

Youths' Department.

Lessons for 1871.

THE WORDS OF JESUS.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17TH, 1871.

Persevering Prayer.—Luke xviii. 1-8.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Pray without ceasing." 1 Thess. v. 17.

SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS.—1 Kings xviii. 41-46; Acts i. 12-14; ii. 1-4.

Of what had Christ spoken in Ch. xvii. 20-37? Why was Jerusalem destroyed and the Jews scattered? Why was that event called a coming of the Lord? Why should that event have suggested the subject of our present lesson?

To whom is the parable spoken? Ch. xviii. 22. How can one pray "always"? vs. 1. What is here meant by *not fainting*? Why this "ought"?

What was the character of the judge? vs. 2. Compare this with Matt. xxii. 38-40. What character ought a judge to have? Why does Christ mention a widow? vs. 3. What is meant by "adversary"? What by "avenge"? How did the judge at first treat the request? vs. 4. What led him to change? vs. 5.

What lesson is drawn from this? vs. 7, 8. Does the judge represent God in character? In motive of action? Can you see that the lesson is more forcible because he does not? Why is it said his *elect*? His *own elect*? Does not God love his own chosen ones, as the judge did not this widow? John xvi. 26, 27. How can God both bear long with his people and avenge them speedily?

What is meant by the final question? vs. 8. Is our lesson appropriate to us? What adversaries have we? Is it right to wish God to punish the wicked if they do not repent? Will he do it?

SUMMARY.—God's character, relative to his people, and pledged word, bind Christians to perpetual believing prayer.

ANALYSIS.—Persevering Prayer.—I. A Preliminary Statement. vs. 1.

II. The Parable. (1) The two parties. (a) The judge. vs. 2. (b) The widow. vs. 3. (2) The two acts. (a) The request. vs. 3. (b) Its treatment. vs. 4, 5.

III. The Application. (1) The divine side. vs. 7, 8. (2) The human side. vs. 8.

EXPOSITION.—The connection.—In the preceding chapter Christ speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem. As in case of the flood (vs. 26, 27), and of the end of the world, it was a coming of the Lord. Wickedness became rampant, and called for judgment. God's people, Christians, were afflicted, and when the world was against them, lost faith. Christ foretelling this instructs his disciples to hold on upon God, for God will hold on upon them, whatever the seeming. Thus this lesson springs naturally from the preceding discourse.

To whom.—Plainly to disciples. It was for their comfort and instruction expressly. If the word "men" is general, its use only implies that men, all men, ought to become and to be Christians. People often say: "If I were a Christian, a professor, a church-member, I would do so and so and I would not do so and so!" As though that were right for them which is wrong for Christians. "This is the work of God that ye believe." John vi. 29.

Always.—We must here put aside the notion that there is no prayer without spoken words. The words are never the real prayer. They are only one form of its expression, one way of showing it, a very natural and fit way, it is true. The essential thing is the heart's desire and trust and hope, looking to God in faith.

Not faint.—This is the "always" put negatively. To faint is to lose trust in God, to give up.

The judge.—Very fitly does a judge represent God in this matter. God is the Judge, (Judge xi. 27,) and the deliverance of his people is properly a work of judgment. The strange thing here is the character of the judge. Exactly opposite to God's. Its wickedness emphasized. It made total wreck to both tables. God gave to the Jews their laws. He was the recognized source of authority. See Ex. xviii. 15. Compare Ex. xxi. 6 with Ps. lxxiii. 1, 6. Thus the first requisite in judging by those laws was to have respect for God. But this man was not kept to fairness and decency even by regard for men's opinions.

The widow.—Named just because defenceless, powerless, at the mercy of judge and adversary. She had no chance, everything against her, nothing for her. Herein lies the beauty and power of the comparison.

The Adversary.—Legal adversary, the defendant. The connection implies that his case was unjust, her's just.

Avenge.—Not revenge, she did not wish

that, and such an idea is the very reverse of that required by the lesson. She only wanted to have justice done.

The change.—These parables prove clearly that Jesus "knew what was in man." John ii. 25. He lets us look into the wicked judge's heart, and see the process; lets us into his closet to hear his soliloquy.

The application. vs. 7, 8.—This is made by Jesus. It is unusually full and explicit. There is little room for mistake.

