

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

AUGUST 17, 1879.

THE CHRISTIAN ARMOUR.—Ephesians vi. 10-20.

INTRODUCTION.

The metaphor and its interpretation are so interwoven in the verses which form the subject of this Lesson, that it is impossible to sever them. We have, therefore, taken them together in our mode of treatment. Use might be made, by way of illustration, of the "Pilgrim's Progress," where Pilgrim is shown the armour in the house of the Interpreter, and where the combat with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation is described.

EXPOSITION.

I. The Christian Soldier's Conflict.—verse 10-12. The New Testament always regards human life as a conflict against evil, for God and goodness, 2 Cor. x. 4. The young soldier is told what he fights for, 1 Tim. vi. 12. The old soldier glories that he has been faithful in the fight, 2 Tim. iv. 7. Verse 12 tells us against whom we fight. "Not against flesh and blood," we have wicked men around us; in our own persons we have enmity against God; but these are not our worst foes. These are higher than ourselves, stronger than men; principalities, powers, rulers. Illustration: every nation has its government departments, organizes its armies into divisions and regiments; these are called forces ("powers"); in time of war they are put in motion to protect an invaded province; and during their presence that province is under military law; the officers of the army are for the time being rulers. Over all is the sovereign—king, queen, emperor. Who is the prince of evil? verse 11. What terms express the divisions of his army? What part of his empire is in dispute? Compare 1 John v. 19, ii. 14; 2 Cor. iv. 4; John xiv. 11, xiv. 30. These enemies are "spiritual," "dark," "wicked," "high," greater in intellect and power than ourselves. What is their mode of conducting war? verse 11. Sin approaches in disguise; covers itself with an ambush. But these "wiles" are lifted when opportunity offers, and then the attack is made fiercely, cruelly, upon the soldier's courage. There are many "evil days" in every one's life when such attacks are made, and happy is that soldier who comes out conqueror. Joseph did. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen. xxxix. 9. Judas gave way in many an evil hour, then came the evil day in which he sold his Master. How is the character of the struggle described? (verse 12, "wrestle.") The fight is hand to hand, foot to foot; it is a life-and-death struggle which each one must manage for himself. Will you enter upon this conflict? Eternal life, and your soul's salvation, depend upon the issue. You must decide for yourself. There are angels innumerable, and believers in multitudes on God's side; but the fight is single-handed. "Each for himself and God for us all; is the right motto for school and church.

II. The Soldier's Equipment. The young Christian "enlists" on the Lord's side. He has neither skill, courage, defence, nor weapons. What is to be done with him? God, his Sovereign, will furnish him with armour, he must put it on; with the only weapon that he will need, he must grasp and wield it. Let us see him thus equip himself. 1. He takes the girdle, Isaiah v. 27, xi. 5; Luke ii. 35; 1 Peter i. 13. The "girding" was accompanied by gathering up the loose robes, which otherwise would impede the movements around the hips and loins, and drawing over this a girdle of leather studded with metal beads, rings, etc. Thus an exposed and vulnerable part of the body was sufficiently protected. What is the Christian soldier's girdle? He must gather up all the powers of his mind into decision; the decision of a sincere and conscious trust in Jesus. "I do trust Jesus," "I will fight for him;" thus the girdle clasps. 2. The breast-plate. What part of the body would this cover? What is the breast-plate? The righteousness here spoken of is the conscientious resolve to do the right and nothing but the right. A conscience wounded by wrong-doing turns a man into a coward, Rom. vi. 18. 3. The shoes.—Soldiers wore sandals, with thick soles covered with nails; so covered, the feet were comfortable and safe. The soldier could plant his feet firmly or move with agility. What do these shoes represent? This peace is with God, and in one's heart, Rom. v. 1, viii. 31, 38. This peace gives a Christian firm foothold; he is prepared to stand or move as the exigency of the conflict may demand. He that is in peace will fight for peace. 4. The shield.—This part of a soldier's armour measured 4½ feet long and 2½ feet broad. It therefore covered his whole person. What does this shield represent? Faith covers and defends the Christian. It brings salvation down (Ephes. ii. 8), obtains forgiveness (ch. i. 7), affords constant access to God (ch. iii. 12), is accompanied by the witness of the Spirit (ch. i. 13, 14). Compare Rom. viii. 14-16, 31-39. Behind that shield the soldier fights, feeling himself a child and heir of God. Old warriors painted or engraved their shields with a device—a red cross; a heart; a falcon. As all faith acts through a crucified Redeemer, so we sing—

"What though a thousand hosts engage,
A thousand worlds, my soul to shake?
I have a shield shall quell their rage,
And drive the ungod armies back."
Portray'd it bears a bleeding Lamb;
I dare believe in Jesus' Name.—Hymn 260.

