

Youths' Department.

Lessons for 1871.

THE WORDS OF JESUS.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24TH, 1871. Words from the Cross.—John xix. 25-30.

GOLDEN TEXT.—And he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." vs. 30.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Luke iii. 40-52; Isaiah lixiii.

SUMMARY.—Natural affection and Christian love bloom and fruit together, and Christ is in both our pattern. He did his whole duty as Son of Mary, Son of man, and Son of God.

ANALYSIS.—I. Filial affection. vs. 25-27. II. Atoning Sacrifice. vs. 28-30.

EXPOSITION.—The situation.—In our last two lessons we found Jesus of an evening in a quiet upper chamber in Jerusalem with the eleven apostles, calmly speaking words of holy comfort and heavenly wisdom. To day we find him at about three o'clock in the afternoon succeeding that evening, just without the city walls, near one of the public roads, on a cross, between two robbers; mocking enemies about him; faithful, tearful disciples also, both men and women, near him, and he at the point of death, actually dying. Mark xvi. 33.

Meanwhile.—Only a few hours between, but what events. The arrest; the mock trial and treatment, and the grand fact and mystery of atonement for sin carried to the point of accomplishment. After passing through all this Jesus speaks the "Words from the Cross."

The disciples present.—John mentions four women, unless with some, we take "the wife of Cleophas" to be Christ's "mother's sister." This second view leaves only three, but the first view is better. John himself was there, for by "the disciple whom Jesus loved," vs. 26, he means himself. These all are represented as standing near, close by the cross. Of the women three are mentioned by Matthew (xxvii. 56) and by Mark (xv. 40.) But there "were many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem." Mark xv. 41. "All his acquaintances and the women that followed him from Galilee," Luke xxiii. 49. Mark and Luke state that they stood afar off. Doubtless most did until near the end, but a choice and chosen few whose "perfect love cast out fear," came close to the cross. Their presence, especially that of his mother and the beloved John, was surely most grateful to the Redeemer.

Woman.—Why does he say "woman," and not mother. We find the same in John ii. 3. When at the age of twelve his parents found him in the Temple with the elders, the mother rebuked him calling him son, and herself and Joseph his parents. His reply was "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business. In his character of High Priest he is "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." Heb. vii. 3. Compare Mat. xiii. 46-50, where he very plainly teaches this. "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciple and said: Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." Yet Christ was truly the son of Mary, and this he recognized in being "subject to his parents," and in his provision for her in this dying hour. He vindicated his priestly claims, but without detriment to his filial duty. Some also think Christ said, "woman" rather than mother: (1) To shield her from insult by keeping secret the relation to him. (2) To indicate her helplessness and need, and (3) Because she was the ideal, though not sinless woman, the second Eve, whose seed here bruised the serpent's head.—Gen. iii.

"Behold thy Son."—vs. 25. "The brethren" of Jesus, the sons of Mary, or her nephews. Nor do we know why Mary should not have been commended to some one of those "brethren." We know of John's fitness to take charge of her. (1) His own mother, Salome, and she were kindred spirits. Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40. (2) John and she were kindred spirits both naturally and spiritually. (3) John's love of the Redeemer was peculiarly deep, tender and strong, so that such a service for Christ's sake, would be most grateful to him. (4) John had a house

and home and doubtless a comfortable property. vs. 27. Compare xviii. 16; Mark i. 20. (5) John was to live to a good old age, and to be for a time comparatively settled. Ch. xxi. 21-4. His chief labor seems to have been performed after the others had laid the foundations and gone home. The Papal notion that Mary, as the immaculate virgin and holy mother of God was here charged to take the apostles under her patronage, John simply representing the apostles, is utterly baseless, and quite against the obvious sense of this passage.

"Behold thy mother."—vs. 27. The relation of mother and son involves duties and privileges on the one side and on the other. Those of the mother are intended in the address to Mary, those of the son in the address to John. Thus the language, though simple exceedingly, is yet full and formal. That John is called to act as son to Mary on occasion of Jesus' death shows that up to that time Jesus himself, besides all his official work, had acted the son's part. He honored his mother, and thus is a pattern not for boys and girls only, but no less for men and women. Every child ought to cherish the wish to make some return to parents for their care, and the support of an aged parent should never be deemed a burden to be dreaded and shunned, but rather a welcome love-duty.

