

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

BELIEVING AND DOING.*

By Rev. J. W. McMillan, D.D.

If a man say (Rev. Ver.), v. 14. During the American Revolution, the commander of a small squad was giving orders to his men, as they lifted a heavy log to the top of a rampart they were constructing. The little great man could be heard afar off shouting in regular vociferations, "Heave away! Heave away!" An officer, not in military costume, was passing and asked the commander why he did not take hold and help his men. The answer was given with all the pomp of an emperor, "Sir, I am a corporal." "You are, are you?" replied the officer, "I beg your pardon, Mr. Corporal." Upon this he was dismounted, and lifted till the sweat stood on his forehead, and the log reached its appointed place. Then he said, "Mr. Corporal, when you need another man for such a job, do not forget to send for your commander-in-chief, and I will come and help you a second time." It was General Washington.

Be ye warned and filled, v. 16. A youth in Rome, who had recovered from a dangerous illness, was filled with emotions of gratitude. He exclaimed, "O Thou all-sufficient Creator, could man recompense Thee, how willingly would I give Thee all my possessions!" Hermes the herdsman heard this, and said to the youth, "All good gifts come from above; thither thou canst send nothing. Come, follow me." He took him to a hut where there was nothing but misery and wretchedness. The father lay sick; the mother wept; the children were in rags and starvation. Hermes said, "See here an altar for the sacrifice; see here the Lord's representative and brethren." When the youth had assisted them bountifully, Hermes smiled and said, "Turn always thy grateful countenance, first to earth, and then to heaven." This is true charity, that goes beyond wishes and fine words, into loving deeds.

By my works, v. 18. An Irishman once was asked if he could play the violin. He answered, "I never tried, but it looks simple." To try is the way to find out. You cannot tell how skillful a carpenter is by looking at him; you must see something that he has built. It is only thus that the carpentering faculty is revealed. It is exactly the same with the religious faculty of faith. So long as it sleeps and dreams within us, we know nothing about it. Christian experience is full of surprises, as soon as faith begins to show itself in activity. Like the man with the withered arm, strength comes to us in the act of obedience to Christ's commands.

Faith apart from works is barren (Rev. Ver.), v. 20. It was said of Edmund Burke, that no man could so much as chat with him for ten minutes on the street, waiting in the shelter of a doorway for a shower to clear, without being convinced that he was the first man in all England. His brother Richard once listened to him delivering an oration in the House of Parliament. He afterwards remarked, "I have been wondering how Ned has contrived to monopolize all the talents of the family; but now I remember, when we were at play, he was always at work." It is the story of many a family. The inner talent of many a promising child never comes to anything, because it is not diligently exercised. Faith is the religious talent, and obeys the same law of growth by exercise. It is a universal

rule that our powers are developed by use and decay when they are not employed.

Faith made perfect, v. 22. A saint legend tells how, some years after the event, Thomas was again troubled with doubts as to our Lord's resurrection. He sought the apostles, and began to pour his troubles into their ears. One after another, they told him that they were sorry for him, but that they had so much to do that they had not time to listen to his tale. Then he tried to impart his woes to some devout women. But they, busy as Dorcas, soon made him understand that they had no leisure for such thoughts. At last it dawned on him that it was just because they were so busy, that they were free from his torturing doubts. He took the hint; he occupied himself in Parthia, teaching the gospel, and was never troubled again. It is by working for Jesus that our faith in Him holds firm. Every act of service for Him well done has its reflex influence in deepening our confidence.

PASTORAL VISITING.

All who make any pretension to the office of shepherds visit their flocks; yet there is a wide difference in the kind of visits which shepherds give. One does it formally, to discharge his duty and to quiet conscience; another makes it his delight. And of those who make it their delight, one goes forth on the regular plan of addressing all in somewhat of the same style; while another speaks freely, according as the wounds of his sheep come to view. On all occasions, this difficult and trying work must be gone about with a full heart, if it is to be gone about successfully at all. There is little in it to excite, for there is not the presence of numbers, and the few you see at a time are in their calmest, every-day mood. Hence there is need of being full of grace, and need of feeling as though God did visit every hearer by your means. Our object is not to get duty done, but to get souls saved.

