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# THE CHILD'S BIBLE EXPOSITOR;

OR

## Lessons and Records of the Sunday School.

BY MRS. LEONARD.

“When thy word goeth forth, it giveth light and understanding  
unto the simple.”—PSALM cxix, VERSE 130.

TORONTO, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1841.

This Work will continue to be Published regularly every week as soon as a sufficient number of Subscribers is obtained to meet the expense of publication.

TERMS:—Ten Shillings per annum, paid quarterly or half-yearly in advance, or Fifteen Shillings if paid at the end of the year.

Sunday Schools subscribing for twelve or more copies, will be supplied at half-price.

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THE CHILD'S  
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NUMBER XXIV.

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The days were so short, and the roads and weather had been so bad for some weeks, that our school had been but thinly attended, and we but seldom assembled before the hour when the regular lessons for the day began; but upon this morning the sun shone brightly, and there had been a hard frost in the night, so that the walking was quite good, and in consequence we were all in the school-room at a quarter before nine. Mrs. Arnold and Charles were among the first, and as we stood round the stove our teacher spoke of the lesson we had been committing to memory during the week, and several of the children said it was a very easy one, for they had known it as long as they could remember, and had said it every night and morning ever since they were able to speak. Mrs. Arnold smiled kindly but seriously at their confident way of speaking, and remarked that a great many persons had done the same for a much longer time, who had perhaps never in all that time studied carefully the meaning of the words they were using so familiarly, or had known what was the frame of mind and temper in which only they were justified in using them. Several years ago, said Mrs. Arnold, I was requested by a benevolent gentleman who had visited and examined the gaol of the District in which I lived, to intercede with a creditor in behalf of one of the prisoners, who was suffering very much in health from

confinement and depression of spirits, and who had no prospect whatever of satisfying the demand against him. It was a very pitiable case, for the poor man, whose name was Armstrong, had a sickly wife and two or three children, who were quite young and helpless, and they were all suffering the extremity of want, while he was shut up in prison and unable to do any thing for their support. He had been imprudent in undertaking some work by contract without having sufficient capital to carry it on, and had borrowed money for the purpose; and his undertaking having failed, it was for this borrowed money that he was thrown into gaol. I did not hesitate to take upon me the office of petitioner to Mr. —, as I was well acquainted with him, and considered myself rather a favourite with him. I was also the more certain of success because I knew him to be a person of very decided pretensions to religion, and that he often had prayer-meetings and sometimes preaching, in his own drawing-room; he had subscribed liberally to several religious undertakings, such as Churches and Sunday Schools, and talked a good deal upon such subjects, so that I thought it quite impossible that he could intentionally act so harshly toward a poor man who had no means of paying his debt. I thought the imprisonment of poor Armstrong must have been without his knowledge, and felt sure that he would thank me for telling him of the circumstances, and would say at once that the prisoner should be released, and sent home to his family. I even expected that he would give him a little help in beginning house-keeping again, to atone to him for the mistake some officious person had made in putting him in gaol. I was very indignant with my friend because he was not so certain as I was of the success of my mission, and would not believe that it was done without Mr. —'s knowledge. "It is a mistake," he said, "no doubt my dear, for such a good Christian as you represent Mr. — to be to cast a poor wretch into a gloomy gaol to pine himself to death, when his only chance of getting out of difficulty is by working steadily at his trade; but I am

very much afraid that the mistake has been a wilful one. I happen to know that he is a hard man to deal with, and poor Armstrong is not the first who has had to complain of his want of humanity; however, you must try your powers of persuasion, and do not be easily discouraged, for you are pleading in the cause of pity and charity to a fellow creature, and I heartily wish you more success than I expect you to meet with. Mr. ——— met me at his own door, and was so cordial in his welcome, and looked so good-natured and benevolent, that I felt convinced that my friend had done him injustice. He told me that I could not have made his family a visit at a better time, for they were to have a lecture from a very admirable preacher, and a prayer-meeting, in the evening. I was in a great hurry, however, to be satisfied as to his intentions toward his prisoner, and very soon asked him for a few moments' conversation in his office. I immediately entered on my business, told him all that he knew quite as well as I did,—described the situation of Armstrong's wife and children, as well as his own declining state, and handed him a medical certificate that the poor man's health was fast sinking under confinement and anxiety, and that he would probably not live long unless he was released. To my great surprise Mr. ———'s brow grew darker and darker as I went on, and at last he burst out into a storm of abuse of the doctor, and the gaoler, and all who had any thing to do with Armstrong's affairs,—protested that he was an idle, unprincipled fellow, who had been just as much guilty of theft in borrowing money as if he had stolen it, and concluded by saying that he should stay in gaol the longest day he had to live, unless the debt was paid, and if either the doctor, or the gaoler, or my friend, or any one else, felt so much compassion for him, they might pay it themselves; they had just as much right to be losers by him as he had. "But," said I, very much shocked and frightened, but determined not to give up the point too soon, "poor Armstrong's dying in gaol will not make you any richer; he can never earn any money

