

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLETHE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION
OF JESUS.*

As John was baptizing in the region of the Jordan, Jesus came into his congregation and presented Himself as a candidate for baptism. John recognized the greatness of the Christ and felt that it was not fitting that he should receive baptism by human hands. In the presence of the Christ John's manner suddenly changes. Yesterday he had spoken in tones of thunder, but in Jesus' presence he becomes modest and deferential. He exclaims, "I have need, O Christ, to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" John would retire and leave his work in the hands of one whose greatness he recognizes and whose character he honors. But Jesus set at rest all hesitation and questioning, saying, "Suffer it now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

The question may perplex us as to why Jesus should ask for baptism or submit to it. He was sinless and needed not to make confession nor did his spiritual life require the ordinance which he honored. The reason for Jesus' baptism may be found in his desire to place himself near to our fallen and sinful humanity. Son of God, spotless and undefiled, he would become as the Son of Man, that by His humiliation He might save the more. He bore our sins in his body on the tree. Just, he suffered for the unjust. So Christ passed into the Jordan as man's mediator, as man's representative. In all points he touched human life. John, in the hour of Christ's baptism, bears testimony to his sinlessness. But a higher witness was given to his divinity. No sooner was the ordinance administered than the heavens were opened and the Spirit of God, in the form of a dove, descended and rested upon the head of Jesus, while a voice from the unseen was heard, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

There are questions that here suggest themselves as regards the significance of this symbolism. In Scripture the dove is the symbol of peace and reconciliation. The dove brought to Noah the leaf which was the presage of hope and goodness. So Christ was the author of peace and hope to a troubled world. But after the baptism there came the temptation, Christ was led of the Spirit into the wilderness and there tempted of the devil. After he had fasted for forty days, the devil made appeal to him through hunger. He proposed that Christ should turn the stones into bread. The devil would send angels from heaven for his defence. If Christ should by his own power turn the stones into bread, he would by his fiat oppose the sovereignty of his father in heaven. Christ does not hesitate. The temptation is immediately repelled. The Saviour exclaims, "I have the power to turn stones into bread. But man has higher needs than bread. It were better that a man should die than dishonor God."

The second Temptation is to presumption. The devil suggests to Christ that he use his power in working a miracle for a display, by casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Thus at once he would gain the favor of the people. "And here," exclaims Satan, "is Scripture to encourage you: 'He shall give his angels charge over thee; in their hands they shall

* S. S. Lesson for January 9.—The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus.—Matt. 3:13-17; 4:1-11. Golden Text: "In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted He is able to succor them that are tempted."—Heb. 2:18.

bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." The sin in yielding to this temptation would be found in courting danger for a selfish end. Christ repels the suggestion with the words, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

The final temptation was to the exercise of power. Christ is shown all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. Then Satan promises him these possessions if he will render him divine honor. At first thought this temptation seems the weakest of the three. It seems the almost despairing attempt of Satan. Yet, perhaps, to Christ it was the strongest of the three temptations. It was not the possession of power but the use to which he might have put it, that would constitute the temptation. He could have used it for blessing the world. But he would not forego the cross. In a moment the words leap from his lips, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God." The devil leaves him, and angels come and minister to him. Once again the tempter came in the hour of anguish upon the cross. Christ exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." But temptation ends in victory, and Christ cries, "It is finished;" and the returning sun looks down on a world redeemed.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

What will you do with the New Year?

The question is asked to-day.

To you who are travelling onward

To the land that is far away;

The old year has gone forever,

It has bid you a last adieu,

Oh, heaven dear! consider,

What will you do with the new?

Do you wish for a happy New Year

Without one anxious care?

Then turn to the face of Jesus,

Lift up your soul in prayer;

Follow him as your guide,

Willingly work in his vineyard,

Closer press to his side.

Do you wish for a holy New Year?

Then sit at the Master's feet,

And ask for His Holy Spirit;

To guide your faltering feet;

Then, resting upon his promise,

Without a doubt or fear,

You may step out with gladness

Into the fair New Year.

