

No. 20.

Vol. I.

THE CHILD'S
BIBLE EXPOSITOR;
OR
Lessons and Records of the Sunday School.

BY MRS. LEONARD.

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

TORONTO, SATURDAY, MAY 29, 1841.

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TESTIMONIALS.

From the Church, January 30.

We fear that we have been remiss in not punctually acknowledging the receipt of three numbers of "THE CHILD'S BIBLE EXPOSITOR," by Mrs. Leonard,—which have been issued, with characteristic neatness, from our Diocesan Press. We have already expressed our favourable opinion of this little work, in noticing the first number, with which we were some time ago favoured. It contains much instruction that must be peculiarly beneficial to Sunday School Teachers, and we should be glad to see a copy in the hands of every one who has engaged in this interesting department of Christian duty. The publisher will oblige us by transmitting two copies regularly to our address.

From the Utica Gospel Messenger.

We have received the first three numbers of this weekly effort to be useful. It is in the 12mo. form, neatly printed, each number having 12 pages besides the cover, and issues from the press of Henry Rowsell, Toronto, U. C. We judge that this little work will prove a useful addition to the means of religious training. The instruction is imparted in the way of familiar conversation, and from the specimen before us, is aimed as well at the heart as the understanding. We tender our thanks to the excellent friend who has sent us the numbers before us, and hope the effort will be duly encouraged.

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THE CHILD'S
BIBLE EXPOSITOR.

NUMBER XX.

*Lesson from the forty-third to the forty-eighth verse of
the fifth chapter of St. Matthew.*

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

Harriet.—"Ye have heard that it hath been said,
Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.'

Mrs. Arnold.—This was one of the gross perversions
of the word of God of which the Scribes had been guilty.
They taught their followers that it was their duty to
love their own families and friends, and the people of
their own nation or sect, so long as they were not at
variance with each other; beyond this the duty was not
enforced, but on the contrary they were enjoined to hate,
and consequently to revenge themselves upon their
enemies. I need not tell you that no such words are
to be found in the Mosaic law, which in its spirit
shadowed forth the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and in its
provision for the protection of the poor and helpless,
the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless, is infinitely
superior to any mere human code of laws that has ever
been framed: even the bondsman and the hired servant

are remembered, and the great God whose mercy is over all his works stoops to place the shield of his Almighty power and authority between the poor beast of burden and his covetous or hard hearted master. We will spend a few moments in tracing the similarity of this spirit of universal benevolence in the Old and New Testaments, for I am anxious that you should in all cases be very careful to compare them together, and understand that they are all to be held as the Word of God, and as the Scriptures which were "written for our learning," and which "are profitable for us." Turn to the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus, Lucy, and read the ninth and tenth verses, and you will find the rule that was laid down for the rich owners of the land, who had an abundant harvest to gather for themselves.

Lucy.—"And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

"And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God."

Mrs. Arnold.—"Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," is another injunction from the same authority, and it conveys in a few words the duty of being careful and tender of the animals which are placed within our power, and protecting them from ill usage. Nothing indeed can excuse the neglect of this duty, and those persons who act contrary to it are deeply responsible for their cruelty toward those creatures who were given for our use, but never to be exposed to unnecessary suffering. We have a property in them so

far as their power of usefulness and their strength is concerned while they live, and in their use as food when they are killed, but no one has a right to inflict on them needlessly the suffering of cold or hunger, or of labour beyond their strength, nor to give them pain by blows or ill usage, or any other cruelty; and it is a proof that there must be something very wicked and contrary to all kind and Christian feeling in the disposition, when we see any person regardless of the sufferings of even the smallest and meanest creature that is endued with life and with sensation, and has not the power of defending itself against its oppressor, or of complaining when it is cruelly and unjustly persecuted. The poor bondsman too found in the law which bound his master to a higher power, that his interests had not been overlooked, and the cause of the hired servant is pleaded in language that can scarcely fail to affect the hardest heart. Look for the twenty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, Mary, and read the fourteenth and fifteenth verses.

Mary.—"Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates.

"At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it: for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee."

Mrs. Arnold.—In the same spirit in which our Saviour bids us love our enemies, and do good to those who despitefully use us and persecute us, Moses, commanded by the Lord, exhorts the Israelites to shew acts of kindness to their enemies. Look for the twenty-third chapter of Exodus, Hannah, and read the fourth and fifth verses.

Hannah.—"If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

"If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him."

Mrs. Arnold.—In your last lesson you read these words: "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." It must be understood that there are exceptions to the literal meaning of this command, and that it is meant to correct the covetousness and hardness of heart which leads those who are able to assist their poor brethren to refuse them the assistance and relief they have in their power to give. No one having the means of helping a fellow creature in distress is justified in refusing, from any selfish fear that at some future time he may himself come to want. The promises of God are sure to those who trust in him and obey him, and though it may appear to us who see but "through a glass darkly" that a gift that is bestowed in love and charity to our neighbour, and in faithful reliance on our heavenly Father's infinite wisdom, goodness, and truth, may be so much taken from our worldly store, yet in reality it was never known that any person was brought to poverty and want by too great consideration for the wants of others, unless in other respects they are improvident and wasteful; to believe that such is the case would be to doubt the promises of God himself, which, made in old times, have never been revoked or recalled. Turn to the twenty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, Harriet, and read the nineteenth verse.

Harriet.—"When thou cuttest down thine harvest

in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.'

