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for

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YOUNG PEOPLE.

Vol. XXXIII.

AUGUST, 1899.

No. 8.

Things That Cannot Fail.

WASHINGTON GLADDEN.

When the anchors that faith has cast
Are dragging in the gale,
I am quietly holding fast
To the things that cannot fail.

I know that right is right;
That it is not good to lie;
That love is better than spite,
And a neighbour than a spy.

I know that passion needs
The leash of sober mind;
I know that generous deeds
Some sure reward will find;

That the rulers must obey;
That the givers shall increase;
That duty lights the way
For the beautiful feet of Peace;

In the darkest night of the year,
When the stars have all gone out,
That courage is better than fear,
That faith is trueer than doubt.

And fierce tho' the fiends may fight,
And long tho' the angels hide,
I know that truth and right
Have the universe on their side.
—Bible Teacher.

Suggestions for the Primary Class.

BY MRS. G. T. FOOKE.

Many years' experience in Junior League, Intermediate, and Primary teaching have shown me the fact that as soon as the class realizes the pres-

ence of God, perfect order is attained. My first request on entering our classroom is for "attention," "every hand clasped," "every head bowed," and "every eye closed." This is quickly done. Then a few words of prayer, asking God's presence, when all unite in saying, "Amen." This form of opening I find very helpful and impressive, and even the "tinies" can understand and feel that they are in God's house. Then, instead of cutting card-board or joining blocks to illustrate the lesson, I use the blackboard as much as possible, assisted by the class, often choosing the most retired or seemingly uninterested, to write a word or make a mark suitable to the lesson, and am often rewarded by a pleasant smile and look of surprise, as if to say, "Am I really going to help?" Regarding a suitable name for the "little" ones, I have usually (in Junior League and infant class) called them the "little tots," but "the tinies" is just as suitable. In order to encourage home preparation of the lesson and good conduct, I sometimes give a card to the boy or girl who has been the most diligent and attentive. Suggestions from other teachers would be very helpful, as their methods could be adopted in place of the usual form, and children enjoy a change.

Stratford, Ont.

Thirty-seven members of the Dartmouth Sunday-school took the pledge on Temperance Sunday, joining the White Ribbon Army of the school. These included members from all classes, from the Young Men's Bible Class to the Junior Department.

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Sunday School Banner.

W. H. WITHROW, D.D., EDITOR.

TORONTO, AUGUST, 1899.

Schools and the Twentieth Century.

The Presbyterian Church of the United States has undertaken to add fifty per cent. to the number of children in its Sabbath-schools before the opening of the new century, as its way of celebrating the advent of the twentieth century of the Christian era. Rev. Dr. J. W. Warden, secretary of the Board of Sabbath-school Work, mentioned the decision of the Pope to celebrate the new century by a high mass from September to January, and of the Protestant Church to commemorate the occasion by the bringing together of many millions of money for the church work. The Presbyterian Church, he said, by the consummation of this plan, will be strengthened in the strategic point of the conquest of children. "The whole hope of the church is in the children. This is the grandest movement that has been taken up in connection with the advent of the twentieth century. What the church has set out to do can be done if every one takes

hold, and I ask the assembly to send forth a mingled entreaty and command in the interest of this movement that will touch the hearts and the love of every church in the country."

Shall not Canadian Methodism emulate the zeal of our friends of the United States?

Jubilee Volume of Methodist Magazine and Review.

This magazine begins its fiftieth volume with a specially patriotic number. It has two well-illustrated articles on two of Canada's great industries—the Agricultural College, Guelph, and scientific farming; and the lumbering industry. Dr. E. H. Dewart and Chancellor Burwash contribute articles on the Higher Criticism and the Ministry of Canadian Methodism in the College. Dr. R. Wilson sketches the growth of Methodism in Eastern Canada, and Florence E. Withrow has an illustrated article on the pathetic story of Queen Louise of Prussia. A stirring Twentieth Century Address by Bishop Fowler, an illustrated poem by J. W. Bengough, an illustrated story of the days of Wesley, and a graphic sketch by W. E. Barton, "Sim Galloway's Daughter-in-law," are also given. Horseless carriages, a sketch and portrait of Rosa Bonheur, "The Browning Love Letters," the World's Progress, with engravings of "The House in the Wood," where the Peace Conference is being held, and other illustrations are given. There are in all eight illustrated articles. Every Methodist should have this magazine. Now is a good time to subscribe. With this Jubilee Volume the June number, containing the beginning of two new serials, will be given free. Price, \$1 to the end of the year.

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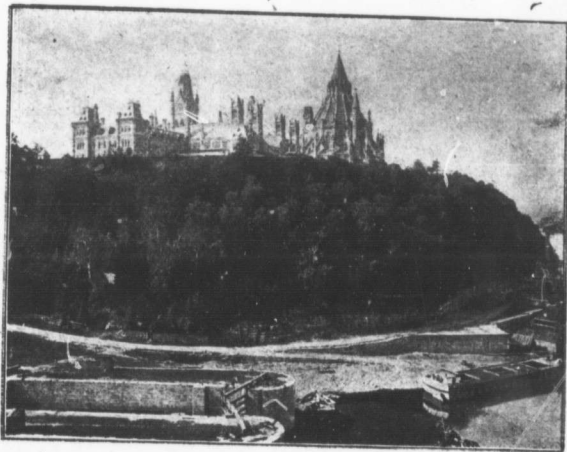
The Outlook Committee.

It is a large committee, for every class in the Sunday-school is represented on it. It is a busy committee if it lives up to what is expected of it, and it is sure to be a useful committee if it does its work with any good degree of faithfulness. The very name is enough to suggest its duty. It is on the outlook for new members of the school. It is to be

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presumed that nearly every one knows somebody who does not attend Sunday-school, and it is these somebodies that the school wants.

It is to be hoped that this committee holds experience meetings now and then to help one another on in the good way. If, for instance, John Jones has not been able to secure one new recruit, it may stimulate his zeal to hear that John Smith has gained three adherents to the cause, and especially it may help to learn how he did it! Let experience meetings be held by all means in all outlook committees.

By the way, why would it not be a good idea for the people of God generally to consider themselves members of such a committee? They need not wait to be appointed; they received their appointment from the Head of the Church, indeed, when they took her solemn vows upon themselves!

Oh, for an outlook committee, not only in every Sunday-school, but in every church of the living God!—Sunday-school Journal.

Intensive Farming.

The farming of the "home acre," in our husbandry for God, is pressing to the front. No plans for church-work are symmetrical that do not recognize the

paramount value of the training of children. We have had to shelve, as disappointingly inadequate, a great many promising temporary expedients for supplying needed Christian workers, and for making up lamentable deficits in missionary treasures, etc., and face the alternative of training up from the cradle a generation which should never know anything but active work for Christ and liberal giving to his cause.

The church has never attempted to farm too extensively in the lines of evangelistic work or missionary enterprises, but she has sometimes lost sight of the fact that one child, whose prenatal influences had been heavenward, and who had been nurtured in Christian experience from birth, ought to be worth half a dozen reformed drunkards or converted heathen, without any disparagement of the miracles of grace which are wrought in the latter.

The annual Children's Day which is now being observed in the churches, together with the Sunday-school, the Junior Endeavour Society, and the Christian fireside, are our tools for cultivating the most fertile part of the church's "home acre." The more efficient our intensive farming, the better prepared shall we be for successful and wider extensive farming.—C. E. World.

No school stands still.

Order of Services.—Third Quarter.

OPENING SERVICE.

- I. SILENCE.
- II. RESPONSIVE SENTENCES. [Psalm 107. 1-8.]
- SUPT. O God, thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.
- SCHOOL. Let those who are redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;
- SUPT. And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.
- SCHOOL. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.
- SUPT. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.
- SCHOOL. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.
- SUPT. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.
- SCHOOL. O that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

III. SINGING.

- IV. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, OR THE APOSTLES' CREED.
- V. PRAYER, followed by the Lord's Prayer in concert.
- VI. SINGING.

LESSON SERVICE.

- I. CLASS STUDY OF THE LESSON.
- II. SINGING LESSON HYMN.
- III. RECITATION OF THE TITLE, GOLDEN TEXT, AND OUTLINE by the school in concert.
- IV. REVIEW AND APPLICATION OF THE LESSON by Pastor or Superintendent.
- V. SUPPLEMENTAL LESSON. [Special lesson in the Church Catechism may here be introduced.]
- VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS (especially of the Church service and the Epworth League and week-evening prayer-meetings.)

CLOSING SERVICE.

- I. SINGING.
- II. RESPONSIVE SENTENCES. [Psalm 117.]
- SUPT. O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.
- SCHOOL. For his merciful kindness is great toward us:
- ALL. And the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

THIRD QUARTER: STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

LESSON VI. THE NEW HEART.

[Aug. 6.]

GOLDEN TEXT. A new heart also will I give you. Ezek. 36. 26.

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

[Read Ezek. 11. 14-25 and Jer. 31. 31-34.]

Ezek. 36. 25-36. [Commit to memory verses 25-27.]

25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

29 I will also save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

32 Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Is'ra-el.

33 Thus saith the Lord God: In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.

34 And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.

35 And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.

36 Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.

REVISED VERSION.

25 And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corn, and will multiply it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more the reproach of famine among the nations. Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sake do I *this*, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Is'ra-el. 33 Thus saith the Lord God: In the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be builded. And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, whereas it was a desolation in the sight of all that passed by. 35 And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fenced and inhabited. Then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord have builded the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.

Time.—This prophecy was delivered probably about B. C. 587 or 585. **Place.**—Ezekiel lived in the Euphrates valley, near the "river Chebar."

Introductory Note.—Ezekiel was one of the great Hebrew prophets. His style is poetical and abounds in imagery. He is an obscure writer, and his writings have given rise to a vast amount of controversy. He came from a priestly class. His lot was cast in evil times, and he spoke boldly

against the sins of the nation. At first he warns of sorrows to come, because of prevailing idolatries. The government would be destroyed, and the king would betake himself in flight. But a new vision comes in the fortieth chapter of brighter days. A new temple rises before his eyes, and a new and better people appear, and prosperity comes to the children of the covenant.

Home Readings.

- M.* The New Heart. Ezek. 36. 22-30.
Tu. The New Heart. Ezek. 36. 31-38.
W. The gift of God. Ezek. 11. 14-21.
Th. The new covenant. Jer. 31. 31-34.
F. A God-fearing heart. Jer. 32. 36-44.
S. Whole-hearted return. Jer. 24. 1-7.
S. Regeneration. Tit. 3. 1-8.

Lesson Hymns.

No. 211, New Canadian Hymnal.

We praise thee, O God! for the Son of thy love,
 For Jesus who died and is now gone above!

No. 207, New Canadian Hymnal.

Gracious Spirit, Love divine,
 Let thy light within me shine!

No. 57, New Canadian Hymnal.

Saviour, more than life to me,
 I am clinging, clinging close to thee.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.**1. The Lord's People, v. 25-32.**

- What is the Scripture promise? Verse 25.
 What does the "clean water" typify?
 What kind of cleansing does it effect?
 What is meant by "a new heart"?
 Under what conditions is it given?
 What is meant by walking in God's statutes?
 What is the promise of God to those who repent? **GOLDEN TEXT.**
 Who were the "fathers" to whom God gave the land?

In the better days what things were they to remember?

Why remember these things?

2. The Lord's Land, v. 33-36.

- In what land were the people to dwell?
 Why were there so many waste places in it?
 What was the land to become like?
 What was to be done to make it such?
 What was the heathen to know from returning prosperity?

What is the Lord's promise? Verse 36.

Why may we trust his promise without any doubt?

Name some promises from the New Testament?

How can we find what God's promises are?

How may we have them in our own experience?

Teachings of the Lesson.

1. God's glory is seen in man's spiritual restoration. His triumph is seen in changing the heart of stone to one of flesh. Here is a miracle which shows mingled power and compassion.

2. The divine Spirit makes one obedient to the divine law. Not the obedience of slaves, but of children. It is not fear but affection which prompts one to keep the commandments.

3. When God restores his favor, even those who have it not can behold it in others. Christians are "the light of the world" and the light to the world.

4. "I will do it." The divine promise is firm as the rock. Firmer! The rock may crumble, and in time it will crumble, but God's promise never will.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.**1. The Lord's People, v. 25-32.**

What promise of cleansing does the Lord make?

What gift is promised to his people? **GOLDEN TEXT.**

What help to obedience would they have?

In what land were they to dwell?

What assurance of plenty did they receive?

What would the people remember?

How then would they feel?

Why were they called to be ashamed of themselves?

For whose sake was this mercy shown? Verse 22.

2. The Lord's Land, v. 33-36.

Where would the Lord cause his people to dwell?

What would occur to the desolate land?

What would the people about them say?

What lesson would the heathen learn?

Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson are we taught—

1. That we all need a new heart?
2. That a new heart is God's gift?
3. That a new heart is a source of blessedness?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Who was Ezekiel?

Where was he when the Lord called him to be a prophet?

In what way did he call him?

To whom did the Lord tell Ezekiel to go? **To the people of Israel.**

What had many of the Israelites done? **Gone away from God.**

How do people go away from God? **By disobeying him.**

What did God send Ezekiel to do? **Call them back to him.**

What did he promise to do? **Give them new hearts.**

What does the old heart of sin love to do? **Have its own way.**
 What good promise does the Golden Text bring to each one of us?
 What will make it possible for us to keep God's law? **To have his Spirit in our hearts.**
 For whose sake does God do all these things for us? **For Jesus' sake.**

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

I. What is one of the precious promises of God? **GOLDEN TEXT: "A new heart also will I give you."**

THE LESSON OUTLINE.

BY J. L. HURLBUT, D.D.

The New Israel.

I. A FORGIVEN PEOPLE.

Ye shall be clean. v. 25.

Pardon all their iniquities. Jer. 33. 8.
 Cleanseth . . . from all sin. 1 John 1. 7.

II. A REGENERATED PEOPLE.

New heart also. . . given you. v. 26.

Create in me a clean heart. Psa. 51. 10.
 Except . . . be born again. John 3. 3.

III. A RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE.

Walk in my statutes. v. 27.

Walk in the Spirit. Gal. 5. 16.
 So walk ye in him. Col. 2. 6.

2. What will a purified people do? **Keep God's commandments.**

3. What was the promise to the ancient Jews? **"Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers."**

4. Who should be witnesses of their prosperity? **Then shall the heathen know.**

NEW CHURCH CATECHISM.

79. When will the kingdom of Christ be consummated?
 The kingdom of Christ will be consummated when, after the Gospel has been preached to all nations, and its glorious promises have been accomplished in the establishment of the reign of righteousness in the earth, Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead.

IV. A RESTORED PEOPLE.

Shall dwell in the land. v. 28.

A tenth . . . shall return. Isa. 6. 13.

There is a remnant. Rom. 11. 5.

V. AN ADOPTED PEOPLE.

Shall be my people. v. 28.

Power . . . sons of God. John 1. 12.

The spirit of adoption. Rom. 8. 15.

VI. A PROSPEROUS PEOPLE.

Multiply the fruit. vs. 30-38.

Grow as a lily. Hos. 14. 5.

Seed shall be known. Isa. 61. 9.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

While Jeremiah, left among enemies in Judah, was doing his best to prevent the national overthrow, and was suffering in consequence persecution as foolish as it was wicked, and while Daniel was witnessing for God in the royal courts of heathendom, to Ezekiel, a prophet of very different type, a resident of Tel-abib, on the Euphrates, the captive elders of Israel thronged to hear "the word of the Lord." A Judean priest by birth and education, Ezekiel had been taken captive by the Babylonians in his early manhood, and was called by God to prophesy when he was about thirty years of age. During twenty-two years he delivered God's messages, and probably remained in Babylonia all his life. A little more than thirty years after his prophecies were ended the first party of returning captives started toward Palestine. His book, overflowing with symbols, allegories, and parables, is unlike any other in the Bible. In some parts it is even enigmatical; and in strange and almost grotesque imagery Ezekiel outdoes even Daniel and John. His influence over the exiled Jews was exceedingly healthful. In their humiliation they were now ready to accept whatever spiritual guide God should send; and their treatment of Ezekiel throughout his lengthened prophetic career contrasts comfortably with the crushing opposition which met Jeremiah. The passage we study to-day is a simplified statement of God's conditioned promises to restore the exiled nation to the Holy Land, and to bless them with such godly characteristics that their restoration and prosperity would be permanent. The condition is deep repentance—turning to God. Similar promises with similar conditions are, in other parts of Ezekiel's book, worked into beautiful parables or visions, two of which we will study next Sunday and the Sunday after.

Verses 25. Then. In the glad days of national restoration, which are to succeed the present days of sincere repentance. **Will I.** God, **Sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.** Washing is a ready figure for moral cleansing; it was constantly used in a

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symbolic way in the Mosaic ritual. (See Num. 19. 17-19; Psa. 51. 7.) Ezekiel, as we have seen, was a priest, and the types of the temple service were constantly in his mind. **From all your filthiness.** Moral filthiness; whatever is spiritually ugly or defiling. **From all your idols, will I cleanse you.** When this prophetic promise was uttered there were probably in some minds honest doubts as to its realization. How such a change of national character could be brought to pass was not clear. But the change came. From the days of Jacob down the chosen people had been tempted by certain pagan superstitions, but now their penitence was so profound that the old temptations ceased to affect them; and after their restoration to Palestine they never lapsed into idolatry. All sin, including idol-worship, is in essence either the immoderate love of an innocent object, a love so great as to alienate the soul from God, or else the love of what is essentially wrong; and sin begets sin. The cleansing from sin here promised implies free forgiveness; not only acquittal from the charge of offending God, but the canceling of the punishment of past offense and restoration to the divine favor.

26. A new heart . . . and a new spirit. Perhaps no deep distinction should here be made between "heart" and "spirit." "Heart" is used, as we often use it, as a symbol of the source of moral vitality. As the health and strength of physical men depend on the health and strength of physical hearts, so the spiritual heart is regarded as the center of spiritual life. Now, the moral and religious condition of the Jews during centuries had shown that spiritually their heart was wrong; they adored Baal, not Jehovah; they wrought evil, not good; they depended on Egyptian horses, not on Providence. With moral perversity they loved what is wrong and hated what is right. The bad spirit of the nation hastened that dreadful climax of their history—the Babylonian exile. God, recognizing their repentance, promises to change all this. Forgiveness is not enough; an erasure of the record is not enough; it is not enough for them to return to the Holy Land, erect again a temple for the living God, and begin a purer worship than the nation had ever known. The people Nebuchadnezzar dragged away from Palestine, had they been restored unchanged, would soon slide back into the sinful habits which had brought about their captivity. Dr. Chalmers used for the title of one of his greatest sermons, "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection." This is exactly what God now promises. **I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh.** Hard-heartedness is a familiar phrase; physical hard-

heartedness brings on by painful stages premature death; the hardening of the moral heart also has fatal results. **I will give you a heart of flesh.** A healthful heart; normal desires. In other passages a "fleshy heart" is used as a symbol of carnality, but here it is contrasted with a heart of stone. "This change of heart," says Dr. Cowles, "is the great doctrine of the New Testament, taught forcibly by our Lord himself in his statements respecting the new birth, and everywhere presented as primarily the work of the Spirit of God."

27. I will put my Spirit within you. With God's Spirit in the heart right actions inevitably result. It is notable that Paul does not refer to the works of the Spirit, but to the fruits of the Spirit, when he tabulates love, joy, peace, and the other delightful results of a life animated by God. **Cause you to walk in my statutes.** As steam causes a locomotive to go; put in you a new moral force. **My judgments.** To the Hebrew mind this would naturally recall the Mosaic ritual and the prophetic teachings. But it has a broader meaning also, and includes all God's laws and decisions.

28. Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave your fathers. Nothing more unlikely could well have been promised.

29. I will call for the corn, and will increase it. Few sentences even in the Bible are more majestic than this. As if corn, and the fruitage of fertile valleys, the diseases of the jungles and the winds of the seas also, all forces of nature, were servants of God, ready to run any whither at his direction. Days of prosperity will come as a result of righteous living, because God will call for his servant, Corn, to minister to them. There shall be no famine in the land, but a wholesome plenty.

30. I will multiply the fruit of the tree. An amplification of the thought of verse 29; there shall be plenty of fruit. **The increase of the field.** An added "specification." **Ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.** When the heathen had heard the exiled Jews exult in Jehovah they "reproached them," asked them why such a God as he could not have kept his chosen people from famine and captivity. Poor Hebrews! Well they knew that these calamities were the result of their own bad deeds. But in the good time coming there can be no more such reproach.

31. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways. God will blot out the record of their sins, but they themselves can never blot it out. Memory of past sins and blunders, however, so long as they have been forgiven, should not be allowed to discourage us; only to remind

us that such doings were not good. **Loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities.** This is the feeling of every genuine Christian. Even a sinner hates sin in other people, and almost every sinner hates certain kinds of sin; but the hating of sin because it is sin argues a change of heart.

32. Not for your sakes do I this. You do not deserve this. **Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways.** It is good to remember the hole of the pit whence we were digged, to recall our infirmities and wrongdoings with sufficient distinctness to keep clear and vivid in our minds the fact that we are not saved by our own righteousness.

33, 34. I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. When the trumpet of Cyrus was blown, and the thousands of Hebrews were invited to return to their land, one burdensome fact kept many back—the walls of the great cities had been broken down, so that after the desert had been crossed

there was no certainty that the newcomers would be welcomed or kept safe; Jerusalem was in ruins, and the outlying farms and plantations lay unprotected and waste. But all this **desolate land shall be tilled;** the region impoverished and depopulated by Nebuchadnezzar's army shall again support a thriving population.

35. They shall say. The discerning ones of the world, who sometimes are quicker to see the movements of God's providence than some of his own children. **This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden.** The reference is primarily to the lands of Judea and Galilee, but in every Christian community the fulfilment of this promise is possible; yea, in every Christian heart.

36. The heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build. The purpose of God's dealings with the Hebrews included the information of the heathen round about that Jehovah punished sin and rewarded goodness.

CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

Verse 25. Then. The Hebrew has "and," not "then." The restoration of the Jews to Palestine was a proof of their forgiveness. **Sprinkle.** This word is often used of the scattering of dry substances, as coals, dust, ashes, etc., but generally like *na'adāh* of the sprinkling of blood or water for ceremonial cleansing as in Exod. 9. 8; 24. 6, and very often. **Clean water.** The use of water for cleansing purposes formed a very important part in the rites of the Jewish Church. It was symbolic of spiritual purification, just as baptism is in the Christian Church. **Ye shall be cleann.** The water itself could not wash sin or guilt away, but, as in baptism, the rite served to lead penitent hearts into self-examination and thus into a closer communion with God; or as St. Mark (1. 4) designates it, "the baptism of repentance into the remission of sins." St. Paul, speaking of the Church, says, "Having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word" (Eph. 5. 26). **From all your filthiness.** From moral defilement of every kind. Sin, of whatever nature, always defiles the soul. **Idols.** The exact derivation is uncertain, but most probably from a root meaning a heap of stones, referring to the custom among the Semitic people of erecting columns, piles of stones or pillars in honor of their gods (comp. Dan. 3. 14). Others derive it from a word meaning a pile of manure, to express the worthlessness of and contempt for the object worshipped. Ezekiel is very fond of

the word and employs it five times more often than all the other Old Testament writers.

26. A new heart. In the Old Testament the heart was regarded not only as the seat of mental life and sensuous feelings, but as the mainspring of moral life as well, "where all the manifestations of virtue and vice reveal themselves." **Heart of flesh.** The phrase is peculiar to Ezekiel. (See chap. 11. 19.) It denotes a tender, impressible heart, one susceptible to the teachings of God's Spirit. The word "flesh" is used in the New Testament in the sense of corrupt human nature. It never has this meaning in the Old Testament.

