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"IT IS WRITTEN"

Bible Stories for Boys and Girls

CHRISTINE I. ^{sabel}TINLING

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INTRODUCTION

Popular demand for Miss Christine I. Tinling's temperance lessons and stories insures a wide welcome for these attractive narratives of Bible heroes.

In the temperance education of children there is nothing more important than a "Thus Said the Lord," for the great principles of our reform. Miss Tinling's stories will also imbue young people with a deep and intelligent love of the treasures to be found in the Book of books.

ANNA A. GORDON.

Rest Cottage, Evanston, Illinois.

JUL 18 1932

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FOREWORD

Dear Boys and Girls:—

There is a certain word you are very fond of using—the little word, “why?” When you see this story-book some of you will be sure to ask, “Why has it this strange name?” I will tell you.

We read in the New Testament how the Lord Jesus, before He began his ministry, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. He spent forty days there and neither did eat nor drink. He was alone in that waste land; the wild animals roamed about His path, the vultures sailed in the blue sky above, and the Devil himself came and tempted Him. Satan tried every way he could think of to make Jesus sin just once.

Do you know how our Savior overcame every temptation? He answered the enemy by a sentence from God’s holy word. Three times over He quoted the Scripture, saying, “IT IS WRITTEN,” and the Devil could do nothing more, so he left Him.

Even we may learn to overcome Satan if we will follow the Lord Jesus in this. Every time we are tempted to do wrong, let us try and remember what the Bible says, and reply, “It is written.” “The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God,” and if in youth we learn to wield it, we shall be victorious over our great foe. In this little book we shall study what God’s word says about strong drink and so we shall always be able to resist the temptation to use it. Will you not therefore try to memorize perfectly the one or two texts that you find in each lesson?

Your loving friend,

CHRISTINE I. TINLING.

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THE BOY IN THE DESERT

Genesis 21:1-21.

The boy Ishmael was fond of teasing and that habit got him into trouble. This is how it happened. When he was about fourteen a baby brother came into the home and was named Isaac. Probably Ishmael was not particularly glad to see the new baby, for everyone paid so much attention to him, and when he was about two years old a great feast was held in his honor. Ishmael had been the only child and so had always gone about with his father Abraham visiting the flocks and herds and learning many things about the cattle business. Abraham was very rich and everyone looked upon Ishmael as his heir.

When the new baby came, however, Ishmael learned that he must now take second place. Naturally this seemed hard. Though they had the same father the boys had different mothers, so they were half-brothers. The name of Isaac's mother was Sarah; Ishmael's mother was named Hagar. Hagar was only a slave, so her son had to give up the heirship to the son of the free wife, Sarah.

About the time of the great feast in honor of Isaac, Ishmael was one day teasing him, as boys often love to do. Ishmael probably meant no harm, though he may have been a bit jealous and have thought the little toddler a very small person to make so much fuss about. Sarah happened to see him and she was very angry. She said to Abraham that he must at once get rid of both Ishmael and his mother for she would not have them in the home. This made Abraham very unhappy but he felt obliged to do as his wife said. God comforted him about it and promised that all should turn out for the best. Isaac was in truth to be the heir, but Ishmael also would be great. God promised to bless the boy and to make him the head of a nation.

So early in the morning Abraham rose and sent Hagar and Ishmael away. It grieved him sadly to say goodbye to the son he loved so much. He took a loaf of bread and filled a bottle with water and gave them to Hagar for the journey. It was not the kind of bottle that we are accustomed to using, but was most likely made of skin. The desert tribes

still use these skin bottles. When they kill an animal they cut off its head and feet and then take the carcass out of the skin without opening it further, and thus there is formed an odd-shaped bottle in which they keep their water or milk or oil. Sometimes the neck of the animal serves to form the neck of the bottle and the thighs do for handles. Then straps are fastened on, and thus the bottle is slung over the shoulder. These skin bottles are more serviceable for traveling than earthenware ones, which would easily break. Hagar's was probably made from a kid-skin.

Thus supplied with food and drink Hagar and Ishmael started off, and for a time all went well. The early part of the day was cool and pleasant, but as the hours passed by the sun grew hotter and hotter and they became very weary. They walked in the direction of Egypt, for Hagar had come from that country and now that she was in trouble it seemed the best place to go.

The way lay across the desert. That is a wild and lonely tract. The soil is dry and stony and very few things grow there, for water is scarce. Everything that lives must have water and where it is not to be had neither plants nor animals can exist. Some plants can manage with less than others and these hardy ones are found on the desert. Several kinds of wild animals roam over the waste, such as pelicans, ostriches and jackals. The ostriches are immense birds, taller than a very tall man. Instead of flying they run, and they can easily out-distance a horse. They make a strange noise, something like the roar of a lion. The ostrich lays her eggs in a hole in the sand and covers them over so the sun keeps them warm in the daytime, and at night the bird sits on them to warm them. The wild desert is their home, but God who made them supplies their needs as He does ours. "It is written": THE BEAST OF THE FIELD SHALL HONOR ME, THE DRAGONS AND THE OSTRICHES, BECAUSE I GIVE WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS.* Animals have a wonderful power of smell and they can scent water a long way off. So in this respect they have an advantage over human beings.

*Isaiah 43:20, margin.

Hagar and Ishmael doubtless tried to be careful and sparing with the water in their skin bottle, but as the sun poured down more and more fiercely they were obliged to slake their thirst and at last the water was all gone and they were nowhere near their journey's end.

Ishmael began to feel sick and feverish and soon he could go no further, so his mother made him lie down under one of the scrubby bushes that grew along the way. She was sure that as the water was gone and there was no more to be found her boy must die of thirst and fever. People can live sometimes a long while without food, but no one can live without water. Hagar could not bear to see Ishmael suffer. It was terrible enough to have to bear the thirst herself, but she minded it worse for the boy, so she went a little distance from him and gave way to her grief, shedding bitter tears.

Though Ishmael was only a young boy he did a wiser thing than his mother. Instead of crying in this desperate situation he prayed to God. And God, who is ever ready to listen to us, heard the boy under the bush and answered him. The angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said unto her, "What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is." Then God showed her a well of water, and she quickly dried her eyes and went and filled the skin and gave Ishmael a drink. This soon revived him; the fever passed away and he was able to continue the journey. Besides thus saving his life, God renewed his promise to Ishmael and said He would make Ishmael a great nation. Hagar and her son remained in the wilderness and he grew up and became a strong man and a famous archer. He probably never forgot how he nearly died that time for want of water and how wonderfully God heard his prayer.

Water is one of the very few things we cannot do without. What a good thing it is that in our country there is plenty of it and it is free to all so that no one need go thirsty. How strange that anyone should buy harmful drinks, such as beer, wine, and whisky which cost a great deal of money when they can get pure water for nothing. Alcoholic drinks never quench thirst; they only make a person more thirsty than he was before. Water is the great thirst quencher and we may

drink as much of it as we wish. It will do us good every time and help to keep our bodies in health.

We read in the Bible many stories about the desert. When the Israelites took their journey from Egypt into the Promised Land, they wandered about in the desert for forty years. They were often in need of water and God made it gush forth from the solid rock for them. The psalmist says "He turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters."* At last He led them into "a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills,"** where they had plenty of this best kind of drink for themselves and their children and their cattle.

Water is useful not only for drinking, but in many other ways as well. We need it in order to be clean and so we use it outside as well as inside. Were there not plenty of water for washing clothes and scrubbing the house and plenty in the kitchen for cooking, we should indeed be in serious difficulty. In fact there would not be anything to cook if water did not make things grow for the use of men and beasts. I wonder how many of us have ever thought of thanking God for this precious gift, so plentiful and so free.

I am sure you are fond of a good drink of cool water. In the hot summer weather do you remember the dumb animals and see that they have enough to drink, since they cannot ask for it? Do you think of the old people and the sick who may be in your home, and offer to get them a refreshing drink? The Lord Jesus said, "WHOSOEVER SHALL GIVE A CUP OF WATER TO DRINK IN MY NAME, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, HE SHALL NOT LOSE HIS REWARD."***

*Psalm 114:8.

**Deut. 8:7.

***Mark 9:14.

THE WISE MAN'S WORDS

I Kings 3:1-15.

"What do you want for Christmas?" Did father or mother ever ask you that question? It is very nice to be able to have one's choice and to get something that perhaps one has been wanting for a long time, such as a pair of skates, a beautiful book, or maybe even a watch.

Once, long ago, a young man was told, not by his father but by God himself, to ask for whatever he wanted. God, who made the worlds and who declares, "The silver is mine and the gold is mine," said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee." This young man was King Solomon. He was the son of David and his name means peace. David was a man of war; he had for many years to fight and flee by turns because his enemy Saul constantly sought his life. Even after he became king there was still more fighting to do and David was often weary of war and bloodshed. He hoped that the son who was to succeed him would have a different kind of life and so he named him Solomon, or the man of peace.

