

14th January

Memory Verse:

and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruninghooks:
nation shall not lift up a sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more. Micah 4:3b
More information on this memory verse in the lesson for 18th January.

Something to learn from science

Did you know that there are paths in the sea? The Bible tells us so – look up Psalm 8:8.



January 14th is the anniversary of the birth of Birth of Matthew Fontaine Maury (1806-1873) who was led by contemplating that verse to begin to look for them – and to discover them. Maury wrote *The Physical Geography of the Sea and Its Meteorology* (1855), the first modern book on oceanography. He had begun his career as a midshipman in the US navy when an accident in which he broke his leg left him unfit for active service. He was appointed superintendent of the US Naval Observatory in Washington, and also of the US Depot of Charts and Instruments and he devoted his life to discoveries in the weather of the sea and also to studying ocean currents.

Maury studied old ships' logs¹ and from compiling the data these yielded on the subject he was able to make charts of ocean winds and currents. In order to obtain accurate information on the speed and direction of currents, Maury employed thousands of specially weighted bottles called “drift bottles”. These bottles floated just below the surface so that their speed and direction of travel was not affected by the wind. The bottles all contained a paper requesting the finder to send in the information about the place and time when the bottle was found. These “messages in bottles” helped him to trace the currents or “paths” in the seas. Maury went on to make charts of the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. There was, he said, a “great Telegraphic Plateau” between the United States and Europe. This was an area where Maury (correctly as it turned out) thought it would be possible to lay an underwater telegraph cable.



The statue of Maury which you see in the picture shows him with a naval chart in one hand and a pencil and compass in the other. On the statue Maury is described as “Pathfinder of the Sea”. If you look carefully you will also see that beside his left foot is his Bible. Can you see what the designer of the statue has put below his feet? The whole of the monument is

¹ A ship's log is its daily record of ocean voyages, something like a captain's diary. All captains are required to keep one.

(or was, see below) even more impressive. Above the seated figure of Maury is a huge globe and there are also representations of shipwreck and various land images to represent Maury's work on weather on land as well as at sea.



The whole of the statue is shown in the picture on the left. I am sorry to have to say that if you go to Richmond, Virginia in the USA today you will not find Maury's statue. It was removed, along with others on Richmond's Monument Avenue in 2020. You might wonder why an attractive statue of someone who has benefited mankind in general and America in particular should be removed. The answer is that Maury fought on the Confederate side in the American Civil War. The Unionists won the war and so prevented the southern states that wanted to leave the Union from doing so. The issue of slavery was bound up in the American Civil War. Although it was so long ago, the wounds are never allowed to heal by those who stir up hatred for their own

ends. No one is morally right about everything. If we were to look for perfection in our national heroes we would pull down every single statue. How sad that people cannot remember the good and forgive the bad! Today's memory verse tells us of a better time.

Something to read carefully

Here is a quotation from Matthew Fontaine Maury. I have highlighted some words you might want to look up in your dictionary. They are not difficult words in themselves but they are words we now use in a slightly different way.

I have been blamed by men of science, both in this country [the USA] and in England, for quoting the Bible in confirmation of the doctrines of physical geography. The Bible, they say, was not written for scientific purposes, and is therefore, of no authority in matters of science. I beg pardon! The Bible is authority for everything it touches. What would you think of the historian who should refuse to consult the historical records of the Bible, because the Bible was not written for the purposes of history? The Bible is true and science is true and therefore each, the truth of the other if truly read, but proves the truth of the other. The agents in the physical economy of our planet are ministers of Him who made both it and the Bible. The records which He has chosen to make through the agency of these ministers of His upon the crust of the earth are as true as the records which, by the hands of His prophets and servants, He has been pleased to make in the Book of Life. They are both true; and when your men of science, with vain and hasty conceit, announce the discovery of disagreement between them, rely upon it, the fault is not with the witness of His records, but with the worm who essays to interpret evidence which he does not understand.

“The Bible is true and science is true and therefore each, the truth of the other if truly read, but proves the truth of the other.” Do you understand this sentence? We must be careful not to confuse “scientific truth” with “what scientists tell us” or “what scientists have discovered”. Can you think why this is?

