

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

MAN'S SIN AND GOD'S PROMISE.*

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

Yea, hath God said. . . v. 1. God makes an eternal distinction between right and wrong. "There's no harm in it," is a suggestion that should not be allowed an inch of foothold in the mind, when it is a question of something forbidden of God. There is harm in building a wall out of the straight line, or in sailing a vessel on the wide ocean without a compass. The wall cannot stand, and the vessel will lose its course. No less certain is it, that loss and evil will come from disobedience to God. This fact in the mind will be an anchor that will hold, let the winds of temptation blow from what quarter they may.

Every tree, v. 1. If the Good Samaritan still had some money in his pocket, when he turned from the inn to continue his journey, and if the priest and the Levite heard any one praising him for his kindness to the wounded Jew, they would sneer. He treated the Jew meanly, holding back that money in his pocket. It is that sort of criticism that makes some boys run away from home; they overlook all the care and expense their fathers lavish upon them, and complain that they do not allow them enough fun. So, we forget all the benefits of health, youth, friends, home, country, religion, that God bestows, and murmur because He has not made us richer or cleverer or handsomer. What meanness of spirit! unworthy quite of true manhood, not to speak of sainthood.

Ye shall not, v. 3. The reason men stand erect is because the earth is always pulling them down. The moment any one ceases to resist, he falls. If he sleeps, or stumbles, or is stricken with a fit, or hit with a bullet, he collapses immediately. It is this resistance that makes us strong and active. So it is the constant pull of enticement to do evil that makes character. The innocence of a child is beautiful. But of another and more enduring type is the established virtue of the man who has met temptation and mastered it.

Ye shall not surely die, v. 4. Milton represents the serpent as trying to prove his assertion by eating the fruit. "How dies the serpent? He hath eaten

and lives,
And knows, and speaks, and reasons,
and discerns,
Irrational till then. For us alone
Was death invented?"

And from the earliest times, the prosperity of the wicked has been a puzzle to thoughtful minds. To this day, men grow rich by practices that set honor and truth at defiance. But the time of reckoning will surely come, however long it may be delayed. When the final balance is struck, it will be seen that no one ever served God in vain.

Pleasant to the eyes, v. 6. There is danger in playing with temptation. No man becomes a villain or a monster at once. He would loathe his own deeds, if they were suddenly done, as much as anybody can. First, he lingers in the neighborhood of sin; then he becomes curious, and looks at it more closely; then he talks to it, and is surprised to find how much it can say for itself; then he tries a very little of its advice; then

he finds himself committed, and perhaps attempts, too late, to escape. "Pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away," says the Wise Man. (Prov. 4: 15).

Try seed, v. 15. There is an old German story of a man who complained of having to work so hard because of Adam's sin. He was positively certain that, if he had been Adam, there would have been no fall. After a time, a rich resident of the village took this complainer to live with him, freed him from the need of toil, and provided him with all the luxuries that were going. Only he was forbidden to open a certain dish which stood on the sideboard. The temptation was too great. One day, when no one was about, he cautiously lifted up the lid to take a peep, when a mouse leaped out and ran away. So his rich benefactor sent him back disgraced, to his hard work. We may complain that Adam did not fairly represent us, but the facts are against our complaint.

It shall bruise thy head, v. 15. In the British navy a scarlet thread runs through every foot of cordage, so that, no matter how old the rope may be, or how small the bit examined, or where the bit is found, any of the property of the navy can be identified. So through the whole Bible runs the scarlet thread of redemption by Jesus Christ.

It shall bruise thy head, v. 15. The gain of redemption far surpasses the loss of the fall. "The Lord God planted a garden," says the early story of Genesis. "God . . . hath prepared them a city," we read in Hebrews (ch. 11: 16). And in that city, with its blessed companionships, its pure and lasting joys, its freedom from sin, there will be no possibility of a second fall, while death will be left forever behind us. From that "statelier Eden," the beautiful Golden City (Rev. 22: 2), we shall go no more out forever.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

SERPENT.—As every ancient people had some theory of the origin of the world, so they had some story to account for the existence of sin, and in many of them the serpent is a factor. Its uncommon form and peculiar mode of motion, as well as the deadly venom of some species, made it an object of fear and of superstitious veneration. The early Persians placed their first man in a paradise from which he was expelled on account of sin, and he was delivered over to an evil spirit, that sprang, in the form of a snake, out of the sky, to blight the creation of the good God, and that finally succeeded in destroying the man. In the British Museum there is a Babylonian cylinder, often reproduced, with two human figures on each side of a tree, their hands stretched out to the fruit, and a serpent in an erect position behind one of them. In the Babylonian story of creation there is a conflict between the dragon, the spirit of darkness and the sea, and the powers of order and light. The author of Genesis selected the features of the common tradition which best expressed to the conceptions of his people the spiritual facts about the origin of sin.

There are times when human sympathy is of no avail, and even dearest friends may sleep in the presence of our greatest sorrow. The only thing to do is to slip away and be alone with God. And even though He may not remove the sorrow He will give us grace to bear it. Every Gethsemane has its angel.

HOPE THROUGH FAILURE.

No man ever gets higher up than he wants to. Therefore impossible ideals are the making of a man. And no man is more to be pitied than he who has realized his ideals. For it has been well said that "a character gets no higher than its ideals," and if a man has none, or if he has set them so low that he has attained to them, then for him there is nothing ahead; growth has stopped; death has set in. There is encouragement here for those who are tempted to discouragement because they have failed to attain; and there is a warning here for those who are tempted to satisfaction in their attainment. Let us set our ideals so high that it is safely impossible to attain them; and then let us spend life freely in doing the impossible.

PRAYER.

O God, we desire that Thou, Father of us all, wouldst take into Thy care all our life. We mismanage all things; we kill the flowers that we pluck; it is in God only to do that which is forever good and right. Not our will, but Thine, be done; put us upon the mountain, or locate us in the vale—where Thou wilt, Thou knowest our number upon Thine own register; Thou knowest where to find us; how to send the angels to us, and how to increase the light as our vision is able to bear it. We would live and move and have our being in God. The Lord hear us at the Cross; and to our poor speech, full of sin and need, and always of supplication for something more, do Thou listen in the name of Jesus, and answer in the mystery of the love of His Cross; so that, where our prayer fails, Thine answer may be multiplied; and where speech and song and adoration abound, may Thy reply much more abound.

THE DELIGHTFUL SERVICE.

"They serve Him day and night in His temple." "And His servants shall serve Him." Just what these declarations may mean in regard to the employment of the children of God in heaven, we may not know. But they certainly indicate that God has something for his servants to do on the other side of the river of death. The highway to service in the kingdom of God is not by the ocean liner to the foreign fields; it is not by the trans-continental train to the needy home fields beyond the plains and the mountains; but it is down the Death Valley to the kingdom of the immortals. There God is calling His servants one by one. When one has learned the secret of service here, God calls him. When he has completed a certain allotted work, God calls him. When he has proved himself true and faithful, God calls him to a wider service where there shall be no night and the day of usefulness is never ended. And God shall there take care of His servant so that the privations of service here will be unknown there. He will spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat; for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes. It will be a magnificent service in that nightless land where all have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.—United Presbyterian.

* S. S. Lesson, January 20, 1907. Genesis 3: 1-6, 13-15. Commit to memory v. 15. Study the chapter. Golden Text.—For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.—1 Corinthians 15: 22.