

tween us and happiness that will satisfy and endure. If that door is ever closed against us, it is by our own hand. No one misses salvation, but the blame is his own.

I have bought five yoke of oxen, v. 19. "When are you going to begin to think of eternity, and come to the house of God?" asked Dr.

A. B. Davidson of a respectable tradesman. "I know, sir, that I ought to come," was the honest reply; "but it's no use; my mind is so full of business, I can think of nothing else."

But how foolish is the excuse! What are five yoke of oxen, or the affairs of some business concern, in comparison with the weighty interests of the soul? Have we not seen mighty business establishments in ill-fated San Francisco crushed to the ground by a tremor of the earth, or licked up by the remorseless fire,—the accumulations of years swept away in a moment of time? How futile, therefore, to make these uncertain and fleeting riches a substitute for eternal things!

Go out quickly . . . and bring in, v. 21. Picture the multitudes of immigrants, varied in lan-

guage and customs and beliefs, pouring into our vast and wonderful West.

Now or Never! Railway companies are pushing on through lines and branch lines with almost feverish haste, to catch their trade. Business houses are sending in their agents to secure their custom. Shame on the church if she is less in earnest in seeking to win and hold them for Christ! It is now or never; for, if these great hosts are not speedily conquered by righteousness, they will surely be enslaved by evil.

Compel them, v. 23. When Simeon, the great English divine, was summoned to the death-bed of his brother, he was thus greeted:

"I am dying, and you never warned me of the state in which I was." "Nay," said Simeon, "I took every reasonable opportunity of bringing the subject of religion before you, and frequently alluded to it in my letters." "Yes," said the dying man, "but you never came to me, closed the door, took me by the collar of my coat, and told me that I was unconverted and that if I died in that state I should be lost."

TEACHING HINTS

This section embraces teaching material for the various grades in the school.

For Teachers of the Older Scholars

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Christ's searching table talk led one of the guests, as an excuse for filling an awkward gap, to offer what he thought a pious remark, v. 15. Jesus takes it up, to show that pious acts are called for. It is no use to express admiration for the reign and supremacy of Jesus, if we withhold the allegiance of our lives. It is easy to praise Him; harder to follow, Matt. 19 : 16, 22. The falsity of every excuse for going without the present enjoyment of gospel blessings is exhibited in this parabolic picture of—

1. *God's Amazing Graciousness*, vs. 16, 17. Dwell on the greatness of the provision made (Isa. 25 : 6; 1 Cor. 2 : 9, 10), and the greatness of the number of guests invited (Rev. 7 : 9)—so "many" that it became hard to find people enough to fill the places of absentees, v. 23. Refute the notion that the gospel is narrow

and limited in its scope and application. God can never be reproached for shutting any out, 2 Pet. 3 : 9. This accentuates—

2. *Man's Amazing Indifference*, vs. 18-20. Other things than Christ, as He presents Himself in the gospel, have so absorbing an interest that pretexts multiply for slighting Him. The excuses mentioned may all have been facts; but, as excuses, they were none the less false in point of urgency. The ground to be viewed (v. 18) would not run away. It would be just as tangible after the feast as before. The oxen to be tried (v. 19) could be left securely in the stall till the feast should be over. The newly-married bride (v. 20), even if Oriental etiquette forbade her presence at the feast, could at least exercise patience at home till her husband should be free. The point to be pressed home upon your class is that, however legitimate and urgent other business may be, there is no business more urgent than immediate acceptance and enjoyment of the divine hospitality expounded and offered by Christ.