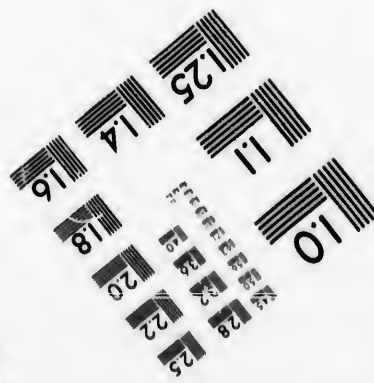
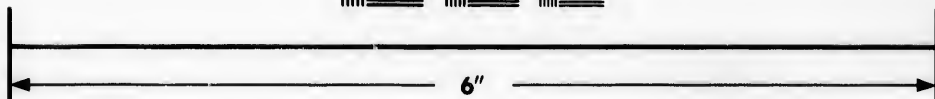
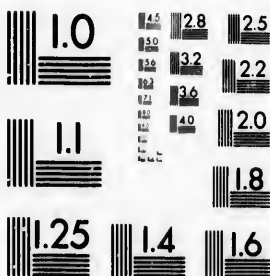


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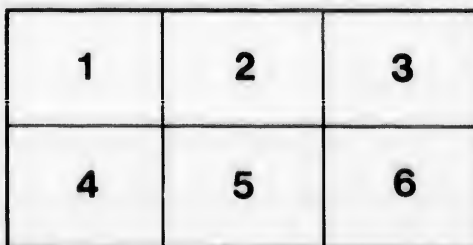
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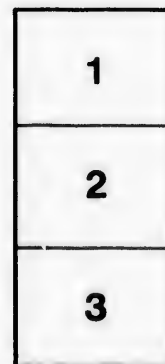
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NOTES

ON

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SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS.

THIRD SERIES.

"Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."—Deut. vi. 7.

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JOHN C. GEIKIE.
HAMILTON: D. M'LELLAN. MONTREAL: J. DOUGALL.

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SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS.

FIRST QUARTER.

No. 1.—Solomon's Choice. I. Kings 3, 5—15.

GIBEON was a city in the tribe of Benjamin. Its ancient inhabitants deceived Joshua, (Josh. 9, 3—15.) Here the sun and moon appeared to stand still, (Josh. 10, 12, 13.) Here also the ark remained in the house of Obed-Edom, (1 Chr. 16. 37—39.) *Dreams*, as in this case, were sometimes employed as means of communicating the Divine will. See instances of Jacob, (Gen. 28, 12;) Pharaoh, (Gen. 44, 1—7;) Daniel, (Danl. chap. 7;) and Paul, (Acts 16, 9.) We are not now to depend on dreams as revelations from God, (Ecc. 5, 3.) *The Ark* of the covenant had been removed to Jerusalem by David.

- LESSONS
- 1.—Like Solomon, we should humbly acknowledge our ignorance.
 - 2.—Heavenly wisdom is still to be sought and obtained from God, (James 1, 15.)
 - 3.—The choice of spiritual, generally ensures temporal blessings, (Matt. 5, 33.)
 - 4.—Like Solomon we ought to show gratitude for mercies received.

No. 2.—Queen of Sheba. 1. Kings 10, 1—13.

SHEBA was probably situated in Africa, south of Egypt. Some think it was in Arabia. It was customary with princes to puzzle one another with *hard questions*, and to present gifts when paying visits. The building of the temple and the palace was now completed. An *hundred and twenty talents* of gold would be worth three quarters of a million pounds sterling. It is a matter of doubt whether *Ophir* was in India, Arabia, or Africa.

- LESSONS 1.—We should desire to see and hear Christ, who is greater than Solomon.
- 2.—The earnestness of the Queen of Sheba will condemn us if we neglect the means of grace, (Matt. 12, 42.)
- 3.—They are the happiest who learn wisdom from Christ, and partake the riches of his grace.

No. 3.—Widow of Zarephath. 1 Kings 17, 17—24.

ZAREPHATH is called, in the New Testament, Sarepta, (Luke 4, 26.) This widow had entertained Elijah, and her store of meal and oil had been miraculously kept from failing, (v. 9 and 16.) The death of her son she regarded as the wages of sin, (v. 18.) Elijah does not pretend to restore him to life by his own power, he prays to God to revive him, (v. 21.) His prayer is an example of *believing, earnest, persevering and effectual* prayer. Greater than Elijah, Christ can quicken not only dead bodies, but dead souls, by his own power.

- LESSONS 1.—The young are liable to death as well as the old.
- 2.—In times of trouble it is well to seek counsel from the ministers of religion.
- 3.—Above all, repair in trouble to God, who is the hearer of prayer.
- 4.—By Christ's power, all who are dead shall be raised again.

N. 4.—Baal's Prophets. 1 Kings 18. 21—40.

BAAL was the God of Tyre ; his worship had been introduced among the Israelites by Jezebel the wife of Ahab, (chap. 18. 31.) *The God that answereth by fire*, (v. 24.) God shewed his acceptance of sacrifice by consuming it by fire from heaven. (1 Chr. 21, 26. and 2. Chr. 7, 1.) *Cut themselves*, (v. 28.) this was forbidden by the law of God, (Deut. 14, 1.) By the law, also, the prophets of Baal were liable to death. (Deut. 18, 20.) *Kishon*. (v. 40.) had its source in Mount Tabor, and flowed through the plain of Acre into the Mediterranean sea, north of Mount Carmel

LESSONS 1.—God is entitled to our exclusive service.

