

Youths' Department.

Lessons for 1871. THE WORDS OF JESUS.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15TH, 1871. The Laborers in the Vineyard.—Matt. xx. 1-16.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." Rom. ix. 14.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Roman ix. 14-33; Luke xxiii. 39-45.

What statement precedes our parable? Ch. xix. 30. What follows? vs. 16. In what spirit did the young ruler come to Christ? (Last lesson). In what spirit did Peter speak to Christ? Ch. xix. 27. The context will help explain the parable.

What is a "householder"? What work had the one mentioned in verse 1 to be done? To what place did he go for laborers? vs. 3. How many times in the day did he go? Did he agree with all on the price? How many cents did he promise to the first? vs. 2. What o'clock was the third hour? The sixth, etc.?

Who in God's kingdom is represented by this householder? By the laborers? What by the market-place? The vineyard? The hiring? The penny? The standing idle? The working in the vineyard?

Whom, at settlement, did the householder bid call and pay the laborers? vs. 8. Who were first paid? Why? How much was paid to each? Who murmured? vs. 11. Why? Had they good cause? Why not? vs. 13-15.

Does God reward Christian labor? When? vs. 8. Is this reward strictly of debt? Rom. iv. 4. Ought one to work merely for reward? Is the reward the same in amount for all, whether they have done much or little? vs. 9, 16. As sinners what do we deserve of God?

Does this parable encourage one to repent in old age? Does it encourage one to remain impenitent till old age? Does it discourage faithful labor in those first called? Does it teach us to think of God as a Sovereign? What feeling toward our fellow-men is reproved? Are you a laborer in the vineyard?

SUMMARY.—The call to Christian labor and its reward are both of grace.

ANALYSIS.—I. The Engagement. vs. 1-7. With five companies.

II. The Settlement. vs. 8-15. (1) The payment. (2) The controversy.

III. The Lesson. vs. 16.

EXPOSITION.—Terms and definitions.—"Householder," the head of the family.

"Steward," the householder's principal servant. "Third hour," "sixth hour," etc. The day was reckoned from sunrise to sunset, and was divided into twelve equal parts or hours, which, therefore, varied somewhat in length, according to the season of the year.

When the days and the nights were of equal length, the first hour, or "morning," would be 6 A. M., the third, 9 A. M., the sixth, 12 M., the eleventh, 5 P. M., etc. "Penny," it would have been better to say shilling, for the coin named, denary, was about fifteen cents, i. e., the silver in that coin would make a ten cent piece and a five cent piece, though the coin would buy far more than fifteen cents with us, because then there was far less money. The denary, "penny," was ample pay for one day's labor.

A custom.—The account implies that it was customary for persons wishing to labor to go to the "market-place," and wait for some one to come and hire them.

Who and what.—In applying the parable we are to understand by the "householder," God, Heb. iii. 4; by the "steward" or agent, through whom the householder manages his affairs and settles with the servants, Christ, Acts xvii. 31; by the "laborers," Christians here in this world.

We also understand by the "vineyard," Christ's kingdom on earth, especially the church; by the "market-place," the world whence God calls men into his kingdom and church; by the "hiring," God's call, however, extended, especially as containing the promise of eternal life; by the wages given, mainly, if not wholly, the eternal life; by the different "hours" successive periods of conversion, as earlier and later, though the main thing is not so much time, — mere length of time of Christian service, as amount and severity of toil, e. g., in persecution, personal sacrifices, as shown in the complaint, verse 12, in the words, "heat and burden of the day."

Some in one year do and suffer more for Christ, than others in forty years of Christian life, more than they themselves if called to be Christians in other circumstances, would do and suffer in many years. The real difference indicated is the amount and severity of toil which in the parable depended upon length of time partly, and partly upon the varying heat of the day. In Christian life it depends sometimes upon

length of service, and quite as often upon other things. 1 Cor. iv. 8-14. The "even" is obviously at the close of the day's work. It may well stand for "the end of the world," or for the hour of death. God sometimes brings the judgment day forward, so that both the wicked and the righteous come to it before death (1 Tim. v. 24, 25), yet not so that the final judgment is not also for them. The settlement is the judgment wherever and however occurring. The payment of the last first, has probably no other purpose in the narrative than to allow the first to be present, and thus have their occasion of grumbling.

