

Youths' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, February 23rd, 1868.

Part 2nd. Announcement and introduction of our Lord's public ministry.

MATTHEW iii. 1-18 : MARK i. 1-8 : LUKE iii. 1-18 : The Ministry of John the Baptist.

Recite—ISAIAH xl. 3-5.

Sunday, March 1st, 1868.

MATTHEW i. 13-17 : MARK i. 9-11 : LUKE iii. 11-23. The Baptism of Jesus.

Under a Cloud.

"Jem, I dropped my pocket-book somewhere out here. Have you seen it?" asked a farmer one day of a boy who was hoeing potatoes for him in a field.

"No, sir," said Jem, "I have not."
"Well, suppose you help me find it. You look along that side of the field toward the gate, while I look on this," rejoined Mr. Beers, pointing in the direction indicated.

"Yes, sir," said Jem, cheerfully, and dropping his hoe in the furrow, he started along the edge of the field, carefully looking for the lost pocket-book.

When he reached the gate he found the farmer there before him, with the pocket-book in his hand. Jem looked pleased, and said:

"You have found it, sir?"
"Yes, I have, and I guess you knew very well where it was. I found it right beside your dinner kettle, under the grass, where I suppose you left it."

Jem felt the color rise to his temples, and anger burned in his heart; but the latter he kept down, for he was a Christian boy, and quietly answered: "I knew nothing about your pocket-book, sir. I cannot tell how it came to be near my dinner kettle."

"You are very innocent, I dare say," rejoined the farmer, with a sneer, "but circumstances don't favor that opinion. I don't want suspicious boys about my place, so you may quit as soon as you like."

Poor Jem was dumb with surprise and sorrow. Taking up his dinner kettle, he left the field, and went directly home to his mother. He told her the story of his misfortune, and closed by saying:

"You believe me, mother, don't you?"
"I do, my son," she replied. "I don't believe you would either lie or steal for the best filled pocket-book in the world."

Jem was comforted. His mother had faith in his word, and a voice whispered, "Jesus knows." His own heart, too, acquitted him. Though suspected of lying and dishonesty, he was at peace, because he knew the suspicion to be unjust.

The farmer, believing that Jem had hid the pocket-book, told the story to his friends. Some believed it, but many shook their heads and said: "It can't be. Jem has always been a truthful and honest boy."

Jem felt bad to know that any thought him guilty. But he told the story over and over to his Heavenly Father, and was comforted. Jesus made him strong to bear this sort of trial. After a few days, a gentleman sent for Jem and offered to hire him. Jem asked if he knew about the pocket-book.

"Yes," said he, "I know more than you do about it; for I saw your dog with a book in his mouth going toward your dinner kettle. I supposed you had sent him to do it, until I heard this morning from farmer Beers that you were suspected of hiding it yourself."

Thus the mystery was solved. Jem's dog had found and hid the pocket-book. The boy's reputation was now clear. He had a better place than before, and his heart was as happy as the love of Jesus could make it.

Happy Jem! He lived to be a very useful man, the confidential clerk of his employer, the support of his mother, and an honor to the church of God.

NIAGARA FALLS IN WINTER—THE ICE BRIDGE.—The Niagara Falls Gazette recently had the following in relation to the winter scenery about the cataract:—The extreme cold weather last week formed a great deal of ice in the river and lake above. The prevailing wind blew the spray upon the trees on the islands and near the ferry until they were loaded with ice clear as crystal, and presenting a most beautiful appearance. Huge icicles form on overhanging rocks from the spray and from water issuing from the banks, the latter giving the icicles beautiful hues of variegated colours. Mountains of solid ice, formed from the constant accretions of spray, rise in various places from the rocks at the foot of the Falls and aspire to an even height with the Cataract itself. Thus Niagara is now to be seen in a winter dress of rare splendour and well worth a long journey to view. Last Saturday an ice bridge formed below the Falls, and hundreds of ladies and gentlemen have since crossed thereon at the ferry, and some even from Goat Island. The river was running vast quantities of slush ice, which very soon formed a wide bridge after the passage was once arrested. The bridge extended from near the tower to nearly half way to Suspension Bridge. It is of great thickness and solidity and bids fair to remain for a considerable length of time. Visitors will now have an opportunity to see the bridge and walk safely over the madly rushing current beneath, and at the same time get the finest view of Niagara.

The Young Irishman.

(Concluded.)