2.—The service of God and of idols cannot be united.

3.—The service of idols is cruel as well as vain.

4.—We should take a decided stand on the side of God.

No. 5.—Elijah's Translation. 2 Kings 2, 1—11.

GILGAL, which was near Jericho. Here was a school of the prophets, (2 Kings 4, 38.) *Bethel* was about 12 miles north of Jerusalem ; here Jeroboam set up one of the golden calves for worship—the other was at Dan, (1 Kings 12. 39.) *Jericho* lay west of the Jordan near where it flows into the Dead Sea. The Translation of Elijah, like that of Enoch, prefigured the ascension of Christ ; who when he ascended bestowed his Spirit upon his disciples. *A chariot of fire*.—Angels are called the chariots of God, (Ps. 68, 17 ;) and probably the ministry of angels was here employed.

LESSONS 1.—Like Elisha we should desire to be with the good, in life, and when they depart from the world.

2.—Like Elisha we should covet the best gifts.

3.—All believers, like Elijah, shall at last enter, body and soul, into the heavenly glory, (1 Cor. 15, 51—56.)

No. 3.—The Shunammite. 2 Kings 4, 18—37.

SHUNAM, the scene of this miracle, lay between Samaria and Carmel. It was probably of a sun stroke the child died, (v. 19.) From v. 23, it appears that the mother was accustomed to attend religious ordinances at stated times. *Did I desire a son?*—the child had been given as a reward for kindness shewn to Elisha (14, 17.) *Salute him not.* Salutations, being lengthy, would cause great delay. Gehazi failed probably from want of faith—see similar case in (Matt. 18, 14—21.) In quickening dead souls, ministers can do only like Gehazi, applying outward means: it is Christ who, like Elisha, imparts the Spirit of life.

LESSONS 1.—Death may surprise us at any moment.

2.—Religion is a source of comfort in every time of trouble.

3.—The doctrine of a general resurrection is confirmed by this transaction.

No. 7.—Naaman. 2 Kings 5, 1—14.

SYRIA extended from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean. Damascus, its capital, was watered from the River Barraday, of which *Abana and Pharpar* were probably two branches. The *silver and gold* (v. 5) would amount to nearly £1500 sterling. Jehoram was at this time King of Israel. *Strike his hand*,—this was according to a superstitious notion, like that which has prevailed in modern times, that the King's touch could cure disease. Naaman's unwillingness to wash in the Jordan represents that of sinners to submit to the simple plan of salvation by Christ.

LESSONS 1.—Great rank does not exempt from the ills of life.

2.—In humble situations we may be able, like the little maid, to tell of the great Physician.

3.—We should be more anxious for the health of our own souls than Naaman for that of his body.

- 4.—We should submit at once to the simple plan of salvation exhibited in the gospel.

No. 8.—Jonah. Jonah 3, 1—10.

JONAH succeeded Elisha as prophet of Israel in the reign of Jeroboam the second, (2 Kings 14, 25.) He probably laboured long and faithfully among the ten tribes before the transactions recorded in this book. He was a type of Christ, (Matt. 12, 40.) *Nineveh* was the capital of ancient Assyria; its magnificent ruins have lately been discovered. *A day's journey* was about 20 miles. The circumference of the city was about 60 miles. *God repented of the evil*, that is, he dealt with Nineveh as if he repented,—there was no real change in his mind; it was his unchangeable purpose to overthrow Nineveh if it repented not; but it repented, and it *appeared* as if his purpose were changed.

- LESSONS 1. - Missionaries, like Jonah, ought to be sent to the heathen.
 2.—Sinners ought to humble themselves and confess their sins before God.
 3.—The conduct of the Ninevites will condemn us if we remain impenitent, (Luke 11, 32.)
 4.—God is willing to forgive the truly penitent, (1 John 1, 9.)

No. 9. Hezekiah. 2. Kings 20, 1—11.

HEZEKIAH was the son of Abaz, and was one of the good Kings of Israel. *Turned his face to the wall*, (verse 2.) for the sake of secrecy, as he could not retire to his closet. *I will deliver thee*, (verse 6;) from this it is probable that Hezekiah's sickness took place while Jerusalem was threatened by the Assyrian army. *A lump of figs*: means were to be used, though the cure was miraculous.

- LESSONS 1.—In times of sickness we ought like Hezekiah to pray to God for deliverance.

- 2.—God is the hearer of prayer and can deliver from death.
- 3.—The use of means is not to be neglected.
- 4.—This miracle shows the power of God and the efficacy of prayer.

No. 10.—Manasseh. 2 Chr. 33, 1—16.

MANASSEH was son of the good King Hezekiah. *High places and groves*, (verse 3.) were used for the impure services of idolatry. *The valley of the son of Hinnom* (verse 6,) bounded Jerusalem on the north; here the horrid rites of Moloch were celebrated. (Jer. 7, 31.) *Gihon* was a fountain west of Jerusalem. *Ophel* formed part of the city on the east.

