

Home Department Magazine

VOLUME VIII.

THIRD QUARTER, 1917.

NUMBER 2.

A Cure for Worry.

ANNE GUILBERT MAHON.

"I CAN'T help worrying," you say. "I simply can't keep the worry and trouble out of my thoughts, try as I will. It haunts me incessantly until I am weary trying to fight against it."

Times like that come to all of us, but when our will power is almost exhausted, there is a simple, easy, but a sure way to cure this unhappy state of mind.

Next to the power of prayer when one is beset by sorrow or anxiety, the practice of forcing the mind to dwell on some other subject becomes the greatest panacea for worry or grief. Instead of fighting so hard against the unwelcome thoughts that will come, just try filling the mind, every minute, with something else, and see how much easier and more effective this plan is than the old habit of fighting.

Open your Bible and select some short text which is full of strength and comfort—the shorter, the better, for then it will impress itself more deeply on your mind.

For example, take "Underneath are the Everlasting Arms". Read the verse over several times—riveting the attention upon that and nothing else until you can fairly see the words with your eyes shut—as if they stood out in large letters on a blackboard—"UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARMS". Close the door of your mind against any other thought. You can do it if you persist in trying. Let the words possess you completely—body, mind and soul. All at once you will find the most inexpressible feeling of rest and peace steal over you as you realize their meaning, and you will begin to see all there is in the wonderful words.

Ponder thoughtfully over each word at a time. Think of its full meaning, "Underneath"—holding us up, supporting us, sustaining us, lower than which we can never fall, no matter into what depths of sorrow and suffering we may sink. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Next comes the short word "are", but think of its meaning in relation to this verse: The arms *are* underneath us, whether we always realize it or not. They *are* always there, *are* always holding us up.

"The" comes next. "The everlasting arms"—God's arms, *The All-Mighty, The All-Powerful, The All-Loving arms*—"The everlasting arms".

Then the glorious, comforting word, "Everlasting". What a wonderful mine of thought this opens to us: Never-failing, lasting through everything, lasting *forever*. Human arms fail us when we lean on them, they leave us, but the "Everlasting" arms are *always* under us—every minute of the day, every day of the year, every year of our lives, through everything that can happen to us, wherever we may go.

Last of all the word "Arms": God's arms, the eternal arms, the arms that uphold and protect the whole universe, yet which are under each one of his smallest, weakest children; the arms outstretched wide to receive all the repentant sinners, all the sick, all the sorrowing ones—God's arms, the arms that never fall us.

Think each word over and over until the verse seems to be a very part of you, until you have absorbed every bit of its meaning and significance. Do this for a few minutes each day, early in the morning, if you can. Start the day with it, then all during the day, whenever the worry or the fear or the trouble thoughts assail you, immediately think of your verse, say it over impressively to yourself, putting the emphasis first on one word, then on another. See it clearly in your mind's vision. You will find that the worry thoughts, the fear thoughts, the trouble thoughts vanish as if by magic, and with no hard fighting on your part. You will feel soothed and comforted, strong and able to go on with your work and lead a useful, happy life. Think of the verse whenever you can, make it a part of you; especially at night if wakeful, say the words and think them over and over to yourself, dwelling on the strength and comfort of them until you are soothed into peaceful slumber.

Each day a new verse can be taken. The Bible is overflowing with beautiful, comforting, strengthening ones: "My peace I give unto you." "It is I, be not afraid." "The Lord, thy God, will guide thee continually."

"Fear thou not for I am with thee." You will find the ones especially fitted to your needs—for there are special ones for every human need, at just the time of need.

Not until you have tried this faithfully will you realize the great benefit the habit will do you, nor the wonderful peace and strength which it will give, the deeper knowledge of God's love and power, and the blessings unspeakable which will follow.

All-Sufficient Grace.

REV. O. C. PEYTON.

My father had the good custom of having me, when only a small lad, to commit to memory many precious and comforting portions of Scripture. Most of these thus impressed on my mind in those early years, I have never forgotten. They have been to me a potent safeguard and a living inspiration in many an hour of distress, weakness and need.

Here is one of the most comforting of all those treasures acquired in those days, long gone by: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work."

"All sufficiency in all things!" How comprehensive, yea, boundless. Surely, believer, thou art to be fully supplied with all needed equipment for every possible exigency. Grace is no scanty thing to be doled out to you in mere pittance. It is a glorious treasury in the keeping of an infinite God, whose compassionate love knows no bounds, and this vast treasury the key of prayer can always unlock but never, never empty. Oh, be glad that your life and all its interests are in the keeping of a God whose resources are inexhaustible! You are privileged to drink of a fountain full, flowing, ever-flowing, over-flowing. Mark the three alls in this precious promise. It seems to me it is like a threefold link in a golden chain let down from the throne of grace. "All grace"—"all sufficiency"—"in all things", and all these to "abound". Precious truth! The soul

This pondering on God's Word, making it a very part of your being, dwelling upon it and clinging to it in time of need will give rest when you are weary, strength when you are weak, guidance when you are perplexed, deliverance when you are fearful, peace and comfort when you are in trouble. It is a simple remedy, and may be had for the taking, but it is a never-falling cure and blessing.

thrills as we reflect upon it. Our wants can never impoverish that inexhaustible treasury. Millions are hourly depending on it and drawing soul nourishment from it, and yet there is not the slightest lessening of the supply.

Out of that fullness all men everywhere may receive. Needy soul, be thou stayed and comforted. Thine insufficiency in everything is far overbalanced by an "all-sufficiency in all things". There is grace for you in all circumstances and situations, in all vicissitudes and changes, in all the varied phases of your earthly pilgrimage. Grace in pain, sorrow, ignorance, perplexity, sickness, death. Grace for duty and grace in duty. Grace to walk steadily in times of spiritual joy, and grace to drink the bitter cup with an uncomplaining spirit. Grace to sanctify prosperity, and grace to help you say, through blinding tears: "Thy will be done."

We do not make the use that we should of the Word of God. There are many precious passages that we ought to fix in our minds. We ought to revive the good custom of teaching them to our children. In after years, when the storms are beating about them, these will be recalled, and they will be a blessed stay and comfort. Amid the surging cares and duties of life give to these precious assurances of the Word of God the devout, reverent, prayerful meditation they merit. "The entrance of thy word giveth light."

Mollie Fancher to the Home Department Shut-Ins.

JAMES ELMER RUSSELL.

MOLLIE FANCHER has been called the most remarkable invalid in the world. When her life of suffering came to a close a short time ago she had been for half a century a shut-in. A little more than fifty years ago, when a

beautiful girl in Brooklyn, she was thrown from her horse, dragged several blocks, and horribly injured.

Says *The Youth's Companion*: "From that day to the day of her death, she never left

her bed, but lay through all the intervening years a helpless cripple, much of the time totally blind, and for a long period with one hand and arm immovably fixed above her head." Very few members of the Home Department are afflicted as she was.

But though many people would have called Mollie Fancher a "helpless cripple", she refused to be helpless. During all the long, long years in which she was a prisoner to suffering, her mind was busy planning for others, and her hands were swift to carry out her plans. "Although blind, and with one arm fixed above the pillow on which her head rested, she nevertheless made exquisite wax flowers, knitted quantities of yarn into articles of usefulness, crocheted thousands

of skeins of worsted, and wrought the beauty of her soul into the faintest of embroideries—all for charity."

But this was not all. As the years slipped away she came to learn of others who were shut out from the ordinary pleasures of life, and she determined to bring cheer into their lives by writing to them letters of friendship and encouragement. The circle of those to whom she was ministering increased until there were thousands, whom she had never seen, whom she yet knew intimately.

Let the members of the Home Department like Molly Fancher thank God for the possibility of having an unconquerable soul, and resolve in spite of their handicaps to fill their lives full of joyous ministry.

Becky.

SUSAN HUBBARD MARTIN.

WHEN Becky had first gone to help Mrs. Archer she had not dreamed that she would have to give up Sunday school. That was the one great pleasure in her life.

She loved the large pleasant room, where the children and young people gathered each week; she loved the music, too, and the cheerful greetings of her friends.

Becky was young and confiding. She thought the best of everyone. She did not realize how much thoughtlessness and selfishness there were in the world. Of course she was going to Sunday school in Mrs. Archer's home the same as she did in her own. Becky had pink cheeks, too, and curly brown hair, and a round face. But there had been troubled times in the little brown house. Father had been sick a long, long time, and was not getting much better. Mother was not strong, and could not do anything to earn a dollar, except by plain sewing, and that did not bring in a great deal. It was Becky who saw the situation and rallied to it.

"I'm going out to find some work," she announced one morning, when the flour was nearly out. "I'm young and strong, and I do know how to keep house." So, she put on her plain coat and her little shabby hat, and started out. It had ended in the finding of Mrs. Archer, who was willing to pay her for her services, three dollars a week. Three dollars a week would help pay for groceries, and Becky accepted it gladly. Mother kissed her good-by when she left with her suitcase in her hand.

"Oh, Becky!" she said, tremulously. "I wish—I wish," her voice faltered and broke.

Life at that moment seemed a cruel thing, but Becky put her young arms about her.

"Just be glad I can go, mother," she said, bravely. "Think of all the comforts that three dollars will bring us." And so Becky's work began. She washed dishes, prepared meals, cleaned and dusted in young Mrs. Archer's house with a good will, and every new task that was given unto her hands, Becky only smiled, for, at the end of the week, two delightful things were going to happen—she would earn three dollars, and she was going to Sunday school. But that first Sunday young Mrs. Archer said nothing about it, instead there was a very late breakfast and a very early dinner. By the time the bells were ringing Becky saw her hopes of attending Sunday school slowly disappear. "But this is my first Sunday," she thought, hopefully; "next Sunday I can surely go." But next Sunday was just the same, and so was the next, and Becky began to realize slowly that she could not go. There would always be too much to do on Sunday morning. Up in the bare little room she studied the lesson faithfully, but she missed the help and inspiration of good teaching.

Things moved along, and if young Mrs. Archer noticed a certain wistful look in Becky's round young face, she did not speak of it. And then Mrs. Harrison Norris came to visit.

Mrs. Harrison Norris was young Mrs. Archer's aunt, and a woman of importance. Everything had to be made especially nice for her. Becky washed the windows and swept and dusted for a week before the expected guest arrived. She was a large portly woman with soft white hands, on which a ring or two sparkled, and a pleasant manner. Somehow Becky loved her at once. She came

in the kitchen on Sunday morning as Becky was hanging up the dish pan. They had had a late breakfast as usual, and already the bell was ringing for Sunday school.

Becky's eyes were red as she patiently hung up the tea towel. Making one's way in the world was not so easy, after all. How she longed for the little brown house, and for Sunday school. Already her small hands were becoming red and rough in the service of her mistress. Already her bright color was fading—Becky was pining for that Sunday school.

"You can hear the bells quite plainly from here, can't you?" spoke up Mrs. Norris, kindly. "By the way, what hour do they have Sunday school?"

"Ten o'clock," replied Becky, in a choked voice. "At least my church does."

"Do you ever go?"

"I used to before I came here," went on poor Becky, battling with her tears.

"I see," replied Mrs. Harrison Norris, "you'd like to go again?"

Becky nodded. "Oh, so much; but it isn't any use to wish it. There's always too much to do on Sunday mornings."

Without a word Mrs. Harrison Norris left the kitchen, she went into the living room. Young Mrs. Archer sat there reading the Sunday paper.

"Isabel," said Mrs. Harrison Norris, suddenly, "you must arrange to let that little maid of yours attend Sunday school. A little extra management on your part will make it easy. It seems she's been accustomed to going each Sunday before she came here, and she's missing it. No matter if she is in your employ, you or no one else has the right to deprive her of that privilege. No wonder

our working girls prefer to labor in stores and shops in preference to doing housework. If they were treated with more consideration, and less selfishness, they would have a better opinion of us. There's not so much difference between you and that little girl in your kitchen, Isabel. She is there because of a series of unfortunate events—a sick father—an invalid mother—and other things. You should make it a habit to be kind to her. She's young and easily impressed, and her usefulness as a Christian later depends largely upon you. She'll measure all women by your standard. See that you do not fall short. Now, my dear, can you not arrange matters so that hereafter Becky may go to Sunday school? Suppose it does cut short your Sunday morning nap; suppose you do have a less elaborate dinner? What is that beside spiritual food? Oh, my dear, learn to know something of those beneath your roof! Be generous with them; there is nothing that will give you the same sweet satisfaction all through life."

That next Sunday morning Becky and her mother walked arm in arm down to Sunday school. Behind them came Miss Buell, her teacher.

"Why, Becky," she cried, "I'm so glad to see you, my dear. I've missed you dreadfully."

Becky beamed. "And I've missed you, Miss Buell; but it is all right now. I can come every Sunday after this."

Just then the bells pealed out. Becky pressed mother's arm. What a beautiful day it was. She didn't mind the hard work or the long hours or the big piles of dishes she must wash. Why should she? She could go to Sunday school.

Does It Pay?

JENNIE N. STANDIFER.

MRS. FREEMAN, Superintendent of the Home Department of the L— Street Baptist Church, asked herself over and over one sultry July afternoon: "Is the work worth while when so few are interested, and the department fails to be self-supporting? *Does it pay?*"

The Sunday school secretary had been a week late in delivering the literature. One assistant, or visitor, had gone on a vacation. One was sick, and another returned the magazines with the message that she was too busy to continue the work. In order to be able to make her quarterly report on time, Mrs. Freeman undertook the work of her three delinquent helpers.

House after house was visited, and she grew weary in body and soul. Some had lost both magazines and report envelopes, and were cheerfully indifferent about receiving others. Mrs. Jones, who owned the handsomest house and car in town, had forgotten to study the lessons or to lay aside even a penny for her contribution. Mrs. Roberts, whose husband was a banker, had so many pressing engagements for the literary club that she did not have time to bother with studying the lessons. She did not care to remain a member of the department any longer. Mrs. Jackson was suffering from weak eyes, and could not read anything. She wished to be dropped as a mem-

ber. Mrs. Moore plausibly announced that she would study her lessons from the Bible, as she wished to economize.

The Home Department worker had grown thoroughly discouraged by the time she had reached the name of Mrs. Bankston, the last on her list. It was a modest little cottage at which she knocked, but the mistress opened the door with a smile and gave a cordial greeting.

"Come to the shady side of the porch and have this lazy-backed rocker," the little woman invited. "You look so tired, and must have a glass of iced lemonade."

"I am discouraged as well as tired."

"That will never do in such a good work, friend. I have been wanting to see you to tell of the joy the HOME DEPARTMENT MAGAZINE has brought me. You remember Mrs. Graham, who was my next door neighbor until she moved to Texas last year? I had a letter from her yesterday which has made me so happy. Mrs. Graham, as you know, joined the L— Street Baptist Church a year or so before she went West. Her people were Hardshell Baptists, and she did not believe in missions and Sunday schools. She could never be persuaded to attend one or let her little girl enter the Primary Department. A few months before they moved away I got her to studying the lessons in the HOME DEPARTMENT MAGAZINE. She read the stories, the beautiful poems, and other instructive, uplifting articles, and became interested. She wanted to keep on reading the magazine, and that is why I always asked you for an extra copy. I sent it to Mrs. Graham. In the letter I received yesterday, she wrote that the magazine had caused her to study God's Word, and through it she had been brought so near the Master that she saw things differently now. She goes to Sunday school regularly, and takes her little girl. And she has joined the missionary society. But best of all her husband has been reading the magazine, and has begun to study the Bible. She believes that her prayers will soon be answered, and he will accept Christ as his Saviour."

"I have always been lacking in self-confidence—I can't say things as you say them—but I would like to be one of your helpers. Mrs. Freeman, in this Home Department work."

"You are the woman I am looking for, dear. The Lord surely sent you just when I need you most. I will give you literature and instructions tomorrow, so you can go to work."

"Here is my report envelope. You see I doubled my contribution this quarter, be-

cause the magazine brought me so much joy."

"That extra contribution is the Lord's way of providing for the deficit of other members. May the Lord bless you for your encouragement, little woman. I must hurry home—ward, or supper will be late."

A young girl was standing on the porch as Mrs. Freeman entered her gate.

"I was afraid I wouldn't get to see you, Mrs. Freeman," said the girl. "The visitor didn't come, and sister is so anxious to give you her report in the Home Department and get a new magazine. She has sent her old one, but she wanted to keep it for the helpful things in it. She is so lame, you know, and gets blue and lonesome. She says the magazine comforts her and gives her a daily scriptural reading she can't do without."

"Here is a new magazine, and tell her to keep her old one and all the others I send her. I merely wish the ones returned that are not wanted. I give them to a negro preacher, and he distributes them among his people. Tell your sister I am sending her a few extra copies to give to her neighbors."

"She will be so glad to give them. Sister says the HOME DEPARTMENT MAGAZINE blesses everybody that reads it."

"I believe it does, child."

"Here is sister's contribution. She has had so many orders for crochet work and embroidery this summer that she could give more than last quarter. She is always so glad to give. Good-bye. I must run home before dark."

Mrs. Freeman was rubbing her eyes to make sure that the generous amount marked on the crippled girl's envelope was no dream, when a well-dressed young woman came up the steps.

"Good evening," she greeted. "If you have it, I want a HOME DEPARTMENT MAGAZINE for mother. She has been a shut-in since my brother's death, and good reading means so much to her. That magazine comes next to the Bible. Thank you. I didn't bring her report, but will send it by mail. Here is a dollar to use in keeping up the department. Mother blesses it every day of her life."

"Is the Home Department paying running expenses, Mrs. Freeman?" asked the Sunday school superintendent the following Sunday morning.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Freeman, promptly. "All members do not contribute, or study the lessons, but it pays a big dividend a thousand times more precious than silver and gold. Beyond question, it *pays*."

Why Fear Old Age?

JENNIE CAMPBELL DOUGLASS.

"Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou livest,
Live well; how long or short permit to heaven."
—John Milton.

