Youths' Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, January 26th, 1868.

MATTHEW i. 18—25: An angel appears to Joseph—The birth of Jesus.

Recite—JAMES ix. 6—7.

Sunday, February 2nd, 1868.

LUKE ii. 8—20. xxi. 38: An angel appears to the shepherds. The circumcision of Jesus and his presentation in the Temple.

Recite—Gal. v. 4—6.

The Quaker boy's wish.

All our readers have at one time or another expressed a wish for something. Now we want to tell you of the wish of a little Quaker boy. He was once in a congregation of friends, who had assembled for the purpose of worshipping God. They do not preach, as most ministers do, at a set time; but they sit still until they think they are moved by the Holy Spirit, and then any one in the congregation, whether male or female, may stand up and say what he or she desires. This congregation had been sitting in silence for a long time, when a little boy, between five and six years of age, stood up upon the seat, and folding his hands together, with a childish lisp gave utterance to the following:

'My friends! I wish the Lord would make us all gooder, and gooder, and *gooder*, till there is no bad left!'

He then took his seat.

Have you, my dear reader, ever had a wish like this of the little Quaker boy? If you have not, let me entreat you from this time forth to make it your daily prayer that God, for Jesus' sake, would 'take all the bad from your hearts until there is none left.' Pray that, as you grow in age, you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Pear.

A little boy, as he walked home from school, saw a ripe pear lying on the ground in the front yard of a large, fine house. It was a nice yellow pear. The little boy was hungry. 'How I would like that pear!' thought he. 'I might reach it through the slats of the fence. No one sees me.' Hardly had the thought come to him than he called to mind these words, 'Thou God seest me.'

He at once turned his head away from the pear, and walked bravely on. But he had not gone far when a little girl came running after him, and said, 'My mother sent me with this pear to give to you, little boy. She saw you through the blind as you looked at it, and sends it to you with her love.'

Do it well.

'There, that'll do,' said Harry, throwing down the shoe-brush; 'my boots don't look very bright. No matter. Who cares?'

'Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well,' replied a serious but pleasant voice.

Harry started and turned round to see who spoke. It was his father. Harry blushed. His father said, 'Harry, my boy, your boots look wretchedly. Pick up your brush and make them shine. When they look as they should, come to me in the library.'

'Yes, pa,' replied Harry, pouting, and taking up his brush in no very good humor, and brushing the dull boots until they shone nicely. When the boots were polished, he went to his father, who said to him:

'My son, I want to tell you a short story. I once knew a poor boy whose mother taught him the proverb, 'Whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well.' That boy went to be a servant in a gentleman's family. He took pains to do everything well, no matter how trivial it seemed. His employer was pleased, and took him into his shop. He did his work well there. When he swept out the shop he did that well. When he was sent on an errand he went quickly, and did his errand faithfully. When he was told to make out a bill, or to enter an account, he did that well. This pleased his employer so that he advanced him from step to step until he became head clerk, then a partner, and now he is a rich man, and anxious that his son Harry should learn to practice the rule which made him prosper.'

'Why, pa, were you a poor boy once?'

'Yes, my son, so poor that I had to go into a family and black boots, wait at table, and do other little menial services for a living. By doing those things well I was soon put, as I have told you, to do things deemed more important. Obedience to the proverb, with God's blessing, made me a rich man.'

Harry never forgot the conversation. Whenever he felt like slighting a bit of work, he thought of it, and felt spurred to do his work properly. '*Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well*,' cheered him in his daily duties.

I commend the proverb to every lazy boy and girl. I hope it will make little Annie Careless do better sewing, make better progress with her music lessons, and take better care of her room. I hope, too, that Tom That'lldo will stir himself, and show that he regards the proverb by doing his work so well that there will be no need for those complaints which are made about him every day. O Tom, Tom, you will never be worth a shilling to yourself or anybody else, if you don't mend your ways by learning to do your work well. Do you hear that, Tom? *Yes.* Very well, then, *do* as well as hear.—*S. S. World.*

The Young Irishman.

(Continued.)

