

## The Sunday School.

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

## LESSON XX.

May 16, 1888. } THE MARRIAGE FEAST. { Matt. xxii. 1-14

GOLDEN TEXT.—"As many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage."—Matt. xxii. 9.

## HOME STUDIES.

- M. Matt. xx. 1-19... The Labourers.  
 T. Matt. xx. 20-34... The Ambitious Disciples.  
 W. Matt. xxi. 1-16... Christ's Triumphal Entry.  
 Th. Matt. xxi. 17-32... Christ's Authority Questioned.  
 F. Matt. xxi. 33-46... Wicked Husbandmen.  
 S. Matt. xxii. 1-14... Marriage Feast.  
 Sab. Luke xiv. 16-24... The Great Supper.

## HINTS TO STUDY.

After receiving little children and replying to the rich young man, as recorded in the passage which formed the subject of our last lesson, Christ delivered the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, answered the ambitious request of James and John, and departed from Peira, directing His steps towards Jerusalem by way of Jericho.

In the neighbourhood of Jericho He healed two blind men, and having entered that city He visited Zaccheus and delivered the parable of the Talents.

Six days before the passover He reached Bethany. There He passed the Jewish Sabbath; and on the first day of the week occurred His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The episodes of the barren fig tree and the cleansing of the temple follow, the Saviour spending each night at Bethany and returning to teach in the temple each day.

In the course of this teaching in the temple during the week preceding His death He delivered the parable of the Two Sons, that of the Wicked Husbandmen, and that which forms the subject of our present lesson.

The teachings of this parable may be arranged under the following heads: (1) *Invitation Rejected*, (2) *Retribution*, (3) *Invitation Accepted*, (4) *An Unworthy Guest*.

**I. INVITATION REJECTED.**—Vers. 1-6. This parable, like the two preceding ones already mentioned, exhibits primarily the wickedness and ingratitude of the Jews in their persistent rejection of God's offers of mercy notwithstanding their high privileges, and their utter rejection as a people on that account. It has also a direct application to nations and to individuals, in all ages, who reject the Saviour as the Jews did.

A certain King made a marriage for His Son. The King represents God, and the marriage feast signifies the abundant provision made in the work of redemption for man's salvation, support, and happiness.

Sent forth His servants. This generous King would exclude no one from the feast—the wayfaring man, come whence he might, would be welcome, but He sent special invitations. His servants, the prophets, had called the Jews to repentance; and His servants, the priests, had shewn them as in a glass, darkly, Christ crucified.

To call them that were bidden. The ceremonial dispensation had been a constant bidding, a repeated invitation, to the Jews, and all its material rites and observances pointed to the salvation that is in Christ.

They would not come. Instead of humbling themselves before God and seeking the pardon of sin through the atonement prefigured in their animal sacrifices, they vainly endeavoured to work out a righteousness for themselves by strict attention to ritual and by rendering a superficial obedience to the moral law falsely interpreted and corrupted.

Again He sent forth other servants. This second mission is supposed to represent John the Baptist, Christ Himself and His immediate disciples, Stephen, Barnabas, Paul, and others, who called upon the Jews to "behold the Lamb of God," slain before their eyes.

All things are ready, said these last messengers, come unto the marriage. A few believed and lived, but the great bulk of the nation either gave no heed or manifested the most bitter opposition.

They made light of it. That was one class; one thought more of his farm and another of his merchandise than they thought of Christ or salvation. This class was very large; and this kind of Judaism is very popular in the present day.

Entreated them spitefully and slew them. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee" (Matt. xxiii. 37). See also Acts iv. 3; v. 18; viii. 3; v. 40; xiv. 15-19; xvii. 5; xxi. 30; xxiii. 2; vii. 58; xii. 2.

**II. RETRIBUTION.**—Ver. 7. The King in the parable surely had reason to be angry. Those who ought to have rendered obedience to his commands had treated even his kind invitations with contempt. God is long-suffering and not easily provoked; but He tells us that He is "angry with the wicked every day." His anger is no transient ebullition of passion, but an uncompromising opposition and an unrelenting hatred to that which is evil, accompanied by the most tender pity and love to those who are its victims. Those who choose evil and cast in their lot with it can look only for destruction.

Destroyed those murderers. About seventy years after these words were spoken Jerusalem was destroyed by Roman armies, and the beautiful temple given to the flames. National sin brings national disaster; but for the individual there is a still more terrible punishment beyond.

