

## Youths' Department.

## BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, June 7th, 1868.

MARK iv. 13-16: LUKE iv. 16-31: Jesus at Nazareth he is there rejected, and fixes his abode at Capernaum.

Sunday, June 14th, 1868.

Concert. Or Review of the past month's lessons.

## Poor Matt: or, the Clouded Intellect.

BY JEAN INGELOW.

## CHAPTER II.

The autumn sun was bright and hot upon the sand, and Matt was basking in it under the cottage wall, when his new friend appeared before him at noon the next day. Little Becca was seated beside him, singing, and knitting a coarse fisherman's mitten; but the boy was not noticing her; as before, his face, with its strange look of awe, was fixed on the open sky; and it was not till Becca touched him that he withdrew his eyes, and seeing the lady, said, with outstretched hands,—

"Please, give Matt a penny!"

The penny was ready for him; but the moment he received it, he handed it over to the little girl.

"Does he mean to give it to you Becca?" asked the lady.

"O, no, ma'am," said the child, "he means me to go and buy apples with it; I always do when our folks give him money. He knows how many apples you can buy for a penny; and if I was to hide one, he would find it out directly."

But the boy was not at all willing that his messenger should wait to give all these explanations; and he now pulled her frock impatiently, saying,—

"Becca, go—Becca, fetch apples."

The little girl shook back her long hair from her eyes, and laying her knitting on the sand, ran to a neighboring cottage, from which she shortly returned, bringing five small apples, which she gave to Matt; and he laid them on his knees and after looking at them, appeared satisfied, and began to eat.

"And now," said the lady, "I shall give you a penny also, Becca, because I like to see you so kind to your poor neighbor."

The happy child received the penny, and again ran away to the shop, returning shortly with three apples in her hands.

"Why, what is the reason of this?" said the donor.

"It's a very dear apple year," said the little creature, "and they can't afford more than three."

"But they sent Matt five apples."

The child then explained that Matt always expected to have five apples for a penny; that if apples were only three a penny he would cry, for he would know it was less than usual; but if there were seven a penny he would give back two; so they always gave him five all the year round, and they said it made very little difference. She continued:

"Matt knows all about money, ma'am—he knows a deal more than you think. Sometimes they let him have a pennyworth of apples at the shop when he has no penny; but then as soon as he gets a penny he always remembers, and takes it; he knows he must pay. I taught him that, ma'am; and I taught him to say, "Please," and "Thank you."

She then shook him by the sleeve, and said,—

"Matt, good Matt, tell the lady what they do to folks that won't pay."

"Put 'em in prison," said Matt, readily.

"What does he know about a prison, my child?" said the lady, amused at his sagacity.

"You are only telling him to repeat words that he does not know the meaning of."

"O, no, ma'am," answered the child, shrewdly, "there is a prison at—, and he sees that very often; he knows about bad men being put in there."

The boy nodded assent very energetically, and began to show by gestures and imperfect sentences how he had seen two men led in there at a great door; and holding out his hands, explained that their hands were tied together; at the same time he expressed evident satisfaction in their punishment, saying,—

"Bad men—bad men—shut 'em up; they eat other folks' dinner."

"O, yes," said the child, "his grandfather took him several times to see the prison, because he used to go into the cottage when the folks were at sea and take things to eat that wasn't his; and when his grandfather was out a fishing, and they set his dinner by, Matt used to get it whenever he had a chance; but he's a good boy now."

Matt had by this time finished his apples; and his friend had been watching him to see how much strength he possessed. His movements were weak and uncertain; and sometimes he dropped the apple, but he always picked it up again, though not without difficulty; and she felt sure that with patience something might be taught him.

She would not attempt to begin her lesson till he had done eating; but as soon as this business was over, she brought out her straws and began to plait them before him, holding one of his hands in hers, and making him create the straw with his soft white fingers.

At first he was patient and even amused, but he soon got weary; and the unusual movements

for his fingers tired them. He pulled Becca by the pinafore, and patting her hand, cried out,—

"Becca learn; Becca make haste and learn—Matt stop now."

"If Becca learns," said the teacher, "then Becca shall have a penny; but if Matt learns, then Matt shall have a penny."

