

MATERIAL FROM ENGLISH LITERATURE

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS.

I. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY. II. THE DAY OF JUDGMENT III. THE LAST SUPPER. JUDAS

BY PROFESSOR MYRA REYNOLDS, F.I.D.,
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They spread their garments beneath His feet,
And strew'd green palms on the rock-hewn way:
"Great Son of David," in greeting sweet,
"Blessed art Thou," they did sing and say;
"Hosanna!"

Lo, when He marked from the mount's descent
Beautiful Salem in all her pride,
Under the olives He weeping went,
While bearing their palms her children cried,
"Hosanna!"

Mourner and Monarch, Thy tears are dry;
But the song of the palms shall ne'er be o'er,
For the multitudes yet following cry,
As the multitudes gone on before,
"Hosanna!"

II. *The Day of Judgment.*—In this lesson is given the test which is to be used as a basis for the final separation of men into two classes, the good and the evil. The blessed ones, those who are to inherit the kingdom, have served their fellow-men in the spirit of Christ. Those who are classed with the devil and his angels are those who have failed in such service. This is the underlying thought of Lowell's *The Search*. Nature and the world failed to disclose Christ to the earnest seeker. Even the forms of the church, prized more than Christ's living heart, had become but as veils to conceal him from men. At last, however, dear Love came and pointed to fresh-trodden prints of bare and bleeding feet.

Love looked me in the face and spake no words,
But straight I knew those footprints were the Lord's.
I followed where they led,
And in a hovel rude,
With naught to tence the weather from His head,
The King I sought for meekly stood;
A naked, hungry child
Clung round His gracious knee,
And a poor hunted slave looked up and smiled
To bless the smile that set him free;

I knelt and wept: my Christ no more I seek.
His throne is with the outcast and the weak.

In *A Parable* Lowell gives renewed emphasis to the faith that shows itself in deeds of love to the poor and the outcast. Christ is represented as visiting the earth to see how his brethren believe in Him. Chief priests, rulers, and kings greet the Mighty One with pomp and state. Great organs pour forth jubilant floods of praise, and everywhere His own image is set up for worship. But Christ sees that men care more for form and doctrine than for His real spirit of love toward the needy. He reproaches them sharply:

"Have ye founded your thrones and altars, then,
(On the bodies and souls of living men)
And think ye that building shall endure
Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor?"

"With gates of silver and bars of gold
Ye have fenced my sheep from their Father's fold;
I have heard the dropping of their tears
In heaven these eighteen hundred years."

"O, Lord and Master, not ours the guilt,
We build but as our fathers built:
Behold thine images how they stand,
Sovereign and sole through all our land."

Then Christ sought out an artisan,
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,
And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
Pushed from her faintly want and sin.

These set he in the midst of them,
And as they drew back their garment hem,
For fear of defilement, "Lo, here," said He,
"The images ye have made of Me!"

Mrs. Browning's *The Cry of the Children* embodies a pathetic protest against the inhumanity of employing young children in the mines and mills, and against the futility and hypocrisy of trying to teach these miserable little ones of the love of God:

They answer, "Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?"

When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.

Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?"

Swinburne's *Before a Crucifix* is a hopeless and bitterly strong arraignment of the fear, the lust, the greed of gain, that have sheltered themselves under the phantom of a Christless cross. He abhors "the Christian creeds that spit on Christ," and can see in the Christianity of his day no trace of the Christ "that lived, loved, wrought, and died" for man.

For the other side of the picture see Whittier's *St. Gregory's Guest*, closing with the stanzas:

Still, wherever pity shares
Its bread with sorrow, want, and sin,
And love the beggar's feast prepares,
The uninvited Guest comes in.

Unheard, because our ears are dull,
Unseen, because our eyes are dim,
He walks our earth the Wonderful,
And all good deeds are done to Him.

In Whittier's *By Their Works* we have another phase of this general theme simply expressed:

Call him not heretic whose works attest
His faith in goodness by no creed confessed.
Whatever in love's name is truly done
To free the bound and lift the fallen one
Is done to Christ. Whoso in deed and word
Is not against Him labors for our Lord.

The love to man which Christ so strongly enjoined upon His disciples was, at its best, but the faintest reflex of God's love to man. This thought finds expression in this stanza by John Hyrum:

What is more tender than a mother's love
To the sweet infant fondling in her arms?
What arguments need her compassion move
To hear its cries, and help it in its harms?

Now, if the tenderest mother were possessed
Of all the love within her single breast
Of all the mothers since the world began,
'Tis nothing to the love of God to man.

III. *The Last Supper. Judas.*—In this lesson we have a twofold outlook. Judas represents the malignity and hypocrisy which not even Christ can alter or subdue. The Supper commemorates the highest example of love to men, and is sanctified by the holiest possible communion of hearts high-sorrowful with love and the shadow of approaching death. In its extreme form we have again presented the world-old antithesis between love and hate. Various phases of this theme have found expression in literature. The longing of man for that full communion with God of which the Supper stands as the permanent symbol is the underlying thought in Tennyson's *The Holy Grail*. We feel in this poem the parity, the exaltation, of the soul "all whose love is drawn above." Even on earth he breathes the air of heaven, the pure lilies of paradise with odors haunt his dream, great hopes are his, fear is cast out, the organ-harmonies of the other world are in his ears, and he passes through life led by clear dream and solemn vision. A second part of the general theme has to do with the practical working out of the love that gives the feast its significance. Most of the poems referred to under "The Day of Judgment" would be equally applicable here. Lowell's poetry is permeated with the thought that no man truly keeps the Divine law whose life is not ruled by the Christian spirit of love to man.

In *The Vision of Sir Isumbras* the splendid young knight in his flaming armor goes forth to search for the Holy Grail, the symbol of Christ, but he loathes the foul leper, and, so long as there is in his heart selfish desire for personal spiritual aggrandizement or scorn of any living thing, this search is in vain. It is only when he can say to the leper,

"I behold in thee
An image of Him who died on the tree;
Thou, also, hast had thy crown of thorns—
Thou, also, hast had the world's buffets and scorn—
And to thy life were not denied
The wounds in the hands and feet and side;
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;
Behold, through Him, I give to thee!"

It is only when he shares his last crust with the horrible creature he had once despised that the glorified vision of the Son of Man appears to him. And the voice that was softer than silence said:

"Lo, it is I; be not afraid!
In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold, it is here—this cup which thou