

The Old Year.

ANOTHER year has gone,
With swift and noiseless tread,
Winter and spring have glided on,
Summer and autumn sped—
Each season with its joys and pain;
And they will never come again.

I mourn its wasted time,
If I could live it o'er,
Its sad mistakes I'd try to shun,
Its wrongs would do no more.
But, no; the loss none can repair,
'Tis gone for ever, the old year.

This only can I do:
Be sorry for the past,
And at my loving Saviour's feet
My weary burden cast.
He will blot out sin's crimson stain,
And strengthen me to try again.

And as a bright new year
Comes with its hope and joy,
I'll seek to live aright, and all
My hours for God employ;
And this new year will try to live
That it a record fair may give.

LESSON NOTES.

FIRST QUARTER.

HEARING AND DOING.

A. D. 50.] **LESSON II.** [Jan. 13.
James 1: 16-27. Commit to mem. vs. 22-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.—James 1: 22.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The nature of true religion. (Repeat v. 27.)

THE LESSONS IN JAMES.—These are placed here (1) because this is the last mention of him in the Acts (save in Acts 21: 18); and (2) because the book may have been written about this time.

JAMES.—(1) Either James the apostle, son of Alphaeus, and, if so, a cousin of Jesus, and called his brother, perhaps because he was adopted into the family of Mary. Or (2) James, the own brother of the Lord, and a different person from the apostle. In either case, this James was the president of the Church at Jerusalem, a very influential person. Josephus says he was stoned to death in A. D. 61, or early in 62.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES.—(1) *Written to the Jews who were Christians.* (2) *Time of writing.* Uncertain; some say A. D. 45; others as late as A. D. 61 or 62. (3) *Where written.* At Jerusalem, the home of James.

INTRODUCTION.—James is writing to the Jewish Christians to correct certain errors of doctrine and practice. The Epistle begins with comfort for them in their trials. He shows that while God is in these, yet real evil is never from God. All that comes from Him is good.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—16. *Do not err, in believing that God is the author of evil.* 17. *The Father of lights*—The creator of the heavenly bodies which give us light, and the author of all spiritual light. *No variability*—Always the same in character and principles. Never retracts his promises or changes his purposes. *Shadow of turning*—Shadow caused by the turning or revolution of the heavenly bodies. 18. *A kind of first-fruits*—The first-born of the flock, the first-fruits of the harvest were consecrated to God (Num. 15: 19-21), as showing that all came from Him, and all should be used for Him. Christians were the beginning of the conversion of the whole world to Christ. 21. *Superfluity of naughtiness*—Overflowing of malice from a bad heart. 25. *Perfect law of liberty*—The truths and moral teachings of the Gospel which make men free (1) from sin (2) from bad habits, (3) in the natural flowing of a good life from a good heart. 26. *Bridleth not his tongue*—As a horse is bridled to control and guide him. 27. *Pure religion*—Religion here is observance of religious rites and services. This is the way the love of God shows itself.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—James. The Epistle of James.—God as the source of every good gift.—The Father of lights.—Christians a kind of first-fruits.—The illustrations in vs. 23-25.—The law of liberty.—Nature of true religion.—Unspotted from the world.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—Why do the lessons now change to this Epistle? Who was the author

of it? What can you relate of his life and character? When and where was the Epistle written? To whom? What is the subject of the verses previous to the lesson?

SUBJECT:—THE NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION.

1. **ITS SOURCE FROM GOD (vs. 16-18).**—Why are the brethren exhorted not to err? What is it to err? What is the source of every good gift? Does anything that is not good come from God? Why is God called the Father of lights? (John 1: 3-9.) What is said of his character? Meaning of "shadow of turning"? Has God no variations of feeling or action? What is meant by unchangeableness in a spirit? What comfort to us in the fact that God never changes? What is the source of our Christian life? (John 3: 3, 5.) What were the "first-fruits"? (Num. 15: 19-21. Ex. 23: 19.) How may Christians be said to be a kind of first-fruits of all God's creatures?

2. **SOME OF ITS DUTIES AND DANGERS (vs. 19-25).**—What three exhortations in v. 19? What is it to be swift to hear? Why should we be slow to speak? Why slow to wrath? Why does anger never do any good? What two things must be laid aside? How should the word be received? How does it save our souls? What two ways are there of treating God's word? What are the "hearers only" like? Why? In what respect is God's word like a mirror? Why is it called the law of liberty? What is said of the doers? How are they blessed in their doing?

3. **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE RELIGION (vs. 26, 27).**—What is it to bridle the tongue? Why is doing this a sign of the true religious life? What is meant by religion in v. 27? Why is it spoken of as undefiled "before God"? What is the first service of true religion? Why are these two classes mentioned? If we despise or neglect the poor or the weak, is it a proof that we are not Christians? Why is doing good to the needy a true religious service? Will any number of ceremonies or forms of worship take the place of this? What does Christ say in Matt. 23: 31-46? What is the other characteristic of true religion? Meaning of *world here*? What is it to be unspotted from the world?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

- All good things are from God to make us love Him who is so good.
- God, being unchangeable, His words and promises, spoken thousands of years ago, are as true and certain as if uttered to-day.
- Because we are God's children, we should speak and act in a manner worthy of our Father.
- Scolding and anger never do any good (v. 20.)
- Every act of love to our fellow-men may be also an act of worship toward God.

