

By Way of Illustration.

BY JENNIE M. BINGHAM.

Verse 19. They were simple disciples—what we would call laymen—doing only what every Christian is naturally constrained to do, telling to others what they themselves have heard and believed concerning Jesus. It does not matter so much who scatters the seed; the life is in the seed and not in the hand of him that sows it. It is of more consequence *what* is preached than who preaches it.—*Pentecost.*

It was not for the last time that persecution diffused the truth which it sought to crush. The brands kicked from the hearth by the heel of violence kindled flames where they lit. The fugitives carried their faith with them and declared it as they went.

Verses 20, 21. When good men see the multitudes without the Gospel all ecclesiastical barriers seem of small importance. Lord Shaftesbury was like these men. He was a loyal member of the Church of England, but when he found that the Church opposed open-air preaching and all evangelism not under its direction he declared that "in a country where one hundred thousand souls are without pastors and public worship, and no one to care for their souls, the Church which does not lead in evangelism should die of dry rot if not by divine judgment." He put measures through the House of Parliament, giving such services the protection of law. He opened the theaters for the unchurched masses and himself led those great meetings.

Verse 23. "When he was come and had seen the grace of God." The grace of God is a thing to be seen. When grace comes to a man it makes itself manifest in life and character. We are told when the four men let down their paralyzed friend through the roof at the feet of Jesus that Jesus "saw their faith." Those who knew Five Points, New York, before the mission was started there declared that they could see the grace of God in the appearance and behavior of the people and even in the material surroundings, poor though they were.

"Disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." The worshipers of Diana were delighted when they found that silver shrines of the goddess could be made, so that each one could have a little Diana in his home. When these heathen saw their neighbors acting like the Christ of whom they so often spoke they naturally felt that they were copies of him, and so they called them by his name—Christians.

Verses 29, 30. The city which sent out the

first missionaries to foreign lands was foremost in caring for the needy brethren at Jerusalem. The light which shines the farthest shines very brightly where it is. This is a law in physics, and in spiritual life as well. A woman wrote to her missionary secretary: "I had occasion to call upon the officers of our Woman's Foreign Missionary Society the other day, and I found one leading a cottage prayer meeting in a neglected quarter, one was nursing a sick child in a poor home, and one was packing a Home Missionary box for the frontier. It cannot be that their interest in the far-away heathen causes them to be deaf to home calls."

Heart Talks on the Lesson.

BY MRS. J. H. KNOWLES.

Everything that has life must grow. The message carried by the people scattered abroad by the persecution, after St. Stephen's death, was a living seed of truth. Sometimes it is spoken of as "preaching the word," sometimes as "preaching the Lord Jesus." St. John, writing of Jesus, says, "In the beginning was the Word," and "in him was life." Preaching Jesus is sowing vital seed which must take root and grow; preaching for doctrine the commandments of men is as useless as scattering pebbles on the sand and expecting to gather a living harvest. The opinions, theories, forms of the visible Church may change, outlive their power and die; but "the word of the Lord liveth and abideth forever." It is not worth while to be so devoted to external forms of religious faith, or expressions of creed, as to grieve over a change in them or even their disappearance altogether; or to suppose that the faith itself is lost because its form of expression is not the same we have always known.

Please notice that I do not say it is a matter of small consequence for religious faith to change, or whether or not the truth itself is firmly held; these are matters of vital consequence indeed. But never confound externals, which are of human origin, with the inward life of the Gospel message, which is divine. Progress marks the path of the true Church of Jesus through the ages. New light, new power, larger liberty come with the dawn of each century, and will continue to do so until, as he has said, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

It was really a shock to the Christian Jews in Jerusalem to hear that Peter had gone contrary to all traditions, and to what they honestly believed were essentials of the true faith, by eating with the uncircumcised. But when