Youths' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, May 24th, 1868.

JOHN iv. 27-42: Many of the Samaritans believe on Jesus.

Recite—1 JOHN iv. 10-15.

.....

Sunday, May 31st, 1868.

MATTHEW iv. 17: MARK i. 14-15: LUKE iv. 14-15: JOHN iv. 43-45: iv. 46-54: Jesus teaches publicly in Galilee and heals the son of a Nobleman lying ill at Capernaum.

Recite,—1 JOHN v. 1-4.

Poor Matt: or, the Clouded Intellect.

BY JAEN INGELOW.

CHAPTER I.

On a lonely sea-coast, at some distance from any houses, a lady was wandering at the turn of the tide, and watching somewhat sadly the shadows of the clouds as they passed over and changed the colors of the tranquil sea.

It was a clear morning in the month of September, and she had walked more than three miles from her lodgings in the nearest village. The first two miles had been under high rocky cliffs, from which tangled bugloss, thrift, and sea-lavender hung, and long trailing fern-leaves peeped, and offered somewhat to hold for the hand of the adventurous climber. The shore under these cliffs was rugged with rocks which stood out from the soft sand, and were covered with limpets; the water washing among them made a peculiar singing noise, quite different to the deep murmur with which it recedes from a more level shore. She listened to this cheery singing, as the crisp little waves shook the pebbles, playing with them, lifting them up and tossing them together; and she listened to the sheep bells, and watched with wonder how the adventurous lambs found food and footing on the slippery heights of the cliffs.

The day was so sunny, the air and water so still, and the scene so quiet, and she was tempted to enter upon the third mile; and here the cliff suddenly dipped down with a grassy sweep, and the shore changed its character altogether.

Those who are familiar with the scene I am describing will know that I do not exaggerate in saying that after this range of cliffs, more than two hundred feet high, the last descending so deeply as not to be climbed without risk, the coast and country become so perfectly level, that, standing on the low bank of sand—a natural barrier which keeps out the sea—a spectator may discern spires and turrets more than twelve miles inland, and may carry his eye over vast fields, pastures, and warrens, undiversified by a single hill, and over which the shadows of the clouds are seen to lie, and float as distinctly as over the calmest sea.

It is a green and peaceful district; the church bells, the sheep bells, and the skylarks make all its music; and a few fishermen's cottages are the only habitations along its coast for several miles.

As I before mentioned, the lady had wandered for more than three miles from her temporary home; and now pausing to consider whether she should return, she observed a figure at a distance before her on the level sand. At first she thought it was a child, and then she imagined it was a large white stone, for it was perfectly motionless, and of a dazzling white in the sunshine.

It stood upon a vast expanse of sand, and excited her curiosity so much that she drew nearer to look at it; and then she found that it was a boy, apparently about twelve years of age, and that he was intently gazing up into the sky.

So intent, so immovable, was his attitude, that the lady also looked up earnestly; but she could see nothing there but a flock of swallows, and they were so far up, that they only looked like little black specks moving in an open space of blue between two pure white clouds.

She still approached, and again looked up, for the steady gaze of the boy amazed her; his arms were slightly raised towards heaven, his whole attitude spoke of the deepest abstraction; he had nothing on his head, and his white smockfrock, the common dress of that country, fluttered slightly in the soft wind

She was close at his side, but attracting no attention, said, 'What are you looking at, boy?'

The child made no answer. He had a peculiar countenance; and the idea suggested itself to her mind that he was deficient in intellect.

"Boy, boy!' she said, shaking him gently by the sleeve; "what are you doing? what are you looking at?'

Upon this the figure by her side seemed to wake up from his deep abstraction; he rubbed his eyes, and that painful smile came over his features which we so often see in those whose reason is beclouded.

'Boy,' said the lady, 'what are you doing?'

The boy sighed, and again glanced towards the space between the clouds; then he shaded his eyes, and said, with distressful earnestness, 'Matt was looking for God—Matt wants to see God.'

Astonished and shocked at receiving such an answer, the lady started back; she now felt assured that the boy was an idiot. She did not know how much trouble and pains it might have cost his friends only to convey to his mind the fact that there *is* a God; and she was not one of those who inconsiderately and unauthorized will venture to interfere with the teaching of others. She therefore said nothing; for she could not tell that to assure him of the impossibility of his ever seeing God might not confuse him in his firm belief in the being of God.

