



LESSON VI.—NOV. 11.

The Rich Man and Lazarus.

Luke xvi., 19-31. Memory verses, 19-22. Read Luke xvi., 19, to xvii., 10.

Daily Readings.

M. The Perils—Luke xviii., 18-30.
 T. The Fool—Luke xii., 13-21.
 W. The Wise—Proverbs xxx., 1-9.
 T. Prosperity—Psalm lxxiii., 1-28.
 F. Warnings—I Timothy vi., 1-21.
 S. Destinies—Matthew xxv., 31-46.

Golden Text.

'Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven.'—Matt. vi., 20.

Lesson Text.

(19) There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. (20) And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores. (21) And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which came from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. (22) And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died and was buried; (23) And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (24) And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. (25) But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. (26) And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. (27) Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: (28) For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. (29) Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. (30) And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. (31) And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Suggestions.

The fault of the rich man lay not in his possession of riches, but in his misuse of riches. He was not rich toward God. (Luke xii., 19-21.) He was a slave to mammon, worshipping luxury instead of God. (Luke xvi., 13.) He was an unwise, dishonest steward, neglecting every opportunity for doing good with his wealth and spending it instead in vain pomp and show. When the rich man made a feast he called in his rich neighbors and kinsmen— (Luke xiv., 12-14)—and the beggar who lay at his very doorway received the merest pittance of scraps thrown to him by the rich man's slaves.

The rich man is known as Dives, but that is simply the Latin designation of one who has riches, it is not a name. The names of rich men are well known on earth, but they are evidently not considered worth mention in Heaven, unless connected with some deed of love and mercy. It has been well said that gold is of no more consideration in Heaven than dust is here, for there they make the very streets of gold. A man is not honorable for his possessions, but for his use of those possessions. The greater the wealth the greater the responsibilities. It is not a sin to be rich, but it is an awful sin to misuse riches. A man who covets riches and obtains them, is no worse than a man who covets and does not obtain. God judges by the spirit, not by material

things. Riches may take to themselves wings—(Prov. xxiii., 5)—and vanish suddenly, but character is a permanent possession; at best the wealth of this world is only for this world, all must be laid down on this side of the grave. Woe to the man who by his love of money has robbed his soul of its eternal inheritance. It is easy enough to denounce the rich man, but it is safe first to look at home and see if there be in our own hearts any mammon worship, any lust of gain, any neglect of visible opportunities. To speak figuratively, Let us be sure there are no beggars lying unfed at our own doors.

The rich man's sins were those of omission (Matt. xxv., 41-43), but it was because his conscience was so atrophied by covetousness that he could endure the sight of the sick and suffering without wanting to relieve them. Love of gold had driven from his heart all love of God and humanity. His soul became so entangled with his sin that it was impossible to separate them, and as sin must be consumed by the fire of God's holiness, so that the soul that clings to sin must suffer the same fire. Not a material fire, but the complete exposure of the warped and sin-marked soul to the blazing light of holiness, and the burning torment of self-inflicted remorse. The blaze of holiness will only make brighter the robe of Christ's righteousness, in which the redeemed are clad, but it will cause to shrivel and burn that soul which dares to appear without that robe.

Lazarus was not rewarded merely on account of the sufferings he endured in this life. If he had been possessed of the same spirit as the rich man, his ultimate reward would have been probably the same as that of the rich man. His honor was not poverty, but faith. An unrepentant beggar has no more right to the glories of Heaven than has an unrepentant millionaire. Lazarus though an outcast of this earth, was at heart a child of God, and when God summoned him from this world he sent angels to bear him triumphantly home. Heaven is here represented as a great feast, at which the saints recline in Oriental fashion, the place of honor is next to Abraham, and Lazarus is allowed to lean upon his bosom. Afar off, the rich man having died, is suffering the fiery torments of conscience awakened too late. Seeing Abraham he cries out for mercy and begs that Lazarus may be sent with some alleviation for his pain. Someone has aptly remarked that this is the only prayer to a saint recorded in Scripture, and that it shows the futility of such prayers. Abraham points out the impassable gulf fixed between the destination of the redeemed and that of the unrepentant ones. Then Dives pleads for his brothers who are living the same life as he has done, praying that Lazarus may be sent back to warn them. But Abraham reminds them that they all have the Scriptures to study, they have the same privileges as had those who are already in heaven, and if they do not heed the warnings God has already given them neither will they heed even the voice of one raised from the dead.

