

For the Little People

The Daughter of a Knight

Of course he does not wear armor, but just ordinary coats that fit well; and he does not wear a helmet, and you are glad, for it would be very sad to have his expression of good-fellowship hidden away. Think how you would feel to have your father's face hidden under a helmet! Why, I do not believe you really like to have your mother wear a veil. This knight just wears ordinary clothes, but they are always brushed. Somehow, you feel, when you see him, as if he revered the strong, sound body that God had given him, and was glad to take care of it, respect it, use it well, that it might be a good house to live in as long as he needed it. And you know that he is a true knight when you look at him, for he looks as if he hated lying, and meanness, and bad temper, and unkindness, and hard-heartedness. And you know that to hear a baby cry and not try to help it would be impossible for this knight; that he would see the old lady crossing the street, and would hurry to help her; that he would help the small boy mend his kite, or fix his wagon, or find his ball, and after he found the ball you would expect him to give it a toss with a laugh that would make the little owner of the ball forget he had lost it even for a minute—it would just be part of the game. You may be sure that such a knight would be a lovely father to have. The little daughter of this knight is just like a little sunbeam. All the lonely folks, and feeble folks, and old folks, and a good many naughty folks, think it one of the most lovely opportunities of their lives that this little daughter of a knight is their friend; that she can call them by name, and that she will greet them as friends. They feel sorry for all the folks in the world who do not know her, and cannot ring the bell and hear her sweet "Good-morning," who do not know her dolls, and cannot see the beautiful statues she makes from blocks. The darkest, stormiest day is a lovely day to her, because her heart is so full of love. There is so much love in her home that perhaps it is always sunshine there. For you may be sure that so true a knight would choose as true a lady to live in his castle and be the mother of the little knights and ladies who would come to live in it.

Our little daughter of a knight had one trial in her life, one thing that blotted out the sunshine for a little time. She did not like cold water, and the knight and his lady were made very unhappy by her tears. But one day the knight told his little daughter of all the brave knights of King Arthur's time; how they fought against evil, how they tried to be true and brave—true and brave in the little things of life.

"Did they cry when they had their faces washed in cold water?" the little daughter asked, with her lovely blue eyes all filled with tears.

"No. Oh, no!" said the knight; and the little daughter was still.

She wanted to be like the knights, brave and true, but cold water was very disagreeable.

Then this knight said: "I will give you a badge which you shall wear whenever you do not cry because you are washed with cold water. If you cry, you cannot wear the badge for that day. You shall be the daughter of a knight, and the badge will be the sign."

"I want to be the little daughter of a knight, and I shall not cry when my face is washed with cold water."

And almost every day now on the little daughter's white dress is the red badge with the Greek cross. And sweetly she looks down at it when you notice it, saying: "Knights do not cry when their faces are washed with cold

water. They are brave." And the badge each day is helping to make this little daughter of a knight truer and braver.

A Little Lonesome

When we buy canary-birds in the bird-stores and take them home, we ought to remember that the little birds have a number of friends, and that when we take them all alone to our homes we should be very careful of them and be very friendly with them at first. We ought to talk to them, and sing, if we know how, in the room with them, and whistle, so that they will not feel lonely. I know one little bird whose mistress used to play the piano; she went to Europe and left him in care of a friend who had no piano, and the little fellow drooped and drooped, until one day the lady bought an autoharp. The moment the little bird heard it he brightened up, and gave the first chirp that he had given in weeks. After that every day the autoharp was taken into the room with the bird and played for a little while. The moment he heard it he began to sing, and in a few weeks he was the same bright, happy, active bird that he had been before his mistress went to Europe. A gentleman in St. Louis has told the following story, which was published in a St. Louis paper: "Not long ago my wife purchased a canary at a bird-store. It had been accustomed to companions of its kind at the store, but at our house it was entirely alone. The pretty little songster was evidently homesick. It would not sing, it would not eat, but just drooped and seemed to be pining away. We talked to it, and tried by every means in our power to cheer the bird up, but all in vain. My wife was on the point of carrying the bird back to the store, when one day a friend said: 'Give him a piece of looking-glass.' Acting on this suggestion, she tied a piece of a broken mirror about the size of a man's hand on the outside of the cage. The little fellow hopped down from his perch almost immediately, and, going up close, looked in, seeming delighted. He chirped and hopped about, singing all the pretty airs he was master of. He never was homesick after that. He spends most of his time before the glass, and when he goes to sleep at night he will cuddle down as close to the glass as he can, thinking, very likely, that he is getting near to the pretty bird he sees so often."

Not a Palace-Car

A tramp in Nevada rode for twenty-four hours in a car with wild steers. He says that the animals were quiet, that sometimes he sat on their backs, and when he got cold stood on the floor between them until he was warm again; he could have made the journey to New York had it not been for hunger and thirst, he told the train-hands when they freed him from the car.

