

Youths' Department.

Lessons for 1871. THE WORDS OF JESUS.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1871.

The Unjust Steward.—Luke xvi. 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Ye cannot serve God and mammon." vs. 13.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Psalm xli; Acts iv. 32; v. 11.

To whom was the parable of the unjust steward spoken? vs. 1. What was a steward? What was the accusation against the steward? Its result? vs. 2. His perplexity? vs. 3. His aim? vs. 4. His expedient? vs. 5-7.

What do you think of his course? What did his lord think of it? vs. 8. Was the moral character of the act commended? If not, in what respect was the act commendable and a lesson of Christian prudence?

What is meant by "the children of light"? "The children of this world"? "This generation"? vs. 9. Making friends of it? "Everlasting habitations"?

How can these friends receive any into these habitations? Is Christian prudence like worldly prudence in its moral character? vs. 10. Why are faithfulness and justice in worldly things necessary? What does verse 11 teach? Explain vs. 12. Why cannot one serve two masters? vs. 13. What master do you serve? What evidence in your life that God and not the world is your supreme good?

SUMMARY.—The sons of light are, but should not be, less prudent respecting their eternal spiritual home, than are the sons of this world respecting their temporal earthly homes.

ANALYSIS.—Christian Prudence.—I. Illustrated by Parable.—1. The steward's extremity. vs. 1, 2. His expedient. vs. 3-7. 3. His commendation. vs. 8.

II. Enjoined by Precept.—1. Man's duty. (a) What? vs. 9. (b) Why? vs. 10. 2. Failure therein. (a) Results. vs. 11, 12. (b) Cause. vs. 13.

EXPOSITION.—To whom.—The parables of the preceding chapter were spoken to murmuring Pharisees and Scribes. The Saviour now addresses his disciples. Among them were many publicans. These publicans by their profession had to do with the money of others, and were specially tempted of covetousness. The last two lessons were a defence of the conduct of publicans and sinners in coming to Christ, and of Christ's conduct in receiving them. The present is designed to teach these how to show their discipleship, and to exercise a heavenly prudence.

The rich man and steward.—A steward was a general manager of another's estate, e. g., Eliezer, Gen. xv. 2.—often a slave, though here evidently a freeman, since he seems not to have been at his master's disposal, except in the matter of the stewardship. The last part of our lesson shows that the rich man here represents, not Satan, or the Roman power, etc., but God; and the steward, man as responsible to God for certain things entrusted to him.

The accusation.—The word translated "accused" means stealthily, though not necessarily falsely, reported. The report in this case was true.

The result. vs. 2.—A summons, a question, a command, and a threat. The first requisite in a steward was trustworthiness. This failing, nothing remained but to deal with him severely. Here it is plain the waste resulted from unfaithfulness, not incompetency. An account must be given, and the man, unless thereby cleared, be driven from his place. The account, it is said, was regularly given only once a year.

The perplexity. vs. 3, 4.—It is extreme. The man looks into the very face of ruin. The question is, What escape? The man has lived in affluence, but has laid up nothing, for he never expected to be thrust out of office. But he is still steward, for time was, of course, given him to make up his account. He can lay his lord's debtors under obligation to him, and they will in return take him under their care.

The expedient. vs. 5-7.—The decision is promptly executed. All the debtors are summoned. He asks them in order, How much dost thou owe? Hands each one his bill, and bids him make it greatly less. He deducts from one bill more, from another less; but on what principle does not appear. Whether the original bills were changed or destroyed, is not stated. The haste and urgency of the business is shown by the word "quickly." The measure (bath) of oil was about eight and seven-eighths gallons. The measure (cor) of wheat was about eleven and one-ninth bushels.

The commendation. vs. 8.—The lord,

i. e., the steward's lord, not the Lord Jesus, "commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely," or better, prudently. The rich man did not commend the fraud, as such, but simply the shrewd provision for self. It is assumed that the steward was to be and was put out of office, and he had worked only for one end, viz., to be cared for when put out.

The comparison. vs. 8.—The parties are termed respectively "The children (better the sons) of this world," whose aims and hopes and enjoyments are earthly only, and "the children (the sons) of light," i. e., those who have been re-lightened, who recognize God and his law, and who live for God according to his law, whose principles and practices are in a measure heavenly. Mark the judgment implied in the term "the sons of light." Men of the world are assumed to be blind, ignorant, in the dark, fools. The very judgment which they boastfully bring against the pious, God brings against them. His judgment, not theirs shall stand. Yet Christ pays them a compliment. They are "wiser," i. e., more prudent, as above, than the sons of light. The unjust steward is a fair specimen of worldlings, his policy a fair specimen of worldly policy.

