

The Quiet Hour.

The Prince of Peace.

S. S. LESSON. Isaiah 9: 1-7. Dec. 25, 1904.
GOLDEN TEXT—His name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.—Isaiah 9: 6.

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But there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish, (Rev. Ver.), v. 1. Frederick Douglas, the great negro orator, at a meeting of his own people made a speech in which despair for their condition was the prevailing note. The whole audience was cast down. An old negro woman, known as Sojourner Truth was present, called out and asked, "Frederick, is God dead?" Thank God for those who come to us in our dark hours, and point us to the light yet to dawn! These are the true prophets of the living, loving, God.

In the former time... contempt... in the latter time... glorious (Rev. Ver.) v. 1. Blow after blow with mallet and chisel—so the sculptor out of the seemingly useless piece of marble forms his splendid masterpiece. Day after day of severe training—so the athlete gains the strength and endurance that wins the race amid the plaudits of the crowd. Is it otherwise in the forming of character? Does not the road to excellence lie amid everyday, commonplace duties and trials? We are too apt to despise these. Are they really not God's tools, intended to mould and fashion us into the likeness of His own son? Irksome the process may be, but how glorious the result!

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, v. 2. Take the sun out of the heavens, and desolation and death would reign over the world, now so fair and beautiful. In countless ways the light of day ministers to us. It does more than show us our path. How a day of bright sunshine uplifts us after depressing days of gloom! Our souls need light, too. They need Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. Walking in His presence, we shall not stumble, and from him we shall receive constant inspiration and impulse.

Thou has multiplied the nation, v. 3. The seed cast upon the ground dies, but it is not lost. God sends his sunshine and showers, and by and by the green blades appear, soon to ripen into the golden harvest. The Saviour of the world likened himself to "a corn of wheat," John 12: 24. He died, but what a glorious harvest has sprung from His Death! Not the Jews only, but the people of every nation, have received the knowledge of God and His salvation. It needs only the prayers and patient effort of God's children, to bring the glad tidings to every creature, and gather the last sheaf from the world's great harvest field.

Joy... joy... joy... joy... rejoice, v. 3. How this verse rings through the soul like a peal of sweet bells, proclaiming its gospel of joy! Nor is this joy a stream that fails when the summer suns grow hot, but a perennial fountain. Its source is in God, and it is as enduring as Himself. Are men glad when, in the harvest-time, they reap the reward of their toil? Does joy fill the hearts of the victors who have driven a foreign invader out of their borders, and maintained their freedom? Even deeper and more satisfying is their joy who have been delivered from the power of evil and have

entered into the inheritance of the saints.

Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, v. 4. It is only when we obey the laws of God that we are really free. The writer recently heard this truth aptly illustrated. Imagine a horse and driver approaching a deep and dangerous ravine. A new bridge has been erected to make a safe crossing. But the horse shies at the bridge, and he with his driver is dashed to death in the ravine. The bridge intended for safety, through misuse becomes a peril. Every divine law leads to safety and freedom. Refusal to obey them brings us into bondage.

For all the armor of armed man... shall even be for burning (Rev. Ver.) v. 5. Sin lies at the root of strife. But for human ambition and selfishness war would be unknown. It is by the spread of the gospel that war is to be abolished for the gospel is the great power to change the hearts of men. Its message is one of love and good-will. It has already robbed war of many a horror, making it less brutal, more humane. Every evangelist is a peacemaker. Every missionary is a herald of the kingdom ruled by the Prince of Peace.

For unto us a child is born, v. 6. How a child rules in the home! He twines his tiny fingers round the hearts of parents and older brothers and sisters, and there is nothing they will not do for the little one. His sway is not of force, but of love. And has not Jesus taught us that the little child is the best representative of His kingdom? Not by force, but by love, is that kingdom to be established in the earth.