The complaint.—vs. 10, 12. Notice as to those first engaged, (1) with them alone had a definite amount been fixed on as the price of the day's work. vs. 2. "For a penny," in the Greek, indicates that this was not simply the wages, but the motive of labor. The other laborers went leaving the matter of reward wholly to the householder. vs. 4, 5, 7. (2) They came to settlement with the conviction that they deserved, and the expectation that they should receive more than the others. (3) This made them envious and angry at their fellows, and unjust and angry with the judge, because their labor had not been rewarded both above the terms agreed upon, and above the reward of the others. Here we see the Spirit which Christ so often and sharply condemns, and which the young ruler unfortunately possessed, — the spirit of legality, — self-merit, working not from love of God, with trust in God, leaving all to God, but to earn the inheritance, and take it of debt.

The reply.—vs. 13-15. They came on the "debt and credit" principle, with claims urging their desert—their merit. They are met on the same principle. You demand your due. Your due and that only shall you have. You remember the bargain, fifteen cents for the day. By the bargain I stand. You worked for the money. Are you wronged? No. Just that, no more, no less, for just that and nothing else, you worked. Take it, and off. It is "thine," etc., and to thee, with thy spirit. I can give only thine. Not so do I deal with the others. They have wrought in another spirit. With them I deal on the principle of grace, not of debt. It is reward, and yet a reward given not on the principle of their own desert, for not on this principle have they wrought. They recognize in me a sovereign, with full power over my own property to give where there is no claim, and so ought you. I can be not only just, but "good," dealing graciously, distributing gifts, and that according to my own will and pleasure. Thus does God, in the person of this steward, reason with every one of us, to expel the self-righteous, legal spirit, and bring us to recognize before the final judgment the sovereignty of God, the great fact of grace. Justice will bring to us as sinners hell. Only mercy brings heaven.

A difficulty.—There is an objection, by many deemed fatal, to the explanation just given. If the "penny," the reward of labor be heaven, then the mere legalist goes to heaven, for he had the "penny," the last shall be first, and the first last. No equality there. 1 Cor. xv. 29-42. The rewards may be made equal, since eternal life or glory is one, though differently appropriated according to the different capacities of the saved.

Some make the key to the parable the equal penny, and the lesson the quality of rewards in God's kingdom. Others find it in the successive hours, and the lesson is an encouragement to enter the Christian life, even though it be late in life. This encouragement is indeed contained in the parable, though it was not given mainly to afford it. It is, however, no encouragement to defer repentance till old age, for Scripture and experience teach that aside from the sin of this course, it is full of peril.

Caution.—We must take care not to infer either that rewards in God's kingdom have no relation to labors, or that one ought not to have respect to the rewards. Heb. xi. 26; xii. 2. Grace gives according to its own law, and love has its own desire for those rewards.

ILLUSTRATION.—Harlan Page, celebrated for his abundant and successful Christian labors said during his last sickness, "Oh, I am nothing, and have done nothing. I'm nothing but a poor sinner. I'm a blank, and less than a blank. I hang on the mere merits of Christ." Again, "My work here is all done,—its all done. What I want now is a sense of the presence of Christ, and I think he is with me and sustains me." So he trusted in Christ, not self.

"In my hands no price I bring." See Matt. xxv. 34-46.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Recite.—Scripture Catechism, 339, 340.

THE STORY OF A VOLCANO.

Volcanoes can never be trusted. No one knows when one will break out, or what it will do; and those who live close to them—as the city of Naples is close to Mount Vesuvius—must not be astonished if they are blown up, or swallowed up,—as that great and beautiful city of Naples may be, without a warning, any-day.

For what happened to that same Mount Vesuvius nearly eighteen hundred years ago, in the old Roman times? For ages and ages it had been lying quiet, like any other hill. Beautiful cities were built at its foot, filled with people who were as handsome, and as comfortable, and (I am afraid) as wicked, as people ever were on earth. Fair gardens, vineyards, oliveyards, covered the mountain slopes. It was held to be one of the Paradises of the world. As for the mountain being a burning mountain, who ever thought of that? To be sure, on the top of it was a great round crater, or cup, a mile or more across, and a few hundred yards deep. But that was all overgrown with bushes and wild vines, full of boars and deer. What sign of fire was there in that? To be sure, also, there was an ugly place below by the sea-shore, called the Phlegrean fields, where smoke and brimstone came out of the ground, and a lake Avernus, over which poisonous gases hung, and which (old-stories told) was one of the mouths of the Nether Pit. But what of that? It had never harmed any one, and how could it harm them?