while he is in prison, and if you let him out he may be able to pay you by degrees, and support his wife and children besides; and then you know if the poor man should die it will be too late to regret that you were not more merciful to him, and I am sure you will then wish to be in his place, where he is now in the gaol, rather than have such a thing on your mind all your days." "My good girl," said Mr. —, "you know nothing of business, or you would know that it is necessary for people who are engaged in it to do things that are very repugnant to their feelings. If I were never to exact payment from people who find it inconvenient to meet my claims upon them, I should very soon be in gaol myself." "That is very true," I replied, "but there is a difference between leaving a poor helpless family to starve, while their father is dying in gaol because he owes you a few pounds he cannot pay, and putting people to some slight inconvenience to enforce your claims upon them, when they are rather unwilling than unable to pay you." "You will allow me," he replied, "to understand these things better than you do, and take my advice, young lady, never meddle with affairs that in no way concern you, and which are sure to be made worse instead of better by your interference." I told him that I did not see how poor Armstrong's affairs could be made worse than they were by any thing I could do, as he had no power to make him more thoroughly miserable than he had done already, and that I was very sorry I had not succeeded in prevailing on him to show greater mercy to his unfortunate debtor, for his own sake, as well as for many others. He was immovable, and though he did not lose his temper I saw very plainly that he wished me any where but in his presence; and though he renewed his invitation to me to stay and partake of the evening's engagements with his family, I saw that he would rather I should not accept it, and so I went back with a heavy disappointed heart to report my failure to my friend.

*Amy.*—He must have been a hard-hearted, cruel man. Did you not tell him he ought not to have the prayer meeting if he did not let poor Armstrong out of gaol?

*Mrs. Arnold.*—I did tell him, my dear, that he ought to let his poor debtor go free before he ventured to say the Lord's Prayer, but I was young and in many respects very indiscreet at that time, and I spoke in a petulant and unadvised manner, which probably did more harm than good to all the parties concerned; and I am afraid that I indulged in very harsh judgments and feelings against my offending brother, and so far I was a partaker of his offence, for he only *acted upon* the same feelings of dislike and anger that I was guilty of in my heart towards him; and you are not now to learn that the indulged thought of sin is counted as sin; and I am very sure that if I had possessed the power of doing it I would have put him in the place of the poor prisoner, and have kept him there longer perhaps than would have been necessary to awaken him to a sense of his cruelty.

*Susan.*—And what became of poor Armstrong and his family?

*Mrs. Arnold.*—Why, my dear, when I returned from my unsuccessful journey, the gentleman who had sent me was, as you may suppose, not much surprised at my failure. He was not a very wealthy man, and had many claims on his small income, but he could seldom resist an appeal to his compassion, so he became responsible for the debt, and let Armstrong go to his family; and it so happened that though his relatives had allowed him to remain in confinement until his health was seriously injured, and had taken no steps to release him, they were so much struck by the generosity of the gentleman who had assumed the debt, that they took great pains to secure him from any ultimate loss. However, Armstrong recovered very rapidly as soon as he was released from imprisonment, and in a condition to exert himself for his family; and though he had been improvident and occasionally intemperate before, the severe lesson he had



received was not lost upon him, and he became a sober and industrious man, paid all his debts, and supported his family in comfort and respectability.

*Hannah.*—And what became of the hard-hearted creditor?

