

1st January

Memory verses

The first day of a new year is a good day to revise all your memory verses. Perhaps you could award yourself a special notebook to write down your weekly memory verses this year. Another idea is to make a colourful wall poster. This could have verses in many different colours. If you have a lot of memory verses, of course, you might need a very big poster! If you are just starting memory verse learning you could make a large poster that could be added to gradually over the year.

Today is also a good day to begin using a *Daily Light*. You will know what this is if you recently did the lesson for 26th of December. If you were on holiday then you might like to read that lesson today. To whet your appetite here is the Daily Light morning reading for today:

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind,... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Father, I will that they ... whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me. — I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. — He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. — Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.

Phil. 3:13,14. John 17:24. II Tim. 1:12. Phil. 1:6. I Cor. 9:24,25. Heb. 12:1,2.

Something to do



The gloriously named Mrs Ethel Brilliana Alec-Tweedie FRGS (1862–1940) was born (and also married) on 1st January. For details of her life and some of the things she saw and wrote about see the lessons for 2nd and 4th September. She pops up again in few days time too.¹ Mrs Tweedie was a travel writer, journalist, artist and embroiderer who also had a very unusual method of collecting autographs. Every time she gave a dinner party she asked her guests to sign the table cloth in pencil. Then she embroidered the signatures in red thread so that they were permanently fixed on the cloth.

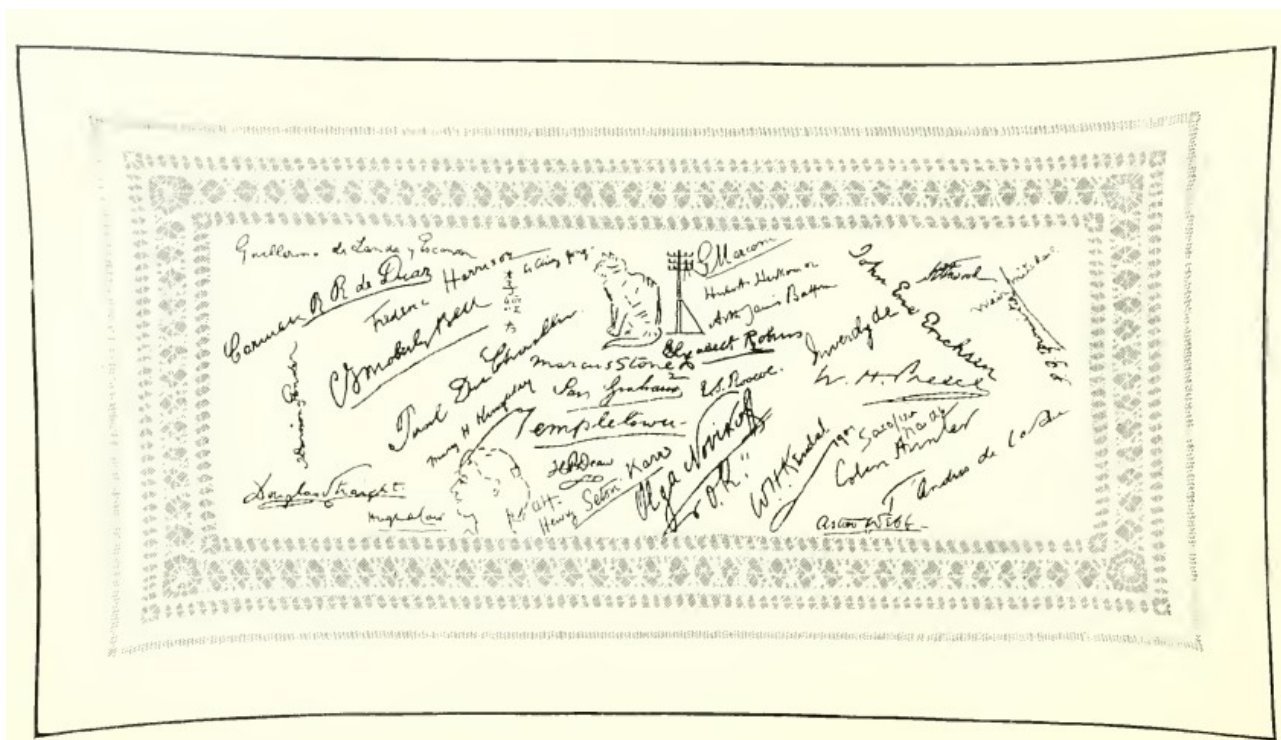
Many guests added a little sketch or comment with the signature and these were preserved in the embroidery too. Eventually she had a brilliant collection of signatures of some of the most famous people of her day. Some of the cloths have ended up in a New Zealand museum where they can still be seen.² Below is a picture of one of the smaller cloths taken from the book she wrote about her hobby. Can you see the signature of Marconi?³ He has drawn a telegraph pole by his name. Among a host of statesmen, diplomats, artists, writers, engineers, explorers and scientists (many now quite forgotten) who signed the cloths are the names in the list below the picture. Someone has included a

¹ See the lesson for 5th January.

