

energy, of joy and boundless hope, are reduced to an ineffective feebleness. And yet it depends on our congregations whether even these things are possible. There can be no teaching by the preacher unless the congregation consents to make an effort to learn. You can help your minister by making that effort. And you will soon find your reward. There is incomparable intellectual interest as well as incomparable spiritual power in the contents of the Christian Gospel, and the heart is never likely to feel the fulness of its power if the intellect is not fascinated by its interest. Do your part, and you will find that the preacher will do his part better every year. Let him see that you are interested in his endeavours to put you in

possession of the great and real ideas of the Old and New Testament, and that your mind works with his when he is illustrating and establishing some great Christian doctrine. Talk to him about these great themes. Tell him when he has made some great subject clearer to you than it was before, when he has invested with fresh and deeper interest and fuller meaning some familiar story in Holy Scripture, or some familiar text. Tell him, too, what still remains obscure, what he has left unexplained; let him know that you not only move to the very edge and outermost boundary of his own thought, but are looking beyond, and would be glad to be led further.

Sunday School.

The International Lessons.

MONTHLY EXAMINATIONS.

QUESTIONS will be set monthly on the International Lessons. It is intended that they should serve as an Examination of each month's work after it is finished. Accordingly, the questions will be set upon the lessons of the previous month. The name, age, and address of the boy or girl must accompany the answers each time they are sent. Prizes will be given to successful Candidates every month.

EXAMINER'S REPORT FOR NOVEMBER.

1. JOHN K. CHALMERS, 4 Esslemont Avenue, Aberdeen.
2. LIZZIE J. MILNE, 32 Belvidere Street, Aberdeen.

To these Candidates Prizes have been sent by the Publisher.

Next in Order of Merit stand A. G. (Bothwell), W. C. E. (Aberdeen), J. M. S. (Perth).

EXAMINATION ON THE LESSONS FOR NOVEMBER.

(Answers must be received by December 14.)

I.

Age under eighteen.

1. Give your opinion of the character of Absalom.
2. How did word come to David of Absalom's death?
3. What is meant by the "Sons of Belial"; and what does David say about them?
4. Why was Solomon's choice a good one?

II.

Age under thirteen.

1. How did Absalom gain the hearts of the people?
2. Who was Ahimaaaz?
3. What do you think of Solomon's choice?

The International Lessons for December.

SHORT NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

I.

December 1.—1 Kings viii. 54-63.

It will not be easy to make this lesson interesting to young children. Not that it is hard to understand, but they will feel a lack of definiteness about it.

Verse 56.—"By the hand of Moses" is a common Hebrew expression, simply meaning "by". See verse 53.

Verse 59.—"Nigh unto the Lord," that He may keep them in remembrance.

Verse 61.—"Perfect." A startling word. It means "entirely, undividedly given to the Lord". The Hebrew word is *shalam*, and from the same root come Islam, the religion of "entire submission"; and Moslem, "the religious man as entirely devoted," words used by Mohammedans.

Verse 63.—The number of victims is enormous. But it was a great occasion—the dedicating of the Temple. Practically, the whole nation gathered to it, and in that climate they could do so easily, all they needed being food. So Solomon made a great feast for them, a feast which lasted seven days. In other words, he provided food for them all these days. Only the fat and some internal parts were, at a peace-offering, consumed on the altar.

This is not, strictly speaking, the Dedication of the Temple. It is the Benediction. Benediction means "speaking well" upon one. We often hear it called the "Blessing". The children are familiar with the minister's benediction: let them repeat it. Refer them to two beautiful benedictions—one near the beginning of the Bible (Num. vi. 22-27), and one near the end (the last two verses of Jude).

Solomon's "Blessing" was Peace and Rest. Very beautiful. Children prefer David, the man of war, to Solomon, the man of peace; and it is true that Solomon abused the blessings of peace; but war is no blessing, at the best only a stern necessity. David craved for peace and rest; and God promised it. Now, says Solomon, he has kept His promise, as He always does. But it was a promise older than the days of David. It was as old as the days of Moses (read Deut. xii. 9, 10, and xxviii. 1-14); and, although it seemed to be long in coming, it had come at last.

Why had it been long in coming? Why had there been wars and murders all these ages from Joshua to Solomon? Solomon himself tells us. God does not grant His blessings to those who disobey Him. It was because the children of Israel disobeyed that they died in the wilderness and never reached the plenty and the rest of the land of Canaan. And in David's own life, it was his great sin that prevented war from ever departing from him. It is "to them that love God" that all things work together for good. God promises, but with a condition—that our heart be "perfect with the Lord, to keep His commandments".

