

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

JESUS HEALS THE NOBLEMAN'S SON.*

By Rev. P. M. McDonald, B.D.

A prophet hath no honor in his own country, v. 44. The habit of thinking very little of the persons and places that are near us, is a very old one. But age does not improve it. It is an unkind and unprofitable habit. The real and true hearts are more likely to be found in our own homes than elsewhere. The great men are our fellow citizens, and we would see it thus, if we would but put off our envious eyeglasses. Far fields seem fair and fertile, but the hills of home are, as a matter of fact, better. It pays to persevere in our appreciation of what we have. Sir Launfal, in Lowell's poem, compassed the world, searching for the Holy Grail, and found it at his castle gate, when he returned there, broken in health and wealth. The miner who keeps digging at his claim gets more gold for his work than those who are constantly pulling up tent pegs and rushing to some newly-found, distant land. The gold of character is near us, and the best that can be found is in our own land.

A certain nobleman, whose son was sick, v. 46. Among the Spanish is a proverb, "There is no home without its 'hush'". The "hush" is on account of some existing defect or sorrow, or some painful memory in the home. The talk of the family flows along, but if it should become boisterous, it will disturb the sick one or the sleeping one, and the "hush" is whispered by the thoughtful. Or, perhaps, the conversation touches on the absent boy or girl whose empty place means a green mound in the graveyard, and again the "hush" is uttered.

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there."

The nobleman had in his home many rich treasures, no doubt; but he had a sick boy, and a need for "hush".

For he was at the point of death, v. 47. When we have done all in our power for our sick ones, and then stand helpless before the coming of death, we grasp at any means that we then hear may help. Men have given the last penny of their fortune to save their loved ones, and felt it was an exchange never to be regretted. This man came helpless, but hopeful. He had done all he could. Now, he hoped Christ would cure his son. If he had once been proud and haughty, he was no longer so. He wanted help, and came as a suppliant.

"I saw him in the flush of pride,
When round him stood his worshipped
pelf:

"This is the truth, good friend," he
cried,
"God helps the man that helps him-
self."

"I saw him in the fall of pride,
When round him lay his shattered
pelf:"

"This is the truth, good friend," he
cried
"God helps when man can't help him-
self."

*S. S. Lesson, February 16, 1908.—John 4:43-54. Commit to memory vs. 49, 50. Golden Text—The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.—John 4:50.

The man believed, and he went his way, v. 50. Faith is to knowledge and reason what the telescope is to the eye. By the use of the telescope we can see the rings of Saturn and all the wonders of "smaller" worlds on larger worlds attending in the blue vault above. By means of the telescope a map of Mars has been made, and now we may study the geography of the red star. Its canal-like seas, its islands, its high mountains with snow caps are there mapped out. So faith brings the distant near to us and makes the unseen real to us, and allows us to dwell in the wonderful righteousness and peace and joy of heaven, while we are yet on the earth.

Thy son liveth, v. 51. There is an old legend of the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine, who went to the Holy Land to find the cross. Excavations were made, and they found three crosses. But how they were to know which was the true one? They took a dead body and laid it upon one after another of the three crosses, and as soon as it touched the Saviour's cross, it started into life. The way to test Christianity is by its life-giving results. It makes dead men live. It gives new heart, new hope, new will to those who had hearts of stone and were filled with despair, or were driven by the tempests of temptation as leaves before the winter wind.

Every year is a fresh beginning,
Every morn is the world made new;
Ye who are weary of sorrow and sin-
ning,
Here is a beautiful hope for you.

LIGHT FROM THE EAST.

By Rev. James Ross, D.D.

Fever—This illness was, in all likelihood, malarial fever, which was, and is still, very common in the valley of the Jordan and neighborhood, and which is there sometimes accompanied by jaundice. Within the past ten years, it has been proved by extensive and oft-repeated experiments, that the germ of this fever is introduced into the system by the bite of a certain species of mosquito, which breeds in the stagnant waters of the swamps, from which it was formerly supposed that the noxious miasma causing the fever arose. Great efforts are now made in civilized countries to get rid of the insect which cultivates and communicates the germ.

PRAYER.

O Lord, have mercy upon us! Multiply Thy loving kindness toward us and comfort us with new supplies. Where there is special sorrow let there be special gladness also; where the grave has been dug under the hearthstone, let there be a great filling up of vacant spaces by a renewed and enlarged vision of Thyself. Then shall men not seek the living among the dead, but say over their very graves,—Our loved ones are not here; they are risen. We bless Thee for bright example, for words remembered with sweet thankfulness, for patience in trial, for heroism in difficulty, and for the gentle charity that added new beauty to life. The Lord remember the bereaved and the sorrow-stricken and the sad, and give them brightness in the night-time—yea, a great multitude of stars, and one brighter than the rest promising early day. Amen.

PREACHING TO THE UNCONVERTED.

By Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, D.D.

I am convinced that, with happy exceptions, there has been a decline of direct, pointed, faithful and persuasive preaching to the unconverted. Too many discourses are directed to nobody in particular; preaching to Christians has been relatively overdone, and preaching to the impenitent underdone. I do not mean denunciations that only irritate, or mere exhortations that are often a waste of breath. I mean that the preacher should hold up the ugliness and the doom of sin before the sinner's eye so that he should feel his own guiltiness, and so present Jesus Christ that that sinner should flee to him as his only Saviour. "Warn them from Me," is God's solemn injunction to every minister. He has, therefore, no more right to cap Sinai or conceal hell than he has to hide the sin-atoning Cross of Calvary. In short, I mean logic set on fire by love.

Ministers ought to go back to the fountainhead, and remember that Jesus Christ "began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." They ought to remember that Peter began the great apostolic campaign by preaching repentance to the unconverted, and Paul ceased not to warn night and day with tears.

They ought to remember that the most successful preachers, from Whitefield and Wesley on to Spurgeon and Moody, were men whose chief aim was to awaken the unconverted, and to lead them straight to Jesus Christ. Spurgeon never had any "revivals" in his great church; and for the good reason that there were no spiritual declensions to be revived from. He sowed the gospel with one hand and reaped conversions with the other. His church was like the orange trees I saw in California; there were white blossoms on some limbs and ripe golden fruit on some other limbs. Unless a minister intensely loves souls, and longs for souls, he will never save souls; if he does, and uses the right means seasoned with prayer, God will give him souls converted as his rich reward.

In my own experience of forty-three years of pastoral work, I delivered hundreds of discourses to the impenitent, and did not limit them to seasons of special outpourings of the Holy Spirit.

My Bible gave me abundant ammunition in such texts as "choose life," come, for all things are now ready," "Jesus only," "quench not the Spirit," and that piercing passage, "past feeling." Preaching to the unconverted is not easy work; it costs more mental labor than any other sermon work—except during a great descent of the Holy Spirit, and at such times all sermons make themselves. Preaching is a luxury when every stroke echoes in converted souls.

Don't turn away from the path of duty because the electric light of pleasure seems to have been cut off.

True happiness (says Scott) is not the gentle growth of earth, the toil is fruitless if you seek it here.

Without hard work and earnest purpose all that is best in the world perishes. We cannot even have a proper game without earnestness.

The double reward of kind words is the happiness they cause others and the happiness they cause ourselves.