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Doing admirable things is quite different from doing things for the sake of being admired. While it is true that admirable deeds do not always bring admiration to the doer, it is also true that admiration for the doer does not always signify that he has done admirable deeds. The one thing certain is, that nothing is admirable that is done merely from a love of admiration.

Everybody needs and everybody values kindness. "Everybody" includes ourselves as well as others. But our duty of being kind applies to ourselves alone: it does not include other people's duty to be kind to us. Their duty in this line is theirs alone. Hence our thought of the value and the need of kindness should centre in our privilege and duty of being kind to others, however others may bear themselves toward us.

Systematic Bible study necessarily includes planning in advance. The International Lesson Committee is at work in the line of this planning, while teachers all the world over are busy in their studies according to the Committee's former planning. Just as the year 1887 goes out, the series of lessons for 1889 is announced by the Committee. These lessons cover six months in the Gospel according to Mark, and six months in studies in Jewish history, mainly from the books of Samuel and the Kings. The printed list, as sent out by the Lesson Committee, has

in it some apparent errors. Both the Chairman and the Secretary of the Committee being away from their homes, no one who is authorized to correct the list is just now accessible. Therefore, in accordance with the suggestion of a prominent member of the Committee, its publishing in these pages is delayed until it can appear in its corrected form.

It was foretold by the Evangelical Prophet concerning the ingathering of the nations to the Messianic Church: "Lo, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim." There was, perhaps, never a time when this prophecy seemed nearer a fulfillment than now, when the Bible students from the four quarters of the globe are sending in their tribute to the common study of the Word of God in connection with the International lesson series. As the lesson-helps for the new year make their beginning in the pages of the present issue of The Sunday School Times, it will be seen that there are contributions from New England, from the Middle States, from the Western States, from England, from Switzerland; and that even from the land of Sinim (if Sinim be China, as many suppose) good Bishop Warren sends his word of explanation why his tribute to that series must be, for a few weeks, delayed.

To think of what we have to do and to bear in this life, is quite likely to be disheartening. To think of God's sure help in our doing and in our enduring, can hardly fail of giving us courage and hope and joy. Many of us know what it is to meet the cares and trials and griefs which we anticipate for the day, even before we are fairly awake in the morning. Through the slowly opening gate of consciousness they flood in upon us like a turbid stream that has been surging without while we slept, impatient for an entrance. By allowing these apprehensions to have the mastery, the new day, God's special gift to us, is marred at its very beginning; the wonder of the dawning light passes unnoticed, and the strength of the early hours, which was given us for efficient service, is weakened and half wasted. As an antidote to this joy-poisoning habit our first thoughts of the day should float upward, and our morning greeting to our troubled soul should be, "Hope thou in God." Experience shows us that our fears are often only a delusion, prompted by minor difficulties magnified in the morning mist, or by shadows that have no answering substance. On the other hand, we have been shown concerning the cares and trials and griefs which God does appoint for us, that as we look to and trust in him he furnishes strength and grace to meet them in the hour of their appearing. Our fears may mislead us. Our faith never will. Our troubles may be less than we think for. God's love is always more.

Few things more surely deaden the sense of moral discrimination and so disguise the dividing line between right and wrong, than a habit of measuring one wrong against another wrong, instead of simply setting right against wrong. The only safe and proper way is to regard wrong as a thing to be condemned absolutely, because it is not right. We ought never to think of one form of wrong as a thing to be relatively condemned or condoned, because it appears to be worse

or better than some other form of wrong. Right can be the only true standard, because it is alone normal and stable. Every wrong can therefore properly be considered only as a deviation from right. No wrong can be properly considered as a deviation from some other wrong, because the very thought of that deviation gives to that other wrong a normal position which it does not possess, and so falsely invests it with the quality of rightness and truth. It is of little use to compare two watches or two weights or two measures when neither is known to be right, or both are known to be wrong. Yet nothing is more common than to hear persons say: "This is a small sin;" "This is not half so bad a crime as that;" "I am no worse than he;" "He is no better than I;" "If he goes to heaven, I shall;" "If I am wrong, he is,"—and the like. The pertinent question, the only question, must always be, not Is this a *small* sin? but Is this a *sin*?—not What is my degree of criminality or sinfulness? but Am I a criminal? Am I a sinner?—not How far may I go in this wrong? but May I do wrong at all?—not Am I more wrong than he? but Am I wrong at all? The simple, safe, fundamental question always is, Is this right, or is it wrong?

THE AMBIGUITY OF WORDS.

It is on words that we depend for knowledge. It is by words that we receive and that we convey thought. Words are the expression of personality. Words are the disclosure and the measure of character. "Such as thy words are," said Socrates, "such will thy affections be esteemed; and such will thy deeds as thy affections; and such thy life as thy deeds." And a greater than Socrates said: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Yet with all the importance of words, words are in themselves nothing; and at the best their value is dependent on the spirit and the purpose of their user, and on the understanding of them by their receiver; while in their very nature there is an essential ambiguity in both their use and their meaning.

"Words are things," says Byron, speaking with a poet's thought. But Locke, speaking as a philosopher, says: "They who would advance in knowledge, and not deceive and swell themselves with a little articulated air, should lay down this as a fundamental rule, not to take words for things, nor suppose that names [the names of things] in books signify real entities in nature, until they can frame clear and distinct ideas of those entities." And Johnson, as a lexicographer, emphasizes this distinction, when he says: "Words are the daughters of earth, and . . . things are the sons of heaven." Words stand for things. Words stand for thoughts. The "daughters of earth" are needful to disclose to us the "sons of heaven." But the thing must be known as a thing, and the thought must be known as a thought, by both user and receiver, in order to the understanding of the words as expressive of that for which they stand; and even then it must be clear to the receiver that the words used are employed by the user as thus expressive, or their using is vain. He who has no conception of heaven will not recognize a disclosure of its sons as sons of heaven, in the faces of the daughters of earth. The word "light," or the word "color," or the word "perspective," for example, conveys no idea

tion," is a petition that has precedence of "Deliver us from the evil," in the pattern prayer of the disciples of Jesus.