27. I will put my Spirit. That is the new spirit spoken of in the preceding verse. The word "spirit" is used here in the sense of special inspiration from God, an influence exerted by the Lord upon the entire nature and being of man. This spirit was to be poured upon all flesh (Joel 2. 28). That the Holy Spirit is a person is distinctly a New Testament doctrine. **Cause you to walk in my statutes.** The new heart will manifest itself by a new life. The new spirit of man, or the indwelling of the Spirit of Jehovah in man will make it possible, yea, easy, to keep God's commandments and statutes, to walk in his ways and to do his will. Whoever is filled with God's Spirit finds no great difficulty in obeying him.

28. Ye shall dwell in the land. The ex-

of Israel resulted from their sins. Their restoration was conditioned upon their repentance. (See chap. 28, 25 and 37, 25.) There are those who still believe that the Jews will be restored as a nation to Palestine. This is perhaps the belief of the Zionists; but if they are ever restored, it will be as believers in the crucified Christ.

29. I will save you from all your uncleanness. "Uncleanness" is the same word as that rendered filthiness in verse 25. Communion with God is impossible without heart purity. "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Keil thinks that, inasmuch as the people are already cleansed, the promise to save here refers to "defilements which are still possible after the renewing of the people." God is able to save to the uttermost or to the very end of life. **Call for the corn.** Having been brought back to their own land, God, the author of all gifts, temporal as well as spiritual, will see to it that his people have abundant crops of grain and fruit. This same promise was given in chap. 34, 27-29. Happy the land whose God is the Lord, and whose people trust Jehovah for every blessing.

30. The reproach of the famine. All the Semitic people fully believed in the direct interposition of God or gods. Famine to them was no accident, but the clearest manifestation of divine displeasure, or indeed sometimes of the helplessness of a god to help. In any case the nation suffering from famine would be twitted either of their own wickedness or the inefficiency of the god they worshiped. Umbreit beautifully says: "It was indeed a reproach to Israel that, nourished as they were by the divine food of life in the words of Moses and the prophets, they went after the imaginary gods of the heathen, and, being carried away into the countries of strangers, were obliged to suffer hunger in a dry land."

31. Shall ye remember. Nothing touches the heart of the average man more deeply than the remembrance of wrong done to an innocent friend. (See chap. 20, 43.) **Loathe yourselves.** The realization of one's ingratitude to the great Father in heaven must inevitably cause disgust for oneself. Theologians have often pointed out that the enormity of sin is nowhere more visible than on Calvary, where the infinite love of God appeared in all its brightness and glory. The man who fully realizes that it was his sin that nailed the blessed Christ to the cruel cross will not fail to humble himself. Blessed is the man who loathes sin to such a degree as to forsake it, for then, and not till then, communion with God becomes possible.

32. Not for your own sake. This is re-

peated for emphasis from verse 22. We have precisely the same idea in Deut. 9, 6. The poor Jew of the Old Testament had no more claim upon God's mercy and forgiveness than the American has to-day. It is all free grace.

33-35. These three verses reiterate and amplify the thoughts presented in verses 9-12 and 29, 30. **This land that was desolate.** Travelers in the Holy Land from America and Europe tell us that it is difficult to form any adequate idea of the barren and desolate appearance of that once favored country. Take the following from George Adam Smith: "But the prevailing idea of Judea is of stone—the torrent beds, the paths that are no better, the heaps and heaps of stones gathered from the fields, the fields as stony still, the moors strewn with bowlders, the obtrusive scapals and ribs of the hills . . . the impression is increased by the ruins of ancient cultivation. . . . The strata were contorted. . . . When we were not stepping on detritus the limestone was blistered and peeling. Often the ground sounded hollow; sometimes rocks and sand slipped away from the tread of horses . . . the gullies glowed and beat with heat like furnaces."

Like the garden of Eden. The place prepared by Jehovah himself for our first parents, but from which they were expelled for their sin and disobedience. The prophets Isaiah and Joel also use this phrase which was probably a common expression for a land of great fertility and beauty. (See Isa. 51, 3 and Joel 2, 3.)

36. Then the nations that are left. The people around Palestine which were not carried captives to Assyria. **Shall know.** The Jewish people were to be a special witness to the more benighted nations around, so as to attract them to the fold of God. So in our day every Christian should live in such a way as to bring those less favored than himself to our blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ. Are you conscious of such a life and influence?

Thoughts for Young People.

Paradise Restored.

Primitive man in Eden's garden, environed by the spontaneous delights of nature, presents the most pleasing scene hung up in imagination's picture gallery. Man sinned; sin turned his garden of delights into a wilderness of woe, and he became an exile on earth. God revealed a plan by which man's sin may be forgiven, and be restored from exile and brought to an eternal paradise.

I. Sin always forfeits Eden. It was so with Adam, with the antediluvians, with Lot, with Jacob, with the children of Israel wandering in

the wilderness, with the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, with the Church of modern times repeatedly, with you and me.

2. *Outside of Eden the world is a wilderness, and sin is the cause.* Man must earn his bread with the sweat of his brow; Lot must suffer the loss of his wife and his wealth; Israel must wander in pain forty years; the Church must pass through the Dark Ages; you and I must bow under the burden of temptations and trials—all because of avoidable acts which led out of Eden into the wilderness.

3. *The first step to a restored Eden is a renewed heart.* Bellamy may picture a perfect world in print, but he has left out the largest factor in the restoration of the world—the human heart. It was Adam's pure heart that made Eden a paradise, and Adam's sinful heart that made the outer world a desert. This world is a Sahara, but God has given Christians the art to carry their oases with them, and wherever a Christian rears his home there is paradise.

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

BY J. T. GRACEY, D.D.

The chapters of Ezekiel which are selected for study in these lessons admit of being placed in their oriental connections so as to make them clear and interesting. For instance, this lesson can be studied in the light of the purification ceremonial of the Hebrew nation, though it was written amid the scenes of Babylon. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean," could not fail to revive in the mind of the exiled Hebrews their national ritual, which was elaborately technical in the later days. This was performed in two ways: a whole-body bath or a hand-washing to the wrist. The first was necessary if one had touched a leper, a corpse, or a reptile. The hand washing was sufficient for the ordinary purification from impurities acquired in the market or any other public gathering. The dishes used for cooking or for serving at table had also to be purified, and the couches on which they reclined had to be "sprinkled." The whole-body bath was necessary for the purification of anyone who had touched a Gentile.

The later rabbis carried the distinctions in the various rites for purification to the kinds of water to be used. The Mishna distinguishes six kinds of water applicable to different shades of impurity, as having degrees of efficacy for cleansing. Water from stagnant pools or cisterns had the lowest purifying power, but it might serve for the mere hand-washing; so might running water from the hills. If the water was drawn in large quantity sufficient for a bath,

it might be used for the entire body, or for washing any article; so might even stagnant water if it issued from a trickling spring; the mineral or thermal water was of high value; but that which had the highest value was from a pure spring.

The prophet said the Lord would sprinkle "clean" water on the people, or pure water from a spring, which had the highest value and could cleanse from all impurities. It was efficacious even against leprosy. It is curious to follow the miserable casuistry of the Jewish rabbis as they try to discriminate the value of waters which are mixed by being brought from different sources through the same pipe. Even the relative value of snow water had to be determined. They discriminated between the kinds of vessels to be used for washing and how far the hands must be plunged into the water. It is pitiful and puerile. But the idea and practice of purification seems to have spread all over the oriental world, and when Ezekiel speaks of the Lord cleansing the people it would have force with a far wider community than the Jew. The Persians think purification compensates for many moral obliquities in conduct. Moslems, too, believe in this form of cleansing the soul. They are supposed to wash the whole body every Friday, as a religious ceremony, and of course they wash five times a day, or before each of the five prayer hours. Van Lennep says when they are in a hurry they can do both the washing and the praying inside two minutes' time. The Jews found fault with Jesus because he did not observe the custom to wash before eating as a religious duty. The clothes of him who led away the scapegoat had to be purified by washing; so did those of the priest who offered the red heifer, though the ashes of the red heifer were the base of the water of "sprinkling" which Moses required to be "sprinkled" on the Levites. These ashes were kept always ready at hand with the water thereof to purify from the many things which caused legal impurity. The water was to be "sprinkled" on the unclean (Num. 8).

It must be emphasized that these "cleansing" ceremonies had no reference to the atonement for sin; that was another ceremony. The defilement which it was the purpose to remove was only ceremonial, and the purification was ceremonial. But it was a picture lesson. Death was, for instance, the penalty of sin; contact with it made the person unclean so that he could have no communion with the community of the living till ceremonially purified. No part of the red heifer ever was brought to the altar, nor was even the blood sprinkled before the altar; only before the tabernacle, and that not by the high priest, but by his son. It was not the blood but

the ashes that purified, mixed with water and "sprinkled" on the unclean. When Korah rebelled there fell widespread deaths on the camp, and the people came to have such dread of defilement from contact with so many corpses that this ceremony of purification was necessary to relieve the people. This ceremony taught the whole nation to look forward to the inward purgation of the soul through the great atonement, combined with the inward purity of the nation such as Ezekiel prophesied should come.

We have mentioned that this idea of purification of the Hebrews was found in many parts of the earth outside the Hebrew community. It is worth while to illustrate this further by reference to some recently discovered knowledge about the Shinto religion, which, if it does not show parts of that ceremony to have been a migration from Judea, at least exhibits marvelous similarity to this Hebrew purification ceremony. Shinto is the oldest religion of Japan, and the only one that can at all be called national. In a paper recently read before the Asiatic Society of Japan, we learn that its ceremony of purification was marvelously similar to that of the Hebrew. What was the most important of all the rites of the Shinto religion was the "Great Purification." The special point of emphasis is that the object was like this promised by Ezekiel, the purification of the whole nation, from princes and ministers down to the common people, from sins, pollutions, and calamities. It was not observed at fixed intervals. The chief ceremony was observed near the south gate of the imperial palace, and is styled the "Purification of the Court." But a similar ceremony was conducted at every shrine throughout the country; whence the expression, "The Great Purification." The chief ceremony consisted of throwing purification offerings into the water. This was distinguished from four other purifications: 1. The purification of the individual from pollution contracted by some offense, the guilty person himself providing the offering to the gods. 2. The "ablution," by which the individual or the place was purified from contact with dead bodies or other unclean objects. 3. The purification of the priests and others taking part in a religious ceremony, just as Moses required the purification of the clothes of the priest offering the red heifer. This ceremony among Shintos was performed in a hall, or open place, specially prepared for the purpose of "bringing down" the spirits of the purifying deities. This consisted of recitations of prayers of purification with certain symbolic acts, and the "sending back" of the gods. 4. A private purification performed on the last day of the sixth month.

By Way of Illustration.

BY JENNIE M. BINGHAM.

God's love. There is a passage in Revelation which I think a great deal of—"Unto Him that loved us and washed us." It might be thought that God would first wash us, and then love us. But no, he first loved us. Several years ago the whole country was intensely excited about Charlie Ross, a child of four years old who was stolen. A search has been made in every State and Territory and in Great Britain, France, and Germany. The mother still cherishes a faint hope of seeing her child. Suppose that she were in some meeting, and that while the preacher was speaking she should look down in the audience and see her son. Suppose that he was poor, dirty, and ragged, shoeless and coatless, what would she do? Would she wait until he was washed and decently clothed before she would acknowledge him? No, she would rush toward him and take him in her arms. After that she would cleanse and clothe him. So it is with God. He loved us and washed us.—*Moodly.*

The new birth. This is the doctrine of the new birth as taught by Christ to Nicodemus. God does not simply energize the old man. He introduces into us something entirely new. Man by nature is as dead and incapable of seeing and entering into the kingdom of God, or into living communion with God, until he is born again, as a blind and deaf mute is incapable of seeing and enjoying the material creation. God was revealed to us by the incarnation of Jesus, and he is revealed in us by the new birth.—*Pretecost.*

Verses 27. Obedience. Obedience ought not to be a hateful word to us. Admiral Dewey would never have become a successful commander had he not learned thoroughly how to obey. The higher up we are in the order of development and intelligence the more laws we are under. The tree is obedient to more laws than the stone; the animal is under more laws than the tree; the man is under more laws than the animal; and the Christian is obedient to more laws than the man, because he is more highly developed.

Prosperity. Godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. The best argument for the Christian faith is the Christian nation, which in all material wealth and advancement so far outstrips the nations which reject God.

Bishop Thoburn reminds us that India has not invented an improvement on the toothpick in two thousand years, while at Washington you can see six hundred improvements on the plow. The nations without God are almost universally the

savage, ignorant, unenlightened nations of the earth.

Lowell's challenge was a good one when he said, "I shall not relinquish my religious belief until you show me a country which rejects God and his word, where civilization abounds, where womanhood is protected, where childhood is respected, where there are civil liberty and all of the comforts and delights which we find in Christian countries."

Heart Talks on the Lesson.

BY MRS. J. H. KNOWLES.

Here we have New Testament gospel in Old Testament prophecy. We "catch the sweet, the far-off strain, which hails the new creation." We hear the prelude to Matthew's song of hope, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins;" the song which rises through Mark, Luke, and John, the book of Acts, and the exultant strains of the epistles, to the full symphony of Revelation—"I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . and I John saw the holy city New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new."

The gospel of salvation from sin through the power of God is the same in the Old Testament as in the New, only in the New Testament we read it in clearer light. For salvation is God's plan, God's thought, God's purpose, and from age to age he changes not. To one taught of the Spirit, the whole Bible is full of Christ the Saviour of men. The regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, as Ezekiel sets it forth, fills us with the same grateful praise and joy as St. Paul's glowing prayer in the third chapter of Ephesians. It stirs us with the same desire which kindled his soul, to "make all men see the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."

O what blessed things we find when we find God! The most blessed of all is the fellowship of this mystery—his recreating, transforming, all-renewing grace through the power of the Holy Spirit. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you." O how good to be washed clean, to have the guilt and stain of sin all taken away! "A new heart will I give you." Righteousness, peace, and joy taking the place of those grievous sins and follies which fill me with shame when I think of them. "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes," or, "I will bring it about that ye walk in my statutes," so that we have the power to do right as well as to choose it, like a bird whose nest is in the low-

lands, but whose wings are strong and free to soar above the earth far into the azure heights of heaven.

Ezekiel saw that God's dealings with his people would be vindicated in the sight of the heathen who said he was not able to deliver them from their enemies in a coming day when Israel should be changed in heart by the Spirit of God. All mysteries of sin, suffering, and death will be made plain in the final salvation of the world through Jesus Christ. They who leave the world's Redeemer out of their reckoning of the world's misery are confronted by a problem which bewilders and disheartens. Believing in him, we wait with courage and hope that day when it shall be said the earth "that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden." "I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it."

This is the gospel for a sinful world; the gospel for a sinful heart. If you know it in your soul, you have learned the first notes of the sweetest song they sing in heaven.

The Teachers' Meeting.

Begin with a brief survey of Ezekiel's prophetic career. This lesson teaches: (1) Purification from sin; (2) The creation of a new heart; (3) The fruits of a righteous life. . . . Or treat the lesson for a few minutes as typical of the history of the Church in all ages; then, with emphasis, as typical of God's dealing with an intelligent soul. . . . Notice what the prophet promises to the people: 1. A new nature (verse 25). The national character changed, the record of evil expunged by the grace of God. 2. A new heart (verse 26). The secret of the outer change is this inner change. 3. A new spirit (verse 27). In the past Satan led Israel to all evil. Now the spirit of God enters and leads to the high and holy. 4. A new relation (verse 28). God had cast off his people because of their wickedness; now he welcomes them as the father did his prodigal son. 5. A new land (verses 29-36). A new people will make a new land. . . . Or treat it as a series of pictures. 1. The Lord's people unfaithful. The worship in Zion half-hearted and fiftful; degrading reverence paid to idols; heartlessness of the rich; degradation of the poor; giddy heedlessness of the future; and through it all the prophets' warnings unheeded. 2. The Lord's land desolate. Jerusalem a heap of blackened stones; towns everywhere demolished; farms and vineyards gone to ruin; terraces torn down; wild beasts ranging the mountains; silence and desolation brooding over the land. 3. The Lord's people exiled. By the rivers of Babylon they sat down and wept while they

remembered Zion. But in captivity they listened to Ezekiel. Though they cannot visit the temple, they turn with new fidelity to the God of their fathers. With new interest they read their literature of song and story and ritual. They make themselves ready for the unfolding of God's plans. 4. The Lord's land restored to prosperity. Our lesson is simply a prophecy, but it is a prophecy which was abundantly fulfilled. Picture Palestine populous again, the people reverent, the walls of Jerusalem restored, its streets crowded, the temple service conducted with a reverence and fervor never known before, and spiritual and temporal prosperity everywhere.

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

Come, thou almighty King,
Lord, I hear of showers of blessing,
O for a heart to praise my God.
Precious promise,
Prince of peace, control my will.

Hear thou my prayer,
O glorious promises of God.
All the promises of Jesus.
I bring to thee, my Saviour,
Jesus, in whom the Godhead's rays.

Library References.

BY REV. S. G. AYRES.

For a study of the prophecy of Ezekiel the Commentary of A. B. Davidson in the Cambridge Bible for schools is undoubtedly the best book. The student will also find help in Cornill, *Prophets of Israel*, and W. Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*. Guthrie, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, is a classic of sermonic literature.

EZEKIEL THE PROPHET.—Stanley, *History of the Jewish Church*, vol. iii, pages 19, 53. Ewald, *History of Israel* (index). Kittell, *History of the Hebrews* (index). Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, vols. v, vi (index). Hengstenberg, *The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament*, vol. ii, pages 264, 272. Gillilan, *Bards of the Bible*. Geikie, *Old Testament Characters*, page 437. Morris, *Sacred Biography*, vol. ii, page 102. Geikie, *Old Testament Portraits*,

page 337. Baring-Gould, *Legends of Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 377.

FREEMAN'S HANDBOOK OF BIBLE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS: Ver. 35, Fenced cities, 365.

SERMONS ON THE LESSON.

Verse 25.—Spurgeon, C. II., "Cleansing: A Covenant Blessing," *The Homiletic Review*, December, 1886, page 518. Parker, John, *In Presence, or Face to Face with God*, page 78. Simeon, Charles, "The Conversion of the Jews," *The Pulpit*, vol. xvi, page 225.

Verse 26.—Fleming, Canon, "A New Heart," *The Homiletic Review*, July, 1892, page 56. Burder, Henry, "A New Heart the Child's Best Portion," *Village Sermons*, page 56.

Verse 31.—Walker, Robert, "Man's View of Himself," *Sermons on Practical Subjects*, page 331.

Blackboard.

BY THOMAS G. ROGERS.



All require the new heart, for the natural heart is enmity against God, and not being subject to the law of God, can never keep his judgments or receive his Spirit. We cannot merit this new heart or offer anything for it (verse 32); it is God's gift to those who inquire of him to do it for them (verse 37). For the stony heart he will give us a contrite heart—one of flesh and feeling. It will be clean instead of sinful, and Christlike instead of selfish. When the heart is right, and God's law is written there, our whole lives will be right. Outward prosperity and beauty of character follow God's gift of a new heart.

LESSON VII. EZEKIEL'S GREAT VISION.

[Aug. 13.]

GOLDEN TEXT. I will put my Spirit within you. Ezek. 36. 27.

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

[Read John 3. 1-18.]

Ezek. 37. 1-14. [Commit to memory verses 5, 6.]

1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

REVISED VERSION.

- 1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones; and he caused me to pass by them round about: and behold, there were

2 And caused me to pass by them round about : and behold, *there were* very many in the open valley ; and lo, *they were* very dry.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live ? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest.

4 Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

5 Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones : Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live :

6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live ; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded : and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above : but *there was* no breath in them.

9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God : Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel : behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost : we are cut off for our parts.

12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

13 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

14 And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land : then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.

Time.—This prophecy was delivered probably about B. C. 587 or 585. **Place.**—Ezekiel lived in the Euphrates valley, near the river Chebar.

Home Readings.

- M.* Ezekiel's Great Vision. Ezek. 37. 1-14.
Tu. Promise of restoration. Ezek. 37. 20-28.
W. All have sinned. Ezek. 22. 23-31.
Th. Dead in sin. Isa. 1. 1-9.
F. Warning. Deut. 8. 11-20.
S. Quickened by the Spirit. Rom. 8. 1-11.
S. From death to life. Eph. 2. 1-10.

very many in the open valley ; and lo, they 3 were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live ? And I answered, 4 O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy over these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of 5 the LORD. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones : Behold, I will cause breath to 6 enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live ; and ye shall 7 know that I am the LORD. So I prophesied as I was commanded : and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold an earthquake, and the bones came together, bone to his 8 bone. And I beheld, and lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up, and skin covered them above : but there was no breath 9 in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God : Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe 10 upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great 11 army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel : behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost ; we are clean cut off. 12 Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people ; and I will bring you 13 into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, and caused you to come up out of 14 your graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land : and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.

Lesson Hymns.

No. 20, New Canadian Hymnal.

Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,
Ever near the Christian's side.

No. 19, New Canadian Hymnal.

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers.

No. 21, New Canadian Hymnal.

Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire,
Let us thine influence prove.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.**1. The Valley of Death, v. 1, 2.**

What is meant by the hand of the Lord?

What was the effect upon the prophet?

What does the valley of bones typify?

What may it represent in these days?

What was the mission of a Hebrew prophet?

2. The Word of the Lord, v. 3-8.

What was the question the Lord asked the prophet?

Why did he ask it?

What was the thought of the prophet in his response?

What is it to prophesy?

What is the meaning of "breath" in verse 5?

3. The Breath of Life, v. 9, 10.

What is the meaning of "wind" in verse 9?

Who are represented by the slain?

What was the effect of the prophecy?

What application of this lesson may be made to the Christian Church?

What is the subject-matter of preaching?

4. The Explanation, v. 11-14.

Whom do the bones of the valley represent?

How do they represent them?

To what land were the Jews to be restored?

Give some reasons why they loved their land?

What were they to know when restored?

What is the promise of God to his people?
GOLDEN TEXT.

Teachings of the Lesson.

1. There is a spiritual death as there is a physical. Such a state seems hopeless. It would be, if there were no God, the author of spiritual life. But God lives, and the promise is "Ye shall live."

2. There must be the human utterance of the divine power. Not that God needs it. God wills it. He honors the good man by giving him a share in the prophetic work. He, too, will give him a reward.

3. The joy of God's favor should make us cry out in gratitude, "He is the Lord." Gratitude for past mercies puts us in that condition that God may still shower mercies upon us.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.**1. The Valley of Death, v. 1, 2.**

What is meant by "the hand of the Lord"?

Upon whom was it laid?

To what place was the prophet carried?

What were in the valley?

What did these dry bones represent? Verse 11.

How did they represent Israel at that time?

Of what besides were they a symbol? Eph. 2, 1.

Wherein does sin resemble death?

2. The Word of the Lord, v. 3-8.

What question was asked of the prophet?

What answer did he give?

What was he commanded to do?

What is here meant by "prophesy?" [To speak in the name of the Lord.]

Who are now God's messengers to men?

What was he commanded to say?

What promise was given?

What did the prophet do?

What was the result?

Were these bodies now living?

What did they need to give them life? Gen. 2, 7.

Who alone can give life?

3. The Breath of Life, v. 9, 10.

What was the prophet next commanded to do and to say?

Did the prophet obey these commands?

Are all men dead in sin? Rom. 5, 12.

By whom can life be given? Rom. 5, 17.

How are men to receive life? John 5, 24.

4. The Explanation, v. 11-14.

What did these bones represent?

What did the house of Israel say about these bones?

What did God say about its graves?

In what sense was Israel at this time buried?

What new life were the people to have? Verse 14.

Had God's Spirit been in them when they were taken captive to Babylon?

Were they ever restored to their own land?

Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson do we learn—

1. That God can do what seems impossible?

2. That God's work is gradual and progressive?

3. That God uses men as his agents?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

Who was Ezekiel? **The Lord's prophet.**

When did he live? **A long time before Christ came.**

How did the Lord sometimes speak to him?

By visions.

What is a vision like?

