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HERMAN H. PITTS.

If I Were a Man.

If I were a sailor across the blue seas,
American, German, whatever you please;
Of whatever nation, or people, or clan,
I'd hoist my true colors, if I were a man,
Be certain I would, if I were a man.

If I were a Christian, of whatever church,
I never would give my religion the lurch;
Whatever its doctrines, its creed, or its plan,
I'd live by my colors, if I were a man,
Wherever I was, if I were a man.

If I were in politics up to my throat
Nobody should question or bid for my vote,
I'd march straight ahead, with the best of
the van,
I'd follow my colors, if I were a man,
Clear through to the front, if I were a man.

I never would wait for a moment to guess
What party was likely to win, more or less?
By choosing the right way, as any one can,
I'd stand by my colors, if I were a man.
As long as life lasted, if I were a man.
—The Prohibition Speaker.

The Great Master.

"I am my own master!" cried a young man proudly, when a friend tried to persuade him from an enterprise which he had on hand: "I am my own master!"

"Did you ever consider what a responsible post that is?" asked the friend.

"Responsibility—is it?"

"A master must lay out work he wants done, and see that it is done right. He should try to secure the best ends by the best means. He must keep on the lookout against obstacles and accidents, and watch that everything goes straight, else he will fail."

"Well!"

"To be master of yourself you have your conscience to keep clear, your heart to cultivate, your temper to govern, your will to direct, and your judgment to instruct. You are master over a hard lot, and if you don't master them, they will master you."

"That is so," answered the young man.

"Now, I could undertake no such thing," said his friend; "I should fail sure, if I did. Saul wanted to be his own master, and failed. Herod did. Judas did. No man is fit for it. 'One man is master, even Christ.' I work under God's direction. When he is master all goes right."—Dr. Bacon.

The Rank and File.

If we could draw back the curtains of the millenium and look in, we should see not a Hercules here and there standing on the world-wasting monsters he had killed, but a world full of men, each with an arm of moderate muscle but each triumphant over his own little piece of the obstinacy of earth or the ferocity of the brutes. It seems as if the heroes had done almost all for the world that they can do, and not much more can come till common men awake and take their common tasks. I do believe the common man's task is the hardest. The hero has the hero's aspiration that lifts him to his labors. All great duties are easier than little ones, though they cost far more blood and agony. There is a truth we all find out. And this is part of the reason why we make allowance for our poor friend in the parable. But if we look at it in a higher way, surely we may come to feel that the very certainty that the world must be saved by the faithfulness of commonplace people is what is needed to rescue such people from commonplaceness in their own eyes, and clothe their lives with the dignity which they seem so woefully to lack, and which, if any man does not see somewhere shining through the rusty texture of his life, he cannot live it well.—Phillips Brooks.

The Grandest Motive to Holiness.

It has been said that if we tell men that good works cannot save them, but that Jesus saves the guilty who believe in him, we take away all motives for morality and holiness. We meet that with a direct denial; it is not so; we supply the grandest motive possible, and only remove a vicious and feeble motive. We take away from man the idea of performing good works in order to salvation, because it is a lie; good works will not save a sinner, nor is he able to perform them if they could save him.

But when we tell men, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," if they exercise faith they are saved; and being saved, there grows up in their hearts gratitude to God, and from this springs a living desire to serve God on account of what he has done; and this motive is not only very powerful, but it is very pure, because the man does not then serve God with a view to self, but it serves him out of love; and works done out of love to God are the good works possible to men.—Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

A holy life has a voice; it speaks when the tongue is silent, and is either a constant attraction or perpetual reproof.

The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Third Quarter-Lesson IV. — July 26.

CHRIST AND NICODEMUS.
—John 3:1-17.

GOLDEN TEXT.—For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—John 3:16.

This is the first of the eleven discourses of our Lord.

THE RELIGIOUS INQUIRER.—Vers. 1, 2. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus. All we know of him is recorded by John. He was a Pharisee. The strictest and most religious sect of the Jews, who believed in a future state, and were looking for the Messiah, whom they expected to be a temporal deliverer and king. A ruler of the Jews. He belonged to the Sanhedrin, a body of about seventy men, whose position was dignified and much respected. He was a religious teacher, and belonged to that branch of the council which represented the learned class of the nation. Tradition says he was a man of great wealth and a rigid observer of the Pharisaic forms.

His Later Life. Twice, later on, we obtain a glimpse of Nicodemus. After this interview he seems to have become a secret disciple, or at least strongly inclined to accept of Jesus as the Messiah; he defended Jesus before the Sanhedrin, a year or so after this interview at the crucifixion he came out boldly as the disciple of Jesus. The same came to Jesus. This was probably during the Passover week. He had seen Jesus, and was questioning whether he might not be the Messiah, and so came to learn. Came by night. The reason generally assumed is fear of the Jews. The night might have been the only opportunity for such an interview as he desired. Then he would not commit himself as a follower till he was assured that he was really the Messiah. It is well to note that his going at all implies strength of character, unprejudiced desire for the truth, and honesty of purpose. And said unto him, Rabbi; i. e., master or lord. We know that thou art a teacher come from God. So much they were assured of, but whether he was the Messiah or some inferior prophet. For no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with them. Jesus had not only cleansed the Temple, but wrought other miracles.

