

of Matthew will do, if we will give this precious little book a fair chance to enlarge our conceptions of life, and broaden our sympathies, and increase our usefulness. As teachers, let us make the most of this year to lead ourselves and the members of our class into deeper sympathy with Christ, in His way of looking at life, in His way of loving and living.

In this first Lesson of the year, John the Baptist appears at the beginning of his public ministry. Get the class to tell what they know of John's earlier life as recorded in the first chapter of Luke. How was he related to Jesus? Notice that he was always good, Luke 1:15. Some children like John and Jeremiah are Christians from the first. MacKay of Formosa never knew what it was not to love Christ. Neither did Dr. Cuyler.

I. JOHN'S PERSONALITY. He was a child of prophecy, v. 3. He was a child of the desert, v. 4, also Luke 1:80. He was a child of God, a great, strong, fearless man, fitted for the work which God had for him to do, the Elijah, the John Knox, of that period. Note how God makes men of this kind, "men who can stand before a demagogue and damn his treacherous flatteries without winking", when He needs them most.

II. JOHN'S PREACHING. He was a great revivalist. His preaching was immensely popular, vs. 5, 6. His cry was "Repent. Give up thinking about life as you do and living as you do, and think about life as God does, and live as God wants you to live." He told them plainly that if they failed to do this there was nothing for them as a people but destruction, vs. 7-10. Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God", which made the people who listened to him quake with fear and clutch the pillars of the church to keep themselves from falling into hell is a good modern example of this kind of preaching. Make some reference to the emphasis laid upon repentance in the revival now going on in China, as related by Mr. Goforth. Is there much place for preaching of this kind to-day? Is there enough of it?

III. JOHN'S PROGRAMME OF CHRISTIANITY, vs. 11, 12. How does it differ from Christ's

programme? (See Luke 4:18, 19.) Note how Christ in reading Isa. 61:2 omitted the very clause, "the day of vengeance of our God", which John felt disposed to dwell upon. The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind, even when that man is the greatest man of his day.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

By Rev. E. Douglas Fraser, D.D.

Begin by having the Golden Text read in concert. Who used these words? From what prophet are they quoted? To what great event in Israel's history did they, at first, refer? To what custom do they point? Who opened up the way for Israel to return from Babylon to their own land? For whose coming was John sent to prepare? After these introductory questions, briskly asked (for the answers see Exposition), let the conversation centre, in succession, round the following points:

1. Where did John the Baptist preach? Bring out the features of the Wilderness of Judea (see Geography Lesson).

2. What was John's message? Be sure that the scholars understand what "repentance" is (see S. Catechism, Ques. 87), and "the kingdom of heaven", and why only those who repent can enter into that kingdom.

3. What sort of man was John? His clothing and food and place of abode,—bring out all these by questioning, and get the scholars to see how they point to a strong, bold, stern man, never afraid to speak plain words against the sins of his time.

4. What was the effect of John's preaching? Picture the multitudes flocking, from city and country, to hear him (be sure to read Luke's account, with its mention of special classes of people in the crowds), the Pharisees and scribes (see Exposition for a description of these). Talk about the confession of sin by the people, and their baptism as a sign of repentance.

5. What proof of sincerity did John demand? For the meaning of his terrible words to the Pharisees and scribes, see Exposition. Make it clear that the only true repentance is that which shows itself in a real change of life and conduct.