

SELECTIONS.

—St. Mark's gospel, which is the subject of the next six months' lessons, has been discussed quite exhaustively by theologians from an historical point of view. Its origin and the career of the evangelist, however, remain obscure as ever. It is generally supposed that the gospel was written at Rome between the years of A.D. 60 and 70, under Peter's direction, with whom Mark was a co-worker. This is the shortest of the four gospels, and in some respects is the minutest in description. Christ's genealogy, the Sermon on the Mount, and most of the parables are omitted, but aside from this it gives a very direct and concise account of the Saviour's life and work. Teachers and scholars wishing all the historical information that is to be had in regard to the gospel must consult Bible dictionaries and Scriptural biographies. But this is not so important, of course, as the matter of the gospel itself, which should receive the closest study from all. Let the map be consulted frequently and the Saviour's journeyings be clearly marked out. The scholar will in that case remember his sayings and doings by associating them with places. A profitable and delightful series of lessons is before the schools for the remainder of the year, and none can regret studying them thoroughly. —Christian Union.

THE CRISIS OF SOULS.—Often when travelling among the Alps, one sees a small black cross planted upon a rock, or on the brink of a torrent, or on the verge of the highway, to mark the spot where men have met with sudden death by accident. Solemn reminders, these, of our mortality! but they led our minds still further; for we said within us, if the places where men seal themselves for the second death could be thus manifestly indicated, what a scene would this world present! Here the memorial of a soul undone by yielding to a foul temptation, there a conscience seared by the rejection of a final warning, and yonder a heart forever turned into stone by resisting the last tender appeal of love. Our places of worship would scarce hold the sorrowful monuments which might be erected over spots where spirits were forever lost—spirits that date their ruin from sinning against the gospel while under the sound of it. —Spurgeon.

TEACHING TO WALK.—The Sunday-School Times has a thoughtful article on helping the young in the divine life. It says: "In urging Willy to repent of sin and come to Jesus, guide the awkward steps by which he shall walk further and further in repentance and faith towards the Saviour. Tell the little fellow that whenever he forgives and is gentle, though he takes, and he did not mean to, he stops his At last it was decided that every time he works faithfully to do the tasks that are set him, every time he is honest in word and deed, when it costs to be so; every time he skips the hard words that profane boys use, and every time he reads carefully God's Word and earnestly prays to be kept from doing wrong, he is through these works of repentance coming nearer Jesus; he is taking steps that bring him closer to God; he is 'going on' in the way to know and love him better. Even a boisterous, unimaginative nature like Willy's will see in this something to 'take hold of' as a help for his awkward, uncertain steps. He will be helped spiritually to walk towards the Lord he is bidden to come to."

THE NAMES "JOHN" AND "WILLIAM."—Ever since the Conquest, Mr. Bardsley informs us that the race for popularity among Christian names in England, has been greatest between "John" and "William." In the age after the arrival of the Normans, "William" was the commonest Christian name. In Domesday, for instance, there are sixty-eight "Williams," forty-eight "Roberts," and thirty-eight "Walters," but no "Johns." In 1173, at a banquet given at the court of Henry II., it was commanded that none but those of the name of "William" should dine at it; and accordingly 120 "Williams," all knights, sat down to the table. In Edward I.'s time this disproportion had become less marked, for in a list of Wiltshire names, containing 588, there are ninety-two "Williams," to eighty-eight "Johns." A century after, "John" had outstripped its competitor. In 1347, out of 183 common councilmen for London, thirty-three were "Johns," the next highest name being "William," with seventeen, while "Thomas," in consequence of the canonization of Becket, springs into notoriety with fifteen. In 1385, the guild of St. George, at Norwich, in a total of 376 names, possessed 128 "Johns" to forty-seven "Williams" and forty-one "Thomases." From this period, owing to the two saints who bore that name, and despite the aversions felt for the worthless monarch who had also borne it, "John" retained its supremacy, and to this circumstance we owe the name of "John Bull." "William" retained, as Mr. Bardsley says, "a sturdy second place." It fared worst at the hands of the Puritans, who rejected it as a Pagan name, with horror; but it recovered its ascendancy with William of Orange and the Protestant Revolution, and it now stands, as it did eight centuries ago, at the head of all

the names in our baptismal registers, while John has again sunk into the second place. —Our English Surnames.

