

Our Young Folks.

NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP.

[Written by an unknown miner in a Western camp, inspired by the light of his camp fire and the stars.]

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake
I pray the Lord my soul to take.

"Now I lay me down to sleep,"
Near the camp-fire's flickering light
In my blanket bed I lie
Gazing through the shades of night
At the twinkling stars on high.
O'er me spirits in the air
Silent vigils seem to keep,
As I breathe my childhood's prayer,
"Now I lay me down to sleep."

Sad y sings the whippoorwill,
In the boughs of yonder tree;
Laughingly the dancing rill
Swells the midnight melody.
Foe-man may be lurking near,
In the canyon dark and deep.
Low I breathe in Jesus' ear
"I pray the Lord my soul to keep."

'Mid the stars one face I see,
One the Saviour called away—
Mother, who in fancy
Taught my baby lips to pray;
Her sweet spirit hovers near.
In the lonely mountain brake:
"Take me to her, Saviour dear,
"If I should die before I wake,"

Fainter grows the flickering light
As each ember slowly dies,
Plaintively the birds of night
Fill the air with saddening cries;
Over me they seem to cry,
"You may nevermore awake."
Low I hush "If I should die,
I pray the Lord my soul to take."

I CHOOSE THE WORLD.

A young lady stood beside the pastor, and he gently yet firmly told her that she was in danger. Her mind was in a transition state; with a keen appetite for fashionable amusements; she nevertheless attended a ministry in which the vanities of the world were repeatedly denounced. Nor had it been without its effect upon her. Convinced of the necessity of love to the Saviour, she was nevertheless conscious that she loved the world. She said she determined to have both Christ and the world. The pastor reminded her that she could not serve God and mammon, and so forcibly was the inconsistency of the attempt to do so pointed out that she was brought to a decision—but to what a startling one! Said she, "Then I choose the world!" "If that be your choice," continued the pastor, "take all the pleasure out of it you can, for you will have no other enjoyment to eternity."

She did so, and plunged into all sorts of gaiety, determined to have her full share of pleasure.

One evening at a fashionable assembly a friend said to her, "Will you oblige us by singing?" She consented, and her choice fell upon the pathetic composition of Tennyson's on the parable of "The Wise and Foolish Virgins." This was printed in a book that contained no other religious piece. How singular she should choose this above all others! Nay, is not the directing hand of God seen here? This is the piece:—

Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill,
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still—
"Too late! too late! ye cannot enter now."

No light had we, for that we do repent,
And hearing this the Bridegroom will relent,
"Too late! too late! ye cannot enter now."

No light! so late! and dark and chill the night,
Oh let us in that we may find the light!
"Too late! too late! ye cannot enter now."

Have ye not heard the Bridegroom is so sweet?
Oh let us in, though late, to kiss His feet!
"Oh, no, too late! ye cannot enter now."

The young lady sang as far as the last verse, when in singing the words, "No, no, ye cannot enter now," she seemed to be pronouncing her own doom. The thought flashed into her mind—this will be my case at last. She trembled through the last few notes and hurried from the room without waiting for the compliments of the company. The night was spent in tears and prayer. Day after day witnessed but little alleviation of the distress of her mind. Could it be that she could find pardon after deliberately trifling with the repeated remonstrances of conscience? She sought it, and the words prompted to her by God's Spirit—"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out," brought her peace and joy in believing.

Once again she stood by the pastor, but with what different feelings! Having heard of her distress, he said: "And what is now your choice?" Mark her answer:—

My heart is fixed, Eternal God—
Fixed on Thee:
And my immortal choice is made
Christ for me!

"The fashion of this world passeth away." "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever." "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh."

A LITTLE GENTLEMAN.

The very first snow of the season had come—just enough to slide on without going in over your boots.

It was a sunny December day, and Ted and Mamie were out on the terrace all ready for fun.

Mamie wore her blue hood and red mittens. Her eyes matched the hood and her cheeks matched the mittens. She wanted the first slide down the terrace.

"O, please let me, Teddy!" she begged in a happy flatter.

"No," said Ted; "I'm going to slide first, 'cause I'm the oldest. 'Sides, it's my sled."

"Then you're a mean boy," said Mamie.

"Say much and I'll slide all the time," answered Ted, coolly.

Wasn't it a pity that a quarrel should cloud the beautiful bright day? Mamma thought so. She had opened the window to get a handful of fresh snow, and she heard it all.

"Ted! Mamie!" mamma called. "I'm going to give Tony and Cleo a bath. Don't you want to see?"

