

Youth's Department.

BIBLE LESSONS.

Sunday, February 5th, 1865.

LUKE xiii. 1-18: Parable of the barren fig tree.
2 SAMUEL i. 1-16: David learns that Saul is dead.
Recite—JOHN xv. 1-15.

Sunday, February 12th, 1865.

LUKE xiii. 18-35: Parables of the mustard seed and leaven. 2 SAMUEL i. 17-27: David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan.
Recite—ISAIAH liii. 10, 11, 12.

Who was the wisest man?

A chaplain was passing from Agra to Calcutta. On his way he called at a mission station. The missionary there was very anxious that he should pay a visit to his school. "O, with great pleasure," said the chaplain, and away they went together. The chaplain was thus introduced, not to a school in one of the great cities of the Indian Empire, but to a purely country school. "Now," said the missionary to the chaplain, "these little fellows have read their Bible, and I should like to catechize them, just to test their acquaintance with Bible history and facts." Well, the chaplain thought he would put a very simple question, and asked, "Who was the wisest man that ever lived?" I have put that question in this country, and the reply has generally been "Solomon." The chaplain, no doubt, thought the reply would be "Solomon," but a little fellow in the class very carefully and thoughtfully answered—"Jesus Christ, sir." The chaplain was immediately on the horns of a dilemma, and knew not what to do, and to save himself rolled the burden of the proof on the little boy who had given the answer. "How do you prove that?" he said. "O," said the little boy, "I can prove it, sir." "How?" "Well, it is written, 'God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him.'" "Capital!" said the chaplain, astonished at the reply. In order to test the quick-wittedness and independent thought of the pupils still further, he said, "Can any of you give me another proof?" "Yes, sir," said another little fellow in the school, "I can. It is written, 'No man ever spake like this man!'"—*Makepeace.*

A word to Young Men.

There is a sad lack of earnestness among young men. To dress, smoke, talk twaddle and slang, and frequent places of amusement, seem with many to be the chief end of life. And even among those who profess religion, the time frittered away and mispent is something painful to estimate. The hours that might be devoted to useful study or active labor for Christ are spent in desultory reading, aimless sauntering through the streets, or shallow, profitless conversation. Some excuse their idleness by quoting the worn-out illustration of the bent-bow, and say, "they must have recreation." Recreation is necessary, but let it be of the right sort. We have a profound belief in the old adage, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." But when Jack plays let him play sensibly and in good earnest. We understand recreation to be the creating afresh of mental and physical power, and we have yet to learn that this end is attained by reading sensational literature, engaging in empty talk, or becoming deeply interested in questionable amusements. Young men, life was given you for other things than these. That wondrous nature, with its soaring hopes and depressing fears, its godlike intellect and deep instincts of immortality, is too valuable to be wasted thus. And if any should read this who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God or man, we would say to them, is there no soul to save, no heaven to win, no mind to adorn with beauty, no success to be achieved; are there no human wastes to be reclaimed, no tears to wipe away, no hearts to cheer, no feeble ones to be lifted up and strengthened; is there nothing to be done, that you should cast your manhood away upon trifles, and spend your time in the pursuit of shadows that ever elude your grasp? Assume your true position in the world. Be earnest. Lead the van among the good and true. Grasp the weapon all-true, and battle manfully with the evils that hold the world in thrall. Lay hold upon the strength of God, and labor to bring in the time in which

Each man finds his own in all men's good,
And all men work in noble brotherhood.

Good and Bad Apples.

One day Robert's father saw him playing with some boys who were rude and unmannerly. He had observed for some time change for the worse in his son, and now knew the cause. He was very sorry, but said nothing to Robert at the time. In the evening he brought from the garden six beautiful rosy-cheeked apples, put them on a plate, and presented them to Robert. He was much pleased at his father's kindness and thanked him. "You must lay them aside for a few days, that they may become mellow," said the father. And Robert cheerfully placed the plate with the apples in his mother's store-room. Just as he was putting them aside, his father laid on the plate a seventh apple, which was quite rotten, and desired him to allow it to remain there. "But, father," said Robert, "the rotten apple will spoil all the others."

"Do you think so? Why should not the fresh apples rather make the rotten one fresh?" said his father. And with these words he shut the door of the room.