In a comfortable prosperous home six women sat chatting. One remarked, earnestly: "I cannot tell you how I dread old age."

"I never think of it. Why do you?" retorted one of her companions. "You might think I would dread it more than you, who have children, since I have neither husband nor children."

"Yes, I would think you might; for it is the loneliness of age that oppresses me."

"It is the dependence that haunts me," was the expression of a third. And two others freely confessed to the same dread, one because of her fear of death, the other because she believed that age would offer little congenial occupation. "And I am so in dread of being unsightly," she added. Of the six, only two lived apart from the fear of the ravages of oncoming years.

Yet it is quite probable that those women, if they live to be aged, will hardly recognize the fact. Only the other day a dear woman of seventy-three, said very seriously: "I have no horror of age, in itself; my only fear is that my friends may go first, and what is life without companionship?" She was so young in spirit that she was unaffectedly unconscious that her own years are dreaded by women only twenty or thirty years her junior, and that they consider her aged. Youth and age rivet their eyes on different ends of the telescope, the one seeing three-score and ten as very far away, the other taking a very close view of childhood.

Cowards die many times before death overtakes them, while the brave never die, but enter a triumphant paradise. So those who live in constant apprehension of age grow old from the effects of their worry, while persons so full of the business of life that they have no time to dwell upon future discomfort, keep young in heart, because young in interests. The individual whose spirits are depressed by solicitude lest the end of life be miserable, is wise to focus the mind on the present, for in its best use lies the promise of happy old age.

Loneliness cannot come overwhelmingly to those who live actively with the young. Sadness oppresses, and dearest faces are missed unspeakably, but those who have

passed, live again in their children, and it is surprising, too, how much of real joy comes from affiliations with young people whose parents one may never have known. Selfish absorption in the family circle is a mistake from every standpoint, and frequently leads to morbid exclusion of "outsiders", when inevitable separations occur. She whose heart is enlarged by love of home and family, until she mothers humanity, has little chance for loneliness or morbid grief; not that she suffers less than her narrower sister; though suffering is keen, joy still enters the life because of the friends that remain. And they instinctively reach out to her when they in turn meet her experiences. She is needed.

And why should she fear going to the home peopled with friends of yore? So many have gone before and are waiting her advent, that death means to her a journey into a country not so far away, where a warm greeting awaits her. Living the present so purposefully that when it fades into the past it seems but a dream of quiet satisfaction, is the antidote for fear of the day when life's purpose will reach its fulfillment. Death has its hopeful and beautiful side, just as has life, and investing the latter nobly yields bright visions of the former.

It is neither feature nor form that makes old age most attractive in appearance. Lines become more pronounced each year, and character decides the charms of age. The old face on which rests sweetness, tenderness, cheer, could never repulse the most aesthetic. Contrast the beautifying effects of virtues with the worldly woman's effort to appear attractive through the mediums of fashionable dress and youthful manners. Which counts for more, style or sympathy; fear or faith; self-aggrandizement or service? No embodiment of attractive virtue is likely to mar the landscape.

There are many practical ways of safeguarding one's future against dependence. It is true that one may save money, to find it swept away; health, sometimes, though not often, breaks without warning or apparent neglect. But on the other hand, mentality and utility are lasting acquisitions. The woman who uses her mind judiciously and actively, strengthens it, stores it with gems that sparkle for others, and with food that nourishes it for herself. She who fills her time with wise service for others makes an investment from which she draws a rightful

as well as a lovingly bestowed income later. She who ever gives more than she demands will never lack for friendly, loving attention. And why should she refuse to others the privilege of rendering such service as she in earlier days has taken joy in bestowing? There is such a thing as being arrogantly independent, and in consequence, suffering more than is necessary in accepting the overtures of affection.

No one need fear a life of utter uselessness. Always there is something needed from the hand, mind, or heart of the ripe in years. If hands grow helpless there are experiences of formative years with which to help mold other careers, usually by silent

influence and loving understanding, rather than by advice. Live sympathy, in joys as well as in griefs, is a key to all natures, and when access to a heart is gained, there are many services to whose graceful performance tact will point the way.

If a woman live the present in a manner stimulating to heart and mind; if she reserve physical resources as far as her physique demands, yet increase them by judicious activity; if she invest her financial income in a way to bring eternal returns; and if she attract and hold new friends; she may leave the future to reach its glorious culmination, without a moment of dread. Old age beautifully crowns such a life.

Under Mother's Window.

ELIZABETH L. GERHARD.

Windows are our most frequent outlook upon the world. Through them we see humanity passing by, the beauties of nature, the glory of the sunsets, and the wonderful starry sky. To the old and the frail, windows—or oftener still their own window—is their only outlook during the chill months of the year.

The etching of the slender branches of the trees, against the bright blue sky and white clouds or the brilliant crimson sunsets; the sparrows and starlings eager for the food scattered over the snow by a generous hand, are each a part of the winter pleasure, fore-runners of spring birds, the tiny leaves and early flowers. Sometimes the mother's window gives the greatest panorama of all—men, women and children passing to and fro, showing in a hundred ways their joys and interests—sometimes their sorrows.

When we are fully awake to all a window may mean to the old people who are the charm of our households, one will begin to think of what would enhance the pleasure of the outlook. Winter is always tedious to a shut-in. How can we shorten the hard season of the year? It is a long cry from September flowers and October autumn leaves to the blossoms of April and flowers of May.

"I have always longed for a bulb bed," wrote an old lady from the far West, "and now I am going to plant one next fall with your Christmas gift."

A bulb bed! One might not guess at first why that should have been a special wish in the flower line, but the heart's desire that crossed a continent, gave a thought to the daughter of a shut-in mother. "We will have

a bulb bed, too, under mother's window," she declared, and the following spring all the family knew why a bulb bed was a thing to be desired.

While weeks of snow were still leaving earth-soiled heaps in the window outlook, pure little snow drops raised their heads at the very edge of the snow, where the sun was warming a little bare spot in the circular bed. The sparkle of the little mother's eyes was like spring sunshine, her enjoyment an inspiration all day. Crocuses followed in time for an early spring, with blueets and an occasional hyacinth. Spring, the wonderful resurrection time, seemed richer in its fulfillment because God's own sunshine had warmed chill mother earth into leaf and bud and blossom.

The little mother loved to stand in her window in these days and watch the unfolding glory beneath. Before the crocuses had gone, more hyacinths, and circles of daffodils, narcissus and tulips followed close after each other, and in the early days of spring, before trees or shrub or summer flower had opened their sleepy eyes, a waving bed of scarlet and pink and white, yellow and purple and crimson blossoms, nodded their heads on long stems, and filled the air with fragrance in front of the mother's window. What a difference it made that spring! It shortened the bleak weeks with a little bit of heaven's beauty.

Nor did it end here. The bulbs had pointed the way with their starry loveliness. When their blossoms were gone, morning glories were planted, and their brilliant-striped cups were the life of each morning from the mother's window. The bulbs were annuals, but the after crops of flowers were

varied in the bulb bed, ever keeping to the old-fashioned blooms which mothers always love.

One year the bulb bed was sweet all the late summer and fall with sweet alyssum and mignonette. Another time, there was a summer pause, while a bed of beautiful asters was maturing. That fall the round bed was a glory of color till snow came, and there were only a few months between aster glory and bulb beauty. The bulb bed was an easy outlook from the little mother's window. It was also a great breeder of fresh and beautiful thoughts.

Closer to the house under the window there remained a little unused ground. Here some white violets were planted, and later one rose bush after another. "Mother's violet bed," "Mother's rose garden," they came to be called. Not so easy to see as the bulb bed from the window, but calling through their beauty and fragrance for a

A Perfect Housekeeper.

JANE TAYLOR DUKE.

"How cozy and attractive your living room looks, Mrs. Lester," said pretty little Mrs. Paul, coming in from the raw February air to the glowing log fire.

"Do you really mean it?" Mrs. Lester's tone was appealing. "You can't think how it comforts me to have you say so, I feared it was growing shabby."

"Why it is just the kind of room I admire, for it looks as if it was really lived in, with the children's books and games around, and the violin and piano with the music books, showing that someone really plays; and the flowers and bright sunshine, it is all so homelike."

"I came home only yesterday feeling sadly discouraged," said Mrs. Lester. "I had been paying a visit at the other end of town, and this lady is a model housekeeper, the hall and living room were spotlessly clean, not a finger print on the white woodwork, the floors highly polished, and the furnishings of old mahogany and Oriental rugs and beautiful cretonne were all so harmonious. She has just as many children as we have, but surely there was no sign of them. I don't see how she manages to keep everything as it is with the children running back and forth. Now here the children all gather at night to study

step outside the door, when May and June sunshine had warmed the air and all the earth.

The space may be small or large under our mother's windows. It may have large possibilities in the way of planting and gardening, or it may be very tiny indeed, but there are few windows which do not furnish opportunity, either in the ground beneath, or on the window seat without or within, for some of nature's beauty, something growing and budding and blossoming, something shedding its sweetness generously about it, and lifting the heart Godward, as one thinks of the luxuriant giving of the heavenly Father, that his children may enjoy his bounty and beauty. Let us make our mothers' windows rich with enjoyment while they look with glorified faces on the thoughtfulness of their children and the gifts of nature, and beautiful with memories when they are gone.

or practice, and afterward they play games or we read aloud, and of course their things lie about, try as I may to teach them to put away or do it myself. I do try to make them feel a respect for our best room, but things show the effect of constant use."

"My dear, this is as it should be. I think I know the friend you were visiting, and I happen to know also that her children are never allowed to enjoy that beautiful room, except on rare occasions, and they are never encouraged to bring their friends to their home 'because children make so much trash'. The consequence is, her children have to play at other children's houses or in the street, where of course the influences are not always what they should be. So you see, there is a difference between a perfect housekeeper and a perfect housekeeper. To me this room expresses a true home, and is all the more interesting because it looks 'used'. After all, it is not so much having things as being something that matters. Dear me, how I am talking, and I came only for a minute. I must run on back to put down my rolls for supper." And the cheery little person bobbed out of the door, leaving Mrs. Lester with a warm, contented feeling about her heart.

International Sunday School Lessons.

STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

LESSON I.

JULY 1, 1917.

Isaiah's Call to Heroic Service.

MOTTO TEXT.—"And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me." (Isaiah 6: 8.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Isaiah 6.

MEMORY VERSES, 6-8.

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Lesson Text.

1 In the year that King Uz-z'ah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

2 Above it stood the ser'aphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 ¶ Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the ser'aphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

9 ¶ And he said, Go, and tell this people. Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.

12 And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

13 ¶ But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a tell tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

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The New Prophet.

ISAIAH is a young man of the city, cultured and refined, and evidently a member of an influential family. It is perfectly fair to assume this, seeing the ease of his access to the king, and his intimacy with the conspicuous citizens of Jerusalem. His education appears in the finish of his style, and the fervor of his eloquence. In his day there was a burst of prophecy that made a brilliant epoch in Hebrew history. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah make an immortal quartet, whose virtually contemporary ministry, during the last half of the eighth century B.C., marked a great advance in Hebrew theology.

High society in Jerusalem added the most distinguished member of this group. God gets his preachers from all ranks. Why not a splendid minister out of the home of wealth as well as from among the poor? It is not often so, but there have been shining instances of it in religious history. In Isaiah's youth, the days were evil. The political horizon of Judea was dark with the menace of Assyrian invasion. That people of fierce countenance was setting its spears against the hearts of Israel and Judah. Under the clouds of doom the easy, frivolous, godless life of Jerusalem was going gayly on. Forms

of worship were faithfully observed, but riotous worldliness reigned. The people, high and low, acknowledged Jehovah, and bowed before the altars of idolatry. The rich oppressed the poor. Injustice and wrong flourished. Religion decayed and general ruin impended.

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Isalah Sees God.

The political, social and religious conditions troubles and alarms the young man. To add to the gloom, good King Uzziab dies after a long reign. Only God can save the guilty city. But she is not worth saving unless her heart is turned. Who can turn Jerusalem from sin and idols to God? There is the only hope. Abaz, the dead king's son and successor, is incapable, morally and intellectually. The broken-hearted patriot has a vision. He sees the Fountain of life and peace. The awfulness of God's majesty is revealed to him. The infinitude of his holiness and righteousness breaks on his soul. Glory fills the temple, while angels sing melodious tribute, and the foundations of the building trembles. He sees the Lord, sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. This is the primal thing in religion, a vision of the character of God. That is the first necessity. You and I have a grander vision in the life and character of Jesus. He that hath seen Me, hath seen God. This world today needs a profound knowledge of God. It perishes in brutishness and savagery, for lack of knowledge. Whole peoples worship accursed force and call it God.

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Isalah Sees Himself.

In that eternal white light of spiritual love and power, Isalah gets an inward look at his own character. The terrible contrast is inevitable. The presence of the perfect is instant exposure of the imperfect. The clear shining good is instant horrible rebuke of evil. God plans that initial shock in every human soul, when he says: "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him. The preacher's supreme duty is to hold up Christ. That is the road to penitence and salvation. Isalah measured himself by the standard of God's holy character. The deepest sense of sin and unworthiness fell on him. I am undone. I and my nation have gone away from God and rushed on to ruin. To that attitude of soul forgiveness always comes. Conviction of sin is by sight of the sinless. Love embraces the penitent.

Isalah Sees Duty.

One more step in the blessed experience. The convert is not dismissed with his blessing. This is sadly the too common view. God needs helpers in saving his people. Who will go for us? Here am I, send me. This is the climax to which God is working always. This is the completing stage in the process of conversion. Converted to active righteousness, to consecration of life, to co-working with God. So Isalah's call came. So yours and mine came. We have seen the vision of God in Christ. Now let us live the divine life in him.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Isalah's Call to Heroic Service. Isalah 6.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"Here am I, send me."

A call to the ministry is a solemn thing, a holy thing. To young Isalah it is a painfully unpopular and dangerous thing. The proud and impious sinners will not stand to be rebuked for their transgressions. They will resent plain preaching, and scorn the man who insinuates that they are disloyal to the old religion. The call means social exclusion and scorn; it means loneliness and persecution. It is the sacrifice of himself to God. Will the cultured youth undertake the thankless, hopeless task? He looks to God, not at the dire conditions. He asks not what is safe, but what is duty, and bravely enters on the bitterness and sorrows of a great ministry.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Courageous Preacher. Isalah 1: 2-9.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"All nations shall flow unto it."

He delays not to declare the mind of God. The holy and righteous God of the vision enthralled his soul. His people have utterly forgotten the supreme obligations of morality and religion. Hear him cry, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways." He thunders to deaf ears and stony hearts the will of God, and warns of their deadly sins. You must denounce sins, but it needs to be done in patient love, not in harsh and abusive temper. This glorious preacher kept his faith fixed on the final triumph of good over ill. He loved to dwell on the assured victory of God's religion. It is a universal grace. All men can respond to it. Look up to the high places. That was brave preaching.

WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—True Religion. Isalah 1: 10-20.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed."

The age was punctilious about going to church, making offerings, and observing all the forms of devotion. Nothing against that. It is right, but the evil is in resting in these things as the sum of religion. No, God wants justice and pity and righteousness in the daily life. If these virtues be neglected, all the formal worship becomes a hypocritical insult to God. Isalah insisted on their interpretation of religion, and it holds good today and forever. Religious worship is always wise and good, but the heart of the matter is in trying to live like the God we worship. Only with such is the holy God pleased. God help us to be good.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Bold Reformer. Isalah 5: 1-10.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"I will lay it waste."

That is a beautiful simile, wherein Isalah likens Israel to a vineyard. God has done everything to make it fruitful; expending wisdom, power, love and grace. But where are the grapes of kindness, goodness, honesty and zeal for the Lord's name? Avarice, selfishness, pride and injustice are become the ruling principles, and the vineyard is a solemn disappointment. The time of discipline is at hand. The Lord will use the Assyrians as a scourge to chasten a disobedient, rebellious nation. O Israel, hear the voice of God. Turn from evil, do good, and live. Otherwise, the vineyard's defences will be broken down and itself will be consigned to desolation.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Sin and Punishment. Isalah 9: 8-10: 4.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"The Lord will cut off from Israel . . . palm-branch and rush, in one day."

That was a terrible sermon. Palm-branch stands for the leaders of Israel, and the rush for the poor and obscure. For the whole nation the rod of correction is being drawn. All the people were alarmed at the approach

of cruel invaders. They will sweep the land with the violence of a flaming hurricane. High and low will suffer alike. Why is all this? Has God forgotten Israel? Far from it. Israel has forgotten God, and soiled herself with the abominations of the heathen. Sin is destroying a people who refuse to allow the God of Jacob to rule over them. Judgment day is coming. No man can escape. Oh, that men would serve the Lord!

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SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Clear-visioned Statesman. Isalah 7: 1-14.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"Fear not, nor let thine heart be faint."

Isalah became a comfort and support to his weak king, Abaz. He studied the international situation as well as the local conditions of his people. The northern kingdom, Israel, made a compact with the king of Syria to attack Judah. Abaz was in alarm and helpless. The noble prophet seeks and assures him that this evil confederacy will not confound Jerusalem. Patriotism is loyal to country, though it be full of transgressions. A confused and troubled ruler needs encouragement and guidance, and the prophet generously gives it. How happy if the poor king had given Isalah like support in the work of reforming the nation.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Triumph of Faith. Isalah 11: 1-9.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him."

It is an element of power to believe in the invincibility of your cause. What support to us, in this confused, sinning, suffering world, is the strong conviction that good will triumph over ill; that this is God's world, and his kingdom must prevail some day. That is faith. Men were made in the image of God. Sin is the abnormal, unnatural thing in human nature. The normal and the natural is moral resemblance to our Father. It is God's desire that all men share in his divine perfections. Jesus was the realization of this end in human nature. The Spirit of God was upon him without measure. This world belongs to Jesus, and he will fill it with salvation.

LESSON 2.