Why does the Lord not need to use visions now? **We have Jesus to teach us who God is and what he is like.**

What was the vision told in this lesson? **A vision of dry bones.**

Who were like these dry bones? **The people of Israel.**

How had they lost the life of the Spirit? **By disobeying God.**

What did God say he could do? **Make these dry bones live.**

What did Ezekiel see in the vision? **The dry bones becoming living persons.**

What is sin? **Death.**

Who can change it to life? **God.**

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

1. Where did the Spirit of the Lord carry the prophet? **Into the valley of dry bones.**
2. What was he to exclaim? **"Hear the word of the Lord."**
3. What was the effect? **The dry bones became an exceeding great army.**
4. What is the gracious promise of the GOLDEN TEXT? **"I will put my Spirit within you."**

THE LESSON OUTLINE.

From Death to Life.

I. A DEAD WORLD.

1. *Valley... full of bones.* v. 1, 2.
Dead in trespasses. Eph. 2. 1.
In pleasure is dead. 1 Tim. 5. 6.
2. *The house of Israel.* v. 11.
Our bones....scattered. Psa. 141. 7.
Country is desolate. Isa. 1. 7.

II. THE GIVER OF LIFE.

1. *The Lord... will cause breath.* vs. 5, 6.
I make alive. Deut. 32. 39.
In him was life. John 1. 4.
2. *Will open your graves.* vs. 12, 13.
In the graves shall hear. John 5. 28.
The dead shall be raised. 1 Cor. 15. 52.

III. THE PREACHING OF LIFE.

1. *He said... Prophecy.* v. 4.
How...hear without a preacher? Rom. 10. 14, 15.
Woe...if I preach not. 1 Cor. 9. 16.

NEW CHURCH CATECHISM.

80. How shall all men be brought to the judgment? At the coming of Christ all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation.

John v. 28, 29. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

2. *So I prophesied.* v. 7.
We preach Christ crucified. 1 Cor. 1. 23, 24.
Not ourselves, but Christ. 2 Cor. 4. 5.
 3. *The bones came together.* v. 7.
God gave the increase. 1 Cor. 3. 5, 6.
We preach...ye believed. 1 Cor. 15. 11.
- #### IV. THE SPIRIT OF LIFE.
1. *Come... O breath.* v. 9.
Sendeth forth thy Spirit. Psa. 104. 30.
Until the Spirit be poured. Isa. 32. 15.
 2. *Put my Spirit in you.* v. 14.
My Spirit upon thy seed. Isa. 44. 3.
Ye are...in the Spirit. Rom. 8. 9.
- #### V. A LIVING CHURCH.
1. *They lived and stood.* v. 10.
Thy dead...shall live. Isa. 26. 19.
Ransomed...shall return. Isa. 35. 10.
 2. *In your own land.* v. 14.
A tenth...shall return. Isa. 6. 13.
All Israel shall be saved. Rom. 11. 26.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

The fortunes of Israel had, as we have seen in former lessons, fallen to their lowest condition. The temple was in ashes; the city was destroyed; the throne of David was cast down; a mournful silence was brooding over the wasted lands, and all that was left of the chosen people was a company of captives in Chaldea, whose dethroned and blinded king lay pining in Nebuchadnezzar's prison. The picture which represented the state of Israel before the eyes of the mourning prophet was that of a valley white with the skeletons of a dead host. By the command of God, Ezekiel began to prophesy, giving to the dry bones the divine promise of returning life. At his word there is a rushing, and everywhere the fleshless bones are united; the muscles and the skin appear upon them, and an army of soulless corpses covers the plain. Now the winds are summoned to bring their breath to the dead, and as it fans their faces bosoms heave, cheeks flush, redder, life pulses through every heart, and those that an hour ago lay throughout the plain as scattered bones now stand upon their feet as the host of the Lord, a regenerated Israel, throbbing with new life, and beaming with hope for the centuries to come.

Verse 1. The hand of the Lord was upon me. A man's arm bended, with a mallet in the hand, is to this day a popular symbol of strength. **Carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord.** There seems to be a care throughout Ezekiel's phraseology to indicate that his spirit only was

"carried out;" he was in an ecstatic state; his body remained where it was. **Set me down in the midst of the valley.** Or "plain"—a level place surrounded by hills. **Which was full of bones.** The place may have been familiar to the prophet. In those days even more than in these were devastated large portions of God's heritage, and modern precautions were not taken by armies for the burial of the slain. The prime aim of this vision was to exhibit to the exiled Jews their helplessness and the hope of their restoration. A secondary purpose was to give the worshippers of God in all generations a picture of the unregenerate world and the means for its salvation; the world is a valley of dry bones, for every sinner is as one dead. Whether or not, in addition to these two purposes, the doctrine of the final resurrection was here intentionally foreshadowed, it cannot well be kept out of the mind of the Christian who studies this passage.

2. Cause me to pass by them round about. He was probably, in vision, led backward and forward through the piles of whitening bones. **Behold, there were very many in the open valley.** There were vast numbers exposed on the ground. **And lo, they were very dry.** There was no hope whatever of resurrection.

3. Son of man, can these bones live. Is it possible? To the phrase "Son of man" our Lord afterward gave a fuller meaning. **O Lord God, thou knowest.** Nothing is impossible to God.

4. Prophecy upon these bones. Or, as the Revised Version says, "over the bones." The prophet, as has been well said, was not always a foreteller, but always a forthteller, always the deliverer of a message from God. And in this case he is not to predict, but to utter God's message. **O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.** But how could dry bones hear, without flesh, muscles, and nerves? How can anything impossible be done? How could the man with the shriveled arm stretch it forth? God's word can reach as far as God's will chooses. We are to preach salvation to all men, and count no lost soul within the reach of our efforts beyond the power of the Gospel.

5. Thus saith the Lord God. Ezekiel is not giving his own opinion merely. **I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.** "I am causing." The completed miracle he mentions first, then afterward details the process. These bones shall again support the intricate fleshy structure of living, human beings. "Life" and "breath" are expressed by the same word. The promise is first of restored national

existence, then of spiritual life to those dead in trespasses and in sin.

6. I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin. Here is the process. Every missing part of the human body is to be restored, and then God will put breath into them, as he breathed into Adam the breath of life, and they shall live.

Ye shall know. As soon as these men become again living, thinking, acting creatures, a great knowledge springs up in their minds that Jehovah is the God. Those who have experienced God's grace know his power.

7. So I prophesied. Did what he was told to do—even though it was to preach to dry bones. **There was a noise.** A thundering, as the bones came together. **And, behold, a shaking.** The whole valley was covered with bones, and as every one of these bones changed its position before the prophet's eyes the effect was like that of an earthquake. **The bones came together, bone to his bone.** Each bone, driven by an intelligent force, sought the other parts of the body to which it had once belonged, and each joint came into its fitting place. Already in Chaldea there were preliminary movements toward a return to the Holy Land, which might be compared to this movement of bone to bone.

8. When I beheld. As I watched. **The sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them.** God's promise was kept item by item. **But there was no breath in them.** All that had been done was introductory to the great miracle. With the outward forms of godliness is need of its spiritual power.

9. Prophecy unto the wind. Or "the breath," or "the Spirit;" for the same word is used for all three, and all three are referred to here. The dead men of the vision needed the wind, which became breath as soon as it was in them. But the nation which was symbolized required the animating Spirit. **Come from the four winds.** The old conception of the universe was quadrilateral. There were four corners of the world, four points of the compass, and four winds answering to the points of the compass. **Breathe upon these slain, that they may live.** As of old, the Spirit of God brooded upon the waters and afterward breathed into man the breath of life. As on the day of Pentecost, and thousands of times since, the Spirit of God has breathed upon thousands who were dead in trespasses and sins, and restored them to life.

10. So I prophesied. As he was told, again. **They lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.** Activity follows close upon life. So the nation of Israel was re-

stored to numerical strength and to great vigor. The time of Ezra, the generation which followed that of Ezekiel, was a time of much intellectual and spiritual activity.

11. These bones are the whole house of Israel. Including both nations. Israel and Judah had been disintegrated and subjected to decay like this defeated and slaughtered army. Upon these whitened bones the winds of the rainy season had blown, the sun in its fury had smitten them, all the forces of nature had attacked them; so the nation of Israel had been subjected to innumerable forces tending toward ruin. Were the bones dead? So was the holy nation. Were they widely scattered? So were the Jews. **Our bones are dried.** With imagery similar to that of Paul they had thought of themselves as organs of the great national body; the head of the nation could not say to the feet, "I have no need of thee;" the feet could not say to the hands, "I have no need of thee." But that was in the old days, when the nation was instinct with life. Now each organ is separated from its fellows; indeed, most of them are utterly decayed; no one can be of any service to the others, for the nation is dismembered and dead. **Our hope is lost.** The most deplorable feature of all. **We are cut off for our parts.** "For our part;" so far as we go. "Clean cut off," says the Revised Version. We are utterly separated from old-time conditions of national glory. Our national spirit is extinct.

12. I will open your graves. In Babylonia

the whole nation was practically dead and buried. A dead man by his own power might rise from his grave and return to home and business as easily as this poor little nation could revive itself, and reestablish itself in Palestine. **But thus saith the Lord God;** it shall be done.

13. Ye shall know that I am the Lord. Not only know that the words of Ezekiel were the words of Jehovah, but that Jehovah is now the same as of old—the same God who rained destruction upon Sodom, who plagued Pharaoh, led the children of Israel across the desert, threw down the walls of Jericho, and made the heathen flee before them. He was able to perform as great wonders in the days of Ezekiel as at any previous time.

14. Shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live. As the "wind," or "breath," or spirit or physical life, which the Lord God had called from the four corners of heaven, had animated the dead men and turned them into active, aggressive, vigilant soldiers, so the Spirit of God is to be breathed into Israel, and God will dwell in it, the animating national force. **I shall place you in your own land.** A promise that some of those who heard these words lived to see fulfilled. **Then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it.** It is well to recognize the hand of God in the accomplishment of our victories. It is better by strong faith to be sure of the promise before as after its performance.

CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. The hand of the Lord. This expression meets us again and again in Ezekiel. (See 1. 3; 3. 22; 8. 1 and often.) It signifies the superhuman power which Jehovah exercised over the prophet in order to influence him to carry out his work, "the hand being regarded as the organ of power in action." Here it refers especially to the ecstatic state of Ezekiel, who was about to receive a divine message for the people. **Carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord.** The subject of the verb is the hand of Jehovah—that is, the hand of Jehovah carried me out in the Spirit of Jehovah. Clumsy as the expression may appear, it is a faithful reproduction of the Hebrew, though some have suggested that Jehovah is the subject and then read, Jehovah carried me out in spirit—that is, in a state of mental ecstasy. **In the midst of the valley.** Probably the same valley that is mentioned in 3. 22, where the Hebrew word *bikah* is rendered "plain." **It was full of bones.** It is very possible that the prophet had really seen such a field literally

covered with the bones of those fallen in some great battle. Such scenes are said to have been common in ancient warlike times.

2. In the open valley. On the very surface of the valley, unburied on the ground, just where they had fallen in war. In verse 12 they are said to have been buried and called forth from their graves. As this is a vision, we are not to look for scientific accuracy. **They were very dry.** There was no flesh to moisten them, so long had they been exposed to the wild beasts and the elements.

3. Son of man. The phrase *ben Adam*, translated "son of man," though used by Ezekiel about ninety times, is found nowhere else in the Old Testament except Dan. 8. 17; *ben enosh*, also rendered "son of man," meets us in other books. It was probably used as a reminder of human weakness and frailty. The term itself is idiomatic Hebrew for human being, or man. **Can these bones live?** The question was intended to arouse attention and awaken the faith of the

prophet, to prepare him for the great work which Jehovah had for him to do. The result should encourage all good men to attempt, when God commands, what seems even impossible. **O Lord, thou knowest.** Another way of saying, "If they are restored to life, it must be through thy almighty power. Thou canst do all things."

4. Prophecy over these bones. Announce to these dead bones what God is about to do for them. The word translated "prophecy," in this place, does not necessarily signify to foretell a future event, but is often employed in the sense of speaking or teaching. In studying the life and works of the Hebrew prophets it is clear that though foretelling the future was a very important part of their duty, it was by no means their only or chief work. Our English word prophet is from the Greek *prophetes*—that is, one who speaks for another. **Say unto them.** The dry bones represented captive Israel. The figure is suggestive. Israel as a nation was dead, and had as little prospect of a new national life as these dry bones had of a resurrection. **Hear the word of the Lord.** Listen to the message Jehovah your God has for you. There is life in his word. As on creation day, so to-day, God speaks, and life appears.

5. I will cause breath to enter into you. The word *ruach*, rendered "breath," is often translated "wind" or "spirit." In Gen. 1, 2 we read that "the spirit [or as some translate, the wind] of God moved upon the face of the waters." He will now breathe into their lifeless bones, as he breathed the breath of life into Adam, our first parent.

6. These bleached bones are now to be covered with flesh and skin, and then the lifeless body is to have a soul or new life put into it.

7. There was a noise. The word used is *kol*, usually rendered "voice." As it is directly connected with earthquake (A. V., shaking), it has been inferred that the noise heard must have been the sound of heavy thunder. Indeed, thunder is called "voice of God." (See Psa. 29.) Perhaps, however, nothing more is meant than that Jehovah spoke in audible voice to these bones, and that the word translated "earthquake" refers to the noise made by the bones, as they, in obedience to the voice, gathered together. **Bone to his bone.** The several bones belonging to one body were now brought together. This is figuratively used for the assembling of the captives to deliberate upon plans for the return to Palestine.

8. There was no breath in them. The prophet naturally compared the poor, downtrodden people of his race to the lifeless body

of man as described in Gen. 2, 7. The body was perfect, but it lacked life. This was the condition of Israel away from God, and is the condition of every man without the soul.

9. Prophecy unto the wind. The word rendered "wind" is that rendered "breath" in verse 5. The meaning is that the prophet is to address himself to the four winds—that is, winds from every point of the compass. So large is the army of the slain as to require an immense quantity of wind or breath to revivify them.

11. The whole house of Israel. Not simply Judah, but the other tribes as well. It seems that when the tribes revolted in the time of Jeroboam that Benjamin and Levi and a part of the tribe of Simeon remained loyal to Rehoboam. (See 2 Chron. 11, 13 ff. and verses 16-18 of this chapter.) **We are clean cut off.** This is the language of despair. Israel captive, under the dominion of the great Babylonian ruler, had no hope of restoration. So they cry out, when urged to work and trust God, "We are completely lost." Our every effort to regain national independence must prove vain.

12. Behold, I will open your graves. Israel had been compared to dry bones, but bones unburied; the figure is carried a little farther. They are not only dead, their national unity was entirely destroyed. They were buried out of sight among the heathen nations. Now, however, God is about to open their graves—that is, bring them out of the lands wherein they were exiles, and to restore them to their beautiful Canaan. **O my people.** This is an endearing title, intended to encourage those who were cast down and lacking full faith in the promises of Jehovah. **I will bring you into the land of Israel.** To us, acquainted with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body from the grave there is a possibility of misunderstanding these beautiful visions of Ezekiel. Whatever his views were regarding the resurrection of the human body after death, it is clear that he speaks here only of the restoration of the Jewish people into new national life, their return from Babylon to the land of their fathers.

Thoughts for Young People.

Thoughts concerning Spiritual Death and Life.

1. Every sinner is in a state of death, a mere lifeless ghastly skeleton. Verse 1.
2. The world of sin is like a sepulcher, full of dry bones. Verse 2.
3. The impartation of life to those spiritually dead is beyond the power of man. Verse 3.
4. In the salvation of the world God employs

men as his agents, and preaching as his instrumentality. Verse 4.

5. Though men are called upon to work for the salvation of sinners, yet the power which lifts from death to life is all of God. Verse 5.

6. The faithful preaching of the Gospel will be attended with results in the saving of souls. Verse 7.

7. The process of a soul's new birth in righteousness is gradual, and by successive steps. Verse 8.

8. The outward form of godliness is not sufficient without its inward power. Verse 9.

9. God does not cease his work of redemption until it is complete. Verse 10.

By Way of Illustration.

The miracle of regeneration. Bishop C. C. McCabe said to a class of young ministers at a Conference:

"The best way to have success is to find the worst man in the community and get him converted, and this miracle will be such a proof of divine power that everybody will be aroused and convinced, and thus the dying faith of the people will be stimulated. In my early ministry I was holding meetings in my little church. I had just given the Gospel invitation, when a ragged, dissolute man, acknowledged to be the worst drunkard in the community, opened the door and looked in. I called out:

"My friend, if you want Jesus Christ to save you from all your sins, come in."

"He came in and walked down the aisle to the altar, where he knelt. In a few minutes he was a new man in Christ Jesus; the miracle of regeneration was wrought in him. He became one of the faithful members of that little Church. Several years later, when stopping in a neighboring town, I was approached by a fine-looking young man who said:

"I am the son of that man who knelt at your altar on that occasion. My father is now a steward and class leader and trustee in that Church, and has been all these years an earnest Christian."

The helplessness of man to save himself from the disease of sin may be illustrated by the story of Laocoon and his sons in the second book of *Vergil*. The great serpent which has come out of the sea has wound itself about the father and sons, and they are being crushed to death in its huge coils while they struggle to get loose.

One of our early missionaries to India said:

"If ever I see a Hindu converted, I shall see that which more nearly approaches the resurrec-

tion of a dead body than anything I have ever seen."

God can turn the forbidding into the helpful, the weak into the strong, the despised into the honored. The miracle of the Nazarene leading the world does not wane, but grows as we know more of what the human heart and will are. In the most obscure spirit may be waiting the benefit of the nations, as with the Syrian youth was the feeding of hungry thousands. So with Theresa, the hospital builder, who began her simple charities with only three farthings, replying to those who would dissuade her, "Theresa with three farthings is nothing, but God and three farthings are everything." The acts of patriot or martyr, or the kind deed to the stranger, may be already issuing in changed purposes, involving the destinies of millions. It is not in the blowing up of battleships and the coronation of czars that the mightiest events of God's kingdom are seen. Some loving, ransoming thought in the mind of a Frances Willard may be working more profoundly among the forlorn, in many lands, transforming homes and communities for which God thus cares. With fine satire upon their race pride John said to the boasting Pharisees, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."—*D. W. S. Clark*.

"*God is able.*" Dr. F. E. Clark, at the great Cleveland Convention, gave the young people this motto, "God is able!" He said: "Young people's societies are not able, the Church is not able, but God is able. When William Carey used to go to the ruins of an old heathen temple on the banks of the Ganges to pray he realized what tremendous darkness surrounded him and what appalling difficulties stood in the way of that land becoming Christian, but with conquering faith he said, 'God is able,' and claimed the promise of his word."

Heart Talks on the Lesson.

Instead of talking to my class to-day I would like to talk with my fellow-teachers.

Do you get discouraged in your work? I am afraid we all too often do. When the Lord sets us down in the midst of very unpromising young people, as he set Ezekiel among dry bones, and the question comes, "Is there hope of making anything out of them?" we sometimes answer with a languid faith, "The Lord alone knows; I am not sure about it myself." It may help us to consider the prophet's experience. The vivifying of dry bones is hardly more improbable to human belief than is the regeneration of some among whom we sit every Sunday. But the dry bones "lived, and stood upon their

feet," energetic personalities, ready for action—a great army. There is surely no member of my class or yours more hopeless than a dry bone. When the prophet felt himself unable to solve the problem, the Lord did not say its solution depended upon him in any way except to give his message to the bones.

That was all he was told to do, and all he had the ability to do. He was commanded to say to them not his own words or thoughts or speculations as to the effect of his prophesying, but simply the word of the Lord. And doing as he was commanded, a decided effect was produced. The bones began to look like human beings.

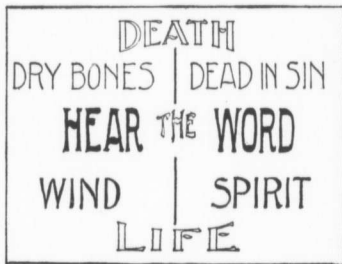
So God says to us, "Be a faithful teacher of my truth, tell your class over and over again the things they ought to know; teach the word week after week, for the entrance of the word giveth light; and my word shall not return unto me void; it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." We do not send it; He sends it by us. The most unpromising scholar will improve in mind and morals and manners under faithful, tactful, thoughtful teaching of the word. Nor is this all we can do. There was great outward change in the bones, "but there was no breath in them." The one thing needed to make this apparent improvement of real value was lacking. A good appearance was of little consequence if they were dead. O, fellow-teacher, let us be thankful if we win the love, respect, and attention of our class, but never let us be satisfied with this alone! However interested or interesting they may be, without the life of God they are dead. The Spirit is not ours to give, but it comes as breath came to the dry bones when, with a true heart cry we pray, trusting the "thus saith the Lord," "Come from the four winds, O, breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." Those whom we thus teach, and for whom we thus pray, will surely live. They will stand erect, as God intended them to be and do, each in his sphere a center of influence for good. Never let us be discouraged. The joy of winning even one soul is enough reward for years of patient teaching. An "exceeding great army" of valiant fighters against evil will come from our Sunday schools if we teachers faithfully use the word in the power of the Holy Spirit. "Then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it and performed it, saith the Lord."

The Teachers' Meeting.

Notice the time when the vision took place.... The condition of the Jews, and their prospects.... A word-picture of the scene.... Its applica-

bility to the Jewish people.... The fulfillment of the prophecy in the restoration.... Outline for teaching: I. The picture of a sinner's state. II. The means of a sinner's salvation. III. The process of a sinner's transformation.... How this lesson illustrates: (1) The condition of the world; (2) The power of the Gospel; (3) The importance of preaching to the lost; (4) The omnipotence of God.... The first scene is of a dead people—the valley of dry bones. This may represent the condition of the Jewish kingdom at that time, without a sign of their renewal and life. It is also a picture of the world dead in sin, for sin is a state of death. 2. The second scene shows us the source of life. God said, "I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." All our life comes from God. 3. Next we notice the divine method of giving life. He might have restored it by divine power, but he chose to use human power. So it is now. 4. But we observe another scene. Bone came to bone and muscle to muscle, but the army lay dead, an army of corpses until touched by the Spirit of life. Men may preach, but only God can give power. 5. The last picture is that of the living Church. As this army arose from the dead bones, as Israel came back from the land of idols and idol worshippers, so out of the dead world arises the living Church of believers in Christ.

Blackboard.



The vision of physical death (dry bones) typifies the spiritual state of those who are dead in sin. The only hope of such is that they "hear the word of the Lord," the invitations, the promises, the warnings, by heeding which they may be made whole. The new life in Christ is a miracle greater than the resurrection of dry bones, and the operation of the Spirit in the heart more wonderful than the work of the wind in giving them breath. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me.... is passed from death into life."

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire.
Come, Holy Ghost, in love.
Thy word, almighty Lord,
Deep are the wounds.
The Lord into his garden comes.

Light of life, seraphic fire.
Awake, my soul, in joyful lays.
Welcome, delightful morn.
Come, Holy Spirit, come.
Lord, we come in faith believing.

Library References.

See references on the last lesson.

SERMONS ON THE LESSON.

Verses 1-10.—Nelson, Rev. T. A., "The True Minister and His Work," *The Homiletic Monthly*, March, 1883, page 357. McLean, J., "The Valley of Dry Bones," *The Pulpit*, vol. xxvi, page 313.

Verse 9.—Herwood, W. D., "The Divine Wrath," *The Pulpit*, vol. lxxiii, page 513.

Verses 11-13.—Spurgeon, C. H., "Despair Denounced and Grace Glorified," *The Homiletic Monthly*, December, 1882, page 150.

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LESSON VIII. THE RIVER OF SALVATION.

[Aug. 20.]

GOLDEN TEXT. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Rev. 22, 17.

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

[Compare Zech. 13, 1 and 14, 8, 9, and Matt. 13, 31-33; also Rev. 22, 1-5.]

Ezek. 47, 1-12. [*Commit to memory verse 12.*]

1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the outer gate by the way that looketh eastward; and behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles.

4 Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.

5 Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.

7 Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.

8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

REVISED VERSION.

