

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 1, 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 XVI.

This was a cold and stormy morning late in October, and the branches of the old walnut trees that had afforded us such a pleasant shade in the warm Sunday mornings in summer, were now swinging about above our heads, and making so much noise that we were glad to make the best of our way into the school-house; where Mrs. Arnold, who seldom allowed the weather to interfere with her duties, was waiting for us at an early hour. Very few of the pupils were absent except some of the young children, who lived at a distance, and who were kept from school during the autumn and winter months by the shortness of the days and the badness of the roads, which were at some seasons nearly impassable.

A great many pupils had lately been added to the school from the very poor families in the neighbourhood, and they came comfortably and respectably clothed, through the exertions and liberality of some of the pupils, who were better off than they were. Mrs. Arnold was always gratified when she saw any practical proof that her lessons had not been lost upon us, and it may be remembered that she had spoken very seriously to us on the duty of caring for the wants of those poor children who were prevented from attending the school by the want of decent clothing, at the same time that she had warned us against the indulgence of pride, selfishness, and vain-glory. There were few or none of us who could be called rich, but when we came to compare our circumstances with those of our poorer neighbours, we found that we had many superfluities, and that what seemed of little or no value to us, might by the application

of a little time, management, and industry, be made very serviceable to those who had nothing beyond the bare means of subsistence. After Mrs. Arnold's hint on the subject, eight of the elder girls in the village used to meet occasionally at each other's houses, for the purpose of converting such materials as they could spare into garments for the poor children who were unable to attend the Sunday School for the want of clothes. These were very pleasant meetings, and I question whether any of those who composed that happy party will ever enjoy greater happiness on earth than we did upon those occasions, when every garment which was completed and added to the great basket which contained our treasures, called forth more heartfelt exultation than the most splendid ball dress ever gave to its possessor. Our little association, which began with a very slender capital of threadbare flannel and well worn faded cottons, soon became comparatively wealthy; for as the elder members of our families saw that we were really in earnest in our work, they used to add occasionally to our stock, and by degrees many people became interested in our proceedings, so that we were called upon to contribute very little except our time, toward the accomplishment of our grand object. I shall never forget the delight we felt when a parcel was sent to us from one of the village shops, containing remnants of chintz, and flannel, and coarse cottons, with thread, needles, scissors, thimbles, and all such materials for useful industry, and the interest we felt in making the most of our resources, and turning them all, after many a grave consultation, to the best possible account. At last came the time for distributing the fruits of our industry, and we walked out with Mrs. Arnold in search of candidates for their possession. I had never dreamed of half so many wants before, and at first felt quite discouraged to find how very few of them could possibly be supplied from funds that had seemed to me inexhaustible. Most of the poor people seemed anxious to send their little ones to the Sunday School, but the difficulties were so numerous that it seemed hopeless to attempt their defeat. There

were little Mollys, who could not go for the want of shoes and stockings, and Kittys and Susans, who were likely to grow up in ignorance because they had no bonnets to cover their little sunbleached heads, and Tommys and Bobbys, who had no jackets, and very indifferent shirts, and were not over well off in the articles of waistcoats and trowsers. Our basket was exhausted before we had accomplished half the visits we had intended to pay; however, there was enough good done to shew us how much more we might do if we did not "weary in well doing," and though many were left unsupplied for the time, there were several children so comfortably equipped that they took their places in the school on the next Sunday morning, and looked so delighted with their unexpected acquisitions, that we were greatly encouraged to go on with our little association, and add as many more as we possibly could to our little pensioners.

It was indeed very pleasant to see these poor little things coming for their share of the instruction we all required so much, and to think that we had been in some measure instrumental in obtaining it for them; and I am inclined to think that some among us were in danger of thinking very highly of ourselves in consequence. But our teacher was very careful not to let us long indulge in any sinful pride, or value ourselves upon our performances, for when little Amy told her how many hours she had worked for the poor during the week, Mrs. Arnold asked her how many more hours she had devoted in many weeks to her own amusement and indulgence, and remarked that the most charitable and benevolent Christians had little cause to pride themselves upon their good works, for if they summed up all they had done, and compared it with all they had omitted to do, they always found that they were at best but unprofitable servants, and had fallen far short of the duty of loving their neighbours as themselves, and doing to all men as they would they should do unto them. "This very consideration," she said, "should teach us how utterly dependent we are for acceptance upon the goodness and mercy of God, and the merits of our Saviour, when our