"His own elect," chosen ones, and his chosen, God's elect, on whom the heart of God is set, with a love whose tenderness passes even that of a mother's, whose strength is equal to its tenderness and whose valour is measured only by "the fulness of God;" these elect ones in Christ, over against a friendless widow, whom the unjust judge knew, if at all, only to scorn, who was to him nothing or worse. Could that widow continue to plead with one who stood thus related to her; and shall the Christian be less confident, less persistent, less hopeful, than she? Shall he faint? What a vast power, what a sweet beauty in these words of our Lord.

The "adversary" in the parable was no adversary of the judge. He may have been in league with him. He certainly had much the same character. But the Christian's adversaries are first and chiefly God's enemies. Hating God and hateful to God. Indeed this is why they are adversaries to Christians.

The widow forced her way into the judge's presence, and thrust her prayers into his unwilling ears. The Christian's Judge has pledged his word that the Christian's prayer shall be answered. Not so the reckless human judge.

Often has God brought his people as a whole, and yet more often individual saints, into terrible straits, where they could not refrain from "crying," i. e., calling out under dreadful pressure. And so God's dear, smitten, defenceless ones keep up their cry day and night. Ps. xiii. 1; lxxiv. 11; Rev. vi. 1; Heb. xii. 4. In almost every Christian's experience there is something of this. In the church at large there has been much, and must be in the future very much.

Though he bear long with them.—The Bible Union translates: "Though he is long suffering in respect to them." Another translation, which has perhaps the best authority, is: "And will he delay in reference to them?" Here the answer *no* is implied in the question, and we have the same thought, negatively stated, which is given in the next sentence.

The question. vs. 8.—"Shall he find, etc." Doubt implied. "Faith," or rather the faith, which leads to such prayer. All prayer springs from faith. "When he comes," i. e., at the destruction of Jerusalem, ch. 17, at similar crises and especially at the end of the world. Faith severely taxed is likely to grow faint. The question should arouse us to watchfulness in all times of discouragement.

Abridged from the Baptist Teacher. Recite.—Scripture Catechism, 331, 332.

WHAT SHALL OUR CHILDREN READ?

One of the grave questions which claim revision and resettlement, is that of a proper literature for the young. The milk venders who rattle over our pavements with their blue chalky fluids, are not the only foes of the pale faced children. The sincere milk of the Word is subjected to even worse dilutions and adulterations. The endless drizzle of thin and semi-aqueous stories, now so mercifully inflicted upon our little ones, is impoverishing the blood, disintegrating the fibre, and destroying the vitality not of the body but of the soul, and there is no cessation or relief. It is like the incessant dripping of that horrid bath in Sing Sing prison, torturing the young brain till it is idiotic or worse. There are children of ten or twelve years, who have read these stories literally by the hundred, devouring them sometimes at the rate of one per day. And yet they have done this so hurriedly and under such excitement of mere feeling, that they could give no intelligible account of any one book or character in all the indiscriminate blurr of impressions which they have received. This brief article must confine itself to the intellectual evils which attended this exclusive aliment of fiction.

There can be no doubt in the mind of any observing parent, that the effect of the constant reading of mere stories, and especially at that early age when the judgment is not balanced and matured, is nothing less than dissipation, and even demoraliza-

tion. It is a perpetual play upon the fancy and the sympathies, with no discipline of sober thought and no power of self-poise. It is a regiment of stimulants and narcotics, with no nutrition. Ere a knowledge of the real world is obtained, an unreal world is thrust into its place. Extremes of character and experience are continually contemplated and dwelt upon, while the power of just discrimination is not only neglected, but is gradually destroyed, and the facility of this thing is its worst danger. It is vastly easier now to buy books than to instruct and drill a young questioning boy into right estimates of things and events as they occur every hour of the day. It is a great relief, doubtless, if that bright little girl of ten, is curled up on the library sofa all by herself, still as a mouse for hours and no trouble to anybody. But where is she meanwhile? Is that silent voyage in dreamland, that fever heat of excitement and emotion safe and salubrious to either mind or body? If in later years your child becomes a lackadaisical novel reader, with pale cheeks and melancholy eye, caring for nothing but novels, extravagant in sentiment, and unhappy without excitement, regarding all common things as "stupid," and common people as "bores," ignorant of all best truths, and having no aims in life but romantic and impracticable ones—be not surprised. The reaping is like the sowing.