This argument, used frequently, induced the boy to go on a little longer, as much longer, indeed, as his instructress thought desirable; and though he never once turned the straw the right way, she was not discouraged, because his attention had evidently been excited, and she knew that the process of teaching would be tedious.

When the lesson was over, she gave him the promised penny and praised him, leaving him in a very good humor; and importunate with her to come again.

Three more lessons were given, and no progress was made; the fourth almost discouraged her; it seemed that he dropped the straws from his listless fingers with no more understanding than at first of the places they were meant to occupy. It was a whole week before anything beyond a little more attention had been gained; but this once done, Matt suddenly began to improve; and at his ninth lesson he began to plait very tolerably.

His relations were now profuse in their thanks, and most urgent that these lessons should be continued; they even seemed to hope that he might one day be able to earn a little money by this simple art, and so relieve them of part of the burden of maintaining him.

But occupation to his mind was not the only good that the boy derived from these instructions—the unusual exercise of his hands, though at first it fatigued him, made them sensibly warmer and less torpid; and when he had once mastered the lesson, he was constantly anxious to be practising it.

Some persons may, perhaps, think it a remarkable thing that a stranger, on whom the poor boy had no claim, should have devoted so much time to his benefit, especially when she might have found soil to cultivate that would have brought her in a much more abundant harvest; but she was utterly without occupation, and had private grounds for sorrow which made her desire employment; and this boy's loneliness, and the absence of joy from his lot, drew her sympathies towards him; besides which, many around her were willing to do more attractive acts of kindness—but who would follow her in this path if she resigned it?

In less than three weeks the boy could make an even and tolerably rapid plait, and would sit for four or five hours a day at this work, only requiring a little attention in joining the straw, and stopping him when he made mistakes.

The weather was extremely hot, which was very much in his favor; and all his friends agreed it was several years since they had seen him so lively and so capable of exerting himself.

This was scarcely a greater pleasure to them than to his new benefactress; for she had begun to take a warm interest in the boy, and could already understand his signs and gestures as well as his half-expressed doubts, wonders, and fears.

One day, on entering the cottage, she found the old grandfather at home ill; he had been ill, he said, for three days, though not so bad but that he could get up and sit by the fire. Close at his side sat poor Matt, and both, though the day was hot, seemed to relish the warmth. Matt could attend to but one thing at a time; and as his thoughts were now occupied with his grandfather, the plait of straw were laid aside.

As soon as he saw her he greeted her with vehement delight, pointing to two chairs successively, and saying,—

"Lady, sit here; parson, sit there."

She inquired if Mr. Green was coming.

"Yes, ma'am," said the old man. "I was taken very bad with a kind of fit, and my daughters were frightened and went and told him; but Matt calls every gentleman he sees "parson," and, indeed, every man that is not dressed like a fisherman. He has but three names for all men. He calls our men "good men," at least such as have nets, for they let him lie and bask on them, which he likes; then all them that have no nets he calls "poor men," and the rest of the world he calls "parson," for our parson was the first gentleman he ever knew, and very good he has always been to him."

The clergyman shortly after came in, and poor Matt's teacher was warmly thanked for her kindness to the boy; he was anxious to see him plait, but Matt was pleased and excited by his presence, and not willing to fix his mind on his task; he accordingly turned to the grandfather, and began to converse with him.

The old man's illness was of a very serious nature; and at his great age it was not likely that he would get over it; yet he talked of approaching death with all that strange apathy so common among the poor, especially the aged poor; accordingly, the ministers' remarks were all of a nature to rouse him from this apathy; he wished to place the solemn nature of death and judgment before his eyes, and to assure him that his feeling so little afraid of dying was not in itself any proof that his soul was in a safe condition.

The boy, who at first had sat by his grandfather, well pleased with the warmth of the fire and the presence of the parson, kept up a humming sound, expressive of comfort and contentment, till Mr. Green took a Bible from his pocket, and said, gravely,—

"Matt must be quiet now, parson is going to read about God."

