

Our Young Folks.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

Every little grape, dear, that clings unto the vine,
Expects some day to ripen its little drops of wine.

Every little girl, I think, expects in time to be
Exactly like her own mamma—as sweet and good as she.

Every little boy who has a pocket of his own
Expects to be the biggest man the world has ever known.

Every little piggy-wig that makes his little wail
Expects to be a great big pig with a very curly tail.

Every little lambkin, too, that frisks upon the green,
Expects to be the finest sheep that ever yet was seen.

Every little baby colt expects to be a horse;
Every little puppy expects to be a dog of course.

Every little kitten pet, so tender and so nice,
Expects to be a grown up cat and live on rats and mice.

Every little fluffy chick, in downy yellow dress,
Expects some day to crow and strut or cackle at its best.

Every little baby bird that peeps from out its nest
Expects some day to cross the sky from glowing east to west.

Now every hope I've mentioned here will bring its sure event,
Provided nothing happens, dear, to hinder or prevent.

DO NOT HIDE THE BIBLE.

"Oh, don't do that, please!" said Mabel Coy to her chum Rose King, as they were arranging their room at the Oak Knoll Seminary at the beginning of the school year.

"Don't do what, pray?" asked Rose, opening her large black eyes very wide.

"Excuse me, please. I must seem very abrupt, but I thought you were about to put your Bible at the bottom of that pile of books."

"And what if I do? it is my own Bible."

"I did not think of that. It was simply that I have been brought up to never put anything on the top of a Bible."

"You look too sensible to indulge in such superstitions."

"It is not superstition, it is reverence."

"The Bible is only a book."

"The Bible is God's only book. It should never be hidden or put on a high shelf or wedged into a case. It should be in plain view, unobstructed, ready to be opened by any person at any time."

"I never heard of any such thing. Where did you get such ideas?"

"It is one of our most cherished family traditions. Papa is a minister and an editor. His study table may be piled high with papers, but the Bible will be free, on its own particular corner. The habit was taught him in his childhood. He says that early love and reverence for God's book made him anxious to read it, and resulted in making a minister of him."

"And I fancy it has helped to make a preacher or a lecturer out of you," said Rose, laughing.

"Am I lecturing you? I beg your pardon. I was only attempting to excuse my seeming rudeness and to defend my position. Please allow me to say further that this thoughtfulness about the Bible has awakened a reverence and a love for it that have stimulated me to read it, and I love God and His Son our Saviour better on account of knowing Him better than I should had I not a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures."

Mabel spoke with such serious sweetness that Rose could not forget her words. Then, too, the sight of Mabel's Bible on a dainty little tripod stand in a corner was a constant reminder.

Hanging to one side of the stand was a small portfolio-shaped basket containing a Sabbath school quarterly and a Christian Endeavour topic card. "So that I may know just where to find them," said Mabel. "So much valuable time may be wasted in hunting for things."

Rose's Bible was on her study table with her other books, and was not open in requisition, for she usually read a story or wrote letters during the time Mabel spent daily over her Bible.

Presently, one evening there came to Rose by express a tiny old fashioned claw footed candle-stand, and as she finished reading the note that accompanied it, she exclaimed—

"O, Mabel, I shall have to tell you how I happened to receive this pretty gift. I do not in the least deserve it. You see I wrote home all about your reverence for the Bible"—Mabel noticed with pleasure that she did not say superstition—"and grandma writes in reply that the idea is such a beautiful one she is sure it cannot help being a benefit to any person who will follow it out in practice, and so she sends me this little old stand that came from England, and I have been in our family for generations, and she hopes it will help to remind me how much the Bible meant to our Puritan ancestors, and that I shall not lose sight of the fact that this government, founded on scriptural precepts, can only be sustained by a Bible-reading and Bible loving people." Now, isn't that quite a preachment for one's sweet little old grandma? and wasn't it lovely in her to rob her room of its greatest treasure for poor little unworthy me?"

"Indeed it was," replied Mabel, assisting to remove the wrappings from the little stand. "What a beauty it is! Now, in appreciation, you must make yourself her greatest treasure."

You can do it by making yourself a Bible-reader and a Bible lover."

"But I don't how to do that."

"Read the Bible with me a half-hour regularly every day. Try to read it prayerfully and understandingly."

"But, Mabel dear, I am not a praying girl."

"You ought to be. It is entirely your own fault that you are not, and it is a fault very easily overcome."

