

The Quiet Hour.

The Brazen Serpent.

S. S. Lesson, Numbers 21 : 1. 9.

August 31, 1901.

Golden Text—John 3 : 14, 15. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Fought against Israel, v. 1. God allows the enemy to wage war upon His people, because He knows that it is only by means of effort that we attain.

Israel vowed a vow, v. 2. Our resolves are often made in some time of difficulty, when the forces of the world press against us. Then we feel the necessity of divine assistance. Our night of tribulation is also the night for the most earnest prayer. As Jacob in his struggle, so these Israelites turned to God for assistance.

And the Lord hearkened, v. 3. Because the Lord does not give an immediate reply to our request, or because he does not answer in the way we expect, that is no reason for presuming that His promise has been broken. Let us not have preconceived notions as to the working of God in our lives. Let us not be like Naaman, who thought that the divine healing should come according to his own method, 2 Kings 5. God is His own interpreter and He will make all plain in His own good time. Faith never doubts God's readiness to hear.

The soul of the people was discouraged, v. 4. The outward enemy is not the most difficult opponent. The near, when it becomes discouraged, is the most troublesome of all things. When hope fails and the spirit loses its faith, then the most severe trial is on.

Our soul loathed this light bread, v. 5. The children of Israel were epicures, and their successors are very numerous. Murmurs about food fill many a home. If all the complaints against the fare provided by house-keepers and by the keepers of hotels, restaurants, etc., are to be repaid from the housepot at some future date, then what a terrific confusion there will be. Let us not add to this confusion by our complaints. There was the making of heroes in the rule of restraint of former days laid upon children, that they were to eat their food in silence. The apostle taught his children to eat what was set before them, "asking no questions for conscience' sake," 1 Cor. 10 : 27. It is wonderful how people think it their duty to ask questions concerning their food. Life is more than meat. If we do not like what is set before us, let us at heart be kind enough to say nothing about it. Cooking, like everything else of importance, is no easy work and demands our respect.

The Lord sent fiery serpents, v. 6. The sin of complaint is a serious one, and receives its due punishment. God feels our indifference, and is troubled at our discontent. He hath made things very good and sometimes the reason why He takes away blessings from people, is because they have failed to appreciate them.

Moses made a fiery serpent, v. 8. This image was a picture of their trouble, and the Israelite might say, What another serpent are there not enough already? When we turn for the interpretation of this passage in

the New Testament, we find that Jesus takes this brazen serpent to be a type of His own death. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up," John 3 : 14. The crucifixion of Christ is a revelation of the sinfulness of the race; for in it we behold the penalty that awaited us. The crucifixion must be to many an offence and a stumbling-block, for it tells of the misery which has befallen us. The story of Calvary is an assurance that a great price had to be paid, that a crushing burden rested upon the world.

A serpent of brass, v. 9. The crucifixion of Christ is the reality of which the serpent is a type. Sin is rendered powerless. He died that we might live. "He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin," 2 Cor. 5 : 21. The cross is the crowning proof that God is ready to forgive us, since in it we find the pledge of heaven that our transgressions are forgiven. There never has been any other power like the cross to rescue the fallen, to inspire the weak and to save sinners.

When he beheld, he lived, v. 9. Only those who looked were saved. There was life for a look. So also only those who by faith look to Jesus can be saved. The cross is powerful only over those who, by love and obedience, yield to the claim of Jesus.

The Art of Letting Go.

We held on to a great many things last year which we should have let go—shaken off entirely. In the first place, we should expel from our minds completely the things which cannot be helped—our past misfortunes, the trivial occurrences which have mortified or humiliated us. Thinking of them not only does no good, but it robs us of peace and comfort. The art of forgetting useless things is a great one and we should learn it at any cost.

It is just as important to learn to let go as to hold on. Anything that cannot help us to get on and up in the world; anything that is a drag, a stumbling block or a hindrance, should be expunged from our memory. Many people seem to take a positive pleasure in recalling past misfortunes, sufferings and failures. They dwell upon such experiences and repaint the dark pictures until the mind becomes melancholy and sad. If they would only learn to drive them out and banish their attempts to return, as they would banish a thief from the house, those painful thoughts would cease to demand entrance. We want all we can get of sunshine, encouragement and inspiration. Life is too short to dwell upon things which only hinder our growth. If we keep the mind filled with bright, hopeful pictures and wholesome thoughts—the things only which can help us on and up in the world—we shall make infinitely greater progress than by burying ourselves in glowing retrospection.

One of the first lessons in life is to learn to be absolutely master of one's own mind, to clear it of its enemies, and to keep it clear. A well trained mind will never harbor thoughts inimical to success or happiness. You have the ability to choose your mind's company; you can call up at will any guest you please. Then why not choose the noblest and best?—Success.

A Mother's Prayer Answered.

A company of young men who had escaped a terrific charge from the enemy in one of the fiercest battles of the Civil War were picking their way across the blood-deluged and death strewn field to rejoin their company. All about lay the dead, and from every side came the heartrending cries and groans from the wounded and dying.

One noble-faced young fellow, whose life was fast ebbing away from a great wound in the side, particularly attracted the attention of the party. The dying boy, too weak to call out, had lifted him-self upon one arm, and was feebly beckoning the passers-by to come to him.

Thinking possibly the poor fellow wanted water, or desired to send some message home, one went over to him. Bending down and putting his ear close to the parched lips, he heard these words; "Pray for me, oh, pray for me; I am dying."

"And then," said the writer, "as I knelt there among the dead and dying on that awful battlefield, it almost broke my heart to be compelled to refuse this last request of a dying soldier. I could give no ray of light to that soul struggling for help; for I had no light of my own, and I had not yet found him who is the light of the world."

"Slightly and in tears I was compelled to say: 'Comrade, I can't pray; you must pray for yourself.'"

"He looked hopeless and sad for a moment. Then he closed his eyes, and began to move his lips in prayer."

"I bent closer to catch his words. As I did so, I heard this wonderful prayer, the most touching and eloquent, it seems to me, I have ever heard: 'O God, hear mo her's prayer: O God, answer mo her's prayer.'"

"A moment after, a look of sweetest peace came over his face. He opened his eyes once more, seeming to thank me for staying by him, and then closed them for the last time."

"This was more than thirty years ago, yet it seems as only an hour since that dying boy helped me to find that light by which a Christian mother helped her boy along the dark pathway of death into the light of hope."—S. lected.

Mistaken Kindness.

The danger of false tenderness in the training of children was finely illustrated at one time in the following manner. A person who was greatly interested in entomology, secured at great pains a fine specimen of an emperor moth in the larva state. Day by day he watched the little creature, as it wove about itself its cocoon, which is very singular in shape, much resembling a flask. Presently the time drew near for it to emerge from its wrappings, and spread its large wings of exceeding beauty. On reaching the narrow aperture of the neck of the flask, the pity of the person watching it was so awakened, to see the struggle necessary to get through that he cut the cords, thus making the passage easier. But alas! his false tenderness destroyed all the brilliant colors for which this species of moth is noted. The severe pressure was the very thing needed to cause the flow of fluids which create the marvelous hues. Its wings were small, dull in color, and the whole development was imperfect. How often we see a similar result in the character, when parents, thinking to help a child over some hard place, rob him of the strength of purpose and other qualities essential to the highest attainments in mental and spiritual life.—The Congregationalist