

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

JESUS RISEN FROM THE DEAD.*

By Rev. P. M. Macdonald, D.D.

Cometh Mary Magdalene, v. 1. In a mission hospital in India, lay a boy whose leg had been skilfully amputated by a medical missionary. Every time the surgeon came into the ward he would place his opened hands together and raise them in token of his gratitude to the one who had freed him from suffering, and perhaps saved his life. Jesus had done more than that for Mary of Magdala; He had set her free from an awful slavery of mind and soul to a band of evil spirits. No marvel that she loved Him. And is there not abundant reason why we should love Him too, since He has broken for us the fetters of sin, and brought us out into the glorious liberty of God's children? What gladder use can we make of all our powers than spending them for Him in loving service?

Seeth the stone taken away, v. 1. A party of tourists were tramping in the north Scotland. The hills were very tiresome for some of them, and when at the close of a day's walk they looked from a hill-top upon another apparently steep climb across an intervening valley, the tired ones said, "It is no use for us to try to go on. We cannot ascend that hill, it is too steep for our strength." But as the rest and refreshment were on the other side of the dreaded hill, they had to try. As they proceeded, the way was easy and not hard. The apparent difficulty they had faced on the high land had disappeared. It was an optical illusion that vanished before their determined advance. In the same way the women who dreaded the task of removing the stone from the sepulchre (Mark 16:3), found when they came to the place that their fears had been idle and deceiving. So it is with the steep hills of living. We anticipate greater strains than we actually find.

Peter entered into the tomb. Then entered in therefore the other disciple (Rev. Ver.), vs. 6, 8. The famous New England preacher, Horace Bushnell, once preached from this incident a sermon on Unconscious Influence. Peter, the stronger character, without his thinking of it, led his more timid friend to follow his example. There are always those who will take encouragement in good or evil from what they see us do. There is not one of us but is drawing some other after him along the upward or the downward path. Helpers or hinderers in right doing, we must all be, in our own measure, to those about us. And if we would have the unconscious influence that goes out from us pure and uplifting, we must live near to the holy and loving Jesus.

Seeth two angels, v. 12.

"Flitting, flitting, ever near thee,

Sitting, sitting by thy side,

Like you shadow all unwearied,

Angel beings guard and guide."

We may not see them with the outward eye, but how many marvellous things in God's universe, yea, and all about us, there are, which we do not see. But they are none the less present and powerful. What is an angel but a messenger of God? And God does not send the feeble and the empty handed on His errands of love.

Go to my brethren, and say unto them, v. 17. Some years ago a man was ac-

identally locked into one of the vaults of the old crypt in Westminster Abbey. He had been strolling around, and did not notice the slowly closing door that noiselessly imprisoned him. Then he tried to get out, but in vain; the locks were heavy, and had set when the door had shut. Through the morning and afternoon he tried to make himself heard, but without any success. In the evening the janitor went his rounds, and when he came near this vault he detected an unusual sound. Listening intently, he heard cries and groans, and opening the door, he found the man lying on the floor. He was rescued just in time to save his reason. Ah! the key of death is at the girdle of the risen Saviour, and one glad day He will open the door into the sunshine of eternal day for all His followers now imprisoned in the grave.

Mary told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, v. 18. In the Easter service of the Russian Greek church, a visitor observed a suggestive feature. The service began "while it was yet dark," in the early morning. All the worshippers carried unlighted torches. The great building was totally wrapped in darkness. At an appointed time a priest appeared bearing a burning torch. Those nearest him lighted their torches at this flaming light and from these the others were lighted in turn. So the light spread from one to the other, until the vast cathedral was brilliant with a radiance that one torch had kindled. In this way the dark torches of human lives have been lighted at the flame of Mary's lamp. When Jesus revealed Himself to her as risen from the dead and sent her to publish the good news, the great work of lighting the torches was begun. Is yours lighted? Are you lighting another's?

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. James Ross, D.D.