The next day I called again. He appeared glad to see me, and immediately began to speak of our interview the day before. Said he, 'Your bold position yesterday startled me. I have been thinking of your argument ever since. I cannot overthrow it. That idea about a change or a motion being an effect, and the human mind assigning a cause to it, and our having knowledge on that ground, was new to me. But I find much that men call knowledge rests precisely on that ground. And yet, I am not fully satisfied. I have been accustomed to think that the existence of God was at least doubtful, that the proofs of it were very obscure, and when you brought up my own existence as a proof, it startled me. I have often said to my aunt, that we know very little about spirit,—that we can understand matter, but spirit lies very much beyond our knowledge; it is all a mystery to us. And now, though I dare not assail your position or your arguments, still, it does seem to me that I have a degree of knowledge and certainty about *bodies* that I cannot have about *spirit*; and I should like to hear what you can say on that point.'

'I say that it is a mere impression,' said I; 'a common one, indeed, but an erroneous one. There may be some faint apology for it. The most, if not all, of our primary ideas reach our mind through the inlet of the senses; and therefore when such an idea as that of spirit is presented to us,—spirit, a thing which we cannot see, cannot hear, cannot touch, cannot bring within the immediate cognizance of any of our bodily senses,—the idea appears to lie beyond the grasp of the mind, hung round with a deep, and misty, and mysterious obscurity. If eyes could see it, or hands could handle it, men would have none of this seeming uncertainty and doubt. But since they cannot, and since the idea of spirit must come to them through some other channel,—for example, by comparison, by reasoning, by tracing effect to cause, or some such device,—the whole doctrine of spirit assumes to them a kind of dim and misty significance, too much like an airy fancy or unsubstantial dream. That is just the state of your mind at the present moment. The seeming uncertainty is not a real uncertainty, it is only an impression; and that is the reason why you dare not assail my argument of yesterday. Your *reason* perceives its truth, but your impressions and your prejudice are against it.

'And since I am on this point now, I will pursue it, if you please, a little further. From the necessity of our nature, while here in the body, the most of us are more conversant with sensible objects than spiritual ones. We employ, from morning till night, our sensitive organism in our ordinary occupation. We gain most of our knowledge itself in that mode; and hence, when we turn to ideas of immateriality, we come into a new field, where we are almost strangers, and cannot, therefore, feel as if we were among the familiar and well known realities and certainties of home.'

He replied to this, 'Do you mean to affirm, then, that human knowledge in respect to spirit is as clear and certain as in respect to material things?'

'Certainly, sir; I mean to affirm just that; and I maintain, that the idea of the imperfection of our knowledge about spirit is all a mere impression and mere prejudice. The mind has taken an untenable position, and has espoused a falsehood, when men declare, 'We know little about spirit; we can understand what matter is, but spirit is beyond our comprehension.''

'Have you been talking with my aunt?' says he.

'No sir; I have not seen her; though I should like to, very much.'

'I thought you had,' says he; 'for I have made that affirmation, which you just condemned, to her a thousand times; and I thought she had told you.'

'I cannot help it,' said I. 'My position is taken, and I cannot retract. Unless you will retract your affirmation, I shall be compelled to show its falsity.'

'I am not prepared to retract it at all,' said he; 'and if you have boldness enough to attempt to show its falsity, I am sure you do not lack courage; and if I am not asking too much of you, I assure you I should be greatly pleased to hear what you have to say.'

'Well, then,' said I, 'we are at issue, and I have much to say,—perhaps more than you have strength to hear.'

'Said he, 'I am not wearied at all. You need have no fear. I told you I love to think, and you delight me by setting me to thinking.'

'Then,' said I, 'I will enter upon the matter. And, in the outset, I admit that our knowledge about matter comes in such a *mode*, that that knowledge has a vividness, and often an impressiveness, which belongs to no knowledge gained in another way. We have a sensible organism, which brings us into contact with matter. Our nerves are affected by it. And through that machinery, sensitive as it is inexplicable, we have impressions as well as knowledge, and have an instant certainty, which requires no slow and cool processes of reflection, or examination of evidences. We see the sun; and that is enough: the moment we have the sight we have the knowledge. We hear the thunder; and that is enough: the moment we hear, that mo ment we have the knowledge. We need not any other examination.