Mrs. Arnold.—There was a custom established by the same law which obliged every one who held a bond or had any other claim against his neighbour, at the end of every seven years to give him a release; it was a general releasing and forgiving of debts, and doubtless many a poor debtor who found it very hard to satisfy his creditor was glad when the year came which allowed him to go free from his obligations. On this subject we find some very beautiful verses in the chapter you have just been referring to, and as they are very applicable to the lesson you have learned to-day, I will read some of them:

"If there be among you a poor man of one of the brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother.

"But thou shalt open wide thy hand unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.

"Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, the seventh year, the year of release, is at hand: and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

"Thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand *unto*."

Here it is plainly told the Israelites that the liberality which leads them to help their poor brethren, even when there is very little prospect of return, shall be rewarded by some proportionate increase of their own substances. It is very probable that this may not have been apparently caused by those acts of charity and kindness, and that none except the eye of faith could discover in what manner the deficiency was made up; and so it is at the present time. We may possibly avert some very heavy loss from ourselves by the interest we feel in making up the losses of another, and the "blessing on our basket and our store" may seem to be quite independent of the relief we have bestowed upon those who were in want, but who shall say that the promises of old are not fulfilled to us and to our children, when in a true and right spirit of faith and obedience we are ready to do according to his will to the best of our ability? It does not appear that in our transactions with the poor we may be permitted to act without delicacy and regard for their feelings; even these are to be respected, and where in the rules of a mere human institution do we find an injunction which is intended to guard the poor and needy from unnecessary and unfeeling intrusion, such as is given in the twenty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy? Find it, Amy, and read the tenth and eleventh verses.

Amy.—"When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge.

"Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee."

Mrs. Arnold.—This is as much as to say, "Intrude not into his ³code, if he is not willing to expose to a

stranger's eye the humiliating circumstances of want and destitution which attend his poverty. The hovel of the poor must be sacred as a holy asylum. The eye of scorn and the foot of pride must not dare to intrude: even the agent of mercy must not enter abruptly and unbidden, without consulting the feelings of the wretched inhabitant." This is an excellent lesson for the charitable and humane, as well as for the hard-hearted; for it very often happens that, from a want of natural delicacy or due consideration, the relief which is given with the best intentions, is embittered to the receiver by the manner in which it is bestowed. You will find, in the same chapter, many more proofs of the tender mercy of our God, which has been the same from the first ages of the world, and shall be unchanged throughout eternity, and how encouraging and soothing it is to us poor mortals, who are ready to shrink from the contemplation of His awful Majesty, to find Him thus condescending to vindicate the cause of the poor and helpless, and even of the over-wrought beast of burden, and to trace in the gospel which he has given us as a rule of life, the same watchful care over the transactions between man and man, that peace and good will and brotherly love, might never cease to abound among his people.

We are also told, as an encouragement for us to aim at the attainment of the righteousness and purity which are so strongly enforced by the precepts of the gospel, that those who obey them shall be called the children of their Father in heaven, for that in shewing kindness and compassion to our worst enemies, we do but follow his example who sends his rain indiscriminately on the just and on the unjust. It is no proof of Christian

obedience to love those who love us, for it is only a natural propensity of our common natures, or to shew civility and courtesy to the person who never provokes us to withhold them. The most worldly and unregenerate scoff at the authority of God may do as much, and there would be no obvious difference between the servants of the Most High and the worshippers of the Prince of this world, if this was to be the limit of their charity.— Christians are called upon to shew an example of a much higher principle of action, and though they cannot attain to the perfection of the Divine character, and must expect to struggle on against temptations and trials, and often to feel sensibly their own deep depravity, yet they must never cease to aim at a character the most pure and exalted. It is only by doing this that we can hope to attain to any degree of excellence; and I should always recommend to any young person to establish for themselves, in very early life, a high and exalted standard of character, with a resolution to form their own as nearly as possible upon it, and to consider every day as lost in which they have not made some approach to the perfection they aim at, in religion, in morals, and in all social virtues. This standard can only be found in the bible; and a person whose character and practice is formed upon the rules of the gospel, as explained by the example and doctrines of our Saviour, would be as near perfection, in every respect, as it is possible for a human being to become. Remember, then, that there is no trifling responsibility arising from your increasing knowledge of the word of God, and that where much is given, much will be required. Whatever may be your failures and your short-comings, they are to be repented and deplored;

but your aim must still be to rise above them, and "to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."—In imitation of that great example, you are required, as Christians, "to love your enemies, and to bless them that curse you." Your Saviour set this example, when he was hurried to execution, with every circumstance of cruelty and humiliation, and yet prayed for the blind and bigoted Jews, who had so long thirsted for his blood—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." His disciple Stephen too, when he was cruelly stoned to death, followed the example of his Lord.—Find the seventh chapter of Acts, Susan, and read the fifty-ninth and sixtieth verses.

Susan.—"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

"And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

Mrs. Arnold.—We have now come to the close of the time allowed for your lesson. I hope that your studies this morning have had some effect in impressing on your young minds the absolute duty of cherishing a kind, benevolent and forgiving disposition towards all your fellow-creatures, and of loving not your friends only who love you in return, but even those who hate and oppress you, should you have any such enemies to forgive, and that the spirit and meaning of all that you have learned may be more effectually impressed on your memories, you shall close your lesson by a passage from the scriptures, which contains, in a few words, the substance of this important duty. Turn to the sixth chapter of St. Luke, Charles, and read from the thirty-first to the thirty-seventh verses,

Charles.—"And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

"For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them."

"And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same."

"And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again."

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

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

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

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