- 1 And he brought me back unto the door of the house; and behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward, for the forefront of the house was toward the east: and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house,
- 2 on the south of the altar. Then brought he me out by the way of the gate northward, and led me round by the way without unto the outer gate, by the way of the gate that looketh toward the east; and behold, there
- 3 ran out waters on the right side. When the man went forth eastward with the line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he caused me to pass through the waters,
- 4 waters that were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters
- 5 that were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass through: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could
- 6 not be passed through. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to
- 7 the bank of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, upon the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on
- 8 the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Arabah; and they shall go toward the sea; into the sea shall the waters go which were made to issue forth; and
- 9 the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every living creature which

9 And it shall come to pass, *that* everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed: and everything shall live whither the river cometh.

10 And it shall come to pass, *that* the fishers shall stand upon it from En-eg-lai'm even unto En-eg-lai'm; they shall be a *place* to spread forth nets: their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.

11 But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt.

12 And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

swarmeth, in every place whither the rivers come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish: for these waters are come thither, and *the waters of the sea* shall be healed, and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that fishers shall stand by it: from En-eg-lai'm even unto En-eg-lai'm shall be a place for the spreading of nets; their fish shall be after their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed; they shall be given up to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for meat, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail: it shall bring forth new fruit every month, because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for healing.

Time.—This prophecy was delivered probably about B. C. 587 or 585. **Place.**—Ezekiel lived in the Euphrates valley, near the river Chebar.

Home Readings.

- M. The River of Salvation. Ezek. 47. 1-12.
- Tu. Streams in the desert. Isa. 35.
- W. A miraculous supply. 2 Kings 3. 9-20.
- Th. Living waters. Zech. 14. 4-11.
- F. The river of God. Psa. 65.
- S. A free gift. Rev. 21. 1-7.
- S. Water of life. Rev. 22. 1-7.

Lesson Hymns.

No. 127 New Canadian Hymnal.

Blessed be the Fountain of blood,
To a world of sinners revealed.

No. 82, New Canadian Hymnal.

"Whosoever heareth," shout, shout the sound!
Send the blessed tidings all the world around.

No. 86, New Canadian Hymnal.

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

1. **The Power of Divine Grace**, v. 1-6.
 - What was the "door of the house" in verse 1?
 - What do the issuing waters represent?
 - Whither did they flow?
 - What does their increasing depth represent?
 - What does water typify in the Old Testament?
 - What are the points of comparison between this spring of water and salvation?

What are the points of failure in the comparison?

What is the gracious invitation of the GOLDEN TEXT?

2. The Beneficence of Divine Grace, v. 7-12.

- What were seen at the bank of the river?
- What do they represent?
- What effect had the spring upon the sea?
- What is the teaching of this?
- What is taught by the sea becoming full of fishes?
- What do the "miry places" in verse 11 illustrate?
- In what respects is a righteous man compared to a tree?
- What hope for the future does this lesson give us?
- What recent events, if any, in the Church and world strengthen this hope?

Teachings of the Lesson.

1. God's truth is to flow forth from his Church. The stream is pure, abundant, and healing. It is a growing stream, and as it falls into the Dead Sea of indifference and sin it has a changing effect.
2. The duty and joy of a good man are to watch this stream as it flows, and see its power and behold its triumph. The missionary work is an education to him who studies it. It awakens sympathy; it prompts to prayer, to generosity, to holy living.
3. The first psalm is a comment upon verse 12 of the lesson. The righteous man is a tree of life, well rooted by the living stream; he therefore flourishes even down to old age.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. The Power of Divine Grace, v. 1-6.

Where did God bring Ezekiel?

What house was this?

What flowed out from under its threshold?

In what direction did the waters pour?

Was this a weak rivulet or a great, majestic river?

When a man had measured a thousand cubits how deep were the waters?

When he had measured another thousand how deep were they?

When he had measured a third thousand how deep were they?

When he had measured a fourth thousand how deep were they?

What did he say to Ezekiel?

Where did he bring him?

2. The Beneficence of Divine Grace, v. 7-12.

What did Ezekiel see on the bank of the river? Through what sort of country had the river flowed?

Into what sort of sea did it pour?

What was its effect on this bad sea?

What was the effect of the river on everything that it touched?

What was the effect of the river on the nation's industries?

What about the cultivation on its banks?

What sort of fruit and leafage would come from its trees?

What was the cause of the goodness of these waters? [They issued out of the sanctuary.]

What is the GOLDEN TEXT?

Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson do we learn—

1. That the grace of God is outpoured in his own time, in his own way?

2. That it constantly increases in strength without any earthly tributaries?

3. That it is meat and medicine for all souls?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

How long before the coming of Christ did Ezekiel live? **About five hundred years.**

What did God show him in this lesson? **The vision of the holy waters.**

Where did these waters come from? **From under the holy house.**

How deep were they at first? **Only to the ankles.**

What did Ezekiel then see? **That they grew deeper all the time.**

Of what is this a picture? **Of the growth of Christ's kingdom.**

What did the waters become? **A river.**

Through what did they flow out to the sea? **Through a desert.**

What did they do for the desert and the sea? **They made everything live.**

What does the Gospel do for sinful souls? **Makes them alive to God.**

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

1. What did the prophet see? **A spring of water flowing from the sacred place.**

2. What effect had it upon the stagnant sea? **Its waters were healed.**

3. What then grew on its banks? **Trees whose leaf did not wither.**

4. What may the righteous man be said to be? **A tree of life.**

5. What is the Gospel invitation? **GOLDEN TEXT: "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely."**

NEW CHURCH CATECHISM.

81. How shall all men be judged?

All men shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body, and as responsible for the privileges which they have enjoyed in this life.

Matthew xi. 23, 24. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

THE LESSON OUTLINE.

The Water of Life.

I. ITS FOUNTAIN.

Threshold of the house. v. 1.

Out of Zion. Psa. 50. 2.

The light of the world. Matt. 5. 14.

II. ITS SOURCE.

South side of the altar. v. 1.

Precious blood of Christ. 1 Pet. 1. 19.
Will draw all men. John 12. 32.

III. ITS GROWTH.

Ankles... *knees...* *loins.* v. 3, 4.

An hundred and twenty. Acts 1. 15.

A great multitude. Rev. 7. 9, 10.

IV. ITS POWER.

- River...to swim in.* v. 5.
Living waters...go out. Zech. 14. 8, 9.
To every creature. Col. 1. 23.

V. ITS BLESSING.

1. *Many trees.* v. 7.
Planted by the rivers. Psa. 1. 3.

2. *Sea...waters...healed.* v. 8.
All things new. Rev. 21. 5.
3. *Everything shall live.* v. 9.
Giveth life unto the world. John 6. 33.
4. *Fishers...upon it.* v. 10.
Fishers of men. Matt. 4. 19.
5. *Leaf...for medicine.* v. 12.
Healing of the nations. Rev. 22. 2.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

Often the thought or story of our Sunday school lesson is so closely intertwined with that of the context that it cannot be satisfactorily understood without a close study of what goes before and what comes after. But our lesson to-day is a prophet's vision, complete in itself. The context has only the relation to this that a pedestal has to the statue which surmounts it. We are to recall again the career and character of Ezekiel as they have been brought before us in the preceding two lessons. We should keep fresh in our memory not only the weird symbolism of this prophet, but the distinct messages he has before given to the exiled people of Israel. The latter part of his book is a revelation of the coming glory of Jehovah's kingdom. This vision stands in close connection with that, and may almost be said to spring out of it. The kingdom of God, according to all earlier conceptions, was to be confined not only to the twelve tribes, but quite as closely to the Holy Land; and when Israel and Judah were exiled from that land they felt that they were taken away from before the face of Jehovah. When in a few years they were to be restored to that land that restoration was to bring them back again into the territory of Jehovah. But in this vision there is a conception quite new. The kingdom of the Lord is henceforth to be of a most expansive character. It is to spread far and wide, and to become a means of salvation and fructification in every place it reaches. It is to be as diffusive as it is benign. In the days when God himself is to reside in the spiritual temple erected in the spiritual Jerusalem, with a royal priesthood for his ministering servants, the blessedness of his dwelling on earth is to be shared with all men. Starting from Jerusalem the goodness of God is to flow forth with healthful and restorative energy even upon the waste places of the earth, and to refresh them with the freshness of life and beauty. Ezekiel in vision has been standing in the outer court of the temple. He is now brought back to the eastern door by the angel who accompanied him.

Verse 1. Afterward. After the prophet's stay in the outer court and near the sacrificial kitchens with the people; after the revelations of the preceding chapters. **The door of the house.** "The opening of the house," the entrance into the holy place, the sanctuary of the temple courts. **Behold.** Astonishing to relate **Waters issued out from under the threshold of the house.** "Living water," as spring water is called in the Bible, is repeatedly used as a symbol of divine blessing, notably by Isaiah and by our Lord. That the waters here referred to came "from under the threshold," from below, is symbolical of the issuance of blessings from the depths of Jehovah's worship. Other blessings are poured down from the heavens, as we sing, "Lord, I hear of showers of blessings" and "Saviour, visit thy plantation;" but this blessing is to spring from under the foundation of the holy temple. There is a deep thought here. **Eastward.** "The reason for saying 'eastward' is the eastern position of the temple front; the waters which issued from below the house flowed toward the place where the glory of

the Eternal had, according to Ezekiel's former vision, entered the house."—*Fairbairn*. This spring, coming from the heart of the sanctuary, bears along its mysteries and its ideals, and as according to oriental idioms the temple looked eastward, in that direction these gushing streams of beneficence flow. **The forefront of the house stood toward the east.** As from time immemorial had been the case with sacred edifices. **The waters came down from under.** The repetition shows the importance that these details had in Ezekiel's mind. **From the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.** All these elaborate descriptive touches show that to Ezekiel's mind this water was no artificial well sunken for priestly purposes. It was not an outburst of any water that had previously been conducted into the temple. It was, as one might say, the free outflow of the temple's inmost nature. The altar of burnt offering stood directly in front of the eastern door of the sanctuary. Now, if the water had sprung from the middle of the threshold, it must flow against that altar. For that reason it

flows at one side of the altar, and at the right side, of course, for that "was the side of good fortune and power." The Bedouins to-day regard the right hand and the right foot as emblematic of eminence and affection, and the right hand of the Lord is repeatedly mentioned in Holy Writ. "The water," says Havernick, "is the fullness of blessing which is poured out over the community from the new manifestation of God."

2. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward. The purpose of the angel was to show Ezekiel the farther course of the flowing waters. He is taken by the north gate because the eastern gate was always shut, and the southern gate would lead him directly against the waters. Along the outside of the wall of the outer court the prophet and the angel walked to reach the flowing waters. "Whether the waters flowed forth over or under the courts is not expressly stated; at all events they ran under the surrounding walls, and, doubtless, under the stone pavement of the outer court."—*Fairbairn*.

Behold, there ran out waters on the right side. Apparently the southeast side of the temple, the south side of the east gate. Here again Ezekiel comes within sight of the rush of waters which had sprung from underneath the sanctuary.

3. Read these verses carefully in both versions. Up to this point Ezekiel's attention has been concentrated on the waters; now the strange actions of his guide interest him. Following the waters as they flowed eastwardly, the man measures a **thousand cubits**, and calls to Ezekiel to pass **through the waters**. He did so, and they reached to the ankles—the *first* measurement.

4. The *second* measure along the course of the waters brings to notice the astonishing fact that in their flow of the second thousand cubits they had become so deep that Ezekiel, wading through them, became wet to his **knees**. After the *third* measure **the waters were to the loins**. It was now a difficult task that the angel gave to Ezekiel, to wade through a current so strong and so deep.

5. The *fourth* thousand. Here Ezekiel is astounded to find no longer a streamlet, but a **river that he could not pass over**. Imperceptibly the flood had not only increased in height and in rapidity, but greatly in width also; **the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over**.

6. He said unto me. The angel said to Ezekiel. **Son of man, hast thou seen this?** A question not meant to be answered. The strange companions have come to a halting place. The angel is the exhibitor of the marvelous work of God, and with a holy triumph in his face he asks,

as a modern boy full of glad astonishment would ask his comrade, "Do you see that?" What the prophet's attention is specially called to is the continuous increase of the waters. No rain had fallen, no brooks had run into it. Here is something as contrary to all mundane experience as is perpetual motion. "The streams of worldly enterprise after a brief course dry up;" but this stream of Messianic salvation flows on and on, like the pilgrims from strength to strength, like the morning sun brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, like the mustard seed and the leaven in the parables of our Lord. By this time one has got more than a glimpse of the spiritual teaching of this vision. This is not only the way in which the kingdom of God grows, the four disciples on the banks of the Jordan gathering in others until to-day there are millions and millions of devout Christians; not only the way in which the divine life in the soul of man turns weak young Christians into fathers in God. Every item in the description has its lesson. We have pointed to the right of the stream in the depths of the temple of God and to the symbolism of flowing water. Here the seer, called the "son of man," is by that very title "reminded that his vision was for mankind, that this swelling stream flows on to the days of the completion of the human race."—*Speakers' Commentary*. **He . . . caused me to return to the brink of the river.** We are not to understand that Ezekiel was made to swim across the waters, though he probably went deep enough into the stream to see that by no other means could he get to the opposite bank. Then the angel called him back, perhaps assisted him from the rushing current to the bank, where another wonder awaits him.

7. Behold. Another exclamation of astonishment. **At the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.** Ezekiel had been so engrossed by the waters in their bed and by his angelic guide that he had not at all observed what was going on at the sides of the river. The inference from this and the succeeding verses is that fruitful trees now lined the stream from its source to its outflow into the Dead Sea. "The looking forward gave Ezekiel the knowledge of the progressive fullness and depth of the waters; not until he looks back does he come to know, with a view to what follows, the fertilizing effect of these waters."—*Ravlinson*. We are to recall the physical blessings that came back to the land of Palestine on the return of the Israelites.

8. Then said he unto me. All that follows to the close of verse 12 is the explanatory statement of the angel. The prophet is not taken farther along the bank of the river, but he is told

of the course of the waters and the effect that was produced. **These waters issued out toward the east country.** Out of the temple, we must remember, and toward the Arabah, the valley of the Jordan, and the region beyond the Dead Sea. **Go down into the desert, and go into the sea.** "Down" they must go with great precipitation, for the descent from Jerusalem to Jericho is abrupt. The lower region through which it runs is full of salt clay, and the place where this miraculous river is to enter the Dead Sea is not far from the mouth of the Jordan, "a slimy delta." Although the Dead Sea seems to be the only one here referred to, there is a suggestion that other seas, the great world of waters, are referred to here. Some of the Jewish rabbis taught that the river, which indeed is called "rivers" in the next verse, divided itself into twelve rivers which flowed to the twelve tribes. It was even said to flow on so far as to Calabria and into Barbary. Having reached the sea, however, the waters are said to be **brought forth into it**, indicating that the "higher hand executes according to deliberate counsel the plan of salvation."—*Hengstenberg*. **The waters shall be healed.** The waters of the Dead Sea are singularly deceptive. In appearance they seem to the thirsty traveler to be as clear and pure as any he has ever quaffed, but in its deceptiveness as well as in its deadliness this sea has been a symbol of the world lying in wickedness.

9. It shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live. There is no living thing in the Dead Sea. It is true that the floods of the Jordan carry in certain fishes, but the brine of the sea soon thrusts their light bodies to the shore. Here we see a marked difference between the miraculous river and the

Jordan. The Jordan waters are fresh, but not strong enough in volume to "heal" the waters of the sea. The confusion of phraseology that speaks of everything that liveth as living includes all things that were alive and had died in the Dead Sea, and all fish that, carried into the Dead Sea, would otherwise have died. It is an emphatic statement of the fact that life and not death will hereafter dominate that sea. For "rivers" some translate "double stream." "The Dead Sea shall become a sea of life." And by parity of reason every land, however unfruitful, shall become fruitful as soon as this river waters it.

10. The fishers shall stand upon it from En-geediven unto En-eghlaim. That is, from the southernmost point on the Dead Sea inhabited by the Israelites to the northern end, where the Jordan flows in. Apparently the whole waste of waters shall swarm with fishes. "The fishes are the men who have attained to life through the Messianic salvation; the fishers are the messengers of this salvation, who gather those who are quickened into the kingdom of God, introducing them into the fellowship of the Church."—*Hengstenberg*. There is emphasis placed on the variety as well as the quantity of the fish.

11. The exceptions mentioned here either indicate the value of the salt, showing that the blessing of God is ever various in its manifestations, or it may be meant to emphasize the fact that life and health are "solely due to the stream which proceeds from the throne of God;" the places that are untouched by it necessarily continuing unfruitful.

12. What was noticed in verse 7 is now dwelt upon—the rich fruitfulness of the banks of the stream. It is to be fruit of all sorts; it is to be fruit ripening every month; the fruit itself is to be for meat and the leaves for medicine.

CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. Afterward. The Hebrew has the simple conjunction *and*, which connects this chapter directly with the preceding ones. **He brought.** An ever-recurring phrase in this section of Ezekiel (chaps. 40-48) which is a description of the temple and the restored land. The pronoun "he" is indifferently used of the hand of the Lord of the man who acted as Ezekiel's guide (see chap. 40, 1-3) and perhaps once or twice of Jehovah himself (see chap. 44, 2-5). **The house.** The temple, the special habitation of Jehovah, the God of Israel. **Waters issued.** Tradition says that there was a fountain called Etham, on the western side of the temple, the waters of which had been piped into the sanc-

tuary for the use of the priests in their ministrations. But as this is a vision, we must not look too closely for exact geography. **From the right side of the house.** Orientals took their bearings by turning the face to the rising sun. What was directly before was then east; what back of them, west; the north was on the left hand, and the south, as here, on the right.

2. There ran out waters. In a southeasterly direction through the Kidron valley to the Dead Sea. Water is used throughout the Bible as a figure of spiritual life and salvation. Eden in the first part of Genesis has its rivers, so the paradise of God in the New Jerusalem in the last chapter of the New Testament has the River of

Life. The prophets and poets of Israel vie with each other in extolling the value of this refreshing drink and fertilizing agency, so prized in Eastern countries.

3. When the man. For a fuller description of this person see chap. 40. **3. Thousand cubits.** The word "cubit," from the Latin *cubitus*—that is, "elbow"—represents the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger. This standard of measure differed in different countries, and ranged from seventeen to about twenty-one inches.

4. Again he measured. The increase of the waters cannot be taken literally, but is figuratively used for the growth of God's kingdom, of spiritual truth which as a life-giving stream issued out of the temple at Jerusalem, where God revealed himself as the Saviour of men. This revelation of God, this knowledge of the truth is still flowing and increasing in volume, and shall continue so to do till it shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11. 9).

7. Very many trees. Trees and waters are inseparably connected in most Eastern literature. The paradise of Genesis, no less than that of Revelation, had its tree of life and crystal waters. The good man of psalm first is like a tree planted upon the rivers of water. As John was thinking of Ezekiel and this chapter, so Ezekiel must have had the first chapter of Genesis in mind. What a river of salvation the word of God has been to men in all ages!

8. The Arabah. This is a proper name. The A. V. is therefore wrong in translating the word. The meaning of Arabah, though sometimes rendered "plain" or "desert," is "dry" or "arid." Here Arabah denotes the barren lands on the western slope of the Dead Sea. It is very often applied to what is known as the Góhr (depression), or the lowlands on either side of the Jordan from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, and sometimes to the extension of the Jordan valley to the Gulf of Akabar. **The sea.** Dead Sea, called Sea of the Arabah in Deut. 3. 17. Formerly the word "sea" was applied in our language to small bodies of water, as it is to this day in German. **The waters shall be healed.** The water of the Dead Sea is remarkably bitter and unpleasant to the taste. It contains about five times as much salt as the water of the sea. It is said that every one hundred pounds of it yields no less than twenty to twenty-eight pounds of solid salt, whereas ordinary sea water yields only about five pounds. The name "Dead Sea" is probably derived from the fact that no animal life can exist for any length of time in its waters.

9. Every living creature . . . shall live. The waters from the temple shall so purify and

change the waters of the Dead Sea in such a manner that life shall manifest itself everywhere. Not only will the fish live, but swarm therein.

The rivers. The Hebrew word is dual, the true rendering is therefore *the two rivers*. The exact reason for using the dual is not clear. We may, however, say that the dual is sometimes used for emphasis. The dual form of the word *zohar* (light)—that is, two lights (twilight)—is employed for the light of day at noon, when the light seems to be most intense or clear. If that be the correct explanation, then the two rivers simply denote a large volume of water, an extraordinarily powerful stream. Some think, but without sufficient reason, that there were two streams, as in Zech. 14. 8.

10. En-gedi. Now called 'Ain-Jidi—that is, kid's fountain. It is on a high cliff on the west shore of the Dead Sea about midway between the northern and southern extremity.

En-eglaim. The literal meaning of this phrase is the fountain of the two calves. The place, mentioned only here, has not been identified. Conjecture is therefore vain. **For the spreading of nets.** Fishing will now become abundant, and nets will be seen all along the coast between En-gedi and En-eglaim. **Their fish shall be after their kinds. . . . exceeding many.** That is, very plentiful, and also as many varieties as in the *Great Sea*, or in the Mediterranean Sea.

11. The miry places thereof. The swamps along portions of the seashore formed by the overflow of the waters during the rainy seasons.

The marishes. This word, now archaic, has the same meaning as the word marsh. A better translation of the Hebrew would be "pool" or "pond." **Shall not be healed.** Though the Dead Sea itself shall be sweetened and rendered fit for animal life, the pools and fens along its shore shall be given up to salt. Salt would be needed for consumption, so these places are left undisturbed for the production of this necessary article. Others, however, with Hengstenberg, give the passage a different interpretation, saying that "the salt comes into consideration here not as seasoning, as frequently, but as the foe of fertility, life, and prosperity." Those who refuse the light must remain in the darkness.

12. Every tree for meat. Literally, every fool tree. All kinds of trees with eatable fruit. **Leaf shall not fade.** The tree in communication with the living waters at the roots will produce abundant foliage. Leafless trees never bring fruit to maturity (see Psa. 1. 3). The freshness of the leaf is a sure sign of a healthy crop. **New fruit every month.** Not like or-

inary trees, bearing fruit once a year (see Rev. 22. 2). **Because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary.** The water, on which these trees grow, "comes directly from the dwelling place of Ilm who is the author of all life and fertility." So to-day. He who drinks the water of life and feeds upon the bread of heaven will produce abundant fruit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5. 22). **The leaf thereof for the healing.** Abundant food avails little if one is too sick to enjoy it. Spiritually speaking, the human race is diseased, and needs healing. Blessed be God, there is a river of salvation, on whose banks grow the tree of life and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. It is a well-known fact that the ancients made extensive use of herbs and leaves in their practice of medicine.

Thoughts for Young People. Divine Grace.

1. *It comes from the word of God.* As the waters issued from under the threshold of the temple the blessings of God come from under his high throne in the heavens. Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of light, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

2. *It flows from God's temple, but reaches far outside the limits of the Church.* It was by no mistake that the impotent man who was miraculously cured by Peter and John was laid as a beggar at the temple gate. It is at the gate of the temple that the benevolence of this world is mainly manifested. It is Christian people that sustain the charities of modern life. It is the efforts of the Christian Church which, permeating the moral sense of humanity, have turned the wilderness of the Middle Ages to the garden of modern times. To-day there are thousands of people far outside the Christian Church who owe nearly all the blessings of their lives to the divine grace which flows through it and out of it.

3. *It grows from within.* No rains fell on this stream that Ezekiel saw, no brooks fed it, but it steadily increased in rapidity, in volume, and in width. Its life represented the love of God flowing from heart to heart. The only way by which man can construct anything is by the process of accretion, adding plank to plank, or brick to brick, or dollar to dollar, but when God would make a thing grow he puts into it life, the mysterious secret force. It was because of the divine life of this divine grace that it steadily increased.