Against what weapons is this shield efficacious? These "fiery" darts were made of reeds, with a slit near the head, in which was dipped in pitch was inserted. This was fired at the moment of discharge, and aggravated the pain and danger of any wound made by the spear. The "wicked" one is Satan or one of his helpers; his "fiery darts" are temptations which set the mind or emotions on fire with evil desires. Such temptations strike

against the uplifted shield of faith; their points are broken and their fiery mischief falls harmless at the true soldier's feet. We have nearly finished with the armour. We have the hips protected by the —? the chest by the —? the whole person by the —? One part still needs protection. What? 5. The helmet. 1 Thess. v. 7. "That which adorns and protects the Christian, which enables him to hold up his head with confidence and joy, is the fact that he is saved." Now our soldier is well protected by his armour, but he must take care of himself and inflict some damage on the foe. What must we give him now? 6. The sword.—What is it? The Christian only needs one weapon of attack—the Word of God. The Holy Spirit teaches him the use of it, and Jesus Himself has given us the best instance of sword exercise, Rom. i. 16; Heb. iv. 12; Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10. You have now before you the picture of the Christian soldier ready for the conflict of life, looking for the crown. Notice that he could not spare one piece of armour, or the rest would be useless. So you must "put on the whole armour of God"—every piece of it. The soldier needs something more, or he will be badly prepared for the conflict. It is—

III. The Soldier's Spirit.—v. 10, 18-20. It is in vain for a soldier to have the best weapons, if he have a coward's heart. If the Christian soldier depends upon his own strength of will and power of control, he will be smitten with sudden cowardice when he feels how easily the "fiery darts" wound him, and he will turn and fly. From whom? Compare Phil. iv. 13; 1 Tim. i. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 17, ii. 1; Romans iv. 20; Heb. xi. 34. But how is the strength from God to be obtained? verse 18. The soldier must pray when he puts on the armour, when he stands on guard, when an attack approaches, when he is in the conflict, when there is a pause in the fight, when the conflict is renewed: "pray always."

"Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."
God grant that every student of this Lesson may be a "good soldier of Jesus Christ."

LIGHT ON THE GOLDEN TEXT.

EPH. vi. 11.—"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."
As the armour is needed, so it is provided. God does not set His soldiers in the post of danger, and leave them to find their own equipments. For every assailable point, he makes ready a perfect defence. God gives the armour. It is for us to put it on. And it must all be put on, according to the inventory of God's harness which this chapter gives. Many fall sorely wounded—some unto death—who have said: "To-day I shall not need this or that part of the armour." The Lord provides nothing that is needless; and any day may be "the evil day" of fierce attack and deadly strife. Take and wear all the Divine equipment, whether the enemy be in sight or not; and then, come war or quiet, you shall be found standing where the Captain of your salvation has posted you.—G. S. Rowe.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR.

EPH. VI. 11.—"Put on the whole armour of God."

I. The Soldier's Armour.—What is armour? It was the outer dress of a soldier in days long past, and his weapons, or the things with which he fought. It was made of iron, or brass, or other metal, so as to keep the wearer safe while fighting. He wore a coat of mail to protect his arms and shoulders and body. On his head was a helmet, to keep it from the cut of a sword or the thrust of a spear. On his legs were greaves of brass, and his feet were strongly shod, to keep them safe and to help him to stand firm in the fight. And on his arm was a shield, which he could put before his face, or any part in danger, to catch the arrows or to ward off the blow of the enemy. But all this was of use to defend him only. He did not fight his foe with them. For this he had a sword always, and sometimes a spear, as well as a bow and arrows. But this is not the armour spoken of in our verse. It only helps us to understand.

II. The Armour of God.—For a coat of mail we must have truth and righteousness. Now this is something which is not put on the body, but it is in the heart; yet it shows itself in the words and in the life. But can these protect us from harm? Yes, for it is in which brings us into danger. To be true in word and deed, to have the truth of God's word in the soul, and ever to do what is right, is the best way by which to keep off all harm. And the other armour is like it. For the "helmet," the calm quiet peace which the knowledge of what Jesus has done for us will bring. How safely we may stand with that in the heart! For a shield there is faith, the belief and trust in God's love and power to help. For a helmet, salvation. What harm can come when that is given? For a sword, the "Word of God." Surely there is no armour like this. But to be of use,—

III. The Armour Must be Worn.—It cannot save unless it is "put on." It is not the having but the using which helps the soldier to get the victory. Now pray that you may have this "armour of God." It is for all who need, and who seek it. Little children may begin to have it, and to learn to use it. Pray too, that you may know how to use it. It cannot be bought, but the Lord Jesus will listen to the prayer of the youngest, and as life goes on will teach him how to use this armour for his safety.

