

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

JESUS BEFORE PILATE*

By Rev. Clarence Mackinnon, B.D., Winnipeg.

I have found no fault in this man, v. 14. Hercules manifested his strength, not by sitting at home at the fireside and spending his days in effeminate ease, but by overcoming the lion, the hydra, the boar and all the evil monsters whom he combated. Otherwise, men would not have been convinced of Hercules' superior strength. So Christ is acknowledged sinless, not because He was free from temptation, but because He conquered it. When Pilate examined Him and proclaimed Him free from fault, it was at the close of a lifetime of strenuous conflict. Every assault of the wicked one had been repelled, every subtle form of sin had been resisted, and on Christ's very features and in His very tone of voice is expressed triumphant innocence so clearly, that Pilate cannot mistake it.

Away with this man, v. 18. "I'll put Jesus Christ by for a while till I have made my fortune, and then bring Him out again." This was the resolution of a physician, who changed his religion in order that he might secure the patronage of the great. But how little he gained by the foolish choice of the world in the place of Christ, Martin Luther tells us. For next day Luther found the poor man, his tongue protruding from the mouth, his face black as coal, and his neck twisted half around. He had been the victim of a sudden death, in which the great reformer saw the merited chastisement of his impiety. But whether the result of the choice is so swiftly and terribly obvious or not, it is the saddest of all mistakes to exalt anybody or anything in the place of Jesus Christ.

Release unto us Barabbas, v. 18. Sometimes a dangerous criminal escapes from one of our prisons. Immediately a hue and cry is raised, the police get on the track of the fugitive, and pursue him till he has been captured and put behind the bars again. But, all the while, one of the chief makers of criminals is left at liberty. The saloon is allowed to sell men the cursed drink that fits them for any crime. If we were only wise enough to stop the making of criminals, we should save ourselves a great deal of trouble in keeping them from doing evil.

Crucify Him, v. 21. One of Michel Angelo's most striking works is, The Triumphant Christ. It is intended to represent the Saviour after His resurrection. The figure is strong and vigorous, though the marks of the nails in the hands and the spear thrust in the side are still visible. But the unique thing in the work is, that the risen Christ still carries with Him a cross. He comes back to be crucified again. The great sculptor was not mistaken in the sad truth he sought to depict. Too true it is, that in every denial of Him, in every choice of another in His place, we crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame.

Why, what evil hath he done? v. 22. Polycarp was one of the most famous among the fathers of the early Christian Church. When he was an old man he was brought before a heathen magistrate because of his religion. He was offered his life and freedom, if he would only curse Christ. Listen to this answer: "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me nothing but

good; and how could I curse Him, my Lord and Saviour?" And he died in the flames, rather than speak a word against the Master whom he had served during a long life. Thousands upon thousands have given themselves to the service of Christ, and to no one of them has He ever done anything but good. Come what may, we shall never have reason to be sorry, if we choose Him as our Lord and Master.

They were instant with loud voices, v. 23. Some one tells us that in the days of the old anti-slavery movement, when he visited a town where he was the object of particular hatred, he took the pains to stop first for a brief moment at one house, and then to move on to another. In the middle of the night, he heard a fierce clamor on the street, and he knew that the first house at which he stopped had become the object of the filth and mud thrown by the mob. People when carried away by the passion of the moment are almost always mistaken in their man. Let us never be stampeded into wrong decisions by a multitude of voices, but use that calm reason which is among our highest human prerogatives.

It should be as they required, v. 24. Pilate tried in this cowardly fashion to shift the blame to other shoulders. His excuse was, that he only carried out the people's wish, and that the people's will must be obeyed. We are ingenious in finding ways of getting rid of our responsibility. The fault lies with our ancestors, our companions, our circumstances. "It was the way I was brought up," says one. "You see I was led to it," says another. "A man in my position must do such things," says a third. "It is the fashion"; "Circumstances compelled me". These, and innumerable others, are the vain excuses daily given for conduct men know to be wrong.