- LESSONS 1.—Good parents like the father of Manasseh may have wicked children.
- 2.—Afflictions serve to lead to repentance, (verse 12.)
 - 3.—God is willing to receive the chief of sinners.
 - 4.—Like Manasseh we should show the reality of our repentance by the fruits of holiness, (verses 15 and 16.)

No. 11.—Josiah. 2 Chr. 34, 1—13.

JOSIAH was son of the wicked Ammon and grandson of Hezekiah. The *eighth year* (verse 3,) this was the sixteenth year of his age. *They brake* the altars, images, &c., (verse 4.) This was in accordance with the law, (Ex. 23, 24.) Josiah commenced the work of reformation at home in Jerusalem, then extended it through the kingdom of Judah, and afterwards, (verse 6,) exerted his influence in the same direction through the kingdom of Israel.

- LESSONS 1.—Like Josiah the young ought to serve God in the days of their youth.

- 2.—Princes should endeavour to promote the piety and prosperity of the church.
- 3.—The patrons of idolatry deserve to be severely punished.
- 4.—Every department of the work of God ought to be faithfully performed, (vere 13.)

No. 12.—The Captivity. 2 Kings, 25, 1—11.

This chapter is almost the same as the last of Jeremiah. *Zedekiah* had his name changed from Mattaniah, (chap. 24, 17.) He was the son of Josiah, whose two other sons and grandson preceded him on the throne. He had submitted to the King of Babylon, but afterwards rebelled. The siege lasted a year and a half. *Riblah*, (v. 6,) was in the north of Palestine. *Put out the eyes of Zedekiah* : this was to prevent him ascending the throne.

- LESSONS 1.—Learn from this narrative how dreadful are the evils of war.
- 2.—National sins unrepented of, ensure national judgments.
 - 3.—Princes, as well as their subjects are liable to the greatest reverses.
 - 4.—The facts here recorded prove the inspiration of the prophets Jeremiah and others who foretold them.

SECOND QUARTER.

No. 1.—Nobleman's Son. John 4, 46—54.

CANA was a few miles north of Nazareth, and distant about 20 miles from Capernaum. A *certain nobleman*, (v. 46,) probably an officer of Herod's court. *Signs and wonders*, (v. 48.) these were designed to prove the Divine mission of Christ.

- LESSONS 1.—The rich, as well as the poor, are liable to sickness, and other afflictions.
2.—While careful of the bodily health of their children, parents ought to be still more anxious for their spiritual health.
3.—This miracle serves to illustrate the wisdom, power, and goodness of Christ.

No. 2.—The Demoniac. Mark 1, 23—28.

A man with an unclean spirit, (v. 23,) that is, a man possessed of a devil. *Art thou come to destroy us?* (v. 24,) that is, to execute the threat denounced against the serpent, Gen. 3. 15.) Christ is the Holy One of Israel. Compare (Isaiah 63, 9 and 10, with John 12, 39—41.

- LESSONS 1.—The devils believe and tremble.
2.—The devils are full of malice. (v. 26.)
3.—How great is the folly of men in choosing to serve their spiritual foes.
4.—Christ can deliver from the power of Satan and his hosts.

No. 3.—The Widow of Nain. Luke 7, 11—17.

Nain was a town of Galilee, not far from Mount Tabor. *Carried out*, (v. 12,) burial places in the east were generally, as they ought to be, outside of cities and towns. *Bier*, (v. 14,) the dead bodies were carried on an open couch or bier. *A great prophet*, (v. 15,) this miracle recalls the miracles wrought by Elijah and Elisba.

- LESSONS 1.—The young are often laid low by the hand of death.
 2.—Christ is full of sympathy with the bereaved.
 3.—At his command all the dead shall finally arise. 1 Thes. 4, 16.)
 4.—Christ, by his Spirit, can quicken dead souls.

No. 4.—The Tempest. Matt. 8, 23—27.

The Sea of Galilee was the scene of this miracle. *He was asleep*, Mark says, (4, 38,) on a pillow, in the hinder part of the ship. *O ye of little faith*. Christ thus teaches the importance of faith, recognizes its existence even when weak, and shows the sin of unbelief. How striking must have been the sudden change from a raging tempest to an unruffled calm!

- LESSONS 1.—Though embarked with Christ, his people are not exempted from tribulation.
 2.—For the trial of his people's faith, Christ sometimes seems to forget them.
 3.—Afflictions often lead to earnest and importunate prayer.
 4.—Christ is able and willing to save from temporal, as well as spiritual evils.

No. 5.—The Man sick of Palsy. Matt. 9, 1—8.

His own City: this was Capernaum where he now resided, (Mark 2, 1.) *This man blasphemeth*, (v. 3;) the Jews rightly

considered that God only could forgive sins, and not knowing that Christ was God, as well as man, charged him with blasphemy. *Whether is easier, &c.* (v. 5,) Christ can equally heal the body and soul, and the miracle now wrought proved his declaration that he could forgive sin. *Take up thy bed*—the *bed* was a light mattress or blanket, which could be easily carried.

- LESSONS 1.—It is right to bring the sick to Christ in faith and by prayer.
 2.—Christ has power to bestow forgiveness of sin, (Acts 5, 31.)
 3.—This power establishes his claim to equality with the Father.