Upon hearing this, Matt's attention was aroused; and when he looked up and saw Mr. Green's serious face, his own assumed a look of

awe; for it is a well-known fact that feelings are communicated, with perfect ease, to those who are deficient in intellect, though ideas of a complex nature are often beyond their comprehension. Matt folded his hands and gazed fixedly at the "parson." The chapter he was reading was the eighteenth of Matthew; and if he had intended his lesson for Matt's instruction, he would have selected something that appeared easier to understand; but so it was, that when he came to the parable of the "king that would take account of his servants," Matt's attention and interest became so evident, that he read slowly and very distinctly.

When he had finished, the boy's face, over-awed and anxious, and with that look of painful perplexity so often seen in persons like himself, was turned to him with breathless earnestness, and he said, repeating the last words addressed to him,—

"Matt, Matt, sit you still; parson is going to read about God."

"Goddard," said the clergyman, "this poor boy's eager attention ought to be a very affecting thing to you, and, indeed, to us all. If he to whom so little sense has been given, desires to know all he can, and to hear more than he can understand of his Maker, surely we ought not to treat the subject with indifference, but rather with interest and reverence."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the old sailor, respectfully, but with no appearance of particular interest.

"Parson, read some more," said Matt.

"So I will, my boy," replied the clergyman; and partly commenting on the text, partly changing the words for others that he thought would be better understood, he began to relate the parable thus:

"A great King said"—and in speaking he pointed upwards—"a great King said, Bring my servants to me, and I will make them pay me all the pounds that they owe me."

And they brought one servant that owed a thousand pence,—a great many, a great many, a great many. And he had no pence to pay."

And the King said, He shall be put in prison, and never come out any more till he has paid all this money."

He had got so far when he observed that tears were trickling down the boy's cheeks, and that his countenance showed great alarm. He stopped at once and patted him on the head, saying to his grandfather that he had not intended to distress him.

"Parson did not go for to make Matt cry," said the old man; meaning, did not do it on purpose.

But Matt was not to be comforted; he refused to listen; and presently he broke away from his friends and bobbed out on to the beach, where he threw himself down under the shelter of a fishing boat, and continued to weep piteously; but whether he had been merely frightened by the solemn tone, whether his tears were shed from pity to the man who owed so much money, or whether, having been told that parson was going to read about God, he had, more by impression than by reason, set himself in the place of the debtor, it was quite beyond the power of any person to discover. But it was evident, as in former cases, that so much as he had understood had become perfectly real and true to him; and whether what had cost him so many tears was a right or a false idea, it would not easily be eradicated.

Poor Matt! they were obliged to leave him; and as he refused to listen to his new friend when she spoke to him, all that could be done was to desire little Becca to sit by him and try to divert him from his grief.

The wind was rising when his friend reached her lodging, and by nightfall it blew a gale. She looked out and saw the driving clouds swept away from before the moon, leaving her alone in the bare heavens till again they were hurried up from the sea and piled before her face, blotting out the bright path she had laid across the waters. The thundering noise of the waves, as they flung themselves down hissing and foaming among the rocks, and the roaring of the wind, kept her waking, and trembling for the mariners out on that dangerous coast; and the thought of that poor afflicted boy was present to her mind; for she had been told that he was always restless in a storm, and that at night, while the family sat by the light of their one candle, he would stand, with his eager face pressed against the little casement, muttering that God was angry.

In the morning, gusts of wind and rain detained her in doors; but towards afternoon, though the wind did not abate, it became clear overhead, and she put on her bonnet and prepared to go out. Sea sand in heaps lay against the houses in the village street; it had been blown up during the night. The poor were busy collecting drift wood from the shore, as well as the vast heaps of dulse and other weeds which the tide had brought in. She passed on till the cliffs afforded her some shelter, and then crept into a cave and rested awhile; for she intended to go on and see Matt that day, and discover, if possible, the cause of his trouble.

Though the wind was now beginning to abate, it was not very easy to stand against it, and the noise in the cave was like the sharp, incessant report of guns. But she rose and determined to go on, being encouraged by the rapid subsiding of the wind, which seemed likely to go down in a deluge of rain; for black clouds were gathering over the troubled sea, which, excepting where a line of foam marked its breaking on the beach, was almost as black as themselves.

She pressed on; and shortly, as she had expected, she saw the motionless figure of the boy, his white clothing fluttering in the wind, his face intent on the gloomy sky.

