

Our Young People

Topic for February 5: "Idle in the Marke =place."—Matt. 20: 1-16.

"I Must be About My Father's Business."

The Wages of the Vineyard.

When Horace Walpole was about to build Strawberry Hill Villa, he betook himself to Spenser's "Faerie Queene" for a preparation of imagination. Who wants, in this changing, bewildering world, a clear perspective of life and its duties does well to go to the parables of our Lord.

Taking the good advice of an old poet, and letting "our eyes make pictures when they're shut," what do we see? A busy market place, and men standing around waiting for work. Is it nineteen hundred years ago? Go to any large city or town and find it to-day. Not far away, a vineyard at gathering time, and extra hands needed. Thousands of sunny slopes in either hemisphere afford the scene of the grape harvest in its season.

The first relay of workers is off with the early morning, on the definite contract of seventeen cents a day—a good wage for the time and place; the second, third, and last set go to their partial day's toil at high noon, at three, and at last five o'clock in the afternoon, relying on the good faith of the master who had said: "Whosoever is right I will give you."

Night falls, the sudden Oriental night, too soon for the late-comers, but alike on all. As the laborers crowd around to receive their honest dues, two surprises await them; the eleventh-hour laborers are surprised at the liberality of the master, the early workers with his apparent lack of it. At first sight it looks as if there were an injustice, even when one grants that the master had a right to do as he would with his own.

But hold a moment! Shady ways usually seek shady places. Nothing could be more palpably open than the frank manner with which the paymaster rewards the last in the presence of the first, who might easily have been paid off and sent home. Nothing could be more cordial than his answer to the grumbling expostulations, "Friend, it is my will to give unto this last as unto thee;" nothing more just than his appeal to the conditions of the contract, "Did I not agree with thee for a penny a day?" as if to say, "No one is made poorer by my act, many are made happier."

It is well to recall the reason that the last employed, who call out the envious and grudging spirit of their neighbors, give for idling away their time. It is an

honest answer, "Because no man hath hired us." Ruskin, in "Unto This Last," declares that Christ here gave the practical basis of the daily wage, and that the country owes to the people that are willing to work, whether employed or not, an honest living. Milton certainly implies the same thought in the noblest of sonnets, when he says:

"Thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

They are not wise who forget that God's "state is kingly," and that, like an earthly king, he may give all the heart's desire besides what he gives of his royal bounty.

Two beautiful lessons at least lie in the parable, that heaven's rewards are not so much for what we do as for the spirit in which we work; and that God cares more for the workers than for the work. This is emphasized more than once, as in the answer to Peter's question, "And what shall we have therefore?" and again, "What shall this man do?"

But is there no loss to anybody? Yes, a great loss, but not to the first-hour workers; but to all the rest, and greatest to him who seems overpaid. A poet in The Century expresses it with a fineness denied to prose:

"Idlers all day about the market place
They name us, and our dumb lips answer
not,
Bearing the bitter while our sloth's disgrace,
And our dark tasking whereof none may
wot.

"Oh, the fair slopes where the grape-gather-
ers go!—
Not they the day's fierce heat and burden
bear,
But we who on the market stones drop slow
Our barren tears, while all the bright
hours wear.

"Lord of the vineyard, whose dear word de-
clares
Our one hour's labor as the day's shall be,
What coin divine can make our wage as
theirs
Who had the morning joy of work Tor
thee?"

Just before she went away from us, the first president of Mt. Holyoke College said to the writer: "I used, in my earlier experience as a teacher, to speak to young people of the danger of postponing the Christian life until the cares and perplexities of living might make it practically impossible to begin it. I still think that a great consideration, but it is secondary to me in these later years. Now I say to the young, 'You will miss the richest and best thing life has to offer

in a late acceptance of Christ as your Savior. The serene and exalted joy of life in Christ is only known to him who has had a long life of service."—L. M. Hodgkins in C. E. World.

For Daily Reading.

Mon., Jan. 30.—The idle talent. Matt. 25: 24-30.
 Tues., Jan. 31.—Idle words. Matt. 12: 33-37.
 Wed., Feb. 1.—Sowing, morning and evening. Eccl. 11: 1-6.
 Thurs., Feb. 2.—Untiring activity. 2 Cor. 11: 23-28.
 Fri., Feb. 3.—The night cometh. John 9: 1-7.
 Sat., Feb. 4.—Laborers are few. Matt. 9: 36-38.
 Sun., Feb. 5.—Topic, Idle in the market place. Matt. 20: 1-16.

Their Part in History.

A Greek historian desired very intensely to say a word about the people of the city where he was born. He felt he could not write his history without saying something of his own native place, and accordingly he wrote thus: "While Athens was building temples, and Sparta was waging war, my countrymen were doing nothing." I am afraid there are too many Christians of whom, if the book were written as to what they are doing in the church, it would have to be said, they have been doing nothing all their lives.—Charles H. Spurgeon.

God's ways seem dark, but soon or late,
 They touch the shining hills of day:
 The evil cannot brook delay,
 The good can well afford to wait.
 —J. G. Whittier.

Eskimo Dogs.

The wild dog, uninfluenced at all by association with man, is typical of nothing but the wolf, and in the circumpolar ice he is found in numbers roving over the fields of snow and ice, frequently in company with the wolves. The Eskimo have taken these wild creatures and by a rude process of selection and training they have developed the "huskie," a colloquial abbreviation of the word Eskimo. These animals represent a type of dog but little removed from the wolf—hardy, vicious, swift of foot and keen of eye. They have been trained to haul sledge-loads of goods across the snow and ice, and this comes as natural to them now as for a pointer to point. They possess the blood of the wolf, however, in their veins—the taint of the jackal. At the first opportunity they will run away and join the wild dogs, and deteriorate rapidly in their company. Throughout the great North-West it is hard to make up a full team of strictly pure huskies. The leader of a team is invariably a trustworthy huskie, but harnessed behind him will be one or more wild creatures that are kept in harness only through the moral influence of the others.—North American Review.

For we must share, if we would keep,
 That good thing from above;
 Ceasing to give, we cease to have,
 Such is the law of love.

—R. C. Trench.