No. 6.—The Blind cured. Matt. 9, 27—31.

Two blind men—although their eyes were dark yet their understandings were enlightened to know Jesus. *Thou Son of David*, (v. 27); Christ, according to prophecy, was descended from David. *Have mercy on us*, (v. 27); as David's son Christ was to shew mercy, (Ps. 72, 12 and 13.) "*Believe ye &c.*" (v. 28;) it is by faith we receive from Christ the blessings of salvation, (Acts 16, 31.) *See that no man know it*, Christ thus avoided ostentation, and shewed that he had no wish to become a temporal ruler.

- LESSONS 1.—Instances of blindness like these here recorded should suggest to those who see, a lesson of gratitude.
 2.—Christ is able to restore sight to the blind.
 3.—Faith is the instrument of salvation.

No. 7.—Bethesda. John 5, 1—9.

Bethesda signifies house of mercy. *Five porches*: these were probably coverings to protect the sick, while waiting to be healed. *The moving of the water*, (v. 3;) it is supposed that at stated seasons the water put forth peculiar medicinal

properties. *An angel went down*, (v. 4.) angels are employed as ministering spirits, (Heb. 1, 14.) *Whoever first*, this does not mean the first one, but those who at the first troubling of the waters went in.

- LESSONS 1.—We should be grateful for the means of healing disease provided by God.
 2.—We should wait like the impotent man on the means of securing bodily as well as spiritual health.
 3.—Christ is willing to save those who are willing to be saved, (v. 6.)

No. 8.—Five thousand fed. Matt. 14, 15—21.

After hearing of the death of the Baptist, Christ had gone into the desert and multitudes had followed to hear or be healed of him. *Loaves and fishes*, (v. 17 ;) the food of the common people was barley loaves and fish from the sea of Galilee. *He blessed*, (v. 19,) that is, gave thanks ; this was the constant practice of Christ. *Twelve baskets*, these may have belonged to the twelve disciples, and been used by them to carry provisions, as was common with travellers who only lodged in inns, providing their own food.

- LESSONS 1.—Christ is full of sympathy for the needy and at the same time able to relieve them.
 2.—We ought like Christ to acknowledge God in grateful prayer at our daily meals.
 3.—Nothing useful should be wasted.

No. 9.—The Syro-Phœnician. Matt. 15, 21—28.

TYRE AND SIDON were cities of Phœnicia, which lay on the coast of the Mediterranean north of Palestine, and which was called Syro-Phœnicia, because part of the Roman Province of Syria. *A woman of Canaan*, (verse 22.) In ancient times Canaan included Phœnicia, hence she is here

called a Canaanite, but in Mark 7, 26, a Syro-Phœnician. *The dogs* (verse 27,) a name given to the Gentiles by the Jews. *Great is thy faith*, (verse 28,) the greatness of her faith was proved by her humility, her earnestness and perseverance, and was the more remarkable from her being a Gentile.

- LESSONS 1.—We should pray to Christ in the day of trouble, and on behalf of the afflicted.
 2.—We should persevere in prayer, notwithstanding apparent discouragements.
 3.—For wise purposes an immediate answer to prayer is often deferred.
 4.—Strong faith is well pleasing to Christ.

The Deaf and Dumb healed. Mark 1, 31—37.

DECAPOLIS, signifies ten cities, which were embraced in the region so named; this region was chiefly east of the Jordan and mostly inhabited by foreigners. *Ephphatha*—a Syriac word signifying “be opened.”

- LESSONS—1.—Christ often uses external means, although he can work without them.
 2.—This miracle illustrates the fulfilment of prophecy (Is. 35, 56.)
 3.—By his spirit Christ opens the mind to receive saving knowledge, and bestows the gift of utterance.

No. 11.—The Figtree withered. Matt. 21, 17—22.

BETHANY was a town about 2 miles east of Jerusalem. *A figtree in the way*, being on the open road its fruit might lawfully be plucked by any passer-by. It was now the season of the passover, which was in April, when figs might be ripe, but not gathered. *If ye have faith*, (verse 20,) this means that the apostles would have the power of working miracles equal to the removal of mountains.

- LESSONS 1.—The leaves of profession should be accompanied with the fruits of holiness.
2.—The absence of fruit exposes to the Divine curse.
3.—The efficiency of faith and prayer is here affirmed.

No. 12.—The Draught of Fishes. John 21, 1—14.

This miracle was wrought after our Lord's resurrection. *Nathaniel* (verse 2.) was the same as *Batholemew*. The disciples *knew not that it was Jesus* (verse 4); they did not expect to see him; his appearance may have been somewhat different, and it was only twilight. *Cast himself into the sea*, (verse 7,) this was in accordance with Peter's usual forwardness. *Two hundred cubits* (verse 8,) were about 350 yards.

- LESSONS. 1.—There are times when ministers may labour with their hands for their support.
2.—Obedience to Christ's commands will ensure success.
3.—This miracle confirms the doctrine of the resurrection of Christ.

THIRD QUARTER.

No. 1.—Daniel's Abstinence. Danl. 1, 8—21.

