

The Sunday School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XXXIII.

Aug. 17. } THE CHRISTIAN ARMOUR. { Eph. vi.
1879. } 107.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."—Eph. vi. 11.

HOME STUDIES.

- M. 1. 1. Pel. v. 1-9. The adversary.
T. Luke xxii. 24-38. Satan's devices.
W. 2. Cor. x. 1-27. The weapons of our warfare.
Th. 1. 1. Thess. v. 1-11. Breastplate and helmet.
F. Eph. vi. 10-20. Christian Armour.
S. 2. Tim. ii. 1-10. A good soldier.
S. 2. Tim. iv. 1-8. A good fight.

HINTS TO STUDY.

The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians was written in Rome, it is supposed during the Apostle's first imprisonment there, about A.D. 62. The Ephesians were the inhabitants of Ephesus, which was the chief city of Ionia, a province in Asia Minor, bordering on the Aegean Sea. This city was the great centre of the worship of Diana, whose temple there was one of the seven wonders of the world, and to whom the inhabitants were fanatically devoted, as we may learn from Acts xix. In this stronghold of idolatry Paul staid three years (A.D. 54-57) and there he founded a Christian Church. The first three chapters of the epistle are doctrinal, setting forth the work of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in the choosing and redemption of the Church and in its union to Christ; the last three chapters are eminently practical, describing the worthy walk (or conduct) of those who receive the heavenly vocation (chap. iv. 1), in unity (iv. 1-16), in newness of life (iv. 17-32; v. 1-33; vi. 1-9), in the strength of the Lord (vi. 10), in the Christian armour (vi. 11-20). The text of the lesson calls our attention to the enemies, the equipment, and the conflict.

I. THE ENEMIES.—vers. 11, 12. Not flesh and blood: not men like ourselves, but beings much more crafty and powerful—principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness (or rather wicked spirits) in high places. To meet the superhuman cunning and power of these adversaries the Christian needs Divine wisdom and strength; he needs to be strong, not in himself, but in the Lord and in the power of His might. They are neither myths nor personifications of evil, nor mere abstract qualities; they are real, live personalities, led by a real personal chief called the devil or Satan, and actively, though invisibly, engaged in opposing the cause of God in the world and in the destruction of human souls. A recent writer says:—"The devil is shrewder than the Chinese. He doesn't come at us with gongs and banners when he wants to bring us into submission. He gives no signal of his approach. He even much prefers that we should not suspect his proximity. He is sly and cunning. He watches for our unguarded moments. He looks to see if there are unprotected joints in our armour; if there is but an exposed heel which he can bruise; and the slightest opening he goes for. The devil doesn't commonly propose gross sins to a person of refined nature. He is very careful not to shock the sensibilities of the most fastidious in his temptings. He will try to make uncharitableness seem virtuous indignation; selfishness he will suggest as prudence; unbelief he likes to have called liberalism. He greatly dislikes to have his suggestions known by their right names. And the best reason for our having on all the armour of God at all times, is that we can never know where the devil will strike at us, or when, if we are unprotected or off our guard."

II. THE EQUIPMENT.—vers. 13-17. This equipment or armour, offensive and defensive, is *imperatively necessary*. Verse 11 teaches us, by implication, that if we do not put on the whole armour of God we shall not be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. The defensive armour is complete and efficient. It constitutes a full panoply, covering the Christian warrior from head to foot, that is, protecting him from all kinds of evil, come from what direction they may. There is only one offensive weapon mentioned, but it is a good one. David, no doubt, prized it as highly for spiritual warfare as he prized the sword of Goliath for carnal warfare, and would probably have been quite as ready to say of it "There is none like that; give it me." (1 Sam. xxi. 9.) While Paul was writing this epistle (or letter) to the Ephesians, it is very likely that he was constantly guarded by Roman soldiers in complete armour; so he had his illustrations before his eyes. In ancient times, when there was no gunpowder, and almost all the fighting was done "hand to hand and foot to foot," the soldiers protected their bodies with various pieces of defensive armour which have in modern days been cast aside as cumbersome, and as affording little or no protection against the weapons now in use. The modern soldier has no helmet nor breastplate nor shield, but the modern Christian needs his spiritual armour just as much as Paul or the weakest Christian in Ephesus did. The different pieces of this armour, as set before us in the lesson, are:

The Girdle.—Having your loins girt about with truth: The girdle surrounded the waist and kept the clothing and the other parts of the armour in their proper place. It is by coming to a knowledge of the Truth of God, as contained in the Bible, that the Christian is enabled to bind his armour about him. There is also a reference here

to the truth or truthfulness of the Christian's own character.

