

evidence, no sentence passed or judgment given. The judges refused to hear Stephen's statement, and raged like wild beasts. This is a graphic and true picture of error's methods. (b) The murder. He was cast outside the city (see Lev. 24 : 14). Stoning was not allowed by the Romans, except by permission of the governor. Every detail indicates the whirlwind of passion. (c) The vision and prayer of Stephen. Both give remarkable testimony to the reality of the Holy Spirit's presence in the believer and in the church. Study carefully the vision of Stephen. Compare his dying prayers with those of Jesus.

In the tragic death of Stephen, we see the first victim of the rage of evil against the church. It closed the period of the church's limitation to Jerusalem, and ushered in its wider spread. Since then, multitudes have died for the truth, victims, as was Stephen, of error and blind passion.

This Lesson shows the necessary connection of the cross and the crown. The cross is a common experience, but all do not see the crown which is awaiting the faithful. We have the right to keep the two together. The vision inspires, fills the soul with joy, and creates heroism. The teacher should point out the bearing of this on daily life. Surely, if God and heaven are near and victory is assured, we should all be faithful unto death.

For Teachers of the Boys and Girls

The Lesson title is attractive : STEPHEN THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR. His was not a long life ; but it was of extraordinary interest, and the end was in a blaze of glory. Try the plan of taking it chapter by chapter. Get the class to give a heading for each chapter after the incidents in it have been brought out. These will probably not be greatly different from the following :

Chapter I. THE DEACON.

A little study beforehand of vs. 1-6 will prepare the teacher to bring out these interesting points : (1) The name Stephen (Greek for crown) shows him to have been a Greek-speaking Jew ("Grecian" of v. 1). (2) He was a layman, not a minister : the service to which he was appointed was layman's work, vs. 1-4. (3) He had proved

himself a man of high character, saintly life, and excellent wisdom, v. 3. (4) He was solemnly set apart to his work. Have the scholars note that laymen as well as ministers have responsibility for church work ; and that the secular work of the church, such as the care of the poor and the procuring and administration of church funds, requires men with much of the grace of God.

Chapter II. THE MIRACLE-WORKER AND PREACHER.

The chapter is brief—only three verses (vs. 8-10) of the Lesson passage ; but these show this layman as fully the equal of the apostles. He wrought the wonderful works of God, and preached His Word boldly and with power.

Chapter III. THE PRISONER AT THE BAR.

Have one of the class describe the scene—this brave, good man, accused before the great Council of his nation, and testified against by witnesses paid to lie. Was he dismayed ? Did his faith and hope burn low ? V. 15 is the answer ; and a fine opportunity it gives to show how one's outward appearance is affected by the sort of person one is within. There is not time to follow Stephen's defence (ch. 7 : 1-53). It was, in substance, that God had all along been good and gracious to His people, and that they had as steadily fought against Him, as they were now doing in refusing to accept Jesus as their Prince and Saviour.

Chapter IV. THE MARTYR.

Show that this chapter is one of contrasts : his foes conscience-stricken, Stephen conscience-free ; they frantic with blind rage, he full of the Holy Ghost, gazing into glory.

Very startling his exclamation (v. 56), as he gazed heavenward, and, by the illumination of the Holy Ghost granted him, had a foregleam of the glory which he was soon to see in its fulness—let the class pause a while here. With what is heaven filled ? What place does Jesus occupy there ?—are natural questions on vs. 55, 56. Is there any special significance in the fact that He was "standing" not sitting (see, for contrast, Heb. 1 : 3) ?

Very dreadful the response, vs. 57, 58. Have the scholars remember, that violence is no answer to argument or truth. Give notice, too, that we shall hear more about