch. xii. 13, 14), on the taking or despoiling of which his career turned. He disregarded it. His vain glory betrayed him, for the "place" not wrong in itself became so, when God was disobeyed for the sake of it. He hoped, perhaps, by getting the first word (v. 18), to carry his self through. It is hateful to God and to good men to hear bad men make a character for themselves by pious language. Beware of Balaam's "cant" (Num. xxiii. 10).

2. How little natural qualities avail without grace! Saul was fine-looking, manly, amiable at the beginning, he even noted the reformer, and gained great victories. But he forgot God, and pleased himself, and so was ruined.

3. How hollow are the pretences we often set up: "We are not thieves, or robbers," we allege, when sin is charged on us. (See Luke xviii. 11, 12.) We sin much and give God, a little of the results, as if they were ours (Isa. lxi. 8), and as if we might do evil that good might come (Rom. iii. 8).

4. The true nature of sin—no matter how high the rank or how many the good qualities of the sinner, or the avowed aim in it. It is disobedience to God. He sees it as such. Like many self-seeking reformers, Saul was remorseless to other men's sins; but that did not alter the nature of his own. He was sorry, but that was after he saw the consequences to himself, and he (like sinful men always) is more ready to go to God's servant than to God himself. Saul valued the "confessional," when he should have gone to the Lord.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Saul's history—how called to the throne—for what end—by whom anointed—his orders from the Lord as to Amalek—why so severe—his execution of them—wherein he failed—probable motive—his course after the victory—where he meant to celebrate it—in what way—God's word to Samuel—his course—where he saw Saul—how he was received—Saul's plea—evasion—guilt—meanness—Samuel's exposure of it—statement of principle—application of it—lessons to us.

LESSON II.

Jan. 9, 1876. DAVID ANOINTED KING. (1 Sam. xvi. 1-13.)

COMMIT TO MEMORY, vs. 6, 7. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Ps. lxxviii. 70; Isa. lv. 8.

SCRIPTURE READINGS.—With vs. 1 and 4, compare ch. xv. 35; with vs. 2 and 3, compare Ex. vi. 16, vii. 1; with v. 5, "sanctified," compare Ex. xix. 10, 11, and Jos. iii. 6; with vs. 6-10, compare Luke xvi. 15, and Ps. cxlvii. 10, 11; with vs. 11, 12, compare ch. ix. 24, and Ex. ii. 2; with v. 13, compare Judges iii. 10, vi. 34.

GOLDEN TEXT.—And the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.—1 Sam. xvi. 18.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—God chooses the weak things.

This lesson has a significance of its own from the typical character of David; from the charge it records in the occupancy of the throne, and from the light it casts on the Lord's mode of government.

We are, in the first verse, incidentally shown the state of Samuel's mind. He mourned for Saul; for his failure; for the calamities he brought on the people; for the dishonour done to God. He had broken with him; had no farther confidence in him; had no communication with him regarding public affairs. He had, in consequence, no heart to do anything, till admonished of the Lord—"how long wilt thou mourn?" While we are not to despair of the salvation of any man while there is life, we may give up hope of his being useful in a place in which he has utterly failed. There is a limit to such hope of men. There should be a limit also to our sorrow over their fall. It ought not to paralyze us. "The Lord will provide." "I have provided, etc." But (v. 2)

SAMUEL FEARED TO STIR UP CIVIL WAR, by openly espousing a rival to Saul. This explains the elders' question at Bethlehem (v. 4). They knew of the breach, and feared that Samuel might come with a measure of direct resistance to Saul. Hence his reassuring reply to them.

There is nothing sinful in fear, until the Lord gives assurance of safety. To flee is sometimes a duty (Matt. ii. 13; x. 23; xxiv. 16). Prudence is not cowardice. So God vice's him how to proceed (v. 2). "But was not this a deceptive course?" No. It was God's plan to change the succession to the throne—but not by bloodshed. Hence secrecy was proper. But secrecy is not deceit. To hide is not the same as to lie. God's purposes are often hidden till executed; wisely and mercifully. So it is with men. Medical men, generals, statesmen, ministers, business men, have often to keep their secret.

This is no departure from truth. Prudence in a good man is one thing. Duplicity is another. So in God's government. (See Ex. ix. 13; 1 Sam. x. 16; Prov. xxix. 11.) Even the brothers do not seem to have been aware of the transaction (1 Sam. xvii. 28).

A sacrifice was right and proper in itself—brought the people together, made the occasion solemn, and sufficiently public, without disturbing the nation. Witnesses to the solemn deed were no doubt secured.

Accordingly Samuel said to the elders (v. 5), "sanctify yourselves—for when the law contained directions. (See Lev. i. 10, and Num. xi. 18.) When it is said, "be sanctified," it means that he directed, and saw that it was done. See a similar usage in 1. 5. (A surgeon disinfects a ship, a governor purges an office of bad men, when directing, and seeing that it is done.) Now we come to

JESSE (v. 6), SON OF OBED.