Eight days afterward he asked his son to open the door and take out the apples. But what a sight presented itself! The six apples, which had been so sound and rosy-cheeked, were now quite rotten, and spread a bad smell through the room.

"Oh, papa!" cried he, "did I not tell you that the rotten apple would spoil the good ones? yet you did not listen to me."

"My boy," said the father, "have I not told you often that the company of bad children will make you bad, yet you do not listen to me. See, in the condition of the apples, that which will happen to you if you keep company with wicked boys."

Robert did not forget the lesson. When any of his former play-fellows asked him to join in their sports, he thought of the rotten apples, and kept himself apart from them.

To the uttermost.

Mrs. M. was an aged woman. For eighty-four years God had spared her, though she was an impatient, hardened sinner. Pious parents from her birth had commended her in faith to God, and with their dying breath prayed that she might meet them in heaven.

Early in life she had imbibed sceptical notions, which she loved to avow. She read her Bible to find difficulties and to make objections. When personally addressed on the subject of religion, she would adroitly turn the conversation to disputed topics, and claim that she could not understand the doctrines of grace. Thus she lived with no fear of God before her eyes, and with no interest in his written and preached word, except as it furnished her with materials for argument and cavilling. Her faculties were unimpaired by age, her mind clear; and but for her repugnance to religion, her society was agreeable.

Two successive ministers of the congregation to which her family belonged, declared her to be the most hopeless individual for whom they labored. They did not, however, neglect her. Often was her pastor found talking pointedly with her until she proposed an argument, when he would read an appropriate portion of Scripture, then pray with her, and go his way. He sometimes despaired of being at all useful to her, but was encouraged when he reflected that her parents had been faithful, that God's people were praying for her conversion, that many texts of Scripture were in her memory, and that one of her household was daily setting her a godly example.

One day, as usual, he called upon her. She seemed the same woman as ever—no penitence, no softness. She remarked, "I can't see anything wrong in what Christians call sin. I see evil in ugliness and the like; but some very good people are always talking about their sins. I can't tell what they mean. The Scripture statements respecting the sin of disobeying God were held up to view, and sin was described to her as 'any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God.' Well, if there is such a thing as religion, I should not object to have it."

"Do you doubt then that there is such a thing as religion?"

"I never saw anybody different after from what they were before they professed to be converted."

"Indeed, that is strange; though much younger than you, I think I have seen many. Is not your son L. a different person from what he once was? Does he not give evidence of a great change?"

"I can't see that he does. He always was a good boy before he was pious, and he is a good son now."

"Do you not feel that you yourself need to be changed in order to meet an infinitely holy God?"

"No, I don't know as I do. I never have done any sin."

After a pause the pastor read a few verses of Scripture, and committed her to God in prayer.

Ten days afterwards he visited her again. But to his surprise he seemed to find a woman not different from Mrs. M.—as far as form was concerned, but with a subdued expression of countenance wonderful to behold. She was bathed in tears, and with sobbing and cries for mercy was begging God to pardon "the chief of sinners." Her pastor sought to comfort her, but she refused his consolations. "Oh, there is, there can be no mercy for me. Such a sinner, such a sinner!"

"But I thought you didn't understand what sin is—that you never sinned. What have you been doing so bad of late?"

"Oh, do not talk so; I have committed the greatest sin than any one can commit."

"Why, what sin is that?"

"Oh, it's rejecting Christ's mercy all these years. Surely he will not save me now."

Jesus was preached to her as "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Heb. vii. 25. It was, however, many days before she could rest upon Christ alone, and believe that he would have anything to do with such a sinner. Prayer was daily made for her and with her. The old elder, her neighbor, whose visits and prayers were once unwelcome, was urged by her to come as often as he could, and all other Christian friends were entreated to pray.

"The worst is," said she, "I have been sinning on and on, and opposing everything good so long; and now I am shut up in this corner, where I can do nothing but come to Christ; and can it be possible that he will receive me when I can do nothing else?"

"Yes, he has promised to save to the uttermost. He ever liveth; he will be your Saviour eternally. He is willing to begin to be your Jesus now. Though aged, you are blessed with clear reason. You can hear and understand his message: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' Acts xvi. 31."

