

Youths' Department.

Lessons for 1871.

THE WORDS OF JESUS.

SUNDAY, JULY 16TH, 1871.

The Rich Fool.—Luke xii. 13-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."—vs. 15.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—Luke xvi. 19-31; Jas. iv. 13-17; Psalm xlix.

For what did our last lesson teach us to pray? xi. 13. Against what does our lesson to-day teach us to guard? vs. 15. Will not the answer to that prayer keep us from this sin?

What favor was asked of Christ? vs. 13. By whom? What is meant by dividing the inheritance? What, think you, prompted this request? Was it refused? vs. 14. Can you see good reason why Christ should have given such an answer? See John xviii. 36; ix. 39.

What lesson does Christ draw from the incident? vs. 15. What is covetousness? 1 Tim. vi. 10. Repeat the commandment which forbids it. Ex. xx. 17. What is meant by a man's life not consisting in the abundance of his possessions? Is covetousness a sin to which there is great temptation? Is it confined to any one age or class?

What is said of the rich man's grounds? vs. 16. What did he decide to do? vs. 17, 18. With what hope? vs. 19. What did God say? vs. 20. What is meant by requiring the soul? State the points of contrast between the man's thought of himself and God's thought of him.

What is the lesson of the parable? vs. 21. What is it to be rich toward God? Jas. ii. 5. Are these riches denied to any? Isa. lv. 1. Are you laying up treasure in heaven, or are you "treasuring up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath"?

SUMMARY.—The rich fool: he whose wealth is money in the hand, instead of grace in the heart.

ANALYSIS.—The Rich Fool.—I. In the History.—1. The interview, vs. 13, 14. 2. The lesson, vs. 15.

II. In the Parable.—1. The parable, vs. 16-20. (a) The success. (b) The decision. (c) The summons. 2. Its import, vs. 21.

EXPOSITION.—The last lesson taught us to pray for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was likened to bread which supports life, to wholesome food, which builds up a sound life, to a father's good gifts, the sum of them. This has the same idea of a true life. The writers of Scripture do not throw their materials together loosely, as one throws rubbish into a heap. They build, and that both compactly and with beauty.

The applicant.—"One of the company"; a chance hearer. The father had died. The sons could not agree about the division of property.

The favor sought.—To have the inheritance divided to suit him. The word "inheritance" usually denotes a landed estate handed down from parent to children. So here, as appears from the parable following, doubtless a large inheritance. According to Mosaic law, it "was to be divided among the sons, the eldest receiving a double portion (Deut. xxi. 17), the others equal shares. He wished to bring Christ's influence to bear on his brother, in his interest. It seems that he only wanted his due.

The reply is quite like that given to Moses. Ex. ii. 14. The form of the question indicates reproof. The answer also shows why Christ refused. "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Yours is purely an affair of civil law. There are courts and law officers. Your business is with them, not me. My work is not earthly but heavenly. He thus keeps church and state apart, as his ministers since ought to have done, and gives to each its due place and honor. Matt. xxii. 21. This, however, is not so meant as to deny Paul's principle in 1 Cor. vi. 1-6.

Covetousness is extremely prevalent. It takes on many forms, and is the mainspring of much enterprise, is not a bad repute, and yet is sin, dire and deadly. It makes self the great centre, disregards God and mankind, is a blind, stupid crime against heaven and conscience. Illustrate; show its folly. It is a root sin; 1 Tim. vi. 10; a root of pride, arrogance, envy, injustice, strife, murder, war, etc., etc. Distinguish it from desire of property for lawful purposes.

Take heed and beware.—Of such a sin. Property is the ready means to gratify a thousand natural desires, e. g., of power, influence, ease, etc. To stand against these and the like temptations, requires that we "take heed and beware."

Life here does not mean merely the

opposite of natural death, but is used to denote true life, well-being. Thus often elsewhere: Psalm xxx. 5; John i. 4; vi. 47; Rom. vii. 10. This truth, simple, vast, plain, but often forgotten, has been proved by how many a miserable rich man. Still, not riches, not even the desire for riches, is condemned, but trust in them, Mark x. 24, and a selfish desire for them.