Just then the evening mail was brought to the door, and several letters fell to Rose's share.

After looking them over she said: "I think, Mabel, my conscience will not be quite clear until I have confessed that in every letter I have written this term I have indulged in some merriment about you and your Bible, and it has been the means of my finding out that my friends consider me a frivolous young person indeed. They all say how beautiful your spirit of reverence is, and that Bibles are so common in this day and generation that people fall into a habit of treating them with disrespect. They are all rejoicing that I have a room-mate who is a Christian, and trust that my bad habit of turning all serious subjects into ridicule will not prevent you from influencing me for good. Now, is not that a fine record for a young woman of my age and advantages?"

"Is it true?" asked Mabel, softly.

"Oh, yes, you know it is, although you have made very few attempts to approach me on serious subjects. But, Mabel dear," she went on with some hesitation, "I was very much affected by hearing your prayer for me last night. You thought me sleeping, and your voice was very low; but my hearing is acute, and I understood every word. Now I want to know if you believe that God was listening to your prayer."

The young girl looked astonished at the query, but she replied quickly—

"He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him."

"Is that in the Bible?"

"Certainly. It is in that beautiful eleventh chapter of Hebrews. It is all about faith, you know."

"I do not know anything in particular about the Bible I never cared to know before. Do you think, Mabel, that God would listen to me were I to pray to Him, asking to be one of His followers?"

Mabel turned to her little stand, opened her Bible, turned to the passage she wanted, and read aloud—

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

"Can everything be answered out of the Bible, Mabel?"

"I do not think there can be any doubt about it."

"Well, from this time on I am resolved to be not ashamed, but to make the Bible the guide of my life, and not only to pray, but live also as it would have me. How strange it is that your exclamation begging me not to cover up my Bible should have led me to this decision!"

"Nothing in the providence of God is strange," replied Mabel.

FAIR AND SQUARE.

The last time that Bert and Ray Temple stayed at Wyngard's farm, the farmer gave them a rabbit apiece, and a handsome wooden house to keep them in.

"You must keep the house clean and feed them yourselves," said Farmer Wyngard.

"That isn't work; it's fun," said Bert.

"Not likely we'll forget," Ray declared, proudly.

The farmer laughed.

Ray was to feed them three times a day, and Bert was to sweep out the house and put in fresh water once a day. They were to take turns week about at the work.

But before the week was out a discussion arose.

"Ray, you've forgotten the feeding three times this week; now I shan't clear out the house to-morrow."

"Very well, then, I won't feed them the next day," Ray answered.

"Then I won't do my part for two days," cried Bert.

Farmer Wyngard listened with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Bless us! Seems to me it's a bad lookout for those rabbits. They're to starve because you youngsters are lazy."

The boys looked ashamed. They attended to their duties promptly for a few days, then they forgot again, and each accused the other of neglect.

"Now, I'll tell you how to manage," said the farmer, sitting down on the wheelbarrow. "Tisn't fair to punish the rabbits for your faults—you see that?"

"Yes," the boys admitted.

"Now, when Ray forgets to feed them three times he must take the turn at house cleaning, besides his own work; and if Bert forgets his part of the bargain once, he must feed the rabbits a whole day, besides his share of the work. Punish yourselves, boys, but don't punish the rabbits. Watch each other and be fair and square."

The boys laughed at the old farmer's clever plan. Then they looked at each other.

"We'll try it," they said.

"That's right! Be fair and square, boys!"

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Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

AUG. 28. THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR.

GOLDEN TEXT.—He kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. ACT. VII. 60.

INTRODUCTORY.

The touching event forming the subject of the present lesson, took place about seven years after our Lord's ascension. The Church had steadily grown in numbers and in influence. In the administration of the funds provided for the support of poorer members some complained that there was partiality. The Hebrew Christians were supposed by those of Greek origin to be the recipients of the larger share of the contributions. To obviate this cause of complaint deacons were chosen who would attend to the care and distribution of the funds. From the names of those chosen it may reasonably be inferred that the first deacons were selected from the Greeks or Hellenists. The one who stands out most conspicuously among them is Stephen, who was an eloquent and powerful preacher of the Gospel, and who obtained the distinction of being the first of the noble army of Christian martyrs. The hostility of the ruling faction was still as determined as ever. The success and fidelity of Stephen's ministry were especially displeasing to them. He was brought before the Sanhedrim and charged with being a blasphemer and a subverter of the institutions of Moses. Quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures, with which he was perfectly familiar, he showed that Christ was the fulfilment of the Old Testament economy and the promised Saviour. Then, making a sharp, direct, personal application to his judges, he exasperated them to such a degree that they were eager to take his life.