At last light broke in upon her soul. She saw the compassion of Jesus. She received him into her heart, and found all his promises true. Then her prayers were mingled with praises. Since her aged voice had lost its melody, she called upon all about her to sing the praises of her Saviour. In the night she would awake and request this, and on more than one occasion succeeded in having her friends sing "songs in the night." Old hymns long forgotten came back to her memory, and must be searched up and sung. Some of them were found in ancient books, and she repeated them with joy.

Here are important lessons.

1. There is hope even for those whose case seems most hopeless. Never despair for such. Use all the means of grace for them. Read or repeat to them God's word, converse with them tenderly, and pray for them.

2. Let parents train their children for Christ, and in faith commit them to his care. Teach them his word, set before them a godly example, and if you are taken from them, trust in God to make them his own. "I believe," said a dying Christian mother, "that all my children will be converted." And it was in accordance with her faith.

3. The greatest sin is the rejection of Christ's love. Such is the testimony of a conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Ah, sinner, beware! Are you slighting the infinite love of Jesus? Remember it was to bless you that he died, to make you for ever happy, he bowed his head in unutterable anguish. And his power is as mighty as his love. If you believe on him, he can, he will save you. HE IS ABLE TO SAVE THEM TO THE UTMOST THAT COME UNTO GOD BY HIM.—*American Messenger.*

Little Sticks make a Fire.

I once went to visit a newly-married couple in a country village. The bride was a beautiful and intelligent girl, fond of dress, music, painting, and all other graceful things, and what was far more rare, she understood her own household work, and meant to do it. I knew this, and so I went to rest in the fresh new bed with a happy confidence of a good night's sleep and a comfortable breakfast in the morning. Sleep soon came, and daylight followed in due time, but the breakfast was very long in coming. At last the welcome bell was heard; all was right in the drawing-room but the hour-hand of the clock, which would persist in pointing at an hour that made the pretty hostess blush, and over the delicious coffee she told us the cause of the delay. It was no fault of hers; when we once looked at her, we were sure of that. It was simply owing to the fact that her husband had not provided kindling wood, and she had spent a full hour in the attempt to light a fire. After the meal was over—and a capital one it was—she took us to the wood-house, full of large, dry sticks, hard and sound, without a chip or a shaving, or a bit of charcoal, anywhere to be found. There was no ax or hatchet on the premises, and in order to warm the heart of these ungainly blocks of wood, the young wife had only her bright eyes, a box of matches, and the morning paper. Instead of marvelling at the time it took, we were only surprised that the fire had been lighted at all. But when a pair of strong hands, with an ax in them, came to her relief, and one of those large sticks was quickly changed to a score of little ones, it was worth a second breakfast to see her look of content.

Now, children, you know it is love that makes the fireside warm. The house is always cold and cheerless where the people are unkind to each other. And in kindling this home-fire that warms the heart, you, children, are the little sticks. This is what you are good for. Look at the baby in the cradle! He cannot earn his own living; he does not know how to wait upon himself; and yet he is sometimes the most useful member of the family. He makes everybody love him, whether they are willing or not, and his little heart is brimful of love in return. Most people are fond of pets, and like to keep a bird, a dog, a pony, something to love and let love, if they can afford it; but of all pets a child is at once the dearest and the cheapest. Many a family cannot afford any other, but in the very poorest houses you see little white heads around the hearth. They are the little sticks that make it warm.—*Springfield Republican.*

Well answered.

"I will not believe anything but what I understand," said a self-confident young man in a hotel one day.

"Nor will I," said another.

"Gentlemen," said one well known to me, who was on a journey, and who sat close by, "do I understand you correctly, that you will not believe anything that you don't understand?"

"I will not," said one, and so said each one of the trio.

"Well," said the stranger, "in my ride this morning I saw some geese in a field eating grass; do you believe that?"

"Certainly," said the three unbelievers.

"I also saw pigs eating grass; do you believe that?"

"Of course," said the three.

"And I also saw sheep and cows eat grass; do you believe that?"

"Of course," it was again replied.