She called to him several times as she drew near, but the noise of the wind and waves

drowned her voice; it was not till she came close and touched him, that he looked at her. His countenance was full of awe and fear.

"What is Matt doing?" she asked, in a soothing voice.

"Matt was talking to God," said the boy.

"What did poor Matt say?" she required, compassionately.

The boy joined his hands, and looking up with a piteous expression of submission and fear, said, "God, God—Matt has no money to pay."

And then shaking his head, he told her, with a reality of fear most strange to see, that he was going to be put in prison; God was going to put Matt in prison.

He was standing in the shelter of a fishing vessel which had been drawn up above high-water mark; and as she turned away from him, not knowing what to say, he again looked up and began his piteous prayer.

The lady stood awhile considering; it was evident that, whether from the parable or the clergyman's words, or both together, acting on what previous knowledge he had, he must have derived some consciousness that punishment would follow his misdoings. He had long known right from wrong; he knew that he had begun to look upon God as a judge. Now he knew "that he had nothing to pay." In other words, he knew, however dimly, that he could not make satisfaction for his misdoings. What did it matter that he had derived this dim and distorted knowledge in a figurative way,—something now must be done to quiet and comfort him. She resolved to venture on taking up the figure; and when the boy again muttered, "God, God, Matt has no money to pay," she turned towards him, and taking both his hands, said, in a clear, cheerful voice, "Jesus Christ has paid for poor Matt."

The boy looked happily at her; and pointing upwards with a smile, she repeated slowly, "God will not put Matt in prison now. Jesus Christ has paid for poor Matt."

The child repeated these words after her; and as their meaning, helped by her reassuring face, gradually unfolded itself to his mind, an expression of wonder and contentment overspread his features. He sat down and wished again and again to hear these good tidings, and as he coned them over he gradually became calm and happy.

He sat so long silent in the shelter of the boat that his kind friend thought it possible that now his fears were removed he might have forgotten their cause.

But it was not so: he arose at length, and walking a few paces, lifted up his arms and face to heaven, and cried out, in a loud, clear voice, "Man that paid, man that paid, Matt says, thank you, thank you."

A strange-sight this, and strange words to hear! Many times the lady seemed to hear their echo during the silence that followed; and the boy repeated them over again with the deepest reverence, before she could decide whether to attempt any further enlightening of his mind. That by means of some picture, or the remembrance of something taught him by his first benefactress, he had become aware that He whom he thus addressed was Man, became evident from his words; but the reverence and awe of his manner were such that she could not venture to undertake the hopeless task of instructing him in a mystery so far beyond his comprehension. It was sufficient, she thought, that he should pay to his Redeemer the reverence due to God, while in the act of addressing Him as Man.

To be continued.

Jean Ingelow.

The following description of the author of the beautiful sketch we are now giving in our "Youths' Department" will be read with interest and pleasure by those who admire her writings—and who does not admire them!

The long-talked-of visit to Miss Ingelow has taken place, and was one of great pleasure. I found her not at all poetical looking (though possessing a good and very trustful face) nor by any means attractive, and to an extraordinary degree shy and timid with strangers. But as we grew better acquainted she drew nearer to me, and the soul commenced to gleam and sparkle in and about her countenance, and she conversed with greater fluency. Her heart seems very warm towards Americans, and she possesses many flattering evidences of their appreciation of her efforts, in autograph letters from a large number of our authors and authoresses, welcoming her to their literary circle, and sending handsomely illustrated volumes of their own productions. She has an album of rare heads and faces, a gathering of her contemporaries from various countries. I was introduced to Mrs. Ingelow, her mother, and my heart warmed to her at once. She has a face brimful of loving-kindness, and is a woman of great intelligence and culture, conversing with grace, and winning one irresistibly towards her. She is of small stature and between sixty and seventy years of age, and while Miss Ingelow was absent a few moments, remarked, "You have probably noticed that Jean is very shy and reserved, and I think that only through her finger ends could she have given vent to her heart and soul; for I have learned more of her life and tastes through her writings than through years of companionship." Mrs. Ingelow showed me the likenesses of her eleven children, who looked noble and gifted throughout. The eleventh, Maud, was very pretty and spirituelle, and with a carelessly clasped bunch of wild flowers, looked the very embodiment of sentiment and romance.