In its relation to the attainment of real knowledge, such reading is not merely a wasteful monopoly of time,—it positively disqualifies for study. The habit has been that of skimming instead of investigation, glancing at the surface for impression, not looking closely and accurately at facts. Examine one of these little dreamers upon her history lessons—upon the dates and names and the relations of events, and see whether she has become sharp and close in her discernment, or vague and inattentive, and incapable of the simplest reasoning processes. We would not convey the impression that girls and young ladies are less intelligent than youth of the other sex. They ought to be more so, as they have more leisure, and read more books. Having fewer opportunities to learn from real contact with the world, they should make up the difference by the acquisition of real knowledge.

But the lack of solid attainment outside of their academic curriculum, in the wider sphere of general reading, is notorious with our young people of either sex. We might almost offer a premium for a class of fifty persons at the age of twelve, who could give any satisfactory account of their own country's history, or the structure of the government under which they live, or the English literature of the last century, or the manners and institutions of other leading nations, or even the more modern geography of the earth, and the recent results of travel and exploration. The means of such knowledge are now everywhere at hand; but the difficulty is, that all taste and desire for the substantial has been destroyed by the wrong diet of earlier years.—*Christian Advocate*.

'COS HE SANG SO.

Leaning idly over the fence a few days since we noticed a little four-year old "lord of creation," amusing himself in the grass watching the frolicsome flight of birds, which were playing around him. At length a bobolink perched himself upon a drooping bough of an apple tree which extended to within a few yards of where the urchin sat, and maintained his position, apparently unconscious of the close proximity of one whom the birds usually consider a dangerous neighbor. The boy seemed astonished at his impudence; and, after regarding him steadily for a minute or two, obeying the instinct of his baser part, he picked up a stone lying at his feet, and was preparing to throw it, steadying himself carefully for good aim. The little arm was reached backward without alarming the bird, and Bob was within an inch of damage; when lo!—his throat swelled, and forth came nature's plea: "A-link—a-link—a-link, Bob-o-link, Bob-o-link! a-no weat, a-no weat! I know it—I know it! a link—a link! don't throw it! throw it, throw it!" &c.; and he didn't. Slowly the little arm subsided to its natural position, and the despised stone dropped. The minstrel charmed the murderer. We heard the songster through, and watched his unharmed flight, as did the boy, with sorrowful countenance. Anxious to hear an expression of the little feelings, we approached him and inquired:

"Why didn't you stone him, my boy? You might have killed him and carried him home."

The poor little fellow looked up doubtfully, as though he suspected our meaning, and with an expression of half shame and half sorrow, he replied: "Couldn't, 'cos he sang so?" Don't stone the birds.

DO WHAT IS BEFORE YOU.

Do whatever there is to be done without questioning and without calculation. Make progress in things moral. If need be, utter stammering words. Would you console the troubled if you only had a ready tongue? Take the tongue that you have. Ring the bell that hangs in your steeple, if you can do no better. Do as well as you can. That is all that God requires of you.

Would you pray with the needy and tempted if you had eminent gifts of prayer? Use the gifts that you have. Do not measure yourself according to the pattern of somebody else. Do not say to yourself, "If I had his skill," or, "If I had his experience." Take your own skill and your own experience, and make the most of them.

Do you stand over against trouble and suffering, and marvel that men whom God hath blessed with such means do so little? Do you say to yourself: "If I had money, I know what I would do with it?" No, you do not. God does; and so he does not trust you with it.

"If I had something different from what I have, I would work," says many a man. No. If you would work in other circumstances, you would work just where you are.

A man that will not work just where he is, with just what he has, and for the love of God and the love of man, will not work anywhere in such a way as to make his work valuable.—*Beecher*.

PRECOCIOUS CHILDREN.

Experience has demonstrated that of any number of children of equal intellectual power, those who receive no particular care in childhood, and who do not learn to read and write until the constitution begins to be consolidated, but who enjoy the benefit of a good physical education, very soon surpass in their studies those who commenced earlier, and read numerous books when very young. The mind ought never to be cultivated at the expense of the body; and physical education ought to precede that of the intellect, and then proceed simultaneously with it, without cultivating one faculty to the neglect of others; for health is the base and instruction the ornament of education.—*Spurzheim*.

A precocious child should not be taught before it is eight years old, and greater care should be taken to develop its body than its brain. There are thousands of children born with a tendency to excessive development of the nervous system, who, if they could have physical development instead of mental during the years of growth, would make our highest and best citizens. Stimulate their brains in youth, and they break down and die.—*Herald of Health*.

INSTINCT OR REASON?