REVIEW EXERCISE. (For the whole School in Concert.)

- Who was the leader in the conference at Jerusalem? **ANS.** James, the brother of our Lord.
- To whom did he write an Epistle? **ANS.** To the Jewish Christians.
- For what purpose? **ANS.** To correct some errors into which they had fallen.
- What is the source of true religion? (Repeat v. 17.)
- What is the nature of true religion? (Repeat v. 27.)

A. D. 50.] **LESSON III.** [Jan. 20.

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE.

James 3: 1-18. Commit to mem. vs. 2-5.

GOLDEN TEXT.

By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.—Matt. 12: 37.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The tongue is an instrument of the greatest good or the greatest evil, according as we make a good or a bad use of it.

TIME.—This Epistle was written probably about A. D. 45.

PLACE.—It was written at Jerusalem.
TO WHOM.—To Jewish Christians everywhere.

INTRODUCTION.—James is warning the people against various sins to which they were especially liable. Among the most dangerous were sins of the tongue.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.—*My brethren*—He calls them brethren, for he was tempted as were they. *Be not many masters*—Do not be ambitious for the highest places,—to rule, to teach, to have honour. 2. *We offend all*—We all offend, or stumble, and fail of our duty. *The same is a perfect man*—Because

the tongue is the easiest outlet of what is in the heart. All others are controlled more easily than this. *To bridle*—To control and govern, as horses are by their bridles. Four illustrations of the power of the tongue now follow. 4. *Governor*—Captain, steersman. 5. *Boasteth great things*—And the boast is not in vain. It does do great things. *How great a matter*—How large a forest, how much fuel. 6. *The tongue is a fire*—(1) It can scorch and burn others' feelings; (2) a little word may do much mischief. *A world of iniquity*—All the evil of the world condensed. *The course of nature*—The whole orb of the world, or the whole course of man's life. *Set on fire of hell*—A bad tongue is the instrument of the devil, and utters the things which are inspired by hell, belong to hell,—as envy, malice, blasphemy, lying. 11. *Doth a fountain*, etc.: Showing that nature itself is against this double use of the tongue, and that if the tongue that curses seems to bless, it is but seeming and hypocrisy. 14. *Lie not against the truth*—To try to teach the Gospel when you have envy and strife in your hearts is a lie and hypocritical. 15. *This wisdom*—Narrow, selfish, envious wisdom that is sharp and shrewd for self. 17. *But the wisdom*, etc.: Divine wisdom is, first of all, goodness.

SUBJECTS FOR SPECIAL REPORTS.—Many masters,—v. 2.—The tongue like a horse's bit,—like a ship's helm,—like a little fire,—untamable.—The good uses of the tongue.—The bad uses of the tongue.—Earthly wisdom,—heavenly wisdom.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—To whom is James writing? What kind of sins does he condemn in to-day's lesson? Was there special need then of these warnings? Is there equal need of them in our day?

SUBJECT:—THE RIGHT AND THE WRONG USE OF THE TONGUE.

1. **FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE POWER OF THE TONGUE (vs. 1-8).**—Against what does St. James first warn us? What is it to be many masters? Meaning of offend? Are any perfect? In what way are we most likely to stumble and fail? Why is one that does not offend in word a perfect man? What is the first illustration of the power of the tongue? What is the second illustration? What is the third illustration? What does St. James say of the tongue? How is it "a world of iniquity"? What is the source of the evil in the tongue? What is the fourth illustration? Why cannot the tongue be tamed? In what way is it an unruly evil? How may it be said to be full of deadly poison?

2. **THE GOOD AND BAD USES OF THE TONGUE (vs. 9-18).**—What are some of the good uses of the tongue? Is there any way of doing more good than by a right use of the tongue? How was this shown by the gift of tongues on Pentecost? What are some of the evils from a bad use of the tongue? Can good and evil things come from the same tongue? How does a wise man show his wisdom? What are the signs of a false wisdom? What is its source? How may this be called wisdom? Have you ever known any examples of it? What are the seven characteristics of heavenly wisdom? What is the fruit of righteousness? (Gal. 5: 22, 23.) Why does peace always join with true wisdom? (John 16: 33. Ps. 119: 165. Rom. 5: 1.)

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

- The greater the power of the tongue, the more earnestly should we seek to use it aright.
- The tongue may be used in uttering praise, in giving comfort, in proclaiming the truth, in imparting wisdom, in expressing love, in converting the world.
- The tongue may be used in uttering slanders, lies, hatred, blasphemy, envy, pride,—in leading men into evil, in destroying their souls.
- Note the distinctions between the two kinds of wisdom,—the earthly and the heavenly.

REVIEW EXERCISE. (For the whole School in Concert.)

- To what does St. James compare the tongue? **ANS.** (1) To the bit that controls a horse, (2) to the helm that guides a ship, (3) to a match that kindles a great fire, (4) to an untamed wild beast.
- What are some good uses of the tongue? **ANS.** Praising God, teaching the truth, expressing love, giving sympathy, leading others to Christ.
- What are some bad uses of the tongue? **ANS.** Slander, lying, cursing, speaking bad words, leading others astray.
- What is the golden text?

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