

**THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.**

LESSON V. FIRST QUARTER, INTERNATIONAL SERIES, JAN. 29.

Text of the Lesson, John III, 1-15. Memory Verses, 14, 15—Golden Text, John III, 16—Commentary Prepared by Rev. D. M. Stearns.

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If we take the last sentence of chapter II and the first sentence of chapter III from the revised version we read, "He himself knew what was in man; now, there was a man," thus bringing before us this Nicodemus as a sample man representing a very large class of well to do, moral, religious, devout men, who are found in all churches as members in good standing, but in the sight of Him who reads the heart, and before whom as their judge they must appear, lacking the one essential to fit them for the kingdom—viz, the birth from above (verse 3, margin). The subsequent history of Nicodemus would indicate that his eyes had been opened and that he became a true child of God.

Nicodemus knew and acknowledged Jesus to be a teacher come from God and that God was with Him, but such knowledge could not save him. And yet that is more than some of His professed friends, who think they are saved, know or acknowledge today, counting Him to be ignorant of many things which they think they know better than He did. Notwithstanding all that so called wise and learned men say and teach, we must accept the opening statements of John concerning Him—that He was God, that He made all things, that He made the world, that He is the only revealer of God the Father (John I, 1, 3, 10, 18).

The Lord Jesus seemed not to notice what Nicodemus said; but, reading his heart and seeing his real need, He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again (margin, 'from above') he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is the second of the twenty-five double "verily" or "amens" of this gospel, and the next two are found in verses 5 and 11. We have in all these sayings the most abundant possible testimony to the importance of the truths enunciated, the first referring to the kingdom and glory and the next to the only way to see that glory.

Nicodemus, being only a natural man, although so very religious, could not understand this new birth, for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are foolishness unto him (I Cor. II, 14), and he therefore asks what seems like a very foolish question. Not many people consider that the foolish questions they often ask concerning spiritual things may indicate that they are only natural people, not born again, not spiritual. The natural birth by which all come into this world can only produce natural people, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh."

When our Lord replied to Nicodemus' first question He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What does this signify and just how is this new birth accomplished? Jas. I, 18, says, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth." I Pet. II, 23, says, "Being born again by the word of God." But our Lord said we must be "born of water." Now turn to Eph. v, 26, and read, "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." Although this refers to an experience which follows the new birth, yet it tells us that water is a symbol of the word and that "born of water" means "born of the word," as James and Peter plainly state. But our Lord said, "Born of water and of the Spirit." Now turn to John VI, 63, and read, "The words that I speak unto you are Spirit and are life." And is it not conclusive that the new birth is accomplished by the word of God and the Spirit of God? And by this means God does all His work. In Gen. I, 2, 3, the Spirit of God moved, and God said, and the work was done. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath (or Spirit) of His mouth" (Ps. xxxiii, 6).

Only by the word of God in the power of the Spirit of God can we know anything of the things of God, but unless we meekly receive the testimony of God we cannot know the things of God. Not only was Jesus a teacher sent by God, as Nicodemus confessed (verse 2), but He came down from heaven, and, though visibly on earth, He was at the same time in heaven (verse 13). If this sounds foolish to any consider what we have already written. To understand more fully let us go with our Lord to the wilderness story of Num. xxi, 4-9. The people did not like God's way nor God's provision, so they spake against Him, and the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, which bit them, and many died. In answer to Moses' prayer he was instructed to put upon a pole, so that all might see it, a brass likeness of that which had bitten the people, and every bitten one who looked upon the serpent of brass lived.

That old serpent, the devil, has bitten the whole race of mankind and instilled his poison of unbelief into us, bringing upon us death and the curse, and man cannot provide a remedy.

But the serpent upon the pole suggests sin, that which has bitten us nailed to the cross, and when the helpless, dying sinner sees Jesus Christ made a sin offering for him on Calvary and looks believingly upon Him instantly he lives or is born from above. See John III, 10; II Cor. v, 21; Gal. III, 13; John I, 12, and learn the secret of the new birth, but note also verse 18 of our lesson chapter and learn that we are either not condemned (if born again) or condemned already.

**WHEN THE FOG SHUT DOWN**

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It was not until the tender began to bob about in lively fashion that McCusker would admit to himself the truth of the suspicion which for the past half hour had been momentarily growing upon him. Yet he dared not stop rowing lest the girl should suspect the truth. He shut his teeth hard as he bent over the oars.

The gray, dreary mist which had shut down like a pall seemed growing more dense, and by this he knew that darkness was coming on. Somehow in the fog he had missed the yachts at the moorings, and now the motion of the tender as she slid over the long incoming swells told him they were well out in the bay.

It was a serious predicament. The fog gave no sign of lifting, and, with darkness coming on, the chances of spending a night in the open boat were somewhat more than McCusker cared to contemplate.

"Sorry, Miss Carey, but we've overshoot the mark and pulled past the yachts in the fog. Hard a port, please. We'll make them in a trice."

The girl smiled as she brought the boat about.

"I wonder you can get your bearings at all in this wretched fog," she said. "Something in her tone made McCusker look up quickly.

"And I have my own suspicions as to our present plight. Honestly, now, do you know where we are?"

"Oh, there's not the slightest danger," McCusker began reassuringly. "So we are not lost, then," she said lightly. "This is great fun."

McCusker looked at her with undisguised admiration.

"Yes," said he; "we're really lost. And, by George, it makes it a lot easier to have some one along you can tell the truth to without sending her into hysterics."

"The worst—tell it all!" the girl demanded.

"Well," said he, "we're out in the bay somewhere, that's evident, and heaven only knows where we can find the yachts. We may drift round all night, but not if I can help it," he ended, with determination.