JULY 8, 1917.

Ahaz, the Faithless King.

MOTTO TEXT.—"Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him." (Hebrews 11: 6.)

LESSON PASSAGE, 2 Chronicles 28.

MEMORY VERSES, 1, 2.

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Lesson Text.

1 A'ház was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jê-rú'sá-lém: but he did not *that which was right* in the sight of the Lord, like Dá'vid his father:

2 For he walked in the ways of the kings of Is'râ-êl, and made also molten images for Bâ'á-lím.

3 Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hin'nom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Is'râ-êl.

4 He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

5 Wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syr'ia; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Dâ-más-cûs. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Is'râ-êl, who smote him with a great slaughter.

20 And Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

21 For A'ház took away a portion out of the house of the Lord, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not.

22 ¶ And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is *that* king A'ház.

23 For he sacrificed unto the gods of Dâ-más-cûs, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syr'ia help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Is'râ-êl.

24 And A'ház gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner of Jê-rú'sá-lém.

25 And in every several city of Jô'dáh he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers.

26 ¶ Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Jô'dáh and Is'râ-êl.

27 And A'ház slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jê-rú'sá-lém: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Is'râ-êl: and Hêz-ek'iah his son reigned in his stead.

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BIRMARK characterized Napoleon II as "the great unrecognized Incapacity". Ahaz was a contemptible kinglet, whom the accident of birth put on a throne. That is the weakness and the bane of hereditary monarchy. Here is an effeminate, incompetent, cowardly, superstitious man with the sacred interests of Judah in his hands. Old Samuel foresaw such possibility in kingship, and resisted the abandonment of the simple, rude democracy of Moses. With rare exceptions the kings of history, down to this day, have been weak, insignificant nobodies, soft in muscle and brain, and more at home in a harem than on a throne. This Ahaz has all the faults, and virtually none of the virtues, of David's line. Coming up undisciplined, amid the prosperity and luxury of Uzziah's reign, he is fated to the throne at the age of twenty-one. The national honor of Judah never dips lower than during the twenty years of his figure-head rulership.

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Sea of Troubles.

Assyria rises ominously in the east to become a menace to the peace of the world. Fed on militarism and the lust of conquest, her able king sets his covetous eyes on the kingdoms of the west. The brutalities and savageries of his invasions were almost as infamous as those that have horrified the world in our own day. Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezon, king of Syria, united against the foe, and urged Ahaz to join their alliance. Three courses of action lay before him. He might join the petty kings against the foe; or he might throw himself into the arms of

Assyria to save himself from the attacks of his indignant neighbors, or he might refuse all alliances and await developments. Isaiah advised the last, and urged the king to put his confidence in Jehovah. Already the little angry kings to the north were waging war on Judah, spreading wreck, defeat and ruin. As a punishment for declining alliance, Ahaz fortified Jerusalem and planned appeal to Assyria. This appeal Isaiah denounced as cowardly unbelief and treason to Jehovah. He assured the king that the two confederate foes, oppressing Judah, would soon be destroyed, and that the contemplated alliance with Assyria would soon be fatal to Judah. Wait on God, turn from vanities and idolatries, bow down in penitence and make alliance with the mighty One of Israel. He is the defense of his people. Serve him in righteousness and trust him to save. The terrified and bewildered king esteemed this the counsel of an unpractical religious fanatic. No, he would put no test on Jehovah. Possibly he feigned too much reverence for such a thing. The poor incompetent was blind to spiritual realities, and knew no hope but an arm of flesh. Disdained by ruler and prince, the prophet turned in a passion of appeal to the people, only to find the ashes of a dead religious faith.

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Heathen Alliance.

The people held on to medicines, wizards, and all the degrading clap-trap of idolatry. Ahaz went to meet the triumphant Assyrian at Damascus, paid him homage, and submitted Judah to a foreign power. He aped the customs, and adopted the religion of Assyria. He stripped the temple of Solomon of its precious vessels and ornaments to pay tribute to the new exalting master. He literally closed the temple, and required his people to worship on altars erected in Jerusalem to the honor of Assyrian deities. To this depth of disgrace and impiety the apostate imbecile plunged a helpless people. Broken-hearted Isaiah saw it all, was in it all. He was despised and rejected.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Ahaz, the Faithless King. 2 Chron. 28: 1-15.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"He . . . burnt incense in the high places."

He followed the path of least resistance; he drifted with the currents of irreligion and immorality. He allowed the Ten Command-

ments, the constitution of his country, to be trampled under foot, and virtually turned over Moses' and David's and Elijah's heritage to idolaters. He is the blackest spot in David's line, as disastrous a nonentity as ever wore a crown. How do you explain such an unmitigated failure? Parental indulgence of the youngest boy, perhaps. Moral and religious education were doubtless neglected. His intellect was small; his will was weak, and that is calamity. Train your children to resolution, to strong purpose. The unstable will stamp a youth as a mediocre and a fore-doomed failure.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Idolatry of Ahaz. 2 Chron. 28: 16-27.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord."

Judah was made naked by the kings just north of her, and, strange to say, by the treacherous king of Assyria. This last he trusted to help him, but it was a vain hope. What effect do his calamities have on his views and conduct? Did he discover the chastening of the Lord and humble himself? Not he. He went all the lengths of moral insanity. As though maddened against God, he threw himself with reckless abandon into all the corruptions and abominations of the heathen world. There was absolute collapse of the old religion in Judah. What a time of humiliation and despair for the faithful few who had to witness this orgy of national depravity and shame.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Foolish Policy. 2 Kings 16: 1-9.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"I am thy servant and thy son."

This the pusillanimous speech of Ahaz to the king of Assyria. The two kings assailing Judah were guilty of immense stupidity in weakening their forces against a small neighbor, when their utmost strength was needed against the great foe. The policy of seeking aid against them from this same mighty nation was equally ill-advised. Ahaz had no political sense, no hint of statesman-like quality. What possible interest could the robber-empire have in preserving one of the little western kingdoms when all were plainly included in her scheme of conquest? Any ordinary public man would see that Isaiah saw it. Assyria accepted, of course. It played into her hand to keep the little na-

tions separate and hostile to each other. Ahaz got temporary aid, and was pillaged duly.

THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Religious Instability. 2 Kings 16: 10-20.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"The king approached to the altar and offered thereon."

Visiting the king of Assyria at Damascus, he took copy of a heathen altar that pleased him, and commanded his priest to duplicate it for service in the precincts of the temple. It was done, and violating the laws of sacrifice he himself ministered before that altar. Irreverence and blasphemy could go no farther. It was as though a Baptist governor should demand of his pastor the setting up of Catholic images and a confessional in the church. It was more outrageous and criminal than that. Yet that king was set and sworn to preserve the laws and institutions of Moses! When the wicked rule, the people mourn. The time was bad, for even the best king of Judah, but his loyalty and courage could not have borne such bitter fruit.

FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Faithlessness Condemned. Isaiah 22: 15-25.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"I will drive thee from thy station."

The humiliated and heart-broken Isaiah lost not one particle of his courage amid the disastrous decline of religion. He still comforted king and prince with his presence and daring criticism of public conduct and policy. No self-important and sacreligious official could escape his rebuke. Shebna was a treasurer in the court, and engaged in an enterprise not in keeping with civic or religious propriety. Isaiah never knew how to spare the big offenders and vent displeasure on the small. I will drive thee from thy station and toss thee like a ball into a large country. He regarded a state officer as a

LESSON 3.

Hezekiah, the Faithful King.

MOTTO TEXT.—"He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." (Hebrews 11: 6.)

LESSON PASSAGE, 2 Chronicles 30.

MEMORY VERSES, 11, 12.

servant of God, for the state belongs to God. That is the correct view and we must insist on it.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Murderous Queen. 1 Kings 21: 1-10.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth."

Here is the famous story of Naboth's vineyard. Jezebel was the ripe fruit of heathen thought and manners. The fiend in her barked not at blackest villainy and cruelty. Idolatry knows not of brotherhood and justice, but liberates all malign tempers and passions. Naboth would not sell or swap his loved possession. Ahab soured over disappointment, but it only rallied the demons in Jezebel's nature to activity. She would treacherously involve and murder Naboth and smilingly present the victim's property to her husband. She did it and registered her name high among the immortal arch-criminals of this world. She is an eternal warning against idolatry.

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Royal Wickedness Denounced. 1 Kings 21: 11-24.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"

A great crime sets a prophet on the track of the criminal. When Ahab saw Elijah, he knew that divine anger looked him in the face. His coward soul shrank from the blow he knew was to fall from the prophet's lips. Thus said the Lord: In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even there. The royal house has murdered an humble citizen of Israel, and God speaks in the democratic wrath of the people. Ahab has become a menace to popular freedom; let him perish. God has ordained it so, on the earth that no king can oppress his people and live. Thank God, divine-right kings are being scourged out of the world!

JULY 15, 1917.

Lesson Text.

1 And Hezekiah sent to all Israhel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israhel.

2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.

3 For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

4 And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation.

5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israhel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israhel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written.

6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israhel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israhel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israhel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria.

7 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see.

8 Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.

9 For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.

10 So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zabulon: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.

11 Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zabulon humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

12 Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the Lord.

13 And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

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A Good Man.

There is something curious in the moral reversals in the history of families. Ahaz,

the son of pious King Jotham, was notoriously bad and his reign was a curse to Judah. The noble Hezekiah is his son. Don't lose hope of the unfortunate children of a wicked father. Remember Hezekiah. He must have had a good mother. A tradition says that the youth was trained by Isaiah. Some scholars put the beginning of his reign at 725 B.C.; others at 715 B.C. The ancient people were careless of chronology, and the keeping of dates. In our day the whole world reckons time from the birth of Christ. In those ages each nation had its own calendar and its own point of reckoning. Owing to the lack of calendars and national era, it has been difficult to locate in time many of the events of ancient history, but Christian scholarship has attempted to classify them around the birth of our Lord, before and after. What wonderful significance resides in that simple fact! The Son of man has gathered the story of the race around his own marvelous personality. He is the center of human history.

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A True Reformer.

An ignoble father had left Hezekiah with a heritage of political, social and religious scandal and wreck. He found himself a vassal to Assyria, and so remained all his life. He was allowed to rule Judah and guide all her internal affairs, but as to the annual tax and relations with other nations, he was not to forget his foreign master. National independence was gone, never to return to Judah again. His father had provided this humiliation for him.

Repairing the ruins and building up the waste places in the little kingdom became his task, and with energy he performed it. He determined to repair the dishonored temple and re-establish the solemn services and ceremonies of religion. He would restore the courts of justice, and secure all citizens in their rights. To him service of the people is the service of God. He would redeem the credit of the family by a closer walk with God. Happy had he been if he could have received the hearty support of the leaders of Judah, but corruption of the times had struck too deep. As a rule, princes and nobles were, of all things least interested in zeal for religion. Too many judges were lovers of bribes more than the dispensation of justice. Priests were commonly sordidly selfish and indifferent to spiritual things. Ignorant prophets, ambitious of popularity, flattered the ruling classes. Unsavory diviners, sooth-sayers, enchanters, wizards, charmers, powerfully attracted the common

people. That Hezekiah's courage did not break before this mass of disorganization and moral decay marks him as a resourceful, able man.

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The Great Passover.

Two brave citizens were conspicuous in support of the king, Isaiah and Micah. The first was a statesman and a social reformer; the latter gave himself wholly to social reform. Hezekiah was greatly influenced by these prophets. They pressed on him the necessity of uprooting ills and renewing the old-time rites and customs of the fathers. So he determined to observe the long-abandoned passover feast, with immense display and solemnity. They diligently advertised it; stirred the popular interest and gathered necessary funds. The day came and great multitudes assembled from far and near. The king led the opening prayer, joyous enthusiasm spread through the city and not a passover in two hundred years had equaled it. The revival was genuine, recalling the days of Solomon. The effect was deep and good. Irreligion was checked, and the devout remnant were encouraged.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Hezekiah, the Faithful King. 2 Chron. 30: 1-9.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"Be ye not stiff-necked as your fathers were."

The young king shows the soundness of his wisdom by the point on which he chose to put his first emphasis in the work of building up the kingdom. Agriculture was run down, trade was disorganized, social order was deranged. All these were vitally important matters, but, said the king, they are not the supremely important concerns. First and foremost, the nation must get right with God. She must make confession of sins, and consecrate herself anew to the principles of the old religion. The friendship of Jehovah is the nation's life. Seek first the kingdom of God, and all other needful things will be added unto you. Pure religion will heal bad conditions of agriculture, trade and social order.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Religious Assembly. 2 Chron. 30: 10-19.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God."

A solemn passover was the king's first move. It had not been observed in long years, under the reign of his heathenized father. He consulted with leading citizens, imparted his plans, exhorted the people, sent invitations to Jews in all Palestine. Perhaps he had a dream of reunion of the divided kingdoms. He wanted a passover of the old type, where all Abraham's children might meet as brothers. The spirit of Hezekiah and the largeness of his views caught the minds of the people, and many from the northern kingdom came. A great multitude went up to Jerusalem as in the days of Solomon two hundred years ago, when the kingdom was one. Trumpets called to worship, and Hezekiah prayed for his people, and the Lord healed them.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Religious Awakening. 2 Chron. 30: 20-27.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Making confession to the Lord God of their fathers."

It was a memorable revival of religion, and three men started it—Hezekiah, Isaiah and Micah. It does not take many to stir the soul of your church, but it does require a few earnest, resolute saints. The passover went on a week. The people said, "Let us make it two weeks," and it was done. Its duration was the longest ever known. All the tribes of ancient Israel were represented in the glad throngs, and all rejoiced together as in the good old days long ago. So there was great joy in Jerusalem. Religion and patriotism and brotherhood mingled in the shoutings and the songs. Their voice was heard and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto heaven. God blessed his people, and Hezekiah had his heart's dearest wish.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Religious Reform. 2 Kings 18: 1-8.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"He trusted in the God of Israel."

There was a destructive side to Hezekiah's reform work as well as a constructive side. Before he could decently approach God in the passover services, he must put away all the abominations of idolatry. So he smote down the corrupt shrines and images on the hill-tops, and even broke the brazen serpent that Moses made, for the people had been worshipping it. The Lord was with him and he prospered whithersoever he went forth, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah. For he clave to the

Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses. This man's religion was of the positive sort. Is yours?

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—God-appointed Rulers. Romans 13: 1-7.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"For rulers are not a terror to good works, but the the evil."

Paul teaches that civil government is of divine appointment, and therefore claims our obedience to all its lawful mandates. Government is constituted for the benefit of society, to preserve the rights of peace and industry, and to repress and punish the lawless. This is its ideal and design, though it may, in the hands of a despot, become cruel and oppressive. Paul takes it according to its proper purpose, and urges the Christian duty of submission and obedience. Yes, pay your taxes, honestly and cheerfully. Possibly Paul has in view some Roman Christians with wrong notions on these matters. The Christian must honor the chief and support the laws.

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SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Righteous King. Psalm 72.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"The mountain shall bring peace to the people."

Here is an immortal picture of a good king. The poet conceives him as fertilizing the fields with justice. That is fundamental.

Be just with the people, treat them as heaven-born free men, and not as beasts of burden. The sense of injustice and wrong poisons the fountains of life and embitters the soul. But justice brings peace and satisfaction and solidifies the foundations of the government. To such a ruler the people will give honor and love. Justice is the great word. Righteous dealing first according to the instincts of a true humanity, and then peace, abundance of peace. Self-respecting poor resent the offer of charity. They demand justice. The ruler who gives it is enthroned in their hearts.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Ideal King. Isaiah 9: 1-7.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"The government shall be upon his shoulder."

The iron of despotic government had entered into Isaiah's soul. To his meditative, longing heart arose the vision of an ideal king. He will come some day in the good providence of God. Fear the unflinching, unapprehensible optimist. This is God's world and he made it, and it shall be ruled in righteousness. And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. All warlike equipments shall be utterly destroyed, and war itself shall cease. Even so come, Lord Jesus. With this grand hope and confidence, Isaiah comforted his sorrowing soul.

LESSON 4.

JULY 22, 1917.

Sennacherib's Invasion of Judah.

MOTTO TEXT.—

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble." (Psa.
46: 1.)

LESSON PARAGRAPH, 2 Kings 18: 13-19: 37.

MEMORY VERSES, 19: 32, 33.

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Lesson Text.

20 ¶ Then I-na'ah the son of A'môz sent to Hêz-ki'ah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Is'ra-ël, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sên-nâch'er-ib king of As-syr-î-â I have heard.

21 This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning him; The virgin the daughter of Zi'on hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jê-rû-sa-lêm hath shaken her head at thee.

22 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Is'ra-ël.

28 Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

29 And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.

30 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Jô'dâh shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

31 For out of Jê-rô'sâ-lêm shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Z'ôn: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.

32 Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of As-syr'i-â, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.

33 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord.

34 For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant Dâ'vid's sake.

35 ¶ And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the As-syr'i-âns an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

36 So Sên-nâch'êr-ib king of As-syr'i-â departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nin'ê-veh.

37 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nis'rôch his god, that A-drâm'mê-kêch and Shâ-rê'âr his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Âr-mê-ni-â. And Esâr-hâd-dôn his son reigned in his stead.

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Hezekiah's Folly.

701 B.C. was a most eventful year in the political affairs of Judah. Sennacherib came with an army to crush the small nations of the west who had rebelled against him. He was the savage ruler of the strongest nation on the earth. It is believed that in 705 B.C. he murdered his own father in order to succeed him on the throne of Assyria. He was harsh and cruel as death. Now, Hezekiah had foolishly joined the small nations round him in an effort to throw off the yoke of bondage when Sennacherib became king. This he did against the intense protest of Isaiah, who saw only national suicide in the move. He wisely counseled quietness and peace. But Hezekiah had fond hopes that the confederacy would be aided by Babylon and Egypt. It was a vain hope. These two powers did

try to give assistance, but they were speedily humbled to the dust. It was then a light task to deal with the smaller states. They had formed no close union, and so were crushed, one by one, as a giant would crumble a dry leaf in his hand.