The Lesson. vs. 9.—"And I say unto you," "I" and "you" emphatic, making two contrasts, one between the Lord Jesus and the steward's lord; the other between his disciples and worldlings. I also as well as that rich man, admire prudence and commend it to you though unable as yet greatly to commend you for it. You, my disciples especially those who have recently been drawn from the ranks of publicans and sinners, continue to use your former prudence and shrewdness. You have in your hands money fully called "the mammon of unrighteousness," because in winning and using it mankind at large have little regard for righteousness.

Of this money, i. e., by its right use make to yourselves friends, as did the unprincipled steward. Make friends, for you must soon fail, i. e., your stewardship in these things is brief. At furthest it lasts not beyond death, and death comes soon. Death is only a change. You will want a home. Live so as to secure "everlasting habitations," for the soul lasts forever. But to do this you must identify yourselves with those for whom God makes these homes, with the household of faith. Just here lies the gist of this whole lesson. Christ presses the comparison between the steward and his new made friends, and his recent disciples and their newly sought society. The new convert must use his money, and indeed everything belonging to him, "to keep in" not with worldly men, but with those who have the mind of God. See Jas. ii. 21-25; Acts iv. 34-37; Rom. xv. 26; Heb. vi. 10; Gal. vi. 10; Matt. xxv. 34-40.

Verses 10.—Worldly prudence we saw is both unfaithful and unjust, has no faith in God and no regard for his law as such, is without moral character; not so Christian prudence, Faith and righteousness are its distinguishing characteristics. The man who uses his money with complete faith in God and complete regard for his law, imitates the unjust steward by identifying himself with those who can receive him into everlasting habitations.

Verses 11 and 12.—Strong assertions in the form of questions. God's will in its completeness must rule the Christian, and if one does use his worldly possessions according to that will, it shows that the divine will is not ruling at any point. These possessions are not "the true" riches because perishable; they are "another's" and not one's "own" as being, unlike grace, external and foreign to the soul, and are here conceived as under Satan's control.

The impossibility. vs. 13.—Memorable words, never to be forgotten, yet forgotten often. No man can serve two masters, whose wills, like those of God and the world, are exactly opposite. It never was done, never will be, never can be. Men try it often enough. What failures! How the church is disgraced with these attempts and failures.

GENERAL REVIEW.—Ways in which money can be used for the good of the church and the glory of Christ. Money obtained by fraud before conversion, should be used how? Worldly principles in the transaction of business. The danger of forgetting that our money and our powers are God's, not our own. The danger of misusing the parable of to-day's lesson. The present reward of entire consecration to Christ, of prompt, hearty obedience to the requirements of faith.

ILLUSTRATION.—"Two mites well laid

out will gain you friends in eternity (Luke xxi. 2), when the millions of Croesus are forgotten."

"A beggar upon the way asked something of an honorable lady. She gave him sixpence, saying: 'This is more than God ever gave me.'" "O madam," says the beggar, "madam! you have abundance, and God hath given all that you have; say not so, good madam." "Well," says she, "I speak the truth; for God hath not given, but lent unto me what I have, that I may bestow it upon such as thou art."

"Get all the money you can without hurting your soul, your body, or your neighbor. Save all you can, cutting off every needless expense. Give all you can. Be glad to give and ready to distribute, laying up in-store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come that ye may attain unto eternal life."—J. Wesley.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Recite.—Scripture Catechism, 327, 328.

LAURA'S STORY.

BY OLIVE THORNE.

"Well, Laura," said grandpa Willard, when they were all seated in the library, "now let's hear how a tuft of cotton and a block of wood got to be a spool of thread."

Grandpa had offered prizes to the Willard children, for studying out, and giving clear accounts of the way of making some things in common use, and Laura had been turning over encyclopedias and searching out authorities on the way of making thread. When her grandpa spoke, she shut up her book, and drew back her chair.

"The first thing I know about the cotton, is that the pod grows on the cotton bush, till it is as big as an egg, and then it bursts out in a long exquisitely beautiful bunch of cotton, several inches long. Here is one to look at," and she opened a box which she produced mysteriously from under the table, and exhibited to the group a beautiful specimen of the cotton ball burst open.