4. *It fertilized every shore its waters taved.* In-

stead of sands and salt mire and bitumen came grasses and flowers, grain and fruit. The wilderness and the solitary place were made glad for these streams. So it is with the grace of God, every community that has it is made happy.

5. *It has a various manifestation.* The fishes were "according to their kinds exceeding many as the fishes of the sea"—that is, there were all sorts of them. The fruits were of every kind, and for purposes of both food and medicine. So the marvelous grace of God adapts itself to the variant wants of every human being.

6. *It lasts forever.* All earthly endeavors fail, but the word of the Lord endureth forever.

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

The vision of this lesson is the only one of Ezekiel's for the oriental setting of which we have to look to the land of Palestine. All of the others have a distinctly Babylonian and Assyrian background. Dean Stanley says the costume of Ezekiel's thoughts in all the other chapters shows that "he had wandered through the vast halls of Assyrian monuments, and there gazed on all that the Assyrian monuments have disclosed to us of human dignity and brute strength combined—the eagle-winged lion and the human-headed bull. These complicated forms supplied the vehicle of the sublime truths that dawned upon him from amid the mystic wheels, the sapphire throne, the amber fire, and the rainbow brightness." Professor Hackett says, "As the topography and the monumental sculpture and inscriptions of Babylon have become better known in our day, it is seen how fully the characteristics of Ezekiel's writings agree with the circumstances in which he was placed at the time."

But this vision is recognized as a signal exception. The new spiritual temple to be reared in the latter days, on the top of the mountains for the worship of all nations, and the river with its healing waters flowing therefrom to fertilize all in its course to the ends of the earth, show familiarity with the temple on Mount Zion, and with the hidden springs of the sacred pools, for centuries the joy of the Hebrew in his native hills, and wherever destiny drove him to the ends of the earth. For a fuller setting of this picture than we can give see Dr. Thomson's *Land and the Book*, vol. II, pp. 530-535. [Harper's edition, 1868.]

Dr. Geikie reminds us that "Jerusalem at present receives its water supply from spring-wells, cisterns, pools, and reservoirs. But the only true spring known in Jerusalem is from a living source beneath the great vaults, which

supplies the many fountains, flowing from of old in the temple area, and now sparkling round the Mosque of Omar, as well as maintaining the Fountain of the Virgin, and the Pool of Siloam."

It is interesting to Sunday school scholars to know that the wonderful discovery which confirmed the theory of the subterranean connection between the spring and the pools in the temple was due to a boy roaming round as boys are apt to do. In 1880, a boy playing with other boys at the Pool of Siloam fell into the water, as he was wading up the tunnel, and on rising to the surface his eye caught the shapes of letters cut in the rocky wall. The thing began to be talked about, and in a little while learned men from all parts of the world came to investigate it. They took what are called "squeezes" of the letters and made casts of the whole inscription, and then deciphered the writing. Professor Sayce tells the story in *Records of the Past*, vol. i, page 168. He made the first intelligible copy of this inscription. It tells how the work was done in tunneling underneath the mountain; that the workmen commenced at the two extreme ends and intended to meet in the middle. They did not strike a perfect line, but when they came near to each other they heard each other's pickaxes, the inscription says, when they were yet "three cubits apart" from each other. This inscription in itself is commonplace enough, but the shape and form of the letters proved to scholars that this rock-hewn tunnel has conveyed the waters of the Virgin Pool to the Pool of Siloam for twenty-six hundred years. It was probably built by Hezekiah.

What this spring has been to the Jews none can measure. Isaiah had it in mind when he wrote, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation," referring to the return of the exiles to resume the ceremonial worship of the great temple. And thus Ezekiel finds in the sacred spring in the temple-rock the source of a mighty spiritual river which shall flow eastward and westward like that of the temple, which streamed out to bless the glens of Hinnom and Kedron, and fertilizing even the Dead Sea. Thomson says, what that region was to the eye of the prophet twenty-five hundred years ago, that it is to the weary traveler of to-day. In verse 11 it is said, the "mity places" and the "marshes" shall "not be healed, they shall be given to salt."

Dr. Thomson tells us that the existence of these salt marshes was not known until recent years, when modern exploration made them known, but Ezekiel knew them twenty-five hundred years ago.

By Way of Illustration.

"God will strengthen." The whole vision may well illustrate Ezekiel's prophetic name, "God will strengthen." His firm faith is symbolized in his devotion to the temple. The vision began where God was believed to dwell; it ended among men. His parable took in the city of Zion and the wilderness. Its limits were the temple on the west and the Dead Sea on the east. The temple represented God; the wilderness stood for Israel. There was nothing but death in the sea. No living creature could swim its waters. The ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah are believed to lie beneath the sea.

It was a dark picture Ezekiel drew of the people when he likened them to such a place. In his vision he saw a wondrous change come to them. The river was a symbol of the divine blessings. The waters of the "river" from beneath the temple would heal the waters of the Dead Sea. Fishes and living creatures would swim the sea. The river of God would make the Dead Sea become a sea of life. The desolate shores would be inhabited. Life would overthrow death.—*D. O. Moors.*

The progress of Christianity. In the year 1800 there were 200,000,000 Christians in the world. In 1880 there were 415,000,000 Christians, the gain in the last eighty years being more than in all the eighteen hundred years before.

There are men in the pulpits of some of the churches of the Fiji Islands who remember the taste of human flesh.

It was said of a very earnest missionary in one of the islands, "When he came there were no Christians; when he left there were no heathen." Bishop Thoburn said five years ago, "My greatest embarrassment is my success. We have twenty thousand converts in India, and we might have as many more had we the workers to care for them."

The work of the Church. We may venture to draw one lesson for our own instruction from this beautiful prophetic image of the blessings that flow from a pure religion. The river of God has its source high up in the mount where Jehovah dwells in inaccessible holiness, and where the white-robed priests minister ceaselessly before him. But in its descent it seeks out the most desolate and unpromising region in the country and turns it into a garden of the Lord.

It is an emblem of the earthly ministry of Him who made himself the friend of publicans and sinners, and lavished the resources of his grace and the wealth of his love on those who were considered unworthy and beyond the reach of salvation.

The change produced by this river is an em-

bien of the work of the Church. Its business is to flow through the worst regions and go among the most hopeless of men and transform them by the Gospel, and people the Dead Sea with living children of God.—*Professor Skinner.*

Send the living water. Loch Katrine, embowered among the highlands of Scotland, immortalized in song and story, is the source of the water supply of the city of Glasgow, flowing down among the homes of the poor, cleansing the filth from the streets, bringing cheer, comfort, cleanliness, and health everywhere. So to everyone who has the living water (and all the more if it is possessed amid wealth, culture, education, talent) is given the privilege of sending the living water to the dying. "I will bless thee and make thee a blessing."—*Select Notes.*

Heart Talks on the Lesson.

Wonderful visions are these which the prophet saw from a very high mountain when the hand of the Lord was upon him. Not empty dreams, but "visions of God" they were; prophecies to be fulfilled to his people Israel in days yet to come, prophecies now fulfilled in the experience of everyone who receives in a believing heart the fullness of the Spirit through faith in Jesus. We must go up into a very high mountain of spiritual sight if we would understand even in a measure the significance of this vision in which the prophet saw the temple, perfect in proportion, its whole limit round about most holy, and the glory of the Lord filling it. While we cannot understand, we may apprehend, spiritually, its twofold symbolism. The temple represents God, and perfected humanity when the tabernacle of God shall be with men and he shall dwell with them and be their God, when the former things are passed away and there shall be no more curse. That such a day is coming to this sorrow-laden earth is as certain as that God lives. From this holy temple, the dwelling place of Jehovah, flows forth a river, widening as it flows down into the desert even to the sea of death, healing its waters—for "everything lives whither the river cometh." Beside its banks grow fadeless trees bearing never-falling fruit, whose leaves soothe and heal bruises and sores. All this blessedness comes because the waters issue "out of the sanctuary"—that is, from God himself. Our thoughts turn to St. John's vision of the pure river of water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and the tree of life with its healing leaves.

Again we have New Testament gospel in Old Testament prophecy. The Lord Jehovah, whose glory filled the temple of Ezekiel's vision, "the

Lord God of the holy prophets" is the Lamb of John's vision from whose throne went forth the pure river of life. It is the river of salvation; Jesus is its source; his people filled with the Spirit are the channels through which it flows to bless the whole world. "He that believeth on me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water," Jesus said. O for the touch of God upon us that we may "see" the vision! The River of God—God himself—flowing with ever broadening way through the nations, healing and making fruitful wherever it flows; flowing in me, with ever-increasing fullness, pouring life into the waters of death and restoring my soul "whithersoever it cometh;" a holy people through whom God in Christ shall be brought in touch with all nations and kindreds and tongues; from my own Spirit-filled heart, the river of life pouring itself out to others. Blessed vision of prophecy, thrice blessed in fulfilment. It shows the identification of the Lord with his people. He the temple, filled with his own glory; from him salvation's river flowing; we his temple, filled with his Spirit, from us going forth living streams to make the world better and happier. I cannot fully understand the wonderful symbols, but I see the River of God; I rejoice in its beauty; I drink, and my soul is satisfied; I bathe, and come forth cleansed; I open every avenue of my being that it may flow into me unhindered, and through me find its blessed way to others. It is better thus to know than to understand. As the valley, unknowing, rejoices in the fertilizing stream, so my soul, unquestioning, rejoices in the life-giving River of God.

The Teachers' Meeting.

The prophet in vision sees the new Israel sending forth a stream of power and life throughout the land. We recognize in this a picture of the progress and influence of the Gospel throughout the world. I. Notice that the stream proceeded from the house of God. The temple was the center of Jewish life. More than the Acropolis was to Athens, or the capitol was to Rome, the temple was the spring of influence in the Jewish world. What the temple was in ancient days the Church of Christ is now, the source of salvation and life to mankind. II. The spring of this wonderful river was at the altar. We might have expected to see it pouring out of the holy of holies, where God dwelt; but it came from the place of sacrifice, the place which represented the atonement wrought by Christ on the cross. Observe how much stress is laid by the writers of the New Testament upon the death of Christ, how much is written about "the blood." The river

of salvation has its fountain at the foot of the cross. III. We observe the growth of this river. At first ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then waist-deep, then "waters to swim in." So has it been with Christ's Church: twelve disciples, one hundred and twenty believers, three thousand on the day of pentecost, by degrees an innumerable host, now a Church encompassing the world. IV. We notice, too, the life-giving power of this river. On its banks grew trees, where all had been barren before; the Dead Sea became alive with fish, and its shores were lined with fishermen. Thus it represented the transforming effect of the Gospel upon the world in general, upon the nations that embrace it, and upon the characters that are touched by it. Life takes the place of death where the Gospel river goes.

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

Come, ye sinners.
Sing them over again to me.
Jesus, my Lord, to thee I cry.
A wonderful joy and salvation.
I heard the voice of Jesus say.

All glory to Jesus be given.
Salvation! O the joyful sound.
God loved the world of sinners lost.
Of him who did salvation bring.
Ho! every one that thirsts draw nigh.
O what amazing words of grace.

Library References.

See references for August 6, covering the entire prophecy of Ezekiel.

SERMONS ON THE LESSON.

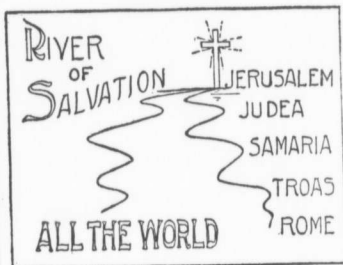
Verses 2.—Johnson, Herrick, "The Influence of the Church of God," *The Homiletic Review*, November, 1888, page 420.

Verses 3-9.—Cooke, R. J., "The Atheistic Idea," *The Homiletic Monthly*, October, 1881, page 31.

Verse 9.—Punshon, William Morley, "The Healing Waters," *The Pulpit*, vol. lxxvii, page 49.

Verse 11.—Owen, John, "The Sin and Judgment of Spiritual Barrenness," *Works*, vol. ix, pages 179, 190.

Blackboard.



The River of Salvation signifies the onward flow of the Gospel of Christ, widening and deepening until it shall bless all the world in its universal scope. The cross marks its inception; for in that day when Christ died a fountain was opened for sin and uncleanness. As shown in the Book of Acts, it was first preached in Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judaism; then in Judea and Samaria (8. 1). At Troas it passed over into Europe (16. 8, 9), and at last reached Rome, the center of the Gentile world (28. 14, 31). The stream has been flowing from land to land, blessing the nations of earth in its course, and bringing life and verdure. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

LESSON IX. RETURNING FROM CAPTIVITY.

[Aug. 27.]

GOLDEN TEXT. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Psa. 126. 3.

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

[Read Ezra 2. 64-70.]

Ezra 1. 1-11. [Commit to memory verses 2-4.]

1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persi-a, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jer-e-mi'ah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Per'si-a, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Per'si-a, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him a house at Je-ru'sa-lem, which is in Ju'dah.

REvised VERSION.

1 Now in the first year of Cy'rus king of Per'si-a, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jer-e-mi'ah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cy'rus king of Per'si-a, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith Cy'rus king of Per'si-a, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Je-ru'sa-lem, which is in Ju'dah. Whosoever there is among you of

3 Who is *there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Je-ru'sa-lem, which is in Ju'dah, and build the house of the Lord God of Is'ra-el, (he is the God,) which is in Je-ru'sa-lem.

4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Je-ru'sa-lem.

5 Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Ju'dah and Ben'ja-min, and the priests, and the Le'vites, with all *them* whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Je-ru'sa-lem.

6 And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all *that* was willingly offered.

7 Also Cy'rus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Neb-u-chad-nez'zar had brought forth out of Je-ru'sa-lem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

8 Even those did Cy'rus king of Per'si-a bring forth by the hand of Mith're-dath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Shesh-baz'zar, the prince of Ju'dah.

9 And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty knives,

10 Thirty basins of gold, silver basins of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.

11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All *these* did Shesh-baz'zar bring up with *them* of the captivity that were brought up from Baby-lon unto Je-ru'sa-lem.

all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Je-ru'sa-lem, which is in Ju'dah, and build the house of the Lord, the God of Is'ra-el, (he is God,) which is in Je-ru'sa-lem.

4 And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God which is in Je-ru'sa-

5 lem. Then rose up the heads of fathers' houses of Ju'dah and Ben'ja-min, and the priests, and the Le'vites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of the

6 Lord which is in Je-ru'sa-lem. And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered.

7 Also Cy'rus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Neb-u-chad-nez'zar had brought forth out of Je-ru'sa-lem, and had put them in the house of his

8 gods; even those did Cy'rus king of Per'si-a bring forth by the hand of Mith're-dath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Shesh-baz-

9 zar, the prince of Ju'dah. And this is the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and twenty

10 knives; thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other

11 vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Shesh-baz'zar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Baby-lon unto Je-ru'sa-lem.

Time.—About 537 or 536 B. C. **Place.**—Crossing the wilderness from the Euphrates to Jerusalem. **Note.**—The sins of the Jews brought upon them great calamity. Seventy years before the Book of Ezra opens the tribes of Israel had been carried away by the Assyrians and Judah by the Chaldeans. The former never returned to their former home. What became of these last tribes is unknown. Judah never forgot the seventy sad years of exile in Babylon. The rejoicing was great when the Jews returned to their own city, but they wept when they beheld its desolation. Ezra was a man of piety and learned in the Jewish law. He edited the Jewish Scriptures and made additions to illustrate, correct, or complete them. He wrote out the whole in the Chaldee character. He was a faithful preacher, a skillful scribe, and a true reformer.

Home Readings.

- M. Returning from Captivity. Ezra 1.
- Tu. Returning captives. Ezra 2. 1, 64-70.

- W. The word of Jeremiah. Jer. 29. 10-14.
- Th. Prophecy of return. Isa. 44, 21-28.
- F. Proclamation of liberty. Isa. 61.
- S. Joy of redemption. Isa. 51. 9-16.
- N. Praise for deliverance. Psa. 107. 1-15.

Lesson Hymns. aug. 27

- No. 49, New Canadian Hymnal.
- In the secret of his presence how my soul delights to hide!
- No. 43, New Canadian Hymnal.
- All the way my Saviour leads me.
- No. 46, New Canadian Hymnal.
- Forever here my rest shall be.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

- 1. The King's Proclamation, v. 1-4.
- Who was Cyrus? What facts do you know about him?
- Where is Persia? Some facts about the empire.
- What was the word of the Lord now to be fulfilled?

Who had given Cyrus the kingdoms of the earth?

What charge was laid upon him?

Why was there no "house of the Lord" in Jerusalem?

What did the proclamation exhort?

What were the Jews to do who remained?

What is meant by a freewill offering?

2. The Captives' Response, v. 5-11.

What class of men were the fathers?

Who were the Levites, and what was their work?

What was the purpose of the returning Jews?

What precious things were given to them?

Why were these things willingly given?

How came the "vessels of the house of the Lord" in Babylon?

How came Cyrus to return them?

What did the Jews sing in the days of their restoration? GOLDEN TEXT.

Teachings of the Lesson.

1. God works through human instruments. Even those like Cyrus, who are not of his people, can serve him. He moves upon their hearts. They do things worthy of praise. They, too, will receive a reward.

2. The call is for willing service. Only with such is God pleased. He claims the heart; his claim is just. To respond to the call may require faith, but the reward is sure. If there be sacrifice now, there will be compensation hereafter.

3. The chief men and the priests led the way. So they always ought in every true reform. Men in place and power should ever be leaders, and not laggards. If they fail, God will raise up leaders from an obscure class. His work will move forward.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. The King's Proclamation, v. 1-4.

What king is here referred to?

Who induced the king to make a proclamation?

In what year of his reign did this occur?

Who had given Cyrus his kingdom?

What charge had the Lord given him?

To what people was the proclamation addressed?

What did the king bid these people to do?

What command was given about those who remained?

Whose prophecy was thus fulfilled? See Jer. 29, 10-14.

What did the psalmist sing? GOLDEN TEXT.

2. The Captives' Response, v. 5-11.

What three classes were the first to respond?

Who joined these leaders?

How did the people of the land help them?

What offering did King Cyrus make?

Where had these vessels been kept?

How long had they been in Babylon? 2 Chron. 36, 21.

Into whose charge were the vessels given?

How many vessels of gold are named?

How many of silver?

What was the number of all kinds?

To what city were these vessels taken?

Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson are we taught—

1. That God is to be honored above all earthly rulers?

2. That the kings of the earth should serve him?

3. That all people should serve him?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

How long had the Jews been slaves in Babylon?

Who promised them deliverance? **The Lord.**

By whom did he send the promise? **By Jeremiah.**

Who was Jeremiah? **A prophet.**

Who was now the king of Persia?

What did the Lord tell him to do?

What did he send throughout his kingdom?

What had the Lord told the king to build?

Were many of the Jews ready to go and help build it? **Yes, about fifty thousand.**

What did they take with them? **Gold and silver and precious gifts.**

What else did they take? **The vessels of the house of the Lord.**

Who had brought these vessels away? **Nebuchadnezzar.**

Do you think the Jews were glad to go home?

How do we know they were homesick? See Psa. 137.

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

1. What was the purpose of the royal proclamation? **To rebuild the temple which was in Jerusalem.**

2. Who led the way in the work? **The chief men and the priests.**

3. What were taken back to Jerusalem? **The sacred vessels of the house of the Lord.**

4. What did the people say after their return? GOLDEN TEXT. **"The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."**

NEW CHURCH CATECHISM.

82. What shall be the end of the wicked?

The end of the wicked shall be eternal separation from God, in an estate of eternal sin, which is eternal death and misery.

THE LESSON OUTLINE.

Elements in Building God's House.

I. THE DIVINE PURPOSE.

The Lord stirred up. v. 1.

Comfort ye my people. Isa. 40. 1, 2.

I am with thee. Isa. 43. 5.

II. THE PROPHECIC WORD.

The mouth of Jeremiah. v. 1.

When seventy years. Jer. 25. 12.

I will visit you. Jer. 29. 10.

III. THE FRIENDLY KING.

Thus saith Cyrus. v. 2-4.

He is my Shepherd. Isa. 44. 28.

Kings shall minister. Isa. 60. 10.

IV. THE EARNEST LEADERS.

Then rose up the chief. v. 5.

I have planted. 1 Cor. 3. 6.

Know them which labor. 2 Thess. 5. 12, 13.

V. THE WILLING PEOPLE.

All whose spirit God... raised. v. 5.

With thy might. Eccles. 9. 10.

Laborers... with God. 1 Cor. 3. 9.

VI. THE LIBERAL GIFTS.

All... willingly offered. v. 6-11.

One another's burdens. Gal. 6. 2.

A cheerful giver. 2 Cor. 9. 7.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

It was not Nebuchadnezzar, but God, that sent the children of Israel into captivity. It was not Cyrus, but God, that determined to take them back again, after years of trial had strengthened their virtues, to pursue their national destiny. The divine influence on the mind of the heathen king brought forth the proclamation to all worshippers of the Lord God of Israel, giving them permission to return to their land and helping them in their godly endeavor by gifts of gold, silver, goods, and cattle. The decree is a notable one; it was made by a heathen king, it recognized "the Lord God of heaven," and declared that he had charged the king to rebuild the temple. In this lesson we see how the Lord Jehovah governs the world, no matter who sits upon the throne. His action on men's hearts brings about results that never could be produced apart from him. Not all the worshippers of Jehovah responded to Cyrus's appeal; but "the chiefs of the fathers" of Judah and Benjamin, with a number of priests and Levites, zealously began to plan for the migration, and they were soon joined by a band from Ephraim and Manasseh. The great bulk of the nation, however, remained in the homes which had become dear to them through the seventy years (and in some cases more) of exile. It has been reckoned that the first party of returning Jews numbered 42,000. Their heathen neighbors helped them freely. The most remarkable feature of the story is, perhaps, the implication that the supreme deity of the Persians was identified in the popular mind with Jehovah the God of the Jews. We are not, however, to understand by this that the Persians were distinctly worshippers of one God. While they had "lords many and gods many," they believed in "a principle of evil coeternal and almost coequal with the principle of good."

Verse 1. In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia. Probably the first year of his reign in Babylon. He became king of Persia by his defeat of Astyages, and perhaps twenty-one years after that he conquered Babylon. **The word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah.** (Jer. 25. 11, 12; 29. 10.) This prophet had promised the return from captivity and had given a date—"seventy years." But a year might mean either 360 days or 365 days, and as there were many relays of captives taken to Nineveh and Babylon in different years, the commencement of the exile might be dated from any one of these "captivities." **The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia.** That God frequently works directly on the minds of men whom he has chosen to be his chief instruments in the development of his cause all sacred history attests. The stories of Abimelech, Balaam, and Nebuchadnezzar are instances of these, and now we

have Cyrus similarly stirred up to carry out God's plans. We do not know what instruments, if any, God used to sway the king's mind. He may have given to his servant Daniel "favor" in the eyes of Cyrus, or he may have simply pressed home on the king's conscience this great duty. (See the note on verse 2.) **He made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing.** The kingdom of Cyrus included most of what are in modern times called Turkey in Asia, Persia, Afghanistan, and Beloochistan. Writing is supposed to have been but recently introduced into the Persian empire, and it is probable that this proclamation was issued in both Persian and Chaldean. Copies of it were given to couriers who rode on fleet steeds from city to city to the remotest points of the empire.

