

Advent thought, vividly contrasting "the great humility" of our Lord's first Epiphany, with "the glorious Majesty" in which He shall come again.

MR. GLADSTONE ON DISESTABLISHMENT.

At the St. Asaph Diocesan Conference last month a letter addressed by Mr. Gladstone to the Bishop of St. Asaph was read. It was written in reply to an invitation to state his views upon disestablishment. But the Premier is very cautious. All he has to say on the suggested topic is contained in these sentences:

"When I undertook to contribute a letter (in default of personal attendance) towards the work of the Diocesan Conference, I did not anticipate the autumnal controversy in which the political world is now engaged, and I fear that any attempt to redeem a pledge given under other circumstances will be poor and inadequate even in comparison with what it might otherwise have been from the cares and distractions which the controversy daily brings upon me. At the same time I had not even at the outset any ambitious plan before me. I did not prepare to enter on the wide field of argument respecting the disestablishment of the Church, too vast for my available time, too polemical for one who has already more than enough of polemical matter on his hands. Will it come? Ought it to come? Must it come? Is it near, or is it somewhat distant, or indefinitely remote? All these are questions of interest which I could not touch with advantage unless it be at a single point—whether disestablishment would be disastrous or not. I think it clear that there is only one way in which it might come to be disgraceful. That one way parts into two. Disestablishment would be disgraceful if it were due to the neglect, indifference, or deadness of the Church. But this is a contingency happily so improbable that for present purposes it may be dismissed without discussion. It might also be disgraceful were it to arrive as a consequence of dissensions among the members of the Church. This, as it appears to me, would be an unworthy termination of a controversy which ought to be settled upon far higher grounds, and the particular "duty of Churchmen with regard to disestablishment," which I shall try in few words to set forth, is the duty of taking care that dissensions from within shall not bring establishment to its end."

Mr. Gladstone thus quietly shelve the question he was invited to answer. He contents himself with expounding the circumstances in which disestablishment, if it came, would be in his judgment disgraceful. His manifesto is an *cirenicon*, and its purpose to exhort High, Low, and Broad to live in peace, lest they bring the house down over their heads. An English journal, commenting upon the letter, says:—

"As we read it, Mr. Gladstone counsels a truce to be maintained by silence. If those who love the Gospel of God are deluded into the acceptance of this device, they must inevitably find themselves betrayed. Their opponents on both sides are eager and zealous enough in their propagandism, and the Ritualistic party can boast of progress which a few years ago would have been scouted as impossible. There are thousands of Christians outside the National Church who would never venture to raise a finger in favour of Disestablishment if her pulpits were occupied by godly and evangelical preachers. Were the Church, however, given over either to a cold unbelief or to a florid ritual scarcely distinguishable from Romish worship, there are thousands within her pale who, through loving her for her glorious past, would consent without a sigh to her severance from the State. There would be nothing disgraceful in the driving out of Rationalism and Ritualism, even though Disestablishment should fol-

low. If pure evangelical truth prevailed throughout her borders she would command the sympathy and love of all who hold the Head. But if a policy of suppression and compromise be adopted the results must be more disastrous in the future than they have ever been in the past."

It then quotes the statement made by Mr. Edwards at the sixth annual Conference of the Evangelical Protestant Union held in Manchester last month:—

"There were terrible trials and dangers ahead. The Church of England would shortly require the aid of all her sons to keep her from falling. Why did not the bishops rise in their right and in their might, and with God's help cleanse the Church by another Reformation and save their country? Instead of this they saw a fatal spirit of compromise in things essential undermining the truth and sapping the vitality of the nation. There was a mixing up of truth and error, religion and fashion, Christianity and Ritualism, Christ and anti-Christ. The natural consequence was that with an enormous display of energy and zeal in their Church the spiritual life-blood of the nation was departing."

Upon which it comments:—

"These are brave words, and no less true than brave. They are spoken by one who loves the Church, and who evidently would preserve her if he could. Compromises of the character proposed are far more fatal to usefulness and Disestablishment. If the Church of England were separated from the State to-morrow, and yet set forth with one heart and voice the glorious Gospel of God, there would be no greater power in the whole realm of England. With this Gospel suppressed or darkened no millions of endowment and no increase of wordly authority could strengthen the weakness which would inevitably ensue. The value and honor of any Church lie in its fidelity to the truth of God. When this is absent there is the feebleness of death. The progress of events more than ever convinces us that if Disestablishment is at hand it will not be produced by what the Bishop of Liverpool calls the 'continued effort of well-meaning but mistaken Liberationists.' Not only the Church, but even religion itself, is more seriously threatened by the rising tide of indifference and infidelity which even now seems nearing flood."

The Sunday School.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

1st SUNDAY IN ADVENT, NOV. 30, 1884.

BIBLE LESSON.

True Wisdom.—Prov. 8: 1-17.

Wisdom makes her appeal to men. Our lesson naturally divides itself into two portions: The cry of wisdom and the worth of wisdom.

