

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

JOSEPH FAITHFUL IN PRISON.*

By Rev. P. M. Macdonald, M.A.

Joseph's master put him into the prison, v. 2. The prison has been the preparatory school for very many of the world's best benefactors. No fault of theirs, but the ignorance and insensibility of their contemporaries, brought them to the dungeon. Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul and Silas, are notable examples in Bible history. Socrates was put to death in prison, after serving a term of punishment for teaching the truth. Columbus, the great navigator, suffered cruel confinement, lying in irons and receiving abuse, because of false charges that had been laid against him. Bunyan was confined for twelve years in "a filthy den, a receptacle for felons and cut-throats." A prison matters little, if one is innocent as Joseph was.

The Lord was with Joseph, v. 21. James II. of England imprisoned certain bishops because they would not join him in overthrowing their cherished Protestant faith. They were committed on the evening of Black Friday, arriving at the prison just at the hour of divine service. They hastened to the chapel, and were soon listening to these words, and knew that their Lord had not left them: "In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in affliction, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments." This word in season so strengthened and assured the prisoners, that the much dreaded imprisonment became to them an opportunity for thought and prayer and work that afterwards greatly aided the cause they were pledged to support.

That which he did, the Lord made it to prosper, v. 23. A worthless workman blames his tools, and a lazy lad complains of his lack of opportunity. For one to rise because of faithfulness in a jail, means that there is much good in him. Where there is much to try the temper, and much to tempt one to refusal, it is evidence of real manhood to try to do well. When one does as well as he can, he does all that is required of him, and he will prosper. For God works wonders for us, when we do out duty as in His sight. The "little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love," that we may perform towards our fellows, wherever we find them, are like seeds we drop into the warm earth in a sunny corner of the garden. They will spring up and prosper towards ourselves as well as to all men.

Wherefore look ye so sadly? ch. 40:7. When Sir Walter Scott was in Ireland, he met a poor woman who offered to sell him some berries. The offer was not accepted. Just then a beggar who came along asked an alms and was given some pence. At this the berry woman said that the gentleman might as well give her alms, too, as she was "an old struggler." Sir Walter was so struck with the expression, that he rewarded her and said her remark deserved to become classical, as a name for those who take up arms against a host of troubles instead of yielding sadly to them.

Think on me when it shall be well with thee, v. 14. It is most natural for us to feel the blows of life and to moan.

S. S. Lesson, April 28, 1907.—Genesis 39:20 to 40:15. Commit to memory vs. 21, 22. Read Genesis, chs. 39, 40. Golden Text—Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.—Revelation 2:10.

Dr. Joseph Parker says of this plea of Joseph, "He would have been far too great a man for me, if I had not seen this little touch of nature coming out, after all. I have wondered, as I have read along here, that he did not protest and resent and vindicate himself, and otherwise come out as an injured man. He has been almost superhuman up to this point." Now he feels the chain to be heavy and the yoke makes him chafe. He was only a man."

DOWN BY THE BROOK.

Down by the brook in the meadow green,
"Jack in the pulpit" a sermon preached.
Some "Quaker Ladies" to meeting came,
And silent sat till the end was reached.

The stately "Cardinal" could not come.
Violet, Daisy, and Lily were there,
And others whose names I need not tell,
An audience large, and wondrous fair.

His text was, "If God so clothe the grass,"
And he spoke of a Heavenly Father's love,
Which is over all, to his humblest child,
As the bright blue sky is the earth above.

Then a robin sang an anthem sweet
A sparrow chirped, "For me he doth care."
And not a note of distrust or doubt
Disturbed the congregation there.

'Twas a message of faith and hope and trust,
And I, as I sat 'neath a shady tree,
Listening and looking at flower and bird,
I found that the sermon was preached to me.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. James Ross, D.D.

Prison.—In Egypt, a prison was usually a section of some strong fortress, where the prisoners were handed over to the soldiers, who became responsible for their safe keeping. Some of the palaces had apartments for the temporary imprisonment of offending officials or refractory slaves. And, as the priesthood grew in wealth and power by the endowments of successive kings, every great temple had its own prison. In many cases the prisoners were transported to the gold and silver mines of Ethiopia and Sinai, and worked with great cruelty during the short time they survived.

Butler.—The cup-bearer, whose duty it was to serve the wine at the king's table. He shared the king's confidence to a high degree, because it was part of his duty to guard him against poison, and this confidence made him a person of great importance.

Baker.—Providing bread for Pharaoh's household was a large task. A picture of the New Empire represents all the processes of baking, the kneaders of the dough tramping it with their feet, the bakers molding the loaves into fancy shapes, others carrying them towards the ovens, which were cylinders of Nile mud narrowed towards the top, out of which the flames appear, while the loaves are seen stuck on the outside to bake.

If your life must needs be taken up with humble duties, put into those duties the sweetness of a Christian spirit. Precious ointment does not lose its sweetness by being put into a common bottle.

THE LAMP OF SACRIFICE.

By Rev. W. H. Sedgwick, M. A.

It is easy to mistake the full meaning of the term sacrifice. We readily conceive that the man who cuts athwart the path of inclination, and does that which he does not like to do, for the sake of principle, is making a real sacrifice. And so he is. But there may be sacrifice where a man puts his heart into his work, takes pains with it, strains all his faculties so as to do his work well, do it up to the measure of his ability perfectly, do it so as to satisfy his idea of how it ought to be done. The lamp of sacrifice is lighted, when a man resolves, with David, that he will not serve the Lord with that which costs him nothing.

The Lamp of Sacrifice is the lamp we need to light up our Sunday School rooms. Architects and builders are at pains to have our buildings perfectly lighted. Well, this is the true light which ought to lighten every one coming into our Sunday School rooms to work there. I am not sure that the Sunday School is much enriched by the presence there of those who go simply because duty's cold eye is on them. But I am sure that there is great gain from those who never think of duty, yet do their work without reproach or blot, because their heart is there. For the sake of our work, then, we need to light the lamp of sacrifice and serve the Lord with our best.

And, for our own sake, we need to light this lamp. There are those who take life at its narrowest dimensions. They ask always, how little will suffice. There are others, who take life at its largest and best. Their perpetual thought is, not how little, but how much. They light their way always by the lamp of sacrifice; and this lamp leads them to the high levels of true nobility. "We are none of us so good architects," says Ruskin, in his "Seven Lamps," "as to be able to work habitually beneath our strength." For work reacts upon the workman. The Sunday School is not only a garden for the culture of the school; it is equally a garden for the culture of the workers. Its work, if faithfully done, is doubly blessed; ill done, it is doubly lost. There is no serving the Lord with that which costs us nothing. If we pay not in one coin, we must pay in another. If we pay not in toil and pains and thought, we must pay in soul-stuff and working-power. The full result of the teacher's best work may be missed by the class; but think of the effect upon himself!

I cannot think, indeed, that one's best work, — work crimsoned with heart's blood, can ever prove wholly vain in the lives of those for whom we work. Somehow, somewhere in this world of God and of men, perhaps, far-off, the good seed will ripen for fruit. "God's seed shall come to God's harvest," as Samuel Rutherford said to Margaret McNaught. But there is one return for true work, which is sure and undelayed. It is the rich return which works itself out in the life and character of the worker.

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As all things work together for good to those who love God, and who are called according to his purpose, even sickness and death are not calamities to the Christian, but may serve the glory and his purpose of redemption.

Temptations from without have no power unless there be a corresponding desire within.