JESUS ANSWERED. Verily, Verily. Truly and certainly, laying great emphasis on the truth of the saying to follow. Except a man (any one) be born again. Either anew, or from above. Nicodemus impliedly asks to know what new doctrine Christ has to teach; Christ replies in substance that the world needs not doctrine, but new life. He cannot see the kingdom of God. A new spiritual life is necessary, not only to enter into, but even to form any correct conception of, the kingdom of God. Christ's answer is equivalent to, "It is not learning, but life, that is wanted for Messiah's kingdom, and life must begin by birth." The kingdom of God. Nicodemus had the common expectation of an outward kingdom, to which all Jews would belong. Christ gives him an entirely new conception. The kingdom of God is that condition or state where God reigns as king, where he is the supreme object of love and service, where his will is the law, and men obey it as naturally as they breathe, and where all his subjects are formed in his holy image, and inspired with his spiritual life. Nicodemus saith, How can a man be born when he is old? How is it possible? How can he undo, or do away with, the result which years have brought and which goes to form himself? Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit. The Jewish proselyte, as a sign that he put off his old faiths, was baptized on entering the Jewish church. John the Baptist, employing the same symbolic rite, baptized Jew as well as Gentile, as a sign of purification by repentance from past sins. Nicodemus, then, would certainly have understood by Christ's expression, "born of water," a reference to a new spiritual life. The declaration, then, is that no man can enter the kingdom of God except by (1) a public acknowledgment and confession of sin, a public putting off of the old man and entering into the new; and (2) a real vital change of life and character wrought by the Spirit of God in the heart of the believer. By the one act he enters into the visible and eternal kingdom; by the other, into the spiritual and invisible kingdom.

The new birth is not a constitutional change, the impartation of

new faculties. It is a greater change, a change of character; the supreme inclination of the affections is changed. A converted man thinks, reasons, remembers, imagines, now; and he did all these before conversion. A regenerate heart feels, desires, loves, hates, now; and it did all these before. But the chief subjects of thought, of love, of hatred, are changed; they are revolutionized. It is the most radical change of which human character is susceptible. It is a change from sin to holiness.

THE SOURCE OF SALVATION.—Vers. 6-8. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Jesus now lays down the great principle of God's universe on which his doctrine of the new birth is based, namely, "like produces like." Animal life produces animal life. Whenever it is raised to a higher kingdom, it is by importation from the kingdom above it. So it is that that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Spiritual life in us must come to us from God's spiritual life. Marvel not. Ye must be born of the Spirit. The e is no escape from this law. It would be as easy to change the law of gravitation. The wind bloweth. The term for "wind" in Hebrew and Aramaic, as well as in Greek, was also the term for "spirit." Accordingly, it is possible to translate the Spirit breathe. The translation then would be "the Spirit breatheth where he willeth, and thou hearest his voice." Where it listeth (pleaseth) i. e. according to its own laws. Thou hearest the sound thereof, etc. You see the results, but you cannot tell the causes which are beyond our reach. We know the facts, though we cannot see the methods. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. The Spirit's methods we cannot know. But the facts of the new life are as plain and certain as that the strong wind bends the forest trees. We may not know the day when we are born again, but we may know the fact by the fruits.

THE TEACHER'S AUTHORITY.—Vers. 9-13. Nicodemus answered. How can these things be? He is sobered by the moral power of the Lord, and asks for clearer light. Art thou a master of Israel, the teacher distinguished by thy learning? And knowest not these things? These words express surprise, and possibly a rebuke. One who had studied the Old Testament as he had and thought so much, ought to have known these things. We speak that we do know, etc. We, i. e., Jesus, and the Father and the Holy Spirit. Some think that Jesus includes with himself John the Baptist, whose testimony Nicodemus may have rejected. And ye receive not our witness. Ye Jews, the nation. If I have told you earthly things, those which can be seen and experienced on the earth, as the new birth and its fruits. And ye believe not. Will not accept and practice these teachings. How shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? If you cannot trust my word in matters you can verify, how can you trust my testimony as to things you cannot verify by your own experience? Heavenly things are those truths which could not be learned without a revelation from heaven. And no man hath ascended, etc. No living person has gone to heaven, and seen what is there, and come back to report the facts to us. But he that came down. This refers to fact that Christ had been in heaven, and so was qualified to reveal what was there. It implies the pre-existence and supernatural character and origin of Jesus Christ. Even the Son of man. This phrase in all four Gospels is used by Christ himself of himself upwards of 80 times in all. The "Son of man" is the true representative of humanity, not only God, but a real man; the ideal man showing what man may become. Which is in heaven. His home is in heaven. As God he is in heaven, while he is man on earth.

THE WAY INTO THE KINGDOM.—Vers. 14-17. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. The reference here is to the event recorded in Num. 21:4-9. Even so, must the Son of man be lifted up. This refers to the exaltation of Jesus on the cross. That whosoever believeth. Accept with the heart the words of Jesus, so as to forsake sin and take him as teacher and master. Should not perish. There is no escape from ruin and punishment, except by escape from sin, and forgiveness from God. But have eternal life. Eternal life is the life which endures beyond the grave, and grows fuller and richer as the ages roll on. It is a present possession of the Christian, and does not begin with the world to come. It is more than mere endless existence. It implies blessedness, fulness, joy, glad activity. For God so loved. The emphasis is on the so. The proof and measure of this love is in what follows. So loved the world.