



LESSON X.—DECEMBER. 3.

Keeping the Sabbath.

Nehemiah xiii., 15-22. Memory verses 15-17. Read Neh. xiii. Compare Isa. lvi., 1-8; Jer. xvii., 19-27, and Malachi i., 10-13.

Golden Text.

'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.'—Ex. xx., 8.

Home Readings.

M. Neh. 13: 15-22. Keeping the Sabbath.
T. Gen. 1: 26 to 2: 3. The Sabbath appointed.
W. Jer. 17: 19-27. Sabbath to be hallowed.
Th. Ezek. 20: 10-20. Sabbath-breaking denounced.
F. Isa. 56: 1-7. Blessings in keeping.
S. Isa. 58: 8-14. Sabbath joy.
Su. Luke 6: 1-10. Christ's teaching.

Lesson Text.

Supt.—15. In those days saw I in Ju'dah some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in a sheaves, and lading asses: as also wine grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Je-ru'sa-lem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals.

School.—16. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Ju'dah, and in Je-ru'sa-lem.

17. Then I contended with the nobles of Ju'dah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?

18. Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Is'ra-el by profaning the sabbath.

19. And it came to pass, that when the gates of Je-ru'sa-lem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I at the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day.

20. So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Je-ru'sa-lem once or twice.

21. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath.

22. And I commanded the Le'vites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

The Bible Class.

The Sabbath—Jer. xvii., 21-27: II. Chron. xxxvi., 21: Neh. x., 29-33: Isa. lvi., 2-7; lviii., 13: Ezek. xx., 12, 13, 20, 21; xliv., 24: Ex. xvi., 29; xxxi., 13-17: Deut. v., 12-15: Matt. xii., 8, 10-12: John ix., 14: Gen. 11., 3.

Suggestions.

About sixteen years after Nehemiah first went to Jerusalem, he returned there, having been for four or five years back at Babylon, the court of Artaxerxes, king of Persia.

Nehemiah found that during his absence many abuses and evils had sprung up. The people and even the priests were breaking the commandments of God in the most flagrant way. The chief abuses were the breaking of the Sabbath, and the marrying of heathen wives. (xiii., 11, 18, 28). These, Nehemiah set himself to reform. Also the people had neglected bringing in their tithes, and the house of God was forsaken, services could not be kept up without money. Those who had been ordained to spend their time caring for the temple and its services, had been forced from want of support, to spend their time farming.

The prophet Malachi draws a dark picture

of the state of affairs at this time; the negligence of the priests and the criminal carelessness of the people. 'Will a man rob God?' he asks. And with startling distinctness accuses the nation of stealing by keeping back the tithes which belong to their God. He also accuses the priests of offering to God polluted and blemished sacrifices. Such as they would not dare to offer to their governor, they dared to offer to the Lord of the whole earth! And called the service of the Lord a weariness! This is interesting to study in the light of the New Testament title of 'priest' as bestowed on every believer in the Lord Jesus (Rev. 1., 6: I Pet. 11., 5, 9.)

The first Sabbath after Nehemiah had returned to Jerusalem, he saw a sight that filled him with horror—many of the people were trading and working and carrying on business just the same as on a week day. The people had grown so accustomed to the sight that it had lost its horror for them. So easily do our consciences become seared and callous, that it is not safe to allow ourselves to repeat any sin or carelessness. A tender conscience is a great blessing, but the tenderest conscience if constantly worn on becomes hardened. Sin causes, as it were, an abrasion, which if not healed soon becomes a callus. But Nehemiah did not allow himself to become accustomed to the sight of evil. God never becomes accustomed to the sight of evil, it is, as it were, a constant surprise and pain to him to find sin in the heart of man. God is unchangeable, and the hatred which he had for the first sin in the garden of Eden is the same hatred with which he now regards sin of every kind. The sin which made necessary the greatest Sacrifice the world ever saw, can never be tolerated in its smallest form in the presence of God. If our hearts live in God's presence we will feel some of his hatred for sin, it will be intolerable to us.