Solomon grew to manhood under the care of the noble prophet Nathan and he most likely received lessons also from some of the priests and Levites. When he was about eighteen his father died and he became the king. We are told that the young king loved the Lord and walked in the statutes of David his father. Because he was full of gratitude to God for putting down his enemies and strengthening him in his kingdom, he went up, soon after his accession, to a place called Gibeon to offer sacrifice. He invited all Israel to join him, specially asking the captains and the judges and the governors and the chief of the old men. A great congregation gathered together for that sacrifice, and Solomon offered no less than a thousand burnt offerings upon the altar. That night, when it was all over and the crowd had dispersed and gone to their homes and the king was asleep in his bed, God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Ask what I shall give thee."

What a wonderful chance this was! He had only to ask and God would give him the thing he wanted most. Many people would have asked for riches; others would have asked for fame; some would have prayed that they might be victorious over their enemies, and some no doubt would have wished to live to a very great age. But Solomon asked for none of these things. He said to God, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who is able to judge this thy people that is so great?" He felt it was a serious thing to be the ruler of a nation, and what he wanted most of all was wisdom to do his work well. God was very pleased with this answer and promised that he should not only have the wisdom he had desired, but also the riches and honor that he had not asked for. Soon his fame spread among all the nations round about. People came from distant lands to hear his wisdom and to see the greatness of his court. He knew all about beasts and birds and creeping things and fishes; he was familiar with all the plants and trees, great and small; in fact, he seems to have known about everything. He was a writer as well as a king and composed more than a thousand songs, but he is best remembered by the book of proverbs.

In ancient times, when there was no printing and every book had to be written out by hand with great labor, people got into the habit of trying to say as much as possible in a few words. Thus proverbs became general. A proverb is a sentence that says a good deal in a short space. Solomon wrote three thousand of these. The book called Proverbs was not quite all written by Solomon. There are some passages in it by other wise men, just as the Psalms include some that were not written by David. But most of this book was written by King Solomon and it is a book that all young people should read, for it was intended chiefly for them. If you will merely glance at it you will see that of the first seven chapters five begin with the words, "My son." There are many dangers in life and of course older people know more about them than do young people, because they have been through such experiences.

Solomon himself got into trouble from time to time, for he did not always and only do right. As he looked back he felt a desire to warn boys concerning several of these dangers. Let us see what he had to say about that thing that has spoiled so many lives, strong drink. The words of the wisest man will surely be worth remembering.

"Hear thou, my son, and be wise,
And guide thine heart in the way.
Be not among winebibbers;
Among riotous eaters of flesh;
For the drunkard and the glutton
Shall come to poverty,
And drowsiness shall clothe
A man with rags."*

In your study of hygiene you learned that alcohol is a narcotic poison and that it benumbs the brain. This causes drowsiness or sleepiness, and when a person is stupefied in this way he cannot work properly. Even when people take so little that they do not feel any harm, their brains are more or less injured and they are not so alert as they otherwise would be. Of course if they don't work hard they can't get on in the world and they are likely to become poorer and poorer. This is what the wise man meant when he said, "Drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags."

Grapes grew abundantly in Solomon's country where many of the hillsides were covered with vineyards. Two kinds of wine were made; one was good and the other evil. Sometimes people merely squeezed the fresh, ripe grapes and made a wholesome drink from them. Travelers in Palestine tell us that many make this grape juice there today. Grapes are used in several other ways. When newly gathered they are eaten with bread and form the chief part of many a meal in an Oriental home. The owner of a vineyard will preserve a good many as raisins. He spreads the grapes in the sun to dry, and turns them over every now and then, and sprinkles them with olive oil to keep the skins moist. The good housewife likes to have a plentiful supply of raisins for the winter.

*Proverbs 23:19-21.

Altogether, the vine is one of God's most useful gifts to men. But in all ages they have misused it and made the harmful drink against which Solomon warned in his day.

The alcohol in home-made wine or cider is just the same thing as the alcohol manufactured in any brewery or distillery and it is never anything but a poison. It caused trouble of all sorts in Solomon's time, just as it does today. Here is something more that the wise man said about it:

"Who hath woe? who hath sorrow?
 Who hath contentions? who hath babbling?
 Who hath wounds without cause?
 Who hath redness of eyes?
 They that tarry long at the wine;
 They that go to seek mixt wine.
 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red,
 When it giveth its color in the cup,
 When it goeth down smoothly:
 At the last it biteth like a serpent
 And stingeth like an adder."*

Everybody who wants to have a good time should try to understand these words of the wisest man. They are not easy for boys and girls to learn, and most likely you think they are not interesting, but they are far more important than any lesson you will ever have in history or geography or mathematics. So let us see what they mean. We shall all have some troubles in this world, sooner or later, but those who use strong drink bring on themselves extra and unnecessary trouble, "woe" and "sorrow." Alcohol causes "contentions" or quarreling. It gives people "wounds without cause." Those who use it have much more sickness and disease than total abstainers, and when they are ill or injured they are slower in recovering. Wine sometimes looks attractive, especially at a party when the lights are bright and the silver and glass sparkle and shine. But the wise man says, though it looks good, it is like a deadly serpent.

*Proverbs 23:29-32.

There are about sixteen hundred different kinds of serpents or snakes in the world, many poisonous but some not. In India about twenty thousand persons are killed by snakes every year. Here in America we have the rattlesnakes and you all know how dangerous they are. The adder or common viper is found in many countries and little vipers only five minutes old, have been known to bite and kill mice. Of all the dreadful and dangerous animals that men have to fight, there are none worse than venomous snakes.

Strong drink is like a snake in three ways.

1. It kills by means of the poison that it contains. The poison of the snake is called its venom or virus; the poison of strong drink we call alcohol. Snake-venom kills the body only; alcohol kills both body and soul.

2. The Bible says the serpent is the most subtle of all the beasts of the field. “Subtle” here means sly. The serpent steals up on people silently and unawares and kills them before they can get away. So does strong drink. People don’t expect to be killed by it; they are deceived into thinking it will not hurt them. At first it seems pleasant and harmless; but “at the last” it often kills.

3. Venomous snakes often have a terrible power to fascinate. Birds know the snake is their enemy but they will fly right to it and be killed. In the same way men fall under the spell of drink and go to it though they know it will destroy them.

You would not play with a serpent; you would kill it or get out of its way. You would be far too wise and wary to take it in your hand and run the risk of its biting you. Solomon says we ought to be just as wise in regard to wine, and not even stand looking at it for fear we might be persuaded to touch it. If ever it is offered to you, even in the grandest company or by the kindest hostess, do not accept the wine any sooner than you would take an adder or a rattlesnake. Remember, “It is written”: **LOOK NOT THOU UPON THE WINE WHEN IT IS RED. AT THE LAST IT BITETH LIKE A SERPENT AND STINGETH LIKE AN ADDER.**

A NARROW ESCAPE

I Samuel 25:1-38.

In the days when David was fleeing for his life from his enemy, King Saul, there lived a certain rich man named Nabal. He owned a large quantity of land and raised sheep and goats. His flocks numbered three thousand sheep and one thousand goats, and in the spring Nabal's shepherds led their sheep to the uplands of Carmel where there was plenty of juicy grass.

Nabal belonged to a good family and was a descendant of Caleb, one of the noblest characters in Bible history. But he was a very different man from his great ancestor; he was "churlish and evil in his doings" and had an exceedingly bad temper. Perhaps the chief reason for this was his love of drink, for alcohol spoils the temper more than anything. He had a wife named Abigail, who was altogether better than he deserved. She was a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance. Moreover she feared God and tried to do right as far as she knew how.

Once a year came the time of sheep-shearing. You can imagine what a busy season this was, and how many men were required to shear those three thousand sheep. Of course extra help had to be employed. After each day's task was done the shearers enjoyed an ample feast, and strangers and poor folks were heartily welcome also. There were stories and jokes and songs when the meal was over, and altogether it was a very jolly time. But it was a pity that strong drink had a place upon the board. Nabal was particularly fond of it and when he began to drink he did not know how to stop.

One day when the shearing was in progress there appeared a party of ten young men to see Nabal. They said they had brought him a message from David. David was at this time an outlaw. He had been obliged to flee because King Saul sought his life. Friends and relatives had gathered around him and formed a little faithful band. Sometimes they lived in caves in the mountains, sometimes they hid among the trees of the forest, and again they wandered about in the desert. It

was not always easy to find food to eat and they needed a great deal, for soldiers living in the open air usually have keen appetites. Often they were able to be of some use to Nabal's sheepmasters and received supplies from them in return for such services. The shepherds were glad to have their help, particularly as they were honest men and David had commanded them not to touch the sheep or goats however hungry they might be. David would not steal; he preferred to ask courteously for what he needed, so he sent these ten young men as a deputation to Nabal.