The parable.—Christ with like ease and clearness shows the inner life of a rich man or a beggar, of a saint or a sinner, the peculiar character and workings of any given vice or virtue. His word is a perfect mirror, in which to see reflected the inmost thoughts of the heart, and how would many a man, now quite at ease, start back with horror and surprise if he would look closely into this parable till he saw in it himself, as he is, and as he is to be.

Wealth increasing.—The man in the parable had become rich in lands and cattle. The parable is aimed at covetousness exclusively, and has all the more force if the rich man be supposed honest, a thrifty, upright, fair-minded business man, like many of our best farmers, merchants, bankers, manufacturers.

The decision.—"What shall I do?" His only perplexity, and that not a great one, rises from abundance, not want. Of course, he must house his crops. What else is to be done? The barns are too small. Down with them. Up with bigger ones. That old philosophy "Every man for himself" is not dead yet. It is hell's science and heaven's abhorrence.

The hope.—Not a miser's, viz., to hoard, and hoard, and keep hoarding, never use. Not that; no such mean, niggardly, contemptible idea as that. "Live while you live." "Get the good of your own money." "Enjoy life." Such are the maxims. Early life's great ambition is attained. "Success."—Now with a "competency" he can "retire from business." To his soul, i. e., himself, he says, "Now, soul, self, enough, done with worry and work; rest now, rest from the money-chase."

"After the battle, the spoils." "Eat, drink, and be merry." Why not? Want and care behind, every wish shall be sated, for "the good time coming" is the good time come. Such was the hope. Was? Rather is, for we know it best as a thing of to-day. Delightful, but delusive. Beautiful, but blind and brutish. It forgets conscience, mercy, right, heaven, hell, God. It sees earth only, and to earth cleaves. It looks not into the skies, and spreads no wings for a heavenward flight. It stands square and defiant against the command to look not at the seen, but at the unseen.

The summons.—"God said." The man forgot God, but God forgot not the man. The soul was "required." The word in the Greek means "demanded," or "demanded back" with authority, by right, with the use of force when needed. How well the word suits its place here. How it flashes out the picture of the man clinging to earth as his all, but torn and dragged by power and right from his all. No committing of the spirit to God, and calling on Jesus to receive it. Psalm xxxi. 5; Acts vii. 59.

The contrast.—The man's thought of himself and God's thought of him, stand one over against the other in sharpest contrast at many points. The lesson stands out all the parable through. But Christ repeats it, for we must not miss it. "True riches." (Luke xvi. 11) are "riches of Christ's grace." Eph. i. 7.

ILLUSTRATION.—There in a room was a man that could look no way but downward, with a muck-rake in his hand. There stood also one over his head with a crown in his hand, and proffered him that crown for his muck-rake; but the man did neither look up nor regard, but raked to himself the straws, the small sticks, and dust of the floor. It is to show that heaven is but a fable to some, and that things here are counted the only things substantial.—Pilgrim's Progress.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Recite.—Scripture Catechism, 311, 312.

ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS.

13. If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians iii. 29.

14. Here are examples of using God's promises in prayer: Gen xxxii. 9-12. "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal with thee. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brothers, from the hand of Esau, for I

fear him. . . And thou saidst I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Ex. xxxii. 12, 13. "Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven." etc. 1 Kings viii. 25, 26.

"Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel. . . And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father."

15. Examples of past mercies encouraging to future expectation of good: Ps. xxxii. 5, 6. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found."

Isa. lv. 2. "O thou that hearest prayer, to thee shall all flesh come." cxvi. 1, 2. "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

16. The modes of sowing rice is described in:

Eccles. xi. 1. "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." Isaiah xxxii. 20. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass."

SCRIPTURE ENIGMA. NO. LIX.

What ruler of the Jews did Paul baptize? Who saw a man of God to glory rise? Who fell'd a bough to fire a city tow'r? Who with great skill could speak of tree and flow'r?

What Hebrew bore a gift to Moab's king? From whence did Solomon much treasure bring? Whose threshing-floor stood on the temple's site? Whose men did swear their king should no more fight?

Who forty years' repose for Israel gained? What Moabitish king o'er them then reigned? What queen in royal house a feast did make? Who from a husband fond a wife did take?