DANIEL, while a youth, had been carried captive into Babylon, and lived till after its close. *He would not defile himself, &c.*, (v. 8,) the Kings meat probably included some things forbidden by the law of Moses, (Lev. 11, 47,) or which were offered to idols (1, Cor 8, 10.) *The children.* (v. 10 ;) this name was often given to persons of full age. *Pulse*, (v. 10,) such vegetable food as peas, beans, &c. *Their countenances appeared fairer, &c.*, (v. 15,) there is nothing unusual in temperance, both in food and drink, producing these results.

- LESSONS 1.—Honour, favour, and wisdom, are gifts bestowed by God, (v. 9 and 17.)
- 2.—The young should, like Daniel, withstand temptations to forget their religious principles.
- 3.—The use of plain food is best both for body and mind.
- 4.—Total abstinence from intoxicating drinks is highly beneficial.

No. 2.—Shadrach Meshech and Abednego. Danl. 3, 18—25.

These three young men had been carried captives, and had their names changed like Daniel, (chap. 1, 5.) The *golden image*, (v. 14,) probably of the god Bel, had been set up in the plain of Dura, (v. 1,) near the Tigris. The reply.

(v. 16—18,) is a noble instance of respectful firmness and unfaltering faith. Similar was the language of Peter and John, (Acts 4, 19 and 20.) *The Son of God*, (v. 25,) or a Son of God. Nebuchadnezzar probably took this fourth person who may have been an angel, or the Angel of the Covenant, to be a son of one of the heathen deities.

LESSONS 1.—Idolatry is intolerant, as it is unreasonable.

2.—Where commands of Gods and of rulers interfere, we ought to obey God rather than man.

3.—It is better to suffer than to sin.

4.—Persecutors will be punished, (v. 22.)

5.—God is a present refuge in time of need.

No. 3.—Daniel in the lions' den. Danl. 6, 10—23.

Jealous courtiers had prompted Darius to decree that for 30 days no prayer should be made but to himself. *Towards Jerusalem*, (v. 10,) see 1 Kings, 8—48. *As he did heretofore*, (v. 10,) it thus appears that Daniel was accustomed steadily to pray thrice a day in secret. (See Ps. 55, 17.) *The King commanded, &c.*, (v. 16.) He should have reversed rather than have executed the wicked decree.

LESSONS 1.—We should have stated seasons for secret prayer.

2.—We should on no account neglect this duty. (Luke 18, 1 ; Phil. 4, 6.)

3.—This narrative illustrates the malice of the wicked, the power of faith, (v. 23 and Rev. 11. 33.) and the favour of God to his faithful servants.

No. 4.—Return from Babylon. Ezra 1, 1—11.

THE FIRST YEAR, that is after his conquest of Babylon. *Cyrus* was predicted by name as the deliverer of the Israelites from Babylon, (Is. 45, 1.) The seventy years during

which the captivity was to last, (Jer. 29, 10,) had now expired. How different the Spirit of Cyrus, (v. 3 and 4,) from that of Pharaoh as recorded in Exodus! *Sheshbazzar* is supposed to have been the same person as Zerubbabel.

- LESSONS 1.—The hearts of princes are in the hands of God to turn them as He will.
 2.—These facts prove the Divine inspiration of the prophets who predicted them.
 3.—All the promises of God will in due time be fulfilled.
 4.—Princes ought, like Cyrus to do what they can to advance the interests of true religion.

No. 5.—Rebuilding of temple commenced. Ezra 3, 1—13.

SEVENTH MONTH., (v. 1;) this was the month in which the great feasts of atonement and tabernacles were appointed to be held. *Jeshua*, was high priest: he is called Joshua, (Zech. 3, 1.) The old men, (v. 12.) probably wept because they could not expect to see so complete a temple as the first, and the young rejoiced because they were to have any temple in Jerusalem.

- LESSONS 1.—The ordinances of Divine worship ought to be carefully observed.
 2.—We ought, like the Jews to honour the Lord with our substance, and to do this willingly (v. 5, 7.)
 3.—The goodness of God ought to be celebrated in songs of praise.
 4.—Let us strive to enter that temple where the shouts of joy are mingled with no voice of weeping, (v. 12 and 13.)

No. 6.—Nehemiah's Petition. Neh. 1, 1—11.

NISAN, (v. 1,) is the month of March. *Why is thy countenance ? &c.*, v. 2. It is said that persons in the East having requests to make often walk about with a rueful look till the cause is asked, and an opportunity thus given them of preferring their petitions. *Sanballat thelloronite*, (v. 10.) Horonaim was in Moab. *Tobias the servant* ; he had probably been a slave, but raised to power.

LESSONS 1.—We should feel deeply grieved for the dissolutions of the Church, (v. 3.)

2.—Like Nehemiah we ought to take steps for its relief and prosperity.

3.—The hand of God ought to be acknowledged in all things, (v. 8.)

4.—Wicked men are jealous of those who seek to promote the Church's welfare.

No. 7.—Rebuilding of the wall. Neh. 4, 7—23.

They were very wrath, (v. 7) ; there was an ancient grudge which these nations bore to the Jews, which was now embittered by the natural feelings of envy and malice. *Ten times* (v. 10) ; this means oftentimes. *With one of his hands*, (v. 17,) similar precautions are still needed in the East, where even the labourers in the field are often armed with swords to guard against the attacks of wandering or hostile tribes.