very best services fall so far short of perfect and irreproachable obedience, and should shew us the absolute necessity of carefully performing our duties to the best of our ability, since even when that was done it was but an unworthy offering to him who has given us all that we possess." Some of the young people who listened to this admonition, and who had not yet learned to look upon these things in their true and scriptural light, found it hard to judge themselves as severely as Mrs. Arnold required them to do, and found fault with the manner in which she had spoken to little Amy. It would have been better they said to have encouraged the poor child, and to have praised her for her good behaviour, than to mortify her when she thought she had been doing so well. Our teacher however was watching carefully over the principles she endeavoured to establish in our minds, and never allowed us to act upon false motives when she could teach us how to detect them in ourselves, or to do our duty with a view to winning praise from her, or from any other of our fellow creatures. Her aim was to teach us always to live as in the immediate presence of God, and with the realities of eternal life before us; and assuredly when this principle of action can be established, the dominion of the world and of Satan must be greatly weakened. "Never," she said, "lose sight of that powerful and gracious being who ordereth all things in heaven and on earth according to the counsel of his own will, and yet can stoop from his greatness and majesty to listen to the prayers and pity the infirmities of the youngest and most ignorant of his creatures. His eye is ever upon you, and therefore whatever are your thoughts and actions, your first object should be to keep them pure in his sight who cannot be deceived by any outward appearance. You will see then, my dear little girl," she continued, turning to Amy, "the reason why I am anxious to guard you against valuing yourself on your own good works, of which your natural disposition and readiness to oblige will probably lead you to perform a great many; you will, I dare say, be praised for them, and some unthinking people will

try to persuade you that you have great merit in them, but remember that the moment you begin to indulge pride and self-righteousness, or to depend upon any other merits than those of your Redeemer for acceptance with God, your very best actions become snares of Satan to tempt you, and lead you into danger."

Lucy, who did not yet in her heart quite approve of Mrs. Arnold's sentiments, here asked whether it was better to give to the poor and value one's self upon it, or not to give them any thing.

Mrs. Arnold.—We need not discuss that question my dear, because both are expressly forbidden in Scripture, and we must beware how we make any distinction between them; but we can look into the Bible and see how these duties are explained and enforced there, and then you will have all the information on the subject which I or any one else could give you. Turn first to the fifteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, and read the eleventh verse.

Lucy.—"For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."

Mrs. Arnold.—Here is a direct command which has never been revoked, and therefore no Christian believer can hold himself exempted from it. It is a duty to God and to our fellow creatures, to endeavour by our best efforts to alleviate the misery and calamity incident to our state on earth; we may have few means of assisting others, but that is no excuse for not doing the little that is in our power. In your case you perceive that as soon as the inclination to be useful and benevolent was awakened, the means were provided, and you were enabled to do much more than at first you had any reason to expect; you were the means of opening the hearts of others, whose attention had not been drawn to the objects of your charity, before your first well-meant attempt to relieve them, and if you persevere in simple faith and sincere disinterested love to God and your

fellow creatures, and use your best endeavours to serve them, you need not fear, but that He who commanded the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil to continue their supplies to the poor widow of Zarephath, will furnish you with the means of carrying on your benevolent and useful work. Find the forty-first Psalm, Mary, and read the first and second verses.

Mary.—"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

"The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies."

Mrs. Arnold.—We have read the history of Job, and have found that though tried and tempted, he was strong in the power of God, and that all his sufferings were recompensed tenfold by the blessings bestowed upon his latter years; when in the midst of his misfortunes he recalls his past happiness, he dwells upon that which he experienced in relieving and protecting the poor:

"When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me:

"Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.

"The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

"I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame.

"I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out."

And now, to shew that whatever may be our acts of this kind, even if we could enumerate as many as Job has done in these verses, we must not be vain or proud of what we have done, or think ourselves better than others because we have done more. Find the second chapter of Philippians, Lucy, and read the third and fourth verses.