She was Thinking

Mr. Hezekiah Butterworth recently told a story, that was very funny, about Forefathers' Day in a Massachusetts village. He said that "It was customary in those days to ride horse-back to church. A lady who used to write books used to ride with her father, on a pillion behind him, on the same horse. It happened one Sunday on the way to church she fell off, pillion and all. He did not notice it, nor, indeed, miss her until at the church steps he would have helped her alight. Alarmed, he rode rapidly back, afraid she must have been seriously hurt not to have called to him when she fell. And do you know," went on Mr.

Butterworth, laughing heartily, "do you know he found her seated on the pillion in the middle of the dusty path, and until he came up to her she was totally oblivious to the fact that she was not seated as usual behind her father on the old horse on the way for church! That's one of the worst instances of absent-mindedness I ever heard. I suppose Hannah was busy writing another book in her mind while sitting there on the pillion in the dust."

Puzzles

Syncopations

By Miss J. Shute

I.

Example.—Syncopate (take out the middle letter) a kind of vehicle, and leave domestic animals: *Ans.* Carts—cats.

1. Syncopate an animal, and leave superlatively good.
2. Syncopate mad, and leave a sudden attack.
3. Syncopate money, and leave to attract.
4. Syncopate to elude, and leave an ancient Venetian dignitary.
5. Syncopate an evil spirit, and leave to discover.
6. Syncopate not suitable, and leave a single one.
7. Syncopate royal, and leave something actual.
8. Syncopate an artist's material, and leave to gasp.
9. Syncopate weapons, and leave some Yankee dainties.
10. Syncopate an evergreen, and leave sinless.

II.

Fill the blanks with words which sound alike, but are spelled differently.

1. I ——— hither, and here will I ———.
2. Can ——— see that old ——— under the ——— tree?
3. Do you think that ——— in the water will be able to reach the ———?

Fish to Fry

By M. E. Saffold

The name of a fish answers each puzzle.

1. A musical instrument which contains a consonant, and a strong drink.
2. The name of an English poet which contains the pet name of a bird, and a fastening.
3. A woman's head-dress which contains the highest point, and a protuberance.
4. A wind-machine which contains a girl's name, and the sound made by an animal.
5. A popular amusement which contains a consonant, and a girl's name.
6. A simpleton which contains a consonant, and to soften.
7. A ball which contains a consonant, and a part of the ear.
8. A boy's name, a personal pronoun, and a conjunction.
9. Absence of color, and a lure.
10. One who whips a parent.
11. Form of the verb "to have," and a place for ships.
12. Part of the ocean, and a small animal.
13. Personal pronoun, and a hand ornament.
14. To find fault.
15. A dog.
16. Master of a vessel.
17. A fisherman.
18. A heavenly body.
19. A painful ailment.
20. A musical instrument which is also a tube, a cask, and an exchequer.

Jacob's Prevailing Prayer¹

By Lyman Abbott

The wrestling of Jacob with the Unknown has always been a perplexity to Bible students. How are we to understand it? The very title given by the International Committee to the Scripture Lesson—"Jacob's Prevailing Prayer"—shows that they give to it a figurative meaning. Even those scholars who regard the Book of Genesis as inerrant and infallible history, and who are therefore compelled to believe that Jehovah did descend to earth in human form and engage in an actual all-night wrestling-match with Jacob, practically lay no stress on the physical fact. To one class of critics the narrative is history, but the fact is of value only as it is an emblem of a spiritual struggle; to the other the same spiritual struggle is emblematically represented by the figure of a physical wrestling. The difference between the two is clearly not so important as we have sometimes been led to imagine.

For myself, I regard this story as literature, not as history. It is true that a sharp line cannot be drawn between the two. In the early age of the race, as of the individual, imagination and memory, fancy and fact, are not clearly discriminated. On the one hand, all early imaginative literature has some historical basis. The imagination has not yet become truly creative. On the other hand, all history is not only embellished by the imagination, but the imagination is freely used to make realistic and vivid the accounts of historic events. They are narrated as the writer imagines them to have occurred. Thus, in substantially all ancient histories speeches are put by the writer into the mouths of his characters—speeches which are neither mere fancy sketches on the one hand, nor verbatim reports of the actual address on the other; but reports of real address put for the sake of vividness in the *oratio directa* by the reporter, the ideas belonging to the speaker, the form to the historian. I suppose the stories in Genesis to be literature rather than history, in this sense, that in them we have the unknown author's narrative, in a free manner, and with the perfectly honest and perhaps even unconscious use of his imagination, of events the accounts of which had been handed down from earlier ages by oral tradition, and the exact historical character of which it is impossible for us now to ascertain.

