

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL.*

By Rev. J. W. McMillan, M.A.

Why persecutest thou me? v. 4.—There is an ancient legend of a saint who sought the presence of his Lord. In a vision he saw himself knocking at the door of the celestial abode of the Redeemer, and heard the divine voice ask "Who is there?" He replied, "It is I, Lord." The door did not open, nor was any response granted him. Again he knocked, and heard the same question. Again he said, "It is I, Lord." Complete silence was once more his answer. A third time he knocked and heard the question, "Who is there?" This time he replied, "It is Thyself, Lord." The door swung open and he found himself in the arms of the Saviour. Thus Jesus insists on identifying Himself with His people, and on His people identifying themselves with Him.

Into Damascus, v. 8. What a different entry from that which Saul had planned, and how much more truly noble! A rich man in Eastern Canada was caught in a big bank failure, and lost nearly all his money. Friends called upon him to express their sorrow. To their surprise he was found to be as hearty and jolly as they had ever seen him in his most prosperous days. "Don't condole with me," he said, "I am richer now than ever before. I have just found out that my money was robbing me of everything else. Now I find, that, with the loss of gold, all the bright friendship and family life are coming back to me. I have exchanged a shop for a home." So God's providence often surprises us. His clouds are lined with light.

Ananias, v. 10.—Why is it that when we hear this name we think of the other Ananias, the liar? Because evil seems to be more easily remembered than good. The word "villain" used to mean a kind of small farmer, it came to mean a rascal. "Craft" used to mean a trade, now it means a low sort of cunning. If any person gets accused of wrong-doing it will be remembered to his discredit, whether he be guilty or not. He may be honorably acquitted in the court, but long afterwards people will say of him, "Oh, that's the man that was mixed up in that scrape." The lesson is, that, to maintain a good name which is better than riches, we must abstain from the very appearance of evil.

I have heard . . . much evil, v. 13.—God likes frank prayers. As we despise the man whom we see trying clumsily to conceal something which can be clearly seen, God, who knows all our hearts, is offended by any lack of sincerity of outspokenness in our prayers. Abraham was the friend of God, and was not the less liked because once he confessed the misunderstanding of Jehovah's purposes, thinking that the Judge of all the earth was not going to do right. Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Presence. Peter ventured to reprove the Speaker on the housetop, saying, "I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." All these are prayers which would surprise an ordinary prayer-meeting, yet God did not resent them. Let us be downright with God.

He must suffer, v. 16.—How much easier it would be to take to people, if we could look ahead and see what they are destined to suffer. All the world

admires a soldier, as Ruskin points out, not so much because he is a man ready to be killed, as because he is a man ready to kill. If you saw your worst enemy being carried on a hospital stretcher into the operating room to have his arm or leg amputated, you would not hate him so fiercely then. Pity is a solvent of anger. Now, there is no human being to whom trouble and sorrow do not come. Consider the temptations, irritations, hardships, disappointments and griefs of others, and it will be less difficult to fulfil the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Filled with the Holy Ghost, v. 17.—The Spirit is always given for service. The possession is a poker, not a plume. It is a dedication, not a decoration. It is to be used as a tool, not a toy. The might of the Holy Spirit, more real and tremendous than all the great forces of nature, is the energy which God sends forth to redeem the world. That power He will not entrust to any save those who yield themselves wholly to Him, and who are willing to endure any toil or suffering, if only they may help to fulfil His purpose.

TREASURE IN HEAVEN.

By John Godfrey Saxe.

Every coin of earthly treasure
We have lavished upon earth
For our simple worldly pleasure
May be reckoned something worth:
For the spending was not losing,
Though the purchase were but small;
It has perished with the using.
We have had it,—that is all!

All the gold we leave behind us,
When we turn to dust again,
Though our avarice may blind us,
We have gathered quite in vain:
Since we neither can direct it,
By the winds of fortune tossed,
Nor in other worlds expect it:
What we hoarded we have lost.

