

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XIV.

April 4, 1884. } THE POWER OF CHRIST. } Mat viii 18-19.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"—Mat. 8: 27.

HOME STUDIES.

- M. Matt. v. 1-17. Miracles Wrought.
- T. Matt. viii. 18-34. Power of Christ.
- W. Isa. xli. 1-13. Compassionate Saviour.
- Th. Matt. ix. 1-17. Power to Forgive Sin.
- F. Mark iv. 30-41. Power over Nature.
- S. Matt. ix. 18-38. Power over Disease and Death.
- Sab. Luke vii. 1-17. The Widow's Son Raised.

HELPS TO STUDY.

Last quarter's lessons brought us to the end of Christ's Sermon on the Mount.

We now take up Matthew's narrative almost unbroken, the only intervening events being the cleansing of a leper (viii. 1-4), the healing of the centurion's servant (5-13), and of Peter's mother-in-law and others (14-17).

The lesson may be divided as follows: (1) Christ's Power over Men, (2) Christ's Power over Nature, (3) Christ's Power over Demons.

**1. CHRIST'S POWER OVER MEN.—Vers. 18-22.** Christ, being God, has the same absolute power over men that He has over the rest of the universe; but He prefers to govern those whom He saves, not by force, but through their affections. He fills their hearts with love to Himself, His people and His cause; and thus leads them to say, honestly, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. This profession may, however, sometimes be made from motives of self-interest, and with wrong views of duty.

**1. A Fair Profession.—Ver. 19.** That is the worst that can be said of the scribe's offer. If honest and disinterested it would be a good profession. But the Saviour, who knew what was in man, apparently had reason to question it, and to present a warning.

**2. Will it Bear the Test?—Ver. 20.** What do you expect? worldly benefit? comfort? ease and security? The path I tread leads through hardship and suffering. Will you follow Me? Count the cost. The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head; will you share His lot? Such an answer as this would not discourage a true believer.

**3. A Plausible Excuse.—Ver. 21.** The Saviour would not belittle the obligation to pay the last tribute of respect to a father. The harm was in placing that obligation first.

**4. No Excuse Accepted.—Ver. 22.** The first duty is to follow Christ. Other duties, if they hinder us from this, must yield. The true disciple will follow Christ first, and bury his father afterwards—not that he loves his father less but that he loves Christ more. If he cannot do both (not very likely to happen) then he will let the (spiritually) dead bury their (literally) dead.

**II. CHRIST'S POWER OVER NATURE.—Vers. 23-27.** The sea to be crossed was the Lake of Gennesaret, also called the Sea of Galilee or the Sea of Tiberias. The ship used was what we would call a boat. The "S. S. Times" says:

"The presence of Jesus does not forbid storms and tempests to beat on His disciples. When we have trials and disappointments in the path of duty; when our best efforts seem to bring about least good; when we are misunderstood or misrepresented in our most unselfish endeavours for the welfare of others, or for the promotion of God's cause; when our very devotedness to Jesus brings us into troubles we might otherwise have avoided; when, moreover, we see the godliest men and saintliest women of our acquaintance suffering to a greater degree than those who are less worthy,—we are inclined to wonder that such things should happen under such circumstances, or to such persons; but this is God's way with his best loved children. It is not freedom from danger, but safety in danger, that comes of a nearness to the Son of God and the Saviour of men. 'With Christ in the vessel' we may 'smile at the storm;' but the storm is there, as well as the Saviour. 'Clouds and darkness' are yet about His throne; and it is the sunlight struggling through the clouds which gives the 'rainbow' there."

**2. A Little Faith.—Vers. 26.** The disciples were not entirely destitute of faith. It was good for them that they had faith enough to make them cry Lord save us; we perish; but they are found fault with for not having had faith enough to dispel their fears. The paper already quoted says:

"If our Saviour is to be trusted, why not trust Him? If He is not to be depended on, what is the use of looking to Him for help? The disciples on the sea probably reasoned for themselves that the storm was a severe one, and that their vessel was unsuited to resist its force; foundering was therefore their reasonable expectation. So they were sore afraid. But if they had reasoned a little further they would have seen that they had with them One who was able and willing to save them. A quiet word to Him would secure a potent word from Him, and they would be at ease. But no, their reason worked just far enough to frighten them; and there it stopped. Then they cried to Jesus, 'Lord, save us!' But what did that cry mean? If they had faith that Jesus could save them, what were they frightened about?"