LECTION VI.—QUESTION XII.

Q. Where is this further explanation and enforcement given in particular?

A. The law of God is further explained and enforced, and its principles applied to various duties and cases, particularly in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and His discourses at other times, when He explains the spiritual and extensive meaning of the moral law, and enjoins the observance upon all His disciples to the end of time.

Inscribed to the memory of my darling child HATTIE TUTTLE who entered into life January 20th, 1879 in the 16th year of her age; by her deeply stricken Father. Gone from the scenes of this mortal life! Gone from its turmoil and its strife. Child of my love! ah! where hast thou gone?

Say to what sphere hath thy spirit flown? Lovely and pleasant! thy voice to me Was sweeter than seraphim songs could be.

Oh! is that voice now blending on high, With the great chorus of saints in the sky? Lovely thy features as some fairy scene, Blooming with flowers mid the water's sheen

Oh! have those features to angels above, All the same sweetness and rapture of love! Then they enjoy her as much as did I. Then she gives pleasure to comrades on high.

And they in turn smile on her with sweet joy: As kindred on earth in some happy employ. Where oft to sweet bowers of amarynth fair, In love's close embrace they together repair:

Singing, and talking, and praising, the while Cheered by a Father's ineffable smile! Oh! happy companions! Oh happy employ!

Ye taste of the banquet that never can cloy! Ye drink of the River of pleasure unknown Flowing eternally fresh from the throne! Your's is the city! the Mansion above! Your's is Heaven of Jesus' love.

Your's is the crown of life in the sky. Your's to tread the broad pavement on high! Or stooping down earthward 'your former abode.

It is yours to help us to climb up to God.

A SHORT LETTER FROM G. O. H.

Dear Bro Currie, Permit me to call the Editor's attention to the unpleasant fact, that there have been in the past, and up to the present, too many typographical errors in the Wesleyan. Your correspondents who take special care to write plainly are often grieved to see their communications sadly disfigured by the Press. The writer wants you to take kindly this gentle hint, now in the beginning of your editorial career. I do not call them sins of omission,—it is the good that is left out—but errors peculiar to men whose eyesight is beginning to fail.

A week or two ago I said in my letter from this place, that this—(removal time) was a peculiar time in Methodism, your printer made me say, a precious time. Had I said peculiar editor, I would not have been surprised at the substitution of the word precious. And when I spake of the first-fruits of the people's liberality the printer made it first prints. Now there were some prints of butter on that well-spread table, but that was not the meaning.

Well, I suppose there would not be so many errors in the world were it not for the fact that there is a devil.

This personage, I am aware, sometimes gets into the pulpit, but he is always regarded as an intruder, there. But the Printing Establishment, recognizes and employs one.

"Humanum est errare."
Burlington July 22, 1879.

NOTE.—The Editor thinks "G. O. H." for his pleasant letter, and its kind suggestions. Sunny paragraphs are sometimes as pleasant as sunny skies. With most writers thought runs faster than the pen. It is not an unusual thing for a writer, who thinks rapidly, to omit a letter or a word, in his compositions. Bro. "G. O. H." in the first paragraph of the foregoing article, left a letter out of the word "unpleasant," and a letter out of the word "Wesleyan." In the last paragraph he omitted one or more words between the words "an" and "intruder." The printer in this instance, as in other similar cases, must guess at something with which to fill up the obvious gap. The printer has in the paragraph referred to, inserted the word "an" which is the simplest way of giving completeness to the sentence. But it is possible, for ought that we know, that Brother "G. O. H." may have intended to characterize the personage of whom he spoke as "a wicked and mischievous intruder," or as "an impertinent and irrepressible intruder," or by some other phraseology. Many persons do not know what good people printers, proof-readers, and editors are, inasmuch as they, sometimes bear the burdens and sins of others, even when others know it not.

LADY JANE GREY'S LAST HOURS.

She did not wish to die—at seventeen no one wants to die—but death, in her present adverse state, appeared as a benign angel, rather than a messenger of gloom and wrath.