She looked up also, and prayed that his dim mind might be comforted, and his belief made more intelligent. The clouds were coming together, and as they mingled and shut out the space of sky, the boy withdrew his eyes, and and said to his new companion,—

'There was a great hole—Matt wanted to see God.'

'Poor Matt,' said the lady, compassionately; 'does he often look for God in the sky?'

The boy did not reply! but, as if to comfort himself for his disappointment, said, in a reassuring tone, 'Matt shall see God to-morrow—shall see God some day.'

He then began to move away, but as he appeared to be rather lame, his new friend kindly led him; but when she found he did not seem to be making for any particular point, but wandered first to one side, then to the other, she said, 'Where does Matt want to go?'

The boy looked about him, but could not tell; perhaps his long upward gazing had dazzled his eyes; perhaps the sweet sound of some church bells which was wafted toward them, now louder, now fainter, attracted his attention, for he stopped to listen, and pointed to a gray church spire, told his new friend that the bells said, 'Come to church, good people.'

This was evidently what he had been told concerning them. There were some cottages on the sand bank a quarter of a mile from them, and not doubting that he lived there, the lady led him towards them. Though dressed like one of the laboring classes, the boy was perfectly neat, clean, and obviously well cared for; his light hair was bright, and his hands, by their shrunk and white appearance, showed that he was quite incapable of any kind of labor. He yielded himself passively to her guidance, only muttering now and then in an abstracted tone, 'Matt shall find God to-morrow.'

Very shortly a little girl came out of one of the cottages and ran towards them She was an active, cheerful little creature; and when she had made the lady a courtesy, she took the boy by the hand, saying to him in a slow, measured tone, 'Come home, Matt; dinner's ready.'

How can you think of leaving this poor boy to wander on the shore by himself?' said the lady. 'Did you know that he had left his home?'

'He always goes out, ma'am, o' find days,' said the child; 'and we fetch him home to his meals.'

'But does he never get into mischief?' asked the lady.

The child smiled, as if amused at the simplicity of the question, and said, 'He's a *natural*, ma'am; he doesn't know how to get into mischief *like us that have sense*.'

'How grateful you ought to be to God for giving you your senses,' said the lady; 'and what a bad thing it seems that children should ever use their sense to help them to do mischief.'

The little girl looked up shrewdly, and perhaps, suspecting some application to herself, began to evade it, as clever children will do, by applying it to another.

'There's Rob, he's the smartest boy in the school, ma'am. Got the prize, he did, last year. His mother says he's the most mischievous boy in the parish. Mr. Green gave him 'Pilgrim's Progress" for his prize, but I reckon he doesn't know Rob's ways. Rob climbs up the cliffs after the pigeons' eggs, he does; and his mother says she knows he'll break his neck some day; he climbed a good way up one day, with his little brother on his back, and his mother says she thought she should ha' died o' fright.'

'I am sorry to hear that he is such a bad boy,' said the lady; 'I hope his little brother was not hurt.'

'No,' said the child; 'but Rob was beat—his father beat him, he did, when he got down, all the same as if he had hurt his little brother.' Then, as the boy at her side appeared to flag and come on with reluctance, his little guide resumed the measured tone in which she had at first spoken, and said to him, 'Matt must make haste, the dumpling's ready; make haste, Mat.'

The kindness and care with which she led him induced the lady to say again, 'Is it safe to leave this poor boy all alone on the beach, when he does not seem to know the way home?'

'He can't go out of sight, ma'am,' said the child, shaking back her hair from her healthy brown face; 'and our folks give a look at him now and then to see what he's about.'

'O, then you all care for him,' said the lady; 'you are all fond of him.'

'Yes, sure,' replied the girl; 'he never does us any harm; and he must come out; he would fret unless he might come out and look for—'

The child hesitated; but being encouraged to proceed, continued in a lower tone,—

'He expects that some day he shall see God, ma'am. He is always asking where God is; and when our folks tell him that God is up in heaven, he comes out and looks up.'

'Poor fellow,' said the lady; does he know that we are talking about him now?'

'No,' said the child, decidedly; 'his grandfather says he can only think about one thing at a time; and now he is thinking about his dinner."