It is not easy for me to keep clear from my old infidel thoughts, and I want to tell you how I was led on to be an infidel."

"I should like to hear that very much," said I. "And as to your amount of strength, I leave you to judge of it. I will go or stay, just as you desire, only tell me frankly what your desire is."

"I thank you," said he, his eyes filling with tears, "I am unable to tell you how much my very heart thanks you. I know there is little value in the thanks of a dying man; but they are all I have to give, and my heart forces them to my tongue."

"I ought to thank you," said I, "for these interviews. They gratify me much, and I assure you they profit me too."

After a short pause, and subduing his emotions, he continued:—

"For some time I have been astonished at myself. My thoughts are full of evil. The old follies will come over me. They torment my mind; and I know they offend God. My infidelity had become interwoven with my strongest feelings. Though I have been led to know its deceptions, its old lies still haunt me, as if a host of infernal spirits were sent to thrust them back into my heart. This troubles me. I am vexed with myself, because I have not vigour of mind to stand to the truth, since I have been convinced of it. My wickedness within is too mighty for me. Satan tempts me with his lies. It is Satan. He comes to me suddenly. He comes at midnight sometimes, when I would pray, if I could; and the horrible ideas dart like an arrow, into my mind, 'Religion is all a delusion.' I have said that to my aunt very often, and now Satan says it to me. I know it is a lie; but the thought torments my very soul."

"You need not be troubled about it," said I. "If you hunted up the idea yourself, or if you welcomed it when it comes, you would have some cause for trouble and alarm. It is not temptation that can injure us or prove our insincerity. The treatment we give to temptation is the thing to be looked at. Since the temptation comes to you without your bidding, and since you do not welcome it, but reject it, and aim to dismiss it as a temptation, the treatment you give it accords with the will of God, and shows that you desire and intend to obey him."

"So I do, sir; but my wicked heart is ever flowing with evil. I wanted to tell you how my unbelief became blended with my blood. I am an Irishman. Early in life my country's wrongs lay on my heart like a burden. My blood burns at this moment to think of the oppressions of England! Before the suns of a dozen summers had shone upon me, I had learned to say, 'The English are tyrants and hypocrites. They profess to be a Christian people; but they wrong my country.' As I grew older I read history. I read the court trials which grew out of what they called 'the Irish rebellion of ninety-eight.' I read of Emmet, and other men like him, led to a disgraceful execution, when they deserved the plaudits of all mankind! I read Curran's Speeches. I read of the infamous informers hired by the government to swear to anything, in order to get the blood of an Irishman! The English have oppressed us, sir! They have ruined Ireland by the most cruel and heartless injustice—by their tyranny and taxation; and then, to crown their barbarity, they call us low, and stupid, and incapable of improvement, sir! and all this, though their victories have been bought with Irish blood, and no small part of the eloquence of their Parliament itself was the eloquence of Irishmen!"

He was becoming so much excited, that I thought it best to interpose, for the purpose of quieting his feelings, and leading his thoughts into another channel. I said to him,—

"The things you complain of were acts of the government, not of the people. Many of the people did not approve of them. None of the Christian people approved of any injustice. It was not religion, but irreligion, which led to any oppression; and you ought not to lay down at the door of Christianity the blame which belongs to her enemies. You attribute to religion what you ought to attribute to the want of it. If all the people and the government had been controlled by the principles of Christianity, there would have been none of those wrongs which so much excite you."

"I know it, sir; I am sure of it," said he. "But I was telling you how I was made an infidel. The English boast of their magnanimity. They talk loftily of 'English honour' and of their 'religion.' And only a few days since—let me see, it was this day eight days—as I was reading an old paper, I came upon the place where one of your own statesmen calls England 'the bulwark of our holy religion.' It is too much, sir. Oppression, heartless and unrelenting oppression carried on through ages, cannot be justified! There is no apology for it. And after all this, for the English to speak of their Christianity, and call themselves 'the most religious nation on earth,' and make other people believe it! Sir, there never was any impudence equal to this! Look at India, sir! The English have made her red with the blood of her innocent children! They have made themselves rich with the gold of which they have robbed her! They have butchered the half-civilized people by the thousands and hundreds of thousands, with no decent argument of justice, and for no other reason than to gratify their own lordly pride, and get riches by the right of their cannon! And when the news of a new victory over the feeble reaches 'brave England,' they call themselves a religious people, and give thanks to God in their churches for success on another field of butchery! This