Rest is a blessing. It is not absence of work. God "rested from all His works," and yet Jesus says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work". "There remaineth a rest for the people of God," and yet "they *serve* Him day and night in His temple". It is rest from worry, not from work, from crosses, from want, and from remorse of conscience. So lead on to the Christian rest—the only rest possible for us—"My rest," as Jesus calls it. Leave them with the beautiful promise, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest".

Browning's poem in the November EXPOSITORY TIMES should be read. But does he not miss the meaning of the work that is rest? For rest and peace compare the two texts, "They shall enter into My rest," "My peace I give unto you". Here is an authentic anecdote of President Lincoln not generally known. In April, 1863, he went, along with Mrs. Lincoln and some friends, on an excursion to the Army of the Potomac, then lying off Fredericksburg. "The President," says Mr. Noah Brooks, who was of the party, "enjoyed his trip very much, or, at least, he appeared to. But one day, when one of the party said that the rest was good for him, he shook his head dubiously, and replied, 'I don't know about the *rest*, as you call it. I suppose it is good for the body. But the tired part of me is inside and out of reach.'"

II.

December 8.—I Kings x. 1-13.

The Queen of Sheba.

An episode in the history of Solomon which cannot fail to catch the children's attention. As the Lesson is read, clear up such points as these:—

1. Where did this queen come from? The Ethiopians (the Soudanese, where General Gordon perished) and the Arabians both lay claim to her. The name settles it in favour of the latter. Sheba was undoubtedly a part of Arabia. She was an Asiatic, not an African. "Spices (frankincense), gold, and precious stones" are products of Arabia, not of Egypt or Ethiopia.

2. It is difficult to understand "the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord," in the first verse. Probably it means that Solomon's fame rested on, or was attached to, the name of Jehovah. His most famous action was the building of a temple to Jehovah.

3. "Hard questions," really "riddles". All ancient nations were fond of riddles, but the Arabs more than all. Whenever a wise man appeared, he was plied with knotty questions, and his wisdom gauged by his ability to solve them. Sometimes a riddle was handed down as a stock-puzzle from one generation to another. Such was the puzzle with which the Sadducees tempted Christ—the woman who had seven husbands, whose shall she be in the Resurrection?

4. "The house that he had built" is not the Temple, but his own palace. "The sitting of his servants" means the array of officers who sat at table; and "the attendance of his ministers" refers to the standing or serving of the liveried servants. Remember that "minister" really means servant or simple attendant, and never occurs in any other sense in the Auth. Version.

5. "His ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord," what is that? Some grand staircase it may be. But the word really means "burnt-offering" here. It is in 2 Chron. ix. 4, the passage parallel to this, that the word used means "ascent". There is the smallest difference between the two words in Hebrew (literally a "jot," in fact). According to the word used here, it means, "His burnt-offering which he offered in the House of the Lord". The queen may have been present at a great sacrifice.

6. The al mug tree (spelt "algum" in 2 Chron.) is believed to be sandal-wood.

When the children understand the story, and have got interested in this inquisitive Queen of Arabia, ask them to remember what is said about her in the New Testament (Matt. xii. 42; Luke xi. 31). Think of this queen rising up with us in the judgment! How far away she seems! How near she will be then! To stand by her side! But what if it be to condemn *us*? She was interested in Solomon's wisdom. Are we as greatly interested in a wiser than Solomon? Solomon was wise, but Jesus Christ is "the Wisdom of God"; all God's wisdom dwells in Him. And as for riddles, He solved those of the Pharisees, and Sadducees, and Herodians—and He alone can solve ours, that great puzzle of how to get rid of sin and gain eternal life.

There are two great sermons on this subject:—(1) "The Worth of Knowledge, or the Judgment of the Queen of Sheba," by Archdeacon Hare, in *The Mission of the Comforter*, i. 299; (2) "The Wisdom of Christ and the Wisdom of Solomon," by F. W. Robertson, of Brighton, in *The Human Race*, p. 199.

III.

December 15.—I Kings xi. 4-13.

Solomon's Fall.

EXPOSITION.—I. "Perfect," *i.e.*, devoted to Him and His cause alone. See Lesson I.

2. "Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians." Baal was the god and Ashtoreth (or Astarte) the goddess of the Phœnicians. At one time Zidon was a more important

town in Phœnicia than Tyre, though Tyre is better known to us.

3. "Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites." In verse 7 the same god is called Molech. He was an abomination indeed, for his worship consisted in human sacrifice, especially the sacrifice of little children. In 2 Chron. xxviii. 3 it is said of Ahaz that "he burnt his children in the fire after the abomination of the nations". Molech's statue is described as "made of brass, and the hands so arranged that the victim slipped from them into a fire which burned beneath".

