

trating school work. This programme will be carried out by prominent S. S. workers in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The services of the Rev. Dr. Meredith, of Boston, who conducts the largest Teachers' Meetings in the world, are secured; also Professor E. O. Excell, of Chicago, the distinguished sacred soloist of Chautauqua, will take charge of the musical part of the exercises. Programmes and railway certificates can be obtained of the general Secretary, Rev. John McEwen, 163 Huron-street, Toronto.

The Sunday School.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON.

15th SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, SEPT. 21, 1884.

BIBLE LESSON.

A Song of Praise—Ps. 103: 1-22.

This beautiful Psalm is the outpouring of a full heart in thanksgiving to Jehovah for his grace and compassion, both as experienced by the Psalmist in his own life and also as manifested to his nation in their history. It celebrates especially God's mercy in the forgiveness of sin, and that tender pity, as of a human father, wherewith he remembers the frailty and stoops to the weakness of his children. It is a hymn of which the text and motto are to be found in that revelation of himself which God gave to Moses when he proclaimed himself as "Jehovah, tenderly compassionate and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." (Ex. 34: 6).

"Nothing certain can be said as to the author and date of the Psalm, though various conjectures have been hazarded. The Hebrew title gives it to David, the Syric still more definitely assigns it to his old age. Rosenmuller supposes it to have been written after his sin in the matter of Uriah, a supposition which appears to me to be wholly without foundation.

"The Psalm consists of three parts: I. A prelude, in a strain of trustful gladness, in which the Psalmist seeks to stir up gratitude within him by the review of God's mercies to him as an individual (vs. 1-5). II. The body of the poem, in a more reflective tone, full of a quiet, tender, pathetic, even melancholy beauty, in which, after brief allusion to the facts of the national history, the great covenant relationship of God to his people forms the prominent ground of hope amid human sins and transitoriness (vs. 6-18). III. A triumphant conclusion. Joy in the remembrance of God's goodness to himself and his people predominate over every other feeling. Such a joy must utter itself in praise. Praise seems its natural employment, and therefore the natural employment of all other creatures, which it summons to a holy sympathy and fellowship with itself." (vs. 19-22).

It is very difficult to make anything like a comprehensive and adequate generalization of this wonderful Psalm which will enable us to study it as a single lesson. There is scarcely a verse in it upon which we might not profitably dwell for more than the time usually at the disposal of a Sunday School class. Perhaps it will be as good a way as any to simply note the particular blessings which awake the Psalmist's gratitude, and then the Psalmist's call to praise.

I. THE BENEFITS CONFERRED (vs. 3-19).—"Forget not all his benefits." This word touches the secret spring of much of the ingratitude to God which so generally prevails. Even in the enjoyment of his rich and varied gifts we often forget the Giver, and so are not thankful. We are, it may be, happy and glad in the use of the mercies received, but we do not connect them with the bounteous hand by which they are all bestowed. "Forget not" that the "benefits" you are receiving come from God. "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1: 17). "Not so much as one of the divine dealings should be forgotten, they are all really beneficial to us, all worthy of himself, and all subjects for praise. Memory is very treacherous about the best things; by a strange perversity, engendered by the fall, it treasures up the refuse of the past, and permits priceless treasures to lie neglected; it is tenacious of grievances and holds benefits all too loosely. It needs spurring to its duty, though that duty ought to

be its delight." The Psalmist goes into a recital of God's benefits; not complete, however—that would not be possible. We heard him sing in our last lesson concerning the divine mercies: "They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." But here "he selects a few of the choicest pearls from the casket of divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude."

1. *Personal mercies* (vs. 3-5). First in the singer's thoughts is what God has done for himself. He calls upon his soul and all that is within him to bless the Lord, first of all, for personal forgiveness. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." This "benefit" is most appropriately mentioned first. It is more precious than any other possible to sinners. Till iniquity is forgiven, healing, redemption, and satisfaction are unknown blessings. But though this is the first benefit in the order of our spiritual experience, and in some respects first in value, it is not enough. Sin has diseased our moral natures; and the mere forgiveness of sins that are past would not affect that condition, but would leave the forgiven one still helplessly in the power of sin. For this state of things God has made merciful provision. In the salvation which he has provided there is provision, not only for pardon, but also for the renewal of the soul. This the Psalmist had experienced, and he exhorts his soul to praise that God, "who healeth all thy diseases." It is of spiritual "benefits" that the Psalmist is here speaking, and the diseases of which he was healed are those of the soul. It is a perversion of his thought to apply the language to bodily diseases, and, especially, to quote them as sustaining the foolish notion of supposed modern miracles of healing. It is something vastly higher and more important to us which is here spoken of. It is bad enough to have a diseased body, but a thousand times worse to be the possessor of a soul rendered diseased and helpless by sin. The restoration to bodily health, after long and painful sickness, is a blessed thing; but infinitely more blessed is the deliverance of the soul from the palsy of sin. It is of this greater mercy that the Psalmist is thinking. In its experience he felt that his very life had been redeemed from destruction, and that God had crowned his being with loving kindness and tender mercies. Such a salvation could not do otherwise than bring satisfaction to the soul. Of this mention is next made. "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." The writer is still thinking of spiritual good. The thought, in New Testament form, is that of God giving himself to the forgiven and renewed soul as the bread of its life. As Augustine says, observing that every creature has its own good: "Seek thine own good, O soul. 'None is good but one, that is God.' The highest good, this is thy good. What, then, can he want who hath the highest good? God is this good. What kind of good who can say? Behold, we cannot say; and yet we are not permitted to be silent." To satisfy the spirit is to renew the youth.