completes the farce, till the very next year brings round a like occasion. All this is true, sir. You cannot dispute it. It is history. And when I began in early life to learn such transactions, I could not respect a religion that would allow them. I disbelieved in such a religion. I became an infidel. The true history of England is enough to make a world full of infidels! Ireland and India tell tales of blood about the religion of England. I can respect Mohammedanism—it acts according to its principles; I can respect Popery and her Inquisition, for the same reason;—but Protestant England, as she calls herself, I despise for her mean hypocrisy! Her religion is described in three words—*pride, avarice, and oppression.* All this became stamped into my heart as I was growing up towards manhood. I knew that the Established Church of England was nothing but a part of her governmental hypocrisy; I knew that her Protestantism was only a political pretence. I felt for my country's wrongs, and I rejected religion because of the example that I studied so constantly. The example never appeared more base to me than it does this moment. And I am troubled now because my old system of thought will come back upon me like a torrent, and tempt me to disbelieve in Christianity as often as I think of the wrongs of my country."

Said I, "In my opinion you can easily get over all that difficulty. You have only to think of that which you know to be true, that is, that Christianity never sanctioned any of the pride, avarice, and oppression you complain of, but that it was abusively made a cloak to cover such sins. In that nation it became linked with the government (which union I dislike as much as you do), and because of that union it became corrupted. As you took the government and its actions for an example of the influence of religion, or for a test of its truth, you looked in the wrong direction. You should rather have looked at the pious in private life. You should have looked where there was some influence of Christianity, not where there was none. You should have looked at the Bible Society, the Missionary Societies, the Sunday Schools and Orphan Asylums, and attempts to relieve the oppressed and down-trodden. There was religion in fact, not in mere name. And now, when you perceive that you erred, in taking what men falsely called religion as an example of it, surely you need not be troubled with your old infidelity."

"So it seems to me," said he; "but Satan tempts me, as if I was now embracing a religion which has crushed my country."
"It never crushed your country; you know it never did. It was a spirit directly the opposite of Christianity which perpetrated the sins you complain of. Christianity would have saved your country; and you ought to welcome it to your heart, for your eternal salvation, more eagerly than you would ever have welcomed a deliverer to your native land."

"So I do," said he; "so I will. I believe in Christianity. I know I need it. I believe Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I trust him to save me. I rely on the Holy Spirit to aid me against the temptations of Satan and the sinfulness of my own heart. You spoke of examples of religion in private life. Let me tell you, the example of my old aunt has been a demonstration to me. Satan cannot shake it."
I again proposed to leave him for the present, and call at another time, lest so long a conversation should injure him.

"Another time!" said he, "another time! You astonish me, sir! I am a dying man! I stand on the verge of time now! I feel that the grave-digger is at the side of me! You may talk of time. With your health and prospects, it is not unnatural. But if I should be talking of time, death would laugh at me, and call me fool and liar!" And then, turning to me, and fixing his keen eyes upon my face as he stood before me—"Tell me what to do to be ready to die."

Said I, "You believe in God, the Infinite, Eternal Spirit."

"I do," said he.

"Then pray to him," said I.

"I have, and I will," said he.

"You believe you are a sinner?" said I.

"I know I am," said he.

"Then repent, and trust in Christ for pardon."

"Will repentance save me?"

"No," said I; "Christ Jesus saves sinners."

You must not trust to your repentance and faith to save you. That would be self-righteousness. Trust only in the crucified Son of God, your proposed Surety."

After a pause—

"What must be done first, before I trust in him?"

"Nothing—just nothing."

"How? Is there no preparation to make?"

"No; none at all."

"But, holiness—" said he.

"Results from faith in Christ," said I.

"And the Holy Spirit—" said he.

"Is your only hope," said I. "Without his aid you will neither repent nor believe. It is his office to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us."

"Will you pray with me?" said he.

We fell on our knees. I offered a short prayer, and left him. I never saw him afterwards.

I called to see him the next day, but his friends would not allow it, because he was so much exhausted. I understood from his nurse that immediately after I left him the day before, he sent for his aunt, told her that he renounced all his infidelity, that he had not a doubt the Bible was from God, and that the atonement of Jesus Christ was all-sufficient for a dying sinner. He continued his conversation and prayer with her till he faintd; and she was obliged to call for aid, to lift him from the floor and lay him upon his bed.

I made another attempt to see him, but his aunt sent word to me at the door that she was

very grateful for my attentions to him, and thanked me much; but she begged me not to come in, for he was not able to see me. He had not strength to utter a sentence.