It was a very respectful and courteous message that they brought. "Peace be to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be to all that thou hast. Now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing to them all the while they were in Carmel. Wherefore let the young men find favor in thine eyes, for we come in a good day; give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants and to thy son David." David was not his son, of course. This was just an affectionate way of speaking. Many a soldier would have demanded from the ranchman all he needed. David only asked modestly for whatever Nabal could best spare in return for the services he and his men had rendered.

If Nabal had been in his right mind he would gladly have sent what was requested so as to earn David's continued protection from the Arabs that roamed the country and other robbers. But he had been drinking wine so his brain was muddled. Alcohol poisons the brain cells so that a man cannot think properly or reason aright. In consequence, he is apt to imagine others are intending injury to him when this is far from being the case. In this way liquor makes people quarrelsome. It probably is the cause of more quarrels than anything else in the world.

The wine made Nabal misunderstand and he answered the messengers rudely, "Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse?" When he said, "The son of Jesse," he showed that he knew all the time exactly who David was, though he pretended to be ignorant. "Shall I then take my bread and my

water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not from whence they be?" continued Nabal. Now nobody had asked him to deprive his shearers of their food. David knew Nabal was immensely rich and that there would be plenty to spare at the feast. Besides, he and Nabal belonged to the same tribe and it had seemed natural that they should be friendly.

The ten young men did not stop to argue. They turned and went back the way they came and told David all about the insolent reception they had received. David was very angry and determined to go at once against Nabal and destroy him. "Gird ye on every man his sword," he commanded, and they did so. There were six hundred soldiers in the troop, and David started out with four hundred of them, leaving the remainder to guard the baggage.

Happily one of Nabal's servants had more sense than his master. This man was a shepherd and he knew the value of David's protection and realized that Nabal's rudeness would bring dreadful trouble on them all. It was of no use in the world to argue with a man who was the worse for wine, so the shepherd hurried off to the mistress of the house. When the servant found Abigail he told her all, and added that the messengers had stated the exact truth. "They were a wall unto us," he said, "all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do, for evil is determined against our master."

Then Abigail made haste and she took two hundred loaves and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and started for David's camp.

She sent her servants before her with the presents and she came riding behind on her donkey down the hill. At this very moment David and his band came down the opposite hill and David was surely surprised when he saw this beautiful woman coming towards him. Quickly she alighted and came and threw herself at his feet and begged him to listen to her request. She said she was not at home when the messengers

arrived and as for her husband she was ashamed of him. The word "Nabal" means "fool." Fool was he by name, said Abigail, and fool was he by nature. This was plain speaking and it is not often proper to use such a word. But when Abigail thought how nearly Nabal's insolence had caused the death of all her household, she felt that this bad name was no more than he deserved. Certainly there cannot be anything more foolish than to use a poison that will benumb one's brain and so bring disaster on oneself and others. Abigail apologized to David humbly for her husband's rudeness. She told him she knew he was a servant of God, and that God would bless him and save him from his enemies and finally make him king. She appealed to his mercy and said she felt sure he would not come against her people to destroy them. David listened to her graciously and replied, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. Go up in peace to thine house," and Abigail returned home a happy woman.

Next day, when Nabal had slept off the effects of his wine, Abigail related the whole story. When Nabal heard what a narrow escape he had had, and how a small army had marched against him and had only been turned back by his wife at the foot of the hill, it gave him a great shock. This brought on a severe attack of illness and he seems to have had a fit. Some think it was apoplexy and that he broke a blood vessel in the brain. At any rate this very thing often happens to those who drink, for alcohol injures the walls of the vessels and makes them brittle. Nabal lingered ten days, cared for by his faithful wife, and then he died. He left only the memory of a wasted life, spoiled by strong drink. He was one of those of whom "It is written": WOE UNTO THEM THAT RISE UP EARLY IN THE MORNING THAT THEY MAY FOLLOW STRONG DRINK, THAT CONTINUE UNTIL NIGHT, TILL WINE INFLAME THEM! AND THE HARP AND THE VIOL, THE TABRET AND PIPE ARE IN THEIR FEASTS, BUT THEY REGARD NOT THE WORK OF THE LORD NEITHER CONSIDER THE OPERATION OF HIS HANDS. *Isaiah 5:11-12.*

TRUE TO THEIR PLEDGE

Jeremiah 35:1-19.

No doubt you have sometimes had object lessons at school. It is easier to understand things and easier to remember them if instead of merely hearing about them we can see them, too. God sometimes teaches people by object lessons. He gave a special one to the children of Israel in the time of Jeremiah.

The Israelites were very slow to learn. God did many wonderful things for them. He delivered them out of the land of Egypt after He had showed His power by the ten plagues. He led them through the Red Sea as by dry land; He provided for them for forty years in the wilderness, even sending them bread from heaven day by day. At last He took them safely into the Promised Land, drove out their enemies before them, and divided this beautiful country among their tribes. But they forgot His works and all His goodness and turned aside after false gods. He sent His prophets to them with messages time after time, but they did not pay much attention to these and continued to be forgetful and disobedient. Then God had to punish them for their own good, so He sent Nebuchadnezzar against them and his army encamped before Jerusalem.

The city was soon crowded with those who had come in from the country districts to take refuge from the invader. There was no safety outside the walls, so the people packed up their belongings and hastened to enter the gates. Fathers and mothers and children came flocking along the country roads toward the capital and among them was a company of people who seem to have carried their tents and pitched them, on their arrival, in an open piece of ground. The place must soon have looked like a gypsy encampment.

No doubt the boys and girls of Jerusalem watched with much interest as the tents went up and asked their parents who these people were. Then father or mother probably answered, "These are the Rechabites, and they live mostly on the desert land to the south of us, but now they have come in to take refuge from Nebuchadnezzar. They don't build houses but always live in tents."

Doubtless the boys and girls enquired again, "Why do they do that?" and the answer was something like this: "The Rechabites are descended from a certain man named Jonadab the son of Rechab who lived more than three hundred years ago. He thought that life in the country was better and more wholesome than city life, so he commanded his children never to build houses or live in towns but always to dwell in tents and make their home in the open country. He also made them promise never to use strong drink or even to grow vines lest they might be tempted to make wine. Although he has been dead so many years they still obey his commandment and they have only come into Jerusalem for a little while. When the danger is past they will return to the country."

Now when God wanted to give an object lesson to His disobedient people He chose to use these Rechabites to teach them. He first called Jeremiah and gave him certain directions which the prophet faithfully carried out. Jeremiah invited the Rechabites to meet him in the temple. The whole family of them assembled there and the meeting was held in one of the upper chambers. There were a good many of these rooms in the temple, for they ran along three of its four sides and there were three stories of them. They were used as storerooms and were also convenient for holding gatherings of one kind and another.

The Rechabites arrived, led by the head of the family, Jaazaniah. They probably wondered what the prophet wanted with them, and no doubt they were surprised when they saw large pots or bowls full of wine. These vessels were something like modern punch bowls, only much larger, and from them individual drinking cups were filled. Turning to the head of the family Jeremiah invited him and all of them to take some wine. Their reply was a very decided, "No." They said, "WE WILL DRINK NO WINE, FOR JONADAB THE SON OF RECHAB OUR FATHER COMMANDED US SAYING, 'YE SHALL DRINK NO WINE, NEITHER YE NOR YOUR SONS FOR EVER, NEITHER SHALL YE BUILD HOUSE NOR SOW SEED, NOR PLANT VINEYARD, NOR HAVE ANY, BUT ALL OF YOUR DAYS YE SHALL LIVE IN TENTS, THAT YE MAY LIVE MANY DAYS IN THE LAND WHEREIN YE BE STRANGERS.'"

*Daniel 5:1-31.

They said they had always faithfully obeyed the commandment of their ancestor, they and their wives and their sons and their daughters, and they intended to continue so to do. Some people would have thought that since it was Jeremiah who set wine before them it would be quite right to drink it, for he was a prophet of God and a most good and holy man. Some today will take a glass of wine if they are urged by one whom they respect and admire. They think there can't be much harm in taking a little if some truly good person offers it to them and says it is all right. But the Rechabites were fully persuaded in their own minds that it would be wrong to drink wine, even at the invitation of a prophet. So they refused and their words sound like the words of a temperance pledge. "We will drink no wine," they said emphatically.

Now Jeremiah had only offered the wine to the Rechabites to prove their faithfulness and obedience. God had told him to do this because the Israelites needed an object lesson. It seems that a large crowd was then gathered in the court outside the temple and Jeremiah left the chamber where the Rechabites had met and went outside and spoke to the Israelites. He told them how faithful the Rechabites had been and how they had kept their temperance pledge all these years because their ancestor had required it of them. But the people of Israel had not been faithful; they had been disobedient to God. He had sent His prophets to them to urge them to mend their ways and they would not even listen. Now God was going to punish them. They all knew what this meant, for the army of Nebuchadnezzar lay encamped about the city.