RETROSPECT.

The heavens that seemed so far away
When old-time grief was near,
Beyond the vista seen today,
Close o'er my life appear;
For there, in reconciliation sweet,
The human and divine,
The loftiest and the lowliest, meet
On love's horizon-line.

—Father Tabb.

GIPSY SMITH'S PRAYER.

"Oh, God, our Father, we pray that our hearts may be emptied of every hindrance. May we remove, as far as human power can remove, by decision and desire, all that would keep out the Holy Spirit, and all that would rob us of the power of His presence. May we be men and women of power. Come, Holy Ghost, for Thee we call. Spirit of Burning, come. Thou Flame of Calvary, Breath of God, Thou Paraclete, Executive of the Godhead, come to everyone of us. Claim the purchase of the redeeming blood, and henceforth may our lives be under the governance and sway of the Holy Spirit. Abide with us, [Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.]

When flowers are full of heaven-de-scended dews, they always hang their heads; but men hold theirs the higher the more they receive, getting proud as they get full.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. James Ross, D.D.

Altar.—The raised, foursquare structure on which sacrifices were burned. Originally the victim was slain beside a pillar or large stone, and on this, which represented the Deity, and which stood for temple and altar, the blood was smeared. Later, the burning of the victim became an important part of the ceremony. This was done on the bare ground, or on a flat rock, but afterwards the place was artificially formed of earth of unheun stone, and without steps. The altar of the tabernacle was a hollow chest of acacia wood, seven and a half feet square, and four and a half feet high, covered with bronze plates. The altar in the second temple was composed of different sections, each somewhat smaller than the one below it. The side of the base was forty-eight feet, the height fifteen feet, and the top thirty feet square, with horns at each corner. It was reached by an inclined plane at the south side, and there were small stairs to the different stages of the altar. Round the middle of it there ran a red line, which served to guide the priest who sprinkled the blood on the upper and lower portions of it. On it the fire burned continually, and there the daily sacrifice, and all the public and private offerings of Israel were burned. It had also the right of asylum, except in the case of very heinous crimes.

THE REASON FOR FOUR GOSPELS.

Four portraits of himself—this is the whole of the legacy left by Jesus to his family on earth. But they are sufficient for its needs, because by its contemplation of these the Church receives into herself, through the communications of the Spirit, the life of him whose characteristic features they set forth.

These four pictures originated spontaneously, and (the three first, at all events) independently of each other. They arose accidentally, in a manner, from the four principal regions of the earth comprehended by the Church in the first century: Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy.

The characteristics of these four regions have not failed to exercise a certain influence upon the manner in which the Christ has been presented, in the pictures intended for the use of each. In Palestine, Matthew proclaimed Jesus as him who put the finishing stroke to the establishment of that holy kingdom of God which had been fore-announced by the prophets, and of which the foundations had been laid in Israel. In Rome, Mark presented him as the irresistible conqueror, who founded his divine right to the possession of the world upon his miraculous power.

Amongst the generous and affable Hellenic races, Luke described him as the divine philanthropist, commissioned to carry out the work of divine grace and compassion towards the worst of sinners. In Asia Minor, that ancient cradle of theosophy, John pictured him as the Word made flesh, the eternal life and light, who had descended into the world of time. Thus it was, under the influence of a profound sympathy with those about him, that evangelist brought into relief that aspect of Christ which answered most nearly to the ideal of his readers.

But on the other hand, each of the evangelists has also, by means of the picture which he has drawn, pronounced a judgment upon whatever was impure in the aspirations with which, in some respects, he sympathized. The spiritual

* S. S. Lesson, May 30, 1899.—James 2: 14-26. Commit to memory v. 25. Golden Text—Faith without works is dead.—James 2: 20.