So they lived on merrily and happily, enough, till in the year A. D. 79 (that was eight years, you know, after the Emperor Titus destroyed Jerusalem,) there was stationed in the Bay of Naples, a Roman Admiral, called Pliny, who was also a very studious and learned man, and author of a famous old book on natural history. He was staying on shore with his sister; and as he sat in his study, she called him out to see a strange cloud which had been hanging for some time over the top of Mount Vesuvius. Is was in shape just like a pine tree; not, of course, like one of our branching Scotch firs here, but like an Italian stone pine, with a long straight stem, and a flat, parasol-shaped top. Sometimes it was blackish, sometimes spotted; and the good Admiral Pliny, who always curious about natural science, ordered his cutter, and went away across the bay to see what it could be. Earthquake shocks had been very common for the last few days; but I do not suppose that Pliny had any notion that the earthquakes and the cloud had aught to do with each other. However, he soon found out that they had, and to his cost. When he got near the opposite shore some of the sailors met him and entreated him to turn back. Cinders and pumice-stones were falling down from the sky, and flames breaking out of the mountain above. But Pliny would go on; he said that if the people were in danger, it was his duty to help them; and that he must see this strange cloud, and note down the different shapes into which it changed. But the hot ashes fell faster and faster; the sea ebbed out suddenly, and left them nearly dry, and Pliny turned away to a place called Stabæ, to the house of his friend Pomponianus, who was just going to escape in a boat. Brave Pliny told him not to be afraid, ordered his bath like a true Roman gentleman, and then went in to dinner with a cheerful face. Flames came down from the mountain, nearer and nearer as the night drew on. But Pliny persuaded his friends that they were only fires in some villages from which the peasants had fled, and then went to bed and slept soundly. However in the middle of the night they found the court yard being fast filled with cinders, and, if they had not woken up the Admiral in time, he would never have been able to get out of the house. The earthquake shocks grew stronger and fiercer, till the house was ready to fall; and Pliny and his friend, and the sailors and the slaves, all fled into the open fields, amid showers of stones and cinders, tying pillows over their heads to prevent their being beaten down.

The day had come by this time, but not the dawn, for it was still pitch dark as night. They went down to their boats on the shore, but the sea raged so horribly, that there was no getting on board of them. Then Pliny grew tired, and made his men spread a sail for him, and he lay down on it. But there came down on them a rush of flames, and a horrible smell of sulphur, and all ran for their lives. Some of the slaves tried to help the Admiral upon his legs, but he sank down again, overpowered

with the brim-stone fumes, and so was left behind. When they came back again, there he lay dead; but with his clothes in order, and his face as quiet as if he had been only sleeping. And that was the end of a brave and learned man, a martyr to duty and to the love of science.

But what was going on in the meantime? Under the cloud of ashes, cinders, mud, and lava, three of those happy cities were buried at once. Herculaneum, Pompeii, Stabæ. They were buried just as the people had fled from them, leaving the furniture and the earthenware, even often jewels and gold, behind, and here and there among them, a human being who had not had time enough to escape from the dreadful deluge of dust. The ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii have been dug into since, and the paintings, especially in the city of Pompeii, are found upon the walls still fresh, preserved from the air by the ashes which had covered them in. When you are older, you, perhaps, will go to Naples, and see in its famous museum the curiosities which have been dug out of the ruined cities; and you will walk, I suppose, along the streets of Pompeii, and see the wheel tracks in the pavement, along which carts and chariots rumbled two thousand years ago. Meanwhile if you go nearer home—to the Crystal Palace, and to the Pompeian Court, as it is called—you will see an exact model of one of these old buried houses, copied even to the very paintings on the walls, and judge for yourself, as far as a little boy can judge what sort of life these thoughtless, luckless people lived two thousand years ago. And what had become of Vesuvius, the treacherous mountain? Half or more than half of the side of the old crater had been blown away; and what was left, which is now called the Monte Somma, stands in a half circle round the new cone and new crater, which is burning at this very day.

True, after that eruption which killed Pliny, Vesuvius fell asleep again, and did not awake for one hundred and thirty-four years, and then again for two hundred and sixty-nine years; but it has been growing more and more restless as the ages have passed on, and now hardly a year passes without its sending out smoke and stones from its crater, and streams of lava from its sides.—Good Words for the Young.

FINISHED AND FOLDED UP.

"There, that is finished and folded up, and I am heartily glad," said Bertha, as she took off her little silver thimble and laid on the table a pretty blue muslin dress on which she had been busy for several days.

"Is it well done, too?" asked practical Aunt Mabel.

"Pretty well done for me, Auntie; mother says I improve in dressmaking."

"That is encouraging. Now, Bertha, do you know that something else of yours is also finished and folded up this evening?"

