

be enabled to train many teachers gifted with sight, either Europeans or first-class Chinese converts, who may be employed by the various missions in all parts of the empire. One such sighted head teacher in each district could there found a blind school, and train Chinese Scripture readers and others; and thus the work may be ceaselessly extended till it overspreads the whole vast empire like a network. It is hoped that among those who offer themselves for this work some may be found, who are endowed with that peculiar faculty which may enable them to apply the system to the principal dialects of the eighteen great provinces.

"This new mission will certainly appeal as no other has yet done to two of the strongest characteristics of China's millions—namely, their reverence for pure benevolence, and their veneration for the power of reading. To see foreigners undertaking such a work of love for the destitute blind will go far towards dispelling prejudice against Christians and their Master, and will prepare the way for the workers of all Christian Missions. Hitherto this work has been crippled in its cradle for want of funds, its development having been limited to what could be accomplished by the continual self-denial of the working man to whom it owes its existence, and who for sixteen years has toiled in unwearying patience, almost unknown to Europeans, working the live-long day as a colporteur, in burning summer heat, or freezing wintry blasts. During that period he has succeeded in creating such a demand for the book, that he has sold about 100,000 copies and portions, in the Chinese and Tartar languages, and he has the satisfaction of knowing that some copies have found an entrance within the Imperial Palace.

"Every moment that he could steal from the sleep or rest of the first eight years was devoted to persistently puzzling out his system; and in like manner for the last eight years every moment he could call his own, and every penny he could save from his slender salary, have been devoted to the service of the blind. It is now high time that the little acorn which he has so successfully planted should be enabled to expand to a great tree, overshadowing the land. But none of the existing Missionary Societies consider that they can at present venture to undertake any fresh responsibilities, and it therefore rests with the public to supply the requisite funds to meet necessary expenses.

"We have heard a great deal this year lately about Jubilee offerings. I now appeal to the great reading public, many of whom have kindly and cordially expressed the pleasure they have derived from my notes of travel in many lands, and I ask them to gladden my own Jubilee birthday (26th May, 1837-1887) by making me their almoner in thus sending light to them that dwell in darkness."

All such donations for the Chinese Blind Mission will be gladly welcomed by Miss C. F. Gordon-Cumming, Glen Earn House, Crieff, Scotland.

EXCUSE-MAKING GIRLS.

BY L. EUGENIE ELDRIDGE.

"Well, I believe I'll stay at home."
"But what shall I say if our minister or Mr. Morris, the class leader, asks for you?"
"Oh, say I have a headache."
"But that would not be true."
"How do you know it would not be true? Can you tell me when my head aches better than myself?"
"But you said less than half an hour ago you never felt better in your life."
"What if I did! Can't one get up a headache for an excuse? A headache is always in order. What are you thinking of, you solemn-looking owl, have I committed an unpardonable sin?"

"I was thinking of what you told that little dress-maker, Miss Lillis, yesterday—that you could not possibly attend to having your wrap cut, as company had arrived. She looked tired and, I thought, rather disappointed when she said she had turned away two jobs that she might have time for you as agreed."

"Well, I did have company, didn't I? Where is the fuss about that?"

"Oh, Edith! You know the reason was not company, but that you were enjoying yourself at lawn tennis, and did not want to leave. And you know to-night

you are busy with that new lace pattern, and it fascinates you. A headache is not the reason why you decline attending the little meeting."

"Well, Miss Prim, are you done with your 'preachment?' According to Susie West I should say I was a common liar."

"No, not a liar! I do not believe you would intentionally break one of the commandments, but forgive me if I am plain spoken, you are fast becoming a modern excuse-maker, and, excuse me again, I shall not give as a reason for your non-appearance to-night a headache. There is the bell. Good night."

But no "good night" came in response. Edith May was too angry, I suppose I must say—to reply. When one's little sins are laid bare, reproofs are usually received in an angry, resentful manner, unless much grace has subdued the natural heart.

Edith May and Susie West were both upright girls, members of the same Sabbath school class and same church, but this little habit of creating an excuse, to hide the real reason, or as a cover to her indolence and shortcomings, this little fox was meddling sadly with her thrifty vines.