THE ETERNAL ROCK.—What a commentary upon the word, "Whoever falls on this stone shall be broken," is the whole history of the heresies of the Church and the assaults of unbelief! Man after man, rich in gifts, endowed often with far larger and nobler faculties than the people who oppose him with indomitable perseverance, a martyr to his error, sets himself up against the truth that is sphered in Jesus Christ; and the great divine message simply goes on its way, and all the babblement and noise is like so many bats flying against a light, or the wild seabirds that come sweeping up in the tempest and the night, against the hospitable Pharos that is upon the rock, and smite themselves dead against it. Skeptics will know in their generation, who made people's hearts tremble for the ark of God, what has become of them? Their books lie dusty and undisturbed on the top shelf of libraries; whilst there the Bible stands, with all the scribbles wiped off the page, as though they had never been! Opponents fire their small shot against the great Rock of Ages, and the little pellets fall flattened, and only scale off bits of the moss that has gathered there! My brother, let the history of the past, with other deeper thoughts, teach you and me a very calm and triumphant confidence about all that people say now-a-days; for all the modern opposition to the Gospel will go as the past has done, and the newest systems which cut and carve at Christianity, will go to the tomb where all the rest have gone, and dead old infidelities will rise up from their thrones, and say to the brand-new ones of this generation, when their day is worked out, "Ah, are ye also become like one of us?" "Whoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken;" personally, he will be harmed; and his opinions, and his books, and his talk, and all his argumentation, will come to nothing; like the waves that break into impotent foam against the rocky cliffs. —Alex. McLaren.

NOTES ON THE LESSONS

August 23.—Mark v. 24—34.

POWER OVER DISEASE.

1. Notice the duration of the disease. This is marked in a way that, if pointed out to children, will interest them not a little. We are told that the woman had suffered for twelve years; and we are also told (vers. 42) that the daughter of Jairus—to whose bedside Jesus was going when the woman touched him—was twelve years old. Put it, therefore, in this way: When Jesus was a young man of about twenty years of age, working for his daily bread in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, two events occurred simultaneously at Capernaum—a Jewish lady fell ill, and a little baby-girl was born to the ruler of the synagogue; and all the while that baby was growing up to the age of twelve (to children this will seem a long time) that lady was getting worse and worse! And how striking that the Nazarene carpenter should on the same day heal the lady and raise the child!

2. That Christ's power did what could be done by no other power. If the woman were not already cured it was not that the physicians had not tried, and it was not that she had stunted their fees. "All her living" was spent upon them: that is she was a well-to-do person, perhaps a lady of wealth, and now she was reduced to poverty. Yet in one moment, "without money and without price," she is perfectly cured by the power of Jesus.

3. But the most remarkable feature in the narrative is the means of the cure, namely, the touch; to this the Golden Text especially directs our attention by describing another occasion when "as many as touched him were made whole;" and upon this the teacher should endeavour to base his application of the lesson—which, if clear, can scarcely fail to be impressive.

Take an illustration or two. Here is a dark room; in the gas-pipes there is plenty of illuminating power, but it is useless without a match to set the gas alight, and even this is useless, unless the little valve be opened and the gas turned on. Here is a house on fire; under the streets there is power, in the shape of water, to put the fire out; but nothing can be done if there be no means of removing the plug. Here is a group of starving children; in the cupboard there is bread for them, but they will starve notwithstanding if they have no key. In either case we may say, here is need—there is power; but how bring the power to bear upon the need? So with the woman at Capernaum. Here was her need; there, a few yards from her, was One with ample power to supply her need. But the question was how to bring the power and the need into contact.

Now what did bring her need into contact with Christ's power? Was it the touch? There was nothing in the mere touch that could convey the blessing. Peter was quite right when he pointed to the thronging and pressing multitude. They, too, touched Jesus; in them there was no doubt, wants—some of the various, "ills that flesh is heir to"—yet no

"virtue" went forth to them. No, but look at Christ's words in verse 34, "thy faith hath made thee whole." The key, the link, the channel, or medium of blessing, was faith. She touched him believing that he could and would cure her, and at once she was cured.