Whose worldly choice became to him a snare, And says with warning voice to us, 'Beware? You'll solve my rhyme whatever may be your age,

If well you search the Bible's sacred page: Name after name must its initial give, And if you heed the text your soul shall live.

TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD.

Said a young man to his Christian mother one day: "In a few months I shall be twenty-one, and then I shall not go to church and Sunday-school, as I have all these years, to obey and please you. Their services are empty and dull to me, I do not care for them."

The mother replies: "I shall at least have the satisfaction of having tried to do my duty as a Christian parent."

A few weeks after this conversation, the young man came to his mother and said, "I have some news to tell you, mother: I have just had a letter from Harry Brown, and he writes that he trusts he has become a Christian and loves the Saviour; only think of that for Harry Brown. Why he was as wild as I am;" and with a low long whistle, he left his mother and went to his own room.

Nothing more was said on the subject for some weeks, when one day the quick joyous step of the young man was heard coming down the stairs. As he passed through the hall to the sitting room, his mother caught the sound of her favorite hymn,

"Jesus, lover of my soul." Surprised that these words should come from her son's lips, she looked up to meet his beaming eyes and happy face.

"Mother dear," he exclaimed, "I have some good news to tell you."

"I should know that, Edward, by your countenance; what is it, my boy?"

"O mother, I hope I too am a Christian, and love the blessed Jesus."

The mother's heart, too full for utterance at this unexpected intelligence, could only express itself in tears of holy joy.

"Why, mother dear, you are crying; I thought this would please you best of all the news in the world."

"Oh, my son, it is the most joyful news, but joy brings tears as well as sorrow; these are most blessed tears. Tell me, Edward, all about this glorious and wonderful news. You are so gay and bright, do you comprehend this important step?"

"Mother, why should I be gloomy and sad? I am in a new world of light and love. I have taken God at his word. He promises forgiveness to those who confess their sins. I do feel sorry for all my past neglect of my Lord and Saviour. I do repent of sin against such great light and knowledge, and I want to be washed and made clean by Him who 'taketh away the sin of the world.'"

"Last night in my room I tried to find Jesus. He seemed far away. I opened my Bible, so long uncared for, and sought comfort there. At last I found this verse, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;' and on my knees, dear mother, with my finger on this dear promise, I told my Heavenly Father all my sins, and my desire for forgiveness and cleansing. Then the Saviour seemed to say to me, 'Be of good cheer thy sins are forgiven thee.' With this promise in my heart, I went to sleep, and this morning, mother, as I told you, I feel as if I were in a new world. Everything is praising God. I woke to hear the earliest song of the birds, and I said to myself, the birds are singing, 'Glory to God in the highest.' The sun just rising chased away the darkness, and for the first time in my life my heart, so cold and dark, was warmed and lighted by this 'Sun of Righteousness.' This was joy and happiness such as I had never known. Now I am free indeed, free to render to Him who died for me, the loving service of my new life."

Blessed experience! with the faith of a little child to take God at his word.

THE SWEARING PARROT.

Two friendly neighbors bought each of them a parrot. That of Mrs. A. was a bird of grave deportment, who had been taught to speak very proper words. That of Mrs. B. was an impious fellow, for his language abounded in bad words. Now, Mrs. B. felt quite shocked at the irreverent talk of her parrot, and prevailed on her friend to allow the grave parrot to pay a visit to the swearer, in the hope of reclaiming the rogue by good example. The two birds stayed together for about a month; but imagine the consternation of good Mrs. A., on the return of her more grave and decorous bird, to hear him swearing terribly. The fact is, that, instead of teaching, he had been learning, and from that sad day, his language was as bad as that of his scapegrace associate.

Let all our scholars learn from this that although they have never been guilty of profaneness, nor of speaking foul and unclean words, yet if they keep company with wicked boys who delight in swearing they will soon be likely to indulge in profane language; for "evil communications corrupt good manners."

WHAT A PAIR OF SLIPPERS DID FOR INDIA.

A TRUE STORY.