*Mrs. Arnold.*—He is still alive, and bears a fine character in the world; but whether his heart is still hard towards his fellow-creatures is not for us to judge. I spoke of the transaction to shew you an instance of the danger of self-deception, and of trusting to an outward appearance of piety and a strict observance of external forms and appearances. I have no doubt that Mr. ——— succeeded in persuading himself that he was an exemplary Christian, and was as much deceived by his own profession, and perhaps more so, than his neighbours. It is one of Satan's most dangerous snares that draws us into a hollow shew of religion, when the heart is unchanged and unsubdued by the power of the Holy Spirit, and still under the dominion of Satan and the world. To persons who do not understand the measureless distance between the religion of the Pharisees and the religion of the Gospel, the example of this person was calculated to do a painful extent of injury; for those who are in this state of darkness, make no distinction between true piety and holiness of life and their external appearances, and are led by such examples as the one I have mentioned, to believe that there is no truth and reality in a principle which has no effect in subduing the evil passions of cruelty and covetousness. Another circumstance, closely connected with the first verse of your lesson to-day, I will now relate to you.—A lady, with whom I have been long and intimately acquainted, was, at one period of her life, reduced to absolute poverty, by the treachery of a person, in whom she placed unlimited confidence. The person who had so cruelly wronged her did not prosper in his dishonesty, and was himself reduced to a small income, which was his sole dependance. In a few years after the transaction took place which deprived my friend of her

property, it was explained to her that it was in her power, by a simple legal process, to take possession of the income that remained to her dishonest agent, and by this means to repay herself for the heavy loss she had sustained. Many of her friends urged her to take this step, which would have placed her in comparative affluence, for she was then so poor as to be in some measure dependant, and had two orphan children to maintain and educate, who had been thrown on her care by the death of their parents. I am ashamed to say that, looking only to one side of the question, I, among others, endeavoured to persuade her that, in justice to herself, she ought to recover as much as she could of her lost property. Her answer to me was, "I cannot do it. It is all he has to depend upon. *I could never say the Lord's Prayer again if I took it from him.*"

*Amy.*—I hope she was not poor and dependant all her life, after being so generous to a man who had used her so ill.

*Mrs. Arnold.*—No, my dear, she still lives in the enjoyment of a very easy competence, and of more peace and tranquillity than almost any person I have ever known. The wrong she relinquished *for conscience sake*, and not from any exalted ideas of generosity, was shortly after replaced through another channel, in a remarkable and unexpected manner, and was the means of placing her in a state of ease and independance, such as perfectly sufficed to satisfy her unambitious disposition. Many circumstances have since conspired to render her life a peculiarly happy one; and, I am convinced, that, though she has not been entirely exempt from trial or suffering, she would not have exchanged her lot in life for that of any other person in the world.

*Amy.*—Did the lady you speak of *profess* to be religious like Mr. — ?

*Mrs. Arnold.*—She practised more decidedly than she professed. She was remarkable for great conscientiousness in all the transactions of life, for strict regard to truth, and a strong sense of justice. Her piety has

always been quiet and unobtrusive, though, from the circumstances I have mentioned, you will perceive that it must be in her a powerful and active principle; but you are not to suppose, from what you have heard, that an open and decided profession of religion is necessarily insincere. There are many persons who conquer a great degree of natural timidity from a sense of duty, when they feel it right to avow their religious principles and to defend them against the attacks of the worldly and profane. A very pious and exemplary friend of mine once observed to me on this subject, that we must not "vail our banner" before the world, for fear or for favour; and that we must not be ashamed or afraid to acknowledge our Master even in the midst of his enemies. Dread of the ridicule of those who think lightly, or who do not think at all, on the interests of eternal life, has often led very sincere Christians to smile at jests or scoffs that cut them to the heart, and to be "silent even from good words," when they wanted courage only and not inclination to utter them. We must be on our guard always rather over our feelings and motives than over our external actions, in this as in all other points of conscience, for it is necessary on the one hand to be careful that we do not incur the reproach of being "ashamed of our Saviour and of his words in a sinful and rebellious generation;" and, on the other, that we do not wound his cause by intemperate and indiscreet zeal, and "darken counsel by words without knowledge," by entering into arguments and discussions without information or ability to support them. We must now close our conversation, my dear children, as it is very near time for school to begin, but do not let what I have told you be forgotten; and, above all things, connected with this subject, remember that it is not only those who are in your debt for money, but all who have, in any measure, been guilty of offences or "trespasses" against you, that you must forgive, even as you pray to be forgiven by your Heavenly Father: for while you cherish a sentiment of hatred, malice, anger, or revenge in your hearts,

your prayer for forgiveness will be changed into one which calls for wrath and punishment upon your own heads.

*Lesson from the twelfth to the fifteenth verse of the sixth chapter of St. Matthew.*

*Mrs. Arnold.*—Repeat the first verse of your lesson, Mary.

