

Syria, beef seldom under any circumstances. In summer mutton is scarce, and lean goat's flesh is all that is eaten in many localities for months at a time. This cannot be kept to render it tender, hence it is stewed or boiled while the carcass is still warm. The Bedouins, who rarely taste meat on any other occasion, on the arrival of a guest whom they desire to honor, kill a sheep, lamb, or goat, the wealthiest, however, only affording a calf, the entire animal being cooked at once in a great iron pot. When cooked the joints appear whole, but, being boiled to tenderness, are easily pulled into shreds with thumb and forefingers, that being the manner of partaking of it.

The essential meaning of this lesson is compassed in a proverb after an Eastern formula, thus: "If a man draw near to God an inch, God will draw near to him an ell;" or, "Who approaches me a span, to him do I make haste an ell; and who comes to meet me, to him do I make haste in leaps."

By Way of Illustration.

Verses 11-17. Sonship. Let us notice that the sinful son was still a son. The sheep which the shepherd sought was not a goat or a wolf; it was lost, but it still belonged to the shepherd, and he sought it because it was his own. The coin which the woman lost was not a counterfeit; it was still a coin bearing the image of the king, and though lost belonged in a very real sense to the woman who sought it, and she sought it because it was her own. The prodigal was not an alien, born outside the father's house and rescued and adopted; he was a son before he left the father's house, and to the father he still remained "my son." "All souls are mine, saith the Lord." The sinner is God's. He is not a child of the devil whom God is endeavoring to lure away from his own paternity and give to him a fictitious relation to himself. We may be bad sons, but we are still his sons.—*W. E. Barton.*

Verses 22-24. The love of God. The marriage of an English noble to an American heiress brings no joy to the great court of heaven. The winning of kingdoms and crowns is of small account in the heavenly world. But let the vilest, humblest, poorest sinner repent of his sin, and at once there is jubilee in glory, while angels and archangels and all the host of heaven join in the oratorios of joy.—*Talmage.*

The story is told of a young woman in Scotland who left her home and became an outcast in Glasgow. Her mother sought her far and wide, but in vain. At last she caused her picture to be hung upon the walls of the Midnight Mission rooms where abandoned women resorted. Many gave the picture a passing glance. One lingered by the picture. It is the same dear face that looked down

upon her in her childhood. She has not forgotten nor cast off her sinning child, or her picture would never have hung upon those walls. The lips seemed to open and whisper, "Come home; I forgive you and love you still." The poor girl sank down. She was the prodigal daughter. The sight of her mother's face had broken her heart. Take the picture of a loving Father into the places of vice, show him as forgiving and loving still, and the wanderers will return.—*Moody.*

The Teachers' Meeting.

Make a brief "word-picture."...Make sure that peculiar phrases and all "manners and customs" alluded to are fully understood: "portion of goods," "living," "a far country," "husks," "swine feeding," "robe," "ring," "shoes," "fatted calf," "men kissing," etc.... This lesson is so fruitful of thought that we are in danger of attempting to teach too much. Choose a simple outline and keep close to it, and you will secure the best results. Take the line presented in "Thoughts for Young People," or any of the following: I. (1) The misery of sin; (2) The way of salvation; (3) The mercy of God; (4) The joy of forgiveness.... II. The four steps of the sinner: (1) Selfishness; (2) Ingratitude; (3) Separation from God; (4) Worldly pleasure. The four steps of repentance: (1) Thinking; (2) Resolving; (3) Seeking; (4) Confessing. The four privileges of the penitent: (1) Welcome; (2) Pardon; (3) Honor; (4) Joy.... III. Draw out the elements of repentance, the privileges of salvation, and the attributes of God illustrated by this parable.... Additional practical lessons: (1) The root of sin is alienation of the heart from God; (2) True repentance affects the (a) understanding, (b) the affection, (c) the will; (3) The pardoned sinner is restored to the full measure of his first estate.

Before the Class.

Inasmuch as Jesus seems to have spoken this parable primarily against the Pharisees (whom he typifies in the elder brother), and as his own defense for loving sinners, let us strive to arouse in our scholars' minds a love like his for lost souls and a superiority to the Pharisaic, elder-brother spirit, touching incidentally upon our own lost, prodigal state, and our Father's welcoming love.

Who likes to read a good story? Don't you enjoy reading about some one who did a good, noble deed, like rescuing somebody from ruin? You want it to end happily? Listen, then, while I tell you the story that Jesus told in to-day's lesson—one of the most beautiful stories in all literature. Hold up your hand if I make a mistake. [Tell, graphically but briefly, in your own words, including the incident of the elder brother.]