

THE HOME CIRCLE.

FALLING TO SLEEP.

Evening was falling to sleep in the west,
Lulling the golden-brown meadows to rest;
Twinkle like diamonds the stars in the skies,
Greeting the two little slumbering eyes;
Sweetly sleep; Jesus doth keep,
And Jesus will give His beloved ones sleep.

Now all the flowers have gone to repose,
Closed are the sweet cups of lily and rose;
Blossoms rocked lightly on evening's mild breeze,
Drowsily, dreamily swinging the trees.
Sweetly sleep; Jesus doth keep,
And Jesus will give His beloved ones sleep.

Sleep till the flowers shall open once more;
Sleep till the lark in the morning shall soar;
Sleep till the morning sun, lighting the skies,
Bids thee from sweet repose joyfully rise.
Sweetly sleep; Jesus doth keep,
And Jesus will give His beloved ones sleep.

LIFE'S CONSECRATION.

An enormous congregation assembled at Westminster Abbey on the anniversary of the death of General Gordon. The sermon was preached by Canon Eyton from the words "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." "This," said the preacher, "is a striking and magnificent description of human character at its best—of the influence that belongs to the highest human character. Great characters are at once an inspiration and a protection—they stop drifts of whatever kind, the drift of mere *laissez-faire* indolence, the drift of panic-stricken terror, the drift of anxiety to be on the strongest side and to shout with the biggest crowd, the drift of cynical pessimism, those strong impulses which, like sand-drifts in the desert, sweep over human nature and are always bringing under their deadly influences the struggling growth of human virtue. And it is surely well to preserve the memory and to set before those who were too young to know it the real greatness of Gordon and the transcendent nobleness of his life. I know with what deep regret we ought to feel that we were blind enough not to perceive what God had sent us in the wisdom and power of the man who, had his counsel only been followed, would have given righteous government to the Soudan and saved an amount of cruelty and bloodshed which, to this hour, sickens us to think of as being the result of drivelling incapacity. But every such reflection only seems to emphasize the greatness of the man, his loyalty under the provocation of a petty officialism, . . . his absolute indifference to all the temptations and the weaknesses incidental to success. All this, and much more, has thrilled the hearts of men as nothing else has done in our time and influenced thousands who never saw the hero's face. It has cast a distinct consecration over the life of the soldier; it has been held up before young men as the spectacle of a man who had an inward hold on God in Christ, and yet was able to throw himself into the smallest details of military service. That combination of deep religion and real capacity is so uncommon and so attractive as to be helpful to all sorts of weak, struggling lives. Gordon carried religion into the field of battle; he gave a new reading of the Christian character."

AGNOSTIC REASONING.

A young skeptic sneered one day at a remark made by an elderly man who sat next to him in the train. The old man looked up and asked, "Are you an atheist?" "No," said the youth, "I am an agnostic. I take nothing for granted. I see the mountains, I smell the rose, I hear the wind; therefore, I believe that mountains, roses, and wind, exist. But I cannot see, smell, nor hear, God; therefore, I am not prepared to admit there is such a Being." The old man inquired, "Did you ever try to smell with your eyes?" "No," replied the other. "Or to hear with your tongue, or to taste with your ears?" "Certainly not," said the youth. "Then why do you try to comprehend God with faculties which are only meant for material things?"

THE BIBLE CLASS.

PAUL IN THESSALONICA, BEROEA AND ATHENS.

(For May 9th—Acts xvii; 1 Thes. ii. 1-12.)

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From Philippi, Paul and his company proceeded westward over the famous Roman road known as the *Via Egnatia*. A hundred miles of travel brought them to Thessalonica, the largest city of Macedonia. It still exists under the name of Salonica, and is, next to Constantinople, the most important city in European Turkey. The intermediate cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia were passed by as the former could easily be evangelized from Philippi, and the latter from Thessalonica.

PAUL IN THESSALONICA.

As usual, Paul began his work in the Jewish synagogue, where he won the hearts of many of the proselytes. Through them he gained access to the purely Gentile population as soon as, in the natural course of events, the doors of the synagogue would be closed against him. Paul respected the principle that those who gave themselves to the work of the Gospel should be supported in material things by those to whom they ministered in spiritual things. But knowing how easily the fact of such support might be misconstrued by his enemies, he preferred to toil at his trade by night that he might preach by day, and thus prove his entire disinterestedness to any who might otherwise have suspected mercenary motives beneath his intense Evangelistic zeal. This he did for a considerable time, perhaps six months. Converts were multiplied, and a thriving church founded. The Apostle was not permitted, however, to continue unmolested in his work. Here, as usual, the Jews showed themselves the bitterest enemies of the Gospel. Their malicious envy was excited by the fact that the message preached by Paul impressed not only men of all classes, but some of the leading women in the city, who in Macedonia occupied a much more influential position than in Athens. These fanatical Jews incited a mob composed of some of the lowest elements, literally "rascals," in the city, to make an assault on Paul. Forcing their way into the house of Jason, Paul's host, they dragged him and several other Christians before the *politarchs*, on the charge of aiding and abetting Paul, whose preaching of Jesus as King was declared to be treason against the Emperor. This charge compelled notice, and the mildest treatment that could be given it was to bind over Jason and his companions to keep the peace. This involved not only the immediate termination of Paul's labors in the city, but the impossibility of his return even when the passion of the mob had subsided. This legal obstacle is probably that which Paul afterwards referred to when he wrote to the Thessalonians of his eager desire to return to them, but "Satan hindered me."

PAUL IN BEROEA.

Some thirty-five or forty miles further west on the Egnatian road lay Beroea. To this place Paul seems to have journeyed alone, leaving Silas and Timothy at Thessalonica to bring him word whether the legal impediment to his return had been removed.

At Beroea Paul found a class of Jews less moved by national prejudices, since they were open to conviction, and not excited to fanatical jealousy by a presentation of the Gospel to the Gentiles. But the arrival of hostile Jews from Thessalonica, and the employment of similar tactics here as there forced the Apostle to depart, after a period of labor covering possibly a month or two.

PAUL IN ATHENS.

From Beroea, Paul proceeded to Athens, probably by water. During his stay in Athens, as at Beroea, he seems to have been constantly expecting a reversal of the decree that debarred him from returning to Thessalonica. Here Paul had reached at length the intellectual capital of the ancient world. Born and reared in Tarsus, itself a distinguished university city, Paul could not be indifferent to the culture and art of this older seat of learning and philosophy. But Athens was famous, not only for its intellectual influence, but for its veneration for the national Greek religion. Here every god in the pantheon had his temple or altar. The sight of this abounding superstition, in a place where above all others human intelligence should have revealed the absurdity of worshiping idols of metal or stone, stirred Paul's spirit with indignation. Though expecting to remain only a short time, he could not keep silent, but began disputations in the synagogue and in the market-place with any whom he met. In this way he came into contact with representatives of the two leading philosophical schools in Athens, and this again led to his being brought before the council on *Areopagus*, possibly that they might pass on his qualifications as a public lecturer in this proud university city that

*An Exposition of Lesson 19 in *The Bible Study Union Sunday School Lessons* on "The Three Great Apostles."