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INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

First Quarter-Lesson VI. — Feb. 10.

CHRIST AND THE CHILDREN.—Matt. 18:1 14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.*—Matt. 18:14.

WRONG IDEAS ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.—V. 1. On the way home from the Mount of Transfiguration the disciples had a sharp discussion amomg themselves as to who should be the greatest. It may have arisen (1) from the fact that three of their number had been selected by Jesus for his companions on the mount; (2) the keys had been given to Peter, and he was to be the foundation stone of the kingdom; (3) Judas, as the treasurer, may have had special ambitions, as he thought of being chief of the treasury of the Messiah king; (4) Some time after this the mother of James and John came to Jesus, asking for her sons the place nearest the king; (5) those who had received special favors may, possibly, have usurped some authority, which would naturally be resented by the others; (6) all this would be intensified by their expectation that the kingdom would soon be set up.

At Capernaum Jesus asked them about their dispute by the way, but the guilty ones held their peace from shame. After Peter had returned from paying the tribute, *at the same time, came unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?* Will you settle the question for us?

THE CHILDLIKE SPIRIT THE WAY INTO THE KINGDOM.—Vs. 2, 3. In answer to their question Jesus taught them that they had only mistaken the way to greatness, for if any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all; simply because the desire to be first is the exact opposite to the spirit which is the law of Christ's kingdom, the spirit of love, of self-denial, of helpfulnes, of humility. *And Jesus called a little child unto him and set him in the midst.* As an illustration. He then took him in his arms, to make the lesson more impressive, and to show his sympathy with childhood. *Except ye be converted.* The word here rendered be converted, always signifies a radical and complete change in method, spirit or course. *And become as little children.* Not sinless, for no children are sinless. And if none but the sinless could enter the kingdom of heaven, that kingdom on earth, would be empty. The meaning is, you must have those qualities which are characteristic of childhood. These qualities are: humility, freedom from ambition, rivalry or jealousy, tender and gracious affection, perfect trust, obedience, a teachable spirit, unworldliness, indifference to the distinctions of rank and wealth. *Shall not enter.* Not only could not be first, as they were seeking to be, but could not even enter the kingdom. Why? Because the kingdom of heaven is a spiritual kingdom, and the self-seeking spirit is opposed to its spirit.

THE CHILDLIKE SPIRIT THE WAY TO GREATNESS IN THE KINGDOM.—Vs. 4, 5. *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself* (so as to be) *as this little child.* To humble one's self is not to think meanly of one's self, not to disparage one's self, but not to think highly of ourselves on this account, not to seek honor or greatness for ourselves. *The same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven,* for he has most of the heavenly spirit. *Whoso shall receive*; welcome, show kindness to. *One such little child,* referring both to children in years, and to those of a childlike spirit. *In my name*: for my sake, from love to me. *Receiveth me.* Whoso appreciates childlike lowliness, when he meets it in others, appreciates Christianity and Christ. Has taken into his heart my spirit. He shall be accepted as having done me a favor. The act proves that he loves me.

PUTTING STUMBLING BLOCKS IN THE WAY OF THE LITTLE ONES.—Vs. 6 9. *Whoso shall offend*: cause to stumble, or fall into sin. *One of these little ones which believe in me*: the weakest and feeblest of God's flock, not merely the children, but the little ones in intellectual and spiritual power.

Offending the Little Ones. Our Lord does not mean vexing them, but tempting or leading them into evil. There are many ways, such as tempting to lie, to drink intoxicating drinks, suggesting religious doubts, breaking down religious habits, sneering at strictness of Sabbath-keeping and obedience to parents. *It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck,* etc. It is better to die a thousand deaths than to lead another into sin, and thus to murder his soul. *Woe unto the world,* a statement of the fact. *Because of offences.* Because there are so many stumbling-blocks and temptations to evil placed in men's way. *For it must needs be that offences come*: it is unavoidable in this sinful world that those who would serve Christ should be tempted. *But woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.* Who is guilty of leading others into sin. He that sins himself is weak, but he that leads others into sin is devilish. *If thy hand or thy foot offend thee* (lead thee into sin) *cut them off.* The meaning is, if objects dear as the right eye and useful as the right hand, stand between us and the righteous spirit, not merely tempt us, but cause us to fall into sin, if we are unable to battle with and overcome the temptation, must give them up. *Hand*: the temptation to do what is wrong. *Foot,* going into forbidden ways. *Halt,* or lame from the loss of a foot. *Maimed,* from the loss of a hand. *Eye,* converting, lusting. *Better....to enter into life halt....maimed....with one eye.* It is better to have eternal life here, to be a true Christian, and to enter into heaven without enjoying the things that caused us to sin, than to enjoy them here and then be lost. *Cast into* (the) *everlasting fire,* that prepared for the devil and his angels. The consequences of sin are eternal. *Hell fire,* the hell, or Gehenna of fire. The literal Gehenna was a valley to the south of Jerusalem, a former scene of Molech worship, and latter the place where the refuse of the city was burned with perpetual fires. This terrible warning comes from the most loving heart in the universe. It is love, not hate, that points out the danger of sin. He that refuses or neglects to warn is the one who is cruel.