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Isaiah's Wisdom.

He did his best to avert the calamity. Twenty years before he had seen the northern kingdom and the kingdom of Damascus go down to death under the blows of Assyria, and now that his king was about to defy the vast world-power, with the passion of a patriot-statesman he implored king and princes not to rush into ruin. The old prophet was scorned, and his pacifist counsels were ascribed to loss of patriotic devotion and faith in God. Why, he is content to see his country lick the hand of a heathen master! The reproaches were false, of course. Isaiah knew that the sparrow could not contend with the eagle, nor the lamb with the lion. Events soon vindicated the wisdom of the prophet.

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Horrors of Invasion.

The Assyrian army poured into the west and the petty kingdoms sank one after another as barley before the sickle. The storm was quick and terrible, like that which recently desolated Belgium and Serbia. Then Judah's turn came. Forty-six of her walled towns were left in heaps and all the land was plundered. The invaders knocked at the gates of Jerusalem, and the terrified Hezekiah stripped the temple of its silver and gold to buy off the conquerors and save the city. Far more horrible! He gave his own daughters to Sennacherib's harem. Better had he died with them in a pitiless massacre. Jerusalem was spared, but at what an appalling price! Poor Hezekiah; why didn't he keep out of that hopeless, insane rebellion? Too late, too late, he saw that Isaiah knew.

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Treachery and Doom.

Sennacherib withdrew his army and then changing his mind, resolved to capture Jerusalem. Honor cannot bind brute force. Assyrian militarism is a monster that the laws of truth and humanity cannot fetter. Hezekiah is in a paroxysm of fear and calls on Jehovah for relief. There are no more treasures of gold or virgin purity to sacrifice. The dear, neglected, patient Isaiah

sends him a comforting message, assuring him that his prayer is heard. Jerusalem shall not fall. She shall laugh in the faces of her foes. God will put a hook in the nose of the Assyrian and lead him back to whence he came. Thus the prophet cheered the heart of his king. Now, before his intended assault on Jerusalem, Sennacherib had planned to strike Egypt. On the low-lands beside the sea, a sudden overwhelming calamity fell on his host, whether of storm or pestilence, it is not possible to say. Isaiah regarded it the direct punitive vengeance of God. The wrath of the Lord had broken the might of the invader and humbled his pride. That mysterious disaster was the hitching of the hook in the nose of the murderous beast. His campaign of frightfulness abruptly closed and the hook pulled him home, never to return again to Palestine. However, before leaving he turned over all the cities of Judah to loyal Philistine vassals. What a fall was that!

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Sennacherib's Invasion of Judah. 2 Kings 18: 13-25.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"His sons smote him with the sword."

If tradition be true, Sennacherib murdered his own father, and there is poetic justice in his own taking off at the hands of his sons. Those were days of low ideals, violated faiths, brutal despotisms, inhuman cruelties, and unnumbered woes. We have Christian civilization now? Yes, with two important exceptions. It is not Christian, nor is it civilized. The ancient savageries have surged back on us like a black wave. The old untamed ferocities of the Assyrian have made new hells in the twentieth century. Christian phrases are glibly used, but the brute war-god is the deity worshipped. A thin veneer of culture hides volumes of essential barbarism. It is sad, but it is true. Of course, I refer to nations, not individuals.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Defying Jehovah. 2 Kings 18: 26-37.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"Let not . . . Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord."

The Assyrian messenger came to demand the surrender of Jerusalem. He made a firm argument, as this world goes, against expecting any safety through Jehovah. He mentions six or seven kingdoms who have fallen. What could their gods do against

us? Not one thing. Has one of them delivered his country out of my hand? Do you fancy that your God can save this city? Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. This heathen, ignorant of Jehovah, put him on a level with the false divinities round about. That was exactly the question to be proved. The argument had weight with the Jews, many of them, but not a particle with Isaiah. Oh, for a faith that will not shrink in the face of worldly foes!

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Divine Help Promised. 2 Kings 19: 1-7.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Behold, I will send a blast upon him."

The argument against the power of Jehovah threw Hezekiah almost into despair. Humanely speaking, the heathen spokesman was unanswerable. The king rent his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the Lord. He sent a message to Isaiah, breathing sorrow and dismay. "Our extremity of weakness is all that we have to oppose to overwhelming danger. It may be that God will bear the insulting speech." Go tell the king not to fear the words he has heard. God will answer the blasphemy. "Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumor, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land." The prophet was the strong man. King and all leaned on the man of faith. So it ever is.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Prayer for Deliverance. 2 Kings 19: 8-19.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"Save thou us out of his hand."

The messenger came to the walls a second time, urging surrender, in still more vehement speech. He recounted to Hezekiah a longer list of ruined nations whose gods were impotent to deliver them. "Now let not thy God deceive thee, saying Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria." Again Hezekiah went into the Lord's house, and told the story of the repeated insult. "Of a truth, Lord they have destroyed the nations and cast their gods into the fire. They were no gods. Save thou us out of his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only." It was a great prayer, and Isaiah sent him word that the answer was sure. What a comfort Isaiah was to his king and people.

FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Prayer Answered. 2 Kings 19: 20-28.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"Therefore I will put my bridle in thy lips."

Assyria was the boastful, big, arrogant bully among the nations of that era. Self-idolatry was her folly, offset by contempt and scorn for weaker nations. Militarism and the lust of conquest was her fatal disease which made her the dread and the hate of all peoples. Her lofty insolence was equaled only by her fiend-like cruelty. A haughty spirit goes before a fall. God has ordained that the individual or nation attempting to live outside the virtues of humility, kindness, self-sacrifice and love shall perish. Assyria has modern parallels. It is astounding but true. Human progress is dimly slow.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Deliverance. 2 Kings 19: 29-37.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"For mine own sake and for my servant David's sake."

Through the prophet Isaiah, God promises Hezekiah that the spontaneous production of the land for two years shall furnish food for the people, thus guarding against want, likely to arise from desolated farming sections.

LESSON 5.

God's Gracious Invitation.

MOTTO TEXT.—"Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." (Isaiah 55: 6.)

LESSON PARAGRAPH, Isaiah 55.

MEMORY VERSE, 1, 2.

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Lesson Text.

1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath not money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

This pitiless bandit nation shall not shoot an arrow into Jerusalem, nor cast up a breastwork against it. Such is the cheering consolation borne by Isaiah's faith. He had suffered slights, hard knocks and insults enough from his own people to tempt him into sullen silence. That would not have been great. It is noble to suffer and be strong. Most of us suffer and become weak and small. No, let us be Christ-like. Be good and pray for those who despitefully use you.

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Presence of God. Psalm 42.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"God is our refuge and strength."

The weakness of human life needs a strong support. Abraham was oppressed with his own insufficiency, and leaned with all his weight on God. The helplessness of human life calls for an Almighty Protector. Hezekiah felt in himself the dependence of a babe, and he hid himself in the everlasting arms. "Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on thee." Frightful storms of trouble roar round the world today. The night is dark, and a vast, ceaseless moan goes up to God from tortured human hearts. Bless his name, he will burn the chariot in the fire, break the bow in sunder and make wars to cease. The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge.

JULY 27, 1917.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run to thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

6 ¶ Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 ¶ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

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Sovereign Grace.

How my heart loves that phrase. All the tenderness of my soul rises up to greet the very sound of the words. Grace carries the implications of power and helplessness, favor and undesert. Our human weakness and unworthiness make appeal to strength and pity. These are in the love of God, and grace is the activity of this love. Blessed be his name; this grace is sovereign. It ranks all the forces of this world; it is free, unbought and unlimited. It welcomes the prodigal home; it folds the penitent in the everlasting arms. Oh, how my poor soul needs sovereign grace! It satisfies with peace and rests my head on the bosom of God. Now, this is Isaiah's heavenly theme in his fifty-fifth chapter. He is turning the desolate hearts of his suffering countrymen to their fathers' God. How noble he is, ignoring his own great sorrows, in the work of comforting a broken and disconsolate people. He is so Christlike. No wonder that Jesus quotes his words so often. Ho, everyone that thirsteth! Here are the living waters, here is the true bread, here are wine and milk. Grace has spread her feast; come, ye hungry, ye thirsty, ye poor and needy, without money and without price. How could the invitations of sovereign grace be more attractively put? The doors of the banquet chamber stand wide open yet, for you and me. Brother, sister, let's go in. It is our Father's house.

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Sure Mercies of David.

These are the blessings promised to the great king David. God's covenants with the great king, the prophet mentions, as the supreme fact of his career, and as a sure basis of confident hope. Those promises point to a mighty helper and deliverer, the anointed

Son of God. Says Isaiah to his people, "Come to your God, with penitence and submission, and he will renew to you this holy covenant. Sovereign grace will give him for a witness, a leader and a commander to all the people. This anointed One will be a witness to you of the righteousness and pitying love of God. By his own pure life he will show God's pattern of holiness for you; and by the excellence of his wisdom and might he will be the captain of your salvation. Sovereign grace will be incarnated in him. He will overcome the sin of this world, and guide his followers to spiritual victory. What a preacher! How beautifully he painted the religious life. Great preaching is not in harrowing descriptions of sin and punishment but in making a good, clean, noble life look supremely winning and beautiful. Isaiah was a hero. He fought a losing battle for spiritual religion, all his days. Yet he fainted not, nor gave up in despair. What a man was that. He lived with God. He did his duty, and that was victory.

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Promise Infallibly Sure.

Sovereign grace comes near to all, and even implores men to accept its aid. If rejection is the crowning sin of the world, "and this is the judgment that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light," what shall men do while the Lord is near? Says Isaiah, "Call upon him; seek him. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts." What then? Mercy and abundant forgiveness. Is not that too good to be true? No, for God is not a man. Man's forgiveness is arbitrary, partial, imperfect and often reluctant; but God delighteth in mercy, and is ever ready to forgive all sin. His ways and thoughts are high, ranging in the lofty sphere of sovereign grace.

Poor, weak, unhappy men and women, we long for the comfort, the peace and joy that endure. It cannot be secured on earthly levels. It must come from above. The dusty earth can make no rain. It must come down from the clouds. The shower falls and the thankful earth smiles back with bud and grain. So shall my word be. Divine love pours itself on human hearts. Invitations of grace are universal. Isaiah's faith declares that his gracious words shall not return to him void. So may it be, O Lord!

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—God's Gracious Invitation. Isaiah 55.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"My thoughts are not your thoughts."

One particular subject is meant, and that is the subject of sin. God contrasts his ways and thoughts, respecting sin, with man's ways and thoughts. The contrast is designed to encourage hope and faith. Man hates the one who sins against him, severs relations and longs for vengeance. Conciliation and forgiveness he despises. Sin offends, hurts God. He hates the sin, but not the sinner. He severs no relations. The prodigal wounds the father's heart, but he is still a dear son. God's blessings come still on the unjust as well as on the just. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. God seeks the offending with sovereign grace. He loves to forgive. The penitent is welcomed to his heart, and the dark record is blotted out.

TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Called to Salvation. 1 Cor. 1: 18—2: 5.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Paul's gospel was the life and character of that Witness foretold by Isaiah. Jesus came and lived the human life of God in the world. Infinite wisdom, power and love, thought and spoke and acted in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. To be like this man, in purpose, mind and spirit, is the end of salvation, in the judgment of Paul. Here is the one pure soul; here is the one supreme divine human personality. Salvation is to be transformed morally and spiritually into his likeness. Getting into Christ, into his spirit and character, is the actual getting into heaven. That is the heaven to which you and I are invited. Believe in Christ, follow and imitate Christ.

WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Called to Fellowship with Jesus. 1 Cor. 1: 1-9.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Called to be saints."

There are no saints, in the finest, fullest sense of the word. Paul knew that, and yet he called his brethren by that name, sometimes. He looked at the possibilities of a man in Christ. To him the Christian life is a progress, a pressing on to the goal of a high prize, which is completed sainthood in Jesus. The Christian has not attained completion of the soul, but he has laid hold on him who will carry on his work to the perfecting of the saints. Sainthood, then, has its various stages, the beginning in conver-

sion, the continuing in the fight of faith, and the culmination in the crown of glory. Remember your calling. Called to be saints, to be holy as he is holy: so much remains to be achieved.

THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Called to Preach. 1 Cor. 1: 10-17.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"That there be no divisions among you."

The church at Corinth gave Paul no end of trouble. They fell out over their favorite preacher and divided sadly over a number of other questions. What good can a quarrelling church do in a community? It has no power, but rather excites the contempt of outsiders. Pride and selfishness sometimes put Christ out of the church, and, alas, the same thing is done by the spirit of faction and strife. It is not expected that good men will see all things alike in the church, but it is expected by our Lord that good men will be courteous and conciliatory. If you can't win the brethren to your view, you can magnanimously take theirs. That will give you influence with your brethren. Keep peace in God's house.

FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Called to Service. 2 Tim. 1: 3-14.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"Life and immortality to light through the gospel."

God's life is immortal; it is the one thing eternally exempt from the power of death. Jesus lived the life of God among men, and so brought immortality to light. That is Paul's sublime conception of the gospel; that is the good news for the children of men. He had no time for philosophical discussion of the subject, but boldly declared, here it is, expressed and revealed in Jesus Christ. Said he, "I long for this immortality. There is no way to attain it but by union of the soul with him through faith." I know whom I have believed. The life I now live, I live by faith in him. The divine life in Christ is Paul's central theme. You and I must live that life. God help us every day.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Invitation Slighted. Luke 14: 15-24.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"I pray thee have me excused."

Jesus and the prophets before him taxed their ingenuity in setting forth the grace of God in all alluring forms. Isaiah is rich in figures and based on pleased and gratified

sense. Bread and wine, milk and honey, not alone for nutrition, but for other imperative daily need, are good symbols of the satisfying grace of God. To these, Jesus adds the appeal based on gratified social hunger. All are joined in the joys of a feast. Men do not want the gospel. They prefer the lower ranges of life to the higher. Material values outrank spiritual. Wealth in character does not attract as does wealth in silver and gold. Spiritual bondage is preferable to the liberty of the sons of God. Shall all go to the feast?

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Obedience to Call. Heb. 3: 1-15.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"Harden not your hearts."

LESSON 6.

AUGUST 5, 1917.

Manasseh's Sin and Repentance.

MOTTO TEXT.—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55: 7.)

LESSON PASSAGE, 2 Chronicles 33: 1-20.

MEMORY VERSES, 12, 13.

Lesson Text.

9 So Mā-nās'sēh made Jō'dāh and the inhabitants of Jē-rū'sā-lēm to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Is'rā-ēl.

10 And the Lord spake to Mā-nās'sēh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. 11 Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of As-syr'īā, which took Mā-nās'sēh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Bāb'y-lon.

12 And when he was in affliction, he sought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

13 And prayed unto him: and he was instructed of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jē-rū'sā-lēm into his kingdom. Then Mā-nās'sēh knew that the Lord he was God.

14 Now after this he built a wall without the city of Dā'vid, on the west side of

The prodigal pains a father's heart. That is one grievous sin. Fancy the boy's getting an entreating, forgiving letter, saying, Come home. He stamps it under his feet. That is another sin, even baser than the first, because it is a heartless insult to unbribing, imploring love. Our Father calls us into the highest life, invites us home into his own life. He makes a thousand daily blessings and joys his messengers to lead us into good. He has made us like himself, sharers of his own nature, a tremendous fact, always repeating the heavenly call. Solid contentment, happiness and peace are realizable only in our congenial home. Sin is poison gas to the human spirit. Righteousness is our native air, the tonic of the soul. Hear his call and harden not your heart.

G'hōn, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about O'phēl, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Jō'dāh.

15 And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord, and in Jē-rū'sā-lēm, and cast them out of the city.

16 And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Jō'dāh to serve the Lord God of Is'rā-ēl.

Wave of Heathenism.

HEZEKIAH the good, was succeeded by his son, Manasseh, the bad. Here again is the strange alternation of noble father and infamous son. Hezekiah gone, Isaiah and Micah gone, a horrible reaction to heathenism began at once under Manasseh. He took the throne at twelve years of age, 694 B.C., and closed the longest reign in Judah, 640 B.C. Wicked princes had, for awhile, to guide the inexperienced lad, and the riot of injustice and licentiousness that ensued might well have excited the envy of neighboring idolaters. To preach the departed Isaiah's doctrine of the holiness of Jehovah was now become a crime. The prophet's little organized band of the faithful, which

he called "the Remnant", was scorned and suppressed. All the cords were cut; let the nation slide down to ruin. Come to years, and taking the reins in his hands, Manasseh supported with enthusiasm the doctrines and practices of the heathen. He even desecrated the temple with an idol and like a moral maniac, authorized massacres of his people, probably those who would not compliment his iniquities. Utterly profane and blasphemous before Jehovah, he logically became the merciless enemy of man. The dying of religious reverence and loyalty is a deadly menace to human life. The plain fact is, these Jews as a whole were not distinguishable from the idolatrous masses of the nations. They were of the earth, earthy. It was a night of gloom over the whole world. The rare instances of pious faith among the Hebrews flickered feebly against the appalling blackness.

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The Causes.

How do you account for such foul rottenness in the generation following Hezekiah's reforms and great Isaiah's preaching? (1) It was a rude, ignorant, brutal age in the world's life. Animalism and barbarism held the field. Alas! by what slow stages refinement and virtue have emerged in the history of the race. (2) Exceedingly low conceptions of Jehovah's character were held by the people of Judah. To the mass, he was only a tribal God, such as their neighbors worshiped. In the national troubles that befell, they thought of him as indifferent, or too weak to help. The unaverted penalties of their sins were ascribed to Jehovah's feebleness. (3) The ceremonies of heathen worship were spectacular and entertaining, while Jehovah's was quiet and solemn. The former gave license to corrupt taste and passion; the latter conveyed serious lessons of self-restraint and obedience to the Ten Commandments. (4) The abominations under Manasseh were accentuated by the odious manners and fashions of the vile women of the king's harem and court. How they did hate Isaiah for his exposures and denunciations. The young princes, too, plunged into a wild carnival of crime and impiety. This scandalous reign touched the bottom of human degradation.