He put his hands to his mouth and shouted again and again at the top of his voice, but got no answer.

"Humph!" he commented. "Just as I thought. Nothing to do but pull for it. It's rather uncertain, but it's better than drifting anyway."

He took up the oars, and the tender shot ahead under his powerful strokes. There was no sound save the creaking of the oars in their oarlocks and the wash of the boat as she rode over the swells.

Darkness was fast coming on. The mist walls which hemmed them in changed from ghastly white to dull gray. McCusker could scarcely make out the face of the girl in the stern sheets. Then slowly the gray deepened into black, and night was upon them. Every few minutes the man ceased rowing and shouted through the mist, but the sound of his voice seemed to die out in hollow emptiness.

"Here's a fix!" he said at length. "We don't seem to be getting anywhere. Are you cold?"

"Not a bit," she said cheerfully. "You'd best stop rowing and trust to the tide. It must be making in now. You're tiring yourself out and all to no purpose."

"Look here," said he, "we simply must find the yachts."

"Impossible! admit of no 'musts,'" she observed philosophically.

"I know," he said, "but the whole future hangs on it. If we drift round all night—you see—that is—"

"Oh," she said quickly, "you'd better row, I think."

There was a hint of coldness in her voice. McCusker dug the oars savagely into the water.

"I'm afraid you don't understand," he said finally.

The girl said nothing.

"It's this way," he said desperately, "if—if we drift round all night you'll think when I ask you to marry me, as I've been trying to get up the courage to do for weeks, that I'm prompted to do so by a sense of obligation. It will be no such thing, but you'll think so, just the same. Therefore I want to make the yachts and prove to you I would have asked you anyway."

The girl was silent. McCusker fancied he heard a low chuckle from the vicinity of the stern sheets, but protracted listening on his part failed to verify this.

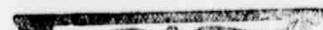
He pulled away with all his might. Presently he noticed that the tender no longer rose and fell. They were in the quiet waters of the harbor. He could have shouted for joy. He bent

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over the oars with a new energy born of hope.

Out of the fog there suddenly appeared a light. There was a shock of collision that nearly threw them from the thwart.

"We've found the yachts," said McCusker laconically, and then to a voice that hailed them from the dark: "I say, where's the Vesta, old man? Second boat to starboard? Thanks!"

A few moments later they stood on the Vesta's deck, Tom Patterson and Mrs. Patterson and the rest of the party clamoring for an account of their adventure.

"The women folks have been just wild, Mac," said Patterson, "but I thought you'd turn up all right. You're a lucky sort of a chap."

McCusker laughed. Then he looked straight at Miss Carey.

"Am I?" he asked.

"I—I can't dispute Tom," she said, flushing beautifully.

RICHARD B. SHELTON.

**The Art of Eating.**

Eating is the first thing we learn to do and the last thing we learn to do right. Some never learn it at all and end their lives and their happiness through the neglect. As it consumes much of our time and must always do so it is a duty to make it an adequate source of pleasure. It is something which all may appreciate, and so has much to do with democratizing pleasure. As long as pleasure is confined to the higher—to music, literature or contemplation—it must be limited and be the privilege of a few who can have the required culture. It is important to secure enjoyments which all men may have and not depreciate the capacity of the poor or low. That there may be much happiness it must be in the many, and these can have only a simple happiness. The good things of life must be found in the common acts in the elementary things which are necessary to life itself or which every one will occasionally have. To disparage "physical" enjoyments—though all enjoyments are such—is to try to limit enjoyment to the rich or the educated.—Boston Cooking School Magazine.

**Sleeping in Church.**

"Some men preach," said Sydney Smith, "as if they thought sin is to be taken out of a man as Eve was taken out of Adam, by casting him into a profound slumber." So at any rate thought not South, who, preaching one day at Whitehall, observed King Charles II. and several of his attendants asleep. Stooping down, he cried out to one of the delinquents, "My lord, I am sorry to interrupt you, but if you snore so loud you will wake the king." His majesty thereupon awoke, and, turning to his neighbor, remarked with his accustomed good nature: "This man must be made a bishop. Remind me on the next vacancy." Latimer speaks of a woman who suffered from insomnia, and who, all soporifics having failed, was taken to the church of St. Thomas of Acres, when she fell at once into a refreshing slumber.—London Mail.

**Sure Sign of Old Age.**

A man may know that he is approaching old age when he ceases to struggle to be among the first to leave a railroad car when he is in no particular hurry.—Philadelphia Ledger.

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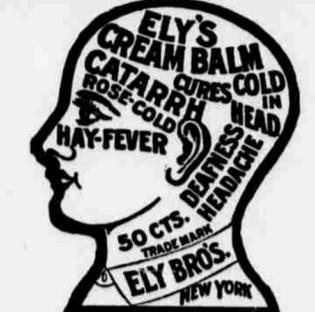
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**Referees' Sale of Real Estate.**

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned referees, appointed by the District Court of Webster county, Nebraska, in the action therein pending, No. 2850, wherein Joseph Freudenstein, et al., is plaintiff and Hazel Garber defendant, for the partition of the real estate hereinafter described, will, under the decree of said court made and rendered at the adjourned December, 1914, term thereof, in said action, at the east front door of the court house in Red Cloud, in said county, on the 21st day of February, 1915, at 11 o'clock a.m. offer for sale at public auction and sell to the highest bidder for cash, as directed by said decree and order, the following described real estate in said county, to wit: the east half of the northeast quarter of section 12, in township 1, north, range 9, west of the 6th P. M.  
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