



LESSON VIII.—MAY 20.

Parable of the Sower.

Matt. xiii., 1-8, and 18-23. Memory verses, 22, 23. Read Matt. xii., 22 to xiii., 23; Luke viii., 1-21.

Daily Readings.

M. Forgiven Sin. Lk. vii., 36-50.
T. Eternal Sin. Mk. iii., 22-29.
W. His Kindred. Mt. xii., 46-50.
T. Wise Heart. I. Ks. iii., 5-15.
F. Clean Heart. Ps. li., 10-19.
S. Their Fruit. Mt. vii., 15-27.

Golden Text.

'The seed is the word of God.'—Luke viii., 11.

Lesson Text.

(1) The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside. (2) And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore. (3) And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; (4) And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: (5) Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had not deepness of earth: (6) And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. (7) And some fell among thorns: and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: (8) But other fell on good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold.

(18) Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. (19) When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. (20) But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; (21) Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. (22) He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. (23) But he that receiveth seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.

Suggestions.

Our Lord had been making a tour through Galilee, preaching and teaching in every city and village. On the day that he returned to Capernaum great crowds flocked to see and hear him. As they were by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus got into a little fishing boat and sat there, speaking to the great multitude on the shore. He now began a new method of teaching. He had taught them plainly the principles of the kingdom, he had healed their diseases, he had showed them many miracles. The people had twisted his teachings, they had discredited his healing powers, they had demanded more miracles. This showed that their hearts were not yet really ready for the truth, they could not or would not understand. From this time our Lord used a new method of teaching, his words, like good seed, were to be sown in the hearts of men to bring forth eternal fruit in the sincere and thoughtful minds.

Jesus Christ was the sower and his words the seed about which he told the first parable.

He likened the hearts of his hearers to the earth in the grain fields. Some hearts were like the wayside or beaten path that ran through or alongside of the field; as that ground was hardened by the tramping of many feet, so the heart was hardened by the tramping through of worldly thoughts, vain desires and trivial ambitions. These are they who hear the truth only with their ears, their hearts are so occupied with oth-

er things that the seed falls unheeded, and before they are aware of what it might have meant to them, the adversary with the swift-winged guile of commonplace trivialities, has snatched away the good seed, and the fruitfulness it might have brought is lost forever. These are they of modern times who go regularly to church and attend many religious services, but while the seed is being sown they are allowing their hearts to be hardened and trampled down by the consideration of their earthly affairs, or by criticisms of the minister or of some of their neighbors. Nothing will so quickly harden and dry up the heart as the fostering of unkind thoughts about one's neighbors. It can truly be said of some men that they have never heard a message from God to them—not because they have not had opportunity, not because they have not attended church and Sabbath-school, but because they have deliberately or unconsciously shut their hearts to the message by thinking of other things.

It is a noticeable fact about the wayside soil that it was not necessarily poor soil by nature, it might have been the same as the richest, most productive ground, had it not been tramped down by the heavy feet of the common passerby. Notice also that it is the devil who makes haste to snatch away the good seed, he appreciates the power of God's word far more than does the careless heart. But that wayside soil is not hopeless, a few turns of the plough and harrow and that soil may be made ready to receive the good seed into its depths, and to bring forth a rich harvest of eternal fruit. The sleeping soul may be awakened, the heart hardened by sin or carelessness may be softened by God's grace, it may require the harrowing of grief and loss, it may need to be broken up with pain and sorrow, it may need to be moistened with the hot tears of penitence—but it is not hopeless. Oh, soul, excuse not thyself for the wayside soil of thy careless heart, thou art accountable only to the Lord of heaven and earth who longeth to make of thy heart a garden of praise to himself and of blessing to the world around thee.

It is not only the careless heart which misses the joy of fruit bearing. The superficial, shallow nature, content with external attractions, is likened to the soil which stretches thinly over a ledge of rock. These natures are common, they receive the gospel gladly, grasping its promises of peace and joy with eager hand. As long as everything goes smoothly they bid fair to become bright and shining lights; as long as the rewards of right doing are visible and tangible they make every effort to do right. But as soon as such an one feels the heat of persecution or tribulation, which is sent to make the seed strike down deeper roots into the earth, the roots meet an unexpected opposition of rock-like obstinacy and self-will. Then the heart life which had appeared so promising, withers up for lack of deep and firm rootage. Such a nature must be deepened, and the hidden rocks of obstinacy and self-will removed, before this soul can bring forth fruit to the glory of God. But with God all things are possible.

