

Aug. 1, 1894.

The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Third Quarter-Lesson VII.—Aug. 12.

TEMPTATION OF JESUS.—

Matthew 4:1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*—Heb. 4:15.

THE FORTY DAYS OF TEMPTATION.

Then, immediately after his baptism. *Jesus led up of the Spirit by some constraining impulse of the Holy Spirit.* He did not seek or run heedlessly into temptation, but he went where he was bidden to go, even though it brought him into temptation. *Into the wilderness.* Mark says he was "with the wild beasts," i. e., without human companionship or help. *To be tempted of the devil, for the whole forty days.* It was not merely one sudden assault. It is not probable that Jesus lived thirty years in Nazareth without enduring many temptations and overcoming them; but this period of temptation was in reference to his great work as the Messiah. In order to be the Saviour of tempted mankind, it was necessary that he himself should be tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. It was necessary that Jesus should not only be exposed to the same temptations as we are, but that he should gain the victory over them.

How Could a Holy Being Like Christ be Tempted? In every act of sin there are two distinct steps. (1) There is the rising of a desire which is natural, and being natural, is not wrong. (2) There is the indulgence of that desire in forbidden circumstances, and that is sin.

He was not tempted with evil, but with good; with inferior forms of good, to yield to which temptation would have been evil in him, ruin to the universe. The temptation of Christ was a real temptation, as real as our temptations, and with aids to victory, only such as we all may possess.

In order to understand the three great temptations which are described, it is necessary that we see clearly four things in respect to each of them.

First. The Allurement. What it was that made the act so intensely desirable to an innocent and holy person like Jesus.

Second. The Wrong in doing what was proposed.

Third. The Means of Victory. The same for Jesus as for us.

Fourth. The Application to Us. The temptation as a type of our temptations.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION, THROUGH BODILY APPETITES.—Vs. 2-4. The Allurement. *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights.* Both Mark and Luke say he was tempted all these forty days, probably in the same general way as the last three great assaults now to be described. *He was afterward an hungered.* When the reaction has begun, hunger asserts its claims with terrible force. Such, doubtless, was the condition of Jesus; he felt himself dying. It was the moment the tempter had waited to make his decisive assault. Now this hunger, even in its most terrible intensity, is perfectly innocent, and the desire to satisfy it in all honest ways is right and holy. *And when the tempter came to him.* Satan made his severest assault in the time of Jesus' greatest weakness. He still watches his time, and attacks us when weary, sick, troubled, disheartened, nervous and weak. *If thou be (art) the Son of God.* If you really are God's Son, and hence are possessed of miraculous powers, opportunity to prove the reality of your claims, and at the same time to satisfy your hunger. *Command that these stones be made bread.* Pointing to one of the stones lying around him.

The Sin in Performing This Act. For unless it was wrong, there was no temptation in his hunger, but only an opportunity to satisfy it. It was wrong because he had voluntarily submitted to all the conditions under which men have to exist. For the Lord to have used his miraculous power to sustain his own life, would have made his humanity a mere appearance. And he could not have been our Saviour, tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

The Means of Victory. The Truths and Promises of God's Word. But he answered and said, *It is written,* (Deut. 8:3). This is noteworthy, that the first word spoken by Christ in his ministerial office is an assertion of the authority of Scripture. *Man shall not live by bread alone.* Other things are far more necessary to true living. The bread must be joined with honesty, truth, holiness, divine approval. *But by every word that proceedeth out of the word of God.* It means that true life comes from obedience to God, and trust in God, and communion with God. To eat wrongly gotten food is to die spiritually, is to die forever, while to die physically in the service of God is to live forever.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION.—TO GAIN NOBLE ENDS BY FALSE METHODS.—Vs. 5-7. The Allurement. *Then the devil taketh him up.* Either literally, or in thought, in planning for his future life. *Into the holy city.* Jerusalem. *And setteth him on a (the) pinnacle of the temple.* This was some very high point of the temple buildings. *If thou be the (a) Son of God, cast thyself down.* What could be the inducement in such a proposal? (1) That it would prove to himself that he had the perfect faith in God which was necessary in his great work. It would seem like an absolute and perfect reliance on his Heavenly Father. (2) That he would gain in a short and easy way his acceptance by the Jews as their Messiah. Seeing him come safely down from the pinnacle of God's temple, borne up in angel's arms, the Jewish nation would hail him as their prophet and king. *For it is written* (Ps. 91:1). Satan uses Scripture as his weapon of attack. The Means of Victory. *It is written again* (Deut. 6:16). Jesus shows from the Word of God that Satan had misapplied the text he had quoted. *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* That is, thou shalt not try them, dare him; or, thou shalt not, by throwing thyself into voluntary and uncommanded dangers, appeal to God for protection. It is presumption to rush recklessly into danger, physical or moral, and then trust that we shall come out unscathed.

A Type of Our Temptation. We are tempted as Christ was in this temptation, when we expect God to do for us what he has given us the means to do; when we misapply God's promises, when we try to gain the blessings of religion and heaven in other ways than God has appointed.