This might seem a rather strong statement were it not for the fact that a little later a man actually did rise from the dead, at the bidding of our Lord—(John xi., 44)—and yet there were many who neither heeded nor believed. When our Lord himself rose from the dead there were many who saw him and yet doubted. (Matt. xxviii., 12-17.)

Questions.

Relate the parable of Dives and Lazarus. Does God judge us by our possessions or by our spirit? How can riches become a curse to their owner? How can they be made a blessing? What were the sins of the rich man in the parable? Is it any use to pray to anyone but God? If we have disobeyed God and refused to repent in this life, is there any way to change after death?

C. E. Topic.

Nov. 11.—A decision for Christ. Luke xiv., 25-33.

Junior C. E. Topic.

Mon, Nov. 12.—Tears and mourning. Ezek. ii., 10.

Tues., Nov. 13.—Heavy taxation. Matt. xxiii., 4.

Wed., Nov. 14.—Lost opportunities. James iii., 12.

Thur., Nov. 15.—Wrecked Future. Jere., viii., 15.

Fri., Nov. 16.—Noblemen. Heb. ii., 7.
 Sat., Nov. 17.—Citizenship in Heaven. Gal. v., 21.

Sun., Nov. 18.—Topic—Intemperance; what does it cost our nation? Prov. xxiii., 15-21. (Quarterly temperance meeting.)

If Ye Faint Not.

(By Fanny Hurrell.)

Harry Lawrence was the naughtiest boy in Langton Sunday school. His teacher had remonstrated with him again and again, but entirely without effect.

At last she said to the superintendent, 'I must ask you to remove Harry from my class. He is so troublesome that he is quite beyond me. Yet I like the boy, and I shall be sorry to give him up.'

'Oh, don't despair about him,' said Mr. Oldham, the superintendent, 'I can assure you that your influence is already telling greatly on the lad. He is not half so bad as he used to be.'

Miss Mortimer shook her head. 'It is very good of you to say so, and I will keep on trying a little longer, but I fear it is of no use.'

That Sunday night she had a strange dream. She thought she was digging a little plot of ground. The soil was very poor, and seemed to yield no fruit to her labors, but something prompted her to go on working. There were several other plots around her, and some of them were very fair and beautiful. Those who tended them looked happy and satisfied. Ah! why could she not have had one of these?

At last she thought in her dream that she really must throw her tools on one side, and give up this fruitless task, when she suddenly heard a voice beside her, saying these words: 'Be not weary in well-doing. . . . Ye shall reap, if ye faint not.'

She turned and saw the Master to whom each plot belonged. She saw it was he, because she had seen him in her dream going to the various workers and uttering words of encouragement.

'Oh, Master,' she murmured, 'I am so weary. The garden yields nothing. It is useless to go on toiling. Shall I ever gain any reward for my labors?'

'Again the tender voice spoke, "If ye faint not."'

The next Sunday her naughty pupil was missing, and on going to inquire for him she found he was very ill with congestion of the lungs. Her heart went out to the boy more than it had ever done, and she stayed some time with him.

When she rose to go the boy's gaze was fixed on her face as if he wanted to say something.

'What is it, laddie?' she asked, kindly. 'I'm so glad you didn't give in, teacher. I thought I would just see who could hold out the longest, you or me, and you did. . . . If I get better I've made up my mind to be different, with God's help.'

Miss Mortimer recalled her dream. She bent down and kissed her tiresome pupil. How true God was to his promise, she thought reverently.—'Sunday-School Times,' London.

The behaviour that is allowed in many Sunday-schools destroys the feeling of respect for sacred things in general. If an irreverent posture and whispering is allowed when the superintendent offers prayer, is it strange if the same conduct is seen when the pastor leads the devotions of the people in the public congregation? Reverence for God's house should be inculcated in the Sunday-school. To be successful the superintendent and teachers must be firm. They must co-operate in this purpose, as well as in any other, to avoid failure. Teachers must give the scholars a wholesome example of how to behave in the house of God. We have known teachers whose conduct in this respect was very far from what it should have been. It had a bad effect upon the class, as it, from the necessity of the case, would have. In addition to a proper example, the teacher must reprove irreverent conduct when scholars become guilty of it. This reproof should be kind, but decided. It may be done in the class, or in a private interview with the offender, as the sanctified common-sense of the teacher may consider the most likely to accomplish the purpose.—'Evangelical Sunday-School Teacher.'