The king was grieved; but for the sake of . . . them which sat . . . with him, he commanded it (v. 9). It is very little to a man's credit that he does wrong reluctantly, knowing the right, and preferring it, but being afraid or ashamed to stand by it. It is terrible to see a man so cold-blooded and hard-hearted that he has no shrinking from the grossest crimes. It is pitiable to see a man of tender heart and kindly feeling crowded into the way of evil, because he lacks the courage of his convictions, and dares not "do as he has a mind to." If only men—men young and old—would be brave enough to do right, and to shun the wrong, even at the risk of having their companions laugh at them, or reproach them, or think them so peculiar, there would be far less of evil-doing in the world. Why, it would almost put a stop to tobacco-using and liquor-drinking and card-playing among the boys, and to fashion-following and folly-hunting among the girls, if all well-disposed boys and girls would adhere to their own ideas of the right, without being wrongly influenced by those who sit with them.

A LAYMAN'S HINTS.

BY GEORGE W. CABLE.

The murder of John. Does this episode really stand alone, a mere interpolation in Matthew's irregular yet balanced alternation of narrative and discourse? In our past lessons we have found the evangelist, although without obtrusive system, full of unprofessed method. His Gospel without the rigidity of confessed constructive design, has yet the grace and proportions of a forest tree. Every part springs from and belongs to his one scheme,—to set forth not a history, an argument nor philosophy, nor yet even a "life of Christ," but, as clearly as a skillful, faithful use of the sayings, doings, and sufferings of Jesus could make it to the Jewish mind, the way of salvation to the whole spiritual seed of Abraham through the royal leadership of the one only universal Moses and universal David. . . .

Now, to this supremely important end, Matthew subordinates the Baptist's history also. In Matthew, John always and only appears for a moment, marking one climax and the setting out toward another. The Saviour's childhood and youth recounted, John flashes out on the view without earlier mention, and the voice in the wilderness rings out a moment, and presently is still, while Christ begins his ministry. The kingdom is set forth in the Sermon on the Mount; the works of power are recorded in a complete typical group; the disciples are sent forth to preach; and at the close of this second act of the great drama, John, removed out of the order of time, suddenly speaks again from his prison, crying, "Art thou he?" and for affirmation receives only a summary of the record that has just been completed. Then appear those debates in which our Lord confounded and enraged his enemies, then his teachings under the disguise of many parables; and now, suddenly again, we hear the last cry and see the murdered form of the greatest of the prophets.

So, then, why stands this final episode of the Baptist just here? Surely the evangelist, having carried his didactic plan, so beautiful in its unobtrusiveness, thus far, is not going, right in the midst of his Gospel, to leave it, and begin rambling along the mere order of incident. We see, indeed, that he is still leading up toward that great middle climax of Christ's ministry, the transfiguration, with even that supreme juncture marked by the ghost, as it were, of the dead prophet. ("As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus . . . said, . . . Elijah is come already. . . . Then understood the disciples that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.") In good faith to Matthew, then, we seek a special evangelistic-didactic purpose underlying the record of these three intervening chapters, 14-16. And we find

1. That just here, where the guilty Antipas sees in Jesus only his righteous victim risen again with supernatural powers, Matthew's didactic rearrangements finally cease, and the evangelist is henceforth able to fulfill his purpose without disturbing the order of occurrence. From John's death even to the Last Supper, we find nothing in Matthew conflicting, in order of time, with Mark or Luke. From the chain of about forty-five incidents lying between these two events in Mark's Gospel, none are displaced, so to speak, and only three or four are wanting in Matthew's. Yet the didactic purpose and the culminating form are not abandoned, but only the didactic reconstruction ceases, and Matthew is able to maintain his purpose, and yet follow the natural windings of the current of events.

2. We find that between these two limits (the death of John and the transfiguration) Matthew leaves for a time Christ's parabolic teachings, and presents a second great group of mighty works,—four, with the statement, twice made, that there were many others (Matt. 14 : 35, 36; 15 : 30).

3. We find that these four miracles are emphatically symbolic, and the only ones that Matthew seems to recount for our recognition of their (as we may say) parabolic value. (He omits Luke's record of the earlier miraculous and symbolic draught of fishes, John's record of the later one, and Mark's record of the symbolic healings of the deaf man by

the seaside and the blind man at Bethesda; and, indeed, does not again group miracles, but recounts only two more miracles wrought upon persons, to the end of his Gospel, though he says (Matt. 19 : 2; 21 : 14) that there were many.) The first three weeks of the year are given to the study of these symbolic miracles.

4. We find in this record of John's execution this relation also to Matthew's main design: That it crowns the rejection of the old dispensation, as the crucifixion crowns the rejection of the New. It is the beginning of the end,—the beginning of the actual verification of the charge, still fresh from Christ's lips, of the double-sidedness of that generation's hardness and unbelief; rejecting John because he came in the violence and austerity of Elijah, and Jesus because he did not, but put violent methods utterly away, and offered a dispensation wherein God demands "mercy, and not sacrifice."

But John the Baptist is never a mere landmark, least of all here. He is always a beacon-fire. I find but little to say upon the awful crime that is made our New Year's lesson. No added words can make the deed or its horrid doers more dreadfully eloquent than they are in the record we have. That record ever since, and still to-day, preaches the great root-principle of the gospel,—the purchase of eternal spiritual victory at the price of temporal material defeat.

I put aside all obvious moralizing save this: Killing is of doubtful expediency enough in the case of a bad man; but the imperishability of truth and righteousness makes one thing sure,—that the poorest way in the world to get rid of a good man is to kill him. We speak of the corrupting and destructive power of sin. I believe it can be overstated. It is the very root of Christ's divine philosophy that sins, unrepented, and unmet by other sins to mate with, perish like the scattered brands of a fire. What effect, save of warning, is there left to-day in the crime of Herod and Herodias? But the indomitable righteousness of the murdered John has strengthened millions for life's battle, and will strengthen millions yet unborn. The destructive power of sin is as nothing beside the constructive power of self-renunciation for righteousness' sake.

TEACHING HINTS.

BY A. F. SCHAUFFLER, D.D.