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Punishment and Penitence.

What power can check the moral putrefaction? Jehovah knows. His providence struck the blow that staggered the forces of evil. The terrible Assyrian army came, cap-

tured the guilty king, bound him in chains and took him to Babylon. He learned in the school of adversity. In affliction he turned to God in penitence, confessed his sins and implored forgiveness. The merciful God was entreated of him, heard his prayer and brought him back to Jerusalem. Manasseh, the monstrous sinner, was genuinely converted and faithfully tried to undo all his wicked works. He studied civic improvements and built up the weak places in the walls. Better still, he stopped the worship of strange gods. He removed the insulting idol which he had put in the Lord's house, and tore down the heathen altars that he had allowed to desecrate the holy city. He repaired God's altar, sacrificed thereon, and so restored the services of the good old religion. But he could not wholly destroy the heathen customs of his people. No bad man can quite cancel all the evil he has done. To his credit, however, he tried in all sincerity to reinstate the doctrines and the practices of the dishonored faith. It is a sad story. How stubbornly sin fights righteousness, and how fatally evil communications corrupt good manners. Wonderful the courage and faith of Jesus, that he should set himself to lift up and purify a world, lying in wickedness.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Manasseh's Sin. 2 Chron. 33: 1-9.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"He wrought much evil."

The story of his sins and crimes revolts and shocks us today. It is almost unbelievable. God said, "I put my name in this temple." Manasseh said, "I will put a heathen idol there." Do men sin as enormously today? Yes; and in the clearer light which has steadily grown through twenty-six centuries. The old coarseness of idolatry has vanished, but its inner reality is present. The wrong ideals we cherish, the wrong principles we act on, the wrong dispositions we indulge—what are they but idols that come between us and God? He has ordained certain ideals, principles and dispositions, to be set up in our souls. Do we set up others? Then, spiritually, are we not offenders as really as were these ancient people? Let us look at reality in the case.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Manasseh's Repentance. 2 Chron. 33: 10-20.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"The Lord spake to Manasseh."

Yes, but he would not hearken. He speaks to us all. The Lord points out the narrow path of daily duty. Along that way is peace, honor, thrift and happiness. We read of the happy God. Happiness is the longing of every human heart. It is good, and the wisdom of God has shown the way to win it. It is his own happiness that God would have us share. Shall we hope to enjoy it by seeking it outside of the divine character, in disobedience to the divine will? The absurdity is plain, and yet we are so apt to forget his way and lean to our own understanding. Why is so much of the Bible biography? Right living is the supreme art. God gives us many examples of success and failure.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Penitence to be Rewarded. Ezek. 18: 21-32.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Have I any pleasure in all that the wicked should die?"

Sin is the enemy of God and the assassin of his people. It is a monster that he cannot look upon. A thousand warnings has he given us against its delusions, pits and snares. A thousand pointers has he given us to the way of safety and peace. When we wander he lovingly calls us back with the offers of pardon and sovereign grace. If we willfully and wantonly go in the forbidden way and destroy our influence and character, shall we lay blame on him? No; it is infinite grief to God to see his children's woe and ruin. He sends no man to torment and shame. That is a man's own doing. God's joy is when he sees his erring children coming home.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Peace and Forgiveness. Psalm 32.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven."

Wrong with God, and it is impossible for a man to be genuinely happy. The brightness and sweetness of life depend on harmony with the all-pure and all-ruling God. That is self-evident. If we break that harmony by the provisions of sovereign grace, it may be restored. The prodigal may forsake his wrong and come back to the father's house. We must all take that journey. David took it, and was glad. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. Paul took the journey home, his sin was covered and all his after life was a song of praise. Trouble and affliction befell, but nothing ever

robbed him of comfort and peace and hope. Get right with God and enter into life indeed.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Sham Repentance. Hos. 6: 1-10.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"O Judah, your goodness is as a morning cloud."

Judah kept up her forms of worship in God's house and before his altars, and then persevered in her dark idolatries. It is so mournfully pathetic, the ease with which men and women can turn from the solemn services of God's house, and yield themselves to the currents of the old, worldly life. Song, prayer and sermon may stir noble thoughts and feelings, and yet in an hour we relapse into the low levels of unspiritual men. Our talk, our sympathies and our principles of action are so apt to take the range of others. We let them drag us down instead of resolutely pulling them up. God make us sincere; help us to be true.

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SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Penitence and Pardon. Hos. 14: 1-8.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"O Israel, thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

Yes; it was her own act. Temptations she had truly, but the tempter cannot make us sin. Our own will is the determining factor. It is a coward's way to lay the blame of his sin on another. Thou hast fallen by thine own iniquity. You choose to do it. Sovereign grace says to the sinning one, "Return unto the Lord thy God." The gate of mercy stands open. There must be a coming through, if pardon and peace are won. That coming must be your own act. You must rise by your own energy of will. Choice, decision is yours. God offers all the sacred inducements, but you, like the prodigal, must say, "I will arise and go."

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Cry for Pardon. Psalm 51.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity."

For I acknowledge my transgressions. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. That is wholesome language; it is the voice of a broken, humbled heart. It is the most potent eloquence that ever rose to heaven from the fields of sin. What happens? Jesus tells

us in the story of the father, when he saw his poor, half-starved, ruined boy approaching the gate. No human father, worthy of the name, ever turned down an appeal like

LESSON 7.

Josiah's Good Reign.

MOTTO TEXT.—"Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth." (Eccl. 12: 1.)

LESSON PASSAGE, 2 Chronicles 34: 1-13.

MEMORY VERSES, 2, 3.

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Lesson Text.

1 Jō-a'h was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jē-rō-sā-lēm one and thirty years.

2 And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of Dā'vid his father, and declined neither to the right-hand, nor to the left.

3 ¶ For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of Dā'vid his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Jō'dāh and Jē-rō-sā-lēm from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.

4 And they brake down the altars of Bā'ā-īm in his presence; and the images, that were on high above them, he cut down; and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.

5 And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Jō'dāh and Jē-rō-sā-lēm.

6 And so did he in the cities of Mā-nās'sēh, and E'phrā-īm, and Sim'ōn, even unto Nāph'tā-ī, with their mattocks round about.

7 And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Is'rā-ēl, he returned to Jē-rō-sā-lēm.

8 ¶ Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shā'phān the son of Az-a-l'āh, and Mā-a-s'āh the governor of the city, and Jō'ah the son of Jō'a-hāz the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God.

9 And when they came to Hīl-kī'ah the high priest, they delivered the money that

that. God is the original, eternal fountain of parental love. He loves to forgive. Go to him in your contrition and feel the pressure of the everlasting arms.

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was brought into the house of God, which the Lē'vites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Mā-nās'sēh and E'phrā-īm, and of all the remnant of Is'rā-ēl, and of all Jō'dāh and Bēn'jā-mīn; and they returned to Jē-rō-sā-lēm.

10 And they put it in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the Lord, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the Lord, to repair and amend the house:

11 Even to the artificers and builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Jō'dāh had destroyed.

12 And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them were Jā'hāth and Ō-bā-dī'ah, the Lē'vites, of the sons of Mēr-ari; and Zēb-a-riah and Me-shū'l'am, of the sons of the Kō'hathites, to set it forward; and other of the Lē'vites, all that could skill of instruments of music.

13 Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and were overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the Lē'vites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

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A White Flower.

AGAIN the lane turns and Judah's throne is in honor with a good king. Josiah begins to rule 638 B.C., when only eight years old. He is the second child to sit on the throne of David. It is about two hundred years since the boy Josiah was crowned at seven years of age. In each case the boy's father had been murdered. Jehu killed King Ahaziah when the son Joash was a babe. King Amon, father of Josiah, was killed in his palace by conspirators. He began an evil reign, as his father Manasseh had done, but assassination cut it short in two years. This bloody taking off was wrong, but it saved Judah the shame of a new inundation of heathenism. Such was the moral, social and religious condition when our eight-year-old lad became king. How did this diamond come out of the mud and slime of the court?

His childhood, like that of Josiah's, must have been guarded and nurtured by a good mother or some devoted priest. At any rate, here is the rising of a bright morning star for Judah's reformation.

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Removing Rubbish.

Here is a significant word: "While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David, his father." David had been dead three hundred and fifty years, but his great example is still a shaping force on the nation's life. How many American boys have been stirred to noble ambitions by the story of Washington! At twelve the youth began his immensely difficult task. The rottenness of Canaanite superstition and impurity had struck deep in Judah's life, and had the look of defiant invincibility. The first work must be destructive like Elijah's and Hezekiah's. The popular idolatries must go. He begins at Jerusalem. He purges the city of the images of the false gods, and breaks down the altars. He burns the unholy furniture and scatters the ashes on the graves of those who had insulted Jehovah. Bravo, blessed young king! You are made of heroic stuff. Your courage puts amazement in the gross-hearted, low-minded skeptics who laughed at your fantastic dreams. He even burned the bones of apostate priests on the unclean altars. In Jerusalem and throughout Judah, he made a clean sweep of all abominations. In all this destruction Josiah was truly seeking the face of God. He grasped the thought that Jehovah can endure no rival and to that view he consecrated his brave young heart. Six years this unsparring work went on to its consummation. He was the conscience of the nation and repentance had to take this practical direction.

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Construction Work.

Josiah is now eighteen years old. The temple must be repaired. When religion waxes cold, the house of God gets out of order. Your church's neatness and beauty is a sure sign of the state of religion in your community. The temple has suffered from neglect and outrage. The king calls for contributions from all the people. His agents go around taking collections which are turned over to the high priest. Teams of workmen are employed and set on the task, just as had been done under Joash, two hundred years ago. Repairs are faithfully done, and

worship is renewed as in the good old times. Choirs are organized and trained to sing Jehovah's praise, and those who have skill on musical instruments are added to the service. The nation begins its new life at the altars of religion. So must begin the new life of each individual. Thank God for young manhood like Josiah's. He is a flower in a desert, a jewel in a dust heap, a noble youth in a godless generation. He begins life as a friend of God, and the Lord makes him great. "Them that honor me, I will honor."

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Josiah's Good Reign. 2 Chron. 34: 1-13.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord."

What a fine summing up of a man's character. It implies everything praiseworthy and good, without one abatement of ill. Is it not grateful to find one man in a dark age, whose whole life was consecrated to God? That is ideal. That is God's plan for our children round the fireside. Reared and nurtured in the admonition of the Lord, that the strength of the years may be an habitual and unbroken sacrifice in divine and human service. This youth sowed no wild oats, which is a soft evasion for serving the devil. Your church, your family and your country want your children at their best, all their days. God grant it may be so!

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Instruction for Kings. Deut. 17: 14-20.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"He shall read therein all the days of his life."

I do not like kings, or, rather, I do not like despotic power. Kings have no doubt served a purpose in the world. Really, I think they have been necessary in certain crude stages of political life, but their time is passed. Growing democracy waves them out of the world. The mass of them have been selfish, incompetent, vain and tyrannical. Moses says the king should not be: (1) A foreigner, (2) nor one ambitious for display, (3) nor a polygamist, (4) nor a lover of riches; but a student of God's law, and a servant of the people. Josiah met the demands. Solomon was a colossal failure, destroying in a few years, by disgraceful excesses, the government his father had built. Too many like him have ruled over men. The handwriting is on the wall. Kings must go; the people must rule.

WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The First King. 1 Sam. 9: 17-10: 1.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Samuel took a vial and poured it upon his head."

This was Saul. Samuel opposed the making of a king in Israel. The wise man feared the experiment, but was overruled by the clamor of the people. He believed that God permitted it to the hardness of their hearts. He acted as the nation's committee in the selection and ordination of the king. Saul was chosen on democratic principles; the people elected him. The trouble was that the increasing power of the king relieved the people from further necessity of election. He established his house and elected his successor himself. Poor Saul was not equal to his task, and it soured him. He became insanely jealous of younger men of ability and genius. He was as acceptable as most of them have been.

THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Words of Warning. 1 Sam. 8: 10-22.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"Ye shall cry out in that day because of your king."

Said Samuel to the people: "What will be the manner of your king?" He answers his own question: (1) He will take your sons; (2) he will take your daughters; (3) he will take your fields and vineyards; (4) he will take the tenth of your seed; (5) he will take your servants; (6) he will take a tenth of your sheep. You will cry out in that day, and the Lord will not hear you. Yes; Samuel was a prophet indeed. The northern kingdom had twenty-two kings, and not one of them was good; no, not one. The southern kingdom had nineteen kings, a few of whom were good, very few. Democracy made the first king among the Jews; then democracy went out of business, as Samuel said. The world is still learning.

FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Asa's Good Reign. 2 Chron. 15: 1-15.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"The Lord is with you, while you be with him."

This was the profoundly suggestive remark of Azariah, made to Asa. If you seek him, he will be found of you; but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. No doubt Azariah had in mind the sins and disasters of Reho-

boam's eighteen years' reign, using them as a lesson. "Be ye strong, therefore," said Azariah, "and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded." Asa was honest and single-hearted, taking courage and putting away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah. Religion was the chief asset of the nation then, and so it is now. God bless our president, and all men who bear authority in all this world.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Boy King. 2 Kings 11: 1-12.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"And he was hid in the house of the Lord six years."

Athallah, daughter of Jezebel, was ambitious to be queen in Jerusalem. The king, her son, was killed, and, like a tigress, she resolved to kill her grandchildren, and take to herself the vacant throne. The hapless little ones all perished except the babe whose name was Joash. His aunt saved him and he was hid in the temple six years. All these years Athallah was queen. The priests guarded their sacred secret, and when the lad was six years of age they crowned him and filled Jerusalem with joy. The indignant grandmother rushed out to see what was happening, and she was speedily done to death. Horrid tragedy, but it is the fruit of idolatry.

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Invaluable King. Psalm 2.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron."

Kingship was the ancient prevalent type of government, so when ideas of the rulership of God came into vogue, it was naturally and inevitably called the kingdom of God. With equal reverence it might now be named the republic of God. Jesus taught the infinite value of each individual, and thought of each one, ideally, as children of God's great household. The liberty of the sons of God is in the teaching of the Master. Obedience to God is freedom, and his words introduce us to the mystery of grace. Christ is God's kingly Son, whose right it is to reign because he is the incarnation of all lovable and adorable qualities. Powers of evil hate his dominion, but they shall vanish away. His loved ones shall rule and reign with him.

LESSON 8.

AUGUST 19, 1917.

Finding the Book of the Law.

MOTTO TEXT.—"I will not forget thy word." (Psalm 119: 16.)

LESSON PASSAGE, 2 Chronicles 34: 14-33.

MEMORY VERSE, 31.

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Lesson Text.

14 ¶ And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, HIL-ki'ah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Mo'ses.

15 And HIL-ki'ah answered and said to Shā'phān the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And HIL-ki'ah delivered the book to Shā'phān.

16 And Shā'phān carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

17 And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the Lord, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

18 Then Shā'phān the scribe told the king, saying, HIL-ki'ah the priest hath given me a book. And Shā'phān read it before the king.

19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

29 ¶ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Jū'dāh and Jē-rū-sā-lēm.

30 And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Jū'dāh, and the inhabitants of Jē-rū-sā-lēm, and the priests, and the Le'vites, and all the people, great and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord.

31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

32 And he caused all that were present in Jē-rū-sā-lēm and Ben-jā-min to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jē-rū-sā-lēm did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

33 And Jō-sā'ah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Is'rā-ēl, and made all that were present in Is'rā-ēl to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.

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Book Found.

JERUSALEM was stirred by a striking religious event in 621 B.C. Josiah is now twenty-six years old, and in the eighteenth year of his reign. He is still resolutely pressing the work of religious reformation, far more concerned for the moral and spiritual interests of Judah than for political and economic interests. It was a slow, hard work, suppressing idolatrous usages, and lifting his people to a better life. What long disheartening battles Christian people have been fighting in our time against the whiskey traffic, the white slave traffic, heartless child labor and the oppressions of capital. Josiah wanted to present a clean kingdom to God. He was assisted by Zephaniah, Nahum and Jeremiah, and an organized body of the spritful, called the prophetic party. This was Isaiah's "remnant". It was parallel to the churches of our day, a spiritual group taken out of the great unreligious mass of the population. The rise of this movement, by the genius of Isaiah, was one of the significant events one hundred years before Josiah. The book of Deuteronomy was found 621 B.C. in the temple by the priest Hilkiah. It was democratic and philanthropic in spirit, enforcing the rights of the needy and oppressed. It demanded human justice, a purified ritual and strict obedience to God. For the crisis, then on, the most conspicuous demand of the new found law book was to centralize all the ceremonial worship at Jerusalem. It had been found that the scattered worship in Judah made opportunity for idolatrous abuses at the hands of ignorant and carnal-minded priests and people. Josiah was overjoyed at the discovery. The book was read to him, he felt its power. But has it divine authority? Is it really the Word of God? He is cautious to have that question settled.

Huldah the Prophetess.

The priest Hilkiah was not asked to pronounce on its authority, but was advised to hand it to a good woman, Huldah, eminent for piety. She studied the book and found it vital with the spirit and teachings of Moses. Yes, it is the truth of God. She sent it to the king, saying, "Tell the king that Jehovah is about to bring all the curses written in this book on Jerusalem, because her people have forsaken him. Tell him, also, because his heart is tender and humble, Jehovah has heard his prayer and will not bring these evils on the city until the king has gone to his grave in peace. Josiah rent his garments in token of alarm and grief, and resolved to follow the teachings of the Book.

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Revival.

