

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

THE LORD OUR SHEPHERD.*

The Lord is my shepherd, v. 1. A shepherd was found on the downs of West England, with a troubled look on his face. "Why, sir," he said, "I could do well enough, were it not for that black ewe that you see yonder among the flock. She is the plague of my life. No sooner do I sit down to look at my book, or take up my wallet to get my dinner, but away she sets off over the down, and the rest follow her, and I have many a weary step to get them again. There! you see, she's off, and they are off after her." The shepherd has his cares and worries. There are black sheep that are his constant annoyance. Are there ever any black sheep in the Lord's flock? Do we sometimes cause Him needless anxiety by our wilful conduct? Do we ever tempt others away from the safe pastures and force Him to travel many a weary mile to win us back again?

I shall not want, v. 1. Garibaldi, the famous Italian patriot, in his early days was a shepherd. On one occasion a lamb strayed from his flock and was lost on the wild slopes of a mountain. The faithful shepherd started out at once to find where it was. He came home at supper time unsuccessful. Nothing daunted, he lit his lantern and took up the search in the darkness. After a while his companions became tired and discouraged, and they returned home; but Garibaldi would not give up. Long after midnight the sleeping friends were awakened by a footstep in the yard. It was the untiring shepherd returning with the poor little bleating lamb in his arms. Jesus is a "good Shepherd" like that (John 10 : 11). He will never desert His wayward sheep nor His tender lambs, until He has brought them back to the safe fold and the pleasant pastures. If we belong to His flock, we need have no fear. He will not suffer us to want or to be lost.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, v. 3. Sometimes the shepherd has to try many devices to bring his sheep where he wants them. On one occasion, when the herbage was cropped close and it was necessary to climb higher to get good grazing ground, a shepherd was baffled, because the approach was steep, and the poor things were not willing to make the attempt. He hit upon a happy expedient. He seized a lamb, carried it up the steep place and threw it on to the table land. It stood at the edge and bleated for the old sheep, and it was not many minutes until the mother was up beside the lamb. God often uses the children to lead the older people. Sometimes a man will resist the most powerful appeal that can be made to him by his minister or his friends; but the sight of his little child a follower of Jesus will melt his heart and make him a Christian too. This is one of the Good Shepherd's happy devices.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow, v. 4. Hume, the great Scotch skeptic, and Robertson, the great Christian historian, passed an evening in earnest friendly discussion. Hume contending that the light of nature was all that man would need, and Robertson that he needed also the light of the Bible. When Hume rose to depart his friend hastened to bring a lamp; but the skeptic smilingly remarked, "Pray, do not trouble. I find the light of nature

always sufficient." He had not, however, advanced many steps along the dark passage way, when he tripped over something and fell. His friend ran to his assistance with the lamp, and as he did so, whispered softly, "You had better have a light from above." When men come to tread the dark passage way that leads out of this world, they would most surely stumble and fall, if they had no one to illumine the darkness for them. But Jesus has given His followers the promise that He will go with them, and He is the Light of the world. There is no gloom so thick His presence will not dispel.

A table, in the presence of mine enemies, v. 5. Our enemies, how many they be, and how relentlessly they pursue us! They are not the difficulties, the struggles, the disappointments. These have proved themselves, again and again, to be our best friends. In contending with them, we have been led into a stranger and nobler manhood. Our enemies are our sins, our evil deeds, our pride, our selfishness, our malice, our passions, which have brought upon us the lashings of the conscience, or worse, have enslaved us in the bondage of debased habits—these are our enemies. But the message of the whole Bible is, that God has made abundant provision for us as sinners. He showers his benefits upon us, day by day, with a loving and lavish hand, so that, by His goodness He may lead us to the repentance, which always leads to pardon. But, better than this, He has sent His own Son into the world to be our Saviour from sin. His perfect life, His atoning death stand between us and the worst we have been and done, to shelter us from its pursuing wrath, and to keep us in peace that nothing can disturb.

