

IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

What the Church Folk Are Thinking About and Doing

Sunday School Lesson and Young People's Topics.

THE ARISTOCRAT WHO DID NOT DARE

The International Sunday School Lesson for February 1 is, "Jesus the Savior of the World,"—John 3:1-21.

(By William T. Ellis.)

Of all the great dramas in that richest storehouse of literature, the scriptures, there are only two or three that equal or surpass the tragedy of the sinner and aristocrat, who first heard the fullest exposition of the same message and mission of Jesus, and yet lacked the courage to follow the truth he had learned. That is a hell. To know the better and to do the worse; to see the great without the nerve to forsake the commonplace, to hear a call of the highest duty, and then to have slunk back into the dreary truts of expediency and contentment has no worse torment than that which the slacker and shirker of the European war are no such cowards as the enlightened men and women who lack stamina to follow truth, whithersoever it may lead.

With the magnificent kindness of Christian teachers, it has been customary to hold up Nicodemus as a noble man, blinding the great fact that although revealed above all men, he did not become a disciple in Jesus until too late to comfort the heart of the lonely, who would have leaned heavily upon the comradeship of one fellow scholar as Nicodemus. Imagine what it would have meant to our Lord to have had a member of the sanhedrin, for a disciple! Only once, while Jesus lived did Nicodemus open his lips in defense of the Master, and that was when the court which he was a member, was plotting the death of Christ. Nicodemus timidly expostulated, "Does our law condemn a man unheard?"

Swift came the startling reply, "Art thou also a Galilean? Have any of the rulers believed on Him?" And Nicodemus shut up like a clam. John, who alone makes mention of Nicodemus, doubtless had the death from the lips of Nicodemus himself, after the resurrection, for, inspired perhaps by a look cast upon him by the doomed Saviour, Nicodemus at length escaped from his momentary fear and indision in time to bring gifts to the body of a dead Lord. We may easily imagine the self-reproaches with which the proud Pharisee confessed to John, the beloved of his disloyalty and cowardice. John conceals his friend's name as he records the explanation of the entire experience. "Even of the rulers many believed upon him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess that they loved the praise of God."

Let us be fair to Nicodemus. He really had good reason to consider. He had gone to the top rung of the ladder of success among the Jews, for he was a member of the sanhedrin. He was a judge and teacher of his nation. Wherever he went he was a marked man, and honored by all. Other men stepped aside to let him pass, and his ears were quite accustomed to the sweet music of overheard whispers. That Nicodemus, the great scholar and judge, the good man as well as rich and great. An aristocrat, a gentleman, a public man with traditions and official position, Nicodemus had much at stake. Despite all, he came to Jesus. Score that to his credit. He was open-minded enough to investigate new truth. He dared to descend to visit this humble Galilean and confer with Him. True, he "came by night," and that has, "by night," is affixed to him in every mention of his name in the Bible in history. His courage was not of the bright sort. He kept out of the light, for he was afraid of "what they say."

John's picture of Nicodemus is like one of the portraits by the old Dutch masters, namely, darkness and shadow and background. The highlight is that the eminent Pharisee, fully conscious of his social and ecclesiastical standing, really did come to Jesus. He was not a young man, either; it is easier for the young to accept new ways and new ideas and adventure new experiences.

With all his inherited and acquired prejudices against Galilee, and against radical teachings, Nicodemus stooped to visit this new rabbi, the engagement having doubtless been made in advance through a servant.

When Teacher Became Pupil.

Dodging ever to the darker side of the narrow Jerusalem streets, and following at a distance the servant who led the way with a torch, went Nicodemus, filled with the thought of his own condescension in seeking out this new teacher from the north, and not at all sure that he was acting wisely in so going. His phylacteries and his bearded face, and his long white hair, were the folds of an all-enveloping cloak. It was a relief to him when they had ascended the outer stair to the upper room in the house of a friend whose name he did not know. Nicodemus knocked at the door of Him who pictures Himself as knocking at the door of all hearts; and he was promptly received, while the great scholar without, the student within.

No great artist has painted that wonderful picture. The proud ecclesiastic, with the bearing of his state and power, and the humility of a young man from Nazareth, each studying the face of the other in the flickering light of an ancient oriental lamp. As became his position on his own estimation—the visitor against the conversation with the ascending words of compliment, which he, himself, scarcely believed.

John, we know, thou art a teacher come from Galilee, which was the only thing he did not know, and was seeking to find out.

Nothing but conventional oriental politeness lay behind the phrase, "an inquirer comest thou, my dear Nicodemus." "Oh, my dear Nicodemus, I am so glad to see you." In a lesser man Jesus might have ignored or parried the salutation; but this was the great Nicodemus, so forthrightly disconcerting of an utterly honest soul. He thrust straight to the realities. With this great religious teacher in quest of truth, he dared ask on the highest level, about the subtlest verities. So he replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born above, he cannot see the kingdom of God"—can't even see it, much less enter.

