

could they see that which they took no pains to discover? How could they believe that which they denied when it was told them?"

Among recent statements made by the public press about China are these: 1. That not much has been accomplished by missions save by the early Jesuits, and that there is little hope of reaching the Chinese by any foreign religion; 2. That there is no liberty for foreigners to travel in China, even on what may be regarded as among the principal lines of travel; 3. That the use of opium in China is by no means the terrible evil it has been represented to be. Without any attempt to fully meet these points, we will here present as briefly as possible some recent testimonies bearing upon them.

1. It is sufficient to refer to the statistics of missionary bodies now working in China to show the remarkable progress of Christianity in recent years. In 1843, the numbers of converts in all Protestant missions in China did not exceed six. At the Shanghai Conference, held in 1877, the church members were reported as 13,035, while the adherents were reckoned at not less than 50,000. From only ten of the twenty-six societies, whose reports were embraced in the summaries presented at Shanghai, have late reports reached us. But these ten are the principalsocieties, British and American, and they included more than two-thirds of the Protestant church-membership reported in 1877. Out of the 13,035 communicants enumerated at the beginning of 1877, these ten societies had on their rolls 8,740. They had at the beginning of 1880, as shown by their last printed report, 12,344, making a gain within three years of 3,804, or over 41 per cent. If a like rate of increase has been made by other societies, and we know of no reason why it should not be so, the number of Protestant communicants a year ago was not less than 18,300. The indications are that the accessions for the year just closed will exceed anything heretofore received. The missionaries find the Chinese accessible, and reasonably steadfast. The argument against attempts to Christianize them, drawn from the instability and poor success of Jesuit missions, ought not to have the least force with Protestants. What can be expected of a Christianity without the Bible, which counts as its converts not those who intelligently apprehend and accept the truths of divine revelation, but all who can be persuaded to submit to the external rite of baptism? Protestant missions, based, not on Confucius, but on the Bible, are bringing forward a new class of men in China. The Chinaman is conservative, but the gospel touches and transforms him, as it does the men of every race. Sir Rutherford Alcock, a competent authority in this matter, says, in an article in the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1880: "It is singular, indeed, to observe how slowly, yet surely, the Chinese as a nation, and their rulers are realizing the fact, all important to them, that Confucius did not teach everything good to know."

2. That there is freedom to travel and locate in China may be learned from the following extract from an official report made last year by the English consul at Han-Kow to his government. He says: "Numerous parties have gone inland either on business or pleasure, and the invariable testimony has been, that although the conveniences and comforts of European travel along established routes are not to be met with, you can travel through China as easily and safely as you can in Europe when and where you leave the main road." In corroboration of this statement, it is enough to say that two female missionaries traveled more than a thousand miles

through the interior of China, far away from the "open ports," and this without European escort. They have settled quietly, and are at work, without the least molestation. The China Inland Mission has its men located in eleven provinces, and itinerating somewhat in four other provinces.

3. As for the influence of opium in China let the following extract from a letter from the interior province of Shensi, dated August 14, 1880, suffice: "If any need to be persuaded of the evils of opium, they should spend a week here, and listen to the daily histories of women, on the most trivial pretexts, trying to put an end to their lives. Mr. King is at this moment called to another case. One little girl of seven was brought who had followed the example of her seniors, but, happily, had got too little from the ashes of her guardian's pipes to injure herself much. There are two hundred places where opium is sold on this short street."

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.

Sunday, April 24.

COVETOUSNESS.—Luko xii. 13-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.—v. 15.—And He said unto them, take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Commit 13-15.

INTRODUCTION AND CONNECTION.

Judging from Luke's account, we might suppose that the words that constitute our present lesson were uttered in close connection with those of our last; indeed, the opening words of our present chapter seem clearly to imply that it was during the time occupied by the meal in the Pharisee's house, that the multitude had increased without, until they literally trod one upon another; and that our Lord's previous conversation furnished the key-note for the opening portion of this chapter. But that all that is given in this chapter was uttered at this time, is very doubtful; and it seems hardly necessary to the ordinary purposes of instruction, to attempt to determine the exact connection of the various parts in regard to time and place, since after all that is said, there will be differences of opinion in regard to a good deal; and at the best, much that is attempted will be merely conjectural.

LESSON NOTES.

(13.) *And one of the company.*—one, probably, who, from the authoritative teachings and extraordinary works of Jesus, took Him to have, like Moses, divine authority to judge and decide in regard to worldly matters—said; *Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.* This abrupt and ill-timed request, so out of harmony with the spirit and tone of Christ's discourse, reveal the character of the man as that of one intent only on personal and worldly profit.

(14.) *Man—not friend,* as He said in v. 4, for the character and object of the applicant were clearly seen to be selfish and sordid, *who made me a judge and a divider over you?* This is one of Christ's pointed interrogatories which clearly suggests its own negative. It is as if He had said,—such is not my work. You have your own lawfully constituted authorities to whom to appeal in all such cases. I neither claim nor attempt to exercise any such authority. With His wonderful tact, however, for turning every incident to profit, the Lord makes the covetousness and greed of this man the basis for a most important and valuable lesson.

(15.) *And He said, take heed, (be on your watch,) and beware (be wary, be afraid of) of covetousness.* As love, whose root is unselfishness, is the spring and source of all good, so covetousness, whose root is selfishness, is the spring and source of all evil. (1 Tim. vi. 10.) *A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* Our life is a thing of vast importance, since upon it hangs the happiness or misery of Eternity. What madness, then, to forget the true value and end of life in heaping up a superabundance of the things that minister to it.

(16, 17.) And He spake a parable to them, saying: The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying—what shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow (store up) my fruits?