Racked with anguish at the shameful apostasy of Northumberland to Romanism just before he was executed, she cried out in holy wrath "Like as his life was wicked, so was his end. I pray God that neither I nor friend of mine die so." And kindling with renewed fervor she added, "Should I, who am so young and in my few teens, forsake my faith for love of life? Nay, God forbid; and much more he should not, whose fatal course, though he had lived for years, could not long have continued. But life is sweet."

* * * God be merciful to us! She had fears also lest Dudley might prove equally false, and was cruelly denied a last interview with him; yet hearing the rumble, and seeing the cart that contained poor Guildford's body, from her window, she rose to greet the corpse as it passed by. Tormented by the priests sent over by Mary to the Tower, who forced their way into her prison, and would not leave it again, in their coarse zeal for her conversion; weary even of the more lenient Feckenham, whose bigotry fell beneath the sweet voice and patience of this young polemic; exhausted by her last masterly controversy

with the cruel, fanatic, Bishop Gardiner, and above all grieving over the father whose love for her had brought his wise head within reach of the fatal axe, can we who read wonder at the spirit manifest in this last tender note which she addressed to the Duke of Suffolk in these words?—

"Thus, good father, I have opened unto you the state wherein I stand. My death is at hand; to you, perhaps, it may seem woeful, yet to me there is nothing can be more welcome than from this vale of misery to aspire to that heavenly throne, with Christ my Saviour, in whose steadfast faith (if it may be lawful for the daughter to so write to the father) the Lord continue to keep you, so at last we may meet in heaven."

Four of her Latin epistles were written in prison, three to Bullinger and one to her sister Katharine, in the then called Martin Tower, now the Jewel Tower, Lady Jane having been removed thence from the damp, sepulchral Brick Tower for greater airiness and comfort. The last, composed the night preceding her execution, on a blank leaf of her Greek Testament to her sister Lady Katharine, sad heiress of all Jane's rights and miseries, reads thus:—

"I have sent you, good sister Kate, a book, which, although it be not outwardly rimmed with gold, yet inwardly is more worth than precious stones. It is the book, dear sister, of the law of the Lord; his testament and last will to us wretches, that shall lead you to eternal joy."

This sacred book she gave to her gentlewoman, Elizabeth Tyner, praying her after she was dead, to deliver it to Lady Katharine, as the last and best token of her love.

On the fatal morning of February 9, 1553, dressed with extreme care in a black velvet gown, Lady Jane came forth from her prison, a prayer-book in her hand, a heavenly smile on her face, a tender light in her grey eyes. She walked modestly across the green, passed the files of soldiers, mounted the scaffold, and then, turning her beautiful face toward the spectators, calmly said:

"Good people, I am come hither to die. The fact against the queen's highness was unlawful, but touching the procurement and desire thereof by me, or on my behalf, I will wash myself guiltless thereof, and deliver to my God a soul as pure from such trespass as it is innocent from injustice; but only for that I consented to the thing I was informed unto, constraint making the law believe that which I never understood."

She paused as if to put away from her the world, then she added:

"I pray you all, good Christian people, to bear me witness that I die a good Christian woman, and that I look to be saved by no other means than the mercy of God, in the merits of the blood of his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, good people, while I am alive I pray you to assist me with your prayers."

Kneeling down, she said to Feckenham, the only divine whom Mary would allow to come near her:

"Shall I say this psalm?"
The prelate answered, "Yes."

On which she repeated in a clear voice the noble psalm: "Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness; according to the multitude of thy mercies do away with mine offences."

When she had come to the last line, she rose on her feet, took off her gloves and kerchief, which she gave to her gentlewoman. The Book of Psalms she gave to Thomas Brydges, the lieutenant's deputy, in which she had written these lines: "Call upon God to incline your heart to his laws, to quicken you in his way, and not to take the word of truth utterly out of your mouth."

Then she untied her gown and took off her bridal gear; the headman offered to assist her, but she put his hands gently aside, and drew a white kerchief around her eyes. She whispered in his ear a few soft words of pity and pardon as the figure of the veiled executioner sank at her feet and begged forgiveness. In a distinct voice she said to the executioner, "Pray, despatch me quickly." Being blinded and unable to see the block on which to lay her young head, she was seen to feel about with her hands, and was heard to say, confused, "Oh, what shall I do? Where is it?" The guard and Feckenham led her to the right place, and as she laid her noble head upon the fatal block, before the death stroke could reach her, the sweet lips were heard to murmur, "Lord, into thy hand I commend my spirit." With these divine words, the soul of Lady Jane Grey passed into its everlasting rest, and the fairest, wisest head in all the English realm fell from under the gleaming axe.—National Repository for August.

