

VII. BLASPHEMY.

Began he to curse.... *Exod. v. 74.*

"The name of the Lord....in vain." *Exod. 20. 7.*

"Swear not at all." *Matt. 5. 34.*

THOUGHTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

Lessons From Peter's Fall.

1. Every character has its weak spot, and is really no stronger than it is there, for soon or late temptation will strike at that point. Let us guard ourselves wherever we are weak.

2. Not every person knows where his weakness is. Peter thought he was strong in his fidelity, but he was weak through his instability. Do you know what your weakest trait of character is?

3. It is dangerous for a Christian to be among enemies of Christ, unless he boldly flings out his colors. Evil associations have turned confessors into cowards.

4. Old habits are apt to assert themselves in unexpected moments. If Peter had never cursed before, he would not have cursed then; but the old fisherman found his earlier profanity coming to his lips when he was under temptation.

5. When such a one as Peter falls, who is safe? Let us watch ourselves lest we be like Peter in his sin.

6. If we find ourselves like Peter in his sin, let us be like him also in his repentance and his return. It was the very same Peter who afterward was bold as a lion.

English Teacher's Notes.

One day when I was sitting quietly with some friends a sudden crash was heard close at hand. We went to see what had caused it and discovered to our astonishment that a large picture in the dining-room had fallen from its place on the wall, knocking over several articles immediately beneath it. There were similar pictures in the same room, but they hung in their places as usual; what should have caused this one to fall? On examining the wall we found that the nail had not been driven in securely and the weight of the picture had proved too much for it.

Suppose the insecure condition of the picture had been pointed out before, we should naturally have taken pains to drive in the nail more firmly. It was because we thought it was all right that the mischief was allowed to happen. To have known of what might happen and to have made no provision for it would have been foolish indeed.

The passage for to-day shows us a man in just such an unsafe condition as that picture.

The court of the high-priest's palace at Jerusalem is full of people, though the night is far advanced. In one of the chambers opening into the court and a little raised above it the scribes and elders are trying to make out a case against Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy One is there reviled, mocked, and buffeted. The servants in the court below, less interested in the matter than their masters, have gathered round the fire to warm themselves and to chat. As the flickering light falls on the face of one of the group, a maid-servant perceives that a stranger has come in among them. He is not of their company. She has seen him with the dis-

ciples of Jesus. Yes, Peter is actually sitting there among the enemies of his Master, in the place—as we know, of temptation and danger.

He did not come unwarned. Twice our Lord had cautioned him individually (Luke 22. 31, 34), and once again together with James and John. Chap. 26. 41. Was it perhaps that very warning which kept the latter, with whom Peter came, separate and silent, intent on the trial, so that he remained unnoticed? But though told first of the tempter, next of the danger, and lastly of his own weakness, he still thought he could stand firm. And mingled with the love to his Master, which led him to follow the soldiers who led him away, that he might "see the end," there was probably some desire to manifest the courage and devotion of which he had already boasted. He has come into the palace trusting in his own strength—a poor thing to depend on! The nail is insecurely fastened; if a strain is put on it, what is sure to follow?

The strain has now come: "Thou art of them," says the maid-servant. And quick follows the denial. Thinking to retire he goes to the porch, but there others recognize him (comp. Mark 14. 69; Luke 22. 58), and a second denial follows. Hoping he has settled his tormentors he comes back again, but once more they set upon him, and for the third time he denies his Lord. Then follows the cock-crowing, and Peter becomes suddenly conscious of his terrible fall.

Often has a dangerous fall been broken by something interposing which lessens the shock and thus wards off the worst injury that might have resulted. And when we see Peter, instead of falling in despair, deeper and deeper, weeping tears of repentance, we can be sure that something has interposed. Luke tells us what it was: the Lord turning and looking upon him. For though it is terrible to Peter to remember the warning he has slighted, memory brings back to him something else with it, the assurance that Jesus had prayed for him, that his faith might not fail. Luke 22. 32.

Very carefully was that fallen picture raised to see what injury it had sustained, and later on, when all was made firm and sure, it was again lifted to its place. So, by God's grace, it was to be with Peter. He who had fallen so low became a "pillar." Gal. 2. 9.

But there is one thing more. The fall of the picture taught my friends to examine the others which were in the room and see whether they were in any danger. They were found to be also insecurely fastened, and the matter was at once attended to, and thus another fall was averted. Let us endeavor to impress the same lesson. Our safety depends on being firmly rooted in Christ and abiding in him. There is but one "nail," securely fastened, on which no burdens can weigh too heavily. The "nail" of self, strong and sure as it may appear, must sometime give way, and a fall be the result. See Isa. 22. 23, 26. Christ only can keep his people from falling.

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