And his name shall be called, v. 6. The white ray of sunlight is broken up by the spectrum into the colors of the rainbow. So each of the titles here given reveals a trait of the Saviour's character. Together they tell us what He is willing to be to us in our daily lives. He will be ours, with all his power and wisdom and love, as a constant Indweller, if we but receive Him.

The zeal of the Lord of Hosts, v. 7. Let us never imagine that the Lord has done for us all that is in His heart to do. We may be able to look back on days that have been safe and happy and prosperous. But be sure that the loving God has in His plans for us a more blessed future. He never rests from His work on behalf of his people. Each day reveals him in some new activity for those He so dearly loves. His "zeal" burns with heaven's own fervency, and not till eternity shall end, shall the flame be quenched.

A Meditation.

BY REV. JOHN REYNOLDS MACKAY.

"SIMON, A CYRENIAN"

This Simon bears a very close relationship to the Cross. Whether he was black or white in skin, his contact with the Cross and the Christ of the Cross made him white in character. And character, after all, is the man. The usual explanations given as to why he, a stranger, should have been pressed into such unwilling service, hardly seems to meet the circumstances. The hatefulness of the name "cross-bearer," the disgrace of aiding a "criminal" and such like, inadequately met the central thought of that morning—that everything, while being natural, was yet part of the purpose of God. It was the fullness of time for Christ

—why may it not also have been the fullness of time for Simon? He was such a necessary link in that morning's events that we are reluctant to believe his part was outside the God plan.

Taking the story as it reads, we wonder why the artist writer has given so much prominence and detail to Simon. If his part were merely contingent upon circumstances, or the caprice of soldiers, then why should the artist give this man such a prominent place in the foreground of the picture? Has the artist missed the true sense of proportion and lifted a mere detail into unrelated prominence? So would the usual interpretations seem to teach. But when we refer back to Leviticus 16:21, we find the artist has made no mistake in the grand picture of the Cross. He dipped his pen into Divine purpose as well as into local incident. Simon was not a contingent part of that morning. He was part of the plan. The name might have been anything other than Simon, but this individual was intended as part of that morning's fulfillment.

The Old Testament reads that after the priest had laid his hands upon the head of the animal, and confessed the sins of the people, it was to be led away into the wilderness. But notice who was to lead it away—a man of opportunity, a man who opportunely presented himself at the moment the priest needed him. If Christ, then, in his own precious sacrifice fulfills the one part, why does not Simon fulfill the other? Was not Simon this man of opportunity—there of his own free will and accord, and yet, there as part of the God-purpose? The Sinbearer was now being taken to his wilderness, and this "man of opportunity" helped to get him there.

My Soul, why canst thou not believe there is also a part for thee in the Great Purpose! This will redeem thy seeming littleness, thine aloneness! To-day may be thy opportunity. Just by the wayside as thou art carrying out thine own purposes thou mayest see a cross to lift. Do it willingly, do it gladly, for with it thou wilt find a fuller revelation of the Christ! In some Leviticus why may there not be a shadow-mark thou art to fulfill! And this may be thy cross-day. Others may force thee into it, and then rail at thy seeming disgrace, but thou shalt find the glory! They see only a cross, but when thou dost look to the other end, thou dost see a smile on his face, and in that thou dost find thy fullest joy, for in thy cross thou hast found his peace.

The Bible and Rum.

Said Dr. Cuyler in his address at the Ecumenical Conference: "Think of the many years that ships from Christian nations have carried to heathen ports missionaries in the cabins and rum, firearms and opium in the hold. Even such advanced nations as Great Britain and America have gone out to the heathen nations holding a Bible in one hand and a bottle in the other, and the bottle has sent ten men to perdition for every one that the Bible has brought to Christ."

A Prayer.

Let me lie still in suffering, dear Christ, and think of thee. Fix my mind on thy Cross and Passion, and make me know the bliss of being Thy companion in pain. And oh, when it is hard to be calm and quiet, come Thou very, very near, and speak peace to my soul. So shall my grief be turned to joy and my heaviness to cheer. Amen.