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That Tired Feeling, Constipation and Pain in the Back

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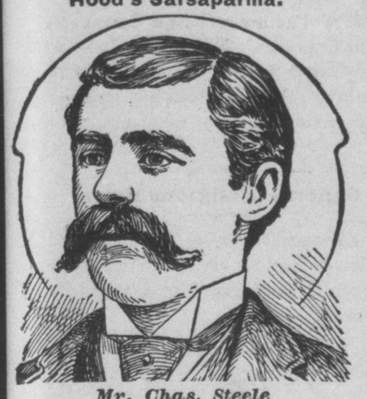

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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Fourth Quarter-Lesson VIII.—Nov. 25.

OPPOSITION TO CHRIST.—Mark 3 : 22-35.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*—John 1 : 11.

THE SITUATION. Jesus had been preaching for a year and a half. Great crowds assembled wherever he was. He was unfolding new truth, and working wonderful miracles. He had chosen twelve personal helpers. From Capernaum he made tours into the surrounding country. His character, works, and teaching were in marked contrast with those of the Jewish leaders. He drew the people from them to him.

INCREASING OPPOSITION OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.—V. 22. It is well to trace the growth of this opposition.

They resented his reform in cleansing the temple courts from money-changers and dealers in sacrifices, and the dishonest practices.

This touched their pockets, and reduced their income.

He taught contrary to their ideas of the Sabbath, exposed and denied their false traditions.

His treatment of publicans and sinners scandalized their make-believe purity.

His popularity drew the people from their influence.

His miracles gave him superiority over them.

He was a Galilean.

He claimed to be the Messiah, and yet was not doing what they expected the Messiah would do. *And the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem.* It may be that these scribes were sent from Jerusalem, as the result of the consultation with the Herodians. *Said.* The words appear to have been whispered by the Pharisees among the people. *He hath.* Is possessed by; under the control of. *Beelzebub.* All authorities agree that the reading here should be Beelzebub. Beelzebub was a god of the Philistines, worshipped at Ekron. By the change of a single letter the Jews converted it into Baal or Beel-zebul (lord of filth), and applied it to the prince of the devils. *By the prince of the devils* (demons). They believed that the world of evil spirits, formed a great army, in divisions, the whole under the command of Satan. To Beelzebub was assigned the control of that division which inflicted disease of all kinds on man. *Casteth he out devils* (demons). Jesus, they hinted, was playing a part under him in pretending to drive out devils from the sick.

Imputing Bad Motives. One of the most injurious and unworthy things a man can do to another is to charge him with the worst motives for his actions. If he tries to be better than others, it is pride, or self-conceit that leads him to do it. If he is a reformer, it is for some selfish end. If he is particular as to his conduct, he is puritanical and righteous over much.

THE ANSWER OF JESUS.—Vs. 23 30. Jesus denies their charge, and shows that it was absurd and impossible. For, it would be suicidal. *And he called them unto him,* knowing their thoughts. *And said unto them in parables,* in illustrations, arguments from analogy. *How can Satan cast out Satan?* How can so shrewd a being work against himself. Such a work could not proceed from Satan. *If a kingdom be divided against itself,* etc. A nation disunited must fall. *And if a house be divided,* etc. The household of some prince; or a business house. If some seek to destroy the work which others are trying to do, there can be no prosperity. *And if Satan rise up against himself.* It is a most graphic picture. In such a case Satan *hath an end* as a ruler of power. Therefore, it is absurd to suppose that I, who am seeking to destroy his kingdom, can be in league with him. *No man can enter into a strong man's house.* The house is the individual soul, and in a sense the body of man invaded by disease and possessed with demons. *And spoil his goods.* Jesus was defeating Satan by casting out the demons, by cleansing the soul from the evil passions, which Satan plants and fosters there. *Except he will first bind the strong man,* by every act which shows that he is stronger, Christ's teachings and his works showed that he had gained a victory over Satan and was stronger than he. *All sins shall be forgiven*: i. e., there is forgiveness through repentance for all sins except the one to be mentioned. *Blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme.* The word "blasphemy" means to speak evil of. *But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost.* To a certain extent the sin appears to be left purposely undefined, that it may caution all against transgressing the bounds beyond which forgiveness never reclaims. The following facts are to be considered: (1) There is an unpardonable sin; a sin, be it act or state, for which there is no space for forgiveness. It is possible to go beyond the reach of God's mercy. (2) There are hints of such a sin elsewhere in the New Testament. The principal passages are the following: Heb. 6 : 4-6; 10 : 26 31; 12 : 15-17. 1 John 5 : 16. (3) Blasphemy among the Jews was a sin against God, answering to treason in our own times. To do aught to diminish reverence and allegiance to him was the blasphemy of the Old Testament, a crime answering to treason in our own times. (For laws, see Ex. 20 : 1-7; 22 : 20; Deut. 13 : 1-5; 18 : 19, 20; Num. chap. 16; 20 : 7-12; 1 Kings 18.) It is a deliberate and conscious rejection of good and choice of evil. *Hath never forgiveness.* Not because God is unwilling to forgive, or has no feelings of mercy toward such a sinner, but because one who thus sins against the Holy Spirit has put himself where no power can soften his heart or change his nature. A man may misuse his eyes and yet see; but whosoever puts them out can never see again. One may misdirect his mariners compass, and turn it aside from the north pole by a magnet or piece of iron, and it may recover and point right again; but whosoever destroys the compass itself has lost its guide at sea. So it is possible for us to sin and be forgiven: recovery through God's Spirit is not impossible. But if we so harden our hearts that they cannot feel the power of the Spirit, if we are past feeling, then there is no hope. *Is in danger of eternal damnation.* Guilty of an eternal sin, i. e., of one which will, with its consequences, extend through the ages. The unpardonable sin, though it may begin with one act of blasphemy results in a state of sinful activity which continues forever. For this reason it is unpardonable. The sin excludes pardon, because it excludes repentance.