LESSONS 1.—We should both watch and pray continually. (v. 9.)

2.—Defensive wars may be justified, (v. 14.)

3.—God brings to nought the counsel of the wicked, (v. 15.)

4.—While building up the church, its members must encounter opposition.

5.—The friends of religion ought to labour in concert.

No. 8.—Nehemiah's prudence and courage. Neh. 6, 1—14.

Geshem (v. 1,) called *Gashmu* (v. 6.) *I am doing a great work*, (v. 3.) This would be an excellent answer to give to those who would have Christians to abate their interest in the cause of Christ. *An open letter* (v. 5,) sent to any but an inferior was an insult. *Thou and the Jews think to rebel*, (v. 6) ; similar charges were made against Christ and his disciples. *Let us meet &c*, (v. 10) ; this was treacherously intended to discourage the people, who would take the alarm when their leader concealed himself.

- LESSONS 1.—The Lord's work ought not to be interrupted for slight reasons.
 2.—Many like Nehemiah are slandered for the best actions.
 3.—Prayer is a source of comfort in times of trouble, (v. 9.)
 4.—We should guard against the treachery of pretended friends as well as the assaults of avowed enemies.

No. 9.—Haman and Mordecai. Esther 3, 1—15.

Ahasuerus is supposed to have been the same person as Xerxes, who invaded Greece. *In the King's gate* (v. 2) ; this was where the rulers sat. *Mordecai bowed not, &c.*; probably some idolatrous homage was required which it was right to refuse. *Thought scorn*, (v. 6,) that is, thought it too mean. *Nisan and Adar* (v. 7,) corresponded with March and February, the first and last months of the sacred year. *Took his ring*, (v. 10.) thus giving the seal of authority, (Gen. 41, 42.) *By posts* (v. 13) ; a regular system of transmitting intelligence had been organized by Cyrus. *Shushan* (v. 15,) or *Susa*, was the winter residence of the Persian monarchs.

LESSONS 1.—Envy destroys happiness.

2.—The wrath of the wicked is cruel, (v. 6,) and they spare no trouble or expense to gratify it.

3.—Evil counsellors are ruinous to princes and people.

4.—We ought to be thankful for the blessings of a constitutional government.

No. 10.—Esther's Petition. Esther 5, 1—14.

The Inner Court, (v. 1 ;) the principal court was open in front, and those persons, seeking an audience, stood until called in to the inner, or private apartment of the King. *What wilt thou ?* (v. 3,) similar language is addressed to supplicants at the throne of grace, (Matt. 7, 7; Heb. 4, 16.) *The half of my kingdom* ; this was a proverbial expression, originating in the practice of bestowing on favourites the revenues of cities or provinces. *Let the King and Haman come*, (v. 4 ;) Esther thus endeavours to test, and conciliate the King's favour, before asking for Haman's punishment.

LESSONS 1.—Let us rejoice that without any restriction, we can come to God by prayer.

2.—Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. (v. 9.)

3.—The wicked often prepare a net, in which their own feet are taken, (v. 14.)

No. 11.—The Jews Delivered. Esther 8, 1—12.

The house of Haman, (v. 1,) that is, his estates. *To reverse the letters*, (v. 5) ; it would have been to little purpose that Haman himself had been hanged, if his counsels had not been set aside. *How can I endure, &c.*, (v. 6,) here is a noble instance of genuine patriotism. Regarding the whole human family as one kindred, we should feel equally anxious to avert their spiritual as well as temporal ruin. *The*

writing may no man reverse. (v. 8;) the laws of the Medes and Persians were made unalterable, on the vain presumption that they were devised by infallible power.

LESSONS 1.—The righteous are exalted in due time, (v. 12.)

2.—Like Esther, we should pity, and, as far as we can, relieve the suffering.

3.—If human laws are translated into the languages of different nations, (v. 9,) much more ought the scriptures to be made intelligible to all men.

No. 12.—Feast of Purim. Esther 9, 20—32.

Pur signifies lot, Purim is the plural form. *Adar* corresponds with February, and was the last month in the sacred year. *Sending portions* (v. 22,) it was usual to send portions to those who could not attend feasts, particularly to those in affliction. *Throughout every generation*, (v. 28,) this feast is still observed by the Jews, but has degenerated into a season of rioting and revelry. In the celebration of it, the book of Esther is read, and when the names of Mordecai and Haman occur, the congregation exclaim "Blessed be Mordecai!" and "Cursed be Haman!"

LESSONS 1.—Great deliverances deserve to be remembered with gratitude

2.—The deliverance wrought by Christ, therefore, ought to be commemorated by Christians in the communion feast.

3.—The poor and afflicted ought not to be neglected in seasons of general rejoicing, (v. 22.)

FOURTH QUARTER.

No. 1.—Three Thousand Converted. Acts. 1, 37—47.

Peter had preached to the Jews, proving that Jesus was the true Messiah, and shewing their guilt in crucifying him. *For the remission of sins*, (v. 38.) Baptism does not wash away sin ; this is done by the blood of Christ, of which the water of baptism is a sign. *Breaking of bread*, (v. 42.) this may mean the observance of the Lord's Supper. *Had all things common*, (v. 44;) many of the converts came from a great distance, (v. 9,) and having expended their own means, needed support from the brethren of Jerusalem, and this was given, not by compulsion, but freely. (Acts 5, 4.)