'Now, this sensitive machinery, and the instant rapidity and suddenness with which it acts, give to the knowledge which we gain in this way a vividness, an impressiveness, and force. But is not that all? Have we any greater certainty about things seen, and things heard, and things handled, than we have about things reasoned and demonstrated? How is this? Can we trust the mechanism of our nerves any better than we can trust the multiplication table, or the mathematical processes of astronomy and the counting house,—any easier than we can trust the deep philosophy of law? Indeed, is it not *more* probable, that some derangement should come in among the mechanism of the senses, and make us see wrong, or hear wrong, or taste wrong, than that the sure processes of mathematical calculation should deceive us? In our knowledge derived through the senses, we can employ only our own processes; nobody else can use our nerves of sight, or hearing, or taste. But in our knowledge derived through mathematics, and in some other modes, we employ the same processes which others have employed before us, and are employing all around us; and we can, therefore, fortify our own conclusions by theirs, and substantiate our certainty in knowledge, if need be, by a comparison of calculations. *Their* processes by which they obtained their knowledge, their certainty, we can make *our* processes; but we cannot use another man's eyes or ears, or the nervous mechanism by which they act. All we can do, is to take the testimony of the men who do use them; and then our knowledge rests only on testimony, not on the senses. And because we are confined to our own machinery of sense, and cannot employ another man's machine, we have *not*, herein, one of the advantages for certainty which attend knowledge in mathematics, and all other matters of reasoning. We can employ for our assurance another man's reasoning powers, but his eyes are his own, and we cannot use them. We can add the *testimony* of one man to that of another man, and then add another, and make them all auxiliary to our own, for heightening our assurance and certainty in knowledge; but we can do nothing of this in the knowledge derived from the senses—we cannot borrow another man's nerves. And it follows from all this surely, that, instead of there being *more* ground of certainty in knowledge derived directly through the senses, there is *less* certainty than in knowledge that comes in some other modes.'

'Why,' said he, interrupting me, 'you do not intend to say that our knowledge is *doubtful*, when we see and hear?'

'Not exactly that,' said I. 'But I am comparing different grounds of knowledge. And I admit, that sensible knowledge is the more *impressive*, by reason, first, of its nervous machinery, and, second, of its instant suddenness. It comes to the mind at once. It makes its impression at a dash. We have no time to get cool, or keep cool, as we have in the slower business of reasoning out our knowledge. But if this superior impressiveness is not all—if it is thought that there is really any superior *certainty* attending what is known by the senses, let any man attempt to tell what that certainty is, or where it lies. He cannot tell. He can tell nothing about it. Indeed, he can *conceive* nothing about it. The thing defies conjecture. I can tell why I believe my eyes sooner than I believe the testimony of an unknown witness before me. I have known men testify falsely, oftener than I have known my eyes testify falsely; and, therefore, I have the more certainty about my eyes. And I would *not* have the more certainty, if I could not tell why. And if my neighbour cannot tell why his knowledge derived through the senses has more *certainty* about it than knowledge coming in some other way, though he believes it has, then I must beg leave to think him a very imperfect man; and though I might trust his eyes, I would not trust his powers of reasoning. The truth is, it is a mere prejudice, when men think that they can know by the senses any more certainly than in other ways. There is a vividness and impressiveness in knowledge gained through the senses, and this freshness and strength are mistaken for an additional degree of certainty. The idea, then, so common among men, that the senses are the surest means of *certainty*, is all false. We can be equally certain on other grounds. It is not true, that while we have clear knowledge of matter, we have only doubtful knowledge of spirit, because spirit does not come within the cognizance of the senses. That notion has just mistaken vividness of impression for strength of proof; and '*assumes*' what is not true, that other kinds of evidence are not equal to the evidence of the senses—that we cannot *know*, because we have not seen.'

'Why,' said he, 'if my aunt were here now she would rejoice over me. I have silenced her many a time by saying to her, 'If I could *see* God I would believe in him.'

'You are not alone in that,' I answered. 'Many have said it. But if it means anything, it is only a miserable *assumption*, a pitiful *dogmatism*. It *assumes* that there is a just suspicion resting upon all evidence, except that of the senses. It assumes too much. How far does this doubt about spirit intend to go? what is precisely its ground? If its ground is at all definable it is this, namely, that a degree of uncertainty attaches to all matters not evinced to us by our senses. This is implied in the very language which men employ. They say, 'If my eyes could see it, if my hands could handle it, I should know. But I cannot see or touch spirit.' Well, now, if we can *know* nothing but sensible objects, our knowledge will be extremely limited. Does this man *know* that he has got a soul? He never saw it—he never handled it—he cannot taste it. Does he know that he has reason, or the power of reasoning, or any mind at all? He cannot *see* his mind, or touch it. How, then, on his own principles, can he certainly know that he has got any? Where will his doubting end? He is bound to doubt whether he has a soul,—whether he has an imagination, a memory, a faculty of reason. Indeed, he is bound to doubt whether he has the power of doubting; because he never saw it, or touched it, tasted it, or heard it speak. So that his principle of doubting about spirit, if he will only be self consistent, will cut him off from all that he calls certain knowledge, except merely on the field of matter, and indeed that *part* of the field which lies within the reach of his fingers, his ears, or his eyes. On his own principles, he cannot certainly know anything more. Just in this absurdity lies every man who exclaims, 'We cannot know much about spirit; we are certain about matter, because our senses can reach it.'

