

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.*

By Rev. Clarence McKinnon, B.D.

He fought against Israel, and took some prisoners, v. 1. It is a fortress in India. A troop of ferocious Sepoys have surrounded it. If once these bloodthirsty enemies force admission, they will cut down soldier and civilian, they will spare neither mother nor child. Can you imagine a fortress in such imminent peril asleep, the warder on the tower nodding over his bayonet, the captain in his tent, pen in hand, but asleep at his table, no sentry watching, the heavy spirit of slumber on them all? No, such a thing is impossible in the alert British army, when the war trumpet sounds and danger is near. Our soul city is besieged by enemies fierce and cunning. We dare not yield ourselves to sloth or slumber; else the foe will surprise us and make us captive, as Arad came upon Israel unawares and took some of their prisoners. "Watch," says our great Leader. And the best of it is, He watches with us to keep us safe.

Israel vowed a vow, the Lord hearkened, vs. 2, 3. On a recent railway journey, the writer heard a bell ringing as the train drew near a crossing. A young engineer sitting beside him explained that whenever the locomotive touched a rail at a certain distance from the crossing an electric circuit was formed, and the bell rang automatically. When we turn to God in prayer and obedience, it is as if a circuit were formed between ourselves on earth and God in heaven, so that He hears the cry of our need and sends His swift-winged messengers to our help.

There is no bread, v. 5. In a fine farming district of Ontario lives an old man over ninety, who tells this story of his childhood. His parents had come from Scotland and settled in the bush miles from neighbors. By hard work they had cleared a small piece of ground on which they planted some potatoes and beans. Their flour failed, and they had no food and no money to buy it. The old man remembers how his mother took him, a wee chap at the time, to see if the potatoes were ready to use. Pulling up a hill, they found them only the size of robin's eggs. The little boy never forgot the look of despair that came into her face. It seemed to say, "There is nothing now but starvation." But they went over to the beans, and found that they were fit for eating. The family lived on these until the potatoes were ready, and on the potatoes until they could get some flour. But in one way or another God provided for them, and the children became prosperous men and women.

When he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived, v. 9. Just as the cure for the poisonous bite of the serpent was made in likeness of that serpent itself, so Christ who is our Saviour from the plague of sin, was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5: 21), took upon Himself the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8: 3), and suffered on the cross that death which is the penalty of sin. And just as the believing Israelite who was dying from the poisonous bite, looked at the brazen serpent and was immediately cured, so every one who looks to the crucified Christ will find in Him full forgiveness for all his sin, the removal of the pen-

alty and deliverance from the power of that sin. How needful, therefore, that all should look to that one Saviour; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men where-by we must be saved." (Acts 4: 12).

LESSON POINTS.

A task shirked to-day will be all the heavier to-morrow, v. 1.

"Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just." v. 2.

No true prayer ever fails to reach the ear or to move the arm of God, v. 3.

The monotonous round of daily duty is the severest test of a man's religion, v. 4.

It is because we forget the blessings of the past that we become discouraged in the present, v. 5.

Suffering is meant to burn away the dross and leave only the pure gold, v. 6.

Blessed is the pain that stings us into confession, v. 7.

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of," v. 7.

God's judgments are passing clouds; His grace is the ever shining sun, v. 8.

Faith is the channel by which the healing energy of Christ flows into our souls, v. 9.

PRAYER.

Oh, Thou eternal and ever blessed God, we adore Thee for Thy manifestation of Thyself in creation, in Providence, and in grace. When we consider all these things, what is man that Thou art mindful of him? From Thy Word comes back the answer, "Man is he for whom Christ died." We cannot understand that, but thanks to Thy revealing grace we can believe it. In that sacrifice of eternal love we rest. We believe in Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, and we ask Thee, oh our Father, for His sake, accept us though we be sinful, and forgive us and accept us for His dear Name's sake. And to Thee will we give the glory forever and ever. Amen.

DEGREES IN GLORY.

Did He mean to tell them that the office of dispensing those glories was not His, but another's? Surely not; for the Son of Man will dispense them as the Judge at the last day. Did He mean to say that He had no authority of His own to give away the glories of Heaven? Surely not; for there is given to Him authority: "All judgment is committed to Him, because He is the Son of Man." But the plain meaning was this, that they were not His to give by absolute or arbitrary right. There were certain eternal principles in the bosom of the Deity, which must guide Him in their distribution. John, the beloved, asked this favor of the Lord, but Christ's personal love to John could not place him one step above another. Personal favor had nothing to do with it, justice everything. Steps of glory are not won by favoritism, or by arbitrary selection. "It is not Mine to give except to those for whom it is prepared of My Father." Who are they for whom the Father has prepared the special glories of the life to come?

They who have borne the sharpest cross are prepared to wear the brightest crown. They who best and most steadily can drain the cup which God shall put into their hands to drink, are the spirits destined to sit on His right hand and on His left. Our Master's question was significant. They asked for honor. He demanded if they were willing to pay the price of honor: Can ye drink of My Cup?—F. W. Robertson.

"TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW."

Would it not be better to leave to-morrow's cares and anxieties with God? That is what is troubling men; to-morrow's temptations, to-morrow's difficulties, to-morrow's burdens, to-morrow's duties. Martin Luther, in his autobiography, says: "I have one preacher that I love better than any other on earth; it is my little tame robin, who preaches to me daily. I put his crumbs upon my window sill, especially at night. He hops on the sill when he wants his supply, and takes as much as he desires to satisfy his needs. From thence he always hops to a little tree close by and lifts up his voice to God and sings his carol of praise and gratitude, tucks his little head under his wing, and goes fast to sleep, and leaves tomorrow to look after itself. He is the best preacher that I have on earth."

HOPES FOR AFTER DEATH.

By J. G. Whittier.

So when Time's veil shall fall asunder,
The soul may know
No fearful change, or sudden wonder,
Nor sink the weight of mystery under,
But with the upward rise, and with
the vastness grow.

And all we shrink from now may seem
No new revealing—
Familiar as our childhood's theme,
Or pleasant memory of a dream,
The loved and cherished Past upon
the new life stealing.

Serene and mild, the untried light
May have its dawning;
And, as in summer's northern night,
The evening and the dawn unite,
The sunset hues of Time blend with
the soul's new morning.

BLUE LAWS.

The so-called Blue Laws of the Puritans have been distorted and traversed in a fearful way as, for instance, when it is stated that one "blue law" forbade husband and wife to kiss each other on Sunday, which is pure silliness, though it has been given currency as a historic fact by a woman of New England, who ought to know better. The truth is the term "Blue Laws," as a writer in the "Historical Magazine" shows, was not used in derision at that time when applied to the Puritans; on the contrary, it had a high and noble meaning to them. The Puritans wore blue as their badge, in opposition to the scarlet of English royalty and Cardinal red. Some of the Presbyterian preachers of the Scotch Covenanters used to wear over their preaching robe an apron of blue. When the robe was dispensed with, the apron of blue was thrown over the front of the pulpit and hung there during the service. In blazonry it signifies charity, loyalty and fidelity. They based their choice on Biblical authority. Blue or azure is the symbol of divine eternity and human immortality. In the book of Numbers (15:36) it is directed: "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, and that they put upon the fringes a ribband of blue." The Christian Work and Evangelist.

There is no need to be perpetually testing the foundations; but any new building must be on the foundation.

S. S. Lesson, September 8, 1907: Numbers, 21: 1-9. Commit to memory v. 9. Read Numbers, chs. 20, 21. Golden Text—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.—John 3: 14, 15.