When Nehemiah saw the men of Tyre, that great fishing city, coming with their fish and other wares on the Sabbath, he warned them that they were not to come again to Jerusalem. Then he reproved the nobles and chief men of the Jews, reminding them how their fathers had had to be punished for this very offence. They were violating one of the distinct commandments of God, and by their open rebellion causing the presence and prosperity of God to be removed from the city. The people seem to have repented and promised better things. Nehemiah in his reforms generally appealed first to the nobles or most influential men because their example would go further than a great deal of talk. Also they probably had been the first to make the sins common, though they may never have gone so far as the common people did. Men in high positions of influence have a greater responsibility than other men—though each one of us is individually responsible to God. We can not shift our responsibilities, each man must see that his own influence, however small, is for the best.

When the alien traders came on the Sabbath they found the city gates firmly barred. They camped outside with their goods, noisily demanding an entrance, but Nehemiah warned them not to be there again, promising that if they persisted in coming, he would arrest them all. So they troubled the Jews no more on the Sabbath.

C. E. Topic.

Dec. 3. 'Until He come.' The Lord's Supper. 1 Cor. 11: 23-28.

Junior C. E.

Dec. 3. 'We can do it,' a lesson of courage from Caleb. Num. 13: 17-31.

Missions and the Sunday-School.

In order to make the subject more real to the children, the missionary cause might always be mentioned in the opening or in the closing prayer. I would recommend that once or twice a month, or oftener if thought fit, the teachers should be asked in turn to give a missionary talk from the desk, the time being limited to five minutes. This is enough to tell some anecdote or give some telling piece of information concerning some country or district. A map of the place referred to, hung in front of the desk, would

help the scholars to remember what they heard.

We want, I think, to eliminate from our Sunday-school libraries missionary books which are written in such style that the children do not care to read them, and to put in their place those that they will read. We must be particular not to give the children books that deal with a great many facts, important as they may be for the older folk. Let us give them lives of the missionaries written specially for them, books full of stirring anecdote, full of vivid pictures of the habits and surroundings of the people in these distant countries. There are several of this kind, but we would like more, and we ought to see that they are in our Sunday-school libraries, and that when there, our scholars are encouraged to read them.

While offering these suggestions for the school as a whole, it is of course taken for granted that each teacher embraces the opportunities so often occurring of illustrating the Bible lesson by incidents in missionary life; and, in conclusion, let us aim high for our scholars; let us so instruct them and so pray for them that we may hope to train up in our schools many who shall esteem it a glorious privilege to be themselves the bearers of the Gospel message to the lands of darkness and superstition.—Mrs. Henry Cook.



Tobacco Catechism.

CHAPTER XXVI.—TWELVE REASONS AGAINST THE USE OF TOBACCO.

Q.—Give twelve reasons why no rational being should use tobacco.

A.—1. The habit is at war with temperance. Tobacco is an intoxicant, it is a part of the merchandise of dram shops, and an incentive to drunkenness.

2. The habit is a self-indulgence. It hinders moral reform and impedes progress.

3. The habit is essentially filthy. No Christian gentleman should fill the air with poisonous smoke or deluge the floor with liquid filthiness.

4. The lips of the tobacco chewer or smoker are swelled and saturated with a disgusting poison.

The gums are spongy and tender, and the whole mouth and throat affected by its use.

5. The habit impairs digestion, brings on consumption and weakens the constitution.

6. The habit injures the voice. The smoker generally articulates huskily. The chewer often croaks. The sufferer speaks indistinctly, as he cannot breathe through the nose.

7. The habit is costly. Official statistics show that more money is spent for tobacco in the United States every year than for bread.

8. The habit often lowers the self-respect of those who practice it.

'I love my pipe,' said a clergyman, 'but despise myself for using it.'

9. The habit disturbs the regular pulsations of the heart; tobacco users are thus in constant danger; many fall dead suddenly.

10. The habit weakens the mind. It enfeebles the memory, paralyzes the will, produces morbid irritability, diseases the imagination, and deadens the moral sensibilities.

11. The habit is at rebellion against conscience. The user knows that it wastes time, money, strength and life, and tramples upon the laws of nature, which are the laws of God.

2. It is as contagious as the cholera.

Avoid Temptation.

One I knew had had a long, hard tussle with the drink habit, and had come off victor. One day, at a distance from his home, he was overtaken by a sudden rain. Looking about for shelter, the only quick chance he saw was the open door of a saloon. Against qualms of conscience, he entered, sat down, took up a newspaper, and set himself to its reading. Then he told me how, strangely but certainly, that newspaper would lower itself from before his eyes till