**III. INVITATION ACCEPTED.**—Vers. 8-10. The door

of mercy had stood open to all in all ages; but now the special advantages and privileges formerly possessed by the Jews alone, were to be transferred to other nations.

They which were bidden were not worthy. Jacobus says: "The unworthiness consisted in their rejecting the provision, as the worthiness of the guests lay in their accepting it. This indicates the sentence passed upon the despisers and neglecters of the Gospel, whether Jews or Gentiles. The Jews, in rejecting the message, proved that they were not worthy of their high privileges. 'Seeing ye put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles'" (Acts xiii. 46).

Into the highways. Translated by Wickliff "the ends of ways." It means literally the outlets of streets, where several ways met; and the intention seems to be to shew that the Gospel call is without distinction. Even the apostles were slow to believe this, and it was only by a special revelation that Peter was brought to understand that "God also to the Gentiles" had "granted repentance unto life."

Both good and bad. The Saviour here speaks after the manner of men; for the Gospel is addressed to all as "bad," that is as sinners; and no one is "good" until he has received the Gospel and is sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

The wedding was furnished with guests. It was much easier for God to do without the Jews than it was for the Jews to do without God. "For I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. iii. 9).

**IV. THE UNWORTHY GUEST.**—Vers. 11-14. Not all who yield outward allegiance to the Gospel really become partakers of its benefits. There have been hypocrites and false professors in all ages.

To see the guests. The wheat and the tares are permitted to grow together until the harvest, but then an inspection and a sifting will take place.

Had not on a wedding garment. He could not plead poverty, for wedding garments had been provided in an outer chamber for all comers, as was customary on such great occasions; and for the sinner there is also provided the righteousness of Christ with which he ought to be clothed before he enters the guest-chamber on earth, and with which he must be clothed before he enters the guest-chamber above.

Friend, how camest thou in? There must have been some remissness on the part of the servants attending at the door of the guest chamber; but this does not lessen the man's own responsibility.

He was speechless. Literally *muzzled* or *gagged*. No man can offer any excuse at the judgment. "Every mouth shall be stopped" (Rom. iii. 19).

Cast him into outer darkness. The hypocrite keeps on hoping that he will not be detected; but the "hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job viii. 13). Will not the sense of self-destruction, and the memory of the gracious offers of mercy rejected, be of themselves sufficient cause for weeping and gnashing of teeth.

## TEMPERANCE EDUCATION.

The subject of temperance education is, we rejoice, engaging public attention both in England and in the United States. At a recent meeting in London of the executive of the National Union of Elementary Teachers, it was moved:—"That it is desirable that the executive devote attention to the question of temperance teaching in elementary schools, and take the initiative in bringing the subject before conference."

Although no definite action was taken, the motion being defeated by a casting vote, and much difference of opinion was elicited, the discussion itself is a significant token of the vast change in public opinion which has taken place. The Board of Education of the city of New York has adopted as a text-book the well known "Temperance Lesson Book," by Dr. Richardson; and the same work which the English teachers proposed to use.

Dr. Holland, in an able discussion of the subject, asserts that the matter is one of vital importance, and that parents and teachers who fail to instruct their children in regard to the real nature, uses and dangers of alcoholic stimulants are guilty of culpable negligence and cruelty.

"It is a cruel thing," he says, "to send a boy out into the world untaught that alcohol in any form is fire and will certainly burn him if he puts it into his stomach. It is a cruel thing to educate a boy in such a way that he has no adequate idea of the dangers that beset his path. It is a mean thing to send a boy out to take his place in society, without understanding the relations of temperance to his own safety and prosperity, and to the safety and prosperity of society."

Dr. Holland, however, accepts the present plan of a special temperance lesson book as a make-shift. Temperance must be taught in the schools, and it is better that it should be done in this way than not at all. But he looks forward to the day when there will be no need of a special book; when no text-book on physiology or on political economy shall be deemed up to the mark which does not give this all-important topic its proper place.

The hallucination that there is some virtue inherent in alcohol, or some good to be done by it, can only be dispelled by an intelligent understanding of the subject.