The book awakened the nation like a dynamite explosion. The king girded himself anew for moral renovation and religious betterment. He had only thirteen more years to live. He called all the leading citizens of the kingdom to meet him in the temple. The book was read and Josiah took the lead in personal consecration. The act was contagious, and the mighty assembly arose and pledged itself to walk in the statutes of Jehovah. That day reform got a tremendous impulse. Ceremonial worship shall be centralized in Jerusalem. Sacrifices elsewhere became unlawful, and so facilities of heathen worship in Judah were abolished. The time of the passover came, and "there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel". Idolatrous priests were put down. Josiah said, "This is God's country and we will have no more heathenish abominations." Thank God for good King Josiah! "No king before that turned like him to the Lord, neither after him arose any like him."

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Finding the Book of the Law. 2 Chron. 34: 14-21.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"All his days they departed not from following the Lord."

Thy word is quick, sharper than a two-edged sword, dividing asunder the joints and the marrow. The entrance of thy word giveth light. By thy precepts is thy servant warned. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet. The words that I speak unto you, they are

spirit and they are life. Thy word, O Lord, have I hid in my heart. Let us walk in the light as thou art in the light. Brethren, do we read our Bibles? God has spoken unto us with infallible wisdom and in the keeping of his commandments there is great reward. You do not know his Word unless you live it. The Bible is a book of the Spirit. Hide its words in your heart and translate them into your conduct.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Law Confirmed. 2 Kings 22: 14-20.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"Huldah the prophetess."

What a compliment to a woman; why was not that wonderful book sent to Jeremiah or Zephaniah, or Nahum for inspection and approval, as the Word of God? I do not know. These prophets were at hand. A woman has sense and religion; a woman has intellectual and spiritual abilities. She can be trusted with divine things as much as any man. So they thought on this occasion; so we may justly think in our day. Neither male nor female signifies in the kingdom but a capable brain and a reverent heart. In a supreme national religious crisis, this woman wields a great spiritual power and makes a judgment vital to the king and people.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Covenant Established. 2 Kings 23: 1-14.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"The king made a covenant before the Lord."

It was a new public consecration of himself to God, a new profession of religion. The new book was read in the temple to a large meeting called by the king. He stood on the platform in view of the people. When the reading was finished the king was first to speak. Today, in God's house, in the presence of these prophets, priests and people, I reconsecrate myself to serve the Lord with all my heart and with all my soul. The assembly was thrilled and as one man they gave themselves with enthusiasm to the resolve of their king. Leaders must lead. That is what they are for. Pastors and deacons and teachers are ordained to be examples to the flock.

THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Law Enforced. 2 Kings 23: 15-25.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"He . . . burned the high place."

Idolatry in Judah was real treason and the penalty was death. The traitors were not killed, but the places of idolatry were destroyed. How can pure religion be preserved if idol-worship is permitted on the hills of Judah? Let the vile sanctuaries be wrecked and the idols be ground to powder. It was rigorously done and legal worship of Jehovah was centralized in Jerusalem. You can see how this expedient tended to suppression of idolatrous practices. Religious liberty does not include the right to uproot the foundations of true religion. I have known instances where the people rose and drove Mormon missionaries out of the community. It was done, I think, with something of Josiah's spirit.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Love Toward God. Deut. 6: 1-9.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"These words which I command thee shall be in thine heart."

What does that mean but that God's words are worthy of all belief, reverence and obedience? They are the love-light of God. His best gift for the happiness and peace of his children. How shall our love for his Word be expressed? By making it the man of our counsel, and the law of our conduct. Moreover, "thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house. Thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." Do we read and ponder God's Word? Has it become a dull and uninteresting book? Do you ever teach the Sunday school lesson to your children? What does God ask you to do?

LESSON 9.

MOTTO TEXT.—"As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." (Ezekiel 33: 11.)

LESSON PASSAGE, 2 Kings 25: 1-21.

MEMORY VERSES, 10, 11.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Highest Law. Matt. 22: 34-40.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

I do like a compendious statement of duty. These words of Jesus reduce to unity and simplicity the manifold obligations of religion. He knew how to get at the heart and core of things. Love to God and men sums up all righteousness. Pharisaism binds religion in rules and forms. The letter killeth, that is, it makes piety mechanical, burdensome and tiresome. The spirit maketh alive. It is love, not an outward rule, but an inward grace. Love is free, generous, divine. God is love. When we love we are in the divine life. We please God and work our neighbor no harm. Brother, we must love people. Love is the eternal touchstone of Christianity. How lovely are you and I?

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Hearing and Doing. Matt. 7: 21-27.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"I will liken him unto a wise man."

Who is that? The real Christian. The man with the mind and spirit of the Master. The man with the principles of the Sermon on the Mount hid in his heart. Hearing and doing. Come to think of it, beloved, how much do you resemble Jesus? Do you take him seriously? Does he really expect you and me to be patient every day, when so many things go wrong? Does he expect us to hate the envy that springs so easily? Does he want us to avoid saying mean things about people? Does he command us to live every day as he lived? Or is he satisfied if we manage to preserve religious respectability, without any special zeal or self-sacrifice? I honestly think he wants you and me to live in heaven every day. That is his religion.

AUGUST 26, 1917.

The Captivity of Judah.

Lesson Text.

1 And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Neb-0-chad-n6z'6r king of B6b'y-lon came, he, and all his host

against Je-ro'ma-lom, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about.

2 And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zed-ek'i'ah.

3 And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land.

4 ¶ And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Châl'dees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain.

5 And the army of the Châl'dees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jer'i-cho: and all his army were scattered from him.

6 So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Báb'y-lon to Rib'láb; and they gave judgment upon him.

7 And they slew the sons of Zed-ek'i'ah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zed-ek'i'ah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Báb'y-lon.

8 ¶ And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Neb-ú'chád-né'zár king of Báb'y-lon, came Neb-ú'zár-ád'án, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Báb'y-lon, unto Je-ro'ma-lom:

9 And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Je-ro'ma-lom, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

10 And all the army of the Châl'dees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Je-ro'ma-lom round about.

11 Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Báb'y-lon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Neb-ú'zár-ád'án the captain of the guard carry away.

12 But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.

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All Over.

Yea, it is all over, the tragedy of Judah's decline and fall. Jesus would have saved Jerusalem, but she would not. Josiah would have preserved Judah, but all in vain. It was promised him that he should not see his nation's ruin, but that event befell just twenty-two years after his death. David's throne has perished because his family became degenerate and incompetent. Ability and piety built it, weakness and implety tore it down. The northern kingdom went down, 721 B.C., at the hands of the Assyrian Salmanser; Judah fell, 586 B.C., before the as-

sault of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Judah lived one hundred and thirty-five years longer than Israel, but both went by the same route to their political doom. The Hebrew experiment at nation-building ended in abject failure. The race has a splendid genius, but not for political government. Not in more than twenty-seven hundred years have they enjoyed an independent state. God did not intend the children of Abraham for politics, but for the deeper and holier mission of religion. This highest service to men began in the nobly pure and unselfish life of Abraham and culminated in the life of Jesus.

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The Causes.

We stand by the deathbed of Judah, a most melancholy spectacle. It need not have been. The blind fanaticism, the political insanity, and the moral corruption of her leaders brought on the fatal issue. Jeremiah's proffered wisdom would have preserved the safety and peace of the city, but they considered him fit only to rot in a muddy jail. Josiah's death, 608 B.C., cut the cord that held the nation to its mooring. The mad rulers went to war with Babylon, the great, new world-power, vainly fancying that Jehovah, whom they had persistently insulted, was committed to the preservation of Judah. That was not faith. It was unadulterated superstition. God is pledged to care for those who love him, but the wicked may not presume on his mercies. The sparrow defies the eagle, the hare challenges the tiger. The coil of Babylon's army tightens round Jerusalem. The brave Jews fight with desperation, but the walls are leveled, the beautiful temple is in flames, and the city is a smoking ruin. This last fragment of David's empire dies in mortal agony. The folly and sin of God's people has wrought this. It is a clear case of national suicide.

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Horrors.

Famine, pestilence, despair and death held high carnival in the beleaguered city. Indescribable sufferings fell on old men and women, mothers, wives and little children. An earthquake is as pitiful as the conqueror. Oh, King Zedekiah, what hast thou done? Harder for him to bear than the catapult of the besiegers were the reproaches of the beleagued. Hope gone, the king and a few of his servants escaped to Jericho. They were caught and added to the train of ill-fated captives, now heading to Babylon. At Rib-

lah, two hundred miles north of Jerusalem, the mournful procession halted at the victor's headquarters. Here Zedekiah saw his sons and princes slain. Then his eyes were put out, his limbs fettered and thus he was led to Babylon. It was intended that he should be capable of no further trouble. Our twentieth century is no stranger to atrocity, cruelties and miseries like these. Behind them lie the same causes of arrogant, inhuman self-idolatry.

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Aftermath.

Many Jews were left in desolated Judah. The conqueror cares nothing for the mass of the common people. He carries off all the leading families who might cause trouble. Gedaliah, a good Jew, a plain citizen, is left in charge of the country by Nebuchadnezzar. The enemy took Jeremiah out of prison and told Gedaliah to care for him. They felt kindly toward the prophet, for they knew that he had discouraged the rebellion. What a scene for the prophet's eyes, as he emerged from his jail. Later a group of these Jews decided to move to Egypt, and they took Jeremiah with them. Tradition says they murdered him.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Captivity of Judah foretold. Jer. 9: 7-16.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"I will make Jerusalem heaps."

Jeremiah is old now, when the city perishes. Long years ago he wrought with good King Josiah for the nation's weal. Strongly and tenderly he had insisted with the rulers that safety and honor were in submission to God. They despised and maltreated the patriot, esteeming his solemn warnings the language of a traitor. Never has this world known a deeper anguish than Jeremiah's. He could not be true to God and his people without incurring their contempt and hate. They tried to kill him for his fidelity. No wonder he cried, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Incompetent Rulers. 2 Kings 23: 36-24: 9.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord."

This familiar, wretched, old refrain recurs with the reign of Josiah's sons. The evil

days are on and Judah rushes down the steep. Kingly dignity and worth passed with Josiah. Jehoahaz, his son, ruled three years, and Egypt put him in prison. Jehoahaz, another son, succeeded and ruled eleven years. Then his son, Jehoiachin, became king, and ruled three months. Next came Zedekiah, who was the last of the miserable men who wore the crown of Judah. Of each and all it is written that he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. They killed the Jewish state, but the great idea of religion in Judah they could not kill.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Captivity Begun." 2 Kings 24: 10-20.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Surely at the commandment of the Lord, came this upon Judah."

The wages of sin is death. The obstinate idolatry of the Jews clouded their intellect and hardened their hearts. How can a people, blind to spiritual truth and sodden with a beastly worldliness carry on a government? A strong government must rest on high intelligence and moral character. Idolatry is the enemy of both. God's principles of truth and honor are imperative. They are the laws of all fine human achievement. They constitute a commandment that their opposites shall involve defeat and ruin. Judah rebelled against God's eternal ordinances of righteousness and her woes were the natural consequences.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jerusalem Laid Waste. 2 Kings 25: 1-12.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"And the city was broken up."

Jerusalem was strong by nature, and that fact always gave the Jews confidence that she was impregnable. The mountains are round about Jerusalem and they had been fortified by military act. It was so strong that it took Nebuchadnezzar eighteen months to capture it. In addition to the mountains, they thought God was round about the city, an invisible defense. They had the absurd notion that God had to defend them because they were his people. That was their fatal blunder. They had ceased to be his people when they gave themselves to false gods, in gross insult to the true God.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—End of Judah. 2 Kings 25: 13-21.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"So Judah was carried away out of their land."

Poverty is sometimes a protection. The poor people of Judah were left behind. The conquerors skimmed off all the high and influential citizens and took them into the Babylonian exile. The idea was that the plain people, bereft of leaders, could not engage in any more revolutions. Jerusalem was a heap, the glorious temple was gone, its gold and silver and even its ordinary utensils being transported to Babylon. The nation is dead and with no hope of resurrection. Idolaters had destroyed idolaters. That is the bane and curse of it. While idolatry is a force in the world, there will always be the menace of wars and desolations.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—End of Israel. 2 Kings 17: 1-8.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"The children of Israel had walked in the statutes of the heathen."

It was in 721 B.C. that Israel passed from the earth, just one hundred and thirty-five years before Judah perished. Her capital, too, was strong by nature for defence, and it required the Assyrian Sbalmaneser three years to take it. Hoshea was her last king,

LESSON 10.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1917.

The Shepherd of Captive Israel.

MOTTO TEXT.—"Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Psalm 23: 1.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Ezekiel 34.

MEMORY VERSE, 12.

Lesson Text.

11 ¶ For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and

and his record shows that he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and taught Israel to sin. Had not Solomon's folly ruined David's kingdom, weakened it by division; had all later kings done good in the sight of the Lord, the Jewish nation might be the glory of the whole earth today. Sin destroyeth individuals and nations alike.

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Sin the Cause of Disaster. 2 Kings 17: 9-23.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"As did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them."

Who occupied Canaan before the Israelites came up from Egypt? Various heathen tribes of whom it is written their iniquities were full. The Jews forgot that sin ruined these earlier people, and literally turned to imitation of those sins. Despising the God of Abraham and Jacob, they sunk in the heathenism, against which they were so lovingly and solemnly warned. All sin is idolatry; a slighting of God in favor of something that suits our self-will. Don't fancy that the principle of idolatry is dead, because the idols are out of date. Sin is idolatry, a setting aside of God, and having our own way. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Then we shall abide in peace and love.

feed them upon the mountains of Is'ra'el by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Is'ra'el shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Is'ra'el.

15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God.

16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant Da'vid; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

24 And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant Da'vid a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.

25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

27 And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.

Pastor Prophet.

EZEKIEL is one of the notable figures in Hebrew history, intellectual, strong and brave. He was born a priest and became a prophet presenting a blend of the two offices. As such he became the connecting link between the teachings of the earlier prophets and the ritualism of the later priests. Born and brought up under the reign of good King Josiah (639-608 B.C.), he was the contemporary and disciple of Jeremiah. Alike, the older and the younger man saw the threatening doom of Judah and did their utmost to avert it by warnings and calls to repentance. Five hundred ninety-seven B. C. Jeholachin's insane rebellion was crushed by Nebuchadnezzar and Ezekiel was carried off with thousands of captives to the rivers of Babylon.

His Call.

Like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Ezekiel gives a vivid picture of the vision that signified a summons to the ministry. It was a vision of God in the symbolism of a luminous cloud, and living wheels, studded with eyes. From that moment he regards himself the bearer of God's message to his brethren. In those elder days, a profound view of the nature of God was the basis of a decision to preach. He becomes pastor and prophet to the exiles.

Unpopularity.

For many years he was cruelly disliked by his fellow-prisoners, and why? Because he would not flatter their vain political

hopes. They kept up communication with Judah and knew of the secret movements looking to a fresh revolt under King Zedekiah. When Ezekiel told them plainly there was not a ray of hope for Jewish victory or for their own return, he was hated for his fidelity. At this very time, Jeremiah was being scorned and persecuted in Jerusalem for saying the same things. Unflinchingly Ezekiel said, "Cherish no vain delusions. Jehovah is punishing his people, and let us be patient under the just dealings. Your apostasies, corruptions and idolatries have destroyed all claims on Jehovah's protecting care. Our nation is gully, it must drink the wormwood and the gall. If Jerusalem rebels she will be bottled out." Events justified the wisdom of the prophets. Ill-fated rebellion began in 586 B.C., and Judah with Jerusalem went to her horrible death. Thousands more were brought into captivity by the rulers of Babylon. All honor to prophets who dared to speak unpopular truth.

Service and Honor.

Slowly the mind of the exiles adjusted itself to hard facts and gave belated reverence to the noble pastor. He becomes their comforter and animates their hopes. He begins to grow old. The ruin of Jerusalem and the death of political hope is an old story. The exiles lose fiery passions and settle down to industrial pursuits. His sermons drop with gentleness and the misunderstood and unappreciated pastor gathers round himself the people's tardy affections. He was right, and we were fanatically and wickedly wrong, they frankly admit. He has a strange faith in the future of his people, and they begin to listen eagerly to the new prophecies of the only surviving Hebrew genius. From a bitter past, Ezekiel turns their thought to a glorious future. Says he, "The nation is dead, but its one great idea lives." The outer political edifice is gone, but its inner spiritual principle is imperishable. From the ashes of a dead Judean state he sees the rising of a Judean church. The kingdom has passed but our religion lives. It is the Lord's doing. Our religious mission in this world has been disencumbered of political cares that it may be more certainly achieved. What a grand triumph of faith was this. In the prison house were born new and grander conceptions of the Hebrew faith. Such was the angel of comfort in Judah's Gethsemane. Brethren, said the prophet, the night is dark, but joy comes with the morning. God still has use for us; he will take us home; we

shall rebuild our temple and around that, instead of a throne our hopes shall be rallied. So confident was he that he gave them plans for the Lord's new house. Noble Ezekiel!

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Faithless Shepherds. Ezek. 34: 1-10.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"My flock was scattered and none did search for them."

He is speaking of the princes and rulers of Judah. It is in the days of his unpopularity, by the waters of Babylon. To the miserable people he explains that their woes are not due to the weakness of Jehovah, but to the unfaithfulness of greedy, vicious and heartless leaders. In all this fiery indictment, Ezekiel seeks to vindicate God, rather than to incriminate the worthless, godless princes. You must not lay your sorrows and miseries on God. He will put no premium on iniquity by protecting the wicked. Unrighteous idolaters have been the curse of our people. These men were sworn servants of Jehovah, and yet they have destroyed his flock.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Shepherd of Captive Israel. Ezek. 34: 11-19.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"So will I seek out my sheep."