Descendant of Moabitish Ruth and Boaz (Ruth iv. 13-22), and also of Rahab of Jericho; as if to show how Jew and Gentile may well become one in the greater "Son of David." Twice in the Old Testament (1 Chron. ii. 5, 12), and twice in the New Testament (Matt. i. 3, 5; Luke iii. 32-34), the family record is given—showing its importance. He was of an old family ("the Ephrathite, 1. Sam. xvii. 12), an "old man" (v. 13), with eight sons, living at Bethlehem, and so named (ch. xvii. 58), but not of the elders of the town, who managed affairs by a simple, natural arrangement. His wife's name is not given, and we have no reply in Scripture to a question often asked, under a misapprehension as to Nahash (2 Sam. xvi. 25), as to David's mother. Jesse is the only one of his name in the Bible.

OFFERING OF SAMUEL.

part is offered: the rest is eaten at a feast to the elders and Jesse. His sons, seven in number, pass under the notice of Samuel (vs. 6-10), and Eliah, who took the leading place, impressed him favourably. Good men, however, may mistake, and the difference between their judgments and the Lord's is stated in words of proverbial form and far-reaching meaning—"Man looketh . . . the Lord looketh on the heart" (v. 7). (See 2 Cor. x. 7.)

Let this be remembered by teachers and scholars: the *godly*, not the *goodly*. God chooses (Ps. iv. 3), though beauty is a good gift from his hand: the lesson is Prov. iv. 24. We need not dwell, any more than Samuel, on these sons, seven of whom—so v. 10 means (see Judg. xvi. 17)—were passed over. We hasten to David who (v. 11), was the youngest, and Jesse's property being largely in sheep, was keeping the flock outside the little town (Mic. v. 2), was living a simple, out-door, country life, accustomed to go some distance with his flock, trained to a certain readiness and self-reliance under God, and withal handsome and attractive. Such men have often played the greatest parts in life.

ANOINTING A KING.

When a new line of kings was chosen, or there was a dispute as to the throne, the anointing was a solemn designation of the king. (See 1 Kings i. 39; 2 Kings xi. 12; 2 Kings xxi. 30.)

Samuel had said in his heart, to himself, Eliah is the Lord's choice, but in his heart God showed him the error, and in the same way pointed out David.

It may be inquired, why anoint him now? We may guess that Samuel—to whom this would be a comfortable assurance of God's care of Israel—an old man, and of known authority, was to do it; that Jesse's mind and conduct towards David were to be influenced; that especially David's own mind might be prepared by the thought of a high calling, and that he might, with this outward and sensible sign, receive the Spirit of God, by whom he—in common with other leaders—was qualified for eminent service. (See Judges iii. 10; vi. 34; xv. 14; 1 Sam. x. 6.) This is not the renewing and sanctifying spirit, but the spirit as bestowing what men call natural and acquired endowments, talents, etc. A less may be learned here from

(1) Samuel's condition. He appears to have been engaged in quiet over "the school of the prophets" at Ramah (1 Sam. xix. 20), hoping more "from young prophets than young princes," but with a true public spirit, mourning not for his own retirement and his family's loss of power, but the evils of the state. Grief must not be excessive: in many cases God has provided some better thing. For Saul, David.

(2) From his obedience. Saul must have become reckless—"he will kill me;" but he refers the matter to God, and takes God's way, referring his judgment to God, and anointing the youngest, when an older brother would have seemed so much more fit for difficult affairs. We must do God's work in God's way, and we shall get direction step by step. And for now and untired places, God will give the aid of His Spirit (v. 18). David's feats, musical skill, and sweet singing are thus explained.

(3) How different is man's judgment from the Lord's! Jesse's family did not think of bringing David to dinner. The Lord is bringing him to a throne.

(4) In how many things like Christ—even in name—"David," beloved (Matt. xi. 17; Eph. i. 6), of lowly origin, designated beforehand, anointed, rejected at first, throne given him, much humiliation, but ultimately crowned as king. We do not here speak of David as the man, in whom was so much sin, but David the anointed king, doing God's will.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Samuel's home—occupation—state of feeling—wherefore—the Lord's word—His provision—Jesse—his home—sons lineage—lesson of it—Samuel's fear—why—the Lord's direction—its fitness—the course followed—the corrected estimate—man's standard—God's—David's pursuits—advantage of his appearance—object of anointing—of anointing David—the typical character—the lessons we may learn.

Don't let the scoffers laugh you into hell; they cannot laugh you out of it.

MISSIONARY NOTES.