2. Here comes the proclamation; and it does not take away from its force to discover that its

phraseology and form are Hebraic rather than Persian. What we have here is evidently the Hebrew transcript of the decree. **Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia.** With some similarity the famous Behistun inscription begins, "I am Darius the great king, the king of kings, the king of Persia." **The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth.** This sentence is remarkable in many ways. "God of heaven" was a recognized title of the Supreme Being among the Persians, who, as we have already seen, believed that the moral universe was dual, and that there was a god of the infernal regions hardly less powerful than the heavenly god. "The Lord" here, as always when printed in small capitals, stands for Jehovah, the Hebrew name for the supreme divinity; not Ormuzd, which name Cyrus would doubtless use in direct communication with his own people. A striking contrast is made between the God of heaven and the kingdoms of the earth which that god bestows upon his chosen ones. Such reverence as this, such disposition to refer to the supreme God as the giver of earthly power, is usual in the royal proclamations of Persia. The power that Cyrus inherited was small compared with the majestic empire which God had built up for him by the conquest of neighboring kingdoms. Cyrus is called, in Isa. 45, the "Anointed of Jehovah," and is given God's promise to subdue nations, and open doors, and make rugged places plain before him, to destroy doors of brass and bars of iron, and bring forth the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places, so that Cyrus may know that Jehovah is the supreme God. **He hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem.** In what form this charge came we do not certainly know. Isa. 44. 28 quotes God as saying of Cyrus, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." The precise date of this remarkable sentence we cannot give, but it is generally assumed that it had been shown in writing to Cyrus, and that he accepted it as a command. Certainly without his support the temple could not at this time have been built. The phrase, **which is in Judah,** here and in verse 3, points to the small relative importance of the ruined capital.

3. Who is there among you of all his people. That is, of all the worshippers of Jehovah. They were scattered in nearly every part of his dominions. Judah and Benjamin, being nearest to the center of imperial power, were naturally most affected by this proclamation, but many from the northern tribes also accepted its

conditions and returned. **His God be with him.** A benediction from a man who, according to Plutarch, "in wisdom and virtue and greatness of soul excelled other kings," and of whom Herodotus writes that he ruled his subjects like a father. **Go up.** This phrase may mean no more than our idiom "undertake." Nevertheless, as soon as the desert was crossed, the caravan to Jerusalem would have steep mountain climbing before it. **Build the house of the Lord God of Israel.** The authorization and much of the treasure necessary to build the temple comes from Cyrus; the work and the responsibility for details rest upon the returning Jews. **(He is the God) which is in Jerusalem.** The Revised Version omits the article before God, as if Cyrus here vouches for the divinity of Jehovah. The Greek version (Septuagint) and the Latin (Vulgate) do not throw this clause into parenthetical form, but make it read, "He is the God who is in Jerusalem." Hardly enough is known of Cyrus, apart from this brief record, to justify a positive statement as to which he intended to say.

4. Whosoever remaineth. The Revised Version is "whosoever is left." Not whosoever is disposed, in spite of the royal permission, to remain in Babylon, but whosoever has survived the dangers and strains of the years of exile. **In any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him.** This appeal for friendly assistance must be interpreted in harmony with the conditions of that day. Ancient heathens, no matter how bad they were, were all religious, and there was no necessary hostility between followers of different faiths. The political struggles between Brahmans, Mohammedans, and Christians in modern India have so affected public opinion that it would be regarded almost as a sin for one to contribute to the cost of a temple, mosque, or church for a rival worship. But throughout the ancient world, with perhaps a few exceptions, rival creeds were not necessarily unfriendly. It is of the very nature of polytheism to tolerate other gods. **With silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts.** In order that none may be hindered by poverty or by the want of beasts of burden from joining the band of emigrants and starting out on their return to Jerusalem. Every such gift would be regarded as a sacred deed sure to be rewarded by the god in whose honor it was done. **Besides the freewill offering.** Cyrus himself was sending as a "freewill offering" many vessels of gold and silver. Doubtless others in high position would follow his example. But he exhorts his subjects to facilitate the enterprise in this very practical fashion also.

5. The chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin. The Jewish nation in its highest development was framed upon something like the clanship of Scotland. These "chiefs" were the heads of the clans. **The priests and the Levites** had been for centuries closely related to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, for the northern kingdom had ignored the Mosaic rule, and had taken its priests indiscriminately from all tribes. **All them whose spirit God had raised up.** Not nearly all even of Judah and Benjamin were willing to undertake the long and perilous journey. Many of the most prosperous preferred to remain in Babylonia, but it was fair to assume that no one went to Palestine from selfish motives. It was the divine touch that raised this enthusiasm, at once earnestly patriotic and profoundly religious. **The house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem.** A similar phrase ends the preceding verse. In each case the thought is that the deserted hilltop of Moriah was still sacred; it was Jehovah's place of residence, and though the building in which his service had been maintained was in ruins, the very site was his "house."

6. All they that were about them. Their neighbors. **Strengthened their hands.** Helped them. The rest of the verse is a catalogue of the help given individually to pilgrim Jews, besides the offerings made directly for the temple. The motives of these givers, though mixed, were mainly good. In the first place, where the king leads many would naturally fol-

low. In the second place, as we have seen, all religions were revered to some degree by all people. Thirdly, the Jews had shown a high morality and had won the respect of their neighbors, and much was probably given from genuine friendship and kindness. Fourthly, it was the habit of the Jews to pray for all who contributed to their worship; and all men valued prayer.

7. Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels. It was the ordinary custom of oriental conquerors to carry off the sacred vessels from the temples of their subject nations. This was done partly in reverence for, partly in contempt of, the gods of those nations. Nebuchadnezzar had thus taken the valuable articles from the temple service and placed them in the temple of his gods in Babylon. To this custom, as followed by the Romans, we are indebted for our knowledge of the shape of the seven-branched candle-stick, which, after having been paraded in triumph through Rome, was carved in the triumphal arch of Titus.

8. Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. This was the Chaldean name of Zerubbabel, who, although not directly descended from Jehoiachin, seems to have become by inheritance his legal heir. Cyrus was evidently not afraid of any rebellion on the part of the Jews when he thus chose their hereditary ruler to be their leader.

9-11. Chargers. Basins or bowls. The rest of the lesson is a continuation of the catalogue of the treasures contributed by Cyrus.

CRITICAL AND HOMILETICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. Now. The Hebrew has "and," showing that this chapter is a continuation of some other work. Ezra was probably formerly joined directly to Second Chronicles. The reader will also notice that the last two verses of 2 Chron. are reproduced here. **First year of Cyrus.** Not of his reign, but his first year as ruler of Babylon, a time so full of meaning to the Jews; so much so that they naturally call it first year. This was 538 B. C., or, according to others, 536. Cyrus was born about 590 B. C., became king of Elam 558, conquered Media 549, Persia about 548, Lydia 540, and Babylon 538. **King of Persia.** So called because this country was regarded as his most important conquest. **The word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah.** The reference is to Jer. 25. 11 and 29. 10. Isaiah also, though no reference is made to it here, had foretold the emancipation of the Jews under Cyrus. (See 41. 2-4; 44. 28; 45. 1-6.) **The Lord stirred up.** By what agency is not stated, but probably by petitions from influential

Jews, like Daniel and his friends. **Made a proclamation.** Literally, "He made a voice to pass." That is, he sent heralds throughout those cities and places where the Hebrew captives dwelt to proclaim aloud their freedom. **Also in writing.** The verbal proclamation was supplemented by written documents, so as to give it the more authority in the absence of the heralds, and such as could serve for future references. (See chap. 5. 17; 6. 3.)

2. All the kingdoms of the earth. Oriental monarchs were not noted for their modesty. Such exaggerated language is often found upon the monuments. Cyrus, however, did rule over an extensive empire, extending from the Caspian Sea to distant Arabia and from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean, ruling over Media, Persia, Elam, Babylonia, and as far west as Lydia. **The Lord the God of heaven,** etc. More exactly, the Jehovah, etc. We have other instances where a heathen king seems to acknowledge the divinity and power of Jehovah,

the national God of Israel. Compare the words of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius (Dan. 3, 28, 29; 4, 2; 6, 25). It was formerly believed that Cyrus was a strict monotheist, but lately discovered inscriptions speak of him as a worshiper of both Nebo and Merodach. He may have used the word "Jehovah" merely from policy, simply to conciliate the Jews, and may have cared but little under what name the God of heaven might be called. Be that as it may, he acknowledges a power superior to himself, from whom all authority is derived. **He hath charged me to build.** The pronoun "he" is emphatic. It is very possible that Daniel, or some other pious Hebrew, might have shown him the prophecies of Isaiah above quoted.

3. Of all his people. That is, Jehovah's people, referring chiefly to the captives from Judah, without, however, excluding any Israelite. (See verse 5.) **Go up to Jerusalem.** A current phrase regardless of the starting point. Englishmen, also, no matter in what part of England they live, speak of "going up to London." **He is the God.** Compare Darius's words, Dan. 6, 26. Two interpretations are possible, the one given in the English versions, the other in the margin of the Revised. According to the latter we should read, "He is the God which is in Jerusalem." In the other case the phrase, "which is in Jerusalem," refers to the temple.

4. Whosoever is left. Whoever of the captive Jews, and their descendants. The reference is to any Israelite who desired to go to the land of his fathers. (See Neh. 1, 2; Hag. 2, 3.) **Let the men of his place.** Not merely Jews, but the inhabitants, regardless of their nationality. **Help him.** Literally, "lift him up." Compare the English, "give him a lift." **Goods.** Articles of clothing, or things necessary for the long trip from Babylon to Jerusalem. **Beasts.** From chap. 2, 66, *f.*, we find that they had 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 asses. This is the first mention of horses used for domestic purposes among the Jews. **Besides the freewill offering.** While many of the Jews had become so alienated from the land of their fathers as not to have any desire to leave Babylon, yet they deemed it a privilege to send some freewill offering for the temple in Jerusalem. Silver, gold, and vessels of all kinds were among the gifts offered (see chap. 8, 28, and compare Exod. 35, 21, *f.*).

5. The heads of fathers' houses. "Houses" is not in the original. The tribes were subdivided into clans, families, and households. (See Josh. 7, 16-18.) The expression may simply mean the leading representative men. For a list of such who returned with the captives, see chap. 2, 2 and Neh.

7. 7. Judah and Benjamin and the priests and the Levites. Those who had remained true to the kingdom of Judah; not all of them, by any means, but those whom the Spirit of God stirred up with a sense of duty to rebuild the temple, and thus render the worship of Jehovah the more easy. As a matter of fact, less than fifty thousand returned, and some of these belonged to other tribes. (See 1 Chron. 9, 3; Neh. 11, 20.)

6. Strengthened their hands. Literally, "Held them firmly by the hand," as a father holds a weak child, or a nurse a sick man to support his own weight. The meaning of this figurative language is that they aided them by their sympathy and material support. **Precious things.** The term is indefinite, but refers in general to costly presents given by one friend or relative to another. (See Gen. 24, 53; 2 Chron. 21, 3; 32, 23.)

7. Cyrus the king brought forth. He issued a decree to that effect. **Vessels of the house of the Lord.** The temples of antiquity were richly and expensively furnished and contained often vast treasures. Nothing could have been more natural than that a conqueror should plunder a temple of such splendor as that of Jerusalem. And this not from mere greed for treasure, but to show forth the superiority of his own god over that of the conquered people. For a detailed account of how the temple of Jehovah was plundered by Nebuchadnezzar, see 2 Kings 24, 13; 2 Chron. 36, 7; Dan. 1, 2. **In the house of his gods.** The same Hebrew words are rendered in the house of his god (see Dan. 1, 2), and probably that is the correct rendering in this place. Elohim is plural in form, but always rendered God when referring to Jehovah. Nebuchadnezzar, like all Babylonian rulers, was a polytheist. At the same time we know that he paid especial honor to Merodach. In 2 Chron. 36, 7 we read that he placed the sacred vessels carried from Jerusalem in "his temple at Babylon."

8. Mithredath. Cyrus's treasurer, the word is of Persian origin, and means either given by or dedicated to Mithra—that is, the animating spirit of fire, or the sun-god. **Sheshbazzar.** This name occurs only in Ezra. Commentators generally agree that it is the Babylonian name for Zerubbabel, who, as the son of either Pedaiiah or Shealtiel, was a direct heir to the throne of Judah. (Compare 1 Chron. 3, 17-19 and Ezra 3, 2-8.) The supposition is that the name of this prince of Judah had been changed from Zerubbabel. The names of several prominent Hebrews were changed in Babylon. (See Dan. 1, 6, 7.)

9. Chargers. The Hebrew term so trans-

lated occurs nowhere else in the Bible. The exact meaning is not known. It is variously rendered as basin, cup, basket, etc. **Knives.** The meaning of this word, occurring only here, is a matter of dispute. There is but very little reason for rendering it "knives." The word probably designates some kind of vessel.

10. Bowls. The Authorized Version has "basin." Keil and others suppose them to have been some kind of goblets with covers. **Of a second sort.** This phrase is puzzling. The text is probably corrupt. The word rendered *second sort* may be a numeral defectively written. Most versions, however, make it refer to vessels of the second class—that is, of inferior value.

11. All the vessels . . . five thousand and four hundred. The total of the vessels mentioned in verses 9 and 10 makes 2,400, or 3,301 less than the number given here. There is no way of explaining the contradiction except to regard the text as corrupt.

Thoughts for Young People.

The Work of God.

1. The work of God requires first of all that somebody's spirit be stirred up. (Verse 1.) Every revival begins in some one heart; every plan for the upbuilding of the kingdom comes from some one who has been quickened in his spiritual nature.

2. The work of God requires self-denial. (Verses 2-4.) Some must give and some must work, and all must make sacrifices for God's cause. You may not be able to work, then give. You may not be able to give, then work, and show your interest in the cause.

3. The work of God requires effort quite as much as faith. Enthusiasm and liberal gifts would not have availed to erect the temple; some one had to go.

4. The work of God requires common people as well as ministers and distinguished laymen. Joshua and Sheshbazzar and their associates could not have done the work without the assistance of the unnamed members of the rank and file.

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

Bishop Newman, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, when on the lower Tigris many years ago, visited the reputed tomb of Ezra at Zamzumu, and found it in the custody of the descendants of those Hebrews who were carried into captivity in Babylon. Their dress was superior to that of the native Arabs about them and they were far more thrifty; the Hebrew women had not a degraded look, but were unusually handsome. The Jews make an annual pil-

grimage to this shrine, offering their prayers and kissing the cenotaph. The Turkish governor at the fort near by extorted large sums of money from the pilgrims. Whether Ezra was buried here or not, the Talmud and Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, who visited this shrine in 1173, both assert that he was. The edifice has a dome encased with green porcelain tiles, surmounted by a gilded circle representing the sun; the main body of the building is composed of yellow bricks, with, of course, Saracenic arched entrances and balconies. Over the doorway Hebrew inscriptions are found on two tablets of black marble. The cenotaph of the interior is covered with rich green cloth fringed with gold, on which are white and green banners, and at each corner is a carved urn, and near by a lamp, the flame of which is never allowed to go out. The Hebrew pilgrims write their prayers on slips of white paper found on the tomb. The floor is a pavement of white and green and black marble; the walls are many-colored porcelain inlaid in the form of stars; on the edge of the panels are embossed stars of small mirrors, and an immense star adorns the center of the dome. About on the walls are quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures. (See *Babylon and Nineveh*.) In a wall and facing the east is a closet in which is kept a copy of the Hebrew law, and above this is a representation of the seven-branched golden candlestick of the Hebrew temple. The copy of the Scriptures in this tomb is a very fitting memorial of the "ready scribe of the law of Moses" who rewrote the whole of the Old Testament, as it existed in his time, in the Chaldaic character for the use of the Jews who either could not or would not return with him to Jerusalem.

About four miles from Murgh-ab, Persia, the traveler reaches Deh Nove, "new village," and about a quarter of an hour's ride from there is the throne of Cyrus, called by the natives of the region now, "Takhte Madar Soleiman," or "The Throne of the Mother of Solomon." It was a delightful place in ancient times, but it has lost its grandeur and beauty, only some of the walls and fallen stones remaining. About a quarter of a mile from the throne are to be seen ten stone pillars, overthrown now. On one of these are inscriptions. A little beyond these is a village called "The Mother of Solomon" (Madare Soleiman). In this village is the tomb of Cyrus, king of Persia, though the natives call it "The Tomb of the Mother of Solomon." It is a square building about thirty-six feet in height, with sides twenty-four feet in extent. The material is a beautiful marble, and its steps enable the visitor to examine it. The Mohammedans have made this tomb a sanctuary. There

is an ancient cemetery near this tomb with many stone gates having inscriptions on them. Two large stones near each other in this cemetery are valued highly by Mohammedans for their supposed marvelous power to cure persons who have been bitten by mad dogs. The faith is such in its healing powers that it has a wide reputation as a sort of Pasteur's resort, and from great distances patients are brought here and made to pass five times round these stones, when they will be cured; but the Persians, nevertheless, acknowledge that most of them die on the way home.

That Cyrus put his decrees "in writing" is in line with what we know of the customs and the times. No nation has reached a higher stage of artistic excellence in the matter of calligraphy than the Persians, who call writing "the golden profession." As high as a hundred thousand dollars has been known to be paid for an artistically executed copy of the Koran. We are told of a superior artist who executed in writing so highly illuminated a copy of a poem that he received in addition to his promised reward his mouth stuffed full of pearls. Another illustration is of a penman of the fifteenth century who was executed because he did not make more rapid progress with a copy of a poem. But the extreme beauty of the artist's work was such that even scraps of it set in gold were sold at most fabulous prices.

It has seemed an unusual thing that an oriental monarch should disperse any peoples whom he had in his territory by conquest, but there seems some evidence that Cyrus extended this policy even beyond the Jews. At least it has been so inferred from several sources, specially from clay cylinders of his time. One of these in the British Museum, some four inches in diameter, bears the inscription which makes Cyrus say, "I assembled all those nations, and I caused them to go back to their countries."

By Way of Illustration.

God in history. The first and most important lesson to be learned from this account is the control of God over nations. The best nations are, indeed, an evolution, but God is the evolver. God is in history, working out the millennium. McCurdy says:

"It is not too much for us to say that while the triumphs of Cyrus shook the earth the return of the little band of Hebrews to Zion shook not the earth only, but also the heavens."

Benefits of the captivity. During these alien years the prophecies of Jeremiah are being collected for the comfort and hope of his exiled countrymen. while the old prophet himself, whose mes-

sage heretofore has been rejected, is writing lamentations from his far home beside the Nile. It is in the exile that the annals of the kings are written out; that Ezekiel, the prophet of the captivity, speaks his symbolic messages of retribution and coming deliverance to the Sabbath congregations of the synagogues; that Daniel, the seer and statesman of the court, illustrates before successive kings the power and beauty of the religious life; and here, perhaps, the second Isaiah published those matchless and inspiring visions for the hope of Israel and the cheer of the whole world. We may not forget also the service of the wandering singers, those troubadours of the captivity, whose minor notes of sorrow are embodied in the psalms of the exile.—*W. H. Davis.*

The national character purified. Dean Stanley reminds us that the purification of the national character begins with the exile. It destroyed the idolatrous element. No Jew after the captivity bowed his knee to idols.

It intensified the religious life of the people. It took away secular hopes and raised spiritual aspirations. The Jews saw their hope of empire depart, and began to look for a Messiah who should restore the kingdom. By degrees they realized that the hope of Israel was in spiritual and not temporal prosperity.

There is a story of a nobleman who undertook to form an æolian harp, or wind harp, between the two great towers of his castle. He stretched the wires, but the wind gave no sound, and he deemed his work a failure. One night there came a mighty storm, and then the silent harp awoke and poured forth its music. It needed the force of the tempest to call forth its tones. So the best of Israel was developed not by the breeze of prosperity, but under the hurricane of adversity.—*W. A. Dickson.*

The land of the Jews. God selected it. "A land that I espied for them, flowing with milk and honey" (Ezek. 20. 6). God gave it to Abraham and his descendants. "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever" (Gen. 13. 15-17). Israel's title deed to Palestine is recorded not in the Turkish Serail at Jerusalem, but in every Bible that there is this day in all the languages of the nations of the earth.

God cares for it. "A land which the Lord thy God careth for" (Deut. 11. 12). Why did God select it? We believe it is not presumption to answer:

First, because of its location. It is the natural center of the earth, a choice situation for the capital of a world-wide empire.

Second, because of the variety of its climate

and scenery, which constitute a miniature world. It was just the place for the giving of the supernatural book that was to have world-wide circulation.

Third, because of its productiveness. Every sabbath year it produced enough to support the population two years, and every jubilee year enough to support them three years.

It is called in Scripture "the pleasant land" (Dan. 8. 9), "the glorious land" (Dan. 11. 16). Twenty-one times it is called "a good land," and once "an exceeding good land" (Num. 14. 7), "the glory of all lands" (Ezek. 20. 6).—*William E. Blackstone.*

Heart Talks on the Lesson.

Jewish history is not only most interesting in itself, but in every era, every detail, it is full of spiritual instruction for us. We lose much when we do not study the Bible as devout and earnest seekers for truth. The coming out of Egypt, the wanderings in the wilderness, the conquest of Canaan, the falling away into idolatry, the suffering, loss, and captivity—what pictures are these of heart-experience! And the never-failing care of God, the hope of restoration, the fatherly discipline, the sending of messengers to call back the wanderers, are all repeated in our own heart histories.

What spiritual lessons shall we learn from the return from captivity? We see that the providence of God is over every life. Never for a moment doubt it. No soul can drift beyond his government or his care. Cyrus was a heathen king, but God's hand was on him to accomplish his will. A hundred years before he was born, as we read in Isaiah 44 and 45, his name was mentioned and what he would do was foretold. God is at the helm of national affairs, stirring up the spirit of rulers and kings even when they are not counted as his servants. We talk of war with Spain, of the czar's call for a peace congress, the despotic woman ruling China, and forget or laugh at the idea of God acting through these agencies. But "his kingdom ruleth over all," and the end will one day prove it.

So, too, his hand is upon our own secret thoughts when we do not know it, and often he stirs another's spirit for us as he stirred Cyrus to send out his people from bondage. Is your heart in captivity, "under the rule of a stranger?" Has the adversary spread out his hand upon all your pleasant things, as their captors did to these poor exiles? Dwelling among the heathen they found no rest, as your heart finds none away from God, among those who do not know or love his name. Jeremiah's lamentations per-

fectly describe a soul held in the bondage of sin. The enemy "hath set me in dark places; he hath hedged me about that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain very heavy."

God has stirred up my heart and the hearts of others who love you, to call you back to the good land of promise which belongs to you. He makes everything as easy as possible for you to go. He provides friends to help you, and all that you need to make you spiritually strong and rich. He even makes the way joyful with music and singing. No one was compelled to leave the land of captivity against his wish. They went there as a nation, but they came out as individuals. There is no freedom without the exercise of one's own choice. Every name was recorded of those who chose to go out of captivity. Every name is written in the Book of Life of those who choose freedom in Christ. All who decided to start "came to Jerusalem." No disappointment, no falling out by the way. It was God's purpose to bring them there; they chose his plan, and nothing then could hinder its accomplishment. Once make the choice that you will be a captive to sin no longer, and nothing can frustrate God's glorious purpose for you.

The Teachers' Meeting.

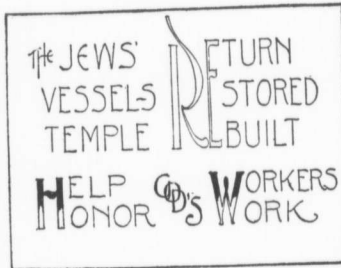
It is best to treat this lesson as a simple and entertaining narrative and draw forth its evident moral and spiritual lessons. But first glance at the captivity: (1) Its causes—moral, political; (2) Its character—the downfall of Judah, the condition of the captives in Babylon, the psalms of captivity; (3) Its prophecies of the overthrow, of the duration of captivity, of restoration; (4) Its effects on the moral and national sense of the Jews.... Next consider the persons of the lesson: (1) Cyrus; (2) Jeremiah; (3) Sheshbazzar; (4) "Chief of the fathers," priests, Levites.... Third, the king's proclamation and the return of the people.... Lessons to be drawn: I. The work of God. See "Thoughts for Young People".... II. Show how this lesson teaches the inevitable fulfillment of God's word.... III. Take the return of the Jews as a type of the return of our souls to the promised land of rich religious experience.

PERSONAL HYMNS.

Take my life.
Come ye that love the Lord.
Give me some work to do.
I love thy kingdom, Lord.
Wake, wake the song.

Light of life.
Children of the heavenly King.
All for Jesus.
There's work for us all.
Jerusalem, my happy home.

