

SUNDAY  
SCHOOL

## The Quiet Hour

YOUNG  
PEOPLE

## THE STORY OF CAIN AND ABEL.\*

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

Fruit...dock, vs. 3, 4. Let each one give to God's cause of what he has. The native converts of the South Pacific bring coconuts and sandal-wood. The converts among the Esquimaux bring sealskins and whalebone. Among ourselves there is always a great variety of gifts. Some, who are poor indeed, have nothing but money to give. Others bring gifts of music, and powers of teaching, and tender sympathy, and bold championing of the right. And all of us can bring obedience, without which even the most splendid offering is worthless.

Cain was very wroth, v. 5. People can get as angry about what happens around a church as about anything else. It seems sometimes as if the solemn surroundings serve to heighten the passions of those who quarrel. Religious wars have always been of uncommon ferocity. Envy may be born in a Sunday school. Jealousy may grow in a choir. Even in the missionary societies and governing boards, there may be disputes and dislikes. Thus the stone which should have been made the head of the corner, becomes a stumbling-block and a rock of offence. If we are not made better by our church-going, we are sure to be made worse.

If...well...accepted, v. 7. Not the gift, but the giver. Not the sacrifice, but the spirit which offers it. John Bunyan says, "For it is not a good work that makes a good man, but a good man that makes a good work; the fruit doth not make a good tree, but a good tree bringeth forth good fruit." When payments are made in gold, the stamp on the coin counts for little, unless the weight and quality of the metal are there. No amount of stamping on lead can make it worth the price of gold. God looks always to the heart of the worshipper.

Slew, v. 8. What weapon did he use? Perhaps a club, or a mattock, or a stone. Poor Cain had not many to choose from, living as he did at such an early period of human history. There are many deadly weapons. There is the hate of the heart which Jesus told us was murder. There is the tongue "full of deadly poison." There is ingratitude that breaks hearts. Murder can use refined methods, as well as coarse, and can kill by slow degrees, as well, and as guiltily, as by a sudden blow.

Abel his brother, v. 8. Many crimes that ripen in later years are nurtured in the home. A felon who was executed said, just before the trap was sprung, "If I had learned to control my temper when a boy at home, I should never have come to this." In the home we know each other so well, that all pretence is useless. Hence we are readier to show the ugly sides of our natures. And thus the ugliness gets leave to grow. It should be the very opposite, as everybody knows, and brothers and sisters should set the world the true example of affection.

My brother's keeper, v. 9. In the Red River, last summer, a launch containing a party of picnickers, mostly ladies and children, ran on a sunken pile and upset. Just at the moment of the accident a couple of young men rowed past in a skiff. Instead of coming to the

rescue, they threatened one of the drowning victims who caught at the gunwale of their skiff, and went off, leaving these helpless women and children to their fate. Four of them were drowned. That was the spirit of Cain, and how ugly it looks! But is it less ugly, when the souls of our fellow-creatures are in danger, and we pass by unhelping, than when it is their bodies? It is not so glaringly evident; but it is none the less Cain-like.

Fugitive, v. 12. Cain fleeing from—! Just from himself. In Philadelphia, not long since, a young doctor was offered a chance to acquire some thousands of dollars by "graft." He refused, saying in explanation afterwards, "You see, I should have to live long time with myself after it was done." There is nothing surer than that your sin will not be found out, that part of it is of little importance—but find you out. It may not be to-day, nor next week; but the sad discovery is sure.

Lest any...should kill him, v. 15. There is mercy even for Cain, who murdered his brother. Then there is hope for us all. David committed the same crime, and the thief, whom Jesus accepted on the cross, had been man of violent deeds. The obstacles in the way of our getting back from sin to God are of our own making. He never makes obstacles, but is all the while seeking to remove them.

## LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

Offering—The feeling of fear and awe and the sense of dependence awakened in man by the thought of the Power behind the phenomena of nature, expressed themselves in the form of a gift of the first and best fruits of the soil, or the most immaculate domestic animals. The conception of a vicarious element in the offering was a later development. Sacrifice was universal in the East in pre-Judaic times. And among many Bedouin of to-day, whose Mohammedanism is more nominal than real, sacrifices are still common. They are offered on the birth of a son, a circumcision, a marriage, or the arrival of a guest. They form a kind of propitiatory prayer for the recovery of the sick and the preservation of flocks and herds. They are used to ensure success on the inception of some enterprise, as the digging of a well, a plundering expedition, laying the foundation of a house, or sealing an important compact. They constitute a thanksgiving for a successful expedition, and a memorial service on the anniversary of a kinsman's death. The owner of the victim slaughters it, pours the blood upon the ground, or smears it on the sacred killing stone, the tent ropes, the door posts, or on the animals or persons to be affected by the sacrifice. The flesh makes a feast for the owner, his family, tribesmen, and guests.

Many men are holding up the candlestick of an inconsistent profession and wondering why they do not shine. Put a candle in it, keep it lit, and you will shine. Christ is the light.

Napoleon in the day of his greatest conquest never won a greater victory than the humble sinner who has surrendered the kingdom of his soul into the hand of the King of all empires.

When men have gotten so far along in the Christian life that they can weep over the sins of a great city, then are they prepared to labor with him who wept over the city of Jerusalem.

## FAMILY WORSHIP.

Of all the forms of worship, none, it seems to us, is more beautiful than that which we see around the family altar. As a means of grace it occupies a distinct place of its own. The all-important "quiet hour," when the soul alone, in the presence of God, seeks the Divine blessing and communes as friend with friend, cannot take its place. The hour of public worship, when we meet at the house of God for prayer and praise, cannot take its place, for it stands alone.

It matters not so much at what hour we meet for family prayer, but the morning hours are best. Surely the ideal hour is immediately after the morning meal, when the whole family, including the servants, if there are any, retire to the library, parlor or living room, and after reading a morning lesson from the Word, kneel in prayer, asking the Father's blessing on the new day. The benediction which will rest on each member of that household as he goes out into the world to fight the battles of life cannot be over-estimated.

We wish we might say to every young husband and wife who are beginning life in a new home of their own, "Do not fail to erect the family altar." We had the pleasure recently of being in a home as a guest where morning and evening the young husband and wife knelt at an altar of prayer. It was truly beautiful, and in speaking to them of the wisdom of their course, the husband said: "It seems a little time to give to God in return for what He has given to us." Of course, there are times in our lives when it is impossible to serve this daily practice; but let each family do the very best it can, and often difficulties disappear faster than we imagine they could. We may not be able to choose the morning hour, and each family should observe the hour in whatever manner it chooses—there are no set forms—but family worship must be a scene which angels delight to see. —American Friend.

## AN INVISIBLE LEADER.

Saul started out to seek his father's asses and found a kingdom. The treasurer of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, sought information in the prophecy of Isaiah, and found personal salvation. The disciples went to fish and found the Son of God. How often God leads us by some secular incentive to the place where He has a blessing of an entirely different nature awaiting us! Little did Saul of Tarsus dream when he started for Damascus what would happen to him before his return. Little did Elisha know when he hitched his oxen to the plough that before they were unyoked in the evening the mantle of God's prophet would be placed upon his own shoulders. Little did Gideon know when he went out to thresh wheat in the winepress of the Abiezrite that he would there meet with the angel of Jehovah and be appointed a judge over Israel. How often in the commonplaces of life we meet with God! It is on the way to Gaza; it is on the road to Emmaus; it is by some bush in the desert, or on some quiet evening in the sheep fold, or when we are pruning our trees. Often it is that the everyday vocations of life have the richest spiritual blessings. He who honestly and faithfully performs his work will invariably find a treasure hid in the field; when he comes to the well he will find a Saviour sitting on the curb. —United Presbyterian.

\*S.S. Lesson, January 27, 1907. Genesis 4:3-15. Commit to memory vs. 8-10. Study the chapter. Golden Text—Who-soever hateth his brother is a murderer. —1 John 3:15.