² You can zoom in on images of some of them here: <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/search/Mrs%20Ethel%20Tweedie/results>

³ See the lesson for 12th December.

little portrait of (I think) the hostess herself. Do you recognise any of the names on the list below the picture? Some of them will be coming up in our lessons this year.



Sir John Tenniel illustrator of *Alice in Wonderland* (he was 82 and drew Britannia as well as his signature on the cloth),

The Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, LL.D., F.R.S., Prime Minister,

Sir J. M. Barrie, Bart., author of *Peter Pan*,

Somerset Maugham, novelist and playwright,

Dr. Samuel Smiles,⁴ author of *Lives of the Engineers* and *Self Help*,

H. G. Wells, author of *War of the Worlds*,

Sir Hiram Maxim who drew a picture of the gun he had developed beside his signature,

Sir W. S. Gilbert of Gilbert and Sullivan fame,

George Grossmith, and Weedon Grossmith writer and illustrator of *Diary of a Nobody*,

Sir Henry Irving, actor,

Sir Douglas Mawson, Antarctic explorer,

Captain Robert Scott,⁵ C.V.O.,

Dr. Fridtjof Nansen, G.C.V.O., explorer

Sir Ernest Shackleton,⁶ C.V.O., Discoverer of the Magnetic South Pole,

Lord Kinnaird, President of Y.M.C.A.

Count Charles de Lesseps, Son of Ferdinand Lesseps⁷ of Suez Canal fame.

You could do something similar to Mrs Tweedie. Unless you are a keen embroiderer I don't suggest you use a linen tablecloth but white *paper* tablecloths are available on which guests could sign their name in pencil and perhaps make a little sketch. Afterwards you can go over the pencil marks carefully in bold or fine felt tipped pen either in red as she did, or in a variety of colours. You could do this for a little tea party with your friends, for a family meal – especially one that includes members of your extended family – or even if your parents have invited some grown-ups for an evening meal.

⁴ See the Lesson for 23rd December (Yet to come).

⁵ See the lesson for 12th June.

⁶ See the lesson for 25th August.

⁷ See the lesson for 17th November.

When you have finished your table cloth, write the date on it and store it away carefully. Perhaps you could write a little note about the occasion and store it with the tablecloth. You may have just made an heirloom!

Something to read for older children

Albert Henry Ross (1881-1950), who wrote under the pen name Frank Morison, was born on **1st January**. His most famous book *Who Moved the Stone?* would be good for older children to read. It is a very unusual book in that the author's idea of what he wanted to say in the book changed radically as he worked on the manuscript. Ross did not believe that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. He decided to analyse objectively all the sources of information actually available and write a short paper which he planned to call *Jesus – The Last Phase*. This would demonstrate that the resurrection was a myth. He was truly objective in his evaluation of the evidence and this had a startling effect. He became convinced as he worked on the paper that Jesus *did* indeed rise from the dead.

Ross worked in printing and advertising, served in the Royal Flying Corps during the first World War as an aerial bombing instructor and also worked in Air Ministry Intelligence yet the rigorous way he examined the evidence in this book made many reviewers (who had no idea who he was when the book was first published) think he must be a lawyer. In fact, Ross's training in use of evidence probably came from his work with the Air Ministry. Today his book is considered a classic in the field of apologetics.

Some maths

Italian mathematician and book thief, Guglielmo Libri Carucci dalla Sommaja (1803-1869) was born on **1st January**. He wrote a *History of the Mathematical Sciences in Italy from the Renaissance of literature to the 17th Century* based on manuscripts which he claimed he owned but which, in fact, he had stolen from various libraries in Europe after being appointed inspector of libraries in France. In his book he gave the name Fibonacci to the Italian mathematician Leonardo Bonacci of Pisa (c. 1170 – c. 1240–50) and the name stuck: we still use it today.

Leonardo Bonacci, or Fibonacci as we now call him was a brilliant mathematician. A special sequence of numbers which he discovered is now called the Fibonacci sequence.⁸

This is the series of numbers 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21... and so on, where each adjacent pair of numbers when added together give the next number in the sequence: $0+1=1$, $1+1=2$, $1+2=3$, $2+3=5$, $3+5=8$, $5+8=13$, $8+13=21$, and so on. Can you write down the next few numbers in the sequence here?:

0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, __, __, __, __, __, __, __,



On **1st January** 1801 the Metric System was legalised in France. After the misery of the French Revolution,⁹ the French government had decided that the chaos of French weights and measures should be replaced with a unified system based on some kind of natural measure. Of course, the various measurement systems in

⁸ This sequence of numbers is related to the Golden Ratio see the lesson for 15th December.

use – and there were thousands of them in France – were already based on natural things, a foot for instance, which were always to hand (no pun intended) when the measurements were needed but there was a drawback. Not only were they not standardised – a foot might vary in actual length – but they did not related to one another. Measurements of volume were not compatible with those of length, for instance.