4. "A high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab." Hills or rising grounds were favourite places for sacrifice, in the idea that thus the worshipper got nearer God. But in Israel they were not only in opposition to the central temple, but were associated with idolatry. We know nothing about the worship of Chemosh.

5. The hill that is before Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives. Often must Jesus have passed the place where stood Solomon's altar to Molech. What a contrast is here! Jesus took the little children in His arms and blessed them: they were put into the arms of Molech to perish in the fire.

6. "Which appeared unto him twice," verse 9. See 1 Kings iii. 5 for the first, and 1 Kings ix. 2 for the second time.

7. "Thy servant"—viz., Jeroboam, see verse 28 and Lesson IV.

Solomon's fall consisted in losing that whole-hearted service of Jehovah which had distinguished his father, and with which he had himself commenced his reign. The cause of his fall was sensual indulgence. No doubt the alternative had been presented to him one day—before he could have such and such a woman for his wife he must agree to build an altar for her god. When he gave way for one, he had to give way for all. The first temptation is the easiest to resist. Charles Kingsley says, "One duty postponed returns with seven others at its back". It is the same with one temptation unresisted.

Solomon had a fair start, few better; but a fair start does not ensure a fine finish. We must run the race set before us from the start to the goal, looking unto Jesus *all the way*. Solomon fell because he looked away from God—did not continue "perfect," wholly devoted to Jehovah. The other troubles that overtook him came out of that. Doubtless they were many, and we cannot help thinking of him passing away in the midst of worry within and turmoil without, and the knowledge that the kingdom would be rent in two as soon as he was dead. But these troubles were the mere accessories of his fall. He "fell" long ago when he first left the whole-hearted service of Jehovah.

There is a fine sermon on this subject by Canon Liddon in *Sermons from the Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii.

IV.

December 22.—1 Kings xi. 26-43.

The Close of Solomon's Reign.

Very few words will clear up the difficulties.

1. "Ephrathite" (verse 26) should be "Ephraimite," as the Rev. Version has it. Ephratah was the old name of

Bethlehem, which was in Judah, and Jeroboam was not born in Judah. Because he was an Ephraimite, the Ten Tribes, with Ephraim at their head, followed him the more readily.

2. "Zereda" has not been identified. It was in the hilly part of Ephraim.

3. "Millo" was a fortress built upon the old wall of Jerusalem near Zion.

4. "The house of Joseph" means the tribe of Ephraim.

5. "He had clad himself" (verse 29): Ahijah is meant.

6. "Shishak, king of Egypt." This is the first time that an Egyptian king is named. Pharaoh is the official title given to all the kings of Egypt.

There is one thing in this Lesson which will catch the children's attention at once. It is Ahijah's meeting with Jeroboam. Start with that. It will be easy to gather all the rest round it. Make the picture clear. Jeroboam has been "discovered" by Solomon, and set over the workmen from his own part of the country, who are building the walls of Jerusalem. They do not like the work, for there is a jealousy in Ephraim of Judah since the capital was fixed there and the Temple built. Jeroboam has difficulty in managing the men. Besides, he shares their feeling. He goes out of the city one evening thinking over his difficult position, perhaps angry too at Solomon, who indulges himself, while he compels them to work for him and his fine capital, so far away from home. He goes out towards the north where Ephraim lies. Suddenly he catches sight of a prophet coming from Shiloh—from Shiloh the home of the prophets and near his own home in Ephraim. He knows the prophetic mantle and the long beard from far. Nearer, he knows Ahijah himself, and he sees that the mantle he wears is a new one. As soon as the first greeting is over, Ahijah takes the mantle from his shoulders, tears it into twelve parts, gives Jeroboam ten, and keeps the remaining two. He then, in a word, explains the mysterious action, Jeroboam goes back to Jerusalem with strange thoughts for an overseer of labourers.

Then comes his rebellion. It was easy to get the Ephraimite workmen to rebel. But Jeroboam was altogether wrong. He had been promised the part of the kingdom, and he should have waited God's time. Besides, it had been distinctly told him that he would not enter in till Solomon was dead. An effective contrast can be made here between Jeroboam and David. The greatness of David can easily be made to appear to the children. He, too, had been promised the kingdom and even anointed; he, too, was a capable man and knew he was capable; he, too, had his ambition. Yet he waited, and suffered insult and persecution, forgave Saul when alive, and sincerely mourned him when dead, and never once attempted to wrest the kingdom from him.