"I thirst."—vs. 28. Jesus had passed through the mighty conflict which extorted from him a loud cry of horror and agony, that he triumphed completely doing all that the nature of divine government and the purpose of God made necessary, and that in the consciousness of this, there was a mental rest, so that his mind reverted to his bodily state. He became aware of the intense thirst consequent upon that from of death. "All things," pertaining to atonement had "been accomplished that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Prophecy had to be fulfilled because prophecy was a statement of God's holy purpose. Christ was, with him, only one of his many bodily tortures; of his sublime devotion to his Father's will, choosing that will rather than deliverance from this suffering; of our indebtedness to such a Saviour, and also of that quenchless thirst which must be ours if we reject him. If he did and endured so much for us shall we not do and endure something for him?

"It is finished."—vs. 30. Christ's thirst was quenched. vs. 29, 30. He took the "vinegar," or sour wine. At an earlier hour he had refused the mixed wine, which, it is said, would have stupefied him. Matt. xxvii. 34. He would not deaden his sensibility, nor becloud his intellect, nor benumb his will. The work of those hours required the perfect action of each, the concentrated energy of the whole man. Immediately on taking the draught he said: "It is finished." Matthew and Mark write: "When he had cried again with a loud voice, he yielded up the ghost," expired, but what this second cry was they do not tell. Was not the second shout, the glorious shout of triumph, of victory, the exulting shout of the mighty ascending Conqueror? They stand one over against the other, the horror first, and soon the glory. So has it been, so must it be with the church. Then followed the words in Luke xxiii. 46. What a death! What a victory! "Death slain and the grave glorified! "It is finished." What is finished? Not the whole of Christ's work, for "he ever liveth to make intercession,"—he works on and will till he comes to judgment and even then he will work on to reward and punish. But the end of humiliation, of sin-bearing, of sacrifice, of atonement, has come. Then, mere physical death is not passed and the resurrection is still future, but in effect the one is passed and the other gained. See vs. 22. That vicarious suffering described in Isaiah lixiii. is ended. God stands in a new relation to mankind and mankind to God. The penalty of the broken law has in effect been paid by the sinner's substitute, and he through faith, which takes the Redeemer to be a substitute, can be pardoned, justified, and yet the honor of God's righteous government suffer not one whit, but rather be made more clear. Just what that "chastisement of our peace" was, no man in this world ever did or ever will know.

Calvary is once used in our common version. Luke xxiii. 33. The phrase "Mount Calvary" is not to be found.

Where in our last two lessons did we find Jesus? Where in this? What has he passed through meanwhile? Whom of the disciples does John mention as present at the cross? vs. 25, 26. How many women? Were any other disciples present? Mark xv. 41; Luke xxiii. 49. In one case

they were said to have been far from the cross, by John near; how do you explain this? Why did they come? Was their presence probably comforting to Jesus?

What did Jesus say to his mother? vs. 23. Why did he say "woman" rather than mother? Who is meant by "the disciple whom Jesus loved"? What did Jesus mean by the words "behold thy son"? Why did he not commit her to the care of "his brethren"? Ch. vii. 5. What special fitness in John for this care? What did Jesus say to John? vs. 27. What does this mean? Had Jesus probably taken any care of his mother up to this time? What lesson may sons and daughters learn from this as to their duty to parents?

At what stage of Christ's sufferings were the words "I thirst" uttered? Had he not probably been thirsty until then? What do these words teach of his sufferings? Read Luke xvi. 24. For whom and for what did Christ suffer? What should we be willing to do for him?

What do the words of Christ in vs. 30 mean? Is Christ still asking for his people? What book of the New Testament treats most fully of his atonement? Have you been cleansed by his blood?

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Recite.—Scripture Catechism, 359, 360.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

A merry, merry Christmas, To crown the closing year, Peace and good-will to mortals, And words of holy cheer, What though the dreary landscape, Be robed in drifting snow; If on the social hearth-stone, The Christmas fire may glow?

CHORUS. A merry, merry Christmas, To crown the closing year, A merry, merry Christmas, And words of holy cheer.

How bright the happy circle Of dear ones gathered here, With naught but kindest wishes, And love each heart to cheer, What though the wind at evening, Blow harsh o'er land and sea, If eager hands and joyful Light up the Christmas tree.—Cho.