Herod and John the Baptist; or, A Coward Beheads a Hero.—Things are upside down in this world. Sin has upset them. Otherwise our heading for to-day's lesson would not be true. But true it is. And the effort to set things right side up again has cost many a hero his life. Part of John's work consisted in the effort to straighten that which was crooked, and right that which was wrong. In this work he came across Herod the tetrarch. It made little difference to John who stood before him. Pharisee, Sadducee, soldier, tax-gatherer, ruler,—all were one to him. Since the fear of God was before his eyes, all other fear vanished. Between Herod and John there was little in common. Their whole make-up was different. Look for a few moments at Herod.

Herod was a Coward.—This is proved by the fact that he imprisoned John at all; for he liked John, heard him gladly, and at times even did what John told him to do. But when John offended Herodias, and she instigated Herod to imprison this bold reformer, Herod had not the moral courage to say "No." He was afraid of Herodias, and bowed before her imperious will. But again he was a coward, as is shown by his fear of the people. For Herodias's sake, he would fain have killed John at once; but then there were the people, with whom John was popular. Lest they should turn away from their loyalty to the tetrarch, he restrained himself, and in some way or other temporarily pacified his enraged wife. But, once more, Herod was a coward, because he was afraid of those who sat at meat with him. Their opinion he valued, and, lest they should think him inconsistent, he fulfilled his rash promise. For fear of a woman he imprisoned a just man. For fear of the people he refused to kill him; and yet, for fear of some other people, he went ahead and murdered him. Finally, in verse 2 of the lesson, we think we discern fear again; for his superstitious mind persuades him that the murdered man has actually arisen from the dead.

Contrast with this coward the hero John. John was a hero, because he dared to do right. To him the face of a ruler was no intimidation. Royalty was no shield behind which any could hide from his rebuke. Like John Knox and Latimer, he feared the face of no man. In prison he was the same undaunted reformer that he had been in the wilderness; and could we have a record of the way in which he met his tragic end, we doubt not it would agree well with his life. Even to think of such a man is like a moral turn. As a cool north wind after a heated day braces the nerves, and infuses new vigor into the system, so the story of such lives seems to brace us for new deeds of duty, from which before we may have shrunk. . . .

Look now again at Herod. Call attention to his troubled conscience. He had a conscience, for he did many things that John told him he ought to do. What these things were we are not told, but apparently they fell into the catalogue of moral deeds. In this Herod was like many in our time. They have consciences that speak out with unmistakable

voice. They often obey their inward monitor. Good impulses gain the day not unfrequently. So long as the sacrifice required by conscience is not too great, they obey its behests. While some John is with them to give them moral backbone, they walk tolerably upright. Under his impulse they make considerable progress, and hear his words gladly. Yes in this respect there are many Herods still living. But note! Then came a crucial time, when John's injunctions and Herod's inclinations collided violently. Now was the time of testing, when the strength of Herod's conscience was to be tried. It was the supreme moment of his life. Had he decided right in this case, there is no telling to what further heights of moral victory he might not have risen. But he failed. There was his Waterloo! Inclination did strong battle with conscience, and won the day! After that the further result was a mere matter of accident. How many are like this cowardly tetrarch in this respect also! . . .

Notice, finally, Herod's unavailing regret. He was sorry, genuinely sorry. But he had gone too far to retrace his steps. When he first yielded to Herodias, he had burned his boats behind him. Now one step, more or less, was a small matter; and though he was sorry to be forced to take the final step, he was more ashamed not to take it. In his fear lest he should be thought a coward, he became doubly cowardly, and pushed madly ahead. How true a picture this of many a young man! The first step in sin involves a second. That calls for a third; and though the young man regrets the consequences of his first action, he is now driven on by a force over which he apparently has no control. Events are now stronger than he, and push him remorselessly ahead. He is entangled by his own past deeds, and his sorrow avails him nothing now. And so he plunges on to his final ruin.

If we were teaching a young ladies' class, we would not let this opportunity pass, without calling attention to the influence of woman in the affairs of this world. Jezebel making a murderer out of weak Ahab; and Herodias doing the same thing for her husband, and involving her own daughter in the plot,—surely these are striking cases of the evil a woman can work. On the other hand, Hannah, consecrating Samuel to the Lord, and thus giving to Israel one of her greatest prophets, and Salome, bringing up two such boys as James and John, prove how woman's influence may bless countless generations in future centuries. This girl of our lesson danced well, but it was for Satan. How much she might have wrought, had her beauty and talent been devoted to the Lord, who shall say?

HINTS FOR THE PRIMARY TEACHER.

BY FAITH LATIMER.

What the King Heard.—Would not a king be likely to hear of what happened in his own kingdom? The king or ruler over Galilee was the son of the one who was king when Jesus was born. What was his name? Matthew calls him the tetrarch, for so the Romans called a ruler; but Mark calls him king, as the Jews did. Herod heard of the fame of Jesus. What were some of the wonderful works Jesus had been doing? Were Jesus' words spoken, or his works done, in secret? Did many people follow to see and hear? No wonder, then, that the story was told over and over, and the news came to the palace and to King Herod and his officers. Everybody talked of the mighty works of Jesus, and some said, "He is a prophet." For a long time there had been no prophets in the Jewish nation such as Moses or Elijah or Isaiah, and many people now said of Jesus, "He is one of the prophets."

What the King Said.—He talked with his servants. Would they be ready to talk about Jesus to the king? Would any of them dare to call him Christ, or say that he was the promised one who had come to save his people? Nobody can tell how many or how few in the king's household may have been friends of Jesus; but there were some who believed in him, and served him. One of his officers, the steward of his house, was named Chuza; and his wife Joanna was one of the women who loved Jesus, and gladly gave of their own money and goods to supply Jesus' wants as a man, and a poor man who had no home of his own. There was a man named Mansen, who had been brought up with Herod, his adopted brother, who was afterwards a Christian teacher; and so when Herod talked with his servants, perhaps some were glad to tell of the wonderful works of Jesus. As he heard, Herod was afraid, and said: "It is John, whom I beheaded: 'he is risen from the dead.'" He felt so guilty and afraid that even to his servants he confessed, "I murdered him;" and he was troubled lest the mighty works he heard of might become some punishment for him. Had Herod really been the murderer of John? Who came to prepare the way of the Lord? What was that John called? Whom did he baptize?