Lucy.—"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Mrs. Arnold.—We must now begin the study of your regular lesson; but as there is much to be said on the subject we have been examining, we will return to it shortly, for it is one of very great importance to us all, connected as it is with the every-day transactions of our lives; and it is necessary to have a decided standard of action by which to regulate our performance of a duty which involves such serious consequences to others, and such deep responsibility to ourselves.

Lesson from the nineteenth to the twenty-second verse of the fifth chapter of St. Matthew.

Mrs. Arnold.—You will perceive, my dear Lucy, by the very first verse of your lesson to-day, how very difficult and dangerous a question you suggested just now, when you wished me to point out the difference of guilt between two transgressions of the law of God. The Pharisees had ventured to do this, and the Roman Catholic Church still does the same, and makes a distinction between sins which they consider mortal, and others which they call venial or less important. But our Saviour says expressly that the least as well as the greatest of the commandments of God must be received and taught by his followers. The Scriptures had already taught the same doctrine in terms not to be misunderstood; and indeed any reasonable and conscientious Christian must feel the conviction in his own heart that any qualification must be destructive to the consistency and purity of our obedience to the law of God, which relaxes in the smallest degree our obligation to obey it, or permits us to trifle with that which Christ came on earth to preach and to honour, and died on the cross to confirm and to fulfil. If the Pharisees had suffered themselves to be guided by the light of the Scriptures already revealed to them, they could not have fallen into this error. Find the twelfth chapter of Deuteronomy, Elizabeth, and read the thirty-second verse.

Elizabeth.—"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

Mrs. Arnold.—When Moses died and Joshua succeeded to the authority and power and possession which had been bestowed upon him, the Lord spake unto Joshua, and explained what was required from him as a condition upon which they were all to be held. Turn to the first chapter of Joshua, Harriet, and read the 7th and 8th verses.

Harriet.—“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayst observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.”

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

Mrs. Arnold.—The second verse of your lesson is one which conveys a startling and most important warning. “Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” If we are not admitted to the kingdom of Christ, we must be condemned to that of the enemy of our souls, for there is no other alternative—no middle way by which we may hope to escape. It is, therefore, a very important matter to us to ascertain what was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, which we are plainly told will not be sufficient for us. Those people were strict in all the outward observances of religion—they kept the Sabbath so rigorously that they blamed the disciples for gathering and rubbing out a few ears of corn on that day, though it was but to satisfy extreme hunger. They also rebuked those who brought the sick and lame to be healed by our Saviour on the Sabbath, and told them that there were six days in which men ought to work, and that they should then be brought to be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.

They fasted often, and prayed constantly. They are said never to have passed a day without repeating the

commandments; and, as you have already heard, they shewed so much reverence for the scriptures, that they wore sentences from them embroidered on the borders of their robes. They were very careful in paying their dues to the priests, for they brought the tenth part of all their ground produced, even to the smallest herbs which grew in their gardens, and paid them into the sacred treasury. And why was all this righteousness, in external appearance, rejected and condemned by our Saviour? Because it was not the humble worship and obedience which is due from man to his Creator. It did not proceed from love to God and to their fellow-creatures, but was put on for the sake of appearing righteous in the eyes of their fellow men. They were proud and tyrannical, and shewed no mercy to the poor and helpless, which caused our Saviour to compare them to "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful without, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness?" "Even so ye appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." It was not for the performance of those external observances that they were rejected, but for trusting to them; for our Saviour tells them, "Those things ought ye to have done, and not have left the other undone;"—that they pay tithes of mint, anise and cummin, the small and cheap produce of their gardens, but have "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith." You will see by all this, my dear children, that no external appearance of righteousness, and no strict observances of the outward forms of religion, can be sufficient to make us acceptable to the great God who sees our hearts, and knows our inmost thoughts and intentions. But remember always that we may not neglect those external acts of obedience. We cannot omit our prayers, or profane the Sabbath, nor be unjust in our dealings, or in any other way be negligent of our Christian duties, and yet hope to please God; we must perform those duties as rigidly as the Pharisees; but the difference between our righteousness and theirs must be, that ours must be influenced by a spirit of obedience and duty,