*Mary.*—“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

*Mrs. Arnold.*—Let us consider, my dear children, whether we can be satisfied to do without mercy and forgiveness from God, before we make use of those words, while we are not in our hearts in peace and charity with all our fellow-creatures. None of them can possibly have sinned so deeply against us as we have all sinned against the great and good Being to whom we are indebted for life and all its blessings,—for the merciful atonement of our blessed Saviour, and for the hope of a glorious resurrection to eternal life through his merits and intercession,—yet, deeply as we have all offended, there are many precious assurances in the Bible that He will listen to our prayers for forgiveness, and pity our infirmities when we humble ourselves before Him. In the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus, we find our God proclaiming himself to his people as a God of mercy, in these words, “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” Now turn to the thirty-second Psalm, Harriet, and in the first two verses you will find a proof that the forgiveness of sin is of such a nature that it is no more remembered, and that no spot or stain remains from the offences that are pardoned by our Heavenly Father for the sake of his Son Jesus.

*Harriet.*—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

“Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

*Mrs. Arnold.*—In the beautiful prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, which you will find in the eighth chapter of the first book of Kings, there are several verses which prove that, even in those days which having come long before the birth of Christ, were, in those respects, in comparative darkness, the prayer of faith and sincerity was offered with full hope of forgiveness of sins. Find the chapter, Lucy, and read the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth verses.

*Lucy.*—“What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house :

“Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men.)”

*Mrs. Arnold.*—Repeat the next verse of your lesson, Hannah.

*Hannah.*—“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

*Mrs. Arnold.*—The word temptation here seems to mean trial, as it does in many parts of the Bible; and the prayer is this, that our Lord will not allow us to be exposed to any trial in which we have not power to adhere strictly to our duty to him. We know that it has been God's will frequently to try the faith of his servants, and to prove them to the utmost, as in the case of Job and that of Abraham, when he was called upon to sacrifice his son, but in both those instances the trial was one which only served to shew their strength of faith and readiness of obedience to the will of the Most High. Now find the Epistle General of St. James, Mary, and read the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth verses.

*Mary.*—“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

*Mrs. Arnold.*—Conscious as we all should be of our own weakness and depravity, let us earnestly and humbly join in this petition, for without the grace of God supporting and strengthening us we should be sure to fall under the influence of temptation; and we may well pray for deliverance from evil, from the power of the evil one, and all the snares, temptations, and delusions which he incessantly practices for our ruin,—from the evil of our own hearts, that it may be subdued, and its power weakened, and from such temporal calamities,—the bodily sufferings, losses, and misfortunes, the sickness of the heart as well as of the body under which so many suffer,—all these evils, and many more, are included in this prayer for deliverance; and yet, unless we are actually suffering from their purposes, how coldly are these words often spoken, which might, if offered in earnest faith, avert such countless miseries from us, and from those who are dear to us; for are we not assured by the Word of God that “the fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much”? We offer these petitions to God from a sense of his unequalled power to help us, and are taught by our Saviour to conclude them by acknowledging that to Him belong all power, dominion, and glory, now and for ever.

The next words of our Saviour are an assurance that if we forgive men their trespasses, our Heavenly Father will also forgive us our trespasses, and that if we do not forgive, we must not hope to be forgiven. Who, with these plain assurances ever before them, and believing in the unchangeable truth of him who spoke them, can yet dare to harbour thoughts of malice or revenge against his fellow creatures? The forgiveness that is here required from us is a very different thing from the mere appearance of being merciful, so we will look into the

bible and find out exactly what it means, so that we may not be deceived by any misunderstanding of the word. Look for the seventeenth chapter of St. Luke, Amy, and read the third and fourth verses.

*Amy.*—“Take heed to yourselves. If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.

“And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.”

*Mrs. Arnold.*—Now look, Susan, for the twenty-fourth chapter of Proverbs, and read the seventeenth verse.

*Susan.*—“Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth.”

*Mrs. Arnold.*—A very striking instance of forgiveness and of returning good for evil is found in the seventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where Stephen, when dying under the violence and persecution of his enemies, yet prayed earnestly for them in his last moments in these words, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Now find the sixth chapter of St. Luke, Harriet, and read the thirty-fifth, thirty-sixth, and thirty-seventh verses, with which we will close the lesson for to-day.

*Harriet.*—“But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”

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