HEAVEN'S CARE FOR THE LITTLE ONES.—Vs. 10 14. *Take heed that ye despise not,* feel contempt or indifference towards. *These little ones,* the children, the childlike believers, the lowly. *In heaven their angels,* their angels in heaven, who are their ministering spirits. There is in this no sufficient warrant for the popular notion of guardian angels, one angel especially assigned to each individual; it is simply said of believers as a class that there are angels which are their angels.

The Church and the Children. If Christ so cares for the young, the childlike, the unnoticed, if the highest angels guard them with loving care, then the church of Christ should give its most loving attention, its best gifts, its most earnest labors to the same classes. The church is most blessed which does this. *For,* here is another reason for not despising the little ones. *The Son of man is come to save that which was lost,* the lost race of men. Men are lost, because they are away from Father and home, and do not know the way back. *If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray.* The parable is given more fully in Luke 15:3-7. The lost sheep is a type of the sinner going away from a loving shepherd and the pastures and waters he provides, till it is lost. *Doth he not leave the ninety and nine,* in a place of safety. *And goeth,* for he knows which one is lost. *Into the mountains,* places hard and dangerous. *And seeketh that which is gone astray.* Jesus uses every means to bring back his lost sheep. *He rejoiceth more of that sheep.* This sheep is of no more value than the others, but its rescue opens the fountains of joy. Heaven is full of joy at the repentant sinner. *It is not the will of your Father....that one of these little ones,* the weakest, humblest believer, *should perish,* fail of holiness and heaven. God's desire is that all men be saved. And those who are lost, are lost because they refuse to be saved. They will not come to Jesus. They stumble over the very steps to heaven.

W. C. T. Union.

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

The following is from the *Union Signal* and embodies the views of the greater number of intelligent women everywhere.

(ED. WOMAN'S COLUMN.)

Our Unanimity on the Suffrage Question.

How comes this unanimity? The same authority which declares us a suffrage society says that we have simply "frozen out" the suffragists. The basis of truth underlying this statement is that at one time seventeen women left our ranks avowedly because of our suffrage views. Probably seventeen more have dropped out for the same reason without avowing their reason, and perhaps seventeen refuse to join for the same reason, but, after all is said, there are at least 150,000 of us. Enough indeed, to create an iceberg sufficient to do considerable "freezing." But the very large question remains, What made these 150,000 women, whom the suffrage associations had never been able to reach, woman suffragists?

The answer is, They have come to demand the ballot for the sake of their homes and their dear ones, as a mother who stood between her helpless little ones and a hungry wolf might call for a gun. If any one doubts this, let him read the history of our leading women, and question the more unknown workers in the ranks.

A few examples here will serve as illustrations of all. Very early in the history of the W. C. T. U., Mrs. Hibben, a Presbyterian lady of the most conservative views on the woman question, accompanied Miss Willard, who was not at that time herself an avowed suffragist, to the Illinois legislature, to work for the passage of a temperance law. Their chief work was in personally persuading individual legislators to support the bill. One and all replied in so many words, "I can't stand by you for you can't stand by me; you have no vote." Mrs. Zerelda Wallace, our great apostle of suffrage, was converted in the same way. She went on a similar errand to the legislature of her state, Ohio. She sat in the House and listened while one member after another gave his reasons for voting to repeal the bill which the mothers of the state were entreating them to support. At last the representative from Mrs. Wallace's own county arose and said: "We are not here to vote our own views, but those of our constituency. My constituency wants license, and I shall vote for license." Instantly there sprang up in her mind the question, "Why am not I one of the constituency which Marion county's representative must vote to please?" The longer she has thought about it the less has she been able to answer the question.

Nor is the experience of temperance women exceptional. Women who enter upon reform work of any kind become as a rule suffragists very soon and for the same reason. The questions of the day are all moral questions, and every one of them is in politics. Our defeats have proved to us that there is only one weapon which can avail. We have tried the "womanly" method of persuasion. There is nothing about persuasion that we do not know. And one conclusion has been slowly but surely forced upon us, that the talk about "womanly influence" along political lines is the merest namby-pamby nonsense. The uniform reply of legislatures, courts, municipal authorities and political parties to our petitions has been, "You can't vote ladies, you can't vote." In Nebraska, when mothers, wives and sisters were using all of their magic womanly influence to persuade the voters of the land to prohibit the liquor traffic, Christian men voted for license, and hundreds of Italians, who had been imported to work upon a railroad, who could not even speak the English language, were naturalized (?) and voted in the interests of the liquor traffic, while the women stood by voiceless and voteless. These things have been done again and again.

Moreover, since we came out from our homes we have learned how men have "represented" us. We have found that we have been despoiled of our property, that we had not even a part interest in our own children; that the shameful laws concerning the age of consent left our daughters when mere children at the mercy of vile wretches, and from agonized mother hearts has gone up the cry. "Brothers, we don't want to be represented that way, and we won't be represented that way. With God's help we are going to get the ballot for ourselves." Yet according to our own showing, we have accomplished something with our petitions. Yes, when after untold expenditure of labor, time and money we have succeeded in getting the petition presented and backed by voters But, brothers, we are tired of this laborious, roundabout way. We are convinced that from every point of view it would be better that we vote ourselves.

The women of the land could never be induced to work for their own emancipation merely. Even if they had sought the ballot for this purpose alone they would not have been self-seekers of a worse character than were their patriot fathers of 1775; but now, by a very large majority, they are asking the ballot for the sake of "God and Home and Native Land."

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