They came, hanging back a little.

"O, yes!" cried Mamie.

It was yet one of her delights to watch the new canaries bathe.

Ted didn't say anything—he didn't care much about such fun himself—but he looked on while mamma took off the cage bottom and set the cage over a glass dish full of water on the oil-cloth mat.

Tony hopped to the lowest perch with an eager flutter, and dipped his yellow bill in the water. Then all at once he seemed to remember something. He looked up at Cleo.

"Chip! chip! chip!" he said.

Cleo understood. "Che-up!" she answered, softly.

Then down she came, and into the water she went, while Tony stood by and sang as if he meant to burst his little throat.

When Cleo finished her bath, he took his, scattering the water-drops like rain.

Mamma looked at Teddy. "What do you think of it?" she asked, with a twinkle.

"I think Tony's a little gentleman," answered Ted, promptly.

"And I'm going to be one, too. You can slide first, Mamie."

"No, you can," said Mamie.

It was to see who shouldn't be first this time! But Teddy conquered.

LOVE FOR LOVE.

Ragged, dirty, ugly. He had fallen in the muddy gutter; his hands and face were black, his mouth wide open, and sending forth sounds not the most musical. A rough hand lifted him up and placed him against the wall. There he stood, his tears making little gutters down his begrimed cheeks. Men as they passed laughed at him, not caring for a moment to stop and enquire if he were really hurt. Boys halted a minute to jeer and load him with their insults. Poor boy! he hadn't a friend in the world that he knew of. Certainly he did not deserve one; but if none but the deserving had friends, how many would be friendless!

A lady is passing; her kindness of heart prompts her to stay and say a word to the boys who are joking their companion and laughing at his sorrow. Then she looks fixedly at the dirty, crouching lad against the wall.

"Why, John, is it you?"

He removed one black fist from his eye and looks up. He recognizes her. She has taught him at the Sunday school.

"Oh, ma'am! I'm so bad!"

She had him examined, then taken to the hospital. Afterward she visits him kindly and frequently.

A year passes by.

There is a fire one night. A dwelling-house is in flames. The engine has not yet arrived. The inmates cannot be rescued. A boy has looked on. Suddenly he shouts, "O! she lives here"; then he climbs up the heated, falling stairs. He fights against the suffocating smoke. He hunts about until he finds what he sought. She had fainted—is dying, perhaps. No! he will save her. Five minutes of agonizing suspense, and she is safe in the cool air.

The bystanders are struck with the intrepidity of the boy. He only walks away muttering, "She didn't turn away from me when I was hurt."

O, friends, the stone looks very rough, but it may be a diamond.

A NOBLE EXAMPLE FOR THE YOUNG.

Wendell Phillips is an example of what a rich young man may become who resists the temptations of early dissipation. He developed a grand moral character, and must ever remain one of the noblest figures in the history of New England. An interesting illustration is related of his early boyhood: One day, after hearing Dr. Lyman Beecher preach, he repaired to his room, threw himself on the floor and cried, "O God, I belong to Thee. Take what is thine own. I ask this, that whenever a thing be wrong it may have no power of temptation over me, and whenever a thing be right it may take no courage to do it." "And," observed Mr. Phillips, in later years, "I have never found anything that impressed me as being wrong exerting any temptation over me, nor has it required any courage on my part to do whatever I believed to be right." In other words, in that supreme hour his moral nature conquered and subjugated his lower self. For him henceforth there was no compromise with animalism, with selfishness, cupidity, or, in a word, with any debasing inclination; they were suppliants at the feet of his soul.

Sabbath School Teacher.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

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THE NEW COVENANT.

Jer. 31:
27-37.

GOLDEN TEXT.—I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.—Jeremiah xxxi. 34.

INTRODUCTION.

This and the following three lessons are selected from the prophecies of Jeremiah. This eminent servant of the Lord lived in evil times. He entered on his prophetic work when a young man, during the reign of the good king Josiah. He lived through the reign of the wicked Manasseh and of his successors, till the overthrow of the Jewish state and the Babylonian exile. He died at an advanced age, either in Egypt or in Babylon. It is an impression that some people have that prophets were gloomy, austere men, who enjoyed speaking severe words to the people, and liked to utter terrible denunciations. This is not difficult to account for. The people were sinking more and more deeply into idolatry, and the wickedness that always follows when they forsake the ways of God. The faithful prophet, the true spiritual guide, has deep sympathy for the people but none for their evil ways.