If it was unreasonable to believe that He could give them help, why did they call on Him to do so? That is just the way with most of us. We have little reason, and less faith; just enough of either to keep us in a worry. If we are the disciples of Jesus, it is the most reasonable thing in the world to believe that He will do all He can for us. If He is all that we think Him to be, He can do anything that we need to have done for us. Why, then, are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"

**3. A Great Calm.—Ver. 26.** The elements are His servants; He says to one go, and it goeth, and to another come, and it cometh. He rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a great calm.

**4. What Manner of Man is this? He is man, for He needed sleep; He is God, for He ruled the storm.**

**III. CHRIST'S POWER OVER DEMONS.—Vers. 28-34.** What Matthew calls the country of the Gergesenes is called by Mark (v. 1) and by Luke (viii. 26) the country of the Gadarenes. Gadara and Gergesa were towns near the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, and the district of country in which these towns were was named sometimes after one, sometimes after the other.

**1. Demoniacal Possession.—Ver. 28.** On this subject Jacobus says: "The devils were allowed such a fearful manifestation on earth, the better to manifest Christ's work of destroying the works of the devil."

**2. Demons know the Truth that Impels's Deny.—Ver. 29.** The devils believe and tremble (James ii. 19). They do not seem to have any doubt about future punishment, neither do they seem to have any hope of escaping it; they merely object to being tormented before the time (See 2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6; Rev. xx. 21).

**3. A very small Favour Begged and Granted.—Vers. 31, 32.** It would appear that if these evil spirits were expelled from the men, and not permitted to connect themselves with some other form of physical life, they would be under the necessity of betaking themselves to what Luke calls "the abyss" which is supposed to mean the place of punishment. So, the permission to enter the swine gave them but a very short respite. Pigs are somewhat unmanageable.

**4. The Prayer of the Gadarenes.—Ver. 34.** The town or city of Gadara was inhabited by a colony of Greeks. The Saviour's action had interfered with one of their staple industries, the raising of pork, which they followed in contravention of the Jewish laws. They preferred their swine to Christ and His salvation, so they went in a body and besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts. Others besides the Gadarenes have entertained the same prayer in their hearts, being unwilling to part with (not their swine but) their lusts. May all our Sabbath school children, who have not already done so, soon learn a better prayer than the prayer of the Gadarenes.

UNCLE TIM'S TALENT.

Uncle Tim held up his saw and squinted along the teeth to see whether it was "losing its set." He failed to decide, in his surprise at finding that he was taking aim at the minister, who stepped in range just at that moment on the street side of the fence. His eyes came into gear again as he laid his saw on the woodpile and stepped up to the fence, saying, "Well, it is queer. It's only a minute ago I was thinkin' about you. I was thinkin' what a good sermon that was you gave us last Sunday mornin', an' how I would tell you so the first time I see you."

Uncle Tim was the wood-sawyer and days' work factotum for the village. Unlearned as he was, the minister always missed him if he was absent from church—he was such a helpful listener. And to Uncle Tim's compliment he replied, "You told me what you thought of it at the time, in the way you listened to it; though, for that matter, you always seem to be interested. I don't suppose you know what a comfort such a hearer is to a minister. If all the congregation were like you I think it would turn my poor sermons into good ones."

"Thank you," said Uncle Tim, "I don't always get the hang of everything that's said. But I should get less if I didn't give attention. An' I always says to myself, 'The minister he works hard to write his sermons an' if folks don't listen to 'em it's pretty discouragin'.' An' I says, 'You can't put much into the contribution-box, Tim, an' you can't talk in prayer meetin', but you can count one in listening,' you can try to 'preciate what other folks do.'"

"The talent for appreciating is an excellent one to have," remarked the minister.

"Well, as I look at it, it's one as isn't denied to nobody," said Uncle Tim. "An' if it's the only one I've got I'll try not to wrap it in a napkin. When Deacon Mason does me good by one of his experience talks in prayer meetin' I think it's no more'n right he should know it. 'Praps he has times of thinkin' he can't say anything worth while, an' it stan's to reason that he can talk better if he knows he's doing somebody some good. An' when Widdler Hatch is makin' such a gitty fight to keep her children together an' give 'em an education, I think mebbe it makes it a little easier for her to stan' up to it if a neighbour drops a word of 'preciation once in a while.'"