We get only a glimpse of Solomon in this Lesson. We see his wisdom once more appearing in the selection of so able and energetic an overseer. We see his weakness in suspicion and jealousy of Jeroboam when he heard of the meeting with Ahijah. We feel that the self-indulgent monarch is nearing an inglorious end. Then the historian tells us in a few sentences that

the end has come, and Solomon with all his wisdom has passed away to the unerring judgment.

The old interpreters held many a discussion over the question whether or not Solomon repented and was converted before his death. But they could not settle it, for there is nothing to settle it with. Do not, on any account, puzzle the children with any such riddle. When the disciples asked Jesus, "Are there few that be saved?" His answer was, "Strive ye to enter in".

Anecdotes for the Sunday School.

IN Australia there are leagues on leagues covered and rendered useless by stubborn, gigantic, impenetrable thistles, and it is well known that all sprang from one single thistle brought over by a Scotchman, and planted in his garden. It is even thus that the tares of evil-doing spread, and, as the proverb says, "Nettle seed needs no planting".—*Archdeacon Farrar.*

An aged and celebrated minister used to say that his whole life had been hampered and injured by one single bad book lent him by a schoolfellow for not more than ten minutes.—*Archdeacon Farrar.*

Being asked how he was converted, a lad said that it was partly by himself and partly by God. When he was interrogated further as to what he meant, he said, "I did all the opposition, and God did all the rest".—*W. Haslam.*

Envy and Emulation.

By Rev. A. M. FAIRBAIRN, D.D., LL.D., Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford.

There is a world-wide distinction between envy and emulation. Envy grudges every good it sees another possess, and strives to deprive the possessor of it; emulation admires every good it sees, and most of all the person that possesses it. Envy, grudging, depriving, never gains possession of the good it desires; emulation, never seeking to take from another, gains all the more. Envy, as it seeks to take from another and dispossess him, would consign that other to lowest depths; emulation strains every nerve, bends every muscle to gain the goal, and all the same if another reaches the goal first is the first to join in the cry, "Well done the winner!" Envy is the very passion of devils that makes hell hellish; emulation is the very spirit and motive of angels that makes heaven heavenly—all seeking to excel, yet all rejoicing in the excellencies of each. Wherever, then, emulation is, there is the spirit celestial, and the emulation that becomes the Christian is not the emulation for wealth, or for comfort, or for ease: it is the emulation that seeks highest services, pants for the entire spirit and all the energies the man possesses after service, obedience, acts of kindness, and labours of love.

Pass it on!

By Archdeacon FARRAR.

An old Puritan, more than two centuries ago, wrote a little book called *The Bruised Reed*. Let us trace its effects. It fell into the hands of Richard Baxter, and led him to Christ, and Baxter wrote *The Call to the Unconverted*. *The Call to the Unconverted* fell into the hands of Philip Doddridge, and Doddridge, when converted, strengthens his brethren, and writes *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*. *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul* touched the heart of William Wilberforce, and William Wilberforce, in his turn, wrote *The Practical View of Christianity*. *The Practical View* brought light, brought fruit of blessing in the hearts of Legh Richmond and Thomas Chalmers. Legh Richmond by his *Annals of the Poor*, and Thomas Chalmers by his magnificent oratory, won hundreds of souls to God. Who, then, shall estimate the priceless harvest of immortal souls that has sprung from that one forgotten book of the old Puritan!

No Grip.

By the Rev. Dr. J. KERR CAMPBELL.

In the course of our voyage to America, some years ago, the motion of the ship was on some days very disagreeable to the passengers. She pitched, and lurched, and rolled among the waves so constantly as to render it impossible for us to rest or be at peace in any position. The sea on the surface being comparatively calm, some of us wondered why the vessel was so unsteady, and on making inquiry were informed that it was owing to her light cargo. The ship had no grip of the water, and the water had no grip of her, and hence her unsteady movement.

The Master.

Let us speak of the Master whenever we meet,
No theme is so precious, so stirring and sweet,
So kindly and quickening to faith and to love,
As Jesus, our Jesus, in glory above.

Let us speak for the Master wherever we go,
Displaying our colours to friend and to foe;
Exalting His person, His work, and His ways,
His cross, and His coming; and all to His praise.

Let us speak to the Master, whatever we need;
In Him we are owners of riches indeed;
Since He is our Patron, our Treasure, and Store,
Even God who bestowed Him can give nothing more.

Let us speak with the Master by night and by day,
In constant communion beguiling the way;
Till, reaching His presence, we rest at His feet,
And know from that moment our joy is complete.

—From *With Him for ever.*