Blackboard.



All events that minister to the welfare of God's children and make them glad are from him. In this instance he fulfilled his word of promise through Cyrus. By his proclamation the Jews were permitted to return to Jerusalem, taking with them the vessels restored by the king. Then, too, God designed the rebuilding of the temple to be by their own effort, as well as by his charge to Cyrus. By a freewill offering according to his ability each man was asked to help the workers, and this the people did willingly. We honor the work of God by ready service and willing gifts.

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Thoughts for the Quiet Hour.

—As it requires the same power to sustain creation that it required to produce it, so it requires the same Saviour who cleanses hearts to keep hearts clean. Only through the continued indwelling of our Lord can Christians be kept holy, useful, and happy. Without his bright presence the dark kingdom of death would soon be restored.—*Clarke*.

—A soft heart is the best tempered for God. O God make our clay wax, and our wax pliable to thine hand, so shall we be sure to be free either from sin or from the hurt of sin.—*Bishop Hall*.

—Religious company brings fire to our graces to kindle them when they are freezing, but irreligious company brings water to quench them when they are flaming.—*Secker*.

—Let the current of your being set toward God, then your life will be filled and calmed by one master passion which unites and stills the soul.—*Maclaren*.

—The desire to be known of men is destructive to all true greatness; nor is there any honor worth calling honor but what comes from an unseen source. To be great is to seem small in the eyes of men.—*Macdonald*.

—There is a vast difference between reading the Bible to preach it and reading the Bible to practice it.—*Phillips*.

—The real blessing, mercy, satisfaction, is not in the having or the lack of merely outward things, but in the consciousness that the true source of life and happiness is deeper than all these.—*Chadwick*.

—Spiritual plowman, sharpen thy plowshare with the Spirit! Spiritual sower, dip thy seed in the Spirit; so shall it germinate; and ask the Spirit to give thee grace to scatter it, that it may fall into the right furrows! Spiritual warrior, whet that sword with the Spirit and ask the Spirit, whose word is a sword indeed, to strengthen thy arm to wield it.—*Spurgeon*.

PRIMARY TEACHERS' DEPARTMENT.

The True Foundations.

"Beloved, let us love so well,
Our work shall still be better for our love,
And still our love be sweeter for our work."

—E. B. Browning.

The primary teacher who is drawn to the work by love can well understand how love betters the work, and the work sweetens the love! Love is the one true foundation upon which all work for the little ones must be built if it is to abide. It should enter into all the details of the school, it should furnish the motive for good order, for punctuality, for attention, for obedience. The underlying principle governing all helpful and pleasant association must be clearly explained and kindly insisted upon. Love for teacher, love for one another, and back of all, love for God, must rule, if the school is to do the best work possible.

The love that is only fond, that pets and admires the "cute little dears," is not love in the real sense. The love that "betters" our work is that which is on the lookout for right principles, and the wise and effective adaptation of them to little minds and hearts. Development of character is the great end to be kept in mind. The order of the school, the various exercises, the courses inculcated—all things, in short, pertaining to the life of the school—should aim constantly and quietly at the growth of character. And to this end the central authority—the teacher—must be one of settled, orderly spirit and life.

Could the primary teacher look into that clear mirror, a child's soul, and see with what reverence she is regarded, she might well tremble! Yes, and rejoice, for this very quality of unfaltering faith in the wisdom and love of "teacher" is her power, as it is her peril if she fail to rise to the occasion! The realization of the truth,

"Up to me sweet childhood looketh,"

can scarcely fail to inspire the earnest prayer,

"Teach me of thy ways, O Father!
For sweet childhood's blessed sake,"

and

"So direct my daily way,
That in following me, the children
May not go from Thee astray."

Notes.

PROMOTION DAY should be made a memorable occasion in the primary department. It will be a sweet reward to those who have made an effort to attain the requisites, and will encourage them

to still further acquirement. It will soften the change, for children, almost without exception, leave the "little class" with reluctance—with some heartache.

It will be an incentive to those who remain to learn with more diligence.

It will help to keep up a lively interest in the main room.

The class being promoted should have recognition by the superintendent in the primary room, and then should be escorted out by him, and afterward be recognized by him before the whole school.

Parents of the children to be promoted should be enjoined to be present, and seats of honor should be given to them. The more closely parents are connected with Sunday school work the more fruitful the efforts of teachers will be.

Let Sunday school teachers, as far as possible, arrange for the attendance of their children upon church services. Undoubtedly many children would attend church if sittings were provided for them. This becomes necessary when they belong to families that are not church attendants.

It should be a teacher's delight to have her scholars at church with her. There ought to be a Sunday-school "acre" provided in every church to which teachers can go with their classes.

Subjects for primary teachers to think about and talk about:

How to reach non-Christian parents.

Is a system of rewards helpful?

How mothers and teachers may be mutually helpful.

Relations between the Church and the Sunday school.

The spiritual basis of character building.

Why am I a teacher?

What can we do for the youngest children?

How to interest children in missions.

In what way does a teacher's personality affect her work?

The Home Department and the primary class—how can they cooperate?

Reflex power of faithful teaching.

The relation of the primary department to the main school.

Are library books desirable in the primary class?

Birthdays and recognition of new scholars.

What can I do to make myself a better teacher?

Beautiful feet will be ours if you bring
Your gifts to the feet of their heavenly king.
Leading them up to the mountain tops high,
Or through quiet valleys, where green pastures

Bring good tidings, publishing peace,
Growing into their lives as the years shall
increase.

No higher mission than this do you give—
To fit them for kingdom of home and of heaven.

Mothers' Meetings.

MRS. CRAFTS says: "A primary class without a mothers' meeting will be considered an anomaly in the twentieth century. It is quite time that those who want to be leaders should look well to this phase of the work.

"Certainly every Primary Union should have a mothers' meeting occasionally, if not regularly. A very small proportion of unions, only fourteen out of one hundred and twenty, have yet entered upon this important method of cooperation."

The following account of a mothers' meeting in England contains some admirable points:

THE MOTHER'S UNION.

At a meeting of "mothers," held lately in connection with the Mothers' Union, in the parish church schoolroom, Paignton, Mrs. Knight-Bruce said that their lives were influenced by their mothers' lives and morals, for they had the beginnings. It was desirable, therefore, that mothers should teach their little ones to read a verse or two of Scripture every day. Many made a point of their reading a chapter, but as there was seldom time for this, they read nothing, yet a verse of the Bible was enough to give them thoughts during the whole day. What "mother" used to say and do is often repeated by old men and women. One great thing was to see their children begin the day with prayer, however short. One mother said that she had found the best time was when all the children were assembled for breakfast.

An illustration of the short time it really takes to offer the Lord's Prayer and one collect was given by the speaker, who was in a church one day when the clergyman came in carrying under his arm a large clock with a white face. He gave an address on prayer, and showed the congregation that these two prayers could be offered slowly and reverently in less than a minute. One mother told the speaker she made it a rule never to go to bed owing a farthing. She often found it inconvenient to do so, but her mother had asked her when she was a young girl always to pay all she owed before going to bed, and she had made it a rule to do so. Mothers were not like other workmen who made cabinets or china, which get old,

or useless, or break; the work of mothers was for life and eternity, and influenced generations and generations. Mothers also worked seven days a week—sometimes twenty-four hours when the children were ill—and never had holidays; no matter how tired she was the children were always in and out and round about her, and often seemed to come in with their little wants just at the wrong time.

Mrs. Knight-Bruce said that once she went into a mother's cottage and told her about the Mothers' Union, and the mother said she did not want to hear about the society; there were too many societies, and she would like it if they were all done away with. Mrs. Knight-Bruce felt very humble and cast down at this, and went to see another mother, also in a cottage, to whom she explained the use of the Mothers' Union, and she said, "Why, ma'am, it is a beautiful society, and I think you might do away with all societies rather than not have the Mothers' Union." Mrs. Knight-Bruce said that mothers should do all they could to prevent children being sent to public houses for drink. At one time the police were sent to all the public houses in London, and they counted 7,000 children thus occupied.

She said that the Mothers' Union was founded by Mrs. Sumner twenty years ago, and now numbered over 150,000. They might work wonders, and so influence others that every poor man might have one bedroom for himself and his wife, one for his boys, and another for his girls. God intended his work to be done by mothers; they were his workwomen. The mothers' work was held up as the "three h's"—the highest, the holiest, and the hardest.

The Story in Religious Education.

BY MRS. WILBUR F. CRAFTS.

"TELL me a story." How often we have heard this request coming from the lips of children. If we stop to ask the reason why, we shall easily discover that there is a psychological reason for it. I will give you the reason in concrete shape. A grown person takes a child to the park. The older person seats herself on a park bench and settles into a state of reverie. But not so with the child. It flits about from place to place picking up "pretty sticks and stones," climbs rocks, if there are any, all the while keeping up an incessant prattle, "saying nothing" you may think. She seems to be talking to herself, but no, she is holding converse with imaginary companions. The little lake is the ocean; she floats the leaves for boats, and sends them far away to bring back to her all sorts of treasures. She is

the queen; all the birds and butterflies and insects are her subjects. The clouds that go floating by fill her realm with strange animals. What a contrast between the adult and the child amid the same surroundings! One feels the pleasures of memory, the other the pleasures of imagination.

The story feeds the imagination, and that is why a child asks for a story. Parents have found that children specially delight to hear stories about what they did when they were little boys and girls. It requires quite a vigorous action of the imagination for the children to conceive the idea of their parents ever having been small like themselves. An old lady, wearing a white cap, directed the attention of a little girl to a portrait of herself when she was a child. It had long curls all around the head. The little girl looked wonderingly at the old lady and back to the portrait and asked, "Did you have the same head then that you have got now?" I think children like to hear stories about the childhood of their parents, because it brings them into closer sympathy with them.

Bible stories are the best of all for children. A wise mother of two lively boys once said to me, "Bible stories, especially Old Testament stories, should be the first told to children, and following them stories about the history of our own country."

I clipped the following from a leading kindergarten magazine: "Of course the ideal story is that of Christ—without the crucifixion. All stories should be bright and beautiful for little children. No little child would understand the sad part of the Christ story, but he can easily understand that which places before him one who did loving deeds and said gentle words to all, and 'suffered little children to come unto him.'" Teachers of little children in the Sunday school will hardly agree to this. "The sad part of the story" gives the only true measure of the love of Christ. It can be told, it has been told, without giving harrowing details and without creating a wicked prejudice against the Jews.

Children like pictures with stories because they give the life elements. They supply the imagination with material to work upon. Those who are not up in the art of story-telling will find these same pictures their greatest aid.

The ideal picture book is Froebel's *Mother Play*, not that the pictures are beautiful, but they are symbolic in the truest sense. It has been said: "Children love to see their own inner life mirrored in a life which is alien to them. To behold these reflections is a help always, a hindrance never, to the growth of the soul."

I plead for pictures with Bible stories. Above all books the Bible needs pictures to explain the

scenes described in it, and yet how seldom one sees a pictorial family Bible. Teachers would do well to use a pictorial Bible in the Sunday school, even though the children cannot clearly see the pictures; it would please them to know that they are being taught out of a "picture Bible."*

But to return to the story. Those of you who have tried to read the Bible through to little children, let me ask you what you have found to be the most difficult parts in which to interest them. I would say Proverbs, Psalms, and the epistles. Why? Because they lack the story element. For this reason we primary teachers have found it difficult sometimes to teach the International lessons, but if we made a thorough study of how to adapt these lessons to the children, we sought for stories in other parts of the Bible and elsewhere to illustrate the truth we wished to teach.

I think I must take the ground, however, that for family reading in the Bible, when there is not the same opportunity for illustrative teaching, I would recommend that where there are young children the narrative portions should be read before the other parts are.

God might have given to us a book of precepts alone—"teachings" so-called. But because we are his children, and he understands us, he has given us instead mainly a book of stories. "Now all of these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for admonition."

In them the child sees himself mirrored. Any good selection of Bible stories which teach the virtues that should appear in the child character, as obedience, truth, gentleness, etc., will prove a great help to the teacher.

It is not necessary, perhaps not always wise, to show the child himself in the story. A moral is often best pointed when a child does the pointing himself. It is in this particular that we Sunday school teachers have been criticised by the professional child-study people. On the other hand, we are told that there is danger in arousing emotion without providing for a corresponding action. A maxim is given by Professor Reuben Post Halleck in these words: "Never frame a good decision, never experience a glow of fine emotion, without a strong endeavor to respond by action in some proper way." The same author holds musical gratification and novel reading responsible for innumerable ruined wills simply because strong emotions are raised and allowed to subside without action. Viewed in this light, it would seem that the course of those teachers who make "practical application" to their Bible lessons to be commended rather than criticised.

*In this connection we cannot too highly recommend *The Leafy Broom*. Toronto: William Briggs.

Above all things to be avoided in story-telling are legends and myths. Because there is so little in the Bible about the childhood of our Saviour there is a tendency to introduce many pretty myths, such as the oxen-bowing down on Christmas night, and the story that when Jesus was a little boy he used to fashion in his play little birds of clay, and give them life, when they flew away.

Even worse are the so-called "myths from classical authors;" such as are not infrequently told to children in the kindergarten. For example, the children are told that the gods made man, made him round with two faces, four arms, etc., but he was so selfish the gods ordered him sliced in two, and that is why we now have our present form, with a flat back. Plato told this story to explain male and female, but it will certainly appear to any earnest Sunday school teacher that it is not to be compared with the Bible account of God creating man in his own image, and breathing into him the breath of life. Myths and legends confound the testimony of truth. Sunday school teachers, beware of them. It is not a legitimate or safe way to use the imagination of children.

Irregular Attendance in the Sunday School.

ALICE MAY DOUGLAS.

PERHAPS there is nothing, with the exception of the preaching of the pulpit, of more vital and eternal interest than the Sunday school; and there are few things conducted so loosely as Sunday school class work. This is true of the average Sunday school of all denominations. This sinful laxity is glaringly seen in the irregular attendance of the pupils. The fault lies generally with the teacher. Some teachers never keep a list of their scholars. They think they know their scholars so well they do not need that; yet they do not know them as well as their parents do, and parents keep a list of their children in the family Bible. One of the most impressive figures in the Bible is that of the Lamb's book in which is written the names of the redeemed. And the plantation song well says, "My God is a-writing all the time." If Christ needs to keep an exact record of his children in the school of life, do not we need to keep one of our spiritual children? One might as well have a bank full of money and no bank book as a class full of scholars and no list.

Irregular attendance is encouraged when the teacher pays no attention to it. Every Sunday some word or a card or Sunday school paper should be sent to every absent scholar. A

scholar absent for two consecutive Sundays should be called upon by the teacher. If absent for a longer time without reasonable excuse, another scholar should be sent to call for and to bring to church the missing pupil. If he does not then come, let some one call for him every Sunday until he returns to the Sunday school. If the child lives at such a distance that you can't call, send him a written invitation every week. Think what an impression such zeal will have upon the parents of that scholar. It may be the means of leading him to Christ.

Let the scholars know that you mark their attendance in your little book every Sabbath. If they deserve a word of praise in this matter don't withhold it. Offer prizes to those who show the best attendance during the year.

Another cause for irregular attendance is the indifference of the parents. They never attend divine service and do not encourage their children to attend. The only cure for this is to get those parents converted. If they won't go to the prayer meeting, they will probably not object to opening their house to such a service. And by the way, it is an excellent plan to have a prayer meeting for the mothers of the children. Ask them to meet you at your home or at the church to join prayers for the little ones.

Irregular attendance is further occasioned by reason of Sunday school tramps, meaning children that drift from one school to another just as they choose. That these may never be without the influence of some school the teacher should request the new teacher to whom they are going to report each scholar, if he or she should in turn leave that school.

The greatest difficulty I have ever met in irregular attendance is the excuse given by parents that their children cannot attend Sunday school because they cannot dress as well as others. I know of children who have cried for hours because their parents would not allow them to attend a Christmas or a Children's Day service. Other children beg and beg to come Sabbath after Sabbath, but are kept away from the same cause. Absentees of several weeks' or months' duration have often resulted from the same reason; and often the parents are churchgoing, even Christian people. The children have clothing good enough for day school, but the parents think that the better-dressed children of the Sabbath school may look down on those not dressed so well. I hope that all teachers do not meet this foolish excuse, which is none the less a difficulty to the work. One way to overcome it is to faithfully teach the scholars that all are equal in God's sight, and that pride and boasting are sinful.

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.
THIRD QUARTER.

LESSON VI. (August 6.)

THE NEW HEART. Ezek. 36. 25-36.

GOLDEN TEXT: "A new heart also will I give you." Ezek. 36. 26.

Primary Notes.

BY JULIA H. JOHNSTON.



Preliminary. [Drill for a few moments upon the Golden Thought for the quarter, that is, God cares for his own—and refer to the use of the shield for protection. Repeat that our Father keeps us, but at the same

time gives us something to do to please him; so each lesson shield has a duty written on it.] We have had shields of faith the past month; now for a month we will have a shield of hope each week. "Take the shield of faith," Jesus says; but he also says, "Hope thou in God." We must expect as well as believe that God will care for us. We must ask for his blessing and then look for the answer. When we look forward to something glad and good it keeps the heart light and helps us to bear what may be hard now.

A poor prisoner long ago and far away was shut up in a lonely castle. The king who held him as a captive said he should not go free till a large sum of money was paid for his freedom. The captive had no money, but he had a brother who was rich. He was allowed to send word to this brother, but it took long for the messenger to go and come. It was hard to wait for the answer, but day by day the poor captive kept up his courage by looking forward to the return of the messenger with the money from his rich brother. He hoped it might be to-day when he woke each morning, and so, though all was strange and hard, and he suffered much, he had something to hope for, and by and by he was set free, as he hoped. His brother had helped him before; therefore he knew he might hope for it again. As we go on with our lessons we shall learn what God has done, and our hope will be strong as we look forward to what he will do. Every sweet promise Jesus has made gives us something to hope for, and we may pray this prayer, "Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

Approach to the lesson. [Hold up the Bible.] Whose book is this? Who wrote it? It is called God's word, but just as we use a pen to put

down our thoughts so God used holy men long ago. He used their minds and their hands, and told them his word, to put down upon paper, to keep for us even now. One of the holy men of old who wrote part of God's book was called Ezekiel. You may not think it a beautiful name, but it has a beautiful meaning—the strength of God, or, God shall strengthen. He had many hard things to do, but in God's strength he did them fearlessly and faithfully. He lived in a sad time. When King Jehoiakim gave up Jerusalem to the king of Babylon many were taken captive even before the city was destroyed under King Zedekiah. Ezekiel, one of the prophets who taught the people and told them God's messages, was carried away among the rest, and there in that heathen land God still spoke to him, and told him what to say to the people. He told them of their sins, which had brought such trouble upon them, and he told them, too, of the love of God even for sinners, and taught them to hope in him, for he would by and by bring them back to their own home land, forgiving them, and leading them as his own people. Our lesson to-day is one of these messages from the loving Father in heaven, and it is about

THE NEW HEART.

How sad it was for those poor captives, away from home and from their beautiful temple. Ezekiel told them, from God, of their sin, of his pity, and his plan to take them home. Then he promised them what they needed most. Perhaps the poor captives thought something else might be better; but God knows best. The Golden Text is the promise. [Drill upon this.]

We are sin's captives. We need a new heart. What is a new heart, and how shall we get it? O it is so important to know. The lesson tells us. God says "Ye shall be clean." [Write on board.] Sin soils. Jesus makes pure. He died that our sins might be forgiven, and even the



stain taken away. Then God says, "I will put my Spirit within you." [Write below the first sen-

tence.] The Spirit cannot live in a sin-soiled heart that holds fast the sin and loves it. If the heart is clean and the Spirit lives in it, what a happy heart it is! It won't want to be selfish and sinful. The new heart loves to please Jesus and to help others. When sin stains it then it is quick to be sorry and to pray, "Lord, forgive me for Jesus' sake. [Draw large heart around the two sentences.]

How shall we get a new heart? We must have it if we would be God's children. The lesson tells. Jesus said it over again in different words. It is written on our lesson shield—"Ask and receive." God gives; we ask and take.

Kindergarten Hints.

BY JULIA E. PECK.

GOLDEN TEXT: "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Psa. 103. 11, 12.

HINTS ON METHOD.

Explain the meaning of the word "fear" as used in our selected Golden Text. If verse 26 of our lesson is used as a memory text, let us remember that the children are apt to confuse the terms "heart," "soul," "conscience." We have at times rather added to their confusion by an unfortunate use of symbols. Try to draw from the children their idea of "soul." Their thoughts will be quaintly suggestive to their teacher as revealing their need.

BIBLE HISTORY LESSON.

Review the lessons about Daniel, and introduce Ezekiel as a captive of war, who, like Daniel, was carried by soldiers into a heathen country in company with other captives. Ezekiel and his fellow-captives settled on the banks of a river. Ezekiel's house was the place they chose as a meeting place to talk with love and longing about their beloved church and their own dear city, Jerusalem.

Do the children recall the name "Jerusalem?" Is it a name full of suggestion and association for them? Find out about this, and let them see why we all have a claim on that city which these captives loved so dearly; and why our eyes also turn toward it in love.

We teach that Ezekiel was their leader, stern, determined, hopeful. God chose him. The word of God came to Ezekiel to teach his fellow-captives two lessons. First, he must warn them that they were forgetting God, and warn them of the tempting ways of the heathen around them, and that their beloved church and city would certainly be destroyed as punishment for this disobedience. He must teach them that

their captivity, and the destruction of their city were necessary to make them see how far they had strayed from God their Father. Next, Ezekiel must tell them daily, that if they obey God, and keep themselves from the tempting ways of the heathen around them, and rouse themselves to help the cause, their own dear church and city will be rebuilt, will be made more beautiful, and there will be a home-coming. This is God's promise as Ezekiel taught it to the captives: "I the Lord will build ruined places, and plant that which was desolate." "I will forgive." "I will remember their sin no more."

The end of the story of Ezekiel's work is that the captives from being worshippers of idols, and careless of God's laws, became zealous for the living God.

All this happened exactly as Ezekiel taught them to expect—and more! Who came to their city long years afterward to teach, to heal, to save?

Ezekiel the prophet was sent with a message from God to save the souls of those captives in a heathen land, who were drawn together by their loneliness and by their love for their home country. He who came later to their home country gave his life that he might reach out to save all men—all captives, all the heathen who are reaching out to find a God, all careless ones, who, knowing God, have strayed far away. To each and all he brings the message, "I will forgive, I will cleanse, I will receive."

Let the children carry home this thought, "The Lord is mindful of his own. He remembers his children."

LESSON VII. (August 13.)

EZEKIEL'S GREAT VISION.—Ezek. 37. 1-14.

GOLDEN TEXT: "I will put my Spirit within you."—Ezek. 37. 27.

Primary Notes.

Open with hymn-verse for the quarter, sung as a prayer:

Father teach us in this lesson
How thou carest for thine own,
Show us how to love and please thee,
May we trust in thee alone.

(Tune, Dornance or Stockwell.)

Approach to the lesson.
Is anything too hard for our God? Is our Saviour strong enough to do anything—everything? Are we sure about this? Do we always act as if we believed it? If we trust God's power and God's



care, why are we troubled or afraid, as we often

are? Doesn't this show that we do not really feel sure of it in our hearts? It grieves our Father's heart when we do not trust his word and his power.

Once there was a distressing famine in the land where God's people lived and many died of hunger. God sent word to them by one of his prophets that the next day food should be plentiful and should be sold very cheaply indeed. One of the king's chief men said, "If the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be." He did not trust God's word and power. But the word came true. It always does.