LESSONS 1.—All are bound to repent and be baptized.

2.—The promises of the gospel extend to all kindreds, and to all generations.

3.—The preaching of the word is the great instrumentality which the Spirit employs in converting sinners.

4.—True religion promotes love, peace, and joy.

No. 2.—The Lame Man Healed. Acts 3, 1—11.

The ninth hour, (v. 1,) or three in the afternoon, was the time of evening prayers. *Called Beautiful*, (v. 2,) this gate is said to have been erected by Herod, and to have been made of Corinthian brass, which was reckoned more precious

than silver or gold. *In the name of Jesus*, (v. 6,) the Apostles could not, like Christ, work miracles by their own power. *Solomon's porch*, (v. 11,) was a covered way on the eastern side of the temple.

LESSONS 1.—We ought to attend punctually on public worship.

2.—We ought to pity, and, as we are able, relieve the poor and afflicted.

3.—Gratitude is due to God for recovered, and still more for preserved health.

4.—This miracle serves to confirm the truths of Christianity. (Mark 16, 17 and 18.)

No. 3.—Ananias and Sapphira. Acts 5, 1—11.

Kept back part of the price, (v. 1,) a similar sin is committed by those who, in the Sacraments, profess to give themselves and all they have, to God, and yet make some secret reserve. *Why hath Satan, &c.*, (v. 3); the existence and personal agency of Satan are here assumed. *Lie to the Holy Ghost*, (v. 3,) but *unto God* (v. 4); these passages prove the personality and Divinity of the Holy Ghost. *Buried him* (v. 6); when bodies were not embalmed, they were buried almost immediately. *Ye have agreed together* (v. 9); how sad that husbands and wives often countenance one another in sin!

LESSONS 1.—Offerings to God should be made with the whole heart.

2.—Hypocrisy in religious matters is peculiarly hateful to God.

3.—Secret sins cannot escape the notice or punishment of God.

4.—The wages of sin is death.

No. 4.—Stephen. Acts 7, 54—60.

Stephen was one of the seven deacons. He was accused of blasphemy, (chap. 6, 11,) against which he defends

himself, (chap. 7, 36.) In his address he charges the Jews with having persecuted the prophets and crucified the Saviour; *hence they were cut to the heart*, (v. 54.) *Jesus standing*, (v. 55); as if he had risen from his throne to receive the Christian martyr. *Stoned him*, (v. 58); this was the punishment appointed for blasphemers, (Lev. 24, 16.) *Saul*, afterwards the apostle Paul, whose conversion may have been due to the prayer of Stephen; (v. 60,) which the latter may have copied from Christ, (Luke 23, 34.) *Lord Jesus*, (v. 59); Stephen thus acknowledges the Divinity of Christ.

- LESSONS 1.—Wicked men hate the truth, and its defenders.
 2.—Christ sympathizes with and succours his suffering servants.
 3.—In the hour of death, believers can commend their spirits to Christ, and fall asleep in Jesus.
 4.—We should pray, like Stephen, for our enemies.

No. 5.—Paul's Conversion. Acts 9, 1—9.

The *High priest* claimed jurisdiction over all Jewish synagogues throughout the world. *Damascus* was the capital of Syria, said to be the most ancient in the world; it was situated in a plain east of the mountains of Lebanon, surrounded by beautiful gardens and watered by the Barraday. *It is hard for thee &c.*, (v. 5) this was a proverbial expression taken from the custom of obstinate animals kicking at the iron pointed goads, and thus hurting themselves. *Hearing a voice*, (v. 7) that is a sound, not the articulate words of the speaker, (Acts 22, 9.)

- LESSONS 1.—The cruelty of persecutors is here illustrated.
 2.—The riches of Divine grace are here exhibited.

- 3.—Christ identifies himself with his people, considering injuries done to them as done to himself, (v. 4 and 5.)
- 4.—Christians ought to be anxious to find employment in the service of Christ, (v. 6.)

No. 6.—Peter delivered. Acts 12, 1—11.

Herod the King (v. 1) ; this was Herod Agrippa, son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the great, of all whose dominions he ultimately obtained the government ; he died a miserable death, (v. 23.) *James* (v. 2) ; this was James the greater. *Pleased the Jews*, (v. 3) ; Herod held his government from the Romans, and therefore thought it necessary to conciliate the Jews who disliked foreign control. *Easter*, (v. 4) ; the word thus translated means the passover ; Easter is the name of a Saxon goddess, whose festival was held about the time of the ancient passover. *Quaternions* ; each quaternion included four soldiers. *The first and second ward*, (v. 10) ; that is the first and second guard.

- LESSONS
- 1.—The sufferings of the first Christians confirm our faith in their testimony for the truth.
 - 2.—We ought to pray for those who suffer for conscience' sake, (v. 5).
 - 3.—God is able to deliver from prison and death.
 - 4.—Angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation.

No. 7.—Elymas. Acts 13, 4,—12.