Gardener—The earliest piece of ground continuously cultivated was a garden. While the fields were left open to all comers or guarded by watchmen, gardens were carefully enclosed by hedges, by stone walls, with a layer of thorns built in near the top, or by walls of compressed mud dried in the sun. A species of cactus which grows to the height of twelve feet is a common hedge. In some of the royal gardens of antiquity, seventy-two kinds of trees and shrubs are mentioned. In the days of Jesus, the whole valley of the Kidron and the slopes of Olivet were covered with gardens belonging to wealthy citizens of Jerusalem and cared for by hired gardeners, who not only planted and cultivated the fruit trees and flowers, but also watched the fruit at the seasons when it was ripening. The office of gardener was always honorable, and much sought after. He was a confidential servant, and knew his master's friends, who would be welcome to enjoy the beauty and security of the garden. Wells were sunk in the gardens for the purpose of irrigation, and fish ponds formed. Cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, garlic, lettuce and endive, were cultivated. Mulberry, olive, fig, pomegranate, almond, orange, lemon, peach, and apple trees grew in abundance.

When will Christians learn the lesson so well taught by Rutherford when he said: "I have been benefitted by praying for others, for in making an errand to God for them, I have always gotten something for myself."

THE MAJESTY OF THE CROSS.

By Rev. E. W. Mackay, M.A.

The cross is tragedy transformed into triumph. To appreciate the cross is to appreciate the greatest moral act man knows. The majesty of the cross is the secret of apostolic optimism—hard pressed yet never in absolute distress; perplexed, yet never utterly baffled; pursued, yet never left unsecured; struck to the ground, yet never slain.

The frequent presence of the minor key in much of the poetry and prose of to-day only begets a sense of the need of productions like Luther's battle hymn, "A safe stronghold our God is still."—Zion songs which ring and tramp, and sound the fundamental note of Christianity, victory. Harps should be taken down from the willows by people to whom such "glad tidings" have come. Ours should be songs even in the night, for the Lord is our Strength and Song, and He is become our Salvation.

Exultation, however, is born of exaltation. But when we measure evaluation by outward circumstances and conditions, instead of by inward quality and character, we fail to recognize or acknowledge God in the highest act of His highest attribute. Much is being said or thought of the incredible or even impossible self-lowering or self-emptying of God in becoming man, or in undergoing the death of the cross, as though the act of love becoming perfect were a contradiction or compromise of the divine nature. Is God not God, or is He least God, in the moment when He is most love? In the incarnation and crucifixion, as nowhere else in all the story of the universe, was or is love so much love, or God so truly God. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."

There is room for fine writing on the pathos of the cross—a beautiful soul broken by the bigotry and selfishness of men; or on its heroism—a brave soul daring men to turn Him aside from the message He would deliver. The fine writing will have real virility in it only when the inner necessity of the cross is seen, how He laid it upon Himself, how, by the law of the Good Shepherd's being, He could not act as a hireling, but must give His life for the sheep. To perceive this is to come face to face with sheer majesty, with love that demands one's soul, one's life, one's all.

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PRAYER.

Almighty God, Thou givest unto all men liberally, and there is no grudging in Thy gift. Thou dost ask us to bring forth all our vessels, that they may be filled; our vessels are too few; Thy rain is infinite. We thank Thee for the opportunities in life which are distinctly religious. Every hour is an opportunity, but some hours are like doors that fall back upon heaven, showing its wealth and life and glory. May such hours often occur in our history; then shall every day be one of blessing. Amen.

Man is a reed, and the weakest reed in nature; but then he is a thinking reed. There is no occasion that the whole universe should arm itself for his destruction. A vapour, a drop of water, is sufficient to kill him. And yet should the universe crush him, man would be greater in his fall than the universe in its triumph, for man would be conscious of his destruction, while the universe would be ignorant of its victory.—Pascal.

*S. S. Lesson, May 31, 1908.—John 20: 1-18. Commit to memory vs. 15, 16. Golden Text—I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore.—Revelation 1:13.