Our Father sometimes shows his children some wonderful things to help them to understand and to believe. Our lesson is something of this sort. The Lord wished to teach the prophet Ezekiel and the captive people of Israel and Judah that nothing was too hard for him. To teach this lesson he gave Ezekiel a wonderful vision. Sometimes the sight of the eye is called a vision. We have clear vision when we can see well. Sometimes what we see is called a vision. We look away off at some beautiful river, with trees on either side, and we say, "What a lovely vision!" But, speaking in another way, we say we have a vision when we see some wonderful sight as if it were real, and yet it is not to be seen with our eyes. The mind sees it instead, and two people do not look at a vision of this kind at once. Now, God gave Ezekiel a strange vision, a great vision. He made him see a sight which no one else could see, and it was to help him to understand a great truth. The story has been written down for us that we, here and now, may learn the same lesson—that nothing is too hard for God and that we must listen to what he says. See on our shield, "Hear the word of the Lord." When he speaks let us listen, and believe.

The vision. In some strange way the Spirit of God carried away the prophet and set him down in the midst of a valley. As clearly as if he could see with his eyes there was the valley before him, and behold it was full of dry bones. It was as if a great battle had been fought there and the bones of those killed—a great multitude—lay upon the ground, and as the prophet looked, behold they were very dry.

Then God asked the question, "Can these dry bones live?" Ezekiel could not tell, himself. It was a hard question, but he answered wisely, "O Lord God, thou knowest." Then God told him to speak to these bones and to say to them, "Hear the word of the Lord." But can a lifeless body hear? Ezekiel might have said, "There is no use in speaking to these dry bones." He said no such thing. He listened to the voice of

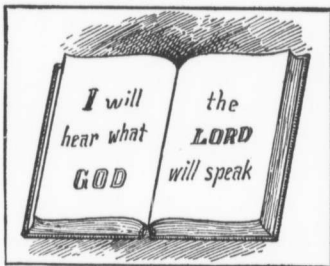
God and said over the message. God said these bones should live, that he would cause breath to enter into them, flesh to come upon them, skin to cover them. The prophet did as he was told, and he heard a great shaking and the right bones came together. God said again to call to the wind or breath, which in this place means the Spirit, and say, "Breathe upon these slain that they may live." It was done, and a living army filled the valley.

Then God explained the vision. His people were captives, away from home, and so sinful that their hearts were dry—no love, no true life in them, and they said, "Our hope is lost." But God, who could make dry bones live if he would, could bring the captives home and give them new life. "I will put my Spirit within you" was the promise. Everything would then be possible. Afterward this came true.

Wonderful things. God can raise the dead. He will at the resurrection. Hear his word, "The dead shall be raised."

God can bring back wandering ones and change their hearts. Hear his word, "A new heart also will I give unto you." He promises his Spirit, so gentle and loving, once coming down in the form of a dove.

God can help us to do what is hard. If he sends us with a message to anyone who does not love him, who seems unwilling to listen, let no one say, "It is no use." Hear God's word, "I will help thee." Listen to him.



Kintergarten Hints.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Seek ye me, and ye shall live."—Amos 5. 4.

"I will put my spirit within you."—Ezek. 36. 27.

"Because I live, ye shall live also."—John 14. 19.

HINTS ON METHOD.

The literary quality of the Book of Ezekiel and the glimpse we get of the lofty character of this prophet, as we study to make up our primary lessons, give us such inspiration that we dread los-

ing any of it by the sifting process necessary in adapting these lesson chapters to the primary grade. Let us see if we can simplify without wordy explanations, and let us see how much we can make out of our adaptation of these difficult lessons, without material loss.

LESSON STORY.

Again we review our lessons about Daniel and recall Ezekiel the prophet as another captive brought to that heathen land, Babylon, a place all the more dangerous to the followers of the true God, we explain, because the heathen offered many alluring, attractive things (customs) forbidden to God's children. Heathen temples built of bright-colored bricks, the king's hanging gardens (which we may describe if there is time) were a wonder to our simple captives, as were the great golden images of their gods. Giants in size were some of these gods, having a man's head on a lion's body, all made out of gold.

It was a temptation to the captives to join the celebrations and heathen festivals given in honor of these gigantic golden creatures which the heathen called "gods."

The captives felt that Ezekiel had become their leader. Ezekiel told them that when God chose a leader from among a company of people who had known misfortunes of war, he, the leader, was like a watchman set to blow a trumpet as a signal in times of danger (chapter 33), and the word of God is like the trumpet which the watchman blows in times like these. All would hear, without fail, the trumpet call. All could hear, without fail, the word of God spoken by the watchman, the prophet Ezekiel. No excuse for carelessness. Would they heed the warning?

At times Ezekiel found his fellow-captives in a state of homesickness as they gathered at his house, and then they were ready to listen to the trumpet call announcing God's promise of homes rebuilt, and of a glorious church when they learned to become obedient to the trumpet call of Ezekiel the watchman. At other times Ezekiel found them in the state we can best describe as the "I won't" attitude. Do you know that state of mind? And you? I do! "I won't listen." "I won't try to keep away from tempting things." We hear, as they did, the trumpet call of danger, and we will not turn our heads. The danger is real, and the trouble that follows it is real! Those captives found it so, times out of number, just as we have. But Ezekiel never gave them up. Do you think God ever gave them up?

When God's followers, the captives in that heathen land, were in greatest danger of losing home forever, of losing themselves among heathen by becoming just like the heathen, Eze-

kiel sounded the trumpet call. This is God's word to the captives. Does it mean anything at all to us? Quote Ezek. 34. 12, and memorize this text if there is time.

Ezekiel at times found his fellow-captives—and 'his is the worst state of all!—in the "I-don't-care" attitude. Do you know this state of mind? And you? I do! We all do! It takes the loudest kind of a trumpet call to rouse the "I-don't-care" captives. Said Ezekiel, "God's word to me is that you are like a valley full of dry bones." God showed Ezekiel in a dream what such a place was like, and why the souls of the "I-don't-care" captives were like the dry bones. Can such bones be made alive? "I the Lord can breathe the breath of life into them." "I will put my Spirit within you." "Because I live, ye shall live also." "Seek ye me, and ye shall live."

LESSON VIII. (August 20.)

THE RIVER OF SALVATION. Ezek.

47. 1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22. 17.

Primary Notes.

[Never forget the review, and let it go back as far as time will allow. Preserve the unity of thought, and continually impress God's loving care.]

Approach to the lesson.

Some traveler in a sandy desert lost their way, and wandered sadly about till they were almost ready to die with thirst. What is the only thing that will really refresh us when we are thirsty? If you were very, very thirsty on a hot day, and you should be offered candy, or cake instead of water, would you like that better? Would a silver dollar or a gold piece quench your thirst? No; nothing but water will do, and so these travelers went on seeking for water and trying to find their way out of the desert. At last they met some others, and begged water of them. "We have only enough for ourselves," they said, "but you are not far from a river. Go in that direction," and they pointed it out, "and you will soon find plenty of water."

These people could not give what was wanted, but they could tell where to find it. The lost men dragged themselves on, and at last came to the river. There they found water enough for all, but each one drank for himself. What one drank would not refresh another. They paid



nothing for the water, but it saved their lives, and was worth more to them than a fortune. Walking beside the river, they found their way to the place where they wanted to go. The river was their salvation—that is, they would have been lost without it; they would have died without it. With it they were saved, and were safe as they walked beside it.

Our Father in heaven gives us many pictures of what his love is, and in our lesson to-day we have a story of a river which is to help us to understand what God has given us. The same prophet Ezekiel who saw the strange vision of the dry bones was shown the vision of the river. It was in a sad time, in the twenty-fifth year of the captivity, when all things seemed darkest, that God showed his servant in a vision this wonderful river.

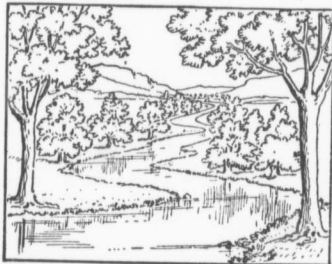
Where did the river come from? In the vision Ezekiel had seen a beautiful temple, the house of God. Now, as he looked, he saw a stream of water coming out from under the door, eastward. The beginning of the wonderful stream was in the holy temple of God.

How the waters grow. In his vision a man showed Ezekiel the strange sights. This man had a line to measure, and as the two went forward the man measured about fifteen hundred feet and took the prophet through the waters. They came up to the ankles. As much farther on they came up to the knees—still growing deeper and wider. Then as they went through again the waters came to the waist, and after measuring again, fifteen hundred feet, the waters were a great river that could not be passed over. The river flowed into a sea that was deadly and its waters were healed, and wherever the river came there was life, and on each side grew trees with unfading leaves and new fruit each month, and the leaves were for medicine.

What did the vision mean? The title of our lesson calls this river of the vision "The River of Salvation" because the Gospel of Jesus, the good news that saves men, is like this. Our souls are thirsty. They need Jesus' love and forgiveness. He freely saves and makes clean the heart as water saves the body from dying and makes it clean. No matter how many come, there is enough for all. The river of the vision came from the temple; the river of salvation comes from God. Sweet promises and everything good grow beside this river, as trees grew beside the one Ezekiel saw. As that river grew broader and deeper so the news and knowledge of Jesus will spread and grow till all shall hear of him. Our gifts help to make a way for this river to flow to heathen lands.

What shall we do? There may be water enough,

but unless one drinks he will die. See on our shield, "Drink and live." [Drill on text.]



Kindergarten Hints.

GOLDEN TEXT: "The whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isa. 11, 9.

MEMORY VERSE: John 4. 14.

HINTS ON METHOD.

UNDERLYING THOUGHT: God, the Source from which flow all vivifying influences. Simplified: God, the Source of life for body and soul.

LESSON STORY.

Were you ever very thirsty at a place where you could get no water? Were the plants in your garden ever thirsty when they could get no water? While you were thirsty could you take the least comfort in work or play? What would surely happen to you and your plants if no water were given you ever? If, as you tell me, the water comes from the clouds, gathered from the seas, who holds the seas "in the hollow of his hand?" Have you ever played down by a brook and noted the richness of the grass and flowers on its banks? Why were they brighter and happier than the grass and flowers back in the field? Parallel thought to develop: Why are those who live close to the Lord, close to the Source of all life-giving influences, brighter and happier than those who, consciously or unconsciously, shut themselves away from the Source of spiritual life?

In the country where Jesus lived there are deserts [describe briefly]. Sometimes large companies of people have to travel through these deserts to get home. We tell of the perils for man and beast in these desolate wastes. Other places there are which would be deserts if they were not watered at great labor and expense. We describe the rich tropical growth resulting from this care. One day Jesus was thirsty after a long journey through the hot sand. He stopped to rest by a deep well of water. We tell the story as found in John 4, emphasizing: "Whoever drinketh the water that I shall give him shall

never thirst." Jesus was speaking of quenching the thirst of parched souls. How could that be done?

Ezekiel had lived in that country long, long before. [At the point of our lesson story]: Ezekiel is not there now. Where is he? Ezekiel knew all about the waste and desert places in his old home, and that they could be made to blossom like a rose if.... He knew about thirsty men and camels who would perish if their water supply gave out. He also knew about thirsty souls which would perish if shut away from the life-giving Father of all men.

To make his fellow-captives listen to his note of warning he spoke in poetry to them. All people of Bible lands love poetry. God made them that way. Instead of "speaking out," and naming the blessings that were promised to those who are faithful to God, as our preachers would do, Ezekiel talks in poetry about a river whose soft-flowing waters flow from under the east gate of the church [quote].

To a people who have known the sufferings of a "dry season," who travel through desert wastes where water is more precious than gold, the most beautiful home on earth, or in heaven, would be to them a place flowing with rivers of water. Ezekiel's poetry shows them a picture of their whole land made over new; the wide desert, even to its very borders, is made to bring forth fruits and flowers. Parallel thought to develop: The whole earth to be filled, made over new, with knowledge and life from the Lord. God the Father sends showers of mercy and goodness, promises of new life to souls wasting themselves by making a desert around them. When we think of Ezekiel's poetry about a river of salvation we are to think of Jesus who came "to make waste places glad."

LESSON IX. (August 27.)

RETURNING FROM CAPTIVITY. Ezra 1. 1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT: "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Psa. 126. 3.

Primary Notes.



Approach to the lesson.
Did you ever go on a journey? Perhaps you went with father or mother. You had your things packed into a trunk, and a carriage took you to the station. Perhaps you traveled in a sleeper or a palace car, and what a beautiful time you had, to be sure.

And before you tired of all the wonderful sights you came back to your own home, as happy as could be.

But suppose some dark, sad night some one should come to your house and carry you away to a strange country, burning your home behind you, and taking from you all you cared most about. Would not that be a different sort of a journey? You would be called a captive, or a prisoner, if you were taken against your will. And if, while you lived in a strange land, you knew that it was for something wrong you had done that you had been taken away, O how sad and hard to bear it would be!

If you had been at Jerusalem about twenty-five hundred years ago, you might have seen a sad procession of captives leave their city and their home. For two years the soldiers from Babylon had camped against the city, and there was sore famine there, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. At last there came a night when the king and his servants went secretly out of a gate by the garden of the palace and tried to get safely away. But they were caught, and taken to Babylon. Soon after came the captain of the king of Babylon and broke down the walls of the beautiful city and burned the holy temple, and carried away the gold and silver vessels, and took captive a multitude of people. All the long way the people walked on that sad journey, and while they lived in the strange land they knew it was because of their sins that all this sorrow came. "By the rivers of Babylon they sat down and wept." But there was hope for them even then. God had not forgotten. He still cared. He said they should stay seventy years, and now the time had nearly rolled around.

The king's proclamation. You remember the lesson about the handwriting on the wall. In that night was Belshazzar killed, and Darius, of the conquering kingdom of Media and Persia, took the throne. It was he who put Daniel in a den of lions. After two years he died, and left the kingdom to his nephew, Cyrus of Persia. About one hundred and twenty years before this Cyrus was born God told the prophet Isaiah to speak and to write about him as the one who should set free the captive Jews after they had been taken to Babylon. God called him by name. Now the time had come. Perhaps Daniel told him about his being called by name, and that the seventy years were almost past. In some way God stirred up the king to proclaim that all the Jews who wished to go home might return to Jerusalem and build the temple again. He commanded that those who did not go should help those who went, with gold and silver and goods. He brought out the precious gold and silver ves-

sels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from the temple, and sent them, five thousand and four hundred, with the pilgrims that went home.

Who returned? All the Jews did not go. Only the old men remembered their country and the temple. The way was long, the journey dangerous. But God stirred up many to go, and more went back than came to Babylon. Remember this: all who *wanted* to go went back. God raised up a leader trusted by all, and all who were willing to trust God to keep them safely on the dangerous journey and deliver them from their enemies when they got back where strangers lived in their places, and all who were willing to obey the voice of God that called them to come back and build his house again, joined this procession of the returning captives.

What shall we do? Satan leads away from God; sin makes us captives. But there's a way back. God calls, and will lead us. See on our shield of hope "Trust and follow." *Who wants to return?*



Kindergarten Hints.

GOLDEN TEXT: "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Josh. 1. 9.

HINTS ON METHOD.

The abstractions of a lesson on Ezekiel's vision of the river of salvation were almost unsurmountable difficulties to the primary teacher. Yet, using it as we did, and interesting the children in our description of the desert, we have opened a way to introduce our lesson for the day, which, on account of its concrete setting, presents fewer difficulties; for here we have people who are moving about and accomplishing something. Things are easier subjects than thoughts. Here is our entering wedge:

LESSON STORY.

See this picture of a caravan traveling through a desert. The camels are loaded. Men have to walk, allowing the women and children to ride. In a caravan like this, more than five hundred years before Jesus came, we would have seen that no children under fifteen were allowed to go. Yet, there are over a thousand people setting forth. Where are they going? Home at last! Only the oldest people here have ever seen home. We explain that most every one in this caravan was born in the country to which the fathers were carried captive.

With what are their camels loaded? They are loaded with gold and silver cups, gold and silver money, household goods. Where did captives get these things? The story begins back of this caravan journey. We see them first in their homes in the land of their captivity. They are not as unhappy here as we might expect; but, in many cases, are too contented for their own good. They are forgetting that home and church are in ruins; that there is a true God of whom the heathen cannot teach. Something happens to wake them out of their carelessness. There comes a day when the king, whose soldiers have taken them captives, feels so safe in his city that he is off his guard. This is careless in war times. What happens? We tell how the Persian soldiers turn the waters of the river into a new bed they dug for it in the night, and walk over it on dry land, then take the city. We explain that the captives are very much excited about this, and think that God sends the Persian king to release them. They think that, possibly, Cyrus may be the promised Saviour of the world. We know that their Saviour did not come for more than five hundred years after this; but God was making the way ready for him. These captives were going home! Their home was to be a home for Christ the Lord.

We explain that children of the captives were growing up in ignorance of God. Who comes to their rescue? Prophets and preachers who teach that God is the Lord; who show the king that it is God leading, that they should go.

The king feels that God is with them. He says, "You may go home and build your church. I will help you." While they knew that they would find their own dear city a heap of ruins, they were so joyous to be set free, their songs were like this: "Yes! Jehovah has done great things for us, and made us glad. O Jehovah, lead back our captive ones!"

King Cyrus had been good to them; for he said, "The Lord of heaven and earth hath charged me to build him a church (house) at Jerusalem. Who is willing to go, and God be

with him?" Cyrus sent soldiers mounted on camels, to guard them on their journey. We teach that One, mightier than the soldiers, guarded the way of their going.

It is easy to picture graphically the probable happenings of the four months' caravan journey in the way to interest children. To close: We may visit them in their own home, just for one day. It is a holiday—a holy day—set apart for the laying of the new stones for their church. The preachers are here, wearing beautiful robes. There are to be praise songs, and music upon instruments the like of which you and I never heard. Let us leave them while their silver trumpets are sounding. Is it the time for the coming of Christ? No, not yet. Our Bible is full of stories about God's children struggling upward toward the Light. Before we reach that chapter which tells us that "the Light has come" we are to remember that all through the long waiting time God was watching over his own.

Whisper Songs for August.

SIXTH LESSON.

Dearest Lord Jesus,
Holy and true,
Give me thy Spirit,
Make my heart new.
Give me thy Spirit,
Make my heart new.

SEVENTH LESSON.

Breath of the Spirit,
Life of us all,
Breathe on thy children,
Hear when we call.
Breathe on thy children,
Hear when we call.

EIGHTH LESSON.

Beautiful river,
Brimming and free,
Life of the Spirit,
Purify me.
Life of the Spirit,
Purify me.

NINTH LESSON.

If I am tempted,
And wander from thee,
Dearest Lord Jesus,
Follow thou me.
Dearest Lord Jesus,
Follow thou me.

Order of Service

FOR THE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.

Third Quarter.

CONCERT.

Jesus loves to listen
When to him we pray;
Help us, then, to hasten
To his feet to-day.

PRAYER.

SINGING: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."

Teacher. The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble.

Class. The name of the God of Jacob defend thee.

T. Send thee help from the sanctuary,

C. And strengthen thee out of Zion.

T. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;

C. But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.

T. Save, Lord!

C. Let the King hear us when we call.

LORD'S PRAYER (slowly and reverently, in concert).

T. What do we learn in Sunday school?

C. That God is our heavenly Father.

T. What book teaches us this beautiful truth?

C. The Holy Bible.

Recite after teacher:

"When my teacher reads the Bible,
That is God's own holy word,
And each message that she brings us
Is a message from the Lord;
O then I will never trifle;
I will listen, I will say:
"Speak, O Lord! thy servant heareth.
Speak, thy servant will obey."

OFFERING.

Teacher. We gladly bring our offering to-day to Jesus, because—

Class. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

SINGING (Air, "Jesus loves me"):

'Tis but little we can give,
But our mites we gladly bring;
Knowing that our blessed Lord
Will accept love's offering.

He who saw the widow's mite
Hears the pennies as they fall;
From his throne in yonder sky
Jesus sees and counts them all.

BIRTHDAY OFFERING. (Use simple service.)

SUPPLEMENTAL LESSON.

LESSON TAUGHT.

ECHO PRAYER.

LESSON CLOSING (Tune, "What a Friend we have in Jesus"):

Jesus, help us to remember
This sweet lesson from thy word.
Write upon our hearts forever
Truths that we this day have heard.
All the week be near to bless us,
Bring us to thy house again.
Lord, be with us; guard us; guide us,
For our Saviour's sake. Amen.

Book Notices.

"The Standard Intermediate School Dictionary of the English Language." Designed to give the Orthography, Pronunciation, Meaning, and Etymology of about 38,000 Words and Phrases in the Speech and Literature of the English-speaking Peoples. Eight hundred Pictorial Illustrations. Abridged from the Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of the English Language. By James C. Fernald, Editor of the "Students' Dictionary." "English Synonyms, Antonyms, and Prepositions," etc. Svo, cloth, 533 viii pp. Price, \$1.00. New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls Co.

The Standard Dictionary is the most complete and comprehensive in the language, except, of course, the great English Dictionary which will not be finished for probably a score of years, and will cost two or three hundred dollars. But the Standard is too large and expensive for High School Students and Intermediate Scholars. The publishers have, therefore, provided for both these classes in the Students' standard at \$2.50, and the Intermediate School Dictionary at \$1.00.

The last is an attractive volume, the net result of several years' work in the review and abridgment of the Standard Dictionary, having been prepared by one of the Associate Editors of that work, Mr. James C. Fernald. It contains 38,000 words, especially selected with a view to meeting the needs of pupils and teachers in the public schools. For a volume of this size, the vocabulary is remarkably complete and inclusive. The newer words and meanings are carefully given, as in the case of "hypnotism," "Roentgen rays," etc.

In the vital matter of definition, this dictionary will stand exceptionally high. However brief the definitions, they always tell something characteristic and distinctive.

To the definitions are added very complete, though condensed and simplified, etymologies. The illustrations are new and remarkably fine, clear, and descriptive.

"Bible Difficulties and their Alleviative Interpretation." By Rev. Robert Stuart MacArthur, D.D., LL.D., pastor Calvary Baptist church, New York. One 12mo. volume, silk cloth, 450 pages. Price,

\$1.50. E. B. Treat & Co., publishers, 241-243 West Twenty-third Street, New York.

The substance of the chapters comprising this volume was delivered in addresses on consecutive Sunday evenings in the regular course of the author's ministry in the Calvary Baptist church. He has long felt that most of the difficulties generally supposed to be in the Bible are not really in the Bible; but are in the human interpretation of the Bible, rather than in the divine relation itself. It is vastly important to separate between erroneous biblical exposition and the actual truth of divine revelation.

The newer scholarship, it will readily be admitted, has disturbed and possibly unsettled the faith of some Bible students; but it is absolutely certain that it has given the Bible a fresh interest and an increased value. It is not necessary to accept all the conclusions of the so-called Higher Critics; indeed, these conclusions are often at variance with one another, and more careful criticism will entirely refute some of the positions taken. But we can readily see that the latter criticism has done much to disabuse the minds of some readers of their traditional interpretations and unauthoritative preconceptions of Holy Scripture; and as a result, the Bible was never so new and so attractive a library as it is at this hour. It never was so carefully studied as now; and it never has been to the Church or to the race the blessing which it will be in the near future. The aim of these discourses is to separate between false interpretation and genuine revelation. Miracles which God performs we unquestionably receive; miracles which men imagine we are free to accept or reject.—Author's Preface.

The Last Thought.

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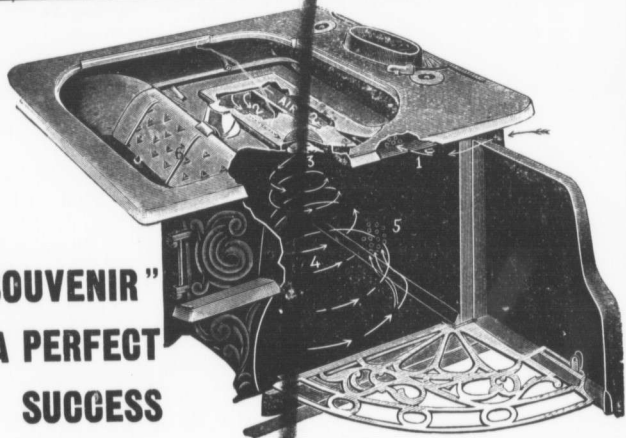
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