The seed falls also into hearts full of thorns. It may be that the thorns have been cut down so that they do not show in the outward character, but the roots are there. It may be that the hearers are unconscious of the thorns in their hearts, or that knowing of them, they do not realize their harmfulness, nor do they appreciate the importance of a pure heart, the necessity of a free clean soil for the cultivation of the seed. These may be they whom the world counts favored, talented, generous, warmhearted, ambitious, the soil is good, it is rich and productive, but the weeds are allowed to monopolize the ground. The unimportant things crowd out or choke the only important thing in life. They fall short of the mark; these souls receive the word and the power of the new life, they even may bear fruit of a shrivelled, green, unattractive sort, but they bring no fruit to perfection, their growth is choked and stunted by the unnecessary and harmful weeds of this world's attractions. The cares of this world signify anything that we care about apart from God. The deceitfulness of riches is a snare both to poor and rich, for riches do not bring contentment. The pleasures of this life dull the appetite for the joys of Christianity. Whatever tends to worldliness separates the soul from God and effectually hinders fruitfulness.

The good soil is the sincere heart. Not

necessarily the good or honest heart as man sees things, but the heart that is open to God and that grasps the message with an honest determination to obey God at any cost. It is the state of the heart at the time of the seed sowing that affects the after life. Let us pray God for humble, teachable hearts, sincere and open, that we may hear his messages and that every word may bring forth multiplied fruit unto eternal life—so shall we be well pleasing in his sight.

This parable includes every class of men who have heard the gospel—in which class are you?

C. E. Topic.

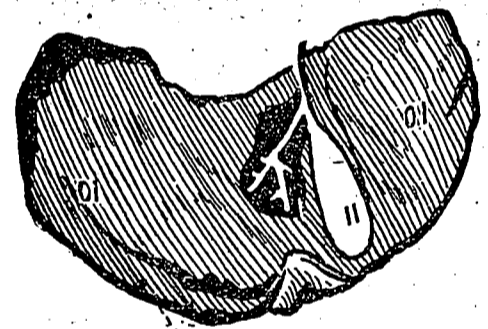
May 20—The power of a temperate life. Dan. 1: 1-17. (Quarterly temperance meeting).

Junior C. E. Topic.**TOUCH NOT THE DRINK.**

Mon., May 14.—It deceives. Prov. xx., 1.
Tues., May 15.—It ensnares. Isa. xxviii., 7.
Wed., May 16.—It brings woe. Isa. v., 22.
Thu., May 17.—It destroys. Nah. i., 10.
Fri., May 18.—It weakens nations. Prov. xxxi., 4, 5.
Sat., May 19.—We are not alone. Rom. xiv., 7.
Sun., May 20.—Topic—Why is it best not to touch strong drink? Dan. i., 7-17. (Quarterly temperance meeting.)

**Alcohol Catechism.**

(Dr. R. H. Macdonald, of San Francisco.)
CHAPTER XII.—HOW ALCOHOL AFFECTS THE LIVER AND KIDNEYS.



In this illustration, 10 represents the liver and 11 the gall bladder. The liver weighs about four pounds.

1. Q.—What is the liver?
A.—The largest gland of the body. The liver secretes the bile, which is needed for digestion. It also renews the blood.
2. Q.—How does alcohol affect the liver?
A.—Its first action is to turn the bile from yellow to green, or even black. This greatly affects the health.
3. Q.—Does the liver absorb much alcohol?
A.—More than any other organ of the body, except the brain.
4. Q.—How does this change the liver?
A.—It irritates it, and makes the soft substance of the liver grow hard and unable to do its work. It also, by depositing fat and false tissue, enlarges and weakens it.
5. Q.—How large is a drunkard's liver?
A.—It becomes twice its natural size, or larger, often weighing ten or twelve pounds.

(To be Continued.)

The Devil's Railway.

A vice-president of the Nationalist Temperance society sends the following schedule, which was prepared by a young man who is serving a life sentence in a Mississippi penitentiary for killing his companion while on a drunken, gambling spree. The young man was from a good family, in good circumstances, but as the parents were negligent as to their attendance upon religious observances, the young man fell into evil company. He yielded to the wine cup. Since he