and not by a spirit of ostentation and parade, "to be seen of men." Our prayers must be sincere, and offered in humility and lowliness of heart; and we must be careful not to disgrace our Christian profession by any act of immorality, or falsehood, or dishonesty: and having done this, must, on the other hand, avoid the ensnaring and treacherous sin of self-righteousness, for this was one of the great offences of the Pharisees, and called upon them such severe reproofs from our Saviour, and from John the Baptist. And now you have seen in what respect our righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, and that you all feel, as I hope you do, how impossible it is for you to attain to any degree of righteousness in yourselves, or to be more pure in heart than they were, except through the grace and mercy of your heavenly Father, strengthening and guiding you. Let us turn to another portion of the Bible for direction and encouragement, and see upon what, as Christians, we are to depend for *our* hope of eternal safety in the kingdom of heaven. Look for the eighth chapter of St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, Catherine, and read the first four verses.

Catherine.—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:"

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Mrs. Arnold.—Here we see that our only hope and refuge is in the mercy of God, who sent his only Son to answer the demands of the law which we had broken, and in faith in the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, who having atoned for the sins of all his faithful and believing people, by his death on the cross, has purchased eternal happiness for them by his own righteousness. The law condemns us, for we have broken it

again and again; but the righteousness of Christ may be ours, if we seek for it and earnestly desire it. Turn to the eleventh chapter of St. John, Susan, and read the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth verses.

Susan.—"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:"

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Mrs. Arnold.—Though our bodies sleep in the grave, yet if we trust in our Saviour, we shall rise to immortal life, for this is the promise of Him whose word and law cannot change. We have now spent a long time in considering our text, and yet there is a great deal left to consider—sufficient for the study and reflection of a great many days; so do not forget it as soon as you are out of school, but think of it at home, and find as many passages in scripture as you can, that are connected with it. Now repeat the third and fourth verses of your lesson Amy.

Amy.—"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:"

"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

Mrs. Arnold.—The extent and spiritual nature of the commandments, seemed to have been lost sight of at the period in which our Saviour came on earth, and their meaning understood only as far as the words in which they were framed. "Thou shalt do no murder," was understood as simply a prohibition of the act of taking away life; but our Saviour tells us that it is a crime equivalent to murder to indulge in excessive and causeless anger. The first steps to crime, if indulged and wilfully acted upon, are of the nature of the crime itself; and, though human laws do not punish them, unless they have been actually carried into execution, they are in the sight of God deserving of condemnation, and must be the subject of deep and sincere repentance before

they can be forgiven. The judgment and the council mentioned in the last verses, were different courts of justice where sentences of greater or less severity were passed upon offenders. "Raca" is a Hebrew word, which means an empty, worthless, contemptible person. "Hell fire" does not mean the place of eternal punishment, but a valley in which idolators used to burn their children as sacrifices to their false gods. It was afterwards considered as the vilest and most polluted of all places, from the cruelties and crimes which had been committed there, and at length became a place of execution for criminals; in consequence of its being in so many ways detestable, it came to be known by the same name as the place of final punishment for sinners.*—The instruction to be derived from these verses is very plain. When we indulge in excessive and causeless anger, and a desire to be revenged, we are not only responsible for the evil passions we are cherishing, but for their possible and probable consequences: for Cain would never have been tempted to murder his brother, if he had not first allowed the evil spirit of malice, hatred, and envy, to get possession of his heart, and urge him on to that dreadful crime. We also learn that all offensive and provoking language which may awaken angry feelings in the hearts of others, is to be avoided, and that those who allow themselves to make use of it, are in danger of falling into such darker and deeper offences as will expose them to temporal as well as to eternal punishment.

We must now conclude your lesson for to-day, and we will do it in the words of Solomon. Turn to the twenty-ninth chapter of Proverbs, Hannah, and read the twentieth verse, and you will see what was the opinion of the wisest of men on the subject of angry and thoughtless words, though many people think there is very little harm in any thing they can say, and forget all the evils to which their intemperate use of their tongue may lead.

Hannah.—"Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him."

* Bishop of Chester.

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ERRATA FOR No. 13.—In Questions on No. 2, Page 155, 7 lines from the bottom,—For "*several* Psalms," read "*second* Psalm."

ERRATA FOR No. 14.—Page 171, Line 25,—For "*warn you sincerely*," read "*warn you seriously*."