

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

SEPTEMBER 11.

IDOLATRY PUNISHED.—Exodus 32: 15-28

1.—The conduct of the Israelites shows how very soon the effect of the most solemn transaction may pass from the human mind. Not six weeks before they had trembled at the thunders of Sinai, and had heard him say in dreadful voice, "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image," etc. They were still on the same spot, surrounded by reminders of that solemn scene. The holy mount was before them, and the cloud of the Divine presence rested on the top of it. They had seen Moses enter into that cloud, and knew that he was there fulfilling the very office they had asked him to assume, receiving the Divine revelations which he was afterwards to communicate to them. And yet, while waiting for Moses to come down out of the mount, they formed the purpose of holding an idolatrous festival, and clamored to Aaron to allow them to carry out this evil design. Alas! for human nature. We blame the Israelites, but often do similar things ourselves. Egypt follows us even to the holy mount, and how often, after having heard the voice of God, and trembled on the Sabbath, may we be found setting up an idol in His place before the week is out.

The statement that they knew not what had become of Moses was a mere excuse. They knew with whom they had to deal in Aaron. Aaron's conduct proved rather from weakness than sinful intention; he was afraid to resist their clamorous requests, and became an unwilling participator in their sin, very likely with the good, though mistaken, intention of holding their proceedings somewhat in check by keeping himself at the head. But it was a fatal mistake.

It was the second commandment that the Israelites broke, rather than the first. The calf, or young ox, was, no doubt, an imitation of the Egyptian god Apis, but they did not really intend to ascribe their deliverance to the gods of Egypt instead of Jehovah. It was as a symbol of Jehovah they intended the calf, as it is evident from Aaron's words,—verse 5. A mistaken impression is likely to be given to the word gods (ver. 4, 8) in our version. The word should have been translated in the singular number, and their meaning was, "This shall represent our God who brought us up out of the land of Egypt." It was a craving for a visible object of worship. But that lies at the root of all idolatry, and was the tendency of human nature specially condemned in the second commandment. Their sin involved a positive disobedience to a well-known command.

2.—Moses had been told by the Lord what was going on in the camp, so that he was not unprepared for the sight that burst upon his view when he reached the foot of the mountain. The sight was such as to kindle the holy indignation with which his breast was filled into a blaze—"his anger waxed hot"—and its manifestation was the violence with which he flung down the two tables of stone, breaking them to pieces against the rocky ground. It must not be supposed that this was simply a rash act of impetuous anger. It was an intentional act, full of meaning for the startled people who witnessed it. They had broken the covenant, and what could the servant of God do but break the sacred ratification of it which he was bringing down from the mount. The fragments of stone strewn over the ground fully represented the law already broken and trampled under foot.

But Moses was not simply a messenger of wrath on this occasion. He might have been so, for the Lord had declared his purpose to destroy them, and they were spared only in answer to his intercession. The influence of the scene up in the mount, and compassion blended with and toned down his righteous anger. The rebellious people were not to be allowed to go on in their sins, and he must take the most prompt and stern measures to recall them to a sense of their duty. And so we have the grand spectacle of that heroic man striding into the midst of that crowd of revellers, rebuking Aaron, demolishing the idol, setting up the Lord's standard, and enquiring, "Who is on the Lord's side?"

3.—Three punishments seem to be mentioned. 1. Moses made the people drink of the water containing the dust of the golden calf. 2. Three thousand people were slain by the swords of the Levites. 3. The Lord plagued the people,—verse 35.

A little careful discrimination will reduce all these statements to a connected and harmonious narrative. To drink the water impregnated with the dust of the golden calf amounted, according to Egyptian notions, with which the Israelites were familiar, to a repudiation of it as an object of worship. It was therefore imposed as a test. Those who refused to drink of it were, no doubt, the men who were the leaders in the enterprise, and they were put to death by the Levites. The command, "slay every man his brother," etc., cannot be understood as an injunction to an indiscriminate massacre, but must mean that none of those who refused to submit to the test were to be spared on account of their relationship to the officers of justice. Then, on the principle that sin has many indirect as well as direct consequences, he had added other plagues

as chastisements even of those who had repented.

4.—There were three several intercessions of Moses in connection with this sin of the Israelites.

In all these instances Moses' power in prayer is prominently exemplified; and in the two included in this lesson his abnegation of self is a strongly-marked feature. The prospect held out to him that if the people were destroyed for their sins, the Lord would fulfil his promise in his personal descendants, had no temptation for him. He pleaded for this stiff-necked people in terms which could not be resisted; and on the subsequent occasion, he prayed that his own name might be blotted out if they were not forgiven,—verse 32. There is a most striking parallel in this passage to St. Paul's language (Rom. 9: 3).—Sunday-School Magazine.