He voices the pity of God; he becomes a son of consolation. No longer does he strike the minor chord of sin and woe, but rather the major chord of hope and redeeming love. His words are rich in all tenderness, touched with soothing and healing power. This is his congenial task. No true pastor loves the office of reproof or rebuke for its own sake. When it has to be done, the speech should come palpably out of sympathizing faithfulness. It ought to be unmistakably the smiting of a friend. Bruised and weary human hearts demand a great deal of encouragement and sympathy. Let them hear much of the love of God.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehovah's Shepherding Care. Ezek. 34: 20-31.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"There shall be showers of blessing."

How precious are all these multiplied promises of sovereign grace. They sound like a soft, sweet song, on a still evening, when the heart is sad. Memory runs back to things that were lost in the national overthrow; but under the spell of these heaven-

ly words hope leaps up to greet the restorations in the good time coming. The Lord will bring it to pass. He will forgive and forget and we will love him so. How eloquent is redeeming love. It omits not our beautiful figure of happiness; it overlooks not our appeal to honor and truth; it neglects not one blessed assurance against future calamity and loss. The gospel of Jesus intensified all these notes of shepherding love.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Jehovah's Representative. Ezek. 33: 1-9.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel."

The preacher must preach the message of God to the people. He is God's watchman for the souls of his flock. He must blow the trumpet when danger comes, and if the unheeding fall by the sword, his blood is on his own head. But if the watchman blow not the trumpet, and the unwarned perish, then his blood will be required at the watchman's hand. This is a tremendously impressive statement of the preacher's responsibility. Heretofore, Ezekiel has been the messenger of the divine judgments; now he enters on the more pleasing office of reviving the hopes of his fallen countrymen. His ministry will never be forgotten while the world endures.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Righteous Judge. Ezek. 33: 10-20.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"If the wicked turn from his wickedness, he shall live thereby."

Misfortune and sorrow open the heart to God. The exiles listen now to the voice of the prophet as they did not before the days of desolation. He is stressing the thought of the righteousness of God, who cannot in any way spare the guilty. The sense of personal accountability is rigidly enforced. The law of God is holy, just and good. It is a way of life to them who will walk in it. The wicked who despise it shall in no wise escape. Ezekiel wants to balance the sweet pity of God with the strict requirements of his righteousness. He does command honor, truth, justice and love, and in the keeping of these commandments there is great reward.

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SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Dry Bones Revived. Ezek. 37: 1-14.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"Son of man, can these bones live?"

Here is the immortal valley of dry bones, a symbolical description of the restoration, union and triumph of the chosen people. Nothing could have been more eloquently representative of the then condition of the exiles. Dry bones truly they were scattered on a foreign soil. Can they live again? Can Israel be restored to Judah? It is too dark a mystery in human fortune for the prophet to decide. Humbly he replied, "O Lord God, thou knowest." All things are possible with God. He is commanded to speak the divine word to the bones. They come together, they take on flesh, they stand up a great multitude. It is a sublime proclamation of hope to a dead nation.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Restored and Exalted. Ezek. 37: 15-27.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"I will make them one nation."

The sanguine, jubilant prophet believes in the ultimate union of divided Israel, with the old home in Canaan. God is going to gather the scattered remnants of the two jarring Jewish nations and mold them again into a glorious holy commonwealth. Under the rule of a true David, God's chosen people shall be joined in the fellowship of a spiritual nation. This fact is symbolized by two rods, emblems of authority, becoming one. Judah and Ephraim shall be no more divided, but shall be obedient and prosperous, as in David's days, with God's sanctuary in the midst of them and his glory resting upon them. The David of this promise is Christ. What a blessed pastor is Ezekiel.

LESSON II.

SEPTEMBER 9, 1917.

The Benefits of Total Abstinence.

(Temperance Lesson.)

MOTTO TEXT.—"Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank." (Daniel 1: 8.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Daniel 1.
MEMORY VERSES, 19, 20.

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Lesson Text.

8 ¶ But Dān'ĕl purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

9 Now God had brought Dān'ĕl into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Dān'ĕl, I fear my lord the king, who hath appoluted your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

11 Then said Dān'ĕl to Mē'zār, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Dān'ĕl, Hān-ā-n'āh, M'šā-ĕl, and Az-ā-rī'āh,

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16 Thus Mē'zār took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17 ¶ As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Dān'ĕl had understanding in all visions and dreams.

18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nēb-ŭ-chād-nez-zār.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Dān'ĕl, Hān-ā-n'āh, M'šā-ĕl, and Az-ā-rī'āh: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

The Select Captive.

DANIEL was of royal blood. Of David's house, he lived in a fashion worthy of the great ancestor. His usefulness and fame were achieved far from his native Judah. It was his curious fate to serve, with fine abilities, the kingdom that had destroyed his native land. How did he come to make his home in Babylon? It is one of the cruel stories of an age that knew no pity. Jehoiakim began to reign in Judah 608 B.C. He was hateful to Nebuchadnezzar because of his restlessness under the yoke of Babylon, which, by contagious spread, might result in rebellion by all the petty nations in the west. To awe him into quietness, the great monarch sent his army to Jerusalem, 606 B.C. The move was effective. Before this army returned a demand was made for some of the brightest boys in the city, who were to be taken to Babylon to be educated in the Chaldean schools. They must be youths from the best families, the handsomest, the most gifted and promising. Unhappy Daniel and three of his companions were of the number chosen, the victims of their own merits and attractions. You can imagine the grief of the parting hour. The tyrannical sultan of Turkey keeps up the practice to this day, and so trains some of his most distinguished statesmen and generals.

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Luxurious Bondage.

The boys were not treated as prisoners, but as favorite guests, a fact which relieved the situation of some of its pain. Nebuchadnezzar put them under teachers to learn the Chaldean language and literature and other subjects, such as were necessary to fit them for the king's service. They were fed on the delicacies and wines of the king's table, a shrewd move to conciliate and win them from repining. The boys' names were changed. Don't you know that Daniel felt curious when he heard himself called "Belteshazzar"? I hope these dear lads had some fun in greeting each other by their new, high-sounding names. So far as luxurious comfort was concerned, they were having the time of their lives. Moses in the palace of Pharaoh and in the University of Egypt did not enjoy more physical comfort. Yet their hearts were in Jerusalem, and often in secret their eyes dimmed with tears in thinking of the loved ones at home. How strange and sad are many of the fortunes of this human life; how heartlessly cruel have been the beastly autocracies of this world.

The Prohibitionist.

Daniel did not like the king's food and wine, and made bold to tell the officer. The meats were probably forbidden by Moses' law and the wines he looked on with abhorrence. The chaste, healthy boy regarded them as defiling. Modestly he asks for a vegetable diet, with only water as a drink. The manly fellow was making progress, demonstrating marked ability and winning the love and admiration of his teachers. The official was afraid of the proposed change, lest it should injure the health of the boys, and so expose himself to the anger of the king. Daniel said, "Give us a ten days' trial and see if harm comes of it." That seemed fair, and it was granted.

At the end of ten days the boys looked fairer, fresher and stronger than the other boys of the school. The case was proved and the changed fare was continued. The young Hebrews advanced rapidly in their college courses, taking highest rank in the classes. This world never had finer intellect than the Jewish type. Finally their course was finished and they were brought in to be examined before Nebuchadnezzar. He was delighted with them. They were so superior to all others that he at once selected them to be his personal attendants. That was a fine promotion from the university to important public service. You can't make a great man out of a dissipated youth. An incidental blessing out of the curse of this horrible war is the certain death of the liquor traffic.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Brave Youth. Daniel 1: 1-9.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"In whom was no blemish, . . . such as had ability."

Brethren and sisters, such boys as these are always in request. Boys of good manners, good habits, good ability and character. The church needs them, the state needs them, society needs them. Where can they be found? Only in one place, and that is the good home, the intelligent, religious family. Not necessarily the wealthy or fashionable family, but the good honorable aspiring family. Boys have a right to be well bred, to be stimulated to high and worthy aims, and to be guarded from evil companions. The field, the school, the church and the family are the schooling places to make noble men and women. God bless your boys and girls.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Benefits of Total Abstinence. Daniel 1: 10-20.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"God gave them knowledge and skill."

I think the long argumentation against strong drink is coming to an end. Few except the old toppers rail against the temperance laws. No doubt they suffer the pangs of ungratified raging thirst, but they must accept the inevitable. Society is not going back to old disastrous customs. The whole world is satisfied with the benefits of total abstinence. Russia abolished liquors when her war began, and it gave her better generals and soldiers. It gives us better teachers and farmers, better doctors and lawyers, better husbands and sons, more happiness and prosperity. The accursed traffic is dying hard, but it is dying. Distillers and brewers will have to seek an honorable calling. Let's sing the long meter doxology.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Separation Enjoined. 2 Cor. 6: 11-18.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Ye are the temple of the living God."

The temple was sacred. In it were the holy place and the holy of holies. It was strictly guarded against all sacrilege and every touch of defilement. Jesus resented the wickedness of its violated sanctities, and drove irreverent traders out of its courts. Now, Paul transfers that quality of holiness to the bodies of God's servants. You are the holy of holies, and are indwelt by the Spirit of God. Shall we insult the divine occupant by defiling his house? That is a powerful appeal to Christian men. What are the defiling things? Base appetites and passions. We all know what they are. Keep the body clean; abstain from fleshly lusts.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Walking Wisely. Eph. 5: 6-21.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."

It is not possible to live in this world and escape all touch of its moral filth. The papers publish it, and it passes from mouth to mouth of the vulgar. Let the abominable things rot. Paul denounces the habit of reciting the performances of the gutters and slime of pools of the world. It is a shame to tell some stories. They are vile and corrupting. From my youth I have had a loathing for the foul-mouthed narrator. His mind is a warehouse of dirty rubbish, his imagina-

tion is a low-lying depravity, and his companionship is a revolting outrage. Let conversation be pure. Tell me of the clean, the pure, the high.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Loyalty to a Vow. Jer. 35: 1-11.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"We will drink no wine."

Drunkenness was one of the crying sins of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah. That is one of the evils engendered by idolatry which imposes no moral restraints. The prophet rebukes the drunkards by the example of the Rechabites. It looks curious to see him offering them wine in the temple, but he has his purpose. It gives them opportunity to promptly decline and to explain the prohibition vow they have taken. This abstaining vow had been held for three hundred years by the Rechabites, and now no temptation can induce them to break it. Jeremiah uses the fact to rebuke the revelers of Jerusalem, but they despise it and go their way to national ruin.

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SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Obedience and Reward. Jer. 35: 12-19.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever."

The perpetuity of Jonadab's race is the promise of God, not preserved nationality. The approbation which God here expresses shows with what favor he regards obedience to parental and other rightful authority, and how he rewards it in this world. It is said that there are still existing Arab tribes near Necca maintaining Hebrew worship and customs, who claim to be descended from the Rechabites. Honor, sobriety and loyalty to God is the best preservation of families. It is sin that wrecks family happiness, and pushes it remorselessly into extinction.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Sobriety and Watchfulness. 1 Peter 4: 1-11.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"Arouse yourselves likewise with the same mind."

Peter warns us all against the ever-present weaknesses of the flesh and the dangerous temptations that are without. To be good means a battle. Righteous living does not come easily of itself, it is a fight of faith. The armor that we need is the mind that was in Christ. The mind that sees duty, the purposeful, resolute mind that does duty. Peo-

ple do not just happen to be pious and effective. Beautiful virtue, lovely character is achievement. Our minds are irresolute, our

will is flabby and our religious incompetency is the natural result. Let's resolve by the grace of God to be real men and women.

LESSON 12.

SEPTEMBER 16, 1917.

The Fiery Furnace.

MOTTO TEXT.—"When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the same kindle upon thee." (Isaiah 43: 2.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Daniel 3.

MEMORY VERSES, 17, 18.

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Lesson Text.

16 Shâ'drâch, Mē'shâch, and A-bēd'-nē-gō, answered and said to the king, O Nēb-ū-châd-nēz'zâr, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

19 ¶ Then was Nēb-ū-châd-nēz'zâr full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shâ'drâch, Mē'shâch, and A-bēd'-nē-gō: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shâ'drâch, Mē'shâch, and A-bēd'-nē-gō, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hose, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shâ'drâch, Mē'shâch, and A-bēd'-nē-gō.

23 And these three men, Shâ'drâch, Mē'shâch, and A-bēd'-nē-gō, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 Then Nēb-ū-châd-nēz'zâr the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

26 ¶ Then Nēb-ū-châd-nēz'zâr came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said Shâ'drâch, Mē'shâch, and A-bēd'-nē-gō, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shâ'drâch, Mē'shâch, and A-bēd'-nē-gō, came forth of the midst of the fire.

27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

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Danger.

For a long time Daniel and his companions had smooth sailing. But the evil days came. Nebuchadnezzar, puffed up with the victories of his armies and the might of his kingdom, resolved to unite all his subjects under one religion. Bel was the great deity of the Chaldeans and the patron god of the monarch. He commanded to make a large image of Bel in gold, and to set it up in the plain of Dura, near to Babylon. Governors, judges, captains and rulers of many provinces were called to the dedication of the image. It was a great religious holiday. The multitude gathered in the plain, and at a certain hour, at the signal of music, the host was commanded to fall on their faces and worship the image. If any should refuse, they were to be cast into the fiery furnace. Daniel's companions were there and understood what was expected of them.

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Courage.

The instruments of music sounding the summons to idolatry and that host fell prostrate. Who are those three men daring to stand up at such an hour! Their conduct was instantly reported. No man could dic-

tate religion to those Hebrews. Their faith was not subject to the caprice of a king. Taught to reverence Jehovah alone, they spurned to bow down before Bel. But they will burn you. Be it so, our decision is made. We have counted the cost. Loyal servants of the king, in civil and political affairs, in religion they acknowledged no human master. They feared God more than a fiery furnace. Religious freedom was unknown in that day, and for many a long century afterward. The king's idea of religious unity was well enough in itself, but to enforce it was a cruelly impossible scheme. To put a man under penalty for his opinions, different from our own, is foreign to the spirit of Christ. Men whose extravagant confidence in themselves and their opinions runs close to self-idolatry, make good persecutors. They are first cousins to Nebuchadnezzar.

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Penalty.

Can it be true that you have refused to worship the image? The astonished king did not want to believe it. There must be some misunderstanding. Gladly would he save his valuable servants. Surely they have not knowingly taken the awful risk of disobedience. He was frankly told that they did understand the whole situation, and that, besides being servants of Jehovah, they did not intend to worship the idol. The king parted from them in a fury of rage. Heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual and cast these obstinate Jews into it! They did so, and the flames were so hot that the men who cast them in were burnt to death. Only the bonds of the Hebrews were consumed. The king stands afar off to witness the result. Presently he exclaims in amazement, "Did you not cast three men bound into the furnace? Behold, I see four men, loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

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Deliverance.

The royal idolater's astonishment went beyond bounds. He shouted into the furnace, "Ye servants of the Most High God, come forth and come hither." They did so, and all the officers and governors saw that their hair was not singed, nor was the smell of fire on their garments. The king burst into praise of the heroes, and gave glory to their God who had sent his angel to guard them. He declared there was no other god equal to

the God of the Hebrews, and if any man shall speak anything amiss against Jehovah, he shall be cut to pieces and his house destroyed. Then the brave servants of Jehovah were promoted to higher positions of honor in the kingdom.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Daniel's Vision. Daniel 2: 17-30.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets."

Nebuchadnezzar had struck down the throne of David, and naturally questioned the faithfulness and power of Israel's God. To him, therefore, Jehovah reveals, in a wonderful vision of a great image destroyed by a stone out of the mountain, the instability of the Chaldean empire, and the other empires that should follow it; and the setting up of a divine kingdom which should be universal and permanent. By leading Nebuchadnezzar to demand the dream as well as the explanation, God forced on him the indisputable proof of its truth, while he showed the falsehood of the Chaldean superstition, and the presence of Jehovah with his servants. Thus the haughty monarch was brought to acknowledge the superiority of Israel's God, and to place Hebrew captives above his heathen courtiers.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Interpreting a Dream. Daniel 2: 31-45.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"It shall stand forever."

The mighty dream, so suggestive of the vanity of human ambitions, was forgotten by the king, a fact that gave Daniel his golden opportunity. God showed to Daniel both the dream and the interpretation. The great image symbolizes the empires of this world which were, each and all, moved by the one aspiration of world dominion. The rock cut out of the mountain, crashing in destructive force on the image, symbolizes a new spiritual kingdom, expanding by mysterious, inward, unseen power, until the whole world is filled with its beneficence and grace. This is God's kingdom, the God of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar was convinced and fell at Daniel's feet to worship him.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Loyalty to Jehovah. Daniel 3: 1-12.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"They serve not thy gods."

Most of the Jews of that day would have worshiped the golden image, especially as life depended on it. There are not many Daniels among us yet. Loyalty to Jehovah is loyalty to the principles he stands for—truth, honor, humility, unselfishness, love. The man who misrepresents the facts to make a profitable trade renounces the god of truth, and worships the god of avarice. The man who coldly lets a neighbor suffer because it is inconvenient to give help, deserts God and bows down to the god of selfishness. Our sins, beloved, have all the elements of the old idolatries. Why, then, are we not idolaters? We are, inasmuch as we leave God out of our motives and purposes.

THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Fiery Furnace. Daniel 3: 18-23.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"These men were bound and cast into the furnace."

Now was it not carrying matters too far? Might these men not have innocently bowed, as a mere form, while inwardly rejecting the idol? It would have saved their lives, their positions, and their future usefulness. Had they not better look at this side of the matter and yield a moment to a bowing of the body? Most of us, I fear, would have found satisfactory reason for compliance. When you face issues, squarely, it is hard to dare to be a Daniel. Jesus did. He would rather die than give up one jot or tittle of his teaching or his principles. Take up your cross and follow me. Issues come to every one of us as they did to Daniel. Choose whom ye will serve. Is it God, or some old idol?

FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Wonderful Deliverance. Daniel 3: 24-30.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"Ye servants of the most high God, come forth."