OPPOSITION FROM FRIENDS AND RELATIVES.—V. 31. *There came then.* This verse apparently records the arrival at Capernaum of his friends. *His brethren.* Their names James, Joses, Simon, Judas, are given in Matt. 13 : 55 and Mark 6 : 3. Some understand them to have been his literal "brethren" others think they were the sons of Cleophas and Mary, his sister and namesake of the Virgin. Commentators are about equally and earnestly divided between the two opinions. *And his mother, standing without.* Either outside of the house, beyond the circle of his hearers. *Sent unto him.* By passing the message from man to man until it reached him. He appeared to them to be out of his mind (v. 21). It was only an honest fear that he was going crazy, and needed to be taken care of. For (1) he was making the religious leaders his enemies; (2) he was preaching strange, almost revolutionary doctrines; (3) the great crowds and the consequent excitement might render him fanatical; (4) he was not taking the place which they supposed the Messiah would take. Opposition from friends is very common in the career of reformers. History is full of instances. It is a severe test. But the only way in which this world can be improved and saved is by that faith, and character, and truth which will do right no matter who opposes.

CHRIST'S ANSWER.—Vs. 32-35. *And the multitude sat about him.* Preventing his friends from reaching him. *Who is my mother, or my brethren?* There is nothing contemptuous in this reply. We know that he loved his mother by his care for her when dying on the cross. But he taught them that his earthly relations had no control over his divine work. *And he looked round about.* Stretching forth his hand towards his disciples. *For whosoever shall do the will of God.* And be thus like their Father in heaven. *The same is my brother,* etc., because born of the same Father; because like Jesus in nature. *And mother.* Expressing the tenderest, purest, and deepest love on earth. With such affection are the disciples of Jesus bound together with him.

W. C. T. Union.

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

A late No. of the Union Signal contains a biography of Mrs. Mary A. Woodbridge a prominent White Ribbon Worker in the States. Her home was in Ravenna, Ohio. An extract from Miss Willard's letter says,—

"Unbind the armor, her long day's work is done." How faithfully and well she did it let the records of the white ribbon movement in this and in all lands attest: for she was our gracious, vigilant and swift ambassador who, at the pen's point, carried victory everywhere that her strong, sisterly words penetrated, informed as they all and always were, by a personality of rich endowment in intellectual attributes, moral worth and religious enthusiasm."

"Mary A. Woodbridge will always be a radiant name in our white-ribbon annals from the day of the Crusade to that "coming of age" for which she was preparing with her unequalled grasp of the situation and skill in the handling of details. Her benignant presence will be incalculably missed and mourned at the coming Convention in Cleveland and her clear, womanly voice, with its deep tones, will be listened for instinctively by thousands who had known and loved it long."

In closing a graphic description of her life, her biographer says—"She being dead yet speaketh." In the light of her white life and white death, with what prophetic power sounds in our ears again the last public words we heard her utter, at Miss Willard's reception, September 28:

"We cannot stop. God bids us on; we must and will obey. God bless you now God bless you ever! Hold fast to the Infinite, the positive pole of holiness and power. Another palm shall strike your own, and on and on—until the negative pole of the world's weakness and sin shall be reached. Then will the divine current flow, and not only will His children be quickened, but the iniquity against which we inveigh shall be shivered and shattered to atoms. Then with voices tuned in the harmonies of heaven, we will sing 'glory and honor and praise and thanksgiving to Him who has redeemed us forever and forever.'"

"She is singing that song to-day, though the work is not yet fully done; but—she will help us from the other shore."

Miss Willard is at present in Boston, preparing her annual address and attending to the multitudious duties of her many responsible positions. She is recovering from a recent attack of bronchitis, and is not yet strong enough to attend the funeral services of Mrs. Woodbridge at Ravenna, O. Deeply affected by her death, she greatly regrets her enforced absence, saying: "In the old days I should have started to you by the next train that followed your first telegram, but that old springy feeling is gone and my physician forbids my daring the trip and the strain of the closing scenes at Ravenna. If Lady Henry Somerset were not to sail for England next Wednesday, and if I were not below par physically, we should both go, for it would be a tender pleasure to us to pay the last tribute of respect and affection to our comrade of so many pleasant years." Concerning the great bereavement, which nations are sharing to-day, Miss Willard writes: "It would be idle for me to attempt to give you any idea of the bewildering astonishment and sorrow with which we heard of the great shock that came to you all in the sudden departure of Mary Woodbridge from this world. I had been receiving letters from her daily, full of particulars concerning the coming Convention. It seems to me that of all the persons who could have been named she was farthest from my thoughts as one who would be called away from us so suddenly and in such a conjuncture as the present. Mary Lathrap's line recurs to my mind again and again:

"We follow that way."

"May we gather closer together as the group diminishes, and may evening bring us all home."

A notorious music hall in London has been compelled to close its doors by the action of the London county council, which refused a license for selling drinks in the auditorium. The united influence of Christian temperance workers brought about the result. The British Women's Temperance Association held a prolonged prayer-meeting, lasting four hours, during the session of the council, and many prayers were offered in London chapels and churches in support of the action of the licensing committee.

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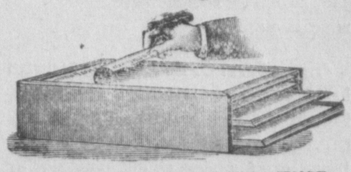

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