

The Young People

EDITOR,

J. W. BROWN.

He had his interview with Mr. Burns, and he presently entered the barber's shop, climbed up in the velvet chair, and said, in a small, miserable voice:

"Will you cut my hair off smooth, please? Here's your money before hand."

Then he shut his eyes, and tried not to see the barber's grim smile in the looking-glass.—Central Christian Advocate.

Dogs Vs. Mountain Lions.

A STRUGGLE TO THE DEATH.

From the February St. Nicholas comes this exciting description of a fight against an American panther:

Frank, accompanied by the three great hounds, did not hesitate to charge this formidable and sudden enemy. But the effect was not what he expected. Instead of bounding away, the great cat, looming larger and more terrible the nearer he approached, faced his foes fiercely, crouching above the slain sheep, ready to spring, and yelling screams of demoniac ferocity. The mustang stopped and roared, then stood snorting and trembling, and could not be forced nearer. The great dogs rushed and Frank sat in his saddle and watched the fight, unable to assist, too fascinated to fly.

Now he realized the imprudence of leaving his arms, and repented his boyish folly in despising discipline founded upon experience.

"Old Strategy" was the leader of the three great dogs. His wise brain did the planning for all, and never did soldiers obey a chief with more careful attention to signals of command than the other two great dogs gave to him. He was the fleetest of the three. "Reserve," who ran in the rear, and always waited the proper time to leap and seize, was the most powerful. "Skirmish," the lightest of the trio, made it his business to distract the quarry by flashing feigned and real attacks all over him, here, there, and everywhere, to provoke openings for the other two.

Just as the battle began, the clouds opened wide, and the brightening moon shed a distant glimmer over the scene through the mist that rose from the wet grass, disclosing the huge mountain-lion standing over his prey, with flattened ears, snarling face, teeth gleaming, claws widely spread, mad with hate, menacing the dogs.

And now Old Strategy, warily observant, crept, growling, directly in front of the angry lion, tempting and taunting him to spring. Nearer—a little nearer yet. Several times the lion seemed about to leap, judging by his lashing tail and settling haunches; but Skirmish distracted him with a sudden feint, or Reserve threatened his flank. When each dog had a good position, Old Strategy provoked a leap by a sudden movement. The lion sprang, body, limbs, and claws spread to strike. But Old Strategy was not there when he alighted; and the lion did not alight when he aimed; for the moment he leaped Reserve and Skirmish dashed in and caught him in the air, one on his flank, one by a hind knee-joint and held back with such force that all three rolled along the grass.

Before the lion could retaliate, all three dogs were once more out of reach, to repeat their provoking tactics.

For half an hour this furious battle was continued. Leap, charge, rush, or strike as he would, the worried lion could not bring his treacherous assailants to a close. But for a few insignificant scratches, the dogs were unhurt, but the lion showed many marks of the conflict. The dogs gave him no rest from their incessant attacks. Occasionally one of the dogs would lie down, panting, and rest himself, while the other two kept the game going; but their adversary was not permitted a moment's breathing-time.

Gradually the tormented night-prowler grew weary and faint. His own fury helped the dogs to exhaust him; for each effort he made increased his rage, until he became a veritable demon of frenzied hate, and spent in useless screams the breath that he needed for battle. As his powers diminished those of the dogs increased. Their rushing, leaping grips were more confident, more frequent, and more effective.

A little later brave Skirmish made such a prodigious feint, in obedience to some secret sign from Old Strategy, that the lion whirled to strike at him. This gave Old Strategy his chance. He fastened the first grip upon the throat of the great cat, keeping his own body behind and partly under the head of his foe, while Skirmish dragged at a hind leg, and Reserve put all his weight and force into a grip over the lion, stretching their enemy helpless for a moment—but only for a moment. As soon as the great cat could muster his tired strength, he drew his powerful body into a curve, and thrust at Old Strategy with his lashing hind legs, compelling the dog to let go. But the instant Old Strategy was pushed off, the painful grip of Reserve at his loins made the lion curl down again, to strike with his fore paws, when Old Strategy plinned his throat once more from the other side.

So in five minutes more the battle was ended, and the three dogs had again proved their right to the proud distinction of being the only dogs that could kill a full-grown mountain-lion.

Monday, February 10.—Romans 10. "Whosoever shall call . . . shall be saved" (vs. 13). Compare Acts 2: 21.