Up Among the Mysteries. Then to the dazed pupil—for such Nicodemus had become—the Galilean began to expound the loftiest conceptions of His new Message. Nicodemus had come, conscious of his own high birth, only to meet the doctrine that they alone are high born who are born from above. This right-seeking legalist had to learn that religion is a spirit, a life, a new nature, a divine sonship. It is a mystery, of course—as mysterious as the wind that was rustling the leaves outside the door as the two men conversed.

Up into the school which Jesus had set up in the heart of the spirit-born life. Flesh and materialism cannot change things essentially; but the Spirit of God can. A new world can come only from new hearts. It is regeneration rather than reform that will set right the world. The one essential thing in Christianity is not creeds or church members, but the new birth. The privilege is one that God never denies to those who seek the new life which is in Christ.

That the two men were conversing earnestly upon this profound theme, there occurred a phrase that opens a wide vista of meditation. Jesus said, "If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" That, after the discourse on the new birth, if the new birth is "heavenly things," what must be "earthly things," he? Verily, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard." The height and depth of love of God are beyond mortal grasp. The staggering profundities of the Gospel move us to awe and humble reverence.

The Man Who Heard the Uttermost. To have heard Luther's defense at Worms would have been a high privilege, and the experience of a lifetime. To have been among the hearers to Paul's address in Mars Hill or to Peter's sermon at Pentecost, would have made one a marked man. But think what it meant to have heard, not from the lips of Jesus Himself, illustrated by His beaming eyes and ravishing smile, the concentration of all the truth of the Gospel, the supreme utterance of Omnipotence. For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.

That greatest of all words was spoken in an audience of one, and Nicodemus was the man, the living Word uttered the vocal word of uttermost salvation, which Luther used to call, "the little Gospel"—and the man who heard it had not the cour-

age to be true to this superlative revelation! To Nicodemus Jesus unfolds His Passion, in the picture of the uplifted cross. To Nicodemus He made clear the unique mission of Himself as the Christ. To Nicodemus He unfolded the Old Testament as it had never been unfolded before. To Nicodemus He made this marvelous exposition of faith and truth. And Nicodemus still refused to become His disciple!

Instead he went out into the night; and the night that surrounded him was not so black as the tumultuous midnight within his own breast. He had talked face to face with the Christ Himself. He knew that the Messiah had come. Nevertheless, he loved the honor that comes from men more than the honor that comes from God, and so, for fear of his fellow-aristocrats, the Pharisees, he went back on Jesus Christ. If ever the records of the sanhedrin which tried Jesus should be discovered it would be found that Nicodemus was counted in his absence as voting against the Victim. For Nicodemus was not present at that cruel session; he was somewhere off in the night, tormented in his soul, and trying to decide whether he should risk all and confess Jesus.

Something—perhaps a look from the Saviour on the Cross—settled his soul's problem. He made the great decision too late to comfort and serve Him when He most needed a friend. If there is regret in heaven, Nicodemus, the scholar who had not the courage to follow Jesus, experiences it.

MOTLOW CREEK.

Motlow Creek, Feb. 1.—Rev. A. T. Jones filled his regular appointment Sunday morning at this place. There were a good many in attendance owing to the beautiful day.

The roads in this section are getting bad on account of the continued bad weather.

Dr. T. E. Morrow is a frequent visitor in and around this community on account of so much sickness. Measles is still raging in and around this community.

Hose Lanford of Greer was a visitor in this section Sunday.

John Suddeth from Holly Springs passed through this section en route to Dr. T. E. Morrow's.

Will Campbell passed through this community Tuesday morning.

George Turner of near Gowansville was a visitor in this section Sunday.

Miss Nellie Atkins visited her uncle George Ashmore last week.

Mr. and Mrs. G. V. Harrill and little daughter, Ruby, visited their daughter, Mrs. Jasper Fisher, Sunday.

Miss Lorene Harrill visited Miss Iella and Harriet Fisher last week.

Earl Odum passed through this section Monday afternoon.

Mrs. George Ashmore was out visiting relatives Monday afternoon.

WELLFORD.

Wellford, Jan. 31.—Mr. and Mrs. L. W. Walker have returned to their home in San Angelo, Texas, after spending some time with Mrs. Walker's parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. Gillman, Wingo.

Mr. Alaman of Orlando, Fla. was a visitor here this week.

W. L. Williams, of Cowpens, passed through here Sunday en route to Greenville.

Mrs. Wingo and son spent Wednesday in Spartanburg.

Mr. and Mrs. Hayes, of Westminster, passed here recently en route to Spartanburg.

Our community was saddened when the death of Dr. J. H. Allen was announced.