I. THE CRY OF WISDOM, vs. 1-5.—The wise man personifies wisdom. This is done to render the truth taught more striking and impressive. It is not necessary to inquire whether the wisdom that cries here be an attribute of God or the person of Emmanuel. We may safely take it for both or either. The wisdom of God is manifested in Christ, and Christ is the wisdom of God manifested. *Wisdom cries in language that every one can understand.* He cries to the sons of men continually and in a variety of ways. "Doth not wisdom cry?" She is in earnest. There is a *vehemence* in her style of address. We recognize already the style of that prophet who came in the fulness of time, speaking as never man spake. It was in this manner that Jesus, in the days of His flesh, stood and cried to the multitude, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." Before He was manifested to Israel His delights were with the sons of men. He found and used a willing messenger to preach righteousness to rebellious spirits in Noah's days. Neither did He leave Himself without a witness in the time of Solomon. The eternal son of God is not only wisdom in Himself, He is "made unto us wisdom." He who was seen by

Abraham afar off was heard by Abraham's seed in later days. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. The Word and Wisdom of God made Himself known to men at sundry times, and in divers manners, before He took flesh and dwelt among us. But the wisdom of God is a manifold wisdom. While it centres bodily in Christ, and thence issues as from its source, it is reflected and re-echoed from every object and every event. There is a challenge in the prophets, "O, earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!" The receptive earth has taken in that word, and obediently repeats it from age to age. 2. *Wisdom cries in places where none can fail to hear,* particularly wherever there is doubt or danger. From many a ruined fortune wisdom cries, "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy." From many an outcast in his agonies wisdom cries out, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long." From many a gloomy scaffold wisdom cries, "Thou shalt not kill." Every law of nature, and every event in history, has a tongue by which wisdom proclaims God's holiness, and rebukes man's sin. But is there any prophet of the Lord besides these? There is one. Giving force to all other imitations, there is a prophet of the Lord within every man—his own conscience. We are fearfully made. That witness within us is often feared and shunned more than armed men. It is the case of the ancient king over again; he is a prophet of the Lord, "but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me." Wisdom cries "in the top of high places." Her voice is heard from Sinai, from the Mount of Beatitudes, and from Calvary. She speaks in striking scenes and important events of life. She cries in the ordinary ways of life—"at the gates," at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors." Christ taught by the wayside, on the sea-shore, and in the streets of the city; so now the voice of wisdom may be heard at every turn, and in the multitudinous monotonies of every-day life. 3. *Wisdom speaks to all without exception.* Her cry is impartial—to all the race. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." The voice of wisdom is everywhere, and she speaks to every man, especially to those who stand most in need of her counsels.

II. THE WORTH OF WISDOM, vs. 6-17.—We have now the reasons why the offers of wisdom should be promptly accepted.

1. *Because of her intrinsic worth.* Wisdom is her own reward. Read chap. 3, 13-17. This is true even from a wordly standpoint. A man who has understanding is like a merchant with something which all will want to buy, and for which he can always get his price! An ignorant man gets nothing, because he has nothing which he can offer in return. [Illustr.—Clerk wanted, who will keep books, write and copy letters, can be generally trusted. What sort of person will get the post? One who has understanding—can read and write, cipher, has a good character. What will he get in return?] So understanding wins money and position. But if a man has silver, gold, riches, will not they do as well even if he have no understanding? [Must pay away his silver, &c. for —? (Food.) So in time all goes. More food wanted. What then?] If a man have understanding, gets his price for it, buys food, and what about the understanding? No less, always a stock on hand. [Cf. the purse of Fortunatus.] So which the most precious—silver or understanding? Wealth, or the power to win wealth?

If this is true of mere worldly wisdom, how much more is it true of the heavenly. She speaks of excellent things. "Excellent things" because "right things," the great principles of righteousness, the gravest of all concerns, the duty of man to his God and to his fellow-men. She speaks only truth. "For my mouth shall speak truth," without any admixture of wickedness. She speaks such truth as is always plain to men of upright and honest heart. They are plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge."

2. *Because of her gifts:* vs. 10-16. To realize her counsels in life is to be richer than if one owned all material wealth. "Receive my instruction and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold." Here, as in chapter 3: 14, 15, wisdom is put above silver and gold and all things which men regard as having the highest intrinsic value. "Receive my instruction, and not silver," was not designed to forbid men to receive silver, but to put in strong light the superior value of the instructions of wisdom. Forego any amount of silver; spend it never so freely if need be; deem it comparatively of no account, that you may by all means gain wisdom. Not with silver, gold, and rubies only is wisdom compared and found far better, but with all things less. "I wisdom dwell with prudence and find out knowledge of witty inventions." "Witty" follows the Old English sense of "wise," and not the modern idea—sharp, sparkling with quick turns of thought,

The idea of t sources. In hid all the tre reception of of the soul (v are received i effected with abides with v firmly, guides It is opposed as to all that of life she fur 3. *Wisdom seek me early me.* There doubt wether sense of "see in Matt.

III. IN C In Him we f He is the wo 17; Heb. 1: Matt. xi. 28- vii. 26, 27); 5 14; St. John John xiii. 33, 27-29, and 27- them is honc (Luke 10: 19 6), riches (Ro 16: 24; 17: 1 rant, the bur but seeks. I the descripti the chapter i "cry" has be but the Son c are all pupils be wise, wh "Jesus Chri wisdom; Jes want to get v Him, take H

THE

This collec fully blends t scribing Chri Epiphany of this time of p advents.

The first c How? In (i.) The W Being in forn God became xviii. 5). Cr humiliation.

(ii.) He c2 viii. 5). Now sin and death sin only exce weakness, hu greater humi

(iii.) He w 29.) Might l to throne—re ants, &c.] ar But no. Mc obscurity—h (Matt. viii. 2 died like crin of publicans; transgressors Yes; and H for God's Fel us!

2. But why For your sal Why?

(i.) The w darkness of i —of sin and vi. 22). Is tl ness? Yes!

(ii.) Christ iv. 2. [Illustr Light of the 2 and Matt. Satan, His re mandments— spirit the bli

II. The se again.

1. How? jesty! As a