There are tens of thousands of people today, men, women, and children, who are following the good example of the Rechabites. They have made the resolution, "We will drink no wine," and have signed the pledge of total abstinence for life. This is a very wise thing to do. No one was ever sorry for having kept the pledge, but multitudes are sorry that they ever learned to use strong drink.

The pledge is a sacred promise. We should always be careful when we make promises, and never make them unless we intend to keep them. Dwight Lyman Moody, the great

evangelist, when a boy went to work for a farmer and promised to stay for a certain length of time. The farmer gave him nothing but corn meal and milk for breakfast, corn meal and milk for dinner and corn meal and milk for supper. This went on until the boy Dwight, had eaten nineteen meals all just alike. He wanted to leave when he saw what his fare was to be, but his mother made him stay out his time because he had given his word. Mr. Moody said that all the rest of his life he was very chary about making promises without careful thought. Now the pledge is an especially serious promise and it ought never to be taken hastily or thoughtlessly. "It is written": **WHEN THOU VOWEST A VOW UNTO GOD DEFER NOT TO PAY IT. BETTER IS IT THAT THOU SHOULDST NOT VOW THAN THAT THOU SHOULDST VOW AND NOT PAY.*** That means, it is better not to make a promise than to make it only to break it. But the pledge usually begins with the words, "Trusting in God's help," and if we really do that we shall not fail.

The temperance pledge not only enables us to avoid a great danger but it is also a help to getting on in the world. Those who keep it find that, as a rule, they can save money. Once there was held in London a celebration in honor of those who had been total abstainers for fifty years. Many temperance veterans were there. One of them was an old gentleman who had held a high position in the British navy. A reporter asked him how old he was when he signed the pledge. "I was a boy of twelve," he replied. "And what made you do that in those days when it was so unpopular?" the newspaper man enquired. "I signed," he said, "because I wanted to do some good in the world and to help others. **But I found I myself was the one who got the most good from that act; the pledge has been worth more than a fortune to me.**" Very many old folks can give the same testimony, so the young folks will do a sensible and business-like thing if they too sign the pledge before they start in their life work.

God rewarded the Rechabites for their faithfulness and some day He will richly reward all who have been His obedient children and have tried to do what they knew to be right.

*Ecclesiastes 5:4-5.

A BRAVE RESOLVE

Daniel 1:1-21.

The courts of eastern monarchs in ancient times were exceedingly splendid. Their palaces were magnificent and were gorgeously furnished and the kings and courtiers lived in the greatest luxury. They were surrounded on every hand by slaves who waited to obey their slightest command. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was very particular about his slaves. He did not want any ordinary persons to attend on him. He preferred captive princes and other young men of noble birth. These he generally obtained in war, for when he had defeated his enemies he picked out the finest young fellows among them and carried them home as his slaves.

There were several things that he took into consideration when choosing them, besides high birth. He preferred bright, intelligent boys and youths, for he liked to have them thoroughly trained in Babylonish learning. But specially he was particular about their looks. They had to be strong and well built and handsome besides, so that visitors to the court would admire them. Slaves were thought of simply as property, just like houses and pictures and furniture and flower gardens. Nebuchadnezzar wanted handsome ones, because the finer looking they were the more would people admire the splendor of his court and praise him as the great king of it all.

The land over which Nebuchadnezzar ruled was called by several different names, Babylonia, Chaldea or Shinar. It was the rich and fertile plain watered by two great historic rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Away off to the west lay another fertile land, that of Egypt, watered by another great river, the Nile. At the time of this story these two countries were at war and Nebuchadnezzar marched with his army all the long way from Babylon to Egypt and defeated his enemy in battle.

Now this king of Egypt ruled also over the little land of Judah which for some time had acknowledged him as its overlord and had paid him tribute in silver and gold.

Nebuchadnezzar thought that while he was about it he might just as well subdue Judah too. But though he seemed

to make this plan out of his own head it was really God's plan. The Bible says, "Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah."* The people had been very wicked in several ways, and they had worshipped idols though they knew perfectly well there was only one true God. God had been good and gracious to them since they first became a nation, but they were ungrateful and God determined after repeated warnings to punish them.

The army of Nebuchadnezzar was not long in conquering Jerusalem and the king took many captives home with him from the land of Judah. Some of them belonged to the royal family and others were sons of the nobles. Also he carried away some of the sacred vessels from the temple. He put these into the house of the false god Bel, to whom he had built a temple in Babylon. This Bel was the Sun god. Nebuchadnezzar was very proud of the magnificent temple he had erected and there have been handed down to us on earthen tablets the very words he wrote about it.

"I set up long beams to support it," he said, "I built up its gates; I stored inside silver and gold and precious stones whose names were almost unknown, and placed there the treasure house of my kingdom." Eastern kings in those days were fabulously rich because they were despots and took from their subjects whatever they wanted. The people stood in great awe and fear of them, for to offend one of these tyrants almost certainly meant death. If they were displeased with a subject or a slave they thought nothing of ordering his head to be cut off on the spot.

Among the captives who were carried from Jerusalem to Babylon were four boys named Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Their handsome faces and intelligent speech caused them to be singled out for the king's service and they were sent with a number of others to the palace. There they learned that they were to go through a three years' course of study to prepare them for their future work. It was not an easy course by any means. They were to study the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans. Although Babylonia as a whole was sometimes called Chaldea and the people were called

*2 Kings 24:3.

Chaldeans, the word is specially used of the wise men or magicians. It seems likely that these learned men and the king and his courtiers spoke a language different from the one used by the people generally. It was this court language that the four boys had to master.

The Chaldeans paid a great deal of attention to astronomy and indeed made some very important discoveries in that line. The boys were required to study this science and a kindred subject called astrology by means of which the wise men professed to foretell events by the stars. Hieroglyphics or picture writing was another of their lessons. Perhaps you have been in a museum and seen some of the strange pictures which those ancient people used instead of writing. Altogether the four boys had plenty of work to fill their days.

There was placed over them the Ash-penaz, or Master of the Household. Beneath him in rank was another called Melzar, who was a sort of steward and looked after the boys' table. It was not long before the Master became very much attached to Daniel and felt for this young stranger a "tender love." It is not hard to guess the reason for this. Daniel was obedient and hard working as well as being a thoroughly gentlemanly boy. His friends seem to have been like him, so it is no wonder that they rapidly gained favor with the Master.

They were not badly treated, for they were being prepared for honorable positions at the court. The king gave directions that they should be fed on the very daintiest food, such as was served at his own table, and altogether they were to live more like princes than like slaves. If only they could forget their home and dear ones and the God they had loved and served and could settle down in this heathen land, they might after all be pretty well off.

In order to try to make them forget Nebuchadnezzar changed their names. Daniel means "God is my judge," but Daniel was given the new name of Belteshazzar, or "the prince of Bel." He was henceforth to be connected with the false god who was supposed to be the special deity of Babylon. Azariah means "the help of the Lord." This beautiful name was taken away from the lad and henceforth he was to be

called Abed-nego or "the servant of Nego," another false god. The other two boys also received new names and these too, had to do with idol worship. But though they went by new names and lived in a strange new land these four boys never forgot the old home and the worship of the one true God.

There were many difficulties in their life in Babylon, but one thing troubled them particularly. The law of Moses, which they had learned faithfully to obey, forbade them to eat certain kinds of food. Some animals were considered unclean and were not to be eaten at all; and no flesh whatever was to be eaten with the blood in it. If they ate the meat from the king's table they would constantly be disobeying the law of Moses, which was the law of God. Nor was this all. The food eaten in the palace of the heathen king was first offered in sacrifice to idols. We are told by one historian that wine was mixed in a golden cup and consecrated to the Sun god, and that the king drank a little of it and then placed a chaplet of cypress on his head, while music was played and hymns were sung to that false deity. After this ceremony was over the food was passed around to the members of the royal household.

Daniel no doubt felt that to eat it under these circumstances would be the same thing as taking part in idolatry. He thought about the matter carefully and talked it over with his friends. Well they knew that it was as much as their lives were worth to transgress the command of Nebuchadnezzar. They would probably be put to death the very same day. However, there was just one thing they could not do, whatever happened. They could not disobey God. So DANIEL PURPOSED IN HIS HEART THAT HE WOULD NOT DEFILE HIMSELF WITH THE PORTION OF THE KING'S MEAT NOR WITH THE WINE WHICH HE DRANK, and the other three joined with him in making this brave resolve.

The secret of Daniel's greatness and of all his success in life is to be found in that one word "purposed." People never happen to grow into noble characters. They have definitely to choose to do right and then stick to it in spite of fate. If you wish to become a fine musician you must "purpose" to

practise faithfully however tedious it may be, and then hold to the purpose when you would much rather be doing something else. If you want to graduate from school with honors you must "purpose" that you will thoroughly master every lesson as it comes, no matter how hard or tiresome it may be. With grown-up folks it is the same. The artist who becomes famous, the business man who makes a fortune, the scientist who gives the world some great discovery, all have a strong purpose constantly before their minds.