"What else can it be, Aunt Mabel? This is the only piece of work I have had about this week, unless it is that tidy. I do not expect to see the end of that these six weeks."

"Still you have finished and folded up something far more important than your tidy or your dress even—something that will not be unfolded again for ages perhaps; and yet you will surely see it again with every line and fold. Your day's record is done, and gone from your keeping. You may remodel the dress if it does not please you, but you cannot change one jot or tittle of the day's record."

Aunt Mabel had the fashion of dropping these seed-thoughts, which often grew into strong, vigorous plants in young hearts.

"What has the record been?" asked Bertha, of her own heart, as she thoughtfully laid away the blue muslin. As little by little she tried to go over the hours, there was much she would gladly have changed if she could.—Exchange.

A WORD ON READING.

"We boys love stories." Of course you do. I like them myself, but the danger is that, with such a multitude of exciting, sensational ones as are sold now-a-days, you will read nothing but stories. And that would be "paying dear" for the whistle, would it not? If for the sake of books that have not the slightest foundation in truth, nor, indeed, in the probable, written only to amuse, not more than a single grain of wheat hidden in a whole page of chaff, you lose all relish for a higher and better style of reading, you do yourself a grievous wrong.

I am not condemning you to dry dull books. Indeed I am not. My own young days are not so far away but I know quite well what you want. But only think of the books that are waiting to take you all over this great world of ours; up into the arctic seas; down below the equator, showing you all the strange forms of life in those tropical regions; into the depths of the sea, and pointing out the still stranger forms of life there; whole volumes of travel and adventure, that will add to your stock of knowledge, as well as enlist your eager interests; and histories without end, that will charm you like a fairy tale, if you only give them a chance; taking you through, not the world merely, but through the past centuries, showing the grand discoveries and dreadful struggles which have made the world what it is now.

Then think of the stirring tales of real heroes, who have fought the battles of life and came off conquerors; have struggled through a boyhood of poverty and trial and temptation into a noble, resolute manhood. Isn't there enough in such examples as these to interest? Doesn't it set your blood tingling to think what others have done and what you may do?

Now a word about the newspapers. I always feel hopeful of a boy who reads habitually the daily or weekly papers. I set all such down for life, wide-awake boys, when I see them taking such an interest in the current news of the day.

But I wait first until I see to what part of the paper they turn most eagerly. If, as the sheet is unfolded, they run over the telegraph column to find out what is passing in other countries, as well as in our own, then I know that there is an intelligent interest. Their ears have been open to the discussions among the older members of the family, and the mind has been at work, too. There is no excuse for ignorance now. When all the nations of the earth are knocking at each other's doors, we may learn what we will.

If I see the eye brighten over some noble deed of charity to the poor and suffering, then I am glad, for I know there is a generous spark down in their own hearts that shall yet kindle into a flame of its own, and gladden others some day with other noble deeds.

But if I see them with eager interest reading the horrible details of crime and murders, hope dies out of my heart, and I turn away with real pain. It is a crying evil of our day, this publishing in such minuteness these loathsome details of crime. I see no end or purposes of justice to be answered by it, but only fearful harm. Your young hearts should turn in instant recoil from such brutal tales.

Boys! if the public journal, that should be a school of better morals, spreads this snare before you, do not walk into it. It will blunt all your finer feelings, and familiarize your mind with forms of cruelty and sin that otherwise you would never come in contact with. Every one knows that anything made familiar to the mind loses half its deformity. Never suffer yourself to read one of these articles. If your eye catches the startling heading, pass it instantly by. Do not fill that mind of yours, which should be all manly and noble, with these dreadful pictures of sin and guilt.

I have said nothing about those poisonous books—low and vulgar—that sometimes find their way secretly into some boy's pocket. I trust there is no need to caution you against these. Never, never, read anything you would blush to have your mother or sister see. Read! But pray be careful what you read.—Heath and Home.

BOYS ON THE FARM.

Say what you will about the general uselessness of boys, it is my impression that a farm without a boy would very soon come to grief. What the boy does is the life of the farm. He is the factotum, always in demand, always expected to do the thousand indispensable things that nobody else will do. Upon him fall all the odds and ends, the most difficult things. After everybody else is through, he has to finish up. His work is like a woman's—perpetually waiting on others. Everybody knows how much easier it is to eat a good dinner than it is to wash the dishes afterward. Consider what a boy on a farm is required to do; things that must be done, or life would actually stop.—C. D. Warner, in Work and Play.

No man ever offended his own conscience, but first or last it was revenged upon him for it.—South.