What the King Did.—"Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison." John had not been afraid to preach before the king and a wicked queen, and tell them plainly of their sins. Herod knew that John was a good and holy man, and he thought much of what he heard, and he "heard him gladly." But the wicked queen named Herodias was angry, and would have killed John, but she

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Giving, not receiving, is the distinctive joy of Christmas. And giving carries a larger blessing than receiving. Children are entitled to the fullest share of Christmas joys and Christmas blessing; therefore children ought to be permitted and instructed to give gifts at the Christmas season. No Sunday-school fills its place or does its work without securing to its scholars the privilege of being glad Christmas givers.

Often the most delicious joys of life are those that come upon us unexpectedly. Their value is enhanced by their being a surprise to us. To light unexpectedly, when we are sternly at work, down in some rough and gloomy ravine of daily toil, upon a lovely wild-flower, where we least thought of ever finding anything so pleasing, gives a more genuine and a fresher delight than when we at home in our leisure hours go out and pluck a beautiful rose from a bush which we ourselves have planted. To come incidentally upon some unpremeditated and fresh token of friendship, some indirect evidence of success in our life work, some little child's unlooked-for manifestation of affection, some unexpected disclosure of sympathy or appreciation on the part of one whose commendation has an exceptional value, is worth far more to us than much formal recognition, or anticipated triumph, or elaborately prearranged scheme of

enjoyment. How easily, too, we can bring this joy into the hearts of our friends by a considerate use of the little things and unexpected opportunities that are always presenting themselves for our improving!

That which is of little ultimate consequence to us God often withholds from us, in order that we may seek that which is of greater consequence to us. He limits the natural vision in order that we may acquire and employ the spiritual vision. Whatever transcends our powers of comprehension is to us awe-striking and stupendous, whether it be in the realm of the infinitely great or the infinitely small. We feel our own littleness and insignificance in the contemplation of the limitless mysteries of the microscopic world as well as of the telescopic universe. Look which way we will, the stretch is toward infinity. The number of atoms in a drop of water is as truly beyond our appreciation as is the number of heavenly bodies. Man sees the drop of water, but fails to perceive the atoms that compose it; or he sees the countless suns and planets, but fails to perceive the universe of which they are parts. But God sees alike the universe and the atom. And while God has not given to us physical or mental power to apprehend either the great universe or the little atom, yet he has given to us spiritual power to apprehend Him who alone comprehends all and is Lord of all. If we could not ask more, neither ought we to be satisfied with less.

A lofty ideal is essential to the highest living. He who would make progress for himself, or who would help others upward, must have clearly before his mind the ideal of the best conceivable attainment. But while a man must perceive that ideal for himself, it is not always wise for him to disclose it to others. If he would be to others a means of inspiration or of instruction, all his words and acts must point in the direction of his ideal; but they are not necessarily to point it out in its explicitness. When Moses would reform the Hebrew view of the marriage relation, he made regulations in the direction of the ideal standard of marriage in its pristine purity; but because of the hardness of the people's hearts, through their wrong education up to that time, he refrained from exacting of them all that would have been their duty had they been capable of perceiving it as such. So, again, Jesus withheld some truths from his disciples, which they were not yet able to bear, while all that he said to them was in the direction of the greatest truths known to himself. And so it must be with every wise teacher and leader. He needs to have his highest ideal ever before himself; but it may not be expedient to bring its dazzling brilliancy immediately before the dull eyes of those whose gaze upward he is lovingly directing.

Liability to unforeseen interruption is a most annoying liability to every one who diligently pursues his vocation in life. Interruptions are stops of our train not provided for by the time-table; they dissipate the accumulated momentum of our progress, which would be almost sufficient to carry us on by itself. They not only throw us behind time for a few minutes, but by our loss of those few minutes we may be prevented from making connections at the junctions, and thus be cut off entirely from the reach-

ing of our destination, while the danger of collisions in our engagements, and the consequent wreck in our projects, is thereby increased. And yet the unavoidable interruptions in our life's work are providential, and therefore work together with all other things for our highest good in God's service. The callers who throw us off the track, or the severe sickness which brings us to a stop, may have been sent to put us in a better place than the track we were on, or to reveal to us that we were going wrong when we thought we were going right. The interposition of internal or external difficulties, of a refractory intellect, or of inclement weather, between ourselves and our object, may be the very best thing for us. We may need to be stimulated, or we may need to be hindered. In fact, life's continuity needs to be broken up and interrupted for us. We are to be not one-sided, but many-sided. We ought not to desire to devote ourselves so exclusively to the pursuit of any one object as that thereby we shut all others out. Hence it is that interruptions, even though they be unpleasant and annoying at the time, are often blessings in disguise.

A LESSON FROM THE POSTAL CARDS.

No one man is just like all other men. Nor is any one man wholly unlike all other men. Yet many a man makes the mistake of thinking, either that everybody is just like himself, or that nobody is. As a matter of fact, every person is typical of a large class of persons, while no person stands as the type of all persons.

Not all men have the same ideal; nor have all men the same spirit, purpose, and tastes. At the same time no man is absolutely unique in his ideal, his spirit, and his tastes. That which pleases one man is sure to please other men for the same reason that it pleases him. On the other hand, the very reason which makes it attractive to him is sure to make it repellent to a great many others. But men generally do not realize this truth; and, as a consequence, they cannot judge themselves or their fellows fairly, nor are they competent to provide for others that which is suited to the needs or the wants of their fellows. He who admires yellow and detests red needs to know that, while there are some who agree with him so far, there are others who detest yellow and admire red. Unless he understands this, he would not succeed in wisely stocking a milliner's show-room. He who thinks that animal food is the best staple of diet for man, and that vegetables are only for the lower order of animals, must know that there are those who take just the opposite view of those two kinds of food, if he would provide successfully for a hotel table. And it is much the same in making provision for the wants of the mind as for those of the palate or of the eye. The matter and style of the preacher, the author, the editor, within the realm of truth, are sure to please some and to displease others for one and the same reason. That which is wanted above all else by some, is not wanted at all by others. Hence, peculiarly, the need of variety in the supply of lesson-helps and aids to study and work in the field of Bible instruction.