Just at this time I left home, and on my return, after an absence of three weeks, I learned that he was buried the week before my return. I could not find his aunt. I have never seen her, and know not the reason why she sent for me, only, as I understood from the lady at whose house he died, that she had at some time heard me preach. This same lady told me that "the young man died in peace, with praise for the atonement of Jesus Christ on his life."

I have never had my feelings more deeply interested than they were in this young Irishman. He was a man of uncommon talents. He was frank and candid. He was full of enthusiasm. It is impossible to convey in writing any just idea of the ardour and eloquence with which he spoke, when he became excited. There was a sort of romance, too, in the mystery in which his aunt so constantly shrouded herself. He was an avowed infidel; and what, in my opinion, is a very uncommon thing, he was an honest infidel. The arguments by which he attempted to sustain his infidelity were peculiar. He was evidently in the last stages of life, the subject of a hasty consumption, of which nobody could be more sensible than himself. He was open to conviction; and it was very evident that he entertained a most profound respect for his pious aunt, who had induced him to send for me.

I think it likely that that woman was the real means of his conversion and salvation. She was an example of practical piety which his infidelity could not refute, and which his conscience could not but honour. He evidently did not say to me all that he felt on that subject. Whenever he alluded to her, after a few words, he would seem to check himself, and soon change the subject. But occasionally, when he became excited, some expression would come out which showed how powerful her influence had been over him. I can never forget the ardour and depth of emotion with which he uttered the expression: "You spoke of examples of religion in private life. Let me tell you, the example of my old aunt has been a demonstration to me. Satan cannot shake it."

It is true that infidelity cannot withstand the force of reason and argument; but true godly example can come nearer the life-spot of religion. It knocks at the door of the heart. If the truths of Christianity were seconded by the devoted and pious lives of all her professed disciples, the unbelief of the world would soon cease. *Private example of godliness is what the world most needs.*

All men will not think alike in reference to the mode in which this young Irishman was led into infidelity. Perhaps he too much blamed the government of England. Perhaps also, his feelings towards the people were governed by a very natural prejudice. But it is much to be deplored, that the governments of nations professing to be Christian, have been so unjust, so ready for war and conquest; and that the Christian people of such nations have so often sunk their principles amid the waves of some exciting popularity, and have shouted over a victory in war, when they ought to have shed tears of bitterness over its injustice and cruelty. They little reflect how much their conformity to the world hinders the triumphs of religion. War and conquest, too, may sometimes be inevitable, perhaps. The general injustice of mankind may sometimes make deadly conflict necessary for the defence of the good against the wicked. But Christians and Christian nations have much to answer for, on account of such things as this young Irishman complained of. Too much of our religion is stained with the pride, and politics, and avarice of the world. "Come out of her, my people."

I have some reason to believe that no small blame was imputed to me for remaining so long at a time with a sick man, and hastening, as they said, his death, by my exhausting conversation. But he never blamed me. I venture to affirm his aunt never blamed me. They were quite as good judges of propriety as those who were half-strangers to him in a boarding-house. Moreover, it would have been heartless to leave him, and would have tended to make him call in question my sense of the importance and reality of the religion I urged upon him, when he used such language as I have here recorded: "No, sir; you are not to leave me yet. Conversation does not hurt me; and it would be no matter, you know, if it did. I am a dying man. I stand on the verge of time now. I feel that the grave-digger is at the side of me. Another time! sir; another time! You astonish me! You may talk of time. But if I should be talking of time, death would laugh at me, and call me fool and liar. Earth has done with me. The grave lifts up her voice to claim me. I am preparing to say, 'Yes, I come.' Some men, perhaps, might have left a man who talked thus. I could not. I am sure, if any wise man had been in my place, and known him as I did, he would have done as I did.

A CANDLE TO BURN ALL NIGHT.—When, as in the case of sickness, a dull light is wished, or when matches are mislaid, put finely powdered salt on the candle, till it reaches the black part of the wick. In this way a mild and steady light may be kept through the night by a small piece of candle.

ARTIFICIAL HONEY.—Recipes for making artificial honey. The following is one of the best. Dissolve eight pounds of refined sugar, and two-thirds of an ounce of alum, in one ounce of pure soft water. Add to one pint of alcohol five drops of oil of roses. Four table-spoonfuls of the alcohol and oil of rose mixture is sufficient for eight pounds of the honey.—Cor. Co. Gent.