Tuesday, February 11.—Romans 11: 1-24. God's goodness and severity (vs. 22). Compare Rom. 2: 4.

Wednesday, February 12.—Romans 11: 25-12: 8. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice" (vs. 1). Compare I Cor. 6: 20.

Thursday, February 13.—Romans 12: 9-21. "Render to no man evil for evil" (vs. 17). Compare I Thess. 5: 15.

Friday, February 14.—Romans 13. True fulfilment of the law (vs. 8). Compare John 13: 34.

Saturday, February 15.—Romans 14. True regard for your brother's faith (vs. 21). Compare I Cor. 8: 13.

Our Study Course is resumed this week, the first lesson on "Initial Truths," being presented by Rev. G. R. White. All will be glad again to take up the study. Let all the Young Peoples' Societies see to it that the study is promptly renewed, that no break be made in the lessons.

We trust that all our Societies will promptly respond to the appeal of our Sec'y who is now sending out cards of inquiry concerning our present general standing. It is important that our history be recorded.

Prayer Meeting Topic—February 9.

The Pathway to Peace. John 14: 27; Isaiah 26: 3; Psalm 119: 65.

In the treatment of this topic it will be helpful to notice that there are two kinds of peace. They are reconciliation and tranquility. To lose sight of this use of the word peace, in the New Testament, means confusion of ideas.

1. Peace, or reconciliation. What does this mean? On account of man's sin there was enmity between God and man. The penalty to man's sin was death. Christ died to remove the enmity. God accepted Jesus' death as a substitute for man's death, and became reconciled to man. When man accepts Christ as his substitute, he becomes reconciled to God and there is union between God and man. This harmony is the peace of reconciliation. The pathway to this kind of peace is, on man's part, the acceptance of Christ, i. e., repentance and faith. Examine Acts 10: 36; Rom. 5: 1; Eph. 2: 14-17.

"Through Christ on the cross peace was made

My debt by his death was all paid,

No other foundation is laid

For peace, the gift of God's love."

Peace, or tranquility. This is the state of mind enjoyed by such as are assured that Jesus is their Saviour. Whether we have much or little of this peace, depends on our loyalty to Christ. We may be saved yet have very little of peace. A life that condemns is sure to destroy our peace. This is the kind of peace Jesus said "I leave with you," you who keep my commandments; it is the peace mentioned in Rom. 15: 13; Gal. 5: 22; Phil. 4: 7; Col. 3: 15. The pathway to such peace is, trust in Christ, obedience to Christ, prayer, and reception of the Spirit.

"In Jesus at peace I abide,

And while I keep close to his side,

There's nothing but peace doth betide,

Sweet peace, the gift of God's love."

Halifax.

G. W. SCHURMAN.

Initial Truths.

"SIN."

Lesson I.

(1) Definition of Sin: Theology has given us no single, adequate definition of this little word "sin." John, the beloved, defines it thus: "Sin is the transgression of the law"—i. e., God's law. Sin has been defined as "missing the mark." But the deeper truth is, that when man misses the mark, so in a sense does God. For sin is rebellion against the divine law and government. And sin's malignant nature is to separate eternally from God the soul that continues under its dominion. Sin, then, may be defined in part, as a state of rebellion against God by open and wilful transgression of his law. Therefore, "sin is the transgression of the law."

Look up the following Scripture references:—Gen. 2: 17, John 3: 19, I John 3: 4, 8, Romans 6: 12, 6: 23, 14: 23, I John 5: 17.

(2) The Nature and Guilt of Sin: "Evil," is a philosophic term, "Vice" is an ethical term, and "Crime" is a legal term, but sin is all these and more. Evil, vice and crime, may and do exist where there is no knowledge of God, but without a knowledge of God there can be no sin. For sin is an offence against a known God. As Dr. Fairbairn says: "Evil may be under a system of necessity, vice is a state of nature, crime is a social or

political state, but sin only in a system that knows the majesty and reign of God." For sin not only declares man's failure to attain unto that for which he was created, but that man himself is the cause of that failure. It is then the nature of sin to put itself in the place of God. For the man who refuses to do God's will and instead obeys his own will makes himself a god, and attempts to force God to obey him; that man is a sinner, and his act is sin. Sin is not simply a religious but a thoroughly Christian notion; for no other religion but Christianity has anything like a clear conception of the true nature of sin. Judaism, which was the nearest approach to Christianity, had only a faint idea of the heinousness of sin. Some of the Old Testament writers had a clear vision of sin, but they were men who towered high above the spiritual perception and religious ideas of their times. The true nature and guilt of sin was but little understood until Christ's day. Jesus revealed the deep wickedness of sin when he said: "Whosoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment," etc. Matt. 5: 21, 26.