Fresh illustrations in this line of thought are furnished in a series of postal-card comments on the various lesson-helps supplied in the columns of *The*

The other great danger threatening Israel in peaceful times is that it may lose its sense of dependence on Jehovah, and yield to surrounding idolatries. Therefore the last act of the assembled nation, as represented by its elders, is the renewal of the covenant. They are gathered on a site sacred by associations with Abram's tent and Jacob's purifying of his household from idolatry beneath the mountains which had echoed to the blessings and curses of the law. Joshua represses inconsiderate ardor, and draws to a fixed purpose, by setting forth the requirements of God's service, which are based upon his sovereign holiness and jealous love. He puts plainly the severe retribution which must come on those who take his vows and break them. Such dissuaves are persuasive to generous hearts. They are also the imperative duty of all who seek to attract men to God's service. His recruiting officers are to hide nothing and exaggerate nothing. Blind vows are not accepted. Lightly made resolves are soon blown away. Straw catches fire quickly, and dies as soon. Coal takes longer to kindle, and is harder to put out.

The fourth group carries on the story into the dark times of apostasy, misery, repentance, and deliverance, which make the epoch of the judges. We have first, in Lesson 9, the general outline of these dreary centuries, in which that miserable round was repeated over and over again. It is the prelude to the whole book, the general formula of which its incidents are the examples. As regularly as the march of the seasons came these four phases,—idolatry, servitude, deliverance, transient return to God; and then idolatry once more, and at its heels, in due order, the others. Such strange constancy in the sequence sets in a wonderful light man's persistent evil and God's patient love, which never ceases to toil and hope for our recovery, and never refuses to welcome our return. Sin is long drawn out, but God's love overlaps it.

In Lesson 10, we learn that God does not need many, in order to conquer, but that he does need the few to be fit. His cause is generally in the hands of a minority, and counting heads is not only a fallacious test of truth, but misleads as to the probabilities of victory, but the little band must be a picked band. God can do without numbers, but not without character. The band has to pick itself, by a self-selecting test, which is an unconscious self-revelation. First the cowards are got rid of; for, if a man is afraid, and lets his fear eclipse his faith, God can win no victories with him. Then the self-indulgent are got rid of; for if a man thinks first of enjoyment and second of work, and had rather will his full of the world's delights than taste them moderately and without interruption of his march, he is not fit for God's weapon. Brave confidence of success, willingness to face peril, rigid Spartan simplicity and moderation,—these are the requisites for God's "forlorn hope," to whom the honor is entrusted of storming the citadel. They may be few, but they are fit.

The history and end of Samson proclaims the converse lesson of how self-indulgence drains God's champion of his God-given might, and how for such a one, blindness, bondage, and ignominious toil are his wages from the world to which he has yielded. But in his misery the blinded warrior bewails and abhors his desecration of his divinely given power, and it gradually steals back into his shrunken muscles. Repentance is ever possible, and, with repentance, some return of abused gifts, to brighten death, if not to gladden life.

These pages from the rough and bloody annals of the judges would not be complete without the sweet relief and contrast of the story of Ruth. In it we see that the flood of sin and war had not swept over all the land and all the years. We have a picture, which evermore lives in the hearts of men, of the true heroism of a gentle woman, a witness of the purity and blessedness of the domestic life in many an unknown home in Israel, an early gathered sheaf and first-fruits, reaped at "the beginning of barley harvest," and prophesying of the gathering in of the Gentiles, a lesson to Israel of its calling among the nations, and a rebuke of exclusiveness and hatred. Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson might seem to teach that Israel was set to be God's sword, Naomi and Ruth teach the better lesson that it was appointed to be God's torch, raying out the light of his name into the darkness.

Manchester, England.

REVIEW TEACHING HINTS.

BY A. F. SCHAUFFLER, D.D.

Trust and triumph, or distrust and defeat,—the whole history of Israel was an illustration of these two things. The inspired record strives at all times so to set forth the history of the chosen people as to prove that trust was always followed by triumph, and distrust was always followed by defeat. This trust was not that blind and unfounded trust that Israel had when, in spite of their gross disobedience, they trusted in the mere physical presence of the ark, and were consequently worsted by the Philistines. It was that trust that was proved by their obedience to all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord their God.

Taking this as the key-note of the lessons of the quarter,

we may with much profit see its application and illustration in the story of the past twelve lessons.

Lesson 1.—Here we find the statement of the principle. As we studied this lesson, we realized how God was careful to reiterate the injunction to obedience, and to promise victory only on this condition. No other command seems to have been so insisted upon as this one. Remember—remember—remember was the constant refrain. All the other lessons are but illustrations of how Israel remembered, or forgot, the Divine command.

Lesson 2.—Trust, absolute and implicit, is here exemplified. There was no call for Israel to do anything but trust and go forward. They did all that was required of them. The rest God wrought by his own power. And the result was triumph.

Lesson 3.—The memorial stones,—what were these but witnesses to the sure foundation on which so far the people had been building! They set forth to succeeding generations the fact that God had not been slack concerning his promise, but had fulfilled it to the letter. They stood as an encouragement to all succeeding generations to trust obediently to the word of the Lord, in the sure confidence that he would always be faithful to his word.

Lesson 4.—Once more we see the result of a complete faith in the bare word of God. All mere reason was against the carrying out of such a plan for the destruction of the walls of the city. But in spite of this the people followed the word of God wholly, as Caleb had done before, and the result was the same as they had experienced at a former time, triumph.

Lesson 5.—This lesson teaches the second of our headings. In it we have recorded the only defeat which Israel suffered during the lifetime of Joshua. Achan, who would not believe the word of God with regard to the spoil, put forth his hand, took, hid, lied. As a result, the army of Israel was defeated, and not until the sin was atoned for were they again able to stand before their enemies.

