

The Quiet Hour.

Joseph in Prison.

Genesis 39 : 2-10. S. S. Lesson 13th Oct.

GOLDEN TEXT :—Gen. 39 : 21. But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy.

BY REV. J. M. DUNCAN, B. D.

And Joseph's master took him, and put him in prison, v. 20. It reads well this story of Joseph, but we forget the bitterness of it all—the envy and hatred of his brothers whom he evidently loved dearly, their selling of him as a slave, his banishment from home and father, the rank injustice of his committal to prison, the fetters, the tedium of prison service—even after his lot there became easier. Bitter and hard beyond expression ! But it was the price he paid for the magnificent manhood into which he grew. He is a grander ruler because he has been a slave. He is gentler to his sinning brethren because the iron of suffering had entered so deep into his own soul. With a great price such high attainments are to be purchased.

And he was there in it, v. 20. Joseph's faith in God must have been sorely tried by the treatment which he was receiving. He had received the theory from Jacob, which is prominent in the discussion between Job and his friends, that God smiles on the good and frowns on the bad. He had been taught that prosperity is a sign of the divine favor and adversity a sign of the divine displeasure. And he had tried to be good. In his Syrian home he had kept his father's commands and lived righteously among his wicked brethren. And the reward of his integrity had been their murderous jealousy and hate. In Potiphar's house he had spurned the temptation that appealed to his passion. And his purity had gained him no hing but the stigma he had striven to avoid and the punishment he did not deserve. His kindness to his fellow prisoners availed nothing to improve his position. Does any one read these lines who is suffering for doing right ? Let the end of this story teach you that although God may seem to have forsaken you, all will be well when God's plan for you is completed.

But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, v. 21. "When children gather to see the magic lantern, the figures may be flung upon the sheet, and yet be invisible, because the room is full of light. Darken the room, and instantly the round circle of light is filled with brilliant color. God our Father has often to turn down the lights of our life because He wants to show us mercy. Whenever you get into a prison of circumstances, be on the watch. Prisons are rare places for seeing things. It was in prison Bunyan saw his wonderful allegory, and Paul met the Lord, and John looked through heaven's open door, and Joseph saw God's mercy. God has no chance to show His mercy to some of us except when we are in sore sorrow. The night is the time to see the stars."

Whatever they did there, he was the doer of it, v. 22. Trustworthiness will win trust. So it ever came about in the case of Joseph. His father trusted him on a perilous journey when but a mere lad. Potiphar "made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put into his hand." The jailer made him governor of the prisoners. By and by Pharaoh made him governor of

all Egypt. In each instance it was his evident capacity and character that led to the confidence imposed. It was not by "bluff" that Joseph got on. The old Persian proverb is true always and everywhere : "The stone that is fit for the wall will not be left in the highway." And it is worth notice, further, that Joseph was what he was, in character and trustworthiness, because God "was with him." He who companies with God will be pure. He who walks after God will be in the way of righteousness. He who takes hold of God will be strong. He in whom God dwells will be good.

And he asked . . . saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day ? ch. 40 : 7. We should never be so absorbed in our own griefs as to lose a sympathetic interest in the troubles of others. A word of kindness may brighten a whole day for one who would otherwise walk in darkness ; and our own day will become the brighter, too, for the word spoken.

And Joseph said . . . tell me, v. 8. Joseph's willingness to hear the dreams of others proves that he had not lost faith in his own. He still "reverenced as a man the dreams of his youth." He had not lost his confidence that God would yet fulfil those dreams. If he had come to disbelieve his own dreams, he would have warned these men to have nothing to do with dreams, for they would only get them into trouble. If we lose faith in our religion, we shall be slow to commend that religion to others. When we say, "Religion has done nothing for me, it has kept me poor, it has lost me a good situation, it has robbed me of enjoyment, it has made me despised," we shall not take the responsibility of advising another man to be religious. Let us learn from Joseph to hold fast the religion of our youth in our sorely tempted manhood.

But think on me when it shall be well with thee, v. 14. It is when it is well with us that we are most likely to forget our benefactors. Many treat Christ as a stepping stone to their own advancement, instead of regarding Him as a loving Friend without whose presence they cannot endure a single moment.

Following the Lord.

He guided by paths that I could not see,
By ways that I have not known.
The crooked was straight and the rough made plain
As I followed the Lord alone.
I praise him still for the pleasant palms,
And the water-springs by the way ;
For the glowing pillars of flame by night,
And the sheltering cloud by day.
—Anna Shipton.

Get into the habit of looking at the silver lining of the cloud, and, when you have found it, continue to look at it rather than at the leaden gray in the middle. It will help you over many hard places.—A. A. Willis, D. D.

Dugald MacFadyen says in his recent life of "Alfred the West Saxon," that Alfred's glory "does not lie in never having met disaster, but in having faced it and overcome it."

Sunshine in the House.

BY THE REV. DAVID JAKES BURRELT, D.D.

In the eastern and western ends of every home there should be windows, high and broad, to catch the first gleam and last glimmer of the day. All things may be pardoned there save darkness and gloom. A father's scowl or a mother's sharp reproof will make a hovel out of the most luxurious home ; and, though the floors be carpeted with velvet and the walls tapestried with gobelin, if there be a lack of sunshine the house is eerie. There's no place like home ; but the word is a sad misnomer if it signify nothing but four walls and a roof. It should be a conservatory of warmth and beauty ; a barricade against all cheerlessness. I pray thee, Nabal, when thou comest from the workshop or the office, remember that a man is not half a man who lays the burden of his cares upon his wife and children. And, I pray thee, much-cumbered Martha, forget not that thy first duty, above and beyond the multitude of lesser tasks, is to keep the multitude of home open toward the sun. I know that in many a household there are inner chambers of sorrow ; and many skeletons in closets ; but, blessed be God, we are masters of our environment. Therein is the chiefest glory of our manhood. A mighty Anak is Calamity, with a spear like a weaver's beam ; but the least of God's little ones hath a two-edged sword of promise that will slay him.

In the household of Charles Lamb there was a shadow so dark that we wonder his own lightsome heart was not depressed with a continual somberness. But he had learned the master art of making the best of things. He had multitudes of friends, but none more beloved than the poor sister who never went away with him on an excursion when she did not pack up a strait-waistcoat with her apparel. To care for that wild-eyed sister was to him not duty nor self denial, but the very joy of love. For her sake he surrendered all more selfish loves, yet made no virtue of it. (And here, in parenthesis, let us note the sweet ministries of those elect ones whom God has called to abide alone, in what is often satirically called "single blessedness.") There is many a household, with an untold story of illness or querulous age, than can witness to a most "patient continuance in well doing" on the part of unwed sons and daughters.) There was a path before the feet of Charles Lamb which seemed to him ordained of heaven ; it was narrow and steep ; but there were flowers by the way, and palm trees bending over, and the sun shining above ; so as he went along he kept his merry heart. Therefore his home, in spite of that and other not less somber shadows, was aptly painted as

"A spot on earth supremely blest,
A dearer sweeter spot than all the rest."

But blessed are those servants whom God calls to the office of housewife (or "weaver") and "house band." It is to ply the engine that furnishes power for all earth's industries ; it is to plant trees and dig wells for the future ages. Oh that parents would more magnify their office ! The sorrows that come to them are but the Master's pruning for greater usefulness ; the clouds that gather in due time empty themselves of the refreshing "latter rains." Is there a more edifying or heavenly sight than that of our aged fathers and mothers, wearing their silver crowns, and amid the benedictions of their children's children, passing on into the light of the Celestial City ? How momentary are they, as they look over their shoulders, seem those bereavements by which was