

English Teacher's Notes.

THERE are places in London into which it is not safe for a respectably dressed person to enter alone. There are streets in which even the presence of a policeman hardly affords protection. Yet there are people who may go in and out in perfect safety—those well-known in the locality as Christian workers and friends of the outcast.

The Rev. H. B. Macartney, of Melbourne, records how, when on a visit to London, he went "back to the Home of Industry by a short cut, which no policeman dares to pass alone," but where he was "safe, because with Annie Macpherson, the good angel of Spitalfields." The presence of this last named person rendered her companion safe from harm, although she had no actual authority or control over the denizens of the streets, but simply exercised a moral influence over them. We can imagine how a soldier attempting to enter and pass through the camp of the enemy would quickly pay the penalty of his temerity; but if for some reason the commander of the hostile forces accompanied and conducted him through, not a weapon would be pointed at him and he would pass unharmed.

In the passage for to-day we see an immense host of men, women, and children taking a course which looked at first sight as though it must end in their destruction.

The river which lay between the Israelites and the land of Canaan was no placid stream, easy to cross. The Jordan rushes down the steep slope which forms its bed with a force and swiftness worthy of its name (the Descender), at an average rate, it is said, of from four to five miles an hour. In harvest time the waters, swollen by the melting of the snows of Lebanon, rise to such a height that all its three banks are submerged. No ordinary traveler would attempt the passage of the river at such a time. "What wilt thou do," says the prophet Jeremiah, "in the swelling of Jordan?" Jer. 12. 5. And it is recorded as an act of heroism on the part of certain Gadites, who "separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness," that they went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all its banks. 1 Chron. 12. 8-15. During the last three days since the return of the spies the river had risen to its full height, and what the Israelites had now before them was a raging, roaring flood, which threatened to sweep away whatever came within its reach, and which would have been formidable to the boldest swimmer.

How was it possible for the hosts of Israel to cross these wild waters? One Presence alone made it possible. The Lord who rules the water floods was with them. The Creator and Master of that raging river conducted them through. As soon as the ark, the sign of his presence, reached the brink the waters divided. "Jordan was driven back." Psa. 114. 3.

And this was the pattern of the Lord's provision for his people unto the end of the world. There

are many "waters," strong, full, swift, seemingly irresistible, which we have all at one time or another to pass through. How is the young Christian in the workshop, the store, or in a godless household to escape being carried along by the rapid current of this world? How are the overwhelming floods of trial and sorrow to be passed through? How is the convert in heathen lands to escape being swept away by the merciless torrent of persecution? How are the weak and fearful to face the last dark waters of death? Our Golden Text, gathering up in one short sentence the teaching of the narrative, gives the answer: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." It was thus that Joseph of old passed through the flood of trial unharmed, thus that Daniel stood unmoved in the tide of luxury, and pride, and ungodliness at Babylon; thus that the infant Church at Jerusalem emerged from the storm of persecution more prosperous than before; and thus has many a naturally timid believer fearlessly gone down into the dark river, grasping the promise: "Fear not, I am with thee."

But how may any one make sure of the promise of the Golden Text, and know that that divine Presence shall be with him?

1. He must see that he is of the company of the spiritual Israel, the redeemed of God; he must have owned himself a guilty sinner, and accepted the ransom divinely provided.

2. He must carry out the instructions given to Israel on the memorable occasion we have been considering: "When ye shall see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, . . . then ye shall remove from your place to go after it." He must order his steps by the divine leading and follow the divine Guide. Then he may expect to pass unharmed through the flood, to the glory of Jesus, the Captain of his salvation, and the encouragement of all the people of God.

The Lesson Council.

4. Did the miracle suspend or contravene natural law?

There was neither suspension nor contravention. Neither was necessary. The laws of nature, which are the laws of God, are not real things, independent of and separate from God. They are modes of divine operation, facts, which we observe to be in orderly and abiding sequence. God's thoughts are laws. All his thoughts, touching nature, are not known to us. Some are matters of every-day experience; the manifestation of others is reserved for occurring emergencies. These, brought into operation, are neither suspensions nor contraventions of those already observed. They are simply additional laws made known upon occasion. A ball is hurled by a strong arm through the air. The law of nature is that it shall traverse a certain distance if not interfered with. I turn it aside with a bat. Another law enters into the phenomenon. No contravention or suspension is present.—Rev. A. Wheeler, D.D.

This question involves the whole subject of miracles. No play upon words should hide from our minds the fact of God's presence and direct exercise of power in this event.—Rev. W. P. Thirkield.

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