Lesson 6.—That principle which we have seen applied to the people as a whole, we see in this lesson applied to Caleb as an individual. His whole life had been one of supreme trust. He wholly followed the Lord, in days of darkness and difficulty as well as in days of prosperity, and the result we see in this lesson; for, though long delayed, his reward yet came at the end, while the reward of those who had made the hearts of the people to melt never came at all.

Lesson 7.—In this we may see the principle illustrated in a different way. The people, long before they had crossed the Jordan, trusted God that they would one day reach that land, and were willing to help their brethren gain possession of the land on the west side of the river. Then, in turn, those who already had their lands believed that God would give their brethren the victory over the inhabitants of the land. In this faith they crossed over and gave battle to the Canaanites. They were rewarded for this faith; and now we see them returning to their families in peace, with the blessings of their brethren and their God as a rich reward.

Lesson 8.—This is another of those instances which came more than once in the history of God's people, when they renewed their covenant, and again reminded themselves of the truth of that which we have been considering to-day in this review. Israel was prone to forget that her true safety lay in obedience, and therefore it was a good thing for her to bring the fact to her own remembrance time and again.

Lesson 9.—The whole Book of Judges is a repetition of the truth that righteousness exalteth a nation, but that sin is a reproach to any people. As often as Israel sinned, so often she fell under the power of her enemies, and as often as she cried in earnest to God, and repented of her sins, so often did he raise up deliverers for her rescue. If only she had learned this lesson once for all!

Lesson 10.—A grand specimen of a trusting man and a trusting army, and, of course, a grand triumph. No more conspicuous example of faith could be found in the whole Old Testament history.

Lesson 11.—Now the reverse of the picture is again shown. Samson was stronger than Gideon, and in single combat could easily have worsted him. Yet he meets his death through the machinations of a woman. Sin it was that weakened him first, and then he became the sport of all who wanted to toy with him.

Lesson 12.—As beautiful a lesson on faith as the preceding one was sad,—personal, this time, also, and not national. Women, this time, and not warriors, set us the example. In fact, the faith of some of the Old Testament women is grand enough to be put alongside of that of Abraham, and not to suffer by contrast.

Now let the teacher prayerfully try to make the scholars understand that the same principle holds true to-day, and that the ultimate victory will surely be on the side of him who exercises unbounded faith in the word and promise of God. He it is who at the end, having endured, will be saved, and not saved only, but given power and an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

New York City.

A LAYMAN'S REVIEW HINTS.

BY GEORGE W. CABLE.

After we have reviewed the titles of the quarter's twelve lessons, have grouped and sorted their human characters, have recalled their various scenes and events, and have still saved enough of the lesson hour or half-hour (as we are in duty bound to do), to sum up the great principles and precepts learned, what are they, and of what use are they to us who have a gospel knowledge of God and of the daily life acceptable to him?

They are of use to us, first, because they are set forth in a literary form, and in scenes and events, so widely different from those of the Gospels and Epistles. Second, because their historical setting so greatly increases our interest in the Gospels and Epistles, with which, notwithstanding their difference, they are really in harmony. And, third, because of the very incompleteness, and even dimness, by which they limit our view to the mere mass and outline of the gospel's great, few, first truths and duties. Have you not seen the artist lean back and peer at his sketch through half-closed eyes? He was shutting out the minutest details; simplifying, for a moment, his subject and his view. So here.

Here we see, for instance, man recognized not merely as faulty in judgment, but as a sinner against the one, true, holy God; yet though a sinner, "in no wise cast out" unless, and only while, in his settled choice he prefers to be a sinner. We see here God's favor gained and held on the simple gospel terms of penitence, faith, and the desire and effort to obey.

Every event in the twelve lessons, wellnigh every event in the whole record of Israel's history under Joshua and the judges, has its principal value in its relation to the covenant. And as in the gospel, so here, the inexorable condition of a heavenly Father's favor is not the covenant perfectly kept, but the constantly broken covenant faithfully and constantly renewed; the daily renewed repentance, dependence, choice, and effort; not in sentiment only, nor in outward performance only, but in both at once; in sentiment and in fact; "in spirit and in truth." Yes, and in love, out beyond the shalt and the shalt not of law; as we see in the gospel according to Ruth.

But, says some student, with troubled face, the trouble is, that, while there are these teachings in harmony with the gospel, these gospel undertones, there are also other commands and precepts utterly and appallingly in discord to the gospel idea of God and of the laws of mercy and love between man and man. Stop, friend; you go too far; commands, if you please, but not precepts. Mark it! Nowhere in Scripture does God appear uttering a precept contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Moses, or Deborah, or David, may say it, but you shall not find it on the lips of God. Commands, yes. But, insists the troubled student, isn't it the same thing? If God commands a thing, does he not inevitably commend that thing? Yes, but how long, and how widely? Only within the time and under the conditions necessary to the fulfilment of the command. Cut away that mast! burst in that window! knock that lunatic down! Such a command may be entirely righteous—nay, merciful—in a particular case; but it does not commend or justify the general cutting away of masts, smashing of windows, or knocking down of lunatics.

The troubled student is silent, but he shakes his head. Presently he says, God's case and man's case are not the same. Man is limited in his resources; but are not God's resources infinite? They are not so infinite that God can violate an eternal truth. It is, to use St. Paul's phrase, "an immutable thing" that man, to be saved as a morally free and responsible being, must be put, for the time, not beyond the power of, yet beyond the operation of, God's compulsion. However God may command or persuade, by law, by precept, or by providence, he never, on earth, by absolute compulsion, destroys the freedom of moral choice in any human creature, and continues to hold him morally responsible. Now, here arises an emergency, so to speak; an inevitable necessity in the preservation of man's moral free agency, for the giving of temporary divine commands adapted to man's moral conceptions, to the shortness of his spiritual vision, to "the hardness of his heart" at a particular time and juncture. Had the Hebrew nation been morally capable of a great missionary work among the heathen nations of Palestine, missionaries, we may be sure, God would have made them. But the Israelites could not have been made missionaries in that or any other generation, except by force, and a missionary cannot be made by force. They could only save themselves from utter apostasy by destroying the heathen round about them. But nowhere do we find the destruction of the heathen made "a statute forever." God's transient commands righteously and mercifully stoop to man's sinful incapacities, but always stoop to lift him out of them. God's eternal commands yield nothing to man's sinfulness, but are absolutely faithful to God's own eternal perfections.