It is a sultry afternoon in India. The wife of a Missionary sits quietly plying her needle with busy fingers, gradually bringing to completion a pair of slippers she was working for her husband. Although the pattern is so intricate, and the execution so skillful that they would seem to demand all her attention, her mind is rather occupied with thoughts about the multitude of high-born women in that land of roses, whose condition is worse than that of convicts in our state prisons. Many and many a time has she endeavored to do something for them, but as often has she been repulsed. She had hoped that when the young men who had been educated in the Mission schools grew up, she might have influence with them, and through them gain her end. She had laboured with them faithfully, but all in vain. The force of what she urged upon them they acknowledged. They felt that it was desirable for their wives to be educated, but were powerless to help them. The iron chairs of ancient custom, the grinding tyranny of religious superstition, the machinery of domestic red-tapeism, thwarted their efforts and destroyed their hopes. And now almost despairing of ever accomplishing her noble desire, she had committed their interests to

THE MOTHER'S DYING WISH.

The following exquisite verse is taken from a Haytian manuscript, and is certainly a sublime expression of a mother's unselfish devotion. The translation is literal, as taken from the original in French, which is headed, "Last wish of a mother."

"Oh, God," she faintly said, upon her dying bed,

"If I have followed Thy divine behest, As my entire reward, grant this request— Make me the angel guardian of my babe when dead."

the God she loved and served, praying to Him to open a door for the relief of these domestic captives. And so she sits busily working, fast completing the gift she designs for him she loves; rejoicing and thanking God that her lot has been so blessed, that she is enabled to aid her husband in his work—that she is permitted to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free, untrammelled by false religion and social propriety.

The last stitch is taken, and she is resting with a quiet contentment in regard to her own condition and in fancy dwelling on the comfort her little gift will afford her husband, when the door opens, and in walks a Babu, or native gentleman, one of her former pupils. He picks up the slippers, and is lost in admiration. Their bright colors attract him, the skill manifested in their execution is something surprising. He had never seen their like before. And a woman made them, worked them out, "stitch by stitch, and did it with that marvellous, magical instrument, the needle!"

"Babu, would you not like your wife to learn how to make you a pair of slippers?" The thought flashes through her mind like an inspiration from on high, "If you will let me, I will come and teach her."

The idea takes him. She lends him the slippers, and he hurries away to his home. The slippers are shown from one to another. The story is told of their being made by a woman, and by means of a little instrument they have never seen, and of whose virtues they were utterly ignorant. Curiosity gets the better of superstition, ambition of custom. "Could they learn? Was it possible for them to make anything so beautiful? Why not let the despised Christian woman come to them? The pollution they could efface by the appropriate ceremonies, and how pleasant it would be for them to have something to occupy their time, something beautiful in itself!"

So they talk it over, this one's mother-in-law with that one's mother-in-law, and so on until the consent of all has been gained, even of the wife of the old patriarch of the family, whose will is the ultimate law respecting everything that transpires in the zenana, or woman's apartment. The missionary lady is invited to come and teach the ladies in that house, and soon they have solved the mysteries and become familiar with the power of the inscrutable needle. Quick to learn, they soon have achieved results which do credit to their teaching and their skill.

Babu So-and-So takes the pair of slippers his wife has embroidered, and shows them with justifiable pride to Babu Thus-and-So. He in turn shows them to the ladies in his house, and they know they can learn just as well as the ladies in Babu So-and-So's zenana, so why not let the missionary lady come and teach them? She is invited; she comes; they learn quickly; and so the work spreads. A pair of slippers has been the instrument of letting in a ray of light upon thousands who for ages had been sitting in the darkness of the shadow of death.

Considered merely in the light of a social reform it commends itself to our sympathy and interests. To give some little occupation, higher than the menial duties which have hitherto engrossed all their time, to those who naturally are the peers in mental power and physical beauty, of the most favored ladies in the world, is itself enough to enlist the zeal and aid of all. But that is the least that is accomplished. Along with the fancy work, the Missionary teaches these poor women how to read, and tells them the attractive stories and the cheering promises of the Bible. The truth of God has made its power felt in the midst of these old superstitions, and the desire to know how to work a pair of slippers has in some cases not been fully satisfied till the feet of the scholar have been taught to walk in the way of holiness.

A CHILD'S HYMN.

I am a very little child; I'm very young and very wild, And sometimes naughty too; I'm led by many a foolish thought To do the things I never ought To think of, or to do.

But God the holy God above, Is very kind and full of love For little one like me; And He will hear me if I pray, And He will help me every day A better child to be.

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