

and endanger their whole welfare. We had some of this kind of work to do at the camp, but felt strongly that a wise father and the quiet counsels of a mother could produce far better effects. It is essential that parents must come to realize that sex is at the basis of a proper appreciation of many phases of life. They have a tremendous responsibility to their boys, and no less a responsibility to society. The most effective methods of helping them seems to be to deal plainly with physical facts; to tell them of noble women and present lofty ideals of purity.

Camp is now over for another year, and the boys are talking of "what we did at the camp." Already they are planning to have a longer holiday next year. Who can measure the happiness they will have during the winter in anticipation of another visit to "Skinny Camp?"

"The House by the Side of the Road"

Read this poem in connection with Mrs. Stephenson's article.

SAM WALTER FOSS.

There are hermit souls that live withdrawn

In the peace of their self-content;

There are souls, like stars, that dwell apart.

In a fellowless firmament;

There are pioneer souls that blaze their paths

Where highways never ran;

But let me live by the side of the road
And be a friend to man.

Let me live in a house by the side of the road

Where the race of men go by—

The men who are good and the men who are bad,

As good and as bad as I.

I would not sit in the scorner's seat,
Or hurl the cynic's ban;

Let me live in a house by the side of the road

And be a friend to man.

I see from my house by the side of the road,

By the side of the highway of life,

The men who press with the ardor of hope,

The men who are faint with the strife.

But I turn not away from their smiles
Nor their tears—

Both parts of an infinite plan—

Let me live in my house by the side of the road

And be a friend to man.

I know there are brook-gladdened meadows ahead

And mountains of wearisome height;

That the road passes on through the long afternoon

And stretches away to the night,

But still I rejoice when the travellers rejoice,

And weep with the strangers and moan,

Nor live in my house by the side of the road

Like a man who dwells alone.

Let me live in a house by the side of the road

Where the race of men go by—

They are good, they are bad, they are wise, they are strong,

Wise, foolish—so am I.

Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat,
Or hurl the cynic's ban?

Let me live in my house by the side of the road

And be a friend to man.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15: 11-32.

TOPIC FOR WEEK OF DECEMBER 18TH.

REV. R. O. ARMSTRONG, M.A., VIKEN, MAN.

THIS has been called the crown of the parables. Truths flash in every direction, and new lessons appear every time we look closely at it. We have heard it read, preached from, and expounded many times no doubt; but it will always bear fresh study. Perhaps it has been misinterpreted and misapplied more than any other parable, and we must not assume we know all about it because others have told us. Look at it for yourselves.

The parable furnishes a good topic for the League, because so many can take part. There are many subjects suggested. Under a wise, enthusiastic leader a very helpful and varied programme may be made out. Make this the "crown" of the programmes!

The name of the parable has been questioned. Can we improve on the generally accepted title, "The Parable of the Prodigal Son"? It looks to me as if we would have to leave it at that. Custom is a great master. But other names could be suggested, and in this way a better analysis made. Some have suggested "The Parable of the Loving Father." Mention might be made of it as the parable of penitence, joy over saving the lost, the two sons, and so forth.

We begin with "two sons." Have you noticed how all through the Bible, and we may verify this in human experience, two kinds of character are contrasted. We have Abraham and Lot, and before them Cain and Abel. Jacob and Esau, Judas and John, Jew and Gentile, Catholic and Protestant; each represents a type. Each has his own characteristics. Over all is one "Father," who is kind toward all, and gives men their freedom.

The "younger son" exercises his "rights" altogether to what he thinks is his own advantage. There was no consultation or taking counsel, and no filial or brotherly spirit shown on his part. This brings to our attention the study of "rights," with its counterpart of "duties." We are free agents, to be sure. We have the power of choice. How shall we use our liberty? Can we better express our answer than in these words:

"Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours to make them thine."

God has given men power of choice, but reason is a part of man's equipment as well, and we should seek that which is good and which will keep our lives in harmony—peace—with themselves, with our "brothers," and with God.

This younger brother, you will perceive, was very wise in his own eyes, anyway. You will find his kind to-day saying something like this: "I believe in the Church just as much as ever, but I do not intend to go every time."

The writer once met one of his former classmates who had professed conversion in some evangelistic meetings held under Crossley and Hunter. I commended him for his stand, and enquired how things were going. I knew he had many temptations in the path he was travelling and from the companions he was thrown among. His reply was, "I believe in these things as much as ever, but I do not say as much about them." The suspicion flashed across my mind at once that he stood where the young man of the parable did when he asked for his

portion of the goods. The position is this: their lives, time, talent, faculties, are in their own hands—as far as that can be—and are not at the disposal of their Heavenly Father. They will say they believe in the Church, Bible, Sunday School, prayer, and so forth, but they don't believe in them the way they used to, or the way other people do. They have no intention giving them up. They expect to stay near by in any case!

But what is the result of this severing of allegiance to God? What is the result of self-reliance, the taking over the mastery of ourselves regardless of traditions and obligations? The result is that before "many days" are passed the wandering into a far country has begun! We cannot stand still morally or spiritually. Life, good or bad, is a way *across* we walk therein. Severed from God, the life from positive religious decisions, and it goes farther and farther into darkness.

Now watch the wanderer's course. How does he act under his own leadership? Self is a poor master. We want to see as much as possible the modern application of the story. It is true to life. That is why it is read so much.

Follow then a young man into one of our cities on these days. He thinks he can do better for himself there. His father and mother wanted him to stay home, and offered him good inducements to do so, but he found home slow and tiresome. He would do better by going off for himself, he thought. To his mother's fears lest he should forget the God of his youth and home, he replied that he was not alarmed, "he knew what he was about." In the big city things were lonely and no one paid attention to his particular whims. However he was going to face the world bravely. Sunday finds him in church, morning, afternoon, and evening. He writes a letter to his mother about it. During one week he finds companions and chooses his haunts. A month passes, and he is too tired to go to church in the morning. He finds the Sunday School lessons duller than ever and on Sunday evenings his chums want him to go for a walk. The months pass . . . cigarettes, cigars, pipe—questionable companions, tipping—the "journey" is well under way. His mother? Well, he tells her he is very busy and "tired" on Sundays; tells her that he does not care for the minister and the church people do not notice him, etc.

Many a young man is slow to learn who his best friends are. He "goes shy" of his parents, his pastor, his Sunday School teachers, his public school teachers and the "elders" of the neighborhood. He thinks they are out of date, narrow, and wanting in ambition. His boon companions are the fellows who brag, who indulge in the questionable; the fellows who would "share their last cent," and such like. Alas, he awakens, after spending his own substance to gratify the lusts of these companions, in himself destitute. Such "friends" remain while health and cash are there to draw from. Money gone, they quit.

So the "prodigal" joins himself to "a citizen of that country." He boasted liberty bartered away for a bite to eat. He aimed to be free—then finds that man wants "kicks"—and he finds at last to his shame that men cannot be free and irresponsible at the same time. It is either a good master or a bad one. Which will we choose?