



LESSON VI.—FEBRUARY 10.

Parable of the Talents.Matthew xxv., 14-30. Memory verses,
20, 21.

(May be used as a Temperance Lesson.)

Golden Text.

'So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God.'—Romans xiv., 12.

The Bible Lesson.

19. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

20. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

21. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

22. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

23. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

24. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

25. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

26. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

27. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

28. Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

29. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

30. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Lesson Hymn.Why will ye waste on trifling cares
That life which God's compassion spares,
While, in the various range of thought,
The one thing needful is forgot?Not so your eyes will always view
Those objects which you now pursue;
Not so will heaven and hell appear
When the decisive hour is near.Almighty God, thy grace impart;
Fix deep conviction on each heart;
Nor let us waste on trifling cares
That life which God's compassion spares.
—Philip Doddridge.**Suggestions.**

Last week we studied the parable of the inner life of the Church, to-day we are to study its outward activities. First, the heart must be right toward God, then the life will be fruitful in good works.

The parable of the talents is strikingly different from the parable of the Pounds, in which the servants started with the same amount of capital, but by their different uses of it secured widely different results, and were rewarded according to their faithfulness. On the other hand those who received the talents received not equal sums at the beginning, but sums proportionate to

their abilities, and were rewarded also according to their faithfulness. The lesson is the same in both parables, that faithful service for Christ will always be rewarded, and that unfaithfulness will always be punished. Nature teaches us that the punishment for not using any faculty is the gradual loss of that faculty; that which is not used becomes useless. That which is most used as a rule becomes most useful. Two men start out on a walking match, one is accustomed to talking long walks, the other has never gone a step farther than he had to. Nature says that the first must win because he has previously made use of his ability to walk and has strengthened and developed those muscles, which the other man has allowed to fall into disuse. Every faculty is God-given and should be used for God.

'Sow an act, reap a habit;
Sow a habit, reap a character;
Sow a character, reap a destiny.'

The talents represent our natural abilities and the man who makes good use of his two talents receives the same reward as he who has made good use of his five talents. The carpenter may be as faithful in his work as the minister in his. The patient prayerful cobbler may glorify God by his daily life as much as does the most brilliant statesman. The errand boy may have as important a place in God's plan as has the famous doctor; if an errand boy should say to himself, 'I am of no importance, it does not matter whether I am faithful or not; if I were a great doctor, of course, it would matter,'—he is making a great mistake, for if he is unfaithful in his work, if, for instance, he fails to deliver a message that the doctor is wanted at once for a dying child, or if he fails to carry the medicine quickly, the disease and death that may result are due to his unfaithfulness. One man's responsibility to be true and faithful is just as great as another man's. Every man is responsible to God for the right use of his faculties. He who neglects his talents or uses them only for his own gratification must find at the judgment day that unfaithfulness brings loss, inevitable and irretrievable.

'But loss is not all the indolent servant's doom. Once more, like the slow toll of a funeral bell, we hear the dread sentence of ejection to the mirk midnight without, where are tears undried and passion unavailing. There is something very awful in the monotonous repetition of that sentence so often in these last discourses of Christ's. The most loving lips that ever spoke have, in love, shaped this form of words, so heart-touching in their wailing but decisive proclamation of blackness, homelessness, and sorrow, and cannot but toll them over and over again into our ears, in sad knowledge of our forgetfulness and unbelief,—if, perchance, we may listen and be warned—and, having heard the sound thereof, may never know the reality of that death in life which is the sure end of the indolent who were blind to his gifts and, therefore, would not listen to his requirements.'—From 'Bible Class Expositions,' by Alexander Maclaren, D.D.

Questions.

Relate the parable of the talents? Who are the servants that have received talents? Is there anyone who has not one single talent? To whom do the talents belong? How can we use them for God? To whom must we answer for the neglect or misuse of our talents? Is the man with one talent any less responsible than the man with five? Does strong drink poison the body and injure the faculties which God has given us? What is your talent, health? Winsomeness? Energy? A good voice? A pleasant manner? How are you spending it for God?

C. E. Topic.

Sun., Feb. 10.—Topic.—If Christ should come to-morrow.—I. Thess. v., 1, 2, 4-8.

Junior C. E. Topic.

THE FATHERS OF THE BIBLE.

Mon., Feb. 4.—Faithful Abraham.—Gen. xxii., 2, 3.

Tues., Feb. 5.—Indulgent Eli.—I. Sam. iii., 13.

Wed., Feb. 6.—The rash vow.—Judges xi, 30, 31.

Thu., Feb. 7.—David punished in Absalom. II. Samuel xviii., 33.

Fri., Feb. 8.—Sacrificing Zebedee.—Matt. iv., 21, 22.

Sat. Feb. 9.—The Heavenly Father.—Matt. vi., 25, 26.

Sun., Feb. 10.—Topic.—Lessons from Bible fathers, (Eli, David, Abraham, Jephthah, etc.)

Free Church Catechism.

18. Q.—How does Jesus Christ still carry on his work of salvation?

A.—By the third person in the blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who was sent forth at Pentecost.

19. Q.—What is the mystery of the blessed Trinity?

A.—That the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, into whose name we are baptized, are one God.

**Just One Drink.**

(By Aunt Nellie, in 'Youth's Temperance Banner'.)

It was at a children's party. A beautiful little girl with a face as sweet as a cherub, and yet marked with sadness, sat in a small rocking chair watching the other children play and taking no part. A dainty white cape, rather long, was thrown about her. More than one child wondered why, but presently they all found out 'why.' During one of the games, one of the guests approached the beautiful stranger with kindly attention. They were playing 'Barbie Brunt.' 'Put out your hands,' she said, 'and I'll fill 'em full to the brim.'

But the gentle request was not obeyed. 'Put out your hands, I say,' demanded the leader. 'Don't you want to play?' Still the child did not put out her hands. Her face paled. She tried to speak, but could not find her voice. At this moment, the little hostess, a charming child, entered the room. Finding her guests watching the little visitor (who was spending a few days at her home), who looked disturbed, she asked:

'What is the matter?'
'She won't play "Barbie Brunt,"' was the answer.

'She can't play "Barbie Brunt,"' said the hostess, sorrowfully.

The little stranger had no arms. She was the child of wealthy parents, who did all they could for her comfort and pleasure, but they could not bring back to her her arms.

It is a sad story. One day she was sitting on the front door step of her beautiful home—a happy, laughing child. While she sat there singing a lullaby to her dolly, her brother came home. He had a gun in his hand and he was staggering. She thought he was staggering for fun, and she laughed in childish glee.

'I'm going to shoot you,' he said angrily. Then she was afraid. As he raised the gun she bent her head and threw up her hands. The boy fired. The dear little hands of the child were almost completely shot off. They had to be amputated at the wrists, and later—to save her life—her arms were cut off.

The boy was broken-hearted; he wanted to put himself out of the world. He had always loved his little sister, but just 'one drink' had made him wild. He never took a drop of intoxicating drink after that 'black day' in his life's calendar. But even his remorseful agony could not bring back the dimpled arms to his beloved little sister. His hair grew white before he was of age. Notwithstanding his father's wealth his days are spent in hard manual labor. He wants to forget that black day, but he cannot. No matter how tired he is, he never rests his weary head upon the pillow without this thought haunting him:

'Janie's dear little arms!—Janie's dear little arms! The price of just one drink'