C. P. Cannon spent several days this week in Spartanburg.

Miss Wingo has returned from Georgia, where she was the guest of Mrs. Burris. While away Miss Wingo visited Oakway and Greenville.

Mrs. N. Miller Cash, of Spartanburg, was a recent guest at the home of her uncle, J. G. Wingo.

A party from here will attend a dance at the home of Mr. Guin Saturday night.

Miss Laura Wingo has returned to her school after a few days' stay here.

The Misses Green were in Spartanburg Saturday night.

Baltimore's Boom.

(The Philadelphia Record.) Washington "digs" what a contrast with good old days of the capital city, when it was famed for the excellence of its drinks and food! If the Demon rum shall be driven from his lair on the Potomac he cannot cross that stream into Virginia, for that state is now enlisted under the banner of prohibition. Maryland alone remains open to him, and Baltimore, only an hour away, seems his logical haven. The Monumental City has long desired a boom, and apparently one is coming at last, such as it is.

INMAN.

Inman, Feb. 1.—Rev. H. C. Brabham and family are now occupying

the new parsonage. Our Baptist brethren are to be congratulated. They have provided a convenient, commodious, ten or eleven room dwelling house for their pastor.

Several weeks ago Mr. A. H. Lancaster carried a party of men in his automobile to Spartanburg, several of them to the theater to hear and see Sarah Bernhardt. After climbing the hill at Mr. John Dodd's he started off at a pretty good rate. Every occupant of the car was broken to pieces by some unseen power. On investigation, he discovered that two telephone wires had been stretched across the road, and fastened securely to telegraph poles on both side of the highway just high enough to strike the car. It was not the wind-shield Mr. Lancaster and the gentlemen who have been beheaded. The wires were on the front seat with him would have been decapitated. The writer knows that the impact was sufficient to have decapitated a number of men. The wires were stretched just right to have gotten a man on a motorcycle at the throat. I understand that this is the second time that an automobile has run into wires stretched across the road at or near this particular place. It is hard to see wires at night, and any one who will stretch them across the public highway—just high enough to cut a man's head off—is, to say the least, guilty of intended murder. I have been informed that sharp iron spikes have been driven in the road, just right for the tires of an automobile to strike them, at or near this place. Mr. Lancaster thought that his car

was damaged about \$15, but it was the shock that worried him.

"The Scheme That Failed," under the auspices of the Y. W. A. of the Baptist church, at the school auditorium, Saturday evening, February 3rd. The public is invited to come. Music and reading between acts.

G. H. Camp has been confined to his room for about a week with a boil on or in his nose.

J. B. Cartee is out again after an attack of rheumatism.

Merman Harris is still confined to his room with rheumatism.



might have been an Eskimo—

Let's Us Good Folks Stick Together



I'm mighty glad I was born a real Southerner. Just suppose I had been an Eskimo, or an Indian, or something with rings in my nose and ears!

Yes, sir—I am good and proud of my Southern birth. My mother is from Virginia and my father is from the Carolinas. I was born and raised down here among you all.

I wish you could see my home—it is so clean and bright and cheery and wholesome—the finest, whitest, healthiest tobacco factory in all the world.

I am called SOVEREIGN—King of Them All! But my middle name is Smoke, friend—and all over the South my loyal friends are with me, because

You Folks of the South KNOW good blood!
You Folks of the South KNOW good tobacco!

I want you all for my friends—every one of you. Give me a chance—see how I make good. And don't forget—

I am guaranteed by *The American Tobacco Co.* —Buy me. If you don't like me return me to your dealer and get your money back. I have said it. A Southern gentleman is known the world over for keeping his word, and I have given you mine.

Sovereign Cigarettes

FOR THE GENTLEMAN OF THE SOUTH
"King of Them All"

MIKE THE MESSENGER

HE CAN'T HELP BEING A HOT SKETCH WITH THE LADIES BY WALT DESMOND.

GO OVER TO MY DRESS MAKER'S AND SEE IF MY GOWN IS FINISHED

I HEAR AN' I OBEY LADY!

LITTLE ONE—I'VE BEEN SENT OVER TO GIT MRS. DE COYNE'S DRESS!

IT WILL BE READY IN A FEW MINUTES—AND I WANT YOU TO TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK OF IT!

I'D RATHER TELL YOU WHAT I THINK OF YOU—TELL ME, BRIGHT EYES, WHAT IS YOUR PRETTY LITTLE NAME?

IT ISN'T SO VERY PRETTY—IT'S HELEN FRENCH!

JUST GO—NOW PLEASE TELL ME WHAT IT IS IN ENGLISH!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY TALKING THAT WAY TO ME?

YOU'RE ENTIRELY TOO SMART!

GEE WHIZZ!—WHAT A RESULT AN INNOCENT QUESTION CAN DO!