IT DOESN'T PAY.

It doesn't pay to hang one citizen because another citizen sells him liquor.

It doesn't pay to have one citizen in the lunatic asylum, because another citizen sold him liquor.

It doesn't pay to have fifty working men ragged, to have one saloon-keeper dressed in broad-cloth and flush of money.

It doesn't pay to have ten smart, active, intelligent boys transformed into thieves, to enable one man to lead an easy life, by selling them liquor.

It doesn't pay to have fifty working men and their families live on bone soup and half-rations, in order that one saloon keeper may flourish on roast turkey and champagne.

It doesn't pay to have one thousand homes blasted, ruined, defiled and turned into a hell of discord and misery in order that one wholesale liquor dealer may amass a large fortune.

It doesn't pay to give one man for \$15 a quarter, a license to sell liquor, and then spend \$5,000 on the trial of another man for buying that liquor and committing murder under its influence.

USEFUL HINTS.

A scientific writer in the Quarterly Review asserts that a piece of bread about the size of a French billiard-ball, tied up in a linen bag, and placed in a pot of vegetables, will prevent unpleasant odors arising from the same.

Mr. Donald G. Mitchell lays it down as a safe rule that a tree is too near the dwelling that casts a shadow on the roof: he favors sunlight for health, and several speakers at a recent meeting of the Oxford, Ohio, Farmers' Club, took the same sensible ground.

To fix pencil marks so they will not rub out, take well skimmed milk and dilute with an equal bulk of water. Wash the pencil marks (whether writing or drawing) with this liquid, using a soft flat camel-hair brush, and avoiding all rubbing. Place upon a flat board to dry.

Every careful farmer, says a recent writer, will see that the compost heap and other refuse stored as food for the roots of grasses and vegetables are at such a distance from the house and well, as not to contaminate the air and water essential to the preservation of health and life.

There is no doubt that serious illness results from ignorance of the great danger attending a too long immersion in the water. The Manchester City Council has had the matter under consideration, and has decided to issue printed warnings to the bathers frequenting the free baths. Those in charge of our free baths say that it is a common thing for bathers to remain in the water an hour at a time.

If jellies are not so firm after six or eight hours as you would have them, set them in the sun with bits of window-glass over them to keep out dust and insects. Remove these at night and wipe off the moisture collected on the under side. Repeat this every day until the jelly shrinks from another as need requires. This method is better than boiling down, which both injures the flavor and darkens the jelly.

To whiten a straw hat, first wash it to take any grease or dirt from it; then cut a lemon in halves, and rub the hat well with the pieces. This will whiten any kind of straw or leghorn. Dry in the air. For stiffening it, dissolve a little gum arabic in water, and wet the hat with it. When ready to press it, lay a cloth between the hat and an iron, and wet it. A tooth-brush is good to use if the straw is coarse.

Professor Ira Remsen, of the Johns Hopkins University, has been investigating the effect of cast iron stoves on health—whether the stoves do or do not allow deleterious gases to escape. The verdict is in favour of the stoves. Professor Remsen finds that carbonic oxide—the gas alleged to be so deleterious—does not pass through red-hot cast-iron even of the thickness of the eighth of an inch. Moreover, a careful examination did not in any case instance detect any deleterious gas given out by a well constructed furnace. Where carbonic oxide gas is found, its presence, it is declared, is not due to its passing through cast-iron in any appreciable quantity.

INFORMATION.

WOUNDS BY FISH HOOKS, OR THE FINS OF FISH, may be cured by bathing with Perry-Davis Fish-Killer.

SAINT VITUS' DANCE.—I had for more than five months been afflicted with St. Vitus' Dance, so that I had no control of my arm, and could not use my hand; although under medical treatment I found no improvement until I used Graham's Pain Eradicator, three bottles of which have completely cured me, as I have remained well since using this medicine more than eighteen years ago.

MRS. HEZEKIAH CROCKER. Canning, N. S., May 18, 1881.

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Among the many desirable results of pure blood are, an elastic step, buoyant spirits and clear complexion. The possessor of healthy blood has his faculties at command, and enjoys a clear and quick perception which is impossible when the blood is heavy and sluggish with impurities. Ayer's Sarsaparilla is the best blood purifier and vitalizer known.

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