Moreover, God, condescending to man's weakness and hardness by transitory legislation, never—according to this very history that we have been studying—put such legislation into operation without first, and as if in divine protest, setting forth his own, better, holy, and eternal way, same

times in plain commandments, as on Sinai, sometimes in dim but beautiful symbolism, as in the week-long procession that bore the ark of the covenant and blew the trumpets of jubilee around doomed Jericho; or, as in the torch-bearing and trumpet-blowing of Gideon and his three hundred.

Do these thoughts give you any light? Do they satisfy you? Do they not satisfy you? In either case remember, dear reader, they are but a layman's hints.

Erie, Pa.

REVIEW HINTS FOR THE PRIMARY TEACHER.

BY FAITH LATIMER.

One valuable form of review for little children is to give them a knowledge of the individuality of Scripture characters, helping them to see what in each is worthy of being an example or a warning. This quarter presents a good opportunity for this method, as there are not too many prominent persons to allow of a distinct idea of each. Write the names on the blackboard, and draw out from the class all that they can remember about each one. We began with one who was called, like Moses, "the servant of the Lord."

Joshua.—Of what people was he to be the leader? Eight of our lessons are connected with his life and words. We began with the words which the Lord spoke to him, and through him to the people. Over and over the words came, "Be strong and of a good courage." What does the name "Joshua" mean? If he was to be the savior of his people, he must be ready to lead them wherever the Lord should tell them to go. God said, "I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." What book was not to depart out of his mouth? Who wrote down, before he died, all the things that God said Joshua and the people were to do? Joshua obeyed these commands; all through the Book of Joshua we are told that the people did "as the Lord commanded Moses." Will God give us good success if we keep all the commands that he has given?

What river flowed between the people and the Promised Land? Was Joshua afraid when God told him to lead the people over it? How did they cross? What was the sign of God's presence with them? What did they set up as a memorial of his love and care? What promise has he given about passing through the waters? What walled city was in their way? How does a golden text say the walls of Jericho fell down? Why was not the little city of Ai taken just as easily? Whose advice did Joshua forget to ask, before he sent his soldiers up to attack it? Who had sinned? What had he done? Is it any better for us now to keep from God what we ought to give to him?

After the fighting was over, and God had kept his promise to give them the land, how many tribes did Joshua send back over the Jordan? Where had their wives and little ones been waiting for them during the war? What does a golden text tell us to bear? These men had done their duty in helping their brethren to conquer the land; what did Joshua tell them to "take diligent heed to do" in their new homes? Was Joshua afraid that they would forget the commandments of the Lord, away over on the other side of the river? Joshua was just as anxious to help others to keep the law as he was to keep it himself. Which lesson tells us how he assembled the people together to hear his last words? What did he say God would do if they forsook him? What did all the people promise? What did Joshua set up in their sight under an oak-tree to be a witness? How old was Joshua when he died? We learned about another old man, Joshua's companion and friend.

Caleb.—Who sent twelve spies up to search out the land? Which two brought back a good report? What city did God promise to Caleb, because he "wholly followed the Lord"? What kind of people lived in those high-walled cities? Who would help Caleb to drive them out? Was Joshua glad to give his old friend the reward that he had earned? Will God fail to give us our reward, if we follow him as Caleb did? Who has gone before to prepare us "many mansions"?

Gideon.—After Joshua died, the people forgot his words, and "forsook the Lord." How did God punish them? When their enemies were many and strong, what young man was raised up to be a judge and to deliver them? How do you know that Gideon was humble? He was timid for himself; was he strong in the Lord? With how many soldiers did he conquer the Midianites? How were they chosen? Do you think Gideon's name should be in the list of brave and true heroes?

Samson.—What strong man was in trouble, and blind? Why was he in a prison house? What kind of companions brought him into all his trouble? Is it ever safe to sin? Does Samson seem to have repented, as his strength came again? Where did he pray that last prayer? What is said about "the dead which he slew at his death"?

Ruth.—Who went over into the land of Moab to live, with her husband and two sons? What were the names of their wives? When Naomi bade them return, which one went back? Which one chose to go with Naomi? What did she say about Naomi's God and people? To what city did they

come back to live? How did God bless her in her home and family? What king was descended from Ruth? What other King, the son of David, was born in Ruth's city?

Several of our lessons have been of great congregations of people. Let the children recall and describe the great meetings. Tell how the millions of people stood by the Jordan in sight of the ark; about the thousands that marched around Jericho; how the multitude at Shechem listened to Joshua's parting words; how the great company in the house of Dagon watched Samson making sport. Other lessons are about quiet conversations of individuals. To Joshua alone came the words of the Captain of the Lord's host; to Gideon alone the order to choose and to conquer; Ruth was alone with Naomi when she decided to follow her mother-in-law. Are there lessons for us alike in the doings of the great congregations and the story of each life? Encourage practical answers, and impress the truth they show, as you ask, How would you wish to be like Joshua? like Caleb? like Gideon? like Ruth?

Louisville, Ky.

REVIEW QUESTION HINTS.

BY EUGENE TAPPAN.

1. Why was Joshua made leader? What was given him to do? How did he become successful? What work have you to do?
2. How was Jordan an obstacle? What was Joshua's faith? Tell how the people crossed. How are you to meet difficulties?
3. What memorial was placed in Gilgal? What would children ask their parents? How would the fathers answer? Why should I remember God's mercies?
4. How did Jericho seem impregnable? Tell what Israel did. Tell what God did? How may I overcome the world?
5. What was Achan's sin? What defeat did Israel suffer? How were these two things connected? Why should I keep from sin?
6. How long had Caleb waited? What was given to him? Why was it a fit gift? What reward is ours, if faithful?
7. Who had lands in Gilead? Who had lands in Canaan? How did all help in fighting? Why should I be unselfish?
8. What was Joshua's first great work? What partition did he make? What was his religious work? Why should I serve God?
9. What nation worshiped the true God? What was that nation's besetting sin? How did the judges help the people? Why should I beware of unbelief?
10. How was Gideon's army twice reduced? How did Gideon attack the Midianites? What lesson did God thus teach? What can our faith do?
11. What was Samson's mission? Show his forlorn state in prison? What was his last great act? How shall I keep spiritual strength?
12. Why were Naomi and Ruth friends? Repeat some of Ruth's words. What beautiful points in the story? How may I make religion attractive?