By this time they had reached the nearest cottage, and a decent-looking woman came out and requested the lady to walk in and rest. She then led the boy in, set him on a low stool, and having cut up his dinner on a plate, gave it to the little girl, who began to feed him with it.

A chair had been set for the stranger; and as she gladly sat down to rest, she took the opportunity of looking about her.

A very aged man was sitting in a corner mending a net, such a one as is used for catching shrimps. A middle-aged woman was clearing away the remains of a meal; and the other, having given the plate into the hands of the child, had turned to an ironing board, which was covered with laces and muslins.

It was a tolerably comfortable kitchen; and, as no one spoke for a few moments, the lady had time to remark the long strings of dried herrings that hung from the blackened beams in the roof, the brick floor which was a good deal worn away, and looked somewhat damp, the sea coats hanging on the wall, the oars lying under the chairs, and that general overcrowding of furniture, and yet neatness, which is often seen in a fisherman's cottage, and gives it a resemblance to the cabin of a ship.

The old man at length looked up. 'I reckon you have had a long walk, ma'am,' said he; 'the visitors from D—— very seldom come over to this lone place; all the fine things they want to see lie on t' other side.'

'Yes, it is a long walk,' she answered; 'and I do not know that I should have come quite so far if I had not met with this poor boy; he must be a great charge to you, indeed.'

'Ah, you may say that, ma'am,' said the woman at the ironing board; 'he is thirteen years old come Michælmas, poor fellow, and has never done a hand's turn for himself in his life, and never will, as you may plainly see.'

'Are both his parents dead?'

'Yes; his poor father was lost in a gale five weeks afore he was born. He sailed in a fine new brig, the Fanny of London; she was very heavy laden with wheat, and she went down in Boston Deeps, and all on board perished—he was mate, and a very steady man.'

'The boy's mother was my granddaughter,' said the aged man.'

'Yes, a poor young thing,' observed the woman, 'and she died afore he was a year old. As fine a child he was as you would wish to see at first; and when I took him to be baptized, for his mother didn't get over her confinement time enough to take him herself, I well remember Mr. Green saying to me, 'Well, Mary Goddard, I hope this child may live to be a comfort to his mother, and you may tell her so from me.' But, poor dear, she didn't live to want comfort, but doted on the child, and never thought he would be a comfort to nobody.'

'Not but what there was something strange about him from the first,' interrupted the old man.

'Ay,' said the woman, 'for though he was a brave child to look at, he couldn't stand; and he had a way of sitting with his head back that was queer to see; and his mother took notice of it, for a few days afore she died, "Aunt," she says, "I misdoubt about my boy; however I put my trust in the Almighty." "What do you mean by that?' says I; "the child's well enough Sarah." "I misdoubt about his head," says she; "and I'll warrant you if you give a crust to other folk's children, they're sharp enough to put it in their mouths by the time they are his age." "Well," says I, for I began to be afraid myself (for what she said was true enough), don't you be fretting, Sally, for he has friends, and he shall never want so long as they can work for him." Becca, don't feed him so fast my dear.'

'I suppose this little girl is a relation,' said the visitor.

'O, no, ma'am,' was the reply, 'none at all; but the neighbors' children take a sort of pride in waiting on Matt; this little lass in particular; and as her mother has no young children at home, she can very well spare her.'

By this time the old man, having finished the work he was about, lighted a short pipe, and went out, and the boy with him; little Becca set a stool for him in the sun outside the cottage door, and there he sat basking and apparently enjoying himself, while his grandfather went to his work.

'You see, ma'am,' said the woman, 'that poor boy can do nothing; but the neighbors are as kind as kind can be; and Mr. Green says sometimes, 'Though this is not a common misfortune,' says he 'yet your father's being able to work at his time o' life is not a common blessing,'—for father is nigh upon eighty years of age, and as hale and hearty as some men at sixty. So the old can work for the young, and we are not burdened with both old and young.'

'No, that is certainly a blessing,' said the visitors, who felt self-reproved when she saw the cheerfulness and industry of this family, particularly of the woman herself; 'and no doubt you have done what you can for the poor fellow; you have tried whether he is capable of being taught anything.'