"Well, but grass which they had formerly eaten had, by digestion, turned to feathers on the backs of the geese, to bristles on the backs of the swine, to wool on the sheep; and on the cows it had turned to hair; do you believe that, gentlemen?"

"Certainly," they replied.

"Yes, you believe it," he rejoined, but do you understand it?"

They were confounded, and silent, and evidently ashamed, as they well might be.

The late Mr. Hudson Gurney's Dog.

One morning, says a correspondent of *The Norwich Argus*, sitting with the deceased gentlemen on business, I heard a pattering of feet behind, and the door silently opened. I turned to see who was listening to us, and the Newfoundland dog quietly entered the room, and, standing in the centre, looked on me coldly, and on his master kindly. "This," said Mr. Hudson, "is one of my most faithful friends; he has come to pay me his usual morning visit." Turning to the dog, he continued, "I am a little better to-day, but not much; one morning you will miss me—I shall be dead." The dog, as though endowed with human instinct, gave a low moan, and advancing to his master, placed his huge paw, with a gentleness that would hardly have crushed a fly, on Mr. Gurney's knee; that done, he raised himself on his hind legs, and placed the other on Mr. Gurney's shoulder, and, licking his face, seemed to pat him on his back with an expression of countenance which almost said, "Come, come, don't be downhearted! You are very bad, but you'll get better by-and-by." Mr. Gurney perfectly understood him, since he replied, "It's no use; I tell you I shall die!" The dog moaned again. "And now," continued the owner of Keswick, "you must go, for I am busy with this gentleman." The dog looked at his master, then at me, and then silently quitted the room. A month or so after, Mr. Gurney was a corpse.

A Word to Sunday-School Teachers.

FELLOW-LABORERS.—Suffer a few words from one who ardently wishes you success in your good work. The souls of the dear children under your care, precious beyond rubies, are already developing the seeds of sin, which will grow and ripen for perdition, unless the Spirit regenerate them through the word. That word is committed to you. Your responsibility is great. Lose no opportunity of pressing home the gospel. Be not satisfied with going through the form of recitation. Seize upon some practical truth connected with the way of salvation, and, as it comes glowing from your own fervid heart, urge it upon the heart and conscience of each child. Endeavor to establish, between yourself and your class, a mutual confidence and affection. Do not fail to present, daily, the case of every one of your scholars at the throne.

You will sometimes see grounds of discouragement, but abate not your prayers or efforts on that account. Your pupils, with yourself, are going to the judgment. Be faithful, O be faithful to their souls. The promises of God—"exceeding great and precious"—are in your favor. His word shall not return unto him void. Courage, brother, sister! Jesus looks upon you with sympathy and love. The Spirit is all-powerful to change the heart. Let all the teachers, with the superintendents and pastors, earnestly supplicate for the conversion of our scholars, and see if our next annual report will not show that "He is faithful who promised." Let our faith rest in God, and our hands do with our might what they find to do; then shall we experience the truth of that scripture, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."—*Can. Bap.*

PERSONAL APPEAL.

A friend recalled the case of a teacher, who going to meet his class at the hour appointed, found but one present. Annoyed and discouraged, his first impulse was to place him in some other class, and spend the hour in visiting the absent ones. He, however, opened the Bible, and, as it chanced, or was it the good Spirit of the Lord, that caused his eye to rest on the passage which spoke of Jesus sitting on Jacob's well? Yet, weary as he was with his journey, he failed not to become the teacher of a class of one, and through that one leading many to believe in His name. The lesson came home to his heart. The application of the lesson that day was necessarily direct and personal, and during the ensuing week the faithful teacher received a note from his scholar, thanking him for speaking to him as he had done, telling him that the teaching of that morning had been blessed; that his one scholar had found pardon and peace in Jesus.—*Friends' Conference Report.*

PICKING UP THOUGHTS.

Boys, you have heard of blacksmiths who have become mayors and magistrates of towns and cities, and men of great wealth and influence. What was the secret of their success? Why, they picked up nails and pins in the street, and carried them home in the pockets of their waistcoats. Now, you must pick up thoughts in the same way, and fill your mind with them; and they will grow into other thoughts almost while you are asleep. The world is full of thoughts, and you will find them strewn everywhere in your path.—*Eliza Burritt.*