So they being sent forth. (v 4) ; the deputation consisted of Paul and Barnabas, with John, who was nephew of Barnabas. *Seleucia* was the seaport of Antioch at the mouth of the river Orontes. *Salamis* was the capital of Cyprus on

the East of the island; *Paphos*, famous for the worship of Venus, was on the West. *Bar-Jesus*. (v. 6,) signifies "son of Jesus." *The Deputy*, (v. 7) or proconsul—that Cyprus was governed at this time by a proconsul, has been proved by inscriptions lately discovered. *Also called Paul*, (v. 9); this is the first instance in which the apostle is mentioned in Scripture by this name. Some think he assumed it in honour of Sergius Paulus: it is more likely that he had it previously—and that this was his Roman, as Saul was his Hebrew name.

LESSONS 1.—The Gospel should be preached to all classes.

2.—Satan has his agents in all lands.

3.—The wicked ought to be faithfully reprov'd, (v. 10.)

4.—As in the case of Sergius Paulus and Elymas, the Gospel is to some the savor of life unto life, and to others of death unto death.

No. 8.—The prison of Phillipi. Acts 16, 25—36.

Paul and Silas had been unjustly imprisoned, on the pretence of being opposed to the Roman Government. *Sang praises*, (v. 25); in the circumstances they might have found suitable songs in Psalms 102, 19—20, and 107, 10—16. *Would have killed himself*, (v. 27). Suicide was considered innocent and even praiseworthy among the Romans; it is forbidden by the sixth commandment. *Believe, &c.* (v. 31); here there is a comprehensive summary of the gospel. *Washed their stripes*, (v. 33); they had been beaten with many stripes (v. 22.)

LESSONS 1.—Christians can rejoice in tribulation.

2.—Suicide is a fearful crime.

3.—Conscience may ask, but the Gospel alone can teach the way to salvation.

4.—Believers ought to make professions of their faith.

No. 9.—Athens. Acts 17, 22—31,

Mar's Hill or *Areopagus* was in the centre of Athens; and there the Supreme Court met. *Too superstitious*, (v. 22); the meaning is too much addicted to the worship of the gods. *To the unknown God* (v. 23); Similar inscriptions were elsewhere found, and proved that the world by wisdom knew not God. *Giveth to all life*, (v. 25); the Athenians worshipped lifeless statues. *Your own poets*, (v. 28); Aratus and Cleanthes used this language. *Given assurance*, (v. 31); the resurrection of Christ proves the truth of all the doctrines he taught, that of a general judgment among the rest.

- LESSONS 1.—The wisest heathens are very ignorant in matters of religion.
 2.—Reason and revelation alike point to God as the author and preserver of our lives.
 3.—Repentance is a duty universally binding.
 (v. 30.)
 4.—We must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ.

No. 10.—Paul a Tentmaker. Acts 18 1—11.

Corinth was situated on the isthmus which connected the Peloponnesus with the mainland of Greece, it was now the political capital of the Province. *Claudius had commanded*, (v. 2,) the Roman Emperor is said to have issued this decree on account of the alleged seditious character of the Jews. *Wrought*, (v. 5,) like other Jews. Paul had learned a useful trade in early life; the tents made were used by soldiers or travellers. *A year and six months*, (v. 11,) this was the longest stay Paul had yet made in one place during his missionary labours. During this time he most probably wrote the epistle to the Thessalonians. (The postscript to these and other Epistles are not inspired, and are not to be depended on.)

- LESSONS 6.—We ought to be not slothful in business, while fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.
- 2.—Ministers should not abandon their duties on account of any discouragements.
- 3.—Grace finds its objects among the unlikeliest classes and places. (v. 8 and 10.)

No. 11.—The Exorcists. Acts. 19, 13—20.

Vagabond Jews exorcists, (v. 13;) these were wandering impostors, who pretended by certain incantations, to heal diseases and cast out evil spirits. *Chief of the Priests*, (v. 16,) Sheva may have been at one time high priest, or a member of the Sanhedrim. *Curious arts*, (v. 19,) that is, magical arts. *Books*, (v. 19,) these were the magical books or parchments which contained the combinations of letters or words used in incantations. *Fifty thousand pieces of silver*, (v. 19,) the value would probably be two or three thousand pounds.

- LESSONS 1.—Magical arts, as involving deceit and blasphemy, are in the highest degree sinful.
- 2.—It is exceedingly dangerous to tamper with evil spirits, or pretend to miraculous power.
- 3.—Genuine believers will abandon sinful occupations at whatever pecuniary sacrifice.

No. 12.—Melita. Acts 28, 1—10.

MELITA, (v. 1,) now called Malta, an island in the Mediterranean, about 60 miles south of Sicily. Paul was shipwrecked on its coast when being sent a prisoner to Rome. *The barbarous people*, (v. 2 ;) the Greeks and Romans, like the Chinese, considered all foreigners barbarians. *This man is a murderer*, (v. 4;) like Job's friends, they too hastily concluded that great sufferings imply peculiar guilt. *Felt no harm*, (v. 5,) this was in accordance with a special promise. (Matt. 16, 18.)

- LESSONS 1.—We ought not to be forgetful to entertain strangers. (Heb. 13, 1.)
2. — Particular calamities do not prove aggravated guilt.
3. — The sick ought to be commended in prayer to God.
4. — We are bound to shew gratitude to our benefactors.

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