I. A Gracious Promise.—Just at the time when things looked the darkest, when terrible calamities were about to befall the people because of their iniquity, the prophet is divinely commissioned to tell his hearers of happier times yet in store for God's chosen heritage. "The days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah." The land became desolate, but at the end of the captivity in Babylon the exiles would be brought back and the desolation would cease. The people should again become numerous and the fields that had been bare would be filled with flocks. Prosperity would return. The fact of God's over-ruling providence is here distinctly brought out. "Like as I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down," All the while that their enemies were tormenting them God was watching over them. The nations that afflicted them were simply God's instruments. Had the people of Judah been faithful to their covenant engagements, God, the ruler over all, would have delivered them from all their foes. When the time for severe discipline was passed, then, with like watchfulness, God would direct His providential dealings so that His repentant people would enjoy the blessings of prosperity once more, "so will I watch over them, to build and to plant, saith the Lord." It had been a proverbial saying among the people during the captivity, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge," meaning that children were punished for the sins of their fathers, that the punishment had fallen on the descendants of those that had done evil. Though they failed to interpret aright the true meaning of God's dealings with men, there is a truth in that proverbial expression. The apostle says "No man liveth unto himself," so no man sinneth to himself. His sins are not confined to himself. He has to suffer, and those nearest to him suffer with him. The consequences of sin are sure to follow. The second commandment contains a truth that science verifies. The prophet brings out a corresponding truth, that in no way contradicts the other, viz.: that everyone must bear the consequences of his own transgression. "Every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape his teeth shall be set on edge." The blame cannot be cast on others or on circumstances. Every man in this respect must bear his own burden.

II. The New Covenant.—From the time of man's creation God has been pleased to enter into covenant relation with men. A covenant implies mutual obligations. God gives the promise of blessing and protection, and those to whom the promises are made undertake to serve and obey Him. God is ever faithful to His covenant. The failure has ever been on man's side. Here, by the mouth of the prophet, God says, "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." After the return from the captivity in Babylon, what remained of the two branches of the Jewish kingdom was re-united. The distinction of the house of Judah and Israel was no longer retained. With the returned exiles the new covenant would be made. The new covenant was to be different from the one made with the children of Israel when they were freed from the bondage in Egypt. The covenant promised deliverance and an inheritance in the land of Canaan. Its requirements and conditions were embodied in the moral and ceremonial law, and was typical of the larger and more spiritual blessings that it prefigured. The condition of the continuance of temporal blessings was obedience on the part of the people. God fulfilled all that He had promised. It was the people who failed in their obedience, "which My covenant they brake." This is seen through all their history, and at the very time the prophet was speaking these words a disastrous overthrow was about to overtake them because they, being faithless to their covenant engagements, had forsaken God. The solemn and binding obligation was of the most sacred character. The marriage relation is here used as an illustration, "although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord." The new covenant is described as spiritual in its nature. It is expressed by the words, "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." The Old Testament economy was largely an outward service. The greatest stress was laid on obedience down the minutest and most literal forms prescribed. It was preparatory for better things to come. In the new covenant the spirit was to prevail over the letter. Obedience would be secured by inward conviction more than by outward prohibition. This new obedience can only be rendered by the new heart which God here promises to give. The new covenant is a covenant of love. God enters on it because He loves us, and we are prompted to keep that covenant because we love Him. Here He again makes the gracious promise, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." How great is the encouragement given us to love and obey God! The happy result of this inward conviction of God's truth will be that the knowledge of it will ultimately be universally extended. A time is spoken of when none shall need to teach and exhort his neighbour, for all shall be influenced by the inward witness of the truth. Again there is the assurance of God's willingness to forgive the sins of all who repent.

III. The Security of the New Covenant.—There are many considerations to impress on us God's faithfulness to His promises. Here it is based on the infinity of His power. The Creator of this vast and illimitable universe, who orders and controls all its movements and its wonderful arrangements, is able to fulfil all the promises He has made. Here the perpetuity of His spiritual Israel—in its largest and fullest sense, the kingdom of God—is made to depend on His omnipotence. The other side of this truth is presented in the closing verse. If man can search out the secrets of this infinite universe, then when that is done it will be time enough to call in question the divine faithfulness, and that is equivalent to saying that period, even in a remote eternity, cannot come.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

The most faithful prophet is he who imbues his message with the spirit of love.

In the darkest hour God gives to His people the hope of better times to come. Captivity would be followed by deliverance.

The blessings of the new covenant can only be experienced by the renewed heart—the heart in which God's law is engraved by the Spirit of God.