

ENGLISH TEACHER'S NOTES.

BY SARAH GERALDINA STOCK.

We all naturally like to know the end of a thing. In turning over the leaves of some interesting story, how often is the reader tempted to look on to the close of the volume, to see what is the conclusion, and whether it is a happy one—that is to say, such a denouement as promises fair to the hero or heroine of the story for the future beyond that. Now we all have a life-story, which must end some day; and the world itself, that is to say, the present dispensation of things, has a life-story, which is day by day advancing to a conclusion, a conclusion which, is but the beginning of another future. What the end shall be deeply concerns even the youngest among us.

The little party gathered around our Lord on Olivet and asked him about the "end of the world." He first told them about the age which must run its course first. The predictions, directions, and promises relating to this we considered in the last lesson. The portion of our Lord's discourse appointed for to-day treats of the end itself. Three of the evangelists have recorded it. And while Matthew and Luke relate that part which refers chiefly to the ungodly, Mark has specially recorded the part which bears upon the hope, the attitude, and the life of the people of God.

The end to which we are to look forward, and which is to close this present dispensation, is the coming of the Son of man. And about this coming the Lord tells us three things.

1. *How it will come.*

If the father of a family, before leaving them for a while, promises one day to return, what will they expect? That they shall actually see his face again, actually hear his voice, and stand in his presence. They are pleased when they get news of him; but that is not his coming. They are pleased to receive a message in his own hand-writing; but that is not his coming. They are glad, as they grow older, to understand his ways better, and enter into his mind; but that is not his coming. They are glad, to receive his gifts of love from afar, to find that he is always mindful of them, whatever the distance; they think of him, and talk of him, and are proud of him. But all these are not his coming. They expect him actually in person, according to his promise.

And this is how we are to expect the "Son of man." The "same Jesus" who ascended up from earth to heaven, is coming back "in like manner," in his personal presence. The

advance of thought, the progress of the Gospel, the increasing light thrown upon his word, are none of them his coming. Nor are strange pretenders, or systems that may spring up, to be mistaken for that coming. It will be manifested to all. For he shall come "in the clouds, with great power and glory." It will be a real, personal, glorious, and unmistakable coming. His people will not be left in wonder and perplexity about it. They shall be gathered together "from the uttermost parts of heaven." Every obscure, feeble servant of Christ on earth; every soul that has gone on before to wait in rest and gladness for his appearing, shall be brought out with joy to meet him; not one left in doubt, not one forgotten. The first object of his coming is to fetch them. John 14. 3; 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17.

2. *When he will come.*

The exact moment of time, though fixed in the everlasting counsels of God, remains hidden from all others on earth or in heaven. ver. 32. But there are given

(a) *Signs of its approach.*

These occur in the passage for last week's lesson, but they bear equally upon the present subject. First, the progress of events in the world brings it day by day nearer. This may seem a truism, but it is one the world needs reminding of. Look at the question of the scoffers. 2 Pet. 3. 4. They think that because things have been going on so long, therefore the end will not come. Yet this is exactly why it will come. Every revolution of the wheel of nature brings it nearer. And when we see "iniquity abounding," the growth of knowledge actually ministering to the increase of wickedness, (as in the case of what are called "infernal machines," etc.) war becoming, with every fresh outbreak, more fierce and destructive, we ought to conclude that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Secondly, the spread of the Gospel brings it nearer. The North American continent has been traversed. China is open, Japan is open. And the long unknown regions of Central Africa are being assailed on every side by missionary expeditions. These signs may be seen by all who will look.

(b) *Signs of its being close upon us*, vers. 24, 25. To these something is added in Luke's account. Chap. 21. 25, 26. Whatever these may mean, they will certainly be understood when they appear. And the coming will follow immediately. When the leaves of the fig-tree appear, it is too late to prepare for summer. When the knock has sounded at the door it is too late to prepare for the guest who is about to enter. Those who would be ready then must prepare now. ver. 33.