It was decided therefore to adopt a measure that was natural but which would not vary. The system would therefore be based on the actual size of the earth itself and would be calibrated in units of 10 – since we use a numeric system based on 10s. Surveyors were tasked with finding the exact distance that would represent one ten millionth of the distance from the North Pole to the Equator along the meridian that passed through Paris. They got slightly the wrong answer but by the time this was realised it was too late to change it!

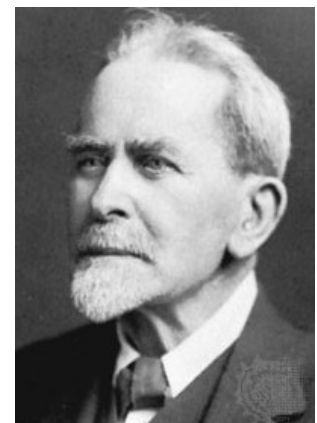
When the system was introduced, however, French people were not keen to use it. There may have been problems with the old inexact measurements but at least they were handy – literally! It was found impossible to manufacture the number of wooden rulers needed quickly enough. In 1812 when Napoleon was established in power he decreed that the old measures could be used again in a slightly modified and standardised form. France did not full adopt the metric system until about 1858.

In 1824 the idea of adopting a metric system was brought before the British Parliament. A commission of enquiry was appointed in 1838 which reported in favour of metrification in 1843. A bill for the compulsory use of the metric system was rejected by Parliament in 1871. In 1896 Weights and Measures (Metric System) Act was passed allowing the use of the metric system without making it compulsory. Compulsory labelling in metric of packaged goods began in 1995 in line with European Common Market regulations and was extended to goods sold from bulk in 2000. This last change led to market traders being prosecuted for selling carrots etc. in pounds and ounces. With Britain leaving the European Union in 2020 there were promises that traders would be free to use the old system of weights and measures again if they wished but this has not happened so far.

Metric measurements are convertible in ways which make them invaluable for scientific use. However, for everyday tasks such as cooking, sewing and woodwork the older “human-sized” measurements generally work better. Teaching small children about measurement is easier in feet and inches too because they can measure things around them with a foot ruler marked in inches before they can count beyond twelve!

Something to think about for older children¹⁰

Mythologist Sir James Frazer (1854-1941) was born in 1st January. Frazer's theory of human development was that of “magic giving rise to religion, then culminating in science.” What does this mean? Frazer thought that “early” or “primitive” humans believed in magic. This gradually became religion. As humans progress, religion gradually gives way to science. He argued in his *Folklore in the Old Testament* that since stories of the flood, the tree of life, the Garden of Eden and other things found in the early part of Genesis are found in mythology and folk tales all around the world, this proves that the Old Testament is itself just a collection of myths and folk tales.



9 The nature and effects of the French Revolution are covered in the lessons for 14th July and 10th November.

10 Information from Bill Cooper, *The Authenticity of the Book of Genesis* (Creation Science Movement, 2011) and other sources.

Frazer did not travel far himself. Instead he gathered his material from ancient histories and by sending questionnaires to missionaries and imperial officials all over the world. When writing up stories he had collected from various people he considered to be “primitive” he used Bible concepts such as “born again”, “new birth”, “baptism”, and “unclean” as well as theological terms such as “sacrament” or Catholic terms such as “Christening” to replace the original native terms. He did this deliberately, not to make native cultures seem less strange, but rather to make Christianity seem more strange and barbaric, more similar to the myths he was retelling.

Frazer's methods were not very scientific but initially his work generated a lot of enthusiasm among anthropologists, keen to apply Darwinian¹¹ evolution to the details of human development. Later in the twentieth century when the arbitrary way he made the evidence he collected fit the theories he held became more obvious, anthropologists distanced themselves from his work. But in the field of literature his work continued to have a big influence on novelists and even present day film makers. His neat way of discrediting the Bible is too comforting to give up even when can be seen to be wrong.

If you have been doing these lessons for a long time now you will probably spot the weaknesses in Frazer's arguments. Why would the common elements in the Biblical narrative and various mythologies imply that they arose separately? Surely the implication rather is that they are connected. The simpler explanation is that the written Biblical narrative represents truth and that the myths represent the wide variety of distortions that occurred during oral transmission and dispersion of the account. If you did the lesson on Occam last year¹² you will remember that the simpler explanation is always more likely to be correct.

11 See the lesson for 19th April for information on Charles Darwin.

12 Have a peep ahead if you like if you have not done the lesson it is on 25th May.