

INTRODUCTORY. Tell that we have a lesson to-day about a man who lost his life for Christ's sake. Recall the trial. Who was the chief of the deacons? Before whom was he brought for trial? What kind of works had been doing? Who was killed before Stephen for doing good works? Tell that Stephen spoke bold, true words to his judges. He told them that they had murdered the Son of God, which makes them very angry. See if children know who these men were. If not, tell that they were the ones who condemned Jesus. Now they persecuted Stephen because he believed in Jesus. Show that it was love of self which made them hate Jesus.

THE HAPPY MARTYR.



Tell what it is to be a martyr, explaining a little about the martyrdoms in the early Church. Recall Stephen's shining face, and ask what made it shine. Show that the shine comes through the globe of a lamp because a light is burning inside, and read from Acts 6, 5, "Stephen, a man full of faith," etc. The Holy Ghost wants to shine in every heart, and will if we let him. Tell where Stephen looked when men were raging against him, and what he saw there. Tell upon whom he called when they were stoning him, and his last prayer—for others, not himself. Ask what this shows, and teach that self-love thinks first of self, and that the only happy people are those whose hearts are large enough to love and bless even those who do them harm. Make vivid word-picture of the scene—Stephen, calm, angelic, happy; the judges with rage and hate in their faces. Where was the rage and hate besides in their faces?

THE UNHAPPY JUDGES.

Talk about the Sanhedrin, and who composed it. They had plenty of money and power, but they had not love. Stephen had no money or worldly power, but he had love. Make a pair of scales on the board, and let children tell which will weigh the heavier, love or power. Talk about happiness and unhappiness, and by questions and examples lead to the thought that only love and truth can be happy. Put lesson thought on board, and let children tell who lost his life, and what he gained. The judges of Stephen saved the life of their bodies, but what did they lose? Show that we try to save life when we seek our own pleasure and way, and that we give up life—the self-life, when we deny self and seek the truth and love.

Ask children if they want self or Christ to be most to them.

LESSON Word-Pictures.

The high-priest was there that memorable day in the Sanhedrin to put the question to the accused, "Are these things so?" Stephen looks up to answer. He sees the seventy judges sitting in a semi-circle, dignified, stern, forbidding. The president is in the middle of this stony arch. Stephen sees also the lying witnesses and the gathered rabble. No friendly face is there, save as some disciple shows himself. And yet Stephen is far from loneliness. It is the Holy Ghost that fills him, that burns through his words of defence that day. Stephen is looking again as he sends home like hot arrows that charge against the Lord's betrayers and murderers. What a change in that dignified row of judges! They now have the faces of beasts halting before a spring from the doors of their cages! One almost hears the "gnashing" of their teeth. And then to comfort him, O marvellous vision of his faith, that opening heaven, that glory of God, and in the heart of that dazzling glory, at the very right hand of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, not sitting, but standing as if to succour his persecuted servant and to receive him! "Blasphemy! blasphemy!" is the derisive cry we hear welcoming the story of that manifestation. Stopping their ears, the wild beasts madly rush upon him, closing about him on every side. Out of the door of the council-chamber they violently rush him. People in the street are startled to see this tumultuous, swollen stream of wrath sweeping Stephen away as the maelstrom would a twig of the forest. With mad shouts they hurry him through the city gates and then excitedly surround him. There is one minute's pause as Stephen's witnesses tear off their outer garments and lay them "at the feet of a young man named Saul," then picking up the stones with which to make the first assault. Is Stephen's eye in that brief delay sweeping this terrible circle of blood to detect any way of escape? We see him rather looking up in the only direction that is hopeful—toward the blue, pitiful sky, toward his God. The assault begins. His murderers run toward him, hurling those sharp, merciless stones. It is only a hideous catapult—at work on every side, letting fly those missiles of death. Stephen falls, rises, falls—his face still toward the sky as he commends his spirit to Christ. He gets upon his knees once more and his voice is heard for the last time as he breathes out a prayer of forgiveness. His murderers' response is another shower of stones on that scarred, bleeding face, but he heeds them no