Daniel's purpose was the noblest that anyone could have. He determined to obey God at any cost, though he lived among the heathen and was nothing but a slave. Perhaps it was a hard struggle when he thought of the cruel death that might await him but once he had fully made up his mind he was not the boy to turn back.

He spoke to the Master of the Household about the matter and explained why he could not eat the king's meat or drink his wine. He respectfully asked if he and his friends might be allowed to eat pulse. This means peas and beans and perhaps various other vegetables and also cereals. Instead of strong wine he desired permission to drink pure cold water. The good man was puzzled and distressed. He felt the boys were sure to get into trouble, for they would not thrive so well as those who lived on meat and wine, and would not look so handsome as others when the time came to appear before the king. Also he was afraid for himself. If the king were angry, the Ash-penaz said, he would think nothing of cutting off his head for having allowed the boys to break the rules.

This made it more difficult than ever, for Daniel certainly did not want to endanger his friend, however brave he might be for himself. But whatever happened, he must obey his God. So he begged the Master to try his plan for ten days at least and see how it worked. Ash-penaz turned the four over to Melzar, who prepared their food, and they were allowed to eat pulse and drink water just as they had asked to do. At the end of the ten days they were examined and it was found they were better looking than the other young fellows who had eaten from the king's table. So they were

permitted to keep on in the same way and observe the law of their God as they had done at home.

There is nothing surprising in the fact that they were healthier than the others and had better complexions. Strong drink is not nourishing or good for the body in any way at all. It contains nothing whatever that will build up muscle and nerve and make rich red blood. On the contrary, the poison alcohol makes the muscle flabby and benumbs the nerves and injures the blood in several different ways. Those who leave it alone and drink pure water are much more likely to be healthy and strong than the people who use it even in the most moderate quantities. Alcohol specially injures the brain and those who do mental work should never touch it.

When the three years' course was over the Jewish boys had to take their examinations. As Daniel and his friends had studied hard and constantly sought God's blessing and had never poisoned their brains with alcohol, they did well. The others had eaten heavily from day to day and used the alcoholic drink that makes it difficult for the brain to work. The result was this: "Among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king enquired if them he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm."

From this time forth Daniel rose higher and higher until he was the greatest man in the country after the king himself. At last through his influence at court he was able to prepare the way for his people to return from exile to their own land. All this was because, as a mere boy in his teens, he had "purposed in his heart" to do right at any cost. Would it not be a fine thing if every American boy and girl would "purpose" to leave strong drink alone and to obey God throughout life?

"Dare to be a Daniel,
 Dare to stand alone;
 Dare to have a purpose firm
 And dare to make it known."

THREE MIGHTY MEN

I Chronicles 11:10-25.

If you like stories of hair-breadth adventures and narrow escapes you should read the history of David in the books of Samuel and Chronicles. Of course you know all about his fights with the lion and the bear and the giant Goliath, but he had other thrilling experiences besides these. You may read how King Saul in a fit of madness threw his spear at David while he was playing the harp before him and how David had to flee for his life. Also how his wife saved him by lowering him from a window and putting an image in the bed to deceive his enemies. Read, too, all about David's friendship with Jonathan, the son of Saul, and how they made a covenant together and were true to each other to the last.

Besides this best and dearest friend David had many others who gathered round him in the wild desert country where he was obliged to hide, and who later helped to make him king. They formed a valiant band of heroes and were known as David's mighty men. There was Eleazar for one. He saw his countrymen fleeing, beaten and terrified, before the Philistines. Instead of catching the panic and running with the rest he made a stand with a few others in a little patch or parcel of ground full of barley "and delivered it and slew the Philistines and the Lord saved them by a great deliverance."

Then there was Benaiah who slew two lion-like men of Moab; also he went down and slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day, which was a great feat. If he had not finished the lion, the lion would surely have finished him, for there was no getting away from the beast when once he was in the bottom of the pit.

This same warrior killed an Egyptian giant who had a spear like a weaver's beam. He went down to him with a staff and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand and slew him with his own spear. Though in these days we have learned to hate war and love peace we can't help feeling that David had some heroes in his little army of whom he could be justly proud.

Perhaps the greatest exploit of his mighty men was their dash to the well of Bethlehem. You will remember that Bethlehem was David's old home. It was there that he was born and spent all his boyhood days. There he used to keep his father's sheep and there it was that Samuel found him and anointed him king. In after years, when David was wandering in the mountains and hiding in the caves and fighting desperate battles, he used to look back with longing to the old days in Bethlehem, so happy and so peaceful. He thought of the hillsides where he had so often led his flocks and the well where he had had many a cooling draught and had drawn water for his sheep besides.

The wells in Palestine were very carefully made, for they were intended to last for all time. Usually they were dug in the solid limestone rock and there was a low curb around the top to keep the dirt from getting in. A large stone was often laid over the opening. Sometimes there were steps leading down into the well. There was a rope for hauling up the leathern bucket or the earthen jar and the water coming from deep down in the ground was deliciously cool and refreshing. One or two troughs were placed near for watering the cattle, sometimes made of wood and sometimes hollowed out of stone.

It always seemed to David that there was no water quite so good as the water from the well of Bethlehem. One of our own American poets felt the same way as David when he said, "How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood, when fond recollection presents them to view," and went on to describe "the old oaken bucket, the iron-bound bucket, the moss-covered bucket that hung in the well."

Once David and his mighty men were in a stronghold known as the Cave of Adullam, which seems to have been on a high hill. A few miles from them the army of the Philistines lay encamped and behind their lines was the little town of Bethlehem, so dear to David's heart. One day, tired and thirsty, he remembered the old well over yonder and thought how good a draught of its cool water would taste to him at that moment. He exclaimed aloud, "Oh that one

would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, that is by the gate."

In eastern lands people have such a delicate sense of taste that they can tell the water of one well from that of another. Sometimes there are several fountains in a town and when the water carrier comes around one of his customers will want water from this fountain and another will want it from that. Our western tongues cannot distinguish such differences, but we may be sure that when David longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem it was because he remembered its taste.

He certainly had not the slightest idea of anyone's attempting to get it. It was just a wish. We often wish for things that it is quite impossible to have. But some of his mighty men heard his words. "Let us go and get it for him," they said to one another. These heroes loved David devotedly, for he was the greatest hero of them all and such a grand leader. There was nothing in the world they would not have done for him so they were glad even to risk their lives that he might have what he longed for. Off they started, three of them together. We do not know whether it was day or night, but either way it was fearfully risky, for they had to pass through the camp of the enemy and at every step their lives were in danger. At last, however, the three broke through and came to Bethlehem and the well beside the gate. You may imagine how hurriedly they drew that water. Then they started back and all the deadly danger had to be encountered again, only this time every step took them nearer to camp. At last, wonderful to tell, they reached their hill in safety, hastened to the cave, and in triumph presented to David the water he had so much wanted.

Now here comes the strange part of the story, and I fear you will be disappointed in it and will feel that the three mighty men must have been disappointed, too. David would not drink of it after all, but poured it out to the Lord as an offering. The fact is, he could not bring himself to drink it when he thought of the awful risk that his brave men had run just for refreshment for him. He said, MY GOD FORBID IT ME, THAT I SHOULD DO THIS THING. SHALL I DRINK THE BLOOD OF THESE MEN THAT HAVE PUT THEIR LIVES IN JEOPARDY? FOR WITH THE

JEOPARDY OF THEIR LIVES THEY BROUGHT IT. Therefore he would not drink it.

Jeopardy means danger. David felt that his men had risked their lives to get that drink and if they had been killed it would have been, in a way, his fault. We do not know whether those three mighty men had wives and children or not. If they had, David surely must have been shocked to think how nearly they were all made widows and orphans that he might have a drink. The drink was just as good as it could be, pure refreshing water, and David wanted it badly enough, but he could not bear to think of the terrible price that was so nearly paid for it, even “the blood of men.” When he poured it out as an offering to the Lord he doubtless thanked Him that He had preserved the lives of his heroes and brought them safely back.

We have the same feeling about strong drink today that David had about that water. It costs too much, not in dollars and cents, but in human life, and for that reason, if for no other, we could not think of using it. Those brave men were not killed after all, and their wives and children were not made widows and orphans. But strong drink does cause men to be killed every day, and women to be made widows and children fatherless. Not every day only but every hour and even more often than that.

Alcohol is always harmful, even in small quantities. But just suppose for a moment that a little would not hurt you. Suppose a person could drink a glass of beer with his meals, or a little wine at dinner, and never be any the worse. Would it be all right to take it then, do you think? Some would say, “Yes, I will drink it, because I like it, and it does not seem to hurt me.” But men like David will always say, “I cannot touch it, for it has destroyed too many people, body and soul. I should be ashamed to use, just for my own pleasure, what is causing the death of so many of my fellows. God forbid that I should do this thing.”

“It is written”: THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.* If we love our neighbour we shall hate strong drink and never let it pass our lips.