THE THIRD TEMPTATION.—TO GAIN SUCCESS BY DOING WRONG.—Vs. 8-11. The Allurement. *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain.* Literally, or in spirit. *Sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.* This term may signify that he made them appear before the view of Jesus, in instantaneous succession. *All these things will I give thee.* Satan says in effect, "I will relinquish my hold and my right, and let you have the whole world as the Messiah monarch. All nations will then be subject to you as the king of the Jews. The kingdom of God will come at once, without pain or the cross, without humility and reproach, but with glory and power. Thus Satan appealed to the noblest feelings and purest aspirations of Jesus offering him, apparently, the very things he had come to this world to bring. *If thou wilt fall down and worship me.* Satan does not mean a bald act of worship, a bending in outward reverence. He asked such an act of worship as men give when they worship money, by loving it better than God; as they worship success, by placing it before duty. Satan is too shrewd to insist on the form if he can gain the heart.

The Means of Victory. *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence Satan.* It is a "word of indignation." Jesus may not, before this, have realized that the tempter was Satan; but now Satan stood undisguised before him. *For it is written* (Deut. 6:13). *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.* The first and great commandment.

A Type of our Temptations. We share the third experience when we are tempted, for the sake of power, wealth or influence, to conform to the world, and to employ Satan's instruments in even seeming to do God's service. We yield when we are conformed to this world, and adopt its policies and methods, and imbibed its spirit for the sake of its rewards.

REST AND CONSOLATION AFTER VICTORY.—V. 11. *Then the devil leaveth him.* "For a season." He was tempted again and again; at last in Gethsemane and on the cross. *And behold, angels.* Spiritual beings; probably in visible form on this occasion. Ministered most naturally means "supplied him with food."

OUR MOTTO.—*If God be for us who can be against us.*

A Character Sketch of Miss Frances E. Willard.

BY W. T. STEAD.

In the English-speaking world two women stand prominently before the public as contributing most to the change that is taking place in the popular estimate of the capacity and the status of woman. They are each distinctive types of their sex—one English, the other American. Each has had a serious and responsible post to fill, which brought them conspicuously before the eyes of their contemporaries, and each, tested by the practical strain and wear and tear of fifty years, has displayed supreme capacity, both moral, intellectual and

physical. No one can over-estimate the enormous benefit it has been to the cause of progress that during the whole of the period during which the conception of woman's citizenship was germinating in the public mind, the English throne should have been occupied by a woman as capable, as upright, and as womanly as Queen Victoria.

The British Constitution has many defects, but it has done one thing which the American Constitution would never have done: it has given an able woman an unequalled opportunity of proving, in the very forefront of the State, that in statesmanship, courage and all the more distinctively sovereign virtues, she could hold her own with the ablest and the most powerful men who could be selected from the millions of her subjects. The Queen has lived in the heart of politics, home and foreign, for more than fifty years. The problems which it is held would demoralize the female householder if once in seven years she had to express an opinion upon them at the ballot-box, have been her daily bread ever since her childhood. She is a political woman to her finger tips. She knows more about foreign politics by far than the permanent secretaries at the Foreign Office, and in all constitutional and domestic affairs she can give tips to Mr. Gladstone in matters as to questions of procedure. John Bright said of her, after knowing her for years, "She is the most perfectly truthful person I ever met."

Mr. Forster, another sturdy Briton of Quaker antecedents, said as emphatically that no one could ever be with the Queen without contracting a very sincere personal regard for her. Even Mr. Gladstone, of whom Lord Beaconsfield said he forgot his sovereign was a woman, and conceived her only to be a Government department, has paid high homage to her extraordinary memory and her marvellous mastery of what may be called the tools of the profession of a constitutional monarch.

Broadly speaking, it may be fairly said that the Queen would be acknowledged by all her ministers, Liberal or Conservative, to have more knowledge of the business of governing nations than any of her prime ministers, more experience of the mysteries and intricacies of foreign affairs than any of her foreign secretaries, as loyal and willing a subervience to the declared will of the nation as any democrat in Parliament, and as keen and passionate an Imperial patriot as any ever beat in any human breast.

And yet, while all that would be admitted, not even the most captious caviller will pretend that the tremendous pressure of politics, kept up daily for over fifty years, has unsexed the Queen. She is a woman as womanly as any of her subjects, and she is the standing refutation of the silly falsehood that a lady cannot be a politician. As long as the one woman, who has to toil at politics as a profession, is our "Sovereign Lady the Queen," the sneer of the popinjays whose ideal woman is a doll well dressed, but without brains, is somewhat pointless to the common sense of Her Majesty's subjects. Hence it is, perhaps, not very surprising that the two prime ministers who have seen the most of the Queen of late years, Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury, both voted for female suffrage. With that object lesson in the highest place of the capacity of woman to discharge, with advantage to herself and to others, by far the most responsible of all political duties, it was simply impossible for them to maintain the position of antagonism to woman's suffrage, which is only natural to those who despise the capacity or distrust the character of one-half the human race.

The English woman who has done the most to familiarize the world with the capacity and utility of the woman in statesmanship upon a throne has given her name to the Victorians. In America there are no thrones on which a woman can sit. Even the Presidential chair is the monopoly of the male. The platform and the press, the pulpit and organization, these are the only means by which, in the Republic of the West, either man or woman can prove themselves possessed of eminent capacity, and can make their personality potent in influencing the thoughts and actions of the nation. And no one has even cast so much as a cursory glance over the dead level of American society without realizing that among American women Miss Willard stands first.

Continued.

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