The Breastplate.—Having on the breastplate of Righteousness: This must be an important piece of armour, for it is represented as protecting the heart, a very slight injury to which would be fatal. The primary reference here is to the righteousness of Christ, which not only saves the believer from wrath and constitutes his title to heaven, but is also a source of satisfaction and comfort to him on his earthly pilgrimage, and of inestimable service in the contest with sin and Satan. Were it not for the knowledge that the righteousness of Christ is his, the Christian would yield to the enemy's temptations and relinquish all hope (on account of his own sinfulness), and thus sink deeper into sin. There may also be a secondary reference to the consciousness of rectitude, on the part of the Christian, in respect to his loyalty and fidelity to Him who has called him to be a soldier.

The Shoes.—And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace: The apostle calls upon the Christian soldier to "stand," but he also indicates that he is to be prepared to march when the order is given to do so. The ancient warrior might, perhaps, be able to stand and fight without shoes, or sandals, but he could not well march bare-footed. The Christian soldier is to be a messenger, and though engaged in war he is to bear the Gospel of peace. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!"

The Shield.—Above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked: The shield most commonly used by the Roman soldiers in Paul's time was of oval form and about four feet long by two and a half feet wide. It was a piece of metal or wood, covered with leather well oiled, to be held before the soldier so that a blow from an enemy's sword or lance might strike the shield instead of the body. Enemies then used to throw darts lighted at the end, to burn as well as wound, and they often hung burning torches against walls and tents. Paul tells Christians to take the shield of faith: when the soldier had a shield before him he felt safe from danger, and so with faith in Jesus the believer is secure.

The Helmet.—And take the helmet of salvation: "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." (1 Thess. v. 8). It is probably the hope of salvation that is meant in our lesson also. The helmet protected the head, and was generally made of brass or some other metal. Like the breastplate, it guarded a vital and very vulnerable part, where even a seemingly slight injury would be apt to prove fatal.

The Sword.—And the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: Being thus fully equipped with defensive armour, the Christian is ready to take the sword in hand. It is a tried weapon. It was this weapon, and no other, that the Saviour Himself used in the conflict with Satan on the occasion of his temptation. His answer to every attack of the adversary began with "It is written."

III. THE CONFLICT.—All this preparation and equipment implies that there is fighting to be done. There are two opposite powers or kingdoms at constant war in this world—the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. The devil is the god of this world, and ever since the fall, men, in their natural, sinful condition, are his subjects. Believers are subjects of the kingdom of God, but they still find the kingdom of evil existing not only around them but within them. There can never be peace between these two powers. The Christian must fight, not only for his King but in his own defence. It is a struggle for life. He must destroy his spiritual enemies or be himself destroyed. But he is not content with mere self-defence. As God enables him he makes inroads on the kingdom of darkness and tries to be the means of setting some captive free. He is not sent on a warfare at his own expense. God has provided the armour; He also provides the strength, and the means of support by the way; but the Christian is directed always to seek God's help, Praying always and watching. John Bunyan's Pilgrim found "all-prayer" effective when all other weapons failed. When Nehemiah's enemies threatened him he prayed and set a watch. He who watches most will need to fight least because not surprised. Praying for others is sure to bring good to the person that prays. It was when Job prayed for his friends that the afflicting hand of God was removed from him and blessings were poured out upon him in abundance. Paul requests the Ephesian Christian to pray for him that utterance might be given him that he might open his mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel; and the Christians of the present day are taught by this that they ought to pray in like manner for the ministers and missionaries who are now proclaiming the Gospel.

EIGHTEEN Algerian Catholic missionaries have started for Zanzibar to join the Victoria Nyanza and Lake Tanganyika Mission.

Official Notices.

CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE OF B.N.A.—The forty-first Session will be opened with the usual public service on Wednesday, September 17th, 1879. Candidates for admission are requested to forward to me their applications, with testimonials of pastors and recommendations of churches, without delay, that there may be time for necessary correspondence. My address till September 10th will be box 28, P.O., Cacouna, Que. GEORGE CORNISH, LL.D., Sec. Congregational College, B.N.A. Cacouna, July 15th, 1879.

CHILDREN'S GARDENS.