*Leviticus 19:18.

RUNNING THE RACE

I Corinthians 9:24-27.

In the city of Tarsus in Asia Minor there once lived a boy whose name was Saul. His father was a Jew and a very strict one, belonging to the sect of the Pharisees. Saul was a clever boy, rather hot-tempered but very affectionate, and no doubt he loved his father and mother and sister very dearly. He most likely went to a little school connected with the Synagogue, where he learned to read and write, seated on the ground beside his teacher.

When he took walks in the cool of the evening he saw the mountain range of Taurus with its pointed peaks which caught the last rays of the setting sun. When the river came rushing down, swollen with the melting snows, no doubt he loved to watch the waterfalls breaking over the rocks. Perhaps he liked still better to wander about the wharves where the boats landed and there were so many interesting things to see, and where men speaking many different languages and clad in many strange costumes were always passing to and fro.

When he was about twelve years old his parents sent him to Jerusalem to a school conducted by a learned doctor of the law. Saul distinguished himself greatly in his studies and not only learned most thoroughly the letter of the law, but took equal pains to obey it. His education was not complete, however, until he had mastered a trade. It was the custom that all boys should learn one so as to be able to support themselves whatever might happen. Saul learned to make tents, and this was a good business for there was a large demand for them. The tents were made of haircloth, the black hair being supplied by the goats raised in the province of Cilicia where Tarsus is situated. Such tents may still be seen today dotted over the plains in harvest time.

Because of his earnestness and ability Saul became a very prominent man and he seems to have been a member of the chief court called the Sanhedrin. It consisted of priests and elders and scribes, all supposed to be learned men, and it was a great honor to belong to it.

Not very long before this time Jesus had been crucified and his disciples were now telling the wonderful story of his resurrection and explaining that he was the Son of God and had given his life to save mankind. Now the Sanhedrin did not believe this doctrine and they sent the Christians to prison for preaching it. They even had them pursued to distant cities and brought back to Jerusalem for punishment. Saul was sent all the way to Damascus to hunt up some of them.

This is a beautiful city lying in the midst of the desert. Its gardens and shrubberies are kept fresh and fertile by a river which after a short course loses itself in a lake. With its white buildings among their green foliage, its fruits and flowers growing in great profusion, and its little rivulets running in all directions, Damascus is an earthly paradise.

Saul was on his way there with a number of companions and had almost reached the city when a marvellous thing happened. Just about noon a great light shone round about him, more dazzling by far than that of the midday sun. All the party were much afraid and fell to the ground and then Saul distinctly heard a voice speaking to him from heaven and saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" "Who art thou, Lord?" he asked trembling and the answer was, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Then the Lord told Saul that he had appeared to him in order to make him his servant and his witness among the heathen. So in that brief moment Saul the persecutor was completely changed. At once he knew that Jesus, who spoke from heaven, was the Son of God, and he was ready to go wherever he might send him and do whatever he might tell him. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"* he cried, and from that time he obeyed his divine master most faithfully and became the first great missionary. Not long afterwards his name was changed to Paul.

For about twenty years Paul traveled and preached the gospel in Asia and Europe. He generally went on foot with a companion or two, and when they made a lengthy stay in any city he worked at his trade as a tentmaker to pay expenses. He suffered many things, but he was glad to bear

*Acts 9:1-6.

them for Jesus' sake. Once he was stoned in the streets and then dragged through the gates and thrown outside the wall for dead. Another time, because he healed a poor demoniac girl, Paul and his friend Silas were cruelly scourged and put in prison and their feet were made fast in the stocks. Prisons in those old days were terrible places, dark, damp dungeons, dirty and unhealthy. But even there, though the stocks hurt their feet, Paul and Silas sang praises to God.

Another time a mob tried to kill Paul and he was only rescued by a company of Roman soldiers. On yet another occasion forty men entered into a compact to murder him and swore that they would neither eat nor drink till they had accomplished their purpose. But news of this plot reached Paul's nephew and the apostle was sent away under a guard of soldiers in the night. Many other thrilling adventures and narrow escapes he had, including no less than three shipwrecks. Traveling was difficult and dangerous in those days, whether by land or sea. On his second missionary journey Paul crossed the Taurus mountains by the Cilician Gates, "one of the most frightful mountain passes in the world." Besides the ordinary perils of rough mountain roads he was sometimes in great danger from robbers. Indeed, the things that he suffered would make a long list. One day a party of friends came down to the seashore to bid him goodbye. He spoke to them of the trials he was likely to meet and said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself."

In small matters as in great Paul was always self-sacrificing. All he thought of or cared about was to serve Christ and help others. Once there came up in the church a certain puzzling question. Some people were saying it was wrong to eat certain meats and others said it was not wrong. Paul said, whether it was actually wrong or not he would not think of doing it if it made it harder for anyone else to live rightly. He wrote, IT IS GOOD NEITHER TO EAT FLESH NOR DRINK WINE, NOR ANYTHING WHEREBY THY BROTHER STUMBLETH OR . . . IS MADE WEAK.* Certainly if he had lived today he would have been a prohibitionist because strong drink causes more people

*Romans 14:21.

to be weak in body and mind and character than any other thing.

It is hard to practice self-denial and no doubt Paul found it so now and then. But he liked to think of himself as an athlete running for a prize. Athletes don't mind training even when it is very strenuous. Among the Greeks in Paul's time a great deal of attention was paid to sports. The chief games were the Olympic and the Isthmian. Competitors for these games were obliged to train very thoroughly and for a long while, sometimes for almost a year. The Greek philosopher Epictetus wrote: "Would you be a victor in the Olympic games? So, in good truth, would I, for it is a glorious thing, but pray consider what must go before, and so proceed to the attempt. You must then live by rule, eat what will be disagreeable, refrain from delicacies. You must oblige yourself to constant exercises at the appointed hour, in heat and cold; you must abstain from wine and liquors; in a word, you must be as submissive to all the directions of your master as to those of a physician."

One of the most popular of the Olympic games was the foot race. The course was called the stadium. A stadium literally means a measure of six hundred feet and the race track had this name because that was its length. At one end was a straight wall in which were the entrances, while the other end was closed in. Tiers of seats rose on each side and on grand occasions these were filled by a great throng of spectators.* At the goal sat the judge with the prize in his hand. This was a crown of leaves. In the Olympic games a wreath of olive leaves was given, and in the Isthmian one of pine or ivy. The runner started from a square pillar at the entrance end of the stadium, and before they took their places they removed all unnecessary clothing that they might not be impeded in the least degree.

Paul often thought of these games and how willingly the contestants practiced self-denial in order to win. He said, **EVERY MAN THAT STRIVETH FOR THE MASTERY IS TEMPERATE IN ALL THINGS.** It seemed to him that the Christian life is like a glorious race and we ought not to let anything handicap us in it.

*Hebrews 12:1-2.

Self-indulgence will hinder a Christian just as it hinders an athlete. Paul was determined that no bad habit should spoil him for the race, and he wrote, I KEEP UNDER MY BODY AND BRING IT INTO SUBJECTION.* . . . I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE.** The Olympic runners practiced temperance and went in for hard training just to win a chaplet of leaves. "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown," remarked Paul, "but we an incorruptible." The reward that the Lord Jesus will some day give to his faithful servants will not fade like the wreath of olive leaves, but will last for ever and ever. So it is well worth while to "lay aside every weight," that is, every hurtful thing that would hamper us, and to run with patience the race that is set before us.

The Bible does not tell us anything about the close of Paul's life, but elsewhere we read that he was beheaded in Rome by order of the cruel Nero, in whose reign so many Christians died the martyr's death. Paul was quite ready to go, for he felt he had done his work and run his race. "I have finished my course," he wrote to his young friend Timothy, "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.*** Would it not be a grand thing to become the sort of athlete that Paul was? Would it not be worth any amount of self-denial if at last we might hear Christ say, "Well done?"

*I Corinthians 9:27.

**Philippians 3:14.

***II Timothy 4:7.

THE BOASTFUL KING

Kings 40:1-21.

Ben-hadad, king of Syria, was a proud and boastful man and he marched against the kingdom of Israel quite positive that he could conquer it. Along with him went thirty-two other kings, rulers of the different provinces of Syria, who looked up to Ben-hadad as their superior. Altogether they had a hundred and twenty-seven thousand men, some mounted on horses and others riding in chariots. No wonder that the Israelites were in despair when they saw this great multitude advancing against them. Ahab, the king, was thoroughly frightened and as it seemed hopeless to attempt to meet such an army in the field, he shut himself up with his troops in the capital city, Samaria.

Ben-hadad sent a herald to demand a hearing for his ambassadors. When these came before the king they gave a most insulting message saying that their master laid claim to everything Ahab possessed, including his silver and gold, his wives and his children. No king would agree to such a demand as this unless he had lost hope altogether and knew he was at the conqueror's mercy. This was how Ahab felt and so he said, "My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine and all that I have."