DR. MOFFAT, the missionary, when introduced by a father to a son as one who was about to enter the ministry and go to Africa, said to him, "Oh! you are going to live for others. What a glorious thing that is!"

In Western Africa, missionaries meet with an active Mohammedan propaganda. At Lagos there are twenty seven mosques, with 8,000 Mohammedans, and the Imams are busy in teaching the children to memorize the Koran. Mohammedanism spreads rapidly, because it leaves the people with their vices—even drunkenness.

DR. MOFFAT, the African missionary, lately said in a speech, he had often been thankful that his efforts in Africa could not read the newspapers, for they would wonder how a people possessing so much knowledge and wisdom could be constantly engaged in breaking one another's heads, and inventing new means of destruction.

THE REV. DR. DEAN, of China, relates the following fact: He had been conversing with an intelligent Chinese respecting our sacred books, assuring him that they were very old. He gave him a specimen. Soon after, the man came to the Dean, and, with a look of triumph and accusation, exclaimed, "You told me your book was very ancient, but that chapter," pointing to the first of Romans, "you have written yourself since you came here and learned all about Chinamen."

THE REV. S. H. KELLOGG, in writing to the *Christian Intelligencer*, says,—"But the most significant fact connected with the census returns of the Christian population, is found not even in the gaudy figure of 225,000 Protestant native Christians, but in the rate at which this class is shown by these government returns to be increasing. This ratio of increase appears from this census to have been 61 per cent. in the last ten years, against 5 per cent. the natural decennial increase of the Hindoo population. Let the reader, therefore, observe that 61—5, or 56 per cent. of increase represents the effect of Protestant mission—\* labor in India since 1864. And this is a statement made not by interested Christian missionaries, and from inadequate statistics interpreted by sanguine faith, but by the authority of the Indian Government, after a census taken with more labor, pains, and exactness, than any ever taken before. It demonstrates that, with only 517 Protestant missionaries to 300,000,000 people, with all the inveterate hatred of fanatical Mohammedanism, and all the power and prestige of a venerable Brahminism against them, the Church of Christ is, as a matter of fact, gaining on the world to day at least as rapidly in India as in the most favored sections of America; indeed, the exact figures would be to the advantage of the Church in India."

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Christian Advocate* gives an account of a solitary worker in the city of Paris, of whom we had not heard before:—"Mr. McAll, the Presbyterian minister, who is doing so good a work at Paris, finds serious difficulties from the fact that his meetings are connected with no recognized and authorized church centre. Hence he is not permitted to hold his services professionally as religious services. His license is merely to hold meetings *pour moraliser les ouvriers*—to moralize the labouring class. The Jesuits watch him narrowly; and the city authorities, who wish well to him and his work, warn him that there must be some feature in every meeting he holds, to distinguish—I may say to 'difference'—it from a religious service, or else they will be obliged to stop the meeting. Accordingly, besides the singing, the praying, and the familiar addresses, there is always a paper read, or some passage from a periodical, or from some printed book; and care is taken to vary the order and method of the meetings."

THE attempt of Mr. E. C. Johnson, formerly an officer of the Bengal army, to carry the gospel into Kafiristan, is characterized by the *Missi onary Magazine* as one of the most daring efforts of the present time. He left Peshawar with a caravan in March of last year, disguised in a Pathan dress. To the master of the caravan he declared himself to be a Christian fakir, who was willing to give away his head, but not his religion; and to this bold confession he adhered in moments of greatest danger. Arrived at the gloomy hills which mark the Indian frontier, he felt that he was entering the Valley of the Shadow of Death. At every mountain path and village the caravan was sharply inspected by armed men of ferocious aspect. Frequently Mr. Johnson was suspected to be an Englishman, but he was saved from saying more than "I am a Christian fakir from the banks of the Indus, near Mari," which was literally true. Several times he thought that his last moment had come—once beside a new-dug grave, and again when a Pathan drew his dagger and brandished it over him. To the latter he said, "Don't kill me. If you kill me, let me first commend my soul to my Saviour." At night he was stowed away among the sacks of the caravan, and guarded by members of the company who felt a kindly interest in the daring man. Having reached Jellalab, he saw the snow-peaks of Kafiristan, and hoped within ten days to reach this mysterious country. At this place he was thoroughly identified as a European, and sent back to the frontier under escort, but not without opportunity to speak of Christ in public and private to Afghans. He thinks the country is so firmly closed, not to Christians as such, but to Europeans; and if protection for missionaries, and for them only, were demanded by the British Government, it would be granted.

THERE ARE 11,000 savings' banks in Europe.

NAVIGATION closed at Montreal on the 21st ult.

MOODY AND SANKEY have left Brooklyn for Philadelphia.

THE MALAY difficulty has been effectually disposed of.

THE PRINCE OF WALES has left Madras for Calcutta.