"A more convenient season" was often and often her plea when wide-awake action was necessary.

"A little more sleep, a little more slumber" again and again she indulged, and her quick brain was fertile in well-formed excuses. But Edith was beginning to be distrusted. Her little stratagems had not always succeeded. The bare truth had now and then been reached, and Susie did not tell her, as she might have done, that Harry Ball had been heard to say, "Edith May was as full of excuses as Uncle Tiff himself," which must have been an exaggeration, since all who have read "Nina Gordon," know he was inveterate.

But Edith had a tender conscience, and Susie's gentle, though plain and truthful words had awakened a close self-examination.

A stubborn, resentful nature would doubtless have taken a different course from Edith. There are those who know they have done wrong; their every action shows it, yet they would probably rather die than acknowledge it. Such natures are not pleasant, and if one is so born it, is a great misfortune, yet they are in no way absolved from the duty of striving to overcome. "Overcomers, crowned at last!" How blest the welcome to such a one! Great temptations bring great victories.

When Edith's self-inquiries began, the first question that shaped itself from the chaos of her thoughts was this. She spoke it aloud:

"Am I nerving, have I reached this border line of 'dishonesty?'"

She knew she was ready and fertile in excuse-making, saying what might be true, but as she must admit was not, always, in her case. Yet this habit, so well developed at present, had grown by degrees. She had practised it as a cover for various self-indulgences, therefore, her logic told her, selfishness was at the bottom.

A sudden impulse seized her. She resolved upon a new start. If she had not been a Christian before she would be honest now. The meeting could not have been more than half through, and presently a sharp gale click was heard, and a decided footfall sounded near.

What was Susie's surprise when an informal hand-shaking followed the meeting, to behold her friend Edith smiling and talking with the minister, when she had been perplexing her mind what truthful answer to give when he should ask for her.

Upon the homeward walk Edith unburdened her mind to Susie, telling her that all she had said and much more was true, that her eyes had been opened, and she had resolved that in future her arch enemy, excuse-making to hide selfishness, should not get the mastery.

Susie pressed her hand warmly, saying she knew the victory was won, for Edith had a determined way of her own and once aroused and on guard would not easily be overcome.

It was true. She was not easily overcome, nor did she easily overcome.

As time passed on her old habit of making ready excuse for something she did not wish to do would not be set aside without a struggle. There were times when almost every breath brought a well-framed plan different from the very fact,

but as often her resolve was taken anew, and now perhaps there is no one in that village free from exaggeration and excuse-making.—*Christian at Work.*

A RICH GIFT.—The teacher of a girls' school in Africa wished her scholars to learn to give. She paid them, therefore, for doing some work for her, so that each girl might have something of her own to give away for Jesus' sake. Among them was a new scholar, such a wild and ignorant little heathen that the teacher did not try to explain to her what the other girls were doing. The day came when the gifts were handed in. Each pupil brought her piece of money, and laid it down, and the teacher thought all the offerings were given. But there stood the new scholar, hugging tightly in her arms a pitcher, the only thing she had in the world. She went to the table and put it among the other gifts, but before she turned away she kissed it. There is one who watched and still watches people casting gifts into his treasury; would he not say of this African girl, "She hath cast in more than they all!"—*Band of Hope.*

GOOD TEMPER, like a sunny day, sheds a brightness over everything. It is the sweetener of toil and the soother of disquietude.—*Irving.*

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From International Question-Book.)

LESSON IV.—APRIL 22.

THE TEN VIRGINS.—MATT. 25: 1-13.

COMMIT VERSES 10-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.

And they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.—Matt. 25: 10.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

The duty of preparing now for the future.

DAILY READINGS.