Then let us sing of Jesus, The blessed holy child, Who came to dwell among us, Though ne'er by sin defiled, And let us strive to love him, And follow in his way, That we in heaven may greet him, For ever there to stay.—Cho.

THE DARK HOUR.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

"I can't stand it any longer, Jane. I'll go out and perhaps something will turn up for us."

"It's a cool night, Robert."

"Cold, yes! But it's not much colder outside than in. It would have been much better for you if you had married John Tremain," he said bitterly.

"Don't say that, Robert, I've never regretted my choice."

"Not even now, when there is not a loaf of bread in the house for you and the children!"

"Not even now, Robert. Don't be discouraged. God has not forsaken us. Perhaps this Christmas even the tide will turn, better days may dawn upon us to-morrow."

Robert Brice shook his head despondingly.

"You are more hopeful than I, Jane. Day after day I have been in search of employment. I have called at fifty places, only to receive the same answer everywhere."

Just then little Jimmy, who had been asleep, woke up.

"Mother," he pleaded, "won't you give me a piece of bread? I am so hungry."

"There is no bread, Jimmy, darling," said the mother with an aching heart.

"When will there be some?" asked the child piteously.

Tears came to the mother's eyes. She knew not what to say.

"Jimmy, I'll bring you some bread," said the father hoarsely, and he seized his hat and went to the door.

His wife, alarmed, laid her hand upon his sleeve. She saw the look in his eyes, and she feared to what step desperation might lead him.

"Remember, Robert," she said solemnly, "it is hard to starve, but there are things that are worse."

He shook off her hand, but not roughly, and without a word passed out. Out in the cold streets! That would be their only home next. For a brief time longer he had the shelter of a cheerless room in a cold tenement house, but the rent would become due at the end of the month, and he had nothing to meet it. Robert Brice was a mechanic, competent and skilful. Three years since he lived in

a country village where his expenses were moderate, and he found no difficulty in meeting them. But in an evil hour he grew tired of his village home and removed to the city. Here he vainly hoped to do better. For a while he met with very good success, but he found his tenement house in which he was obliged to live, a poor substitute for the neat cottage which he had occupied in the country. He saw his mistake but was too proud to go back.

"Of course I can't have as good accommodations here as in the country," he said, "but it is something to live in, and be in the midst of things."

"I'd rather be back again," said his wife: "somehow the city doesn't seem like home; there I used to run in and take tea with a neighbor, and have a pleasant, social time; here I know scarcely any body."

"You'll get used to it after a while," said her husband. She did not think so, but did not complain.

But a time of great depression came, and with it a suspension of business enterprise. Work ceased for Robert Brice. If he had been in his old home, he could have turned his hands to something else, and at the worst could have borrowed of his neighbors till better times. But the friendly relations arising from the neighborhood do not exist in the city to the same extent as in the country. So day by day he went out to seek work, only to find himself one of a large number, all of whom were doomed to disappointment. If he had been alone, he could have got along somehow, but it was a sore trial to come to a cheerless room, a pale-faced wife, and hungry children, with no relief to offer them.

When on that Christmas eve Robert Brice went into the streets, he hardly knew how he was going to redeem the promise he had made little Jimmy. He was absolutely penniless and had been so three days. There was nothing that he was likely to find to do that night.

"I will pawn my coat," he said at last. "I cannot see my wife and children starve."

"It was a well worn overcoat, and that cold winter night he needed something more to keep him warm. Weakened by enforced fasting, he was more sensitive to the cold, and shivered as he walked along the pavement.

"Yes," he said, "my coat must go. I know not how I shall get along without it, but I cannot see the children starve before my eyes."

He was not in general an envious man, but when he saw sleek, well fed citizens buttoned up to the throat in warm overcoats, come out of the brilliantly lighted shops, provided with presents for happy children at home, while his were starving, he suffered some bitter thoughts upon the inequality of fortune's gifts to come to his mind.

Why should they be so happy, he so miserable?

There was a time, he remembered it well, when he too suffered not Christmas eve to pass without buying some little gift for Jimmy and Agnes. How little he dreamed that they would ever want bread.

