

deeds, for example, as are done under the influence of strong drink. The psalmist prays to be kept from sins of act as well as of heart and lips. *With men*. The Hebrew word denotes men of rank and position who set a bad example. *That work iniquity*; a true description of those who, in any way, tempt others to use strong drink. *Let me not eat of their dainties*; let me not give way to the life of self-indulgence to which these tempters would persuade me.

V. 5. *The righteous*; good men. *Smite me*; correct me, though it be with the greatest severity. *A kindness*; for which the psalmist will be sincerely grateful. *An excellent oil*; like the oil with which his head would have been anointed had he consented to become a guest at the banquets of the wicked. *Shall not break my head*. Another translation is: "Let not my head refuse it." The last clause of v. 5 may be translated: "But still let my prayer be against their evil doings." The psalmist will continue to pray to be kept against wickedness in mind, word or deed.

Vs. 6, 7. *Their judges*; that is, the leaders of the "men that work iniquity," v. 4. *Thrown down by the sides of the rock* (Rev. Ver.); cast over some precipice: a vivid picture of the doom of evil-doers, such as those engaged in the drink traffic. *Hear my words*; for they are sweet. When the leaders have been taken away, their followers will welcome the advice of the psalmist. *Our bones are scattered*, etc.; a picture of the sufferings which the righteous had to endure at the hands of the wicked. *As when one cutteth and cleaveth wood*; leaving the chips and splinters scattered and uncared for. So the wicked despised their righteous victims.

III. The Deliverer, 8-10.

Vs. 8-10. *Mine eyes are unto thee*; the attitude of prayer which expects an answer. *O GOD the Lord*. The name "God" is in capitals because it stands for the sacred name Jehovah, which the Hebrews would not pronounce, substituting for it "Elohim" or

"Adonai." *In thee is my trust*. The Psalmist had put himself under God's protection. *Leave not my soul destitute*; Rev. Ver. Margin, "pour thou not out my life," that is, suffer me not to perish. *Keep me from the snares*; the craft and treachery of the enemy. *Gins*; baits or snares: a good word for the temptations set by sellers of strong drink. *Fall into their own nets*; bring upon themselves their own punishment. *Whilst . . . I . . . escape*; because of God's power to deliver.

Light from the East

THE FOWLER'S SNARE—The ancient Hebrews, like the modern people of Palestine, used the flesh of birds as an article of diet. The supply was secured by the domestication of pigeons and poultry and partly by the activity of the bird-hunter or fowler. The art of fowling was hardly a sport, but it was very popular; a great number and variety of metaphors are derived from it. To the psalmist the evil devices of an enemy are like a fowler's snare (see Ps. 91 : 3 ; 140 : 9 ; etc.). In Job (ch. 18 : 7-10) the end of the wicked is that he should "walk upon the toils" (snare). And Jesus warns men that the end shall come upon them like a trap, Luke 21 : 34.

The fowