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THE
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A O U N Q

R U L E R ' S
Q U E S T I O N .

BY
MARGARET JUNKIN PRESTON.



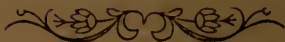
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WHAT

LACK

! YET?



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Yb 269 THE
YOUNG RULER'S QUESTION.

I.

HE had riches, and ease, and honour,
And never a Jewish boy
Had passed on the banks of Jordan
A quieter youth of joy.

II.

He had houses, and fields, and vineyards,
And blessings of all degree ;
None had a fairer portion
In beautiful Galilee.

III.

Whatever this world could offer
 Of pure and innocent bliss—
Whatever his nature needed
 Of goodliest gifts—was his.

IV.

He had felt no weary longings—
 No wants that were unsupplied ;
Upright, and just, and noble,
 His spirit was satisfied.

V.

Only one thought had power
 Ever a doubt to cast :
—Joy, to be wholly perfect,
 Must be a joy *to last* :

VI.

And he knew that his own was fleeting ;
For he read in the sacred Psalm,
That man must fade as a flower,
And it sometimes marred his calm.

VII.

He turned to the holy Prophets,
Security thence to draw ;
And he listened to Moses' teachings,
And he strove to keep the Law.

VIII.

He tithed his anise and cummin—
He tithed his mint and rue :
He *knew* he had earth's best treasures—
He *hoped* he had heaven's too.

IX

—In the mart of a busy city
 It came to pass, one day,
That a throng of curious people
 Were choking the narrow way,

X.

All pressing with upturned faces,
 Eager to hear and see
The miracle-working Rabbi
 Who had come to Galilee.

XI.

—“ Now, verily, what will it profit
 A man, tho' he gain the whole
Of the world, with its utmost glory,
 If yet he should lose his soul ?

XII.

“Come unto me, ye weary—”

Dropped on the passing ear
On the young and happy Ruler,
For he could not choose but hear.

XIII.

He did not pause to listen
As he skirted the crowd, but went
Homeward athwart the city,
Wrapped in his sweet content.

XIV.

Yet ever and oft, the Teacher
Rose to his inward eye ;
Over and over the question
Waited his heart's reply.

XV.

—Bliss that should be eternal—
—Pleasures that could not cloy—
These were the very blessings
 Needed to crown his joy !

XVI.

Again through the palm-girt highways,
 When noontide's sultry flame
Was searing the happy vineyard,
 The wonderful Teacher came.

XVII

And the Ruler hailed His coming ;
 For harvest or vintage cheer
Never had silenced the question
 That troubled his restless ear.

XVIII.

Hastening, he sought the Prophet
Whose words had waked the strife :
—“What shall I do, good Master,
To inherit eternal life?”

XIX.

As he kneeled so young and guileless,
Single in aim and art,—
Jesus, seeing him, loved him,
Tho' He read his inmost heart.

XX.

And he answered and said, as gently
As father would say to son : [ments ;”
—“Thou knowest the Ten Command-
And he spake them one by one.

XXI.

A look that was half reproachful
The eye of the Saviour met :
—“ I have kept them even from childhood ;
Master, what lack I yet ?”

XXII.

And Jesus, seeing him, loved him,
And a human sympathy stole,
As He gazed on the earnest pleader,
Deep into His sacred soul.

XXIII.

All blessings this life could bring him
Even now were his, He knew ;
But he coveted both possessions—
The earthly and heavenly too.

XXIV.

Never diviner pity
Melted the mournful eye,
Never a tearfuller yearning,
Than softened the firm reply :

XXV.

" Only one thing thou lackest ;
Give up thy portion here—
All of thy stored abundance—
Everything heart holds dear :

XXVI.

" Choose thee between the blessings—
This—or the life to be :
Thou shalt have treasure in heaven,
If thou wilt follow me !"

XXVII.

A sudden, surprised dejection
 Flooded the lifted face—
Doubting and disappointment
 Darkened the wistful gaze.

XXVIII

Verily, this was a doctrine
 Hard for the flesh and sore;
This was a self-denying
 Never conceived before !

XXIX.

Had there been half required,
 Then he might heed the call :
Dignities, loves, possessions—
 How could he yield them all ?

XXX.

Bitter the stern exaction

Fell on his heart that day ;

And wavering—wishing—choosing—

He sorrowfully went away.

XXXI.

—Ye who have read and marvelled

That Jesus, who loved him so,

Should let him depart unhindered,—

Will ye, like the Ruler, go?

XXXII.

Ponder the solemn question

Deep in each conscience set,

Asking in soul-like earnest,

“Master, what lack I yet?”

XXXIII.

Choose ye, as every seeker
Who findeth Him truly doth,
—Earthly, or Heavenly treasure—
For ye cannot inherit both !

XXXIV.

Ye may be near the kingdom—
Nearer than any know—
And Jesus may love and pity,
And yet—*He may let you go !*



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