PRAYER.

Almighty and ever blessed God, we adore Thee for the gift of Jesus Christ thy Son to be our Saviour and our friend. None need pass out of this earthly life unsaved. None need live here or hereafter without a friend, for Christ hath loved us, and purchased us for himself with his own precious blood. And all that was in thy gift to the world of him, thine only begotten one. For this we bless Thee. For this we pray to Thee give us part in that salvation, through thine own power calling us with an effectual calling. Help us to evermore love Thee, and worthily serve Thee, and grant to us the leading of Jesus Christ until we rest with Thee. Amen.

THANKSGIVING.

By R. T. Weyburn.

'Tis written: To the shah a dervish went To voice his plea for justice; discontent, Yet prefacing complaint with artful praise For certain benefits of former days. When lo! that list to such proportions grew

As put a period to the interview, Sending the dervish forth at last appeased,

And half-forgetful he had been displeased. So let me come, O Lord, before thy throne,

When discontent would claim me for her own; Prelude complaint with note of praise so long There were no room for discord in the song.

THE IMPRESS OF PRAYER.

By Rev. J. S. Sutherland, B.A.

Like everything of real worth, prayer leaves its impress upon that which it is closely associated. It influences character. It gives a distinctive tone to work.

Look at the face of Hosea in Sargent's frieze of the prophets, or at the countenance of many an one to whom religion has become the great reality of life. What is the meaning of that spiritual beauty that haunts you? Is it not the grace that art and nature both bestow upon those whose eyes are homes of silent prayer?

The face of Moses shone when he came down from the top of Sinai. As our Saviour prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and He was transfigured before the disciples. Francis of Assisi is said to have borne in hands, feet, and side, the print of the nails and spear that wounded our Lord. The human body is in fact often profoundly influenced by religious emotion. But if so, must not the effect of prayer upon character be much more powerful? A moment's exposure prints a landscape upon the photographic plate. How much greater must be the spiritual effect of life in an atmosphere which prayer has filled with the sunlight of divine holiness and love. "Behold he prayeth"; for Saul, and many another, that fact has meant a new nature and a new life.

On work, as well as character, prayer leaves its mark. Work is the outcome of life, the expression of personality. Everything that influences the man must affect what he does. What enters the fountain will be found in the stream that flows from it. Since prayer influences character, it must leave an indelible impress upon work.

This impress is often sadly lacking where we might expect to find it. Too much of our Christian work to-day is the result of habit, rather than of inspiration. It seems to be made to order. It lacks the intangible something that would give it spiritual distinction. Such distinction is never found apart from prayer. Fra Angelico's angels are the work of one who hallowed his art by daily fellowship with God. It has been well said that Moule's commentary on Romans reads as if its author had written it upon his knees; and this is the secret of its inspirational value. Not long ago one of our congregations secured a minister whose work impressed the people with the fact that he believed in the power of prayer. Within a year these were a quiet, thorough-going revival of religion in that congregation; and fifty per cent. of the new communicants were men.

Let us learn the lesson of the Transfiguration. Down in the valley, the disciples try in vain to cast out the evil spirit from the demoniac boy; life seemed sordid, their faith is put to shame. But in the Mountain, Peter, James and John, are receiving ineffaceable impressions of their Master's glory; and from it Jesus descends to cast out by a word the demon that will yield to nothing but prayer. To that mount of communion with God, we, too, must find the way. From it we may hope to return with a new power in our message and fresh hope and inspiration for the work of life.

Halifax, N.S.

We must pass the altar of sacrifice before we can offer our incense before the mercy seat.

Sunday school lesson, December 2 1906—Luke 23: 13-25; Commit to memory vs. 20, 21. Read Matthew 27:3-30; Mark 15: 2-19; Luke 23: 1-12. Golden Text—Then said Pilate, . . . I find no fault in this man.—Luke 23:4.