I wish every mother in the country knew the great satisfaction to be derived from the little plots of land the children cultivate as their own. No matter how small, it has a peculiar charm, and its mixed and incongruous plantings often yield astonishing results. No radishes so crisp as those your little son will lay beside your plate, the reward for his toil and care. No flowers so beautiful as those your loving daughter brings in some bright spring morning, nurtured and tended by her own hands. The earliest hepatica of the woods grow serenely in the shadow of a "May tree." The wild violets flourish in Annie's gentle care. In our home each child has a plot of ground and an apple tree, the fruit of which, always fair and beautiful, is shared generously, and the surplus sold for pocket money. Sometimes an early melon finds its way to our table from the garden of one of our industrious boys, and is praised and appreciated as a reward for his labour. Little two-year-old has a garden too, and while we try to teach him not to pull up the happy family of flowers and vegetables that thrive there, we delight in his glad murmur as he roars like a true Heheman in the summer sunshine, saying, "My gardee, my gardee," and taking a whole potato from the cellar where his restless feet often wander he plants it just deep enough for the hens to pick it out, and nothing daunted sows a handful of peas over it. But as he grows older he will learn that this is not the way to success, and try to copy the care and vigilance displayed by his elders. Even "Baby Hope" has a little circle filled with sweet wild flowers brought from the woods this spring, "to be ready when she can gather them," the children say—and our eager young botanists are ever ready to search for a new flower to transplant into "Hope's garden." By such innocent pleasures is home made happy and beautified.—Rural New Yorker.

A WHITE RACE IN AFRICA.

Major Serpa Pinto, the Portuguese traveller in Africa, who recently turned up at Durban, has been lecturing on his travels at Lisbon. In his address, which is translated in the "Standard," he testified distinctly to the existence of a white race in Central Africa, living in territory "between the Cuchi and the Cubango." He himself spoke to men of this race whom he describes as "whiter than Caucasians," who call themselves Cassequers, and are not a bad people, though totally uncivilized. They have tufts of hair on their heads like short wool. They have eyes like the Chinese, are powerful, and live a nomadic life. It is of course possible that an Albino family should have multiplied, but it is more probable that a small party of Vandals or Goths were forced southward, or tried to explore southward, were compelled by circumstances to remain, and being separated from all around them by their colour, have survived as a distinct tribe. An almost perfectly white tribe exists in the Atlas, the descendants, it is supposed, of Romans who fled to the mountain for protection against the barbarians, and, as far as yet is known, climate has little influence on colour. The Copts remain white and the Tasmanians were quite black, though they had always lived in a climate nearly identical with that of Britain.

Major Serpa Pinto, the Portuguese Stanley, is strong and muscular, although of light limb and frame, and is of a genial and happy disposition, not easily overcome by difficulties. The Portuguese colony in Pernambuco have presented him with a valuable gold medal, set with pearls and brilliants, and bearing a suitable inscription. It is said, that while the journey of Cameron cost £6,000 and that of Stanley about £9,000, Serpa Pinto has spent less than £1,000 all told. To the king he has offered several skins of wild beasts, and he asked her majesty's acceptance of a splendid collection of ostrich feathers, which he had taken in the desert of Calhari, and which in the transvaal were reputed to be superior to those presented some years ago to the Queen of Holland by the Dutch merchants of that republic.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS OF THE ZULUS.

The marriage customs of the Zulus are unlike those of other savages. When a man wants to marry a woman, he goes to the father and purchases her for twelve head of cattle. If after a certain time she bears no children, the husband demands back from the father the cattle given for the wife, and the father is bound, according to Zulu law, to return them. If children are born, and they are daughters, the heart of the father rejoices, for they represent so many head of cattle for which he can sell them, thus getting back the price he had given for his wife, and often much more. Moreover, women till the soil in Zululand, men being reserved for the nobler office of knocking others or being themselves knocked, on the head, according to circumstances. Every woman has a hut of her own, so that on entering a village the traveller can ascertain the number of women living there by counting the huts.

Of the 80,250,000 English-speaking people in the world, 17,750,000 are Episcopalians, 14,000,000 Methodists, 13,500,000 Catholics, 10,000,000 Presbyterians, 8,000,000 Baptists, and 7,000,000 Congregationalists.

Births, Marriages and Deaths.

MARRIED.

At the residence of Anthony Morris, Esq., on Wednesday, the 30th ult., by the Rev. E. D. Silcox, Mr. Willard H. Clarke to Miss Esther Stapleton, all of Stouffville.