But each merciful oblation—
Seed of pity wisely sown,
What we gave in self-negation,
We may safely call our own.
For the treasure freely given
Is the treasure that we hoard,
Since the angels keep in heaven
What is lent unto the Lord.

RISING HIGHEST AT HOME.

Those whom we love most often have to put up with us at our worst. It is in the home, among those whom we love dearest than life, that we usually give our ill-temper and pettiness and rude needs and selfishness and other bad habits fullest play. And it is a shameful thing that it is so. If our Christianity is to be used only among acquaintances and strangers, and on dress parade at public gatherings and church services, what is it really worth, to us or to anybody else? Writing on "The Disciple at Home," Dr. G. Campbell Morgan has said, "No service for God is of any value which is contradicted by the life at home." If our Christianity is not equal to the task of the commonplace routine of home life, it is not Christianity at all. Our best-loved ones are entitled to the best of ourselves that we, in the power of Christ, can give them.

None shall be saved by Christ, but those only who work out their salvation; we cannot do without God, and He will not do without us.—M. Henry.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. James Ross, D.D.

Letters.—The Moslem law was intensely intolerant of heresy among its own people, and enforced ecclesiastical censures with civil penalties, inflicted by the Jewish state as long as it was independent, and as far as their new rulers would allow them, after they became a subject nation. Julius Caesar granted to Hyrcanus and his children all the rights of the high priest, whether established by law or accorded by courtesy. This was confirmed by Augustus, and under this edict the Sanhedrin exercised a strict spiritual and temporal oversight of all Jews inside and outside of Judea. The number and wealth of the Jews in Damascus made them a powerful factor in the city, yet it would not have been possible for a Jewish official from Jerusalem to have arrested men there for a purely religious offence, and carry them abroad to be tried, except that about this time Aretas or Hareth, the king of the Nabataeans, Arabs, had obtained authority over Damascus, and it was part of his policy to allow the Jews the freest hand in their own internal affairs. The Christian Jews in Damascus were converts who had been evangelized during their visits to Jerusalem, or fugitives who had fled there from persecution.

"HIGHER."

"Higher" cries the impatient bulb, as the earth rises and opens for its entrance into the fair, bright world above. "Higher" says the clambering vine as it daily strives to wind one more tendril around its supporter. How gracefully line after line is twined around till the summit is reached, and how tenaciously it clings as if not to lose the position it has gained! "Higher" laughs the gay, gorgeous butterfly, as it seeks to warm itself into life in the sun's genial rays.

And "Higher" sings the lark in his morning song, as he sails through the fleecy clouds to his airy home. "Higher" sings the school-boy, as he daily marks his height upon the wall and half despairs of growth. "Higher" says the youth, when he first beholds the broad fields of intellectual greatness spread out before him, and finds there is work for him to perform.

This word "Higher" is a noble one, a glorious incentive to action. The Christian owns and feels its influence, and it is easy to imagine that he hears it softly breathed in his ear, as he is about to take the last look of earthly objects. "Higher" it was that prompted him to clasp his parent's knee when endeavoring to rise in his infancy. "Higher" was his motto in childhood; in youth he felt its influence; in manhood it urged him to noble deeds and generous actions. And now, as the light of his mortal vision is going out, this cheering word comes to guide him safely to that region of eternal bliss where he will find the realization of his motto fully exemplified and personified even in the "Most High."

So limited are our faculties for comprehending things as they are in themselves, that did the Scriptures present dim and faint pictures of them, they could not otherwise be revealed at all. The "light" which no man can approach unto," if presented in its full blaze to eyes too weak to endure it, would blind instead of enlightening. We now "see by means of the reflection of a glass," what we could not otherwise see at all.

S.S. LESSON, April 18, 1909.—Acts 9: 1-19. Climbit to memory vs. 15, 16. Study Acts 9: 1-30. Golden Text.—He fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?—Acts 9: 4.