So it is—and here comes our application—with spiritual blessing. We need the cure of manifold and inveterate diseases of our souls, (these can be referred to with the class in detail, for example, deceitfulness, wilfulness, passion, forgetfulness of God.) In Christ there is power all sufficient to give us complete spiritual healing. But how is his power to be brought down to our need? Not by mere attendance on outward religious ordinances. In these we, in a sense, "touch" Christ, but only as the multitude at Capernaum did. But let us go and touch him with the hand of faith, that is, seek the blessing, believing in both his power and his will to give it, and of a surety we shall, like the woman, "feel within us that we are healed of our plague." —English Teacher's Notes.

POWER OVER DEATH.

August 30.—Mark v. 22, 23, 35-49.

FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.—DIRECTIONS.

1. Remember that the attention of the older scholars must be won by exciting their interest in the subject. 2. Remember that they cannot be chided, commanded, or coerced as little children may sometimes be.

"They must be taught as though you taught them not. And things unknown proposed as things forgot."

3. Appoint beforehand one pupil to prepare a brief paper (three minutes long) on "Lamentations at Oriental Funerals;" another a definition in writing of "Ruler;" another a very brief word-picture of the scene where the ruler presents himself to Jesus. 4. Elect a secretary of the Bible or Senior class, and let all proceedings be faithfully recorded. One of the most pleasant and edifying exercises for an adult class is a "Bible Reading."

SEED-THOUGHTS.

- 1. Who and what was this ruler?
2. Did many of this class become Christ's disciples? (John vii. 48.)
3. How can we harmonize Matt. ix. 18, Mark v. 23, and Luke viii. 42, about the daughter's death?
4. Did the father or the messenger believe, or ask, that she might be raised from death?
5. Does Christ, in answer to faith and prayer, do more for us than we expect?
6. What effect on their faith did Christ suppose the report of her death might have?
7. Why did Christ suffer so few to witness the miracle?
8. Is it generally useful to the ignorant, the hostile, and the unbelieving to witness great miracles?
9. Why was it more for Christ's glory to raise the dead than to heal the sick?
10. What did Christ mean in saying the damsel is not dead?
11. How many did witness this resurrection?
12. Why did Jesus enjoin secrecy?
13. Why, then, on other occasions, did he command publicity?

Note.—"Talitha," in the ordinary dialect of the people, is a word of endearment addressed to a young maiden, so that the words are equivalent to "Come, my child." —Alford.

BLACKBOARD EXERCISES.

Before the school assembles have written on the board these words: The voice of Jesus. Commence the lesson by asking how, and in whose name, we come to the Father? (Write Prayer.) Why do we write the word prayer? Because he hears prayer. What did Jesus say in answer to the prayer of the ruler? Be not afraid, only believe. Does the voice of Jesus give the same comfort now? (Write Comfort.) Tell the school that our trials bring us a heavenly Comforter, and then by questions and readings from the Scriptures impress upon their minds the life-giving power of Jesus, and that he is able to awaken us from spiritual death? Write upon the board some of the blessings that the voice of Jesus can confer upon us, and close by stating the all-important truth—that there is no salvation without faith in Christ. Have you heard the voice of Jesus giving life to you?

THE PRIMARY CLASS.

What a wonderful being was Jesus! He had power over the waves, over the devils, over diseases, and in this lesson it is seen that he had power over death. The synagogue was the place where God's law was read, and explained. Praise and prayer were also offered there. The "ruler" was the officer who had charge of these services. How his heart must have been saddened at the sickness of his little daughter. He believed that Jesus could save her from death. How, then, must he have felt when a messenger came to him to tell him that she was already dead. O if he had only come for Jesus a little sooner! But Jesus knew what he could do. He said to him, "Be not afraid, only believe," and the man did be-

lieve. Three disciples went with Jesus to the house. Who were they? The people were mourning with great noise. They laughed when Jesus told them the child was not dead but only sleeping. He meant by this that he could bring her to life as easily as a sleeping person could be awakened. Then, when he had sent everybody out but the three disciples and the father and mother he spoke to the little girl, and she arose and walked. Thus Jesus had power over death. How kind and loving he was to give the child back again to its parents. And thus he will raise the dead, to life in the great resurrection day. If we love him and are faithful, though death may separate us for a time, Jesus will unite us again. —S. S. Banner.

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