

They're His.

BY A. I. BUNNER.

When I go to bed at night,
You'd wonder that I dare
To go into the room; at all—
If I told you what was there

There's an elephant and a tiger,
And a monkey and a bear,
A lion with a shaggy mane
And most ferocious air

But I think perhaps my bravery
Will not excite surprise
When I tell you that their master
In a crib beside them lies.

— St Nicholas

THE BLACK BELT.

One of the most striking characteristics of the South is the ubiquitous presence of our brother in black, and a very picturesque object he is. For "loop-holed-windowed raggedness" he is not surpassed by the lazzaroni of Naples or beggars of Rome. As he stands in staccato attitude, motionless in the blazing sunlight, he looks like a black bronze antique. There is an expression of infinite patience, almost of sadness, in his dark and lustrous eyes which one may easily fancy is the result of ages of bondage and oppression. When he speaks to you, which outside of the cities he seldom does unless first addressed, it is in a rich, velvety voice, in an obsequious, almost servile manner, and often in a rude and almost barbarous patois. But to see him at his best you should see him in animated conversation with his brother black.

Then he is all life and energy. His gestures are emphatic, his white teeth gleam, his dark eyes flash, his jolly laugh pours forth peal on peal in an almost unobtainable flood. A very small joke causes infinite mirth, and you realize, as perhaps not before, that "a jest's prosperity lies in the ear of him that heareth it."

The condition of the negroes in the new south is to the Northern tourist a problem of special interest. Since emancipation, it is true they are often thriftless and unprogressive; but so they were before, and their habits are a heritage from slavery days. Yet they are steadily improving. At Montgomery, Ala., a coloured man told me that his people paid taxes on \$500,000 worth of property, and that he himself paid taxes on \$20,000. Yet he had begun, he said, "without a nickel." The blacks are docile and eager to learn. Even where schools are provided throughout the "black belt," it is only at intervals between the pressing field-work of the successive crops—corn, cotton, tobacco—that the young folk can go to school about four months in the year I was told. That they have improved so much is greatly to their credit, and is an augury of still greater improvement in the future. The Sunday-school, moreover, is supplementing the deficiencies of the day-school to a considerable extent. The printed lesson leaves are a valuable means of instruction even in the hands of inexperienced teachers. I have heard coloured children in the South respond to questions on the Bible as well as ever I heard white children.

The religious life of the blacks is a subject of deep interest. Intensely emotional, they are apt to be carried away by what is sometimes, it is to be feared, little better than nervous excitement. At Montgomery, Ala., the very heart of the "black belt," I witnessed far more noisy demonstrations than anywhere else in the South. There was on the part of the congregation a perpetual swaying of the body to and fro, accompanied by a constant chorus of ejaculations in a plaintive minor key and all the while ran a deep undertone in a monotonous strain like the drone of a bagpipe. The preacher favoured the excitement. His voice fell into a regular chanting cadence, a mournful minor strain impossible to describe. The responsive cries became louder and louder, several persons, all women, sprang to their feet, one after another, with impassioned gestures and ejaculations. Still the preacher went on with his weird incantation, till the confusion seemed to me to have no more religious character than the gyrations of the dancing dervishes. The more intelligent blacks disapproved of it, and said it was only the ignorant who indulged in it. There is often a rude eloquence in the sermon that to the keen susceptibilities of the negroes is very arousing. The preachers are very fond of texts from the Revelation and from the prophecies, and their literal application of allegorical language and of bold oriental imagery is very striking. The singing, too, is a very characteristic ele-

ment in the worship—the strange, sweet, plaintive strains with which the "jubilees" have made us all familiar. They are especially fond of hymns describing the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, as that beginning, "Go down, Moses," with its striking refrain, "Let my people go;" and hymns on the destruction of the Egyptians, as "Did not old Pharaoh get lost?" which they sing with enthusiasm. In the refrains everyone joins, often with swaying of the body and time-marking gestures. As a finale, they frequently all spring to their feet, and everybody shakes hands with everybody else, singing lustily all the while.

In their collections they are exceedingly liberal; few white congregations, in proportion to their means, being as much so. Having fixed upon a definite sum as necessary, they keep at it till they get it. They are fond of pitting one secret or benevolent society against another, as the "Sons of Jacob" and the "Sisters of Rachel;" and amid an accompaniment of song and exhortation, and a good deal of chaffing and wit, the sum is almost invariably reached. Though many of this long oppressed race may not be models of honesty, thrift, and morality, yet their vices are a heritage of the dark days when no man could call aught that he had his own, and when even the sanctity of his home and the purity of his family life were not protected. Already a great improvement is manifest and under the regenerative influences of religion and education the negro is destined to reach a high standard of morality and intelligence.



