

CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

CONDUCTED BY S. JOHN DUNCAN-CLARK.

WORLD'S C. E. PRAYER CHAIN, SUBJECT FOR MARCH.—FOR the young converts who have recently been brought to Christ, that they may be strong, unselfish, winsome Christians, and that they may begin at once to show their love to Christ by working for Him.

Daily Readings.

KEEPING OUR PLEDGE.

First Day—It means trusting—Isa. xii. 1-6.
Second Day—It means working—1 Sam. xii. 20-25.
Third Day—It means persevering—Luke ix. 57-62.
Fourth Day—It means remembering—Ps. cxix. 97-104.
Fifth Day—It means helping—Job xxix. 1-25.
Sixth Day—It means praying—2 Kings xix. 14-19, 35.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, Mar. 15.—KEEPING OUR PLEDGE IN SPIRIT AND IN LETTER.—Matt. xxvi. 31-41.

A favorite anecdote with some of our old-time preachers was of a wag taking the sign intended for a wood worker's shop, "All kinds of twisting and turning done here," and placing it over the door of a meeting-house, whose pastor, as Mrs. Partington says, dispensed with the Gospel. Apt as this doubtless was, there is a good deal of twisting and turning besides that which is done by those who are bent on making the Bible conform to their own hand-made theology.

Do you ever, dear Endeavorers, twist and turn your vows, as Christians, to make them fit your worldly inclinations? The devotee of doubtful pleasures declares that she believes God wants us to do the things that give us most enjoyment, and straightway chooses her pleasures, not, however, because she believes God wants her to do these things, but because she wishes it herself. In short, we have only to look about us and observe some of the people who are complaisantly wearing the name Christian, to be convinced that people make it mean anything or nothing, according to what they want it to mean. In a good many societies the Endeavor pledge has become so badly bent to fit the crooked lives of those who have taken it, that it has ceased to be a tower of strength. Are you in the habit of adding to the promise to "do whatsoever He would like to have you do," the conclusion that, of course, He would like to have you do as you please; or that calling out the number of a hymn, or rattling off a verse in which you haven't a particle of heart, is taking a part in the prayer-meeting? If you are, I am afraid there has been some twisting and turning down here.

"The best thing about the Christian Endeavor movement," says *The Interior*, "is what is most frequently criticised, the pledge. It is worth a good deal for a young person to learn that life does not consist of general purposes to do about right, but of specific convictions and stern resolutions. There is no use of trying to be a nebula where God needs stars. The world needs compacted men, men who have come to definite conclusions, and who mean to stand by them and are not afraid to say so. A man cannot sell a horse without coming to a point as to his value and what he will take for him. A young woman cannot get married until she make up her mind to say either yes or no, and to say it decidedly for all time. 'If Jehovah be God,' said Joshua, 'serve Him.'"

FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

CONDUCTED BY S. JOHN DUNCAN-CLARK.

International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON XI.—TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER.—MAR. 15.

(Luke xi. 1-13.)

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."—Luke xi. 9.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Prayer.

AXIOMS.—Our Lord's Prayer, v. 1-4.
Parable, v. 5-8.
recepta, v. 9-10.
romise, v. 11-13.

TIME AND PLACE.—A.D. 29, in Perea; Jesus on His way to Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTORY.—There are no recorded events between the last lesson and this one. The interval was probably short. The account in Luke x. 38-42 of Jesus' visit to Martha and Mary at Bethany seems properly to belong after Luke xiii., as the visit doubtless occurred near the end of the journey which Jesus was now making through Perea to Jerusalem.

VERSE BY VERSE.—V. 1. "As He was praying."—Luke is the Gospel of the Son of Man, and so tells us more concerning the prayers of Christ than any one of the other three. If the Master needed to be so frequently in prayer, how much more the disciples. "Lord teach us to pray."—The disciples realized that there was something in the prayers of Jesus which their prayers did not possess. They wished to prevail in prayer as He did, and they went to Him for teaching. Let us also enter Christ's school of prayer, and learn the secret of touching the Throne, and opening the gates of Heaven.

V. 2. "When ye pray, say."—Christ taught His disciples to pray, but He never taught them to preach. It is more important that you should be able to hold converse with God, than that you should be able to speak to the people; for if by prayer you can enter into touch with Him, and hear His voice, you need fear no difficulty when you come to deliver His message. The following beautiful paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer is quoted from Bernard in the S.S. Lesson Illustrator,—

"OUR FATHER"—by right of creation, by bountiful provision, by gracious adoption; "WHO ART IN HEAVEN"—the throne of Thy glory; the temple of Thine angels; "HALLOWED BE THY NAME"—by the thoughts of our hearts, by the words of our lips, by the work of our hands; "THY KINGDOM COME"—of providence to defend us, of grace to refine us, of glory to crown us; "THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN"—toward us without resistance, by us without compulsion, universally without exception; "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"—of necessity for our bodies, of eternal life for our souls; "AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES"—against the commands of Thy law, against the grace of Thy Gospel; "AS WE FORGIVE THOSE THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US"—by defaming our characters, by embezzling our property, by abusing our persons; "AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL"—of overwhelming affliction, of worldly enticement, of error's seduction, of sinful affections; "FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER"—Thy kingdom governs all, Thy power subdues all, Thy glory is above all; "AMEN"—as it is in Thy purpose, so it is in Thy promises, so be it in our prayers, so shall it be to Thy praise.

V. 5-8. This parable is intended to teach earnestness and importunity in prayer. The selfish friend is not compared, but rather contrasted with the loving Father. The argument is, if persistent importunity would win from a selfish man the gifts required, how much more shall the heart of the Father be touched by the persevering prayers of His believing children.

V. 9. "Ask . . . seek . . . knock."—Pray earnestly, persistently, perseveringly. It was only when Abraham stopped pleading for the cities of Sodom that the Lord went His way. Gen. xviii. 33. It was not until the word came, "There is not a vessel more," that the oil stayed. 2 Kings iv. 6. Oh, when shall we learn to "fill our mouths with great words and utter prayer fit for heaven?" Never did God say, "There is no more oil;" it is always man that says, "There is no more room."

V. 11, 12.—Thus the gifts Satan bestows have some likeness to to object which the heart of man seeks, but are useless as is the stone, or fatal as the serpent or the scorpion. Human fathers do not give such gifts, and yet how often we deem the bread God gives, a stone, the fish, a serpent, and the egg, a scorpion, totally misunderstanding the character of His best gifts.

V. 13. God's promises show that difficulties are meant to increase faith, not to discourage us. God means prayer to be answered. Failure is always with us, never with Him.

BY WAY OF ILLUSTRATION.—"Every one that asketh receiveth."

Once during his last days, when Spurgeon returned from Men-tone, he inquired about the treasury of the Orphanage at a meeting of the deacons. He was laughingly told he would have to "work another miracle" for there was but a small balance left. "Let us ask our Heavenly Father for what we want." They knelt and prayed. Rising, Spurgeon said, "Now let us see what we can do ourselves." He took a sheet of paper, wrote down \$250, and passed it to his nearest neighbor. When it returned to him it contained a promise of \$2,500. Returning to his home and crossing the hall to his study he heard the servant say, "No one can see the master to-night," and a voice in reply remonstrating. "What is the matter there?" said Spurgeon. "Oh! Mr. Spurgeon," the gentleman said, "I have come a long way to see you. I promised them in India to give \$3,500 to your Orphanage, and I have brought you the money." The first letter Spurgeon opened the next morning contained also \$3,500. Here was \$9,000 in less than twenty-four hours to a man who dared to "ask."