Winchester, Mass.

TEMPERANCE LESSON.

LESSON TEXT.

(Num. 6: 1-4.)

COMMON VERSION.

- 1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
- 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord;
- 3 He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried.
- 4 All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk.

REVISED VERSION.

- 1 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall make a special vow, the vow of a Nazarite, to separate himself unto the Lord;
- 2 He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat fresh grapes or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the grape-vine, from the kernels even to the husk.

¹That is, one separated or consecrated. ²Or, consecrate. ³Or, consecration. ⁴Or, Nazarite-ship. The American Committee would substitute "Jehovah" for "the Lord" in verse 1.

CRITICAL NOTES.

BY PROFESSOR W. HENRY GREEN, D.D., LL.D.

Vows of various descriptions are recognized in the Mosaic law, pledging the surrender to the Lord of persons or of property, and regulations are given respecting them (Lev. 27; Num. 30). They are also mentioned in the sacred history, both before and after the time of Moses (Gen. 28: 20; 1 Sam. 1: 11; Psa. 66: 13, 14). The Nazarite vow, which is described in this chapter, was one of peculiar character and of special sacredness.

Verse 1.—*And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying: It is here*

explicitly declared that the following regulations were given by God to Moses. Any critical or archaeological theories which would assign this law to a later period, and maintain that the institution of the Nazarites originated after the settlement of Israel in Canaan, is directly in the face of the plain statement here made.

Verse 2.—*When either man or woman shall make a special vow:* The particular kind of vow intended is explained in the words that immediately follow.—*The vow of a Nazarite:* The word means, as it is explained in the margin of the Revised Version, "one separated or consecrated;" that is, specially set apart to the service of God. It did not involve, necessarily, residence at the sanctuary, or any functions connected with its worship; nor did it require monastic seclusion, withdrawal from family ties, nor the interruption of the ordinary occupations or intercourse of life. But the person who was bound by such a vow was regarded, during the period of its continuance, as consecrated and devoted to God. Amos 2: 11 speaks of it as a special favor to Israel that the Lord raised up young men among them as Nazarites. Samuel and Samson, who were Nazarites, were as such devoted to the service of God on behalf of his people, the latter in contending against their foes, the former in laboring for their spiritual welfare.—*To separate himself unto Jehovah:* There were three requirements laid upon the Nazarite, by which his consecration was externally indicated; namely, abstinence from wine or from any product of the vine, suffering the hair to grow untrimmed, and not allowing himself to contract ceremonial defilement from contact with a dead body. Ordinarily the vow was for a limited time; according to the Talmud, this could never be less than thirty days. It would seem that when the term was extended over the whole life there was some modification in the requirements. Samson did not shun contact with the dead (Judg. 14: 19); and abstinence from wine and strong drink, though spoken of in connection with the mothers of both Samson and Samuel (Judg. 13: 4; 1 Sam. 1: 15), is not expressly mentioned as enjoined upon or observed by themselves. This may perhaps, however, be presumed, as nothing is said to the contrary.

Verse 3.—*He shall separate himself from wine:* As priests were forbidden to drink wine when they went into the sanctuary (Lev. 10: 9), because they should be in full possession of their faculties when engaged in sacred functions, and they should be especially guarded at such times not to indulge in anything that might obscure the action of their powers; so the Nazarite was required to abstain from wine so long as he was under this vow of special consecration. When the period of his vow had expired, he might again drink wine (v. 20). While the Scriptures do not forbid the use of wine, they do forbid drunkenness as a gross sin, and one which is extremely displeasing to God. Intoxication debases and degrades our nature; it for the time destroys the reason and the moral sense, and reduces man to the level of a brute. A pledge to abstain from all that is intoxicating, while not enjoined as universally obligatory, finds explicit sanction in the Nazarite vow. He who so abstains is thereby freed from all risk of ever coming under the power of intoxicating drink himself, and gains an influence, which he could not otherwise have, over others, to preserve them from temptation and excess. The law of Christian love in all matters of expediency is clearly laid down by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 14: 21; 1 Cor. 8: 13.—*And strong drink:* Liquor prepared from barley, dates, honey, or any similar substances.—*Vinegar of wine:* Sour wine, or any product of acid fermentation.—*Any liquor of grapes:* Any drink prepared from grapes. Nor must he eat either grapes or raisins, nor, as verse 4 declares, anything whatever connected with the grapevine. His abstinence was symbolically intensified by extending it to everything that stood in any relation to wine, however remote.

Princeton Theological Seminary.

TEACHING POINTS.

BY BISHOP H. W. WARREN, D.D., LL.D.
DENIAL FOR DOMINION.

It should be expected that a follower of the Almighty should do some things more than other men. He should master his appetites, desires, and passions, be king of himself in order to be king of others. He should be king of his own faculties to get a habit of empire. If one would do a great thing, whatever it may be, let him begin with self-denial. Shall Catiline harden himself by cold and hunger for Roman mastery, and a Christian give up to softness and needless self-indulgence?

If a man or a woman would separate himself or herself unto eminent service for God or man, they may get a strength of conquest by trial on themselves. They may refrain from a whole class of things suggestive of luxury, cut off all dainties of epicures and debauchees, and all symbols of sensual attractions (Hos. 3: 1).

The ambitious athlete eats some things and refrains from others in order to be strong,—does it with pleasure. There tingles in his fibres of strength a far richer joy than the tingles of intoxication in his weakness. Let the Christian athlete, who would run the race set before him, who would conquer the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and be raised up