The woman was busy laying the clear-starched articles in a flat basket, and counting them over to her sister, who was about to take them home; when the latter had left the cottage, and shut the door behind her, she went on with her ironing, and answered her visitor's question,—

'Ten years ago, ma'am, I walked over to K——; it is nigh upon thirty miles from our place, but I had heard say there was a doctor there that folks thought very highly of. So I told him my name was Mary Goddard, and that I had come about a child that was afflicted; and he asked a vast many questions, and by what I said, he said it was easy to tell that the child was paralytic, and had what they call pressure on the brain. But when I asked if he could do anything for him, 'Mary Goddard,' says he, 'can he feed himself?' 'No, sir,' says I,' his hands are too weak.' 'Then,' says he, 'I am afraid it is out of my power to help him,—want of sense is less against him than want of power,—but I will come and see him.' And so he did, sure enough. May the Almighty reward him, for he would take nothing from us!'

To be Continued.

Mr. Gough's Recovery.

The following incident is worthy of being often repeated, as an encouragement to labor for moral and religious reform. A warm heart and a wise tongue may overcome the most formidable obstacles; Rev. J. L. Cuyler tells the story:

On a certain Sabbath evening, some twenty years ago, a reckless, ill-dressed young man was idly lounging under the elm trees in the public square of Worcester. He had become a wretched waif in the current of sin. His days were spent in the waking remose of the drunkard; his nights were passed in the buffooneries of the ale-house.

As he sauntered along—out of humour with himself and with all mankind—a kind voice saluted him. A stranger laid his hand upon his shoulder, and said in cordial tones, "Mr. G—— go down to our meeting at the town hall to-night." A brief conversation followed, so winning in its character that the reckless youth consented to go. He went; he heard the appeals there made. With tremulous hand he signed the pledge of total abstinence. By God's help he kept it, and keeps it yet. The poor boot-crimper who tapped him on the shoulder (good Joel Stratton) has lately gone to heaven. But the youth he saved is to day the foremost of this reform on the face of the globe. Methinks when I listen to the thunders of applause that greet John B. Gough on the platform of Exeter Hall or the Academy of Music, I am hearing the echo of that tap on the shoulder, and of that kind invitation under the ancient elms of Worcester! *He that winneth souls is wise.*

The Ice and the Snow.—(*a fable.*)

"You are as white as a sheet," said the ice to the snow. "You are falling; are you faint?"

"My robe is spotless, my flakes harmless, and my fall noiseless," replied the snow.

"I think you lack firmness," quoth the ice, "and more solidity and weight would render you less the sport of wintry winds."

"We've more to fear from the sun than from the wind," answered the snow.

"Indeed!" observed the ice, "I should pity your weakness on the approach of such a foe."

"I shall commend myself to his mercy by my whiteness and purity," said the snow.

"I shall resist his power by my hardness and strength," returned the ice.

The sun now shed his beams on our two cold friends. The snow began to weep and the ice to melt.

"Where's your whiteness and purity now?' said the ice.

"And where's your firmness and strength?" inquired the snow.

"We are returning to water from whence we came," said the ice.

"Why, 'tis not death, but change," joyfully exclaimed the snow.

"By this change we are becoming one," said the ice "whereas we never could while I retained my boasted firmness and you your vaunted whiteness."

Death is not a destroyer, but a restorer.

Giving joy to a Child.

Blessed be the hand that prepares a pleasure for a child, for there is no saying when and where it may again bloom forth. Does not almost everybody remember some kind-hearted man who showed him a kindness in the dulcet days of his childhood? The writer of this recollects himself as a barefooted lad, standing at the wooden fence of a poor little garden in his native village, while with longing eyes he gazed on the flowers which were blooming there quietly in the brightness of a Sunday morning. The possessor came forth from his little cottage; he was a wood cutter by trade, and spent the whole week at work in the woods. He had come into the garden to gather flowers to stick into his coat when he went to church. He saw the boy, and breaking off the most beautiful of his carnations—it was streaked with red and white—he gave it to him. Neither the giver nor the receiver spoke a word, and with bounding steps the boy ran home. And now here, at a vast distance from that home, after so many events of so many years the feeling of gratitude which agitated the breast of that boy expresses itself on paper. The carnation has long since withered, but now it blooms afresh.—*Douglass Jerrold.*