2. *National mercies* (vs. 6, 7). Rising from the contemplation of personal benefits to the consideration of God's kindness to Israel, the singer celebrates the sympathy of Jehovah with his people in the times of their oppression and suffering, and his repeated and effective interposition in their behalf. "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel." Israel was God's covenant people. He mercifully made known his will to them, and revealed himself in their history. We can imagine how, as the Psalmist strikes this note in his song, his mind would sweep over all those marvellous interpositions of divine providence of which the history of his nation was full, from the call of Abraham down to the hour in which he was writing. God's hand has been graciously in the history of our nation. We may almost say, as we review it, "he hath not dealt so with any people." His benefits to us as a people are neither few nor small. It becomes us, therefore, to take up the Psalmist's song, in this particular, and praise God for national blessings.

3. *Jehovah is a God of mercy* (vs. 8-14). This review of God's mercies, personal and national, leads the Psalmist up to a contemplation of what God is in himself. This is the appropriate effect of the divine goodness and crown of grateful praise. It is possible to dwell too long on the "benefits" bestowed by God. This is done when we fail to be led by them to the bounteous Giver himself. The writer of this Psalm sings of what God is, as revealed by his dealings with men. "The Lord is merciful," therefore "he will not always chide;" "and gracious," therefore "he hath not dealt with us after our sin;" "slow to anger," therefore "he will not keep his anger forever;" "plenteous

in mercy," therefore his mercy surpasses our sins as much as heaven surpasses earth, and he hath removed our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west. All this is illustrated by a figure that brings it within the comprehension of every little child: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembered that we are dust." Finally, this mercy of the Lord endureth forever. This is here brought out by contrast with the frailty of man, and by the fact that it issues from a throne fixed and supreme. It never faileth for the obedient (vs. 15-19).

II. THE CALL TO PRAISE (vs. 1, 2, 20-22).—Justified and moved by the benefits conferred by the gracious God and the contemplation of what the Most High is in himself, the Psalmist issues his call to praise, first to his own soul. "Bless the Lord, O my soul." This is work for the soul. It must be engaged; lip service will amount to nothing. Our thanksgiving must be the utterance of our hearts to be acceptable. The praise of the spirit is the spirit of praise. "And all that is within me, bless his holy name." The writer would enlist every thought, faculty, power, the heart with all its affections, the will, the conscience, the reason, in a word, the whole spiritual being, all in him that was best and highest, in this heavenly service. We must stir and exhort our souls to "forget not all his benefits." Gratitude does not depend on the number of mercies received, but on the number remembered and prized. The Psalmist calls to the angelic hosts, whom he describes by their strength and obedient loyalty, to help him praise God. "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." "Finding his work of praise growing upon his hands, he calls upon 'the first-born sons of light' to speak the praise of the Lord, as well they may, for, as Milton says, they best can tell. Dwelling nearer to that prepared throne than we as yet have leave to climb, they see in vision the glory which we would adore. To them is given an exceeding might of intellect, and voice, and force which they delight to use in sacred services for him; let them now turn all their strength into that solemn song which we would send up to the third heaven. To him who gave angelic strength let all angelic strength be given. They are his angels, therefore they are not loath to ring out his praises." The Psalmist's concludes by calling upon the works of God—all beings and things, animate and inanimate—everywhere in his universe, to ascribe blessing and honor and power to him who sitteth upon the throne. "Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion." Then, from all that vast congregation of worshippers praising God, he turns once more to himself, that his voice may not be wanting in the mighty anthem: "Bless the Lord, O my soul."—From Meredith's Lessons.

Missionary.

CHEN LOH-TS'-UEN

AND THE REMARKABLE CURE OF AN OPIUM SMOKER.

Mr. TOMALIN, of the China Inland Mission, has given an account of the eventful life of Chen Loh-ts'uen. He was driven from home at an early age during the Tai-ping rebellion, and compelled to serve six years in the rebel army. During this time he learned to sing the doxology and to call upon God the Father. At the capture of Chang-chau he was taken prisoner. After this he became an Imperialist soldier and was stationed at Sin-chau Kiang-su. He now felt the world to be hollow and unsatisfying, and longed for something better, and was even thinking of becoming a Buddhist priest. While in this frame of mind, Mr. Jones, of the Baptist Mission, visited Sin-chau; the soldier heard him and it became a turning point in his life; he was further instructed by native helpers and Mr. Tomalin himself, after Chen Loh-ts'uen had travelled one hundred miles to find him. At the end of his furlough he returned to his camp, and with the help of his new Testament, he interested a number of persons in the Gospel of Christ, but finding soldier-life inconsistent with the new life and light he had received from God, he threw up his prospects of promotion, and set out alone for his native town.

He commenced at once to preach, God

blessed his message and soon there were for worship every two or three between sixty to eight his native town, and were hopefully come more instruction Tomalin, who remained months' delay.

"As we drew near the place came out some and it brought the tea and to hear them viour. I stayed most hospitably lievers—a man in and one of the 30 contains some 30 habitants) gave up the use of his shop and dispensing m heartily into the He followed me seemed to be able had been an opium had completely faith in the power is known to all He tells to all how that without suff though he had of but in vain."

The way in which was very striking the town, and was a strip of paper that one could not bearing, in large scription which n to the will of God time forth from an opium den, or in opium." The pap of the shop-keeper Tomalin found t smoking, the per a hold upon him it up. But in pressor; he could its use, nor cure medicines, nor sold in Shanghai ance died out through the prea ter, coming in c with him, found ed, "What! Do not be a Christian that so?" said th forbid it?" He not mentioned demning drunken tar worse intoxic is to be done?" c had better grad amount used by "Ah!" was the but in vain." friend by remind had not an Almi that Jesus was m sin. "Stay," s smoke (we are n three drams? fo God to smoke to go sinning for up. If it is sin, at any cost!" Th would die (quite s or fail and be dis what to say, so from his knees opium-smoker w but took his per