This man was already rich; but God added still more to his riches by sending him a bountiful harvest. Piety toward God would have reasoned thus:—All I have is God's gift—He gave me life, and breath, and all things that I possess. Now, as He has already given me all I need and vastly more, I will give this year's superabundance, all of it, back to Him. I will feed the hungry, clothe the destitute, educate the ignorant, solace the aged and infirm who have none to look to,—in short, I will spend it all in doing good and advancing God's cause in the world. But far otherwise did this man reason.

(18.) *He said:—this will I do, I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruit and my goods.* I will store them up. True, I have not room enough for them just now; but I will make room; and then I will heap up my treasures, and keep them all for myself. There was no thought of God, no thought of his fellow-men, no thought of anybody but himself.

(19, 20.) *And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry!* But God said to him, THOU FOOL! In what did this man's folly consist? First, in resolving to give himself up to unlimited animal pleasure;—and, secondly, in counting upon any period of time as assured, much less upon many years. A horse or an ox, could it reflect, might not be despised for making such a resolution; the pleasures of mere animal existence being all of which it is capable. But for a man, with an undying nature within him, a nature capable of knowing and loving God, and rendering to Him intelligent service, to look no higher than eating, drinking, and amusement, is indeed to be a fool. But God said something more something that he should have remembered God might say at any time—THIS NIGHT shall thy soul be required of thee! Awful warning! this night, this very night, thy soul shall be required of thee! Oh, how unlike to this were the many years he had been counting upon! Oh, how valueless are riches, or pleasure, or mirth, in the face of such a warning; and yet every one knows that in even a less time than that his soul may be required of him. Then *whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* He had provided them all for himself; and yet when God's call came, they must be left behind. On that awful journey he must go forth empty-handed, penniless, alone!

(21.) *So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.* In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, God may call; and who can imagine the awful poverty of him who is thus summoned to appear before God, with no Saviour to receive him, no robe of righteousness to cover him, no peace of God within him, no refuge in which to hide him—a homeless ruined, lost soul!

SUGGESTED THOUGHTS.

When God says *fool*, there is awful meaning in the word. It is not that one lacks ability to reason and discriminate, but that, having such ability, he prefers the worse to the better; and, with heavenly riches offered to, and urged upon him, he chooses his own way here, and eternal ruin hereafter.

Riches are valuable and important when used for the glory of God and the advancement of truth and righteousness; but they are a curse and a blight when used only for self, and the promotion of selfish aims.

The man whose treasures are all for this life, is poor, though rolling in luxury—the man whose treasures are all in Heaven, is rich though not having where to lay his head.

QUESTION SUMMARY.

(For the Children.)

(13.) What did a man of the company ask Jesus to do? (14.) What did Jesus say? What did He mean? That He did not come to this world to settle disputes about property.

(15.) What did he tell the people to beware of? What is covetousness? Is it forbidden in God's law? Where? Repeat the tenth commandment. (16-19.) What is this little story called? What is a parable? What is this one intended to teach?

Give the parable in your own words. (20.) What did God call this man? In what two ways had he shown himself a fool? Has God made us for something better than being lazy, eating, drinking, and being merry? What do you consider better? Can we be sure of living even *one hour*? Then, what ought we to be prepared for? What did God tell this foolish man would happen that very night? Would his riches, then, do him any good? Could he not take anything with him? (21.) Who are like this man? What is it to be *rich toward God*? It is to have God for your friend, Jesus for your Saviour, the Holy Spirit for your guide, the Bible for your rule, and Heaven for your home. Are you rich toward God? What will be your end if God calls you away tonight?

ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

Mr Green, in his admirable history of the English people, has the following in regard to the relations of England and the United States:

From the hour of American independence the life of the English people has flowed not in one current, but in two; and while the older has shown little signs of lessening, the younger has fast risen to a greatness which has changed the face of the world. In 1783 America was a nation of three millions of inhabitants, scattered thinly along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. It is now a nation of fifty millions, stretching over the whole continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In wealth and material energy, as in numbers, it far surpasses the mother-country from which it sprang. It is already the main branch of the English people, and in the days that are at hand, the main current of that people's history must run along the channel, not of the Thames and the Mersey, but of the Hudson and the Mississippi. But distinct as these currents are, every year proves more clearly that in spirit the English people is one. The distance that parted England from America lessens every day. The ties that unite them grow every day stronger. The social and political differences that threatened a hundred years ago to form an impassable barrier between them grow every day less. Against this silent and inevitable drift of things the spirit of narrow isolation on either side of the Atlantic struggles in vain. It is possible that the two branches of the English people will remain forever separate political existences. It is likely enough that the older of them may again break in twain, and that the English people on the Pacific may assert as distinct a national life as the two English peoples on either side of the Atlantic. But the spirit, the influence of all these branches will remain one. And in thus remaining one, before half a century is over it will change the face of the world. As 200,000,000 of Englishmen fill the valley of the Mississippi, as fifty millions of Englishmen assert their lordship over Australasia, this vast power will tell through Britain on the old world of Europe, whose nations will have shrunk into insignificance before it. What the issues of such a world-wide change may be, not even the wildest dreamer would dare to dream. But one issue is inevitable. In the centuries that lie before us the primacy of the world will lie with the English people. English institutions, English speech, English thought, will become the main feature of the political, the social and the intellectual life of mankind.

—Mark Twain says he has just received a letter from one of our "fellow-savages in the Sandwich Islands." It appears to be a most interesting epistle. One passage runs:—"A certain legislator was very much put out on account of the recent riot. He was put out of a two-storey window."