M. Matt. 25: 1-13.
T. Matt. 13: 1-8, 20: 21.
W. Luke 13: 23-30.
Th. Luke 16: 1-13.
F. Luke 16: 19-31.
Sa. Heb. 4: 1-11.
Su. Rev. 22: 6-21.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

1. *Then*: at the coming of the Lord. The Gospel rewards are like a wedding feast. *Ten virgins*: representing the whole of the professed followers of Christ. *Lamps*: small vessels with a wick and a small quantity of oil, in these processions placed on a stick, like a torch, representing the outward profession and form of religion; what appears to men. *Went forth to meet the bridegroom*: in Oriental weddings the bridegroom went to the house of the bride, and then took her with him to his own house by night, in a great procession with torches and music. At his house was the wedding banquet. 2. *Five were wise*: the true Christians. *Five were foolish*: the mere professors, without true religion in their hearts. They were foolish not to be prepared for the future. *Foolish took no oil*: except what was in their lamps. *They represent the character of* which the outward life grows. In the foolish virgins it was mere emotion, excitement, transient feelings, outward motives. Like the seed sown upon stony ground that had no root. 3. *The wise took oil in their vessels*: their religious life grew out of real principle, an earnest character, a new heart, created and sustained by the Holy Spirit. 4. *They all slumbered and slept*: while waiting at some place for the procession to come that they might join it. This is said to show how unexpectedly Christ will come to all. The wise slept in peaceful trust.—the foolish in false security. 5. *The bridegroom cometh*: the bridegroom is Christ when he comes to judge the world. To us he practically comes at death. In a sense he comes at every crisis of our lives. 6. *Not so; lest there be not enough*: it is impossible to give another our character, our new hearts, our preparation. *Go to them that sell*: go to him who alone can give you the needed preparation. 7. *And the door was shut*: it was too late then to make preparation, and there was no possibility of entering without it. The door is often shut to those who have not prepared themselves by faith and love and true service, for the opportunities of being and doing good, for death,—for heaven. There is a "too late." 8. *I know you not*: I do not recognize you as one of those who should come in. You do not belong here.

SUBJECT: THE NECESSITY OF PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE.

QUESTIONS.

I. THE GOSPEL WEDDING FEAST (v. 1).—What are the Oriental wedding customs referred to in the parable? Why was it desirable to attend this wedding banquet? In what respects are the rewards of the Gospel like a wedding feast?

II. THE FIVE WISE VIRGINS (vs. 1-4).—Who are represented by the ten virgins? How did the wise ones show their wisdom? What is represented by the lamps? by the oil in their vessels with their lamps? Why was it wiser to be thus prepared? What must we do to be prepared for the coming of Christ? When is the time to make the preparation?

III. THE FIVE FOOLISH VIRGINS (vs. 1-3).—How did these show their folly? Was it intentional, or only neglect? What is meant by their having no oil with their lamps? What other parable explains this? (Matt. 13: 5, 6, 20, 21.)

IV. THE UNEXPECTED COMING (vs. 5-9).—What did the ten virgins do while waiting? Was this wrong? When did the bridegroom come? What did the virgins then do? Who is represented by the bridegroom? What is meant by his coming? Will it be sudden? Does death always come suddenly at last? Do the great crises and opportuni-

ties of our lives come unexpectedly? Why did not the wise give some of their oil to the foolish? Can we give character, and preparation, and new hearts to others however much we may desire it? Read some verses about the coming of the Lord? (1 Thes. 5: 2, 3; John 14: 3; Mark: 13: 32; Matt. 24: 37-39; 2 Tim. 4: 1; 1 Thes. 4: 15-17.)

V. "AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT" (vs. 9-13).—What did the wise advise the foolish to do? Who went in to the wedding? Why could not the others go in? What is represented by "the door was shut"? Is there a time when it is too late for us to prepare for heaven? When is the time? What is the preparation? How are we to watch?

LESSON V.—APRIL 23.

THE TALENTS.—MATT. 25: 14-30.

COMMIT VERSES 20-21.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.—Rev. 2: 10.

CENTRAL TRUTH.

Unto every one that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

DAILY READINGS.

M. Matt. 25: 14-30.
T. Luke 19: 11-27.
W. Matt. 13: 1-17.
Th. John 14: 1-17; 23-27.
F. Rev. 21: 7-14; 21-27.
Sa. Luke 8: 5-18.
Su. Rev. 2: 1-11.

INTRODUCTION.—This parable is closely connected with our last lesson. There the virgins are represented as waiting for the coming of the Lord, here the servants are working while they wait.