Something to colour and something to sing

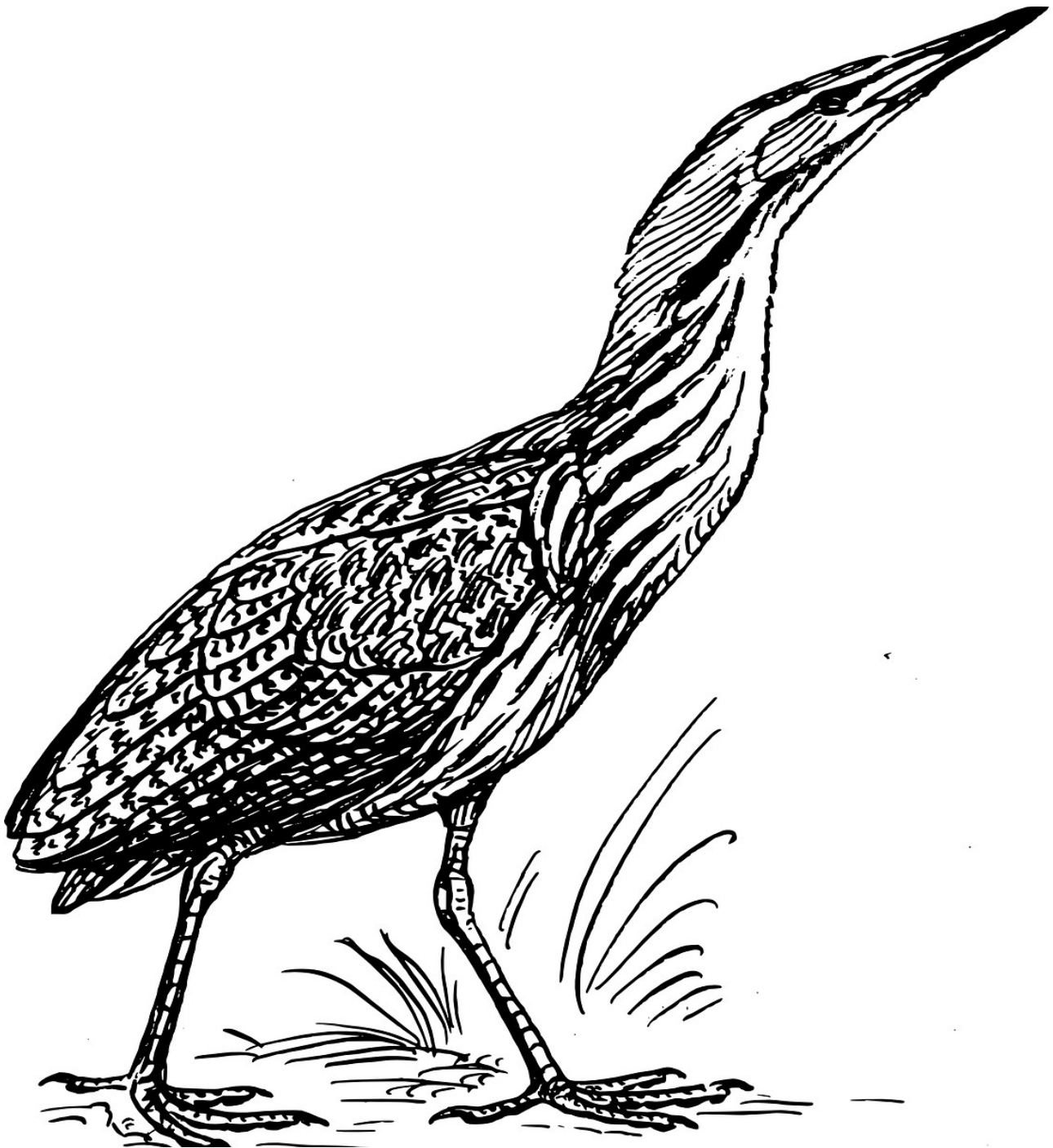
On 14th January 1774 Gilbert White the naturalist² wrote in his diary:

² More about Gilbert White in a few days time and in the lessons and for July 12th and November 9th.

Vast rain in the night with thunder. A bittern was shot in the shrubwood. A dog hunted it on foot and sprung it in the covert. These birds are very seldom seen in this district [Selbourne, Hampshire], and are probably driven from their watery haunts by the great floods.

We feel sorry for the poor bittern and very glad that modern naturalists prefer to help wildlife stay alive as well as wild!

Bitterns are marsh birds famous for their booming call.³ Can you use a wildlife or bird book to find a coloured picture of a bitter? Then you can colour in the picture below correctly.



There is a Welsh nursery rhyme that is all about a bittern. It is as familiar to Welsh speaking

³ You can hear it here: <https://sounds.bl.uk/Environment/British-wildlife-recordings/022M-WBOTAXSTEL01-0100V0> but you need good loudspeakers with adequate bass as the bittern makes a very low pitched sound.

children as “Baa Baa Blacksheep” is to English speakers and has a lovely rollicking tune.⁴ The bittern's booming sound comes into the song too, “boom boom” in every verse.

A Bittern from the Beacons
he went out a-walking
then what fell upon his head, on his head,
boom boom, boom boom,
but a load of apples.

The Bittern picked them all up
carried them to Chester
over the Beacons to Chester town, Chester town
boom boom, boom boom,
and there he quickly sold them.

Apples, in their thousands
lots of yellow apples.
Children shouting hooray hooray, hip hooray
boom boom, boom boom,
a ha'penny for a hundred.

Homeward went the Bittern
back across the Beacons.
“look at the money I've got” he said “got” he said
boom boom, boom boom,
got for selling apples.”

Like all good nursery rhymes the words are mostly nonsense. If you listen to the tune you might be able to sing it in English. Although my translation does not rhyme it will fit the tune quite well.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics: "A bit - tern from the Bea - cons, he went out a wal - king, then what fell _ u -". The second staff continues the melody for the second line: "pon his head, on his head, boom boom boom boom, but a load of ap - ples." The melody is simple and rhythmic, with a mix of quarter and eighth notes. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes.

4 Listen to it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUggFqB6ZII>. The song begins at about 20 seconds after the introduction.