When Ben-hadad received this reply he threatened Ahab still farther. He said that he would the very next day send some of his men to Ahab and they would search his house and the houses of his servants, and whatever they found that the king delighted in they would take it away from him. This was really so insolent that it stirred up even the weak and wretched Ahab to resist. He called a council of the chief men of his realm and asked their advice.

This meeting was held in the open air and many of the people were there in addition to their leaders. With one accord they advised the king to hold out against his proud foe, saying, "Hearken not unto him, nor consent." So this time Ahab returned a refusal to Ben-hadad's impudent demands.

The Syrian monarch was very sure that he could easily conquer Samaria, so he replied that he would soon destroy

the city, but Ahab in reply told the messengers to remind Ben-hadad of the proverb, "Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off," meaning it was foolish to be sure of victory before the battle began.

When the ambassadors returned they found Ben-hadad giving a banquet to his thirty-two allies. He was so very certain of success that he was celebrating it beforehand by drinking wine instead of preparing for the battle and the wine had affected his brain and benumbed his thinking powers so that he was not capable of reasoning and he did not heed the warning but immediately ordered his servants to place the engines ready to begin the siege.*

The engines of war in those ancient times included battering rams and catapults, with scaling ladders for mounting the walls of the besieged city. We have sculptures dating from these bygone ages showing how a siege was conducted. The chief engine was the battering ram, a heavy beam with an iron head to it something like the head of a ram. This great beam was swung to and fro against the wall until a break was made in it.

When Ben-hadad said, "Place the engines," great, no doubt, were the fears and dread that Ahab and his people felt for they knew what a cruel fate awaited the conquered.

At this gloomy moment a prophet of God spoke up and brought hope and cheer to the hearts of all. "Thus saith the Lord, hast thou seen all this great multitude? Behold I will deliver it into thine hand this day, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." Ahab, beginning to see a ray of hope, asked of the prophet by whom they were to be delivered. "By the young men of the princes of the provinces," was the answer. These were the servants of those Israelite chiefs who had fled from the country districts into the capital when the Syrian army appeared. There were only two hundred and thirty-two of them and, being young, they were not experienced in war. But God can do great things through young and even weak and ignorant people, if they put their trust in Him. He is just as ready to use young Americans today as He was to use young Israelites in that ancient time.

*Verse 12, margin.

At noon this little company started out. BEN-HADAD WAS DRINKING HIMSELF DRUNK IN HIS PAVILIONS, HE AND THE THIRTY AND TWO KINGS THAT HELPED HIM, and therefore was paying no attention to the movements of the enemy. When the young men advanced, some of Ben-hadad's servants saw them and told the king, "There are men come out of Samaria." The boastful monarch merely ordered his soldiers to take them alive, whether they had come to fight or to sue for peace. He had no idea there would be any difficulty about that for one effect of strong drink is to paralyze the judgment and thus make the user rash and careless.

The two hundred and thirty-two young men marched on against the Syrians, brave and fearless because they were acting in obedience to God's command. The army of Samaria followed them, only about seven thousand strong against the one hundred and twenty-seven thousand of the Syrians. But since their leaders were under the influence of drink the Syrian army was in hopeless confusion. Clear-headed and strong, the young Israelites attacked them and utterly routed them. The Syrians fled, leaving many of their possessions behind, even some of their horses. The Israelites seized these and pursued their enemies, killing a great number. As for Ben-hadad the boaster, he was glad enough to run away, and lucky to have a horse to carry him. Perhaps when he reached a place of safety and could sit down and think, he wished that instead of muddling his brain with wine, he had kept it clear and given attention to his army. We may be sure that to the day of his death he never forgot Ahab's proverb, "Let not him that girdeth on his armor boast himself as he that putteth it off."

We have seen in other lessons that everyone should abstain from drink for his own sake. Ben-hadad reminds us that all kings and other rulers, all generals and captains and leaders of the people, should abstain for this other reason—because one man's drinking may bring disaster and defeat on a whole nation. "It is written": THEY HAVE ERRED THROUGH WINE, AND THROUGH STRONG DRINK ARE OUT OF THE WAY; THEY ERR IN VISION, THEY STUMBLE IN JUDGMENT.*

*Isaiah 28:7.

HOW THE GREAT CITY FELL

Daniel 5:1-31.

Babylon was built so long ago that no one knows just when it was begun. In ancient times people wrote on bricks and many of these have been found and their inscriptions translated in our day. One of them, written nearly four thousand years before Christ, makes mention of the city of Babylon. It was built on the river Euphrates in Asia. You may find this river mentioned in the very beginning of the Bible.

One of the most famous kings of antiquity was Nebuchadnezzar. He ruled over a large country and Babylon was his capital. He determined to make it the most beautiful city in the world, and also so strong that no enemy would ever be able to prevail against it.

The city was built in the shape of a square, with the Euphrates running through the middle of it. A stone bridge spanned the broad river, and at each end there was a royal palace. On wet and windy days people could go from one palace to the other by a tunnel instead of using the bridge.

The walls of the city were considered one of the seven wonders of the world. There was an inner wall and an outer one. Outside the second there was a broad and deep moat or ditch. When this moat was made the clay that was dug out was used to make bricks to build the wall. There were two hundred and fifty towers around the walls, and between the inner and outer ones there was room for a four-horse chariot to turn round. The walls were so high that the prophet Jeremiah speaks of them as "mounting up to heaven." He also mentions their high gates. There were a hundred of these gates, all made of bronze and very handsome. On the inside the walls were lined with tiles decorated with hunting scenes.

Nebuchadnezzar built himself one specially remarkable palace. The bricks may still be seen. They are very neatly moulded and stamped and the cement that holds them together is as good as any that we can make today. Nebuchadnezzar had so many men to work for him that he built this palace in

almost no time. A record has been found in which he says, "In fifteen days I completed the splendid work."

But far more wonderful than the palace were the Hanging Gardens. These, like the walls of Babylon were counted among the wonders of the world. The story goes that Nebuchadnezzar built them for his queen. She came from a land of mountains and forests, cool breezes and green groves. Babylon was so hot and flat it made her homesick, so Nebuchadnezzar had an artificial hill made for her pleasure.

High arches were built and on top of these terraces were made with earth spread upon them, and trees and shrubs and flowers planted there. Terrace rose above terrace, and on top of all Nebuchadnezzar built a house for his queen. It was very beautiful and about as high as the lofty walls of Babylon, so that the lady had not only cooler and fresher air but a wide view besides. The king also had a pump house erected on the topmost terrace, to which water from the river and canals could be brought up for use in the queen's house and gardens.

Altogether Babylon was a wonderful city, so strong that it did not look as if any enemy could conquer it, and so beautiful that it was the pride of the king's heart.

But it fell and great was the fall of it. The story of its conquest is told by the Greek writer, Xenophon. You may have heard of Cyrus, the Persian boy who refused to touch his grandfather's wine. This Cyrus became a great conqueror and it was he who took Babylon.

The historian says he ranged his whole army round the city and then rode round it himself with some of his friends and advisers. After he had taken a good look at everything he made up his mind that the walls were too high and strong to be broken down, and that in order to capture the place he must try some other method.

Gathering together his principal officers he held a consultation with them. One thought they might perhaps get into the city by way of the river. But another said, "The city is defended by the river even better than by its walls."

When they had had their say Cyrus decided the matter, for a plan was then growing in his mind. "Let us dig a trench," he said, "just as broad and deep as we can." This was soon done, for he had thousands on thousands of soldiers. Then Cyrus built towers here and there, laying their foundations with strong trunks of palm trees. He pretended he was going to blockade the city. The garrison inside laughed at this, for they had provisions enough to last them for years. Babylon was so large that there were within its walls great tracts of grass land on which cattle could be kept in time of war. So when the people saw the army preparing to besiege them they did not care but only laughed.

At this time Nebuchadnezzar was dead and Belshazzar was reigning in his place. The Bible says, **BELSHAZZAR THE KING MADE A GREAT FEAST TO A THOUSAND OF HIS LORDS AND DRANK WINE BEFORE THE THOUSAND.** When his brain was poisoned by alcohol he did a very wicked thing. He sent for the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem, things that were holy to the Lord and only used in His service. They were brought to the palace and Belshazzar and his princes and wives and friends drank wine from them, the while they praised their false gods, idols of gold and silver, of wood and of stone.

And then a strange and awful thing happened. On the wall of the palace beside the candlestick there appeared the fingers of a man's hand, writing mysterious words. The king saw it and was terrified; his face changed color and he trembled so that his knees knocked together. He cried aloud to his servants to fetch the astrologers and magicians that they might explain the dreadful mystery. When they came into the banquet hall Belshazzar said to them that whoever could read the writing and interpret the meaning should be clothed in scarlet and have a chain of gold about his neck and should be made the third ruler in the kingdom. But though all the wise men had come into the palace, and though they would have given much to be able to explain the writing, not one of them could read a word of it. Then the king was still more distressed and knew not what to do.

