

ourselves for meeting Him. It is because this slackness shows how little our hearts are with Him that He counts it so grave.

The door was shut, v. 10. A famous surgeon was standing before his class. He had just completed a very difficult operation. "Gentlemen," he said, "two years

Hung on Hinges ago, a simple operation might have cured this disease. Six years ago, a wise way of life might have prevented it. Nature must have her way. We are too late." The next day the unfortunate patient died. In this finite world, every door of opportunity was hung on hinges. If we will not enter while we may, the door will surely swing to and be fastened by an adamant bar. There is a moment when every one can say :

"Late, late, so late ! and dark the night and chill !

Late, late, so late ! but we can enter still." But there is another awful moment which will succeed the long protracted opportunity, when another Voice will be heard :

"Too late, too late ! ye cannot enter now."

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the school.

For Teachers of the Older Scholars

When Jesus was born, there was a crisis in the world's history, Luke 2 : 9, 10. When Jesus died, there was another crisis, John 12 : 31-33 (crisis being the Greek word for " judgment "). When Jesus returns, there will be the greatest crisis of all, Matt. 24 : 30. Whether He comes sooner, or later, His coming will be a surprise to the world, v. 13. This tremendous crisis is always imminent, Mark 13 : 35-37. How does it affect us ? The parable shows :

1. *Character is developed in anticipation of a crisis*, vs. 1-4. Wisdom and folly are traits of character, v. 2 ; Prov. 10 : 14. The contrast between the two companies of bridesmaids amounts to a distinction between (a) shiftlessness (v. 3 ; Haggar 1 : 6) ; and (b) foresight, v. 4 ; Prov. 6 : 6-8. The wise made adequate preparation (v. 4), whilst the foolish made none, v. 3. Are we prepared for Christ's coming,—you and I ? ch. 24 : 48-50 ;

Watch therefore, v. 13. In one of Brown- ing's poems there is a story of two camels. Both were of great value ; both gave them-

The Two Camels selves wholly to their master's service ; both had precious burdens to bear for him across the desert. One did all he could to save the master expense ; he ate as little food as possible, and that of the cheapest. At last his strength failed, and he fell dead in the desert. His load was stolen by thieves, and his master thus lost both burden and camel. The other camel ate the best food and plenty of it— " No sprig of chevril must I leave unchewed." The result was that he passed safely through the desert with his burden. It is easy to see which of the two camels best served the master's interests. And the lesson for us is plain. We should make the very most of our powers that care and watchfulness will enable us to make. Thus we shall follow the example of the wise virgins, with their carefully trimmed lamps and well-filled vessels. Wise assiduity in the day of opportunity is what tells.

TEACHING HINTS

Luke 21 : 34, 36 ; Rom. 13 : 12-14 ; 2 Pet. 3 : 3, 4. We have the character of the foolish and shiftless, if we make no preparation at all in forsaking sin, and following Christ, Mark 1 : 14, 15. We have the character of the wise and foreseeing, if we give ourselves, waking and sleeping, fully to Christ, Titus 2 : 11-13.

2. *Character is made apparent on the arrival of a crisis*, vs. 5-9. A stranger looking at these two companies, before the crisis, might not see any difference. Both, having accepted the invitation to the wedding, were ready to act as bridesmaids, v. 1. Both brought torches, v. 1 (Rev. Ver. Margin). Both had bowls on the torches, for that may be what is meant by " vessels," v. 4. Both waited for the bridegroom, who came from a distance evidently too remote to permit of sending word of the precise hour of his arrival, v. 5. Both slept, v. 5. Note that. Both woke and trimmed their lamps, v. 7. Note that, too. But the arrival of the crisis (v. 6) at once made the difference in their characters so apparent that even a stranger could see it. The foolish lit their torches, only to find them flare up and