SPARKS FROM OTHER ANVILS.

Philadelphia Westminster:—Theology is man's opinion of God, while inspiration is God's opinion of man. The two should agree and sometimes do.

Presbyterian Standard:—The way to induce the unconverted and careless to come to church is always an interesting question. Those imbued with the Spirit of the Maker have the matter under consideration frequently. No doubt many are thinking about this as well as many other important things for the opening of the approaching year. We butt in to say that one of the best ways, if not the very best, is for the members of our churches to go to church themselves.

United Presbyterian:—It is probable that we do not think of the patience of God as much as we should; we think of his love, but do not always consider how his love is tried by our waywardness. Patience is tenderness combined with love. It is a recognition of our weakness, of our immaturity, our ignorance, of the many things that tend to make us forgetful. We are but children yet, and our Father bears with us day by day, waiting until we trust Him more and come nearer to Him. "The God of Patience" is a precious name for him whose love we try so much.

"WHAT SHE HATH."

By Hope Isbell.

"What is it, Ruth?" inquired Mrs. Gray of her ten-year-old daughter, who stood gazing intently out of the window, a little wrinkle between her eyebrows.

"I was thinking of what the minister said in his sermon yesterday, mother. He said we ought to give what we have to the service of God, no matter what it is. But we are so poor we haven't anything to give, have we, mother?"

"We are poor, my dear; but there are other families worse off than we are. Perhaps you can think of something we can give, if you think hard."

Ruth did "think hard," for her heart had been touched by this sermon of their kind pastor.

Next day she came to her mother with a bright face. "I know what it is, mother—it's Brownie."

Her mother looked puzzled for a moment; then, remembering their conversation the day before, she said: "Are you going to give Brownie away?"

Not Brownie, the horse, and the old battered phaeton, were the only things left them from better days, and these were a source of constant delight to the children, who spent most of their vacation time driving about the shady, quiet streets of the village.

"Oh, no; not give him away," was Ruth's rather indignant answer; "but use him. There is old Mrs. Smith, and she's all alone and sick some of the time. Couldn't I go and take her out riding with Brownie?"

"You could, indeed; and you may go any day. I am glad my little daughter is taking thought for others," kissing her tenderly.

When Ruth made her errand known to Mrs. Smith, she was put through a catchism of questions by the querulous old lady, as to the reliability of her horse and her ability to manage him. Ruth protested inwardly, for "whoever heard of Brownie doing anything bad?" she thought.

Having satisfied the old lady's doubts and fears, they set out for the drive. Down the long, familiar street, past the homes of old friends, at whose doors they made an occasional call over the river bridge, every foot of the way as the face of a friend to her, the frail, lonely woman drank it all in greedily. It was food to her soul.

When alighting at her own door, she said: "God bless you, my child. You have given me no little life." Ruth felt that she had received the best kind of pay.

This was the beginning of many similar drives during the long delightful summer. It was surprising the number of old and feeble persons there were in the village, when she began to think about them—men as well as women. And many had lived there all their lives and knew every spot. Now, as she took them about and they recalled the scenes of their youthful days, many were the interesting tales they told her of those far-away times. Ruth was such an interested listener, the pleasure was equally great to both. But, best of all, she loved to take Dorothy, a little crippled girl, of her own age. Then the dollies could go, too, and occasionally Ted, if he promised to be good. And such good times as they had! This was the life. They were princesses; the shabby old phaeton a rose, and Brownie a butterfly. Dollies could talk, and Ted was their prince.

The happy days sped away, and cold and snow came instead, when Brownie must spend much of the time in his warm stall, munching hay; but the seeds of love and thoughtfulness of others had taken root in Ruth's heart, and were to bear the fruit of kind deeds unto others all through her life.

The Chinese Government has sent a circular note to the Powers protesting against Russia's claims to the right of administration over the Manchurian railway zones.