IN THE BLACK BELT.

A YOUNG SOLDIER'S BRAVERY.

At the storming of the heights of Chagru Hotel, in Northern India, there were many examples of splendid heroism on the part of both white and native troops. One instance has come to light which has excited the admiration of a whole nation. In the attack on the tribesmen, a British regiment of Ghoorkas has become separated from the main body and was in peril. Two English regiments—one from Derbyshire and one from Dorsetshire, were sent to force back these men, but were repulsed amid a hail of bullets. At last the Gordon Highlanders, a famous regiment of Aberdeenshire, Scotland, were sent forward, and to the playing of the bagpipes they rushed upon the enemy carrying the position with fixed bayonets. During the assault, a lance-corporal of the pipers, named Patrick Milne, was shot through both legs. He had been among the first to leap into the zone of danger, and after he was shot down, he managed to raise himself to a sitting position and played a stirring march on his pipes until faintness from loss of blood compelled him to desist.

As he was still weakly playing, he was urged by comrades to save his strength, but he sturdily replied: "I can still blow!" Of four other pipers of the same regiment who marched across the fire zone, only one escaped unhurt. If the enthusiasm of the soldier, in his effort to win a certain point, is sufficient to make him oblivious to physical pain and suffering, how much more ought the enthusiasm of the Christian enable him to rise superior to trials and disasters here, with the rich and imperishable prize of eternal life in view.

LESSON NOTES.

FIRST QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL BY MATTHEW.

LESSON IX.—FEBRUARY 27.

WARNING AND INVITATION.

Matt. 11. 20-30. Memory verses, 28-30

GOLDEN TEXT.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—Matt. 11. 28.

OUTLINE.

- 1. Warning, v. 20-24.
- 2. Invitation v. 25-30.

Time.—Probably November, A.D. 29.

Place.—Probably in Galilee, along the route to Jerusalem.

HOME READINGS.

M. Warning and invitation.—Matt. 11 20-30.

Tu. Exhortation.—Isa. 1. 16-20.

W. Responsibility of privileges.—Luke 12 41-48.

Th. Despised but chosen.—1 Cor. 1. 20-31.

F. Gracious invitation.—Isa. 55. 1-11.

S. A waiting guest.—Rev. 3. 14-22.

Su. None cast out.—John 8. 29-40.

QUESTIONS FOR HOME STUDY

- 1. Warning, v. 20-24.
In what cities did Jesus do the most of his miracles?
Why did he upbraid these cities?

ing of it and dreading it, and so, as it were, be doing it all the time. "The valiant never taste death but once;" never but once do the alert and active have their work to do.

I once read of a boy who drooped so in health that his mother thought she must have a doctor to see him. The doctor could find nothing the matter with him. But there the fact was, he was pining away, losing his appetite, creeping about languidly, and his mother was distressed.

The doctor was nonplussed.
"What does your son do? Has he any work?"

"No; he has only to bring a pail of water every day from the spring, but that he dreads all day long, and does not bring it until just before dark."

"Have him bring it the first thing in the morning," was the doctor's prescription.

The mother tried it, the boy got well. Putting it off made his task heavy on the boy's mind. "Doing it now" relieved him.

Boys and girls, "do it now."

THE LARGE SNOWBALL.

It is an old saying that many hands make light work, and I think it is true in most cases. Willie has been making a large snowball, and now it is so large that he can roll it no further without help. Frankie has stopped shovelling snow into his wheel-barrow, and has thrown down his shovel, to come to the aid of his brother. Even the little girls have come to lend a helping hand in rolling the ball over. I think they will have to stop rolling it soon, it has grown so large. Grace and Willie are very ambitious, however, to have it larger, while Frankie and Amy, who cannot see over the top of it, think it is "most big enough."

Although there are so many hands employed in rolling it, I think they will not be able to make light work of it much longer. These children look as if they enjoyed their play together very much. I should not wonder if Master Willie finds occasion to call for the help of his sisters a great many times as he grows older. How pleasant it will be if they are always as ready to bestow it as they have been in this instance.

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DO IT NOW.

This is for you, boys and girls. It is a bad habit, the habit of putting off. If you have something that you are to do, do it now; then it will be done. That is one advantage. If you put it off, you are likely you will forget it and not do it at all; or else—what for you is almost as bad—you will not forget, but keep think-