

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

THE BOY JESUS.

(By Rev. J. W. MacMillan, M.A.)

The child-waxed strong, v. 40.—The best kind of bodily strength is health. The value of sports is not to make us nimble and dexterous for a few years, but to equip us for long years of steady work. Athletic linos are not so useful and do not give so much pleasure as a sound constitution. As soon as a boy becomes a man he begins to tire of violent games, but as long as he lives, he needs healthy organs. If you want a good horse, get one that eats well and sleeps well. And if you want a man to do any kind of work, with hand or brain, get one that eats well and sleeps well. The physical is not so important as the mental, or the moral, or the spiritual, but it is the foundation upon which all three stand.

Filled with wisdom, v. 40. "Thinking God's thoughts after Him"—so the famous astronomer, Kepler, described his studies of the stars. It is God who gives their laws to the suns and planets, which are the work of His hands. His will rules in the world of nature. And He has made the world of men, as well. He has laid down laws for human life; and true wisdom lies in finding out what these laws are and obeying them. For the youngest of us knows that we do not get happiness by doing what we like, but by doing what is right. It is when we fit our life into God's way that we are on the road to true blessedness. To do His will is the secret of joy.

The grace of God, v. 40. Among the trees leveled to the ground in a fierce wind storm in Muskoka was a lofty maple. Its upturned roots measured eighteen or twenty feet in diameter; but they had been covered with only a foot or so of soil. Below this they ran literally over the solid granite rock. The tree could get but little of its nourishment from the soil; Most of it came from the atmosphere. And it is so with all that is best and noblest in our natures. The virtues that make character beautiful and strong are fed from above. It is by dwelling in the presence of God that we grow both worthy and winsome.

They went up, v. 42. That is the right practice, parents and children going to religious services together. The difference in age and learning and experience and occupation keeps them apart a great deal of the time, but there are two places where they should be together: at the family meal, and in the family pew. Let the boys and girls attend church, even though they may not yet understand it all. Indeed, in the Old Testament, provision is made for such cases. The children are to be shown things which will prompt their questions. They will ask about the pile of stones on the bank of Jordan, "What mean ye by these stones?" (see Josh. 4: 6; 21) and the parents will tell of the Lord's mercy. Boys and girls are learners, and should go, not so much where they understand, as where they will learn to understand.

In the temple, v. 46. That is a proper place to find a true child of God, in His house. You expect to find a soldier in barracks, a sailor on a ship, a merchant in a store. Their business so orders it. To find them habitually in other places, is to suspect their genuineness. Where the heart is, the feet will go. One can be present in the spirit and absent in the body, only when the body is under compulsion to be absent. Love is magnetism, the attracted body, it

free, flies to the magnet. The lover of God's house will be a frequenter of God's house.

Astonished at his understanding, v. 41. A thoughtful boy makes a thoughtful man, and a heedless boy makes a heedless man; "The boy is father of the man." The lad that astonished the doctors of theology by His questions and answers in after days similarly astonished the world. The sinless Man never could have been an ill-controlled boy. Better to be pure and true in youth than be

"As one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and
cry,
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst
not put us down.'"

My Father's business, v. 49. This is a fine sermon in the common expression, "Mind your own business," if we take it as a kindly advice and not as an angry rebuke. Here are the divisions: (1) Business. Everybody ought to have a business, something to do. It is a disgrace to loiter and sponge on others. (2) Your own. It ought to suit one's talents. Each of us has his own gift or abilities, so that there is something he can do easily, strongly and well. Find that out. (3) Mine. Forget other things, if you like, but remember your business. Do your work heartily. Give yourself wholly to it. (4) It is all the time your Father's business. Your work is to be consecrated work, and twice as much valued and twice as well done for that reason.

Was subject unto them, v. 51. Only those who have learned to obey are fitted to rule. First, they learn to obey others. Thus they learn to obey themselves, which is the same thing as to rule themselves. Not until then are they fit to rule others. The obedience may be hard; it may chafe and fret you, and so, perhaps, be the better discipline. For then you understand that others may chafe and fret under you, when your turn comes to rule. It will pay you to have learned how it feels, and your leadership will be stronger, because gentler.

Favour with God and man, v. 52. These two things do not disagree, especially in the younger and less militant years. David was such a double favorite. He was brave, unselfish, bright, clever, truthful, modest. God doesn't like a prig, or a tattler, or a coward, or a lazybones, or a liar; nor does any one like such boys. A man may sometimes justify his unpopularity by saying that he is persecuted for righteousness' sake, but very seldom is it so with a boy. God and men are in practical agreement regarding the proper character of boys and girls.

CROSSING THE BAR.

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the
bar,
When I put out to sea.
But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sounds and foam,
When that which drew from out the
boundless deep
Turns again home.
Twilight and evening bell,
And after that dark day!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark.
For tho' from out our bourne of time
and place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

PRISONERS OF HOPE.

By Rev. D. R. Drummond, B.D.

The New Year is a great hope begotter. In His patience and love and willingness to use us, God allows us to greet its opening day. How truly descriptive and encouraging Zechariah's word—"prisoner's of hope!"

We are prisoners. On the right hand and left, behind and before, we are hedged about, turned back, kept within limits. There is no material thing that we can compel, save as we obey its law. The whole world of nature is saying, "Thus far, and no farther."

Our bodies, despite their wonderful self-adjusting powers, hold us fast. Our crasp always falls short of our reach, our accomplishment of our plan, our real of our ideal. If we could only do all that we have the desire to do! In the realm of thought we are thrilled by the great things wrought in literature, art, education, government and commerce. Men do not any longer recognize the word "cannot." Yet a lisping child or thoughtless man can ask questions which all the wisdom of all the ages cannot answer. We are still in the prison house.

And though a man have the strength of a Samson or the wisdom of a Solomon, he may be weak and unwise as any child, in temptation. What multitudes who say, "We are so little that we ought to be, and so much that we ought not to be. There is a law in our members bringing us into subjection. Prisoners of evil habit, taste or tendency!"

But we are prisoners of hope. First, men of iron will and long patience, willing to pay the price, compel nature on every hand to their will. Lightning is harnessed; seas are made international highways; winds are hatched; disease is outwitted; the whole world becomes every man's neighbor. New inventions will doubtless come to meet man's every will. He is not God's child, to be forever in any prison house. In the realm of thought, it is open to debate if there is now unanswered a single question whose answer would help in daily living. Perhaps life would not be worth living or heaven worth the having, but for their new uplifting thoughts their widening, entrancing visions; their cheering outlook and growing insight. In love, God has made us prisoners, but with hope the undimmed light of our prison cell. And though we see in ourselves and others much to regret, though reforms come slowly, yet to all who wait upon God victory is sure. Evil habits are overcome; character grows. The public mind, too, is learning to value the life that is life. A higher use of money and power and other possessions is manifest. We are prisoners of hope.

If we add, and keep in the forefront, the thought of what God is and promises, we may face the New Year and work, with ourselves and others, young and old, assured that He "that spared not His own Son," will with him freely give us all needed help. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Hamilton.

Beneath the moonlight and the snow,
Lies dead my latest year;
The winter winds are wailing low
Its dirges in mine ear.
I grieve not with the moaning wind,
As though a loss befell;
Before me, even as behind,
God is, and all is well.

—Whittier.

Weeds will grow if the corn is not cultivated; likewise sin will grow if righteousness is not cultivated.