The *Christian Union* vouches for the truth of this:

A narrow log lay as a bridge over a ravine. From the opposite ends of the log, at the same moment, there started to cross it a big Newfoundland and a little Italian greyhound. Of course they met in the middle; of course there was not room for them to pass; neither could they go back. The height was a dangerous one for the greyhound, and to the water at the bottom he was extremely averse. The Newfoundland could have taken the leap in safety, but evidently did not want to. There was a fix! The little dog sat down on his haunches, stuck his nose straight up in the air, and howled. The Newfoundland stood intent, his face solemn with inward workings. Presently he gave a nudge with his nose to the howling greyhound—as if to say, "Be still, youngster and listen." Then there was a silence and seeming confabulation for a second or two. Immediately the big dog spread his legs wide apart like a Colossus, bestriding the log on its extreme outer edges, and balancing himself carefully. The little dog sprang through the opening like a flash. When they reached the opposite shores the greyhound broke into frantic gambols of delight; and the Newfoundland, after his more sedate fashion, ex ressed great complacency in his achievement—as he surely had a right to do?

WRITING FOR NEWSPAPERS.

Some people estimate the ability of a newspaper and the talent of its editor by the quantity of original matter which it contains. The *Literary Journal* truthfully says: "It is comparatively an easy task for a frothy writer to pour out daily columns of words—words upon any and all subjects. His ideas may flow in 'one weak, wuehy, everlasting flood,' and his command of language may enable him to string them together like bunches of onions, and yet his paper may be a mender and poor concern. Indeed, the mere writing part of editing a paper is but a small portion of the work. The care, the time employed in selecting is far more important, and the tact of a good editor is better shown by his selections than anything else; and that we all know is half the battle. But, as we have said, an editor ought to be estimated and his labors understood and appreciated by the general conduct of his paper—its tone—its temper—it uniform, consistent course—its aims—its manliness—its dignity—its propriety. To preserve these as they should be preserved, is enough to occupy fully the time and attention of any man. If to this be added the general supervision of the newspaper establishment, which most editors have to encounter, the wonder is how they can find time to write at all."

CHRISTIANS WANTING NOTORIETY.

It is a pity that any man bearing the Christian name, should be willing to do Christian work only when it is likely to bring him before the notice of men. And yet there are just such men and women. Every pastor can point out one or more such Christians in his church. If such an one can serve on some official board, or lead the singing, or superintend the Sabbath-School, or at any rate teach a Bible class; or if such an one can be prominent in getting up a festival "to clear the debt off the church," or be first directress in the sewing society, why then you can get some work out of that Christian brother or sister. But just let it come to pass that there is no notoriety attending what they do, the way their zeal flags, and their determination dies, and their efforts diminish, is a marvel.

I am a pastor, and I find that just those persons whose desires seem to be to occupy conspicuous places in the church, if they are to work at all, are the very ones whose example is not always the best, or who can not be relied upon for steady activity. They are the ones who must be coaxed, and urged, unless there is a good prospect of their shining. For really efficient labor, for steady, patient toil, which alone insures success, commend me to those who ask: "What is the work to be done? Where can I be most useful? All I want is some place where, in my feeble measure, I can work for Christ." It is not the place we occupy to the eyes of men; it is rather the work we do, and the spirit in which we do it, that brings us the reward.

CHEAP RELIGION.

People are trying to get their religion too cheap and easy. Laziness, some one has affirmed, is original sin. We want a revival of religion in the general Christian intelligence, quite as much as elsewhere. The demand is for "Christianity Made Easy; or, Religion in Twelve Entertaining Anecdotes." It would not hurt most Christians if their attention was taxed occasionally by the great truths of religion, if they made occasionally a few heroic efforts to do and get good.—*Christian Union*.

REV. DR. WITHINGTON, of Newbury, once gave a charge to a church in about the following words: "I charge you to treat your minister as he deserves; and if you treat him as he deserves, he will deserve to be treated as you treat him."

MOTHERS.—I think it must somewhere be written, that the virtues of mothers shall, occasionally, be visited on their children, as well the sins of fathers.—*Dickens*.

He that hath God hath all things; and he that hath him not hath nothing.

True self denial is harsh at the beginning, easy in the middle, and most sweet in the end.

A schoolmaster thus describes a money-lender: "He serves you in the present tense; he lends you in the conditional mood; keeps you in the subjunctive; and ruins you in the future."