But then it is not important for us to ascertain their historical value. For their real worth lies in the *truth* which they convey, not in the *facts* which they narrate.

Accounts of struggles of the mortals with the immortals are common in ancient literature. Of course we do not believe these stories to be literally true—unless we meet them in Hebrew literature, when some readers give them an interpretation which they do not give to similar narratives in other literatures. It does not follow, however, that we are to thrust them aside cavalierly, as though they were of no value, and belonged in the waste-basket. The imagination is also a vehicle for the conveyance of truth; and such stories, whatever we may think of their historical value, are worthy of our study because they portray, in imaginary forms, real experiences.

Such narratives sometimes represent, symbolically, man's struggle with nature. Thus in the ancient Indian legends, as reported in Longfellow's "Hiawatha," Kabibonokka, the fierce North Wind,

Issued from his lodge of snow-drifts,
From his home among the icebergs,

and finds Shingebis, the diver, lingering in the north, and resolves to drive him away.

I will go into his wigwam,
I will put his smoldering fire out!
And at night Kabibonokka
To the lodge came, wild and wailing,
Heaped the snow in drifts about it,
Shouted down into the smoke-flue,

Shook the lodge-poles in his fury,
Flapped the curtain of the doorway.

But Shingebis is too much for him, and he retreats defeated, while Shingebis remains comfortable and victorious by his roaring fire.

It is clear that no such struggle with nature is indicated by the narrative of the wrestling by the ford Jabbok.¹

The other experience suggested by these narratives in ancient literature of struggles of the mortals with the immortals is that of spiritual conflict, from which the soul either issues defeated and despairing or victorious and strengthened. Such a conflict, issuing in defeat, is symbolically portrayed by Eve's colloquy with the Serpent in the Garden; another, issuing in victory, is represented by Christ's temptation in the wilderness. These are, it is true, neither of them struggles with God; but they are struggles with supernal beings. More analogous is the strange but significant story of Moses's interview with Jehovah at the Burning Bush, where the struggle is with God, and from which Moses issues victorious because submissive to the divine command.

We certainly mistake if we interpret this struggle, as it has sometimes been interpreted, to be a wrestling in prayer with a God hard to be entreated. There is nothing in the narrative here to justify such an interpretation, and little or nothing in any other passage of Scripture to warrant it. The parable of the Unjust Judge, for example, in Luke xviii., 1-8, does not represent God by the Unjust Judge, who answered only because he dreaded the widow's importunity. The argument is, If even such a judge will hear and answer a petition, how much more your just and compassionate heavenly Father will hear and answer his children. The argument is not from analogy, but from contrast. But there is a real experience represented by wrestling even with God. It is perhaps best illustrated by such passages as are portrayed in Psalms xlii. and xliii., or in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, chap. iii., 7-14.

We are quite familiar with the fact that physical strength can be conferred only by struggle. The gymnastic teacher wrestles or boxes or fences with his pupil, in order to confer power upon his pupil. Similarly, in the intellectual realm, the teacher does not give his pupil knowledge, translate his hard passages, answer straightway his questions in philosophy. On the contrary, he subjects him to what is known as a "quiz," examines and cross-examines him, debates with him, presents objections to his views, and compels his answers. Out of this intellectual exercise the intellect issues strengthened for its work and life. In a similar manner, God does not give his grace too easily; I might perhaps say cannot give it easily. Spiritual power from God comes by wrestling with God; not because he is unwilling to give, but because wrestling is the method by which he gives. The moral endeavor to penetrate the secret of God's existence, character, and government, does itself confer moral power on the soul. An easy religion is a comparatively useless religion. A perfectly simple creed is a superficial creed. An experience which costs nothing to acquire is not worth much more than its cost. God no more gives something for nothing in the spiritual than in the intellectual and the material realm. We get his grace by striving for it; for our striving is his method of giving. He gives freely, but not to the careless and indifferent; he gives to those that ask, that seek, that knock; and in proportion to the earnestness of their quest. The Holy Grail is not a common cup which we may pick up anywhere. We find it only as we fathom it by our own endeavor.

QUESTIONS

Tell briefly the story of Jacob's life since the last lesson about him. Was Jacob's fear unreasonable? Was his precaution honorable? Compare this prayer of Jacob's with that in the last lesson, and draw lessons from the contrast. Is there anything in the New Testament which throws light on wrestling in prayer? Why did Jacob prevail with God?

¹ International Sunday-School Lesson for April 1, 1894.—Gen. xxxii., 9-12, 24-30.

¹ Though this apparently is the meaning which "The Bible for Learners" imparts to the incident. But it gives no reason for so strained an interpretation.