Compare: Gen. 4: 21, Deu. 29: 18, Psa. 95: 10, Prov. 4: 23, Jer. 2: 19, Jer. 17: 9, Matt. 15: 19, Heb. 3: 13, 12: 15, James 1: 15, Romans 4: 15.

3. The Permission of Sin: "Permit," is a term not well understood when applied to the entrance of sin into this world. God can hinder anything he wills to hinder. But God cannot do impossibilities; the possible is only possible with Him. God could not make a man and prevent the possibility of his sinning. To be a man is to be a free moral agent, and to suspend the possibility of man's sinning is to prevent sin by the destruction of man's freedom. Then the question was will God make a man, or some other kind of being under a law of necessity? Divine wisdom elected to make a man—a free moral agent, able to sin if he willed to do so. Therefore God created man, and such creation made possible the entrance of sin into this world. Who will impeach the divine wisdom? Who would be other than a man could he change the decree in his own case? In harmony with the act of God, we would one and all elect to be what we are, and accept the responsibility. That is how and why God permitted sin to enter Eden. The permission of sin is a distributed act made possible by the creation of man. God did not deliberately open the gates of Paradise and let sin in; but man did. This then, is the sense in which we must understand the word "permit" when applied to the entrance of sin into this world. "God did not permit sin to be, it is in its essence the transgression of His law." The ability to do good implies the capability to do evil. Both of these are in the idea of sonship. The machine can neither obey nor disobey, the son can do both. Then to have a race of sons in this world must be a world which has both good and bad in it—sin and obedience as possible alternatives.

Dr. Fairbairn says: "It may well be that God experiences a deeper and divinest joy in winning the love of a creature that can refuse His love, than in listening to the music of the spheres that cannot choose but play." He says again: "This thing we call sin has come to be in the first act of the drama, we must see the last before we can judge what it means." All this may help us somewhat to see why sin was permitted. At least, it will help us to trust His wisdom and love, where we cannot comprehend the why. Then does it come to this as Fairbairn suggests: "Only through the possibility of sin could God have sons, and it may be that only through the actuality of sin could the sons know God."

See Gen. 6: 6; Psa. 5: 4; Pro. 15: 9; Jer. 44: 4; Hab. 1: 13; Luke 16: 15; Rev. 2: 6, etc.

4. The Penalty of Sin: Penalty is the punishment or suffering that follows the wrong-doer. God's attitude toward sin, because of His nature and because of the nature of sin, must ever be one of eternal and deep rooted opposition—which in Scripture is called the "wrath of God," Rom. 1: 18. But fix this first: "God is love." Therefore every act of God must be an act of love. God does not come forth in person to strike down the violator of His law. Penalty is a distributed act, but it is none the less God's decree, because woven into the structure of His universe. It is a necessity that the violation of law be punished. But the divine anger against sin is no single outburst like the wrath of an angry man. It is rather the attitude of a loving father who sees his son carried down to ruin under the grip of a sinful passion, while his fatherly heart yearns to see him turn from his destroyers, and longs for the opportunity to grant him a quick forgiveness. Such is God's attitude towards the sinner. For God can do what we find it hard to do: "Love the sinner while he hates his sins." Put it as you may, the punishment of sin is not arbitrary on the part of God. But the strong statements of Scripture make the doctrine of the penalty of sin most positive. The symbols used in the Bible to denote the punishment of sin are the strongest language can employ. And who can say that Jesus used symbols stronger than the thing symbolized. But all this deeply expressed attitude of God toward sin is no restraint upon His willingness for reconciliation between Himself and man.

And that which makes this whole question exceedingly sad is, that we are all guilty and sinners in God's sight, and conscious of open and wilful transgression of his Holy law. This then, follows—Our one great need is a Saviour. Matt. 7: 23, 18: 7, 21: 41, 23: 33, 24: 51; 25: 46, 26: 24. Luke 12: 5, 19: 27, 20: 18, 23: 30. Mark 9: 43-48. John 8: 12. Rom. 1: 18. Rev. 18: 5, 19: 15, 21: 27. Isa. 53: 6. Rom. 3: 23.

G. R. WHITE.