I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, v. 6. The conviction of immortality, which faith in God gives, has made soft the pillow of the dying. During an outbreak of smallpox at a mission institution, a heathen woman was engaged to help in nursing. She was greatly impressed by the fact that the Christian girls did not fear death as the others did; and, despite the horrors of the plague, all the Christians wore a cheerful aspect. She returned to her village; but the impression never forsook her, and at length led her back to learn more of that Saviour who could rob death of its sting. To-day she is telling her people how "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4 : 18; Hymn 181, Book of Praise).

NO FRIEND LIKE JESUS.

There's no friend like the dear Lord Jesus,

No, not one; no, not one.

No friend like Him tries so hard to please us,

No, not one; no, not one.

There's not an hour that He is not near us,

No, not one; no, not one.

No night so dark but His love can cheer us,

No, not one; no, not one.

Chorus:

Jesus loves all the little children
Boys and girls He loves everyone;
There's not a friend like the dear Lord Jesus,

No, not one; no, not one.

The Christian life is not merely ourselves getting into heaven, but bringing the spirit of the heavenlies to bear upon the earthly conditions that surround us.—W. R. Hotchkiss.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. James Ross, D.D.

Shepherd—The green pastures are looked up by the shepherd's wisdom, the still waters are the wells and cisterns which, in many places, are the only water. The life of a sheep wandering into a garden is forfeited to the owner of the garden, but the shepherd may restore it to the flock. He goes before the sheep, choosing the right path, which, amid many precipices and impassable rocks, is often difficult, and though he may lead them through the Valley of Robbers, or the Ravine of the Eagle, they are safe. He has his long staff, with which he guides and sometimes stops them, and the short club with the heavy head, driven full of nails, which, wielded by a long, sinewy arm, will speedily stun the most formidable beast. The enemies of the flock are the poisonous plants, which must be discovered and removed, the adders, whose holes must be treated with burnt hog's fat, and the jackals, wolves, and hyenas, against which he watches night and day. At night, when the sheep are entering the fold, he stops the way with his staff, and examines each one, bathing the fly-bitten head with olive oil, or rubbing the torn side or the bruised knee with cedar tar, and if one seems specially exhausted, he lifts the two-handled cup full of water, from a vessel in reserve, and thus refreshes it.

WHAT IF?

What would result if the churches of Jesus Christ, one and all, or a large number were to pursue exactly the course by which the politicians succeed from year to year and from century to century? Suppose they were thoroughly to organize themselves for an aggressive campaign; to make use of suitable literature to interest the people in making the great decision—far higher than any political resolve—to devote their lives to Jesus Christ and His kingdom. Suppose that they held meetings, securing the best speakers of every variety, that all classes in the church would offer themselves to visit everybody whom they might reasonably expect to influence.

Further, what could not be expected if wisdom such as politicians and business men rely upon were used in sending the right man to the right place?

With the Spirit of God to aid them, with churches already built, with great numbers, stirring hymns, and a vast personal influence, is it not reasonable to expect that a great revival of "pure religion" would take place?

Is there anything to account for general religious deadness in any church except that what is done in all other things is not done at all, or to the same degree, to lead men to the greatest and most essential decisions?

WHEN MAN'S DISAPPROVAL IS SURE?

It is never a duty to try to win every one's approval. Such an attempt is not only impossible, but it is wrong. And the man who makes the attempt usually ends in winning no one's approval. To do right is the only duty that need concern us. That means the doing of God's will. But we may know beforehand that our doing of His will assures us the sharp criticism and denunciation of some who are sure that His will for us is different from that which He has revealed to us. This was the experience of Paul, and of Jesus; we need not hope to do better than they.—S. S. Times.

*S.S. Lesson, November 15, 1906: Psalm 23. Commit to memory the entire Psalm. Read John 10 : 1-18. Golden Text.—The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.—Psalm 23 : 1.