

The Quiet Hour.

Elisha at Dothan.

S.S. Lesson, 2 Kings 6:8-23. Oct. 30, 1904

GOLDEN TEXT.—The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.—Psalm 34:7.

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And took counsel with his servants, v. 8. We are reminded that there is always the unseen element, and when we plan forgetting it we do foolishly. It is not necessary that we should always say in words, but we should ever have the thought in our hearts as we plan,—“If the Lord will, we shall do this or that.” For it is as our plans are pleasing to God who rules that they will really prosper. It is well to counsel with our friends; but we should not forget the best Counsellor of all, God Himself.

Beware that thou pass not such a place, v. 10. There is no one who is left altogether without warning as to the course of conduct to be pursued in life as a whole, or in regard to some particular action. He is a wise youth, and not likely to go far astray, who is ready to heed the good advice given by parents, and pastors, and teachers. Many lives that have made wreck of themselves might have been saved, had their possessors only heeded advice given.

Which of us is for the king of Israel? v. 11. We do not act prudently, if we form our conclusions without having all the facts in the case before us. A decision resting on imperfect knowledge is almost sure to be wrong. We should have an open mind for all information, whether it come from friend or foe. What folly, for example, to live as though there were no world but the one we see, forgetful of all those unseen facts and forces which are so real, though we see them not with the outward eye!

Spy where he is, that I may . . . fetch him, v. 13. The world is full of evils that have become strong and boast of their might. It seems to the eye of sense impossible to overthrow them. Opposed to them may be only a handful of poor and powerless people. Perhaps there is only a single individual standing up for the right. But there is no doubt about the result. The Almighty is on the side of the right. The resources of heaven are at the back of those who fight the evil. Their victory—delayed it may be—is certain in the end. No foe can prevail against them, no weapon prosper.

Alas, my master! how shall we do? v. 15. Faith is a great factor in a fight. Despair is a frequent cause of defeat. Hopelessness is an ally of the enemy. The soldiers who are sure they will win are not likely to be beaten. It is the faint-hearted who fail. And who have so good a right to banish fear and hold fast to their confidence, as those who are on God's side in the battle? They stand upon the solid rock.

The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha, v. 17. “Angels came and ministered unto him.” That was in the wilderness of the Temptation, Matt. 4:11. “There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.” That was in Gethsemane, Luke 22:43. An angel to open prison doors. That, again, was when one of Christ's followers was in need, Acts 12:7-10. They are never far away, these messengers of God. Blessed are those—

“Who like the Seer of old
Can see the helpers God has sent,
And how life's rugged mountain side
Is white with many an angel tint.”

And he prepared great provision for them, v. 23. What a picture of the way in which the gracious King of heaven has treated us! We were rebels against Him. There were weapons in our hands and hatred in our hearts. And yet, so far from destroying us, He has invited us to partake of the rich and abundant gospel feast. How all our arms should be cast away! How hatred should be driven from our hearts! How eagerly we should accept His loving offer, and receive the priceless blessings He holds out to us! The same voice that has said, Come! will greet us with a most gracious Welcome!

Christian Courtesy.

The constant practice of Christian courtesy by all who bear the name of Christ would go far to create pleasing conditions here on earth, and make living a delight. Because of the neglect of it there are heart-burnings and bitterness, and the coming of the kingdom of God among men is delayed.

It is a fact as trite as it is true that there are two ways of saying or doing almost anything. A truth may be stated boldly and severely, in such a way as to chill and repel, or it may be put in words that are winning and attractive. One may say a thing with a snap and a snarl, or he may say the same words with a smile. One may say “yes” and say it so ungraciously that he awakens hatred, and another may say “no” in a way that may seem kind and considerate. A very important element in true culture is to learn that manner is of itself a very great matter.

Because of an oversight as to this religious discussion between individuals and different bodies of Christian believers have too often been such as to be greatly deplored. Of course there is intense feeling in the matter of religious faith, but it must not be overlooked that those with whom we differ have as deep convictions that are to them as sacred as our own are to us. It is so easy to offend that we need to be particularly on our guard when we enter the field of religious debate or discussion.

Every really successful minister must be, and is, a thorough gentleman, considerate of the feelings of those whom he addresses, tactful, gentle and courteous. In this he has the example of the Master himself, and of such great disciples as Peter, John and Paul, whose writings may well be studied with the purpose of seeking to discover how to speak the truth in love. It was Peter, the brusque, bold fisherman, whom we so often think of as rough and ready, who urged the followers of Christ to love as brethren and to be pitiful and courteous.

It is so easy for a minister, standing where no one may answer him back, with a desire to be thought courageous and devoted to the truth, to say words that will offend his hearers, hurting their feelings, and undoing all that he has done. One must not be weak and subservient and truckling, but he must not be cruel and harsh. He must speak the truth, and the whole truth, but he must speak it in the spirit of his Lord, and must be patient and forbearing, and courteous. He who has this as his spirit will

win souls for Christ, and that is what he goes into the pulpit for. Some men are unacceptable because they are not courteous, and when they fall into disfavor they ascribe it to their orthodoxy or their age, and lay the blame on others for a fault which they should see and correct in themselves.

It is this same rule of courtesy that should obtain among our various bodies of evangelical Christianity, holding, as we do, the same great distinctive doctrines of Gospel truth, and engaged in the same great work of trying to bring the world to the love and service of the Redeemer. It is easy to magnify our differences, and by so doing, increase them. It might be easy to magnify the points and doctrines we hold in common, and by so doing lead to a larger likeness in faith and similarity in life and practice. Love is the solvent in which the differences must disappear and the atmosphere in which a common likeness may be developed.

The great questions before some of our churches now as to possible union need to be discussed in this spirit of Christian courtesy and love. There must not be words that will exasperate or hurt. There must be only a mutual fairness and patience. If a union is found to be practicable, and for the advancement of Christ's kingdom and the glory of God, let us work for it, and welcome it. If it may not come, let there not be a word spoken that shall hinder cordial co-operation in the days to come.

In family, in church, in society, in the large councils of man with man, and of church with church, we may be loving, pitiful and courteous. Peter, the Christian gentleman of the first century, exhorts us to this course in the name of his Lord and ours. By following his words of exhortation we shall win the largest and best success, and shall have the least to regret as the days and years go by.—Herald and Presbyterian.

FOR DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.

The Two Classes.

BY H. M. MCCLUSKY.

There are two classes of Christians. This fact is apparent to any one who considers the condition of the Church, not only at the present time, but through her entire history.

In what particular do these classes differ? In one there are those who believe in Christ to save them when they die that they may be taken to heaven; while those of the other class, in addition, accept Him for the present every day living. Whatever the hours bring, Jesus is ever present; He bears the heavy part of the burden; He says “Fear not, only believe.” He comes with the pleasures bringing special blessings. He says, “Your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man taketh away from you.” To them He is the inspiration of life, and they are obedient to His voice; He is the indwelling power that enables them to accomplish the Lord's will. These Christians claim the promise of the present abundant life as well as that which is to come.

God's word abounds in wonderful promise which may be fully appropriated by all who believe, and is it not a marvel that so many who are called by Christ's name, live such lonely, burdened lives? Beloved, in Him we have all things; will you not believe and act upon it? “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?” It is absolutely true, as many who read these lines can testify; but, alas, to