My young friend appeared to be surprised. Said he, 'You seem to be fond of turning the tables upon me. You make out that the sin of assumption is more mine than my aunt's.'

'So it is,' said I.

'Well,' said he, very thoughtfully and gravely, 'I believe it is, after all. I think I shall have to go to her to confession.'

'I hope you will confess to God also,' said I; 'for your sin of assumption was more odious to him than to her.

'But I have not done with the charge. There is another item in this count. There is another false assumption in the notion which I am combating. Your notion is, that we can have a certainty of knowledge about matter, such as we cannot have about spirit, because our senses furnish evidence of matter, but not of spirit. This is a mere assumption, and a falsehood. Have you *no sensible evidences* of spirit? When you move your tongue and utter your arguments, are the motion and the arguments any evidences of an unseen mind? They are *sensible evidences* of something to me, for I see the motion and I hear the arguments. And will you tell me that the *matter* of the tongue, the mere material of it, moves of its own accord, and weaves the arguments by its own power? If not, then the motion I see and the arguments I hear are sensible evidences of the existence of an unseen spirit, which prompts the motion and weaves the arguments. Though my senses do not *directly* reach the spirit itself, yet they do reach the effects of that spirit (the motion of the tongue and the audible arguments), which come from the unseen mind. And thus my very senses do furnish me with an evidence of the existence of that mind, as clear and certain as if my eyes could behold it. They do behold the effects of it, the traces of it, the signals of it, as clearly as they behold anything. The signals, the traces, the effects, cannot come from any other quarter. They must come from mind. A reasonable argument must be a production of reason. And just as certainly as I hear it coming from human lips, just so certainly I have the evidence of two of my senses that a mind exists somewhere—a spirit which has moved the lips and contrived the argument. It is therefore, an *assumption* and a falsehood when one says he has no sensible evidences of spirit, and hence cannot know much about it.'

The attention of my Irish-friend was intently fixed on every word I had uttered. And when I paused, he remained silent for some minutes. At length he said to me,—

'You have convinced me of one thing, at least. I perceive that I have often taken false ground. And yet, though I am not prepared to controvert your position, and it seems to me that your argument is unassailable, still, the manner in which you reason from effect to cause may have some error in it. At least, it is so new to me, that I am at a loss, though it all seems perfectly clear. Are we certain, after all, about causes and effects?'

'Yes; just as certain as we are of anything. There may be unfathomable mysteries somewhere in the subject, just as there are in every other subject; but I have had nothing to do with *them*. I have only employed the plain principle of common sense—that effects, changes, motions, must have some cause. Did your question mean to inquire whether that principle is certain?'

He sat in silence for a long time. I did not think it best to interfere with his thoughts. I took up one of his books, and retired to the window, to await the result of his cogitations. He paced the floor, back and forth, for a full half hour, manifestly in profound meditation. Finally, stopping before me, he said,—

'What *is* a cause?'

'That which produces the effect,' said I; 'an antecedent, within which the effect would not exist.'

'Is it *certain*,' said he, 'that there is a fixed connection betwixt the two?'

'Yes; *you* are certain of it, or you would not ask that question, or any other. You speak to me to produce an effect; and speaking, you know you are the *designing* cause. You employ this principle in every action of your life. You *cannot* act without it. You never did, and you never will. You cannot utter a word or make a motion on any other principle if you try.'

He made another long pause; and as he walked the room I went on reading my book. But finally, I laid aside the book, and took my hat to depart, saying to him that I would not have made my visit so long, if his residence had been more convenient for me to reach.

'I *must* see you again,' said he. 'Can you give your company an hour or two to-morrow?'

'Not to morrow,' said I; 'but I will see you the next day, if you please.

'Well, now, do not disappoint me,' said he. 'I am sorry to trouble you, and I feel more grateful to you than I can express; but I cannot rest our subject here, and I am afraid I could not manage it alone. I have been a sceptic on religion for eight years; and if left alone, I am afraid my old sceptical notions would return upon me.'

(To be Continued.)

There is no such injury as revenge, and no such revenge as the contempt of an injury.