"Where did you get it?" burst out the children.

"Mrs. Willis let me take it. She brought it home from the South. 'The first thing they do with it,' Laura went on, 'is, of course, to gather it, and the next thing, is to get out the seeds, which they do by the Cotton Gin.'"

"Do you know how they got the seeds out in old times?" asked grandpa.

"No, I don't," said Laura.

"They had to pick them out, one by one, by hand, and a good man could only pick one pound in a day."

"That must have been pretty slow work," said Allen.

"It was. A Cotton Gin will clean how much, Laura?"

"Three hundred pounds a day; so it does the work of three hundred men."

"I don't see how a machine can pick out seeds," said Allen.

"Can you tell him, Laura?"

"I guess I can. The cotton is fed to the machine by men. As it goes in, it comes to a roller covered with teeth, made of wire; these teeth seize the cotton and drag it through a very fine grate, so fine that the seeds can't get through; so they just have to stay outside."

"Poor seeds!" laughed Allen. "I don't see but teeth do as well as fingers, after all."

"Better, in this case," said grandpa, "but tell us about the tooth brush, Laura."

The children opened their eyes, and Laura laughed.

"The teeth have to be cleaned before the roller gets around, so that they can take up more cotton, and the tooth brush is a roller brush, which takes the cotton off beautifully as the roller goes round."

"What is a roller brush?" asked Nelly.

"It's nothing but a big roller with bristles all over it, instead of on one side, as our brushes are. I saw a picture of it," answered Laura.

"Well, go on with the cotton," said grandpa.

"It is then packed into bales and sent to the cotton mills, where the first thing is to clean it. The finest, such as thread is made of, is laid on a frame made of a sort of net work, and beaten with bundles of twigs. The dust and dirt fall through the net work. Then it is called batting."

"Cotton batting that mamma puts into comfortables?" asked Nelly.

"Yes," answered grandpa, "and if it was to be used as batting, it would now be folded and rolled up, a paper pasted

around it, and sent off to the store. But Laura's cotton can't stop here, it goes—"

"To the carding machine," broke in Laura.

"What does that do?" asked Allen.

"That lays the threads all one way."

"Why, what threads?" asked Nelly.

"Don't you know," asked grandpa, "that though cotton looks like a fleecy cloud, it is really, composed of very fine threads, or fibres?"

"I didn't know it," answered Nelly.

"These fibres can be seen with a microscope after the cloth is worn out, cut up in a paper-mill, and made into a pulp that looks like milk. Now Laura—"

"The carding machine lays the threads one way by drawing it through wire teeth. It comes out on to a roller and looks like a wide ribbon made of a cloud."

"It must be just lovely," said Nelly.

"It is," Laura went on, "and it seems too bad to have it drawn through a funnel."

"What's a funnel?" interrupted Nelly.

"Ho!" shouted Allen, "I know! It's a tin thing, big at one end and little at the other, to pour things through."

"Oh yes!" said Nelly. "Ann has one to fill the castor bottles."

"When the cotton comes out of the funnel," Laura went on, "it is quite small and firm, but to make it still closer, it goes between heavy rollers, which press it very tight."

"In that state it is called 'Roving,'" said grandpa. "Where does it go next Laura?"

"To the spinning machine—called a Mule," said Laura.

"What a funny name for a machine!" laughed Nelly.

"These machines have each twenty two hundred spindles, so they can spin faster than twenty-two hundred spinners with spinning-wheels, attended by only one man. The books say that there are in constant use in the world, for cotton alone, forty millions of spindles."

"Do you believe it grandpa?" asked Allen.

"Why shouldn't I," asked grandpa, "when the facts have been collected, and printed in reliable books? The day has gone by, Allen, for refusing to believe in things merely because you don't see how it can be. I can tell you still more wonderful things that I saw in the World's Fair, in London, when Laura has finished making her spool of thread."

Laura went on. "The thread after being spun very fine on the Mule, needs to be deprived of a sort of fuzz which covers it, so it is run very fast through a gas flame, which burns it off."

"I should think it would," interrupted Allen laughing, "and the thread too."

"It goes so fast that the thread hasn't time to burn, and then it goes over a brush, to remove the ashes or remains, and at last through a tiny hole in a brass plate, just large enough to let the thread go through."

"What does that do to the thread?" asked Nelly.

"That is for the purpose of making the thread perfectly even. If there's a knot or thick place in the thread, it won't go through, and can be taken away. From this it is wound off into skeins, and put up in five or ten-pound bundles."