At this moment the queen entered and advised Belshazzar to send for Daniel, saying he would be sure to know the interpretation. So Daniel was sent for and the King renewed his offer of reward. The prophet told him to keep his gifts for himself, but said he would make known the meaning of the writing. The fingers of the hand were sent by God because Belshazzar had not humbled himself before the Lord but had been proud and wicked. Because the vessels of God's holy temple had been brought into the palace and the king and his wives and friends had drunk wine from them and had praised the gods of wood and stone and had not honored the one true God, this terrible warning had been sent. Daniel said the mysterious words were Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, and they meant that God had made an end of Belshazzar's kingdom and had given it to the Medes and Persians.

Now the leader of the Medes and Persians was Cyrus who later became king. Let us turn back to Xenophon and see the historian's exact words as they have been translated by one of our Greek scholars:

"The trenches were now dug, and Cyrus when he heard that there was a festival in Babylon in which all the Babylonians drank and reveled the whole night, took a number of men with him, and as soon as it was dark opened the trenches on the side toward the river. When this was done the water ran off in the night into the trenches and the bed of the river through the city allowed the men to walk along it. When the river was thus prepared Cyrus gave orders to the Persian captains of thousands of infantry and cavalry to attend him, each with his thousand drawn up two abreast. They accordingly came, and he, causing those that attended his person, both foot and horse, to go down into the dry channel of the river, ordered them to try whether the bed of the river was passable. When they reported that it was, he called together the officers and spoke to them as follows: 'The river, my friends, has yielded us a passage into the city, and let us boldly enter, fearing nothing within, but considering that these people, on whom we are now going to fall, are the same that we defeated when they were all awake, sober, armed and in order. We shall

now fall upon them at a time when many of them are asleep, many intoxicated and all in confusion. Come, then, take your arms, and with the help of the gods I will lead you on.'

"Turning to two of his friends, Cyrus added, 'Show us the ways, for you are acquainted with them, and when we are in, conduct us by the readiest approach to the palace.' 'Indeed,' said some, 'it would not be at all wonderful if the doors of the palace were open, for the whole city seems tonight to be in a revel, but we shall meet with a guard in the front of the gates, for there is always one placed there.'

"As soon as these words were spoken they went forward. They found the doors of the palace shut; those who were appointed to attack the guards fell upon them as they were drinking at a large fire, and dealt with them as with enemies. As a great clamor and noise ensued those who were within heard the tumult, and when the king ordered them to see what was the matter, some of them threw open the gates and rushed out. Those who were with the two guides, as soon as they saw the gates unclosed, burst in and came up to the king and found him standing with his sword drawn. They mastered him and Cyrus sent troops of horsemen through the streets to tell those who were within the houses to remain within, and these directions they obeyed."

When day came the people learned that the city was taken and the king dead and so they all surrendered. Cyrus immediately took possession, and we are glad to know that he treated his conquered foes with justice and mercy.

So this is the story of the fall of Babylon. Some writers say that there were traitors within, and that may partly account for its having been taken so easily. But Xenophon over and over again mentions strong drink and the Bible speaks of it, too. When men use alcohol they are not fit to defend themselves either from enemies without or from traitors within. To begin with, their brains are too blunted to realize the danger, and when at last they do understand it they are not strong enough to meet it. "It is written": **IT IS NOT FOR KINGS TO DRINK WINE, NOR FOR PRINCES STRONG DRINK.***

*Proverbs 31:4.

THE SCOUTS TALE

Numbers 13:1-33; 14:1-10.

The children of Israel had traveled across the great and terrible wilderness and were nearing the land that God had promised to give them. Only a few more days and they would reach it, and the long weary journey would be over. At God's command Moses sent a small party of scouts to spy out the country and report upon it. It was known that a number of different tribes inhabited the land. Moses told the spies to find out whether these people were strong or weak, few or many, whether they lived in tents or in cities and fortresses. They were also to notice what the land itself was like, whether it was fruitful or barren, and especially if there was plenty of wood. Moses told them to bring back samples of what grew there.

The spies were twelve in number. Each tribe furnished one, and they were all leading men, every one a ruler and supposed to be old enough and wise enough to make a good survey and bring back a true report.

The children of Israel from their encampment could see a range of hills stretching away to the north. Beyond these was the Promised Land. The spies were commanded to climb up into these hills from which they might get a good view, and then quietly and cautiously to penetrate into the country. Many weary days had the Israelites been traveling over the barren desert, and as they trudged on mile after mile it had seemed as if there were no end to the shifting sand and the rough rocks and the little pebbles that hurt their feet. Now they were camped close to the border of the new country of which they had heard so much, but thus far there were no signs of the beauty and richness that they had hoped to see.

The twelve men were not long in reaching Canaan and they found it a most beautiful country. After crossing the mountain they descended into a lovely valley, called the Valley of Eshcol, where grapes were growing wild in great quantities; the bunches so large that it took two men to carry one of

them. The spies brought pomegranates back with them along with the grapes. They brought figs also for figs grow abundantly in Palestine, particularly among the mountains.

The scouts were absent forty days and returned in safety from their trip laden with the fruit that they had gathered. That told as plainly as any words that it was a goodly and pleasant land which they had reached. It would have been no wonder if they had all talked at once and said something like this: "See what we have here! Bunches of grapes too heavy for one man to carry alone! Delicious pomegranates! Figs in plenty! Wheat and barley and olives grow there, too! We saw hillsides covered with vineyards, and large flocks of cattle and sheep feeding on the plains. Let us lose no time but go up and take possession of this rich and fertile land that the Lord our God has given unto us." As a matter of fact they made no such speech. They said it was certainly a good land but they could never conquer it. It was no use trying. Why, there were giants there; they had seen them with their own eyes. Their cities, they said, were very great and were defended by strong walls. There were several different tribes in the land, all mighty warriors. "We be not able to go up against the people," they urged, "for they are stronger than we."

This was the cowardly talk of all the spies but two. However these two exceptions, Caleb and Joshua, spoke in a very different tone. "The land which we passed through to search it," they said, "is an exceeding good land. LET US GO UP AT ONCE AND POSSESS IT, FOR WE ARE WELL ABLE TO OVERCOME IT. Only rebel not against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; their defence is departed from them and the Lord is with us; fear them not."

The congregation of the children of Israel very foolishly believed the false report of the ten spies, and when the two spoke up in this brave and hopeful way they tried to stone them. So just when the nation, weary with wandering, had come to the border of Canaan, they had to turn round and march into the desert again by the way of the Red Sea. For forty years the Israelites remained outside the Land of Promise, roaming about in the wilderness. They were not kept out

by the giants, but by their own unbelief. God could have defeated their enemies and driven them out in no time, but they did not trust Him.

In America we had a foe worse than all the wild tribes of Palestine put together. This foe was the licensed liquor traffic. At last Congress submitted to the people the Eighteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution forbidding the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors. This amendment was ratified by forty-six states. Congress then enacted the Enforcement code commonly called the "Volstead Act" thus giving the law the name of the member of Congress who introduced it in that body. Now some people are not willing to obey the law and they still make and sell strong drink which is contrary to the constitution; hence the enemies of prohibition say, "You can never enforce the law; the liquor traffic is too strong; you cannot drive it out of America, there is no use trying." They think of the money and influence those have who wish to restore the traffic and they say, "They are stronger than all that are against them." They make one great mistake; they forget to count God.

The ten spies forgot, too. They were so taken up with looking at the giants that they entirely forgot God was on their side. It is true those giants were very strong. In our own time travelers have found what appear to be the remains of some of their cities. No one lives in them but they are still well preserved. The houses are of black basalt rock, which is nearly as hard as iron, and the roofs as well as the walls are of stone. There are double doors made of slabs of stone seven feet high, and even the rafters and the window shutters are built of the same. Certainly they were a mighty race. But if they were strong, God was stronger, and the scouts ought to have known that.

It is also true that the liquor traffic is exceedingly powerful, but God is infinitely more so, and those who fight at His command can vanquish any foe. "It is written": **BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT.***

When one person is fearful and cowardly he causes others to be so, too. Those ten spies discouraged the whole nation

*Ephesians 6:10.

and prevented them from going up to conquer their enemies. Nowadays it is the same. One person can do a deal of talking and sometimes the talk does a deal of harm. "Prohibition does not prohibit." "It is useless to try to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution, for we can never overcome the liquor traffic." That is the way some folks talk today. They sound like the old spies come to life again. People who are fond of saying "can't" are not a help to their country or to any good cause. It is a weakness for Christians to use such a word.

The right way to talk about the liquor traffic is the way Caleb talked long ago. "Let us go up at once for we are well able to overcome it." "At once," because our nation has been altogether too slow in mastering this foe. No more time must be lost, but all true patriots, men and women, boys and girls, must unite to defeat America's giant enemy, alcohol, and by God's help to make an end of it entirely.



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