There was one man, shorter than himself, warmly clad, who passed him with his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his overcoat. There was a pleasant smile upon his face. He was doubtless thinking of the happy circle at home.

Robert knew him as a rich merchant, whose ample warehouse he often passed. He had applied to this man only two days before for employment and been refused. It was, perhaps, the thought of the wide difference between them, so far as outward circumstances went, that led Robert Brice to follow him.

Alter a while, the merchant—Mr. Grimes—drew his handkerchief from his pocket. As he did so, he did not perceive that his pocket-book came with it and fell to the sidewalk.

He did not perceive it, but Robert did. His heart leaped into his mouth, and a sudden thought entered his mind. He bent quickly down and picked up the pocket-book. He raised his eyes hastily to see if the movement was noticed. It was not. The merchant went on unheeding his loss.

"This will buy bread for my wife and children," thought Robert, instantly.

A vision of the comfort which the money would bring the cheerless room, lighted up his heart for an instant, but then, for he was not dishonest, there came another thought: "The money was not his, much as he wasted it."

"But I cannot see my wife and children starve," he thought again. "If it is wrong to keep the money, God will pardon the offence. He will understand my motive."

All this was sophistry, and he knew it. In a moment he felt it to be so. There were some things worse than starvation. It was his wife who had said this just before he came out. Could he meet her gaze, when he returned with food so obtained?

"I've lived honest so far," he thought; "I won't turn thief now."

It was with an effort he came to this decision, for all there was before his eyes that vision of a cheerless home, and he could hear Jimmy vainly asking for food.

It was with an effort that he stepped forward, and placed his hand on the merchant's shoulder, and extended the hand that held the pocket-book.

"Thank you," said the merchant, turning round, "I had not perceived my loss."

"You dropped it when you took out your handkerchief."

"And you saw and picked it up. I am much obliged to you."

"You have reason to be," said Robert in a low voice. "I came near keeping it."

"That would have been dishonest," said Mr. Grimes, his tone altering slightly.

"Yes, it would; but it's hard on a man to be honest when he is penniless, and his wife and children without a crust."

"Surely you and your family are not in that condition?" said the merchant earnestly.

"Yes," said Robert, "it is only too true."

"And you are out of work?"

"For two months I have vainly sought for work. I applied to you only two days since."

"I remember you now. I thought I had seen your face before. You still want work."

"I should feel grateful for it."

"A porter left me yesterday. Will you take his place for twelve dollars a week?"

"Thankfully, sir. I would for half that."

"Then come to-morrow morning, or rather, as to-morrow will be a holiday, the day succeeding. Meantime take this for your present necessities."

He drew from his pocket-book a bank note and put it into Robert's hand.

"It is fifty dollars!" said Robert, in amazement.

"I know it. The pocket-book contains a thousand dollars. But for you I should have lost the whole. I wish you a merry Christmas."

"It will indeed be a merry Christmas," said Robert with emotion. "God bless you," he said. "Good night!"

"Good night!"

Jane waited for her husband, in the cold and cheerless room, which for a few days longer she might call her home.

"Do you think father will bring home some bread?" said little Jimmy, as he nestled in her lap.

"I hope so, darling," she said; but her heart misgave her. She feared it was a delusive hope.

An hour passed—there was a step on the stair—her husband's? It could not be, for this was a cheerful, elastic step, coming up two stairs at a time. She looked eagerly at the door.

Yes, it was he. The door opened. Robert, radiant with joy, entered with a basket full of substantial provisions.

"Have you got some bread, father?" asked Jimmy, hopefully.

"Yes, Jimmy, some bread and meat from a restaurant, and here's a little tea and sugar. There's a little wood left, Jane. Let's have a bright fire and a comfortable meal, for, please God, this shall be a merry Christmas."

"How did it happen? Tell me, Robert."

So Robert told his wife, and soon a bright fire lit up the before cheerless room; and there were four hearts that waited in joyful hope for the dawn of a "Merry Christmas Day."

The next week they moved to a better home. They have never since known what it is to want. Robert found a firm friend in the merchant, and has a reason to remember, with a grateful heart, God's goodness on that Christmas Eve.

A good man, who has seen much of the world and is not tired of it, says: "The grand essentials to happiness are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for."

Smoking is very much on the decline in England. At the universities one man in five now smokes, whereas 20 years ago at least four in five did.