"Why don't they put it on spools?"

"It isn't what we call thread yet," said Laura; "only the fine strands of which the thread is made."

"Perhaps you don't know," said grandpa, "that good sewing thread is made of six fine strands."

"Oh, grandpa!—this fine thread?" and Allen took a spool out of Laura's work-basket, marked "200."

"Yes; even that. See, it is marked 'best six cord cotton.'"

"Well, I suppose I must believe it," said Allen; "but I must say, I don't see how it can be."

"There's only one more machine to tell about," said Laura, "and that one twists the thread, and winds it on to the spool."

"Can you describe it?" asked grandpa.

"I can't exactly do that, but I can tell what it does. The bobbins of fine cotton are stuck on to skewers very loosely, so they will unwind easily. The thread first runs over a glass rod and through a little trough of water, or weak starch if it is to be stiff or g/lace thread. Then it goes between rollers to press it tightly together and prevent its untwisting. On leaving the rollers, it goes down, twisting as it goes, to where the spool is fastened. There it is regularly wound on—the spool moving slowly up and down as the thread

winds on, so as to make regular layers of it."

"But where did the spool come from?" asked grandpa.

"Oh yes!—the spool-maker buys plank at a lumber yard cuts it into the right lengths, and then turns out the spools on a lathe. After the thread is on, the spools are ornamented on each end with round papers, which some man has printed, and some child put gum on. The last one is stuck over the end of the thread, to keep it from getting loose. It is then put up in packages of a dozen spools, and packed into boxes. And that is all."

"Now grandpa what did you see at the World's Fair?" asked Allen.

Grandpa took up the spool of 200 threads. "You see how fine this is—"

"They all looked at it."

"It's almost too fine to see," said Nelly.

"Well, what do you say to thread number 600! only one-third the size of this, and that cobweb thread woven into lace."

"Oh did you see that?" asked Laura.

"Yes! and I saw a piece of muslin woven of thread number 400. It was so delicate that when laid on the grass, and wet, it could not be seen. You know how large a pound-roll of batting is?"

"Yes," said the children.

"What do you think of one of those being stretched out so fine as to be more than a thousand miles long!—that was number 2100."

"It seems too hard to believe that," said Allen.

"Nevertheless it is true," said grandpa, "and you can easily see that 200 thread may be composed of six finer strands."—Interior.

MY EYE IS ON HIM.

Did you know that young Brown had become a Christian?" said one business man to another.

"Yes, I've heard so, and I have my eye on him to see if he holds out. I want a trusty young man in my business, and if this is real with him he's just the one I want, so I've been watching him ever since I heard of it, watching him closely."

Thus as young Brown went up and down the streets, as he mixed with his old associates, watchful Mr. A—had his eye on him. He noticed how he bore the sneers which sometimes came if he stood up manfully for his new Master, and was not afraid to show his colors. When young Brown did this, Mr. A—said to himself, 'I guess he'll do, still I'll watch him a little longer.'

Though the careless merchant took Sunday rides himself, he was very glad to see that young Brown did not.

Although he went to church occasionally from custom, not from the love of it, he was very glad to see this young Christian go joyfully up to the house of the Lord.

Thus for more than a year did Mr. A—keep his eye on the unconscious youth. Then he said, "Yes, he will do. He is a real Christian. I can trust him. I can afford to pay him well."

Dear young Christian, thus do others watch to see if you are true. Many have their eyes on you and are ready to give you places of trust if you are trustworthy. The world has its cold eye on you to see if your religion is real. The Master's loving eye is also upon you. He sees not the mi steps alone, but the earnest wish to please him. He also has a place for you when through his strength you have proved yourself true.

Keep your eye on him. He will not then let you wander far from the way.—S. S. Times.

AN INFANT LOGICIAN.

A grandchild of Dr. Emmons, when not more than six years old, came to him with a trouble weighing on her mind:

"Mr. A. says the moon is made of green cheese, and I don't believe it."

"Don't you believe it? Why not?"

"I know it isn't."

"But how do you know?"

"Is it, Grandpa?"

"Don't ask me the question; you must find it out yourself."

"How can I find it out?"

"You must study into it."

She knew enough to resort to the first of Genesis for information, and, after a truly Emmons-like search, she ran into the study.

"I've found it! The moon is not made of green cheese, for the moon was made before the cows were."

Love is the key to the scholars heart. Get the heart, and you get the man.