I. Stephen Before the Council. The powerful defence he made did not conciliate his accusers and judges. Having boldly charged them directly with complicity in the crucifixion of Jesus, they would hear no more. They were cut to the heart, not with sorrow and remorse for the part they had taken in the death of the Just One, but, feeling the full force of the accusation, they were filled with ungovernable rage against him who brought the truth so clearly home to them. "They gnashed on him with their teeth." What a striking contrast between these judges and their innocent victim! They rage like wild beasts; he is calm and serene, with ecstatic gaze he looks steadfastly into heaven. They are filled with tormenting passion, with the spirit that animated the Evil One; he is full of the Holy Ghost. To his rapt vision a glorious sight is presented. He sees some manifestation of "the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God"—standing as if ready to receive and welcome His devoted servant. He tells his judges what he beheld, but they are furious. They would listen no longer. They drowned the voice of Stephen by their outcries, and forgot everything, yielding to the wild impulse with which they were possessed. They rushed upon him in a tumultuous mob, hurrying him out of the Temple court into the valley of Jehosaphat. There was a strange observance of minute legal forms, and an utter absence of the spirit of justice in the execution of Stephen. They did not wait to deliberate on his case. They took no vote, but hastily seized him. In accordance with ancient custom they make him suffer without the gate. The severest form of capital punishment among the Jews was inflicted upon him. He was stoned to death, although at that time the rulers were not entitled to inflict the death penalty on an offender without the sanction of the Roman authority. It was the requirement of the Jewish law that when one was condemned to death by stoning that the witnesses had to cast the first stones. In the present instance the witnesses, who falsely accused Stephen, took off their loose outer garments and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. This they did that they might the more easily perform their part in that awful tragedy. That young man has a remarkable career before him. At that time he was fierce in his opposition to Christ and His truth as any one there. The time was to come when he would be the ablest and most zealous defender of the truth for which Stephen offered up his life.

II. The Martyr's Death. After the witnesses had performed their part, then the multitude would join in doing the unrelenting victim. His thoughts are elsewhere. While the multitude are inflicting all the bodily pain they can, he is earnestly praying to the ascended Lord, to whom he says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." In death he trusts in Jesus and through Him he triumphs. Into His safe keeping the dying martyr commends his soul, his eternal interests. In his death Stephen is Christlike. Having prayed for himself, his last prayer is one for his enemies. It shows how fully he had learned the spirit of Christ, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." In the case of one of them, at least, that prayer was fully answered. The great Augustine has said: "If Stephen had not prayed, never would the Church have possessed Paul." In the simple language of Scripture, how suggestive is the description of Stephen's death, "when he had said this, he fell asleep." Death is a sleep, and there will be an awakening on the resurrection morn. It has been remarked that as Stephen's name signifies a crown, he was appropriately named. He was thrice crowned. God's grace crowned his life of devotion; he wore the thorny crown of martyrdom, and the crown of glory, honour and immortality.

III. Persecution. Those implicated in the death of Stephen were not satisfied with what they had done, far less were they visited with compunction. Having begun with the murder of Stephen they were determined to uproot the Church, and they set about persecuting all who belonged to it. Saul, who had been an eager and an interested spectator of what had taken place, heartily approved of all that had been done, and he lends himself readily to the evil work of persecution, though he afterwards repented of it sincerely. The very means employed for the suppression of Christ's truth was overruled for its advancement. The great persecution that drove the Christians out of Jerusalem, spread them over Judea and Samaria, where by their testimony and their exemplary lives they commended the Gospel to many. The apostles remained in Jerusalem. They could best do their work there, and they felt it to be their duty to remain at their posts. Devout men, probably pious and fair-minded Jews, buried the body of Stephen and mourned for him. Saul was animated by a fiery and relentless zeal in the persecution of Christ's followers. He filled the prisons with men and women whose only offence was that they believed in Jesus. The people who escaped were zealous missionaries; they "went everywhere preaching the word."

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

The first Christian martyr was a Christian indeed.

The mad rage of the enemies of Christ's truth is powerless to hinder its advance. Stephen triumphed in his death.

The sincerity of Stephen's faith is seen in the fact that with his dying breath he prayed for his enemies.

It is easier for us to bear testimony to Christ's truth than it was for the early Christians.