It is a fact that the only way to show the superiority of our religion is to live it. You can't argue the matter through. Which is better, or truer, the worship of Jehovah or the worship of Bel or Jupiter? Living their doctrines is the only test. Which brings better results to individuals and families? The

beautiful, lovely, happy life is the best. The doctrines that produce it must be true; the doctrines that produce the contrary cannot be true. By their fruits ye shall know them, not by arguments and loud professions. God works deliverance for us by inducing us to live his own life in the world. That is freedom, that is salvation.

SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Tree Dream. Daniel 4: 4-18.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"The spirit of the holy gods is in thee."

It was like an unthinking idolater to speak of the gods rather than the one God. The king knew Daniel's view of the unity of God, and he believed that the spirit of Daniel's God was with him, but in speaking the compliment he said "gods". He was in trouble with the interpretation of a new dream. The Oriental mind was the home of mighty visions and imaginings. He saw a tree that reached to heaven and could be seen to the ends of the earth. It bore a vast shade and abundant fruit. It rested the fowl in its branches, and fed the beasts. A holy one came from heaven and cried, "Hew down the tree, but leave the stump. Changing to a person, let a beast's heart be given unto him, and let seven times pass over him." What does it mean, Daniel?

SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Dream Fulfilled. Daniel 4: 19-33.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"It is thou, O king."

It was a painful and possibly dangerous thing to explain that dream. So Daniel felt, for he said significantly, "The dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation to thine enemies. It means you! The decree of the Most High is come upon my lord, the king. They shall drive you from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts, and they shall make thee eat grass, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men. Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." That same hour was the thing fulfilled.

LESSON 13.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1917.

Daniel in the Lions' Den.

MOTTO TEXT.—

"The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him, And delivereth them." (Psalm 34: 7.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Daniel 6.

MEMORY VERSES, 22, 23.

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Lesson Text.

10 ¶ Now when Dān'ēl knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jeru'sālem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

11 Then these men assembled, and found Dān'ēl praying and making supplication before his God.

12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Dān'ēl, which is of the children of the captivity of Jū'dāh, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Dān'ēl to deliver him; and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Dān'ēl, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Dān'ēl, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of

his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Dān'ēl.

18 ¶ Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him; and his sleep went from him.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Dān'ēl; and the king spake and said to Dān'ēl, O Dān'ēl, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

21 Then said Dān'ēl unto the king, O king, live for ever.

22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Dān'ēl up out of the den. So Dān'ēl was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

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Political Changes.

The mighty Assyrian empire perished 606 B.C., and Babylon became the world-power. She destroyed Judah, 586 B.C., and just fifty years later was herself destroyed by the Medes and Persians. Thus the exiled Jews came under a new government. This is the historical framework of the great ideas enforced in the book of Daniel. The aim of the book is to impress the superiority and supremacy of Jehovah, and his purpose to establish on earth an everlasting kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar had been compelled to acknowledge these things and had given much honor to God's servant, Daniel. A new empire and a new dynasty arise, and under them Daniel is in honor and holds high positions. God gives the new rulers evidence of his supremacy, and shows the care which he takes of his faithful worshippers. When we get the aim of a book, we gain a great headlight that aids in the understanding of all its details. Jealousy for the honor of Jehovah is the motive of the book of Daniel.

It shows God's superiority over all gods of the heathen, and his authority over the rulers of the earth. It contrasts the permanency of God's kingdom and its universality with the limitations and transiency of human kingdoms. It shows God's preserving care for those who fear and serve him.

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Daniel's Enemies.

His great wisdom and abilities were recognized by the new conquerors of Babylon, and he was made first of the three officials who conducted the affairs of the kingdom. Being an eminently godly man, a Jew of distinguished public experience and usefulness, the Medes said, "We can trust him." The other governors grew jealous of the old servant of Jehovah. Envy is the rottenness of the bones and is cruel as death. That describes all envy, yours and mine. Merit, superiority, never fails to awaken the demon in somebody. They were willing, of course, to lie about Daniel, but they could find no ground in his public service, which was without error or flaw. "We will find occasion against him in the sphere of his religion. We will make his loyalty to God the means of his destruction." Their plan was shrewd as it was infamous. They flattered the vanity of King Darius and persuaded him to assume divine dignity and to demand divine honors. He made the decree that the people should pray to no one but himself for the space of thirty days. The man who broke the decree should be cast into the den of lions. Our book lays this dark background to bring out the glory of God and his care of Daniel. The conspirators knew that Daniel would ignore the law and go to his death. Three times a day the old man turned his face to Jerusalem and prayed to Jehovah. The eager spies saw it and reported to the king. Then he saw that the plotters had made a fool of him, utilizing his own egotism as a sword to kill his most valuable and beloved prime minister. He set his heart one whole day to get himself and Daniel out of the trap, but the murderers held him to the law of the Medes and Persians, which never changes. There was no escape, and he commanded the execution.

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Deliverance.

How strange it was to see Darius comforting the prisoner with the hope that his God would deliver him. At the mouth of the den a stone was rolled, and the king sealed it with his own ring. It was a horrible night

in the palace, under the torments of conscience. He rose early, went to the den and cried, "O Daniel, is thy God able to save thee?" "O king, my God has sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths." Daniel was brought out, and his accusers, with their wives and children, were cast in. Darius sent out a new decree. Henceforth all men in his dominion must worship the God of Daniel, for "He is the living God, steadfast forever, and his kingdom shall never be destroyed." Jehovah is supreme. His power and glory must everywhere be revered. So Daniel, the faithful, fearless servant of God, continued to work and prosper.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Handwriting on the Wall. Daniel 5: 1-12.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"Belshazzar's countenance was changed."

A mysterious presence was at that feast where royal revelers drank wines out of the golden and silver vessels taken out of the temple fifty years ago by Nebuchadnezzar. A mysterious hand wrote unintelligible words on the wall. The lessons given to Nebuchadnezzar were lost on his successors. They gave themselves up to voluptuous indulgence, and praised the false gods, while they profanely drank to them out of the sacred vessels of Jehovah. Belshazzar saw the words, and part of the hand that wrote. His bright looks grew pale, and his thoughts troubled him. He was seized with trembling and his knees smote together. There was not one of his wise men able to read the writing, or to interpret it.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Writing Interpreted. Daniel 5: 13-27.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."

Is there no man to solve the riddle? Yes; Daniel lives, who more than thirty years ago explained the visions of Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar's wife remembers Daniel, and he is called. The troubled king offers him great rewards for a true interpretation. Daniel speaks of his father, Nebuchadnezzar's glory and might. How the Most High God had given him the kingdom, and how God had punished his wickedness. You knew all this, and yet you lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. He sent that hand, and this is the meaning of the words, "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Thou art

weighed in the balances and art found wanting." Daniel was honored on the spot, and that night Belshazzar was slain.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—A Wicked Plot. Daniel 6: 1-9.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"We shall not find any occasion against Daniel except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."

That was a remarkable compliment to the faithfulness and courage of any man. Here is a man with fixed religious convictions; they are written down in the tablets of his heart, and he would sooner die than dishonor them. It is a confession that no fault can be found with his official work. Wonder if they knew that this public faithfulness was due to his religious principles? They are envious of his elevation in honor, and his popularity. This Jew is in our way. He throws us in the shade. He ought to be killed. We will make his religion a snare. They set a trap, and were caught in it themselves; they dugged a pit and fell into it.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Daniel in the Lions' Den. Daniel 6: 10-23.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"They have not hurt me."

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee. The flames shall not hurt thee, the rivers shall not overflow thee. No man shall set upon thee to harm thee. Thou wilt hide him in the cleft of the rock. He will hide me in his pavilion. We are kept by the power of God. I will be thy sun and shield. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him. Like as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people. Our lives are hid with Christ in God. No man can snatch us out of his hand. He that keepeth Israel will not slumber nor sleep. The God of Jacob is our refuge and strength. Amen!

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Vision of Four Beasts. Daniel 7: 1-8.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"The four winds of heaven strove upon the great sea."

We come now to Daniel's own visions, and the first is of four symbolic beasts. He saw a lion, a bear, a leopard and a monster with

ten horns. The Mediterranean is the great sea, on which touched the empires here symbolized. It has always been customary to symbolize kings and kingdoms by different animals. For example, Russia has a bear, England a lion. Now, Daniel sees in the beasts that rapacity, destructiveness and hostility to God and his people which will characterize the empires. He means to say that they exhibit the truth, that all human power and glory must perish if it be not subjected to God's will and service. This doctrine is being much emphasized in our own day.

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SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Ancient of Days. Daniel 7: 9-14.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"The judgment was set and the books were opened."

This great servant of God, an exile, without a country, rises up out of the ruins of human fortunes to vast conceptions of Israel's God, and to adoring faith and love. It is a sublime elevation of the human spirit. The eternal God, the Ancient of Days, is judge of transitory monarchs and monarchies. He will overthrow all opposing powers and establish his kingdom which can never be moved. This was the purified faith of a noble Jew, in a time of vast confusion and disaster long ago. We, too, must hold on to God in these days of awful desolation and savagery. This painful world must find in him its comfort and peace.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Kingdom Established. Daniel 7: 15-28.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"An everlasting kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

Is there not something morally grand in this confidence in the final triumph of good over ill? Here is a sublime achievement of faith that thrills and exalts my soul. In that chaotic time of human rage and brutality, a Jewish believer, chastened by adversity, climbs the serene heights to rest his spirit in God's eternal calm. He knows that brute force can never rule this world. It is condemned, an insane vanity of man. Love and sovereign grace are the powers destined to dominate the earth. Reality must sit on the throne. Spirit must sway the minds of men. Reality, spirit, is love, truth, goodness. This is God's kingdom, it endures forever. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

LESSON 14.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1917.

The Sunday School and State Missions.

MOTTO TEXT.—“But ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1: 8.)

LESSON PASSAGE, Acts 1: 6-8; Matt. 28: 16-20; Romans 10: 13-15.

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Lesson Text.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

16 ¶ Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

17 And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.

18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 ¶ Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

State Missions.

Do you ever get tired in the home over the ever-recurring topic of missions? Does the subject become wearisome to you as you hear it in the sermon and read it in the papers? If that is true, may I explain to you that state of mind? Out of what does it arise? First, it is due to lack of real interest in the subject. That's solemnly true, isn't it? Now, if the cause were unimportant or only of passing interest, your feelings would be justifiable. But you and I dare not say that, and yet the matter falls to engage us. Second, this debilitated interest is due to a considerable sum of ignorance respecting state missions. You and I cannot deny it, can we? Well, brother, there is a lot of explanation in that fact. How can you and I be much concerned about a matter of which we know so little? There are scores of subjects that do not attract me, and chiefly, because I am so densely ignorant about them. We can defend our ignorance of some questions, plausibly and satisfactorily, but state missions is not one of them, is it? You and I dare not say it. Third, and still more significant, our feeling is due to the want of spiritual response to the command of Jesus. He is intensely interested in state missions. You and I promised him in the holy hour of confession, surrender and baptism, that his will should be our law of conduct. Sacredly true, isn't it? Drawn by sovereign love, we joyously put our souls under bond to help him establish his kingdom in the world. State missions is one of his methods. For his dear sake, let us never admit that the subject tires us.

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The Remedy.

Torpid, sluggish feeling in the home, on this subject, must not be tolerated. The children in the Sunday school come out of our homes, and the contagion of parental indifference may easily touch them. The home of the Christian family is God's citadel of faith and love and out of it should stream only the issues, intelligent loyalties and enthusiasms. One remedy, then, I suggest, for lukewarmness is this: Get acquainted with the

aims and methods of state missions. That is simply indispensable to interest. You have a state mission board in your state. Can you tell your children who its officers are? Your little boy says, "Father, tell me what state missions is trying to do." You answer him as follows:

1. "My son, it aims to establish a Baptist church in every destitute section of our state and to open a Sunday school for little boys and girls. That will catch him and you.

2. "It aims to help weak and struggling churches to maintain pastors.

3. "It holds institutes and other meetings to encourage all the churches and stimulate their interest in preaching the gospel everywhere.

4. "It sends out colporteurs and evangelists to sell or give away good books, and to preach in places where there is no church.

5. "It helps to organize Sunday schools, and to stir up those already organized to do better work.

6. "It is helping to build church houses in neighborhoods too poor to build by themselves."

Now, ask the boy if any of these plans and purposes are wrong. Ask him if we all ought to help in such a good work? What will he say? Thus stated, the cause becomes tangible to mind and conscience, and the listless yawn disappears.

Another and more potent remedy is reflection on the mind of the Master. Is this his work? Does he want me to approve and assist it? We cannot cast much into the contribution plate, but we must not refuse our heart's sympathy. The Moravians were asked, "Why are you so zealous for and liberal to foreign missions?" "Because Jesus wants us to be," was the touching, eloquent reply. Yes; our dear Saviour wants us to be. The Moravians now admit that they have made a mistake in not pressing state missions because the strong home field is the necessary basis for large foreign mission work. This is a point that Baptists are not proposing to forget.

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MONDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Isaiah's Call to Heroic Service. Isaiah 6.

MONDAY'S VERSE.—"Then said I, here am I, send me."

The most moving argument for engaging in a great benevolent enterprise is a deep view of God. Moses saw God in the burning bush and undertook the emancipation of his people. Elijah saw God and began the

moral purgation of Israel. Isaiah saw God, and threw himself across Judah's downward course to ruin. Paul saw God, and made of himself a life-long sacrifice to the gospel of our Lord. Is not that why God asks us to seek his face? Come in touch with his awful holiness, his white righteousness, and his all-redeeming love and we, too, may become agents of power.

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TUESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Hezekiah, the Faithful King. 2 Chron. 30: 1-13.

TUESDAY'S VERSE.—"Turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham."

Hezekiah is a good name. It always awakens pleasing associations. He was one of the few worthy kings in Judah who consistently wished to rule his people in the fear of God. There were some faults and blunders in his reign, but the loyalty of his heart to God was never in doubt. Religion was the chief function of the Hebrews, not politics or commerce, and on the religious culture of Judah he centered the chief labors of his mind and heart. Isaiah was his loved friend and counselor. Together they fought a mighty battle for righteousness, but the tides of iniquity could not be turned back.

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WEDNESDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—God's Gracious Invitation. Isaiah 55: 1-14.

WEDNESDAY'S VERSE.—"Without money and without price."

Here is a gospel fountain breaking out in the Old Testament. Isaiah is one of the great men of all this world. He made the precious discovery in religion that God dwells not in the state, but in the humble heart. Disconsolate Jews said that God had no home when Jerusalem was destroyed. Oh, yes, brothers, said he, God's real home is in the hearts of his loyal people. That blessed doctrine has never perished. He was first to organize the spiritual into a close group in Israel, thus furnishing the idea of the church. He called it "The Remnant"—all that was left of apostate Israel. He saw God and was a great preacher.

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THURSDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Josiah's Good Religion. 2 Chron. 34: 1-13.

THURSDAY'S VERSE.—"He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord."

Not often do you read such a tribute to a king in Israel. The too common formula is,

"And he taught Israel to sin." He became king at eight years of age, but of course he could not reign. Others conducted the government for four years, and at the youthful age of twelve he undertook his work. Though the son of a wicked father, he was never inclined to walk in his ways. He carried on a brave work of reform against his idolatrous people and had good measures of success. The finding of the Book of the Law was the great religious event of his career. His death, in his thirty-ninth year, was an irreparable loss to Judah.

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FRIDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Captivity of Judah. 2 Kings 25: 1-12.

FRIDAY'S VERSE.—"The captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vine-dressers and husbandmen."

The curse of war in Judah was terrible. It was as though the land had been struck by storm, earthquake and fire. War's fury and frightfulness have not diminished. Men are as cruel and savage today as they have ever been. The sin is in cultivating selfishness, national vanity and militarism. These are the infernal elements that have shocked the present day. Judah's prominent citizens and families were dragged away to bondage, and only the poor were left. There was no danger of their ever breaking into rebellion. Men who lay the seeds of war are the grand criminals of the world.

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SATURDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—The Fiery Furnace. Daniel 3: 16-27.

SATURDAY'S VERSE.—"Ye servants of the Most High God, come forth."

The wretched vanity of Nebuchadnezzar had been worked on to imperil the lives of some of his best citizens. The devout Jews would not worship his image of gold. For that disobedience they were thrown into the fiery furnace. Good men are still punished in the furnace of unpopularity and hate for adherence to their principles. Never let us do despite to any man who follows his conscience, no matter how widely he differs from us in his views. It is brutal, it is the negative of our Baptist principle of freedom. Conscientious men win out. These Jews did, and their God was increased in honor.

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SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURE READING.—Daniel in the Lions' Den. Daniel 6: 10-23.

SUNDAY'S VERSE.—"He kneeled on his knees three times a day."

It takes a man of resolute will to be habitual and regular in his devotions. Precious few of us have that quality as Daniel had it. Who would have dreamed that this habit of secret devotion could become a basis of danger to his life? None but one who has surrendered his soul to the business of envy. In the name of God, do let us abhor this dishonorable and dangerous thing when tempted to it by some neighbor's merit or success; let's force ourselves to praise and compliment. We can do it without insincerity. It is so noble to say good things of those who excel us. You are inferior when you envy. No man is envious of those he considers below him. Envy never praises.



Calendar

JULY

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	...	...	...	...

AUGUST

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
...	...	...	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	...

SEPTEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
...	...	...	...	...	...	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 30	24	25	26	27	28	29

1917

"The Sunrise Never Failed Us Yet."

Upon the sadness of the sea
The sunset broods regretfully,
From the far lonely spaces slow
Withdraws the wistful afterglow.

So out of life the splendor dies,
So darken all the happy skies,
So gathers twilight, cold and stern,
But overhead the planets burn.

And up the east another day,
Shall chase the bitter dark away.
What though our eyes with tears be wet!
The sunrise never failed us yet.

The blush of dawn may yet restore
Our light, and hope, and joy once more.
Sad soul, take comfort, nor forget
That sunrise never failed us yet.

—Celia Thaxter.