Miss Rice, the daughter of the Rev. Dr. Rice, of Springfield, Mass., was graduated at Wesleyan University, Middletown, this year, leading her class, composed chiefly of young men.

QUIET LIVES.

Christ's lowly, quiet workers unconsciously bless the world. They come out every morning from the presence of God and go to their business or their household work. And all day long as they toil they drop gentle words from their lips, and scatter little seeds of kindness about them; and to-morrow flowers from the garden of God spring up in the dusty streets of earth, and along the hard paths of toil on which their feet tread. More than once in the Scripture the lives of God's people in this world are compared in their influence to the dew. There may be other points of analogy, but specially noteworthy is the quiet manner in which the dew performs its ministry. It falls silently and imperceptibly. It makes no noise. No one hears it dropping. It chooses the darkness of the night when men are sleeping, and when no man can witness its beautiful work. It covers the leaves with clusters of pearls. It steals into the bosom of the flowers and leaves a new cupful of sweetness there. It pours itself down among the roots of the grasses and tender herbs and plants. And in the morning there is fresh beauty everywhere. The fields look greener, the gardens are more fragrant, all life glows and sparkles with new splendor. And is there no lesson here as to the manner in which we should seek to do good in this world? Should we not scatter blessings so silently that no one shall know what hand dropped them? The whole spirit of the gospel teaches this. "When thou doest thy aims, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thy aims may be in secret." We are not to seek praise of men. We are not to do good deeds to receive rewards from men. We are not to sound trumpet or announce our good deeds from the housetop.—Dr. Bushnell.

WHAT IS IN THINE HAND?
All great works are done by serving God with what we have in hand. Moses was keeping sheep in Midian; God sent him to save Israel, but he shrank from the undertaking. We sympathize with Jethro's herdsman—alone, a stranger, owning not a lamb that he watched. He had nothing but his shepherd's rod, cut out of a thicket, the mere crab-stick with which he guided his sheep. Any day he might throw it away and cut a better one. And God said:

"What is that in thy hand? With this rod, with this stick, thou shalt save Israel." And so it proved.

"What is that in thine hand, Shamgar?"

"An ox-goad, with which I urge my lazy beasts."

"Use it for good;" and Shamgar's ox-goad defeats the Philistines.

"What is in thine hand, David?"

"My sling, with which I keep the wolves from the sheep." Yet with that sling he slew Goliath, whom an army dared not meet.

"What is that in thine hand, disciple?"

"Nothing but five barley loaves and two small fishes."

"Bring them to Me—give them to God; and the multitude is fed."

"What is in thine hand, poor widow?"

"Only two mites."

"Give them to God; and behold! the fame of your riches fills the world."

"What hast thou, weeping woman?"

"An alabaster box of ointment."

"Give it to God; break it, and pour it upon the Saviour's head, and its sweet perfume is a fragrance in the church till now."

"What hast thou, Porcas?"

"My needle."

"Use it for God; and those coats and garments keep multiplying, and are clothing the naked still."

You are a manufacturer, or a merchant, or a mechanic, or a man of leisure, or a student, or a sewing-woman. God wants each of you to serve Him where you are. You have your business; use it for God. Order it in a godly manner. Do not allow any wickedness in it. Give godly wages; preach Jesus to your clerks, not by a long face, but by being like Him—doing good. Use your profits for God, feeding the hungry, clothed the naked, visiting the sick, comforting the wretched, spreading the gospel far and wide. What a field you have to glorify God in, just where you are! If you have nothing, use your tools for him; He can glorify Himself with them as easily as He could with a shepherd's stick, an ox-goad, a sling, or two mites.

A poor girl who had nothing but a sewing machine used it to aid a feeble church. All her earnings above her needs were given toward building a house of worship, and in a year she paid more than others a hundred times richer than she. So you can do, if you will. Think of the widow with her two mites, the woman with the alabaster box, and Dorcas and her garments. You do as much and have a great reward.—The Bible Student.

A BEAU

How few in a conception of their nature, of their creation, only as creatures with a mental faculty and expecting the narrow of They forget to are written, as all earthly of with all its pag is crumbling in scarcely deserv excepting as it of another an prudent or in his plans with future and end has so blinded debased the aff fail to invest s fancied perfec that the attain the desires and immortal spiri know of them of the earth, vain to chain i its native stre and its purity c changed, if a prisoner here, will, to range r rial universe, a ed from the ar finding a sing has no resting- God.

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