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SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From the International Lessons for 1881, by Edwin W. Rice, as issued by American Sunday-School Union.)

LESSON VI.

MAY 8.] [About 28 A.D.]

THE PRODIGAL SON.

Luke 15: 11-24.

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 21-24.

11. And he said, A certain man had two sons :
12. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.
13. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.
14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land ; and he began to be in want.
15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country ; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.
16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him.
17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger !
18. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.
19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son ; make me as one of thy hired servants.
20. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.
21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.
22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet ;
23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat, and be merry :
24. For this my son was dead, and he is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

GOLDEN TEXT.

I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.—LUKE 15: 18.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

None that come through Christ will be cast out.

INTRODUCTORY.—The Parable of the Prodigal Son is called the "pearl and cream" of all the parables. "Never certainly in human language was so much—such a world of love and wisdom and tenderness compressed into such few immortal words. All sin and punishment, all penitence and forgiveness find their best delineation in these few sentences."—Farrar. The Parable of the Prodigal Son supplements those of the Lost Sheep and Lost Coin, presenting man, in the use of his free moral agency, no less in the course of sin, than in the work of conversion.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) SINNING. (II.) DESTITUTE. (III.) REPENTANT. (IV.) RESTORED.

I. SINNING.—(11-13.) CERTAIN MAN, represents God who is our Father, Acts 17: 28, 29; TWO SONS, may refer to the Pharisees (represented by the elder brother) and to the Publicans (represented by the younger) or to the Jews and the heathen, or to those who enjoy gospel privileges and those who reject them; GIVE ME, he was dissatisfied with his home; NOT MANY DAYS AFTER, impatient haste; GATHERED, he chafed for freedom; FAR COUNTRY, the state of the sinner away from God; WASTED, we misuse God's gifts, squander our opportunities in the service of the creature rather than to the praise of God; RIOTOUS LIVING, sensuality.

II. DESTITUTE.—(14-16.) FAMINE, his destitution and want now began; FEED SWINE, unclean animals, the lowest degradation and most abject wretchedness the Jew could conceive of; HUSKS, pods of the Carob tree, "something like those of the honey-locust from six to ten inches long. I have seen large orchards of this tree in Cyprus, where it is still the food which the swine do eat."—Thomson's Land and Book.

III. REPENTANT.—(17-19.) WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF, an inward change; sin is mental lunacy. It is a boast against God; WILL ARISE, a resolute determination; GO TO MY FATHER, faith in God; AM NO MORE WORTHY, makes no excuses. "By grace are we saved"; WHEN, while.

IV. RESTORED.—(20-24.) HIS FATHER SAW HIM, he was longing for his return. So God is waiting to be gracious; BEST ROBE, an allusion to the robe of righteousness, Isa. 61: 10 RING, token of favor. Redeemed sinners have the seal of the Spirit, Eph. 1: 13; WAS DEAD, not to the father, but virtue and holiness, "dead in trespasses and sins."

PRactical APPLICATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE PARABLE: (1.) What are the wages of sin? Rom. 6: 23. (2.) How does the lesson represent repentance? v. 17. (3.) What are God's feelings toward sinners? Eze. 33: 11. (4.) How many must make the confession of v. 21? Rom. 3: 23.

THE

PORTION, FEELINGS,
PROQUEST, FANXIETY,
OBDRACY, TENDERNES,
DEPARTURE, HOME BRINGING,
INFAMY, EMBRACE,
GUILT, ROBE AND RING,
AWAKENING, SUPREME JOY,
LOWLINESS, ALL, ALL GRACE.
SONSHIP,

LESSON VII.

MAY 15.] [About 28 A. D.]

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

Luke 16: 19-31.

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 25, 26.

19. There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.
20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores.
21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.
22. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.
23. And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.
24. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame.
25. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.
26. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.
27. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:
28. For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.
29. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.
30. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.
31. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

GOLDEN TEXT.

The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.—Prov. 14: 32.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

All is lost if the soul is lost.

INTRODUCTORY.—The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus was uttered in answer to the derision of the Pharisees whom our Lord had arraigned for covetousness, verse 14. "The decision of the next world will often reverse the estimate in which men are held in this."—Farrar's Life of Christ, ii, 128. This is the main design of the parable. It is, however, full of instruction on other points, and is peculiarly valuable for the light it throws upon the future state of the soul. While the imagery must not be pressed too far, yet the following truths may with certainty be deduced from it. The soul outlives the grave. There are two states of existence beyond, one of bliss and one of misery. And men's destinies in the future are fixed by the lives they live here.