Dr. Holland thus tersely sums up what children should be taught as to the effects of alcohol upon the processes of animal life: "Firstly they should be taught that it can add nothing whatever to the vital forces or to the vital tissues,—that it never enters into the elements of structure, and that, in the healthy organism, it is always a burden or a disturbing force. Secondly, they should be taught that it invariably disturbs the operation of the brain, and that the mind can

get nothing from alcohol of help that is to be relied upon. Thirdly, they should be taught that alcohol inflames the baser passions, blunts the sensibilities, and debases the feelings. Fourthly, they should be taught that an appetite for drink is certainly developed by those who use it, which is dangerous to life, destructive of health of body and peace of mind, and in millions of instances ruinous to fortune and to all the high interests of the soul. Fifthly, they should be taught that the crime and pauperism of society flow as naturally from alcohol as any effect whatever naturally flows from its competent cause. Sixthly, they should be taught that drink is the responsible cause of most of the poverty and want of the world. So long as six hundred million dollars are annually spent for drink in this country, every ounce of which was made by the destruction of bread, and no ounce of which has ever entered into the sum of national wealth, having nothing to shew for its cost but diseased stomachs, degraded homes, destroyed industry, increased pauperism, and aggravated crime, these boys should understand the facts and be able to act upon them in their first responsible conduct.

The national wealth goes into the ground. If we could only manage to bury it without having it pass thitherward in the form of a poisonous fluid through the inflamed bodies of our neighbours and friends, happy should we be. But this great, abominable curse dominates the world. The tramp reminds us of it as he begs for a night's lodging. The widow and the fatherless tell us of it as they ask for bread. It scowls upon us from the hovels and hantms of the poor everywhere. Even the clean, hard-working man of prosperity cannot enjoy his earnings because the world is full of misery from drink. The more thoroughly we can instruct the young concerning this dominating evil of our time, the better will it be for them and for the world. Let us use the "temperance lesson book" wherever we may. Let parents demand that it shall be used, and particularly let all writers upon physiology and political economy for schools take up the subject of alcohol, and treat it so candidly, fully, and ably that their books shall no longer be commentaries on their own incompetency to fill the places whose functions they have assumed."

And now what can be done in our Canadian schools? Have the friends of temperance in the Dominion given the subject the consideration it deserves? The introduction into the schools of proper instruction on this question, would do more to promote the good work than any other agency they can employ.—*Evangelical Churchman*.

## LITERATURE FOR GIRLS.

If there were to be any difference between a girl's education and a boy's, I should say that of the two a girl should be earlier led, as her intellect ripens faster, into deep and serious subjects; and that her range of literature should be, not more, but less frivolous, calculated to add the qualities of patience and seriousness to her natural poignancy of thought and quickness of wit; and also to keep her in a lofty and pure element of thought. I enter not now into any question of choice of books; only be sure that her books are not heaped up in her lap as they fall out of the package of the circulating library, wet with the last and lightest spray of the fountain of folly, or even of the fountain of wit; for with respect to that sore temptation of novel-reading, it is not the badness of a novel that we should dread, but its over-wrought interest. The weakest romance is not so stupefying as the lower forms of religious exciting literature, and the worst romance is not so corrupting as false history, false philosophy, or false political essays. But the best romance becomes dangerous, if, by its excitement, it renders the ordinary course of life uninteresting, and increases the morbid thirst for useless acquaintance with scenes in which we shall never be called upon to act.

I speak, therefore of good novels only; and our modern literature is particularly rich in types of such. Well read, indeed, these books have serious use, being nothing less than treatises on moral anatomy and chemistry; studies of human nature in the elements of it. But I attach little weight to this function; they are hardly ever read with earnestness enough to permit them to fulfil it.

The sense, to a healthy mind, of being strengthened or enervated by reading, is just as definite and unmistakable as the sense, to a healthy body, of being in fresh or foul air; and no more arrogance is involved in forbidding the reading of an unwholesome book than in a physician's ordering the windows to be opened in a sick room. There is no question whatever concerning these matters, with any person who honestly desires to be informed about them; the real arrogance is only in expressing judgments, either of books or anything else, respecting which we have taken no trouble to be informed.

## CHOICE OF BOOKS.

Life being very short, and the quiet hours of it few, we ought to waste none of them in reading valueless books; and valuable books should, in a civilized country, be within the reach of every one, printed in excellent form, for a just price; but not in any vile, vulgar, or, by reason of smallness of type, physically injurious form, at a vile price. For we none of us need many books, and those which we need ought to be clearly printed, on the best paper, and strongly bound.

I would urge upon every young woman to obtain as soon as she can, by the severest economy, a restricted, serviceable, and steadily—however slowly—increasing, series of books for use through her life; making her little library, of all the furniture in her room, the most studied and decorative piece; every volume having its assigned place, like a little statue in its niche.