HELPS OVER HARD PLACES.

11. *A man*: representing Christ as about to leave his disciples. *Servants*: slaves were often in those days employed as this parable describes. They represent all Christian professors. 15. *Five talents*: a talent was 3,000 shekels, and a silver talent is variously estimated at from \$1,000 to \$2,000. In several Bible dictionaries it is called \$1811.50. The talents represent the things God entrusts to us, as Gospel truths, wealth, time, opportunities, the Bible, the Holy Spirit, the capacity for religion. *According to ability*: capacity to use the talents. 16. *Traded with the same*: referring to the wise and faithful use of all God entrusts to us. *Made other five talents*: true use increases power and ability and opportunity. 19. *Reckoned with them*: in the day of judgment. But also, in a lesser degree, at every crisis of life, at death. 21. *Well done*: because, in fact, he had done well. *Ruler over many things*: larger powers, more opportunities, greater usefulness was his first reward. *The joy of thy lord*: the second reward of faithfulness. It is joy like Christ's,—pure, loving, unselfish, infinite, glorious. 24. *A hard man*: hard-hearted. He knew he was lying when he said this. *Gathering up the wheat from the threshing-floor*: where he had strewed or scattered the bundles of grain in the straw. 25. *Thou hast that is thine*: as if he at least were strictly honest. 26. *Wicked and slothful*: the true reason for his conduct. *Thou knowest*: you are convicted on your own showing. 27. *Usury*: interest, money paid for the use of money. *The word usury is now employed to denote unlawful or exorbitant interest.* 28. *Take the talent from him*: unfaithfulness leads to the loss of what is entrusted to us. 29. *Every one that hath*: uses well what he has, and thus, only, really possesses.

SUBJECT: WORK AND WAGES IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

QUESTIONS.

I. THE ENTRUSTED TALENTS (vs. 14, 15).—To what does Jesus next compare the kingdom of heaven? Who is represented by the householder? Who by the servants? What by the going into a far country? How did he divide up his goods? How much is a talent? Why did he give to some more than to others? What things are represented by the talents? Name some of the talents entrusted to you.

II. THE FAITHFUL SERVANTS AND THEIR REWARD (vs. 16-23).—How did the man with five talents use them? What is represented by "trading"? How much did he gain? In what way can we increase our powers and usefulness? (v. 29.) Can you give any examples or illustrations? When did the lord return? What is meant by the "reckoning"? In what two ways was the man with the five talents rewarded? Are these always the rewards of faithfulness? What is it to enter into the joy of our Lord?

How did the man with two talents act? Was there any difference between his reward and that of the other? Could the man with one talent have had a like reward? What lesson can you learn from the faithful servant?

III. THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANT AND HIS FATE (vs. 24-30).—How did the man with one talent use it? What excuse did he give for so doing? Is God ever a hard master? Does he seem so to the wicked? How was the excuse answered? What is represented by burying the talent in the earth? In what two ways was the unfaithful servant punished? What do we lose by unfaithfulness? Is v. 29 a true picture of life? What lessons do you learn from the unfaithful servant?

LESSON CALENDAR.

(Second Quarter, 1888.)

1. Apr. 1.—The Marriage Feast.—Matt. 22: 1-14.
2. Apr. 8.—Christ's Last Warning.—Matt. 23: 27-39.
3. Apr. 15.—Christian Watchfulness.—Matt. 24: 42-51.
4. Apr. 22.—The Ten Virgins.—Matt. 25: 1-13.
5. Apr. 29.—The Talents.—Matt. 25: 14-30.
6. May 6.—The Judgment.—Matt. 25: 31-46.
7. May 13.—The Lord's Supper.—Matt. 26: 17-30.
8. May 20.—Jesus in Gethsemane.—Matt. 26: 36-46.
9. May 27.—Peter's Denial.—Matt. 26: 67-75.
10. June 3.—Jesus Crucified.—Matt. 27: 33-50.
11. June 10.—Jesus Risen.—Matt. 28: 1-15.
12. June 17.—The Great Commission.—Matt. 28: 16-20.
13. Review, Temperance.—1 Cor. 8: 1-13, and Missions.