The minister said nothing, but there was a look of 'preciation' on his face, and Uncle Tim continued, "The other day I see the young schoolmarm was lookin' worn-out and sober like. I imagined them big boys from the Holler was worrin' the life out of her. An' I didn't know how I could help that. But at noon I just went down to the school-house purpose to tell her how nice our gran'son was gettin' along with his 'rithmetic. An' she said it was better than

half a dozen cups of tea for cheerin' her up. She did. An' when I see Sanford's boy take a little Irish girl's part that the other boys were tormentin', an' they jeerin' him, I went up to him an' I says, 'Uncle Tim's nothin' but a wood-sawyer, but he knows enough to see that you've got the stuff of a gentleman in you.' You see old folks don't notice the boys enough. An' there's Jim Brady, a drinkin', card-playin', shootin' match creetur', who goes around a good deal like a dog without an owner. He knows folks despise him. But Jim's right handly with tools, an' when I take my saw to him to have it filed, an' tell him he does that job better'n any other man I know, I think it helps him to have a little more respect for himself, I do. You see it's dreadful easy to look at faults in children, an' faults in hired folks, and faults in avers-keepers, an' faults in prayer meetin's. But as I look at it we'd do a great deal better to think more about the good things in 'em."

"To have the talent for appreciation, as you call it," said the minister.

"I dunno as that's quite the thing to call it," responded Uncle Tim. "My wife, she says to me once in a while, 'It's nigh onto fifty years that you've been tellin' me that you love me. An' I know you do. But I don't want you to stop sayin' it. I want you to keep tellin' it as well as livin' it.' An' I says, it's not only a talent of 'preciation that's needed but a talent of tellin' it."

Uncle Tim screwed up his face for another squint along his saw teeth, and the minister walked away, reflecting how much brighter and better the world would be if all of us had the talent for appreciating the good things in others, and added to this appreciation Uncle Tim's "talent for tellin' it."—*Christian Weekly.*

TRUTHS FOR SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD MEN.

Remember, my son, that the world is older than you are, by several years; that for thousands of years it has been so full of smarter and better young men than yourself that their feet stuck out of the dormer windows, that when they died the old globe went whirling on, and not one man out of ten million went to the funeral, or even heard of the death.

Be as smart as you can, of course. Know as much as you can without blowing the packing out of your cylinder-heads. Shed the light of your wisdom abroad in the world; but don't dazzle people with it, and don't imagine a thing is so simple because you say it is. Don't be too sorry for your father because he knows so much less than you do. Remember the reply of Dr. Wayland to the student of Brown University who said it was an easy enough thing to make proverbs such as Solomon wrote "Make a few," wisely replied the old man. And we never heard that the young man made any; not more than two or three, anyhow. The world has great need of young men, but no greater need than young men have of it. Your clothes fit you better than your father's fit him; they cost more money, they are more stylish, your moustache is neater, the cut of your hair is better, and you are prettier, O, far prettier than 'pa.' But, young man, the old gentleman gets the biggest salary, and his honey, scrambling signature on the business end of the check will draw more money out of the bank in five minutes than you could get out with a ream of paper and a copper-plate signature in six months.

Young men are useful, and they are ornamental, and we all love them, and we couldn't engineer a picnic successfully without them. But they are no novelties, my son. O no, nothing of the kind. They have been here before. Do not be so modest as to shut yourself clear out; but don't be so fresh that you will have to be put away to keep from spoiling. Don't be afraid that your merit will not be discovered. People all over the world are hunting for you, and if you are worth finding they will find you. A diamond isn't so easily found as a quartz pebble, but some people search for it all the more intently.—*Burroughs' Hawkeye.*

DR. HOWARD CROSBY says: "The preacher who exaggerates, so that the coarse world exclaims 'he lies!' who takes advantage of his position to make sweeping assertions unsusceptible of proof; who manufactures his facts, and stakes everything on an ant thesis; or, again, the preacher who makes engagements only to break them; who is ever ready to say yes, without any regard to the issue; who raises hopes and leaves them to wither—these are preachers who are steadily forming a sentiment in the world against the Gospel which they profess to preach, for there is no hing on which the world has such correct notions (however little it practises them) as the necessity for truth and honour in a high and guiding soul."

THE following has been announced as the programme for the observance of the centenary of Sabbath-schools in London.—June 26. Reception of foreign delegates at No. 56 Old Bailey. June 28: noon, inaugural meeting at the Guildhall; evening, choral service in St. Paul's Cathedral. June 29. morning, first meeting of the International Convention at No. 56 Old Bailey; afternoon, second meeting of the International Convention; evening, meeting in City Road Chapel. June 30. gathering of teachers and scholars at the Crystal Palace, concert by the great oracles, singing on the terraces, etc. July 1. morning and afternoon meeting of the International Convention; evening, great meeting in Exeter Hall. July 2: meetings of the International Convention; evening, sermon by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, and communion service at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. July 3. unveiling of the Raikes Memorial Statue on the Thames embankment; afternoon, concert in the Royal Albert Hall.