

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLESTEPHEN THE FIRST CHRISTIAN
MARTYR.*

(By Rev. P. M. Macdonald, B.D.)

Stephen, v. 8. The name in Greek means a crown. It has been well said, that Stephen received three crowns. The first was the beautiful crown of grace with which his heavenly Lord adorned him, so that, by his life and his words, he had such power with men. Then, there was the bloody crown of martyrdom, like the Master's crown of thorns, crushed down on his brows by his foes. And there was the heavenly crown of honor and glory. The King our Saviour offers to each of us the crown of grace. And though the crown of suffering may come to us, it will surely be followed by the glorious crown which we shall wear in heaven forever.

Stirred up the people, v. 12. Men of sagacity put a value upon the cheering crowds, knowing the futility of the excited human throng. When Napoleon returned to Paris from his Italian victories, illuminations, bonfires, bell-ringing, and the cheering of thousands, accompanied him all the way. He scarcely noticed the commotion. "It must be delightful," said a courtier, "to be greeted with such demonstrations of enthusiastic admiration." "Bah!" Napoleon said, "this unthinking mob under a slight change of circumstances would follow me just as eagerly and enthusiastically to the scaffold." It matters comparatively little what the changeable crowd thinks or says about us. What really counts is the approval of God and our own conscience. If we have these we can afford to do without the praise of men.

All saw his face as it had been the face of an angel, v. 15. The secret of the shining face is in the heart. Henry Drummond wrote about a young girl of very winsome character whose presence was a charm to her friends. These friends were content to take what she could give them without trying to discover the secret of her lovely disposition. She had, evidently, a source of goodness that was unknown to them, but that was all it concerned them. On her death bed she had frequent visits from one girl, who asked her how it was she was always so buoyant and happy and helpful. "When I am gone," said the sick one, "you will find the secret written in this locket that I wear; read it and try for yourself if it is not all I find it." When she died the locket was found to contain a slip of paper bearing these words: "Whom having not seen, ye love."

He looked up steadfastly into heaven, v. 55. A small boy found a ladder against a very tall building, and started to go to the top of it. When half way up, he grew tired and stopped and looked down. At once his head began to swim with dizziness, and a violent trembling seized him. He was about to fall, when a kind voice above him said, "Look up, my boy, and keep looking up, and climb!" He obeyed, and soon felt the strong arm of the workman on the roof grasping him safely. Then he got this advice: "When you are on a high place, it is dangerous to look down. When you want to climb high, you must look up. Look at the spot you wish to reach." It was that way with Stephen. If he had

not looked up, we should not be admiring him today. If he had looked down he would have seen human rage and hate. He wanted what was above, where God sitteth. There was his goal, his home and all that he counted best. "Look up, and keep looking up, and climb."

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, v. 60. The town of Calais, in the north of France, was besieged in the year 1346, after the victory of Crecy, by King Edward III. of England. The citizens held out for a whole year, and then found themselves starved into surrender. Edward promised to extend mercy to the garrison and the townsmen, on condition that twelve of the citizens gave themselves up to suffer capital punishment. The list of self-devoted men was soon made up; among them being the wealthiest and most honored of the citizens. But Queen Philippa began to weep tenderly, and cast herself on her knees before her lord the king, and besought him for the love of Christ to have mercy upon these men devoted to death. Then the king delivered them to the queen, and released from death every one in Calais. Jesus prays that we may be pardoned, as did Stephen for his slayers, and Queen Philippa for the doomed captives. And we are like Jesus when we pray for the pardon of those who do us wrong.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, we pray Thee for the true vision. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. We cannot see Thee otherwise. This way is Thine own, it is therefore best, and we pray to be led in it like little children. We want to see God. We would see Thee every day; we would walk with Thee, and talk with Thee, and be Thy friends. We need not see death because of our companionship with Thee, but breathe ourselves into Heaven. Amen.

GOING HOME.

For the loving child of God, death is the going home to the Eternal Father, the ending of warfare, the removing of temptation, the ceasing of failure. No more unfaithfulness, no more miserable weakness, no more grieving God. The solemnity and awfulness of death make the loving servants of God very careful in their preparation for it; but they do not destroy the desire of being with God which can only be attained through death.

Therefore, death must be regarded as the Gate of Life. It is the opening of the door into Judgment; therefore, it must be prepared for with all earnestness. But the thought of death ought not to over-sadden us, for it has a very bright side. A true servant of God has looked forward to the meeting with God, and has prepared; he has realized his own need for repentance, and has repented, does repent, with a growing, deepening sorrow; he has searched out his sins, he has taken them to the foot of the cross and has left them there. The thought of God's love in Christ brightens all to him; he awaits humbly and trusting the call home.—Canon Williams.

Lutheran Observer: The natural man differs from the Christian in the quality of his life as truly as in its quantity. He lives on a lower level, is nourished by other forces, and there is no way in which he can ascend to the higher except by reaching up and laying hold of divine powers that will lift him up.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

(By Rev. James Ross, D.D.)

Witnesses—From the earliest times it seems to have been possible to procure witnesses, who, for a sufficient money consideration, would swear to anything desired. The custom was known in Egypt, and is proverbially common in Turkey and China to this day. Very likely its prevalence had something to do with the origin of the examination of witnesses under torture, as it was thought that pain could compel them to speak the truth. The Old Testament required two witnesses to establish a charge, and a false witness suffered the punishment due to the offence he sought to establish, but according to Pharisaic usage, it was hard to prove them false. They were always examined separately, and they were not punishable if they merely contradicted one another. Nor would they be proved guilty if the accused proved an alibi, but only if an alibi were proved against the witness himself. Evidence was given after a solemn adjuration in the name of God to speak the truth, which compelled an answer to every question, and in which any falsehood would be perjury. Women, slaves, idiots, deaf, blind and dumb persons, and those of infamous character could not be received as witnesses, nor could the high priest legally be compelled to give evidence except in a case affecting the interests of the king.

SLANDERED.

An easy way to harm a good man is to slander him. Few good men have escaped this fiery dart of the enemy. Let no one who has been attacked by a lying tongue think his case is peculiar. No weapon is so hard to defeat. Men have tried to stop a lie, but often with no success. One who is slandered may deny the accusation indignantly, but the denial will not cure the evil. The lie flies faster than the denial. Slander will travel a thousand miles while the denial is going one short mile. The atmosphere of this world seems to be favorable to the rapid circulation of an evil report. Hundreds will believe the evil rumor where one will believe the denial. What can a man do in such a case? What shall he think when his good name has been tarnished by a wicked falsehood?

It is not so bad as it would be if the story were true. How glad such a man should be that the thing is false. He is not what men say he is. Jesus says, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad." Jesus does not seem to consider it a dreadful thing when one is slandered. He tells us to rejoice and be exceedingly glad. It would be bad enough if the story were true. See to it that no one shall ever say evil of you truly, and all shall be well. If we could see the end from the beginning, if we could see what shall follow all this mischief, we should not complain. "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven." There will be an adjustment. Heaven's eternal glory shall pay for all the children of God suffer here.—Selected.

Name other experiences from Job.
Quote New Testament texts on chastisement.
Show how adversity ennoble the character.

*S. Lesson, February 22, 1909.—Acts 6:8-15; 7:54 to 8:3. Commit to memory 7:55, 56. Study Acts 6:1 to 8:3. Golden Text—And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.—Acts 7:59.