NOTES.—Dogs, frequently mentioned in the Bible. They seem to have been very numerous in the large cities, and to have performed the office of scavengers, as they do to-day in the Orient, 1 Kings 21: 19; 2 Kings 9: 10, 36, etc. Their name is often employed as a term of reproach in the Old and New Testaments, Isa. 56: 10; Phil. 3: 2, and they were regarded as unclean, Matt. 7: 6.—HELL, the word is Hades, and signifies the realm of departed spirits. It comprises two states, one of unhappiness and the other of bliss. The latter is called Abraham's bosom, or paradise, Luke 23: 43.—MOSES AND THE PROPHETS, an expression denoting the Old Testament, Luke 24: 27. Moses was the author of the books of the law, and his name is put for the Law.

EXPLANATIONS.

LESSON TOPICS.—(I.) HAPPY AND WRETCHED IN THIS LIFE. (II.) HAPPY AND WRETCHED IN THE NEXT LIFE. (III.) THE GUIDE OF LIFE.

I. HAPPY AND WRETCHED IN THIS LIFE.—(19-22.) PURPLE, costly material brought from Tyre. The color was derived from a shell-fish. It was a royal color. The kings of Midian wore it, Judg. 8: 26, and Mordecai after his elevation, Esther 8: 15. The robe which the soldiers put upon Christ in mockery was also of this color, Mark 15: 17; John 19: 5; FINE LINEN, a texture made of flax very costly, here indicating luxury; LAZARUS, "God my help," a very suggestive name; DESIRING TO BE FED, we are not sure whether he was fed or not; DIED, both prince and beggar must meet death; ANGELS, the Jews believed that the righteous were carried

by angels to Abraham's bosom as the place of bliss.

II. HAPPY AND WRETCHED IN THE NEXT LIFE.—(23-26.) LIFT UP HIS EYES, perhaps this simply means that he began to think and recollect; FATHER ABRAHAM, "the Jews supposed that departed spirits might know and converse with each other"; HAVE MERCY, too late. He should have uttered that cry on earth as others do, Matt. 15: 22; Mark 10: 48, and the publican, Luke 18: 13: SEND LAZARUS, the rich man and he had exchanged places. He was now enjoying "true riches"; TORMENTED, a fearful reality; REMEMBER, memory recalling the abused opportunities of this life will be a chief contributor to our unhappiness; GREAT GULF, our characters are formed in this world, and our destinies are irreversibly fixed at death. A chasm lies between the two realms in the other world.

III. THE GUIDE OF LIFE.—(27-31.) I PRAY THEE, ETC., a second request. This is the believing and trembling of Jam. 2: 19; NAY, he had himself not listened to the Old Testament, and he knew his brothers would not.

APPLICATIONS SUGGESTED BY THE LESSON:

Upon what will the decision of the future life be based? Gal. 6: 7, 8.
Is future destiny fixed at death? verse 26.
Are the Scriptures ample for our enlightenment? 2 Tim. 3: 15.
What use should we make of this life? Amos 4: 12.

ILLUSTRATION.—Judgment Day Forgotten. Is it not foolish to be living in this world without a thought of what you will do in the next? A man goes into an inn, and as soon as he sits down he begins to order his wine, his dinner, his bed; there is no delicacy in season which he forgets to bespeak. He stops at the inn for some time. By and by the bill is forthcoming, and it takes him by surprise. "I never thought of that! I never thought of that!" "Why," says the landlord, "here is a man who is either a born fool or else a knave. What! never thought of reckoning—never thought of settling with me!" After this fashion too many live. They eat and drink and sin, but they forget the inevitable hereafter, when, for all the deeds done in the body, the Lord will bring us to judgment.—Spurgeon.

TRUSTING.

Although it is so very dark,
And I am all alone,
Mamma down-stairs, and nurse away
And no one here to talk or play—
Yet, God, I know to Thee the night
Is bright and shining as the light.

And Thou canst see Thy little child
And keep her safe from harm,
And though it is to her so dark,
Thou'lt shield her with Thy arm;
For to Thee, God, who made the night,
It shines as brightly as the light.
Selected.

A NATURAL BAROMETER.

Everybody has admired the delicate and ingenious work of the spider, everybody has watched her movements as she spins her wonderful web, but all do not know that she is the most reliable weather-forecast in the world. Before a windstorm she shortens the threads that suspend her web, and leaves them in this state as long as the weather remains unsettled. When she lengthens these threads count on fine weather, and in proportion to their length will be its duration. When a spider rests inactive it is a sign of rain: if she works during a rain, be sure it will soon clear up and remain clear for some time. The spider, it is said, changes her web every twenty-four hours, and the part of the day she chooses to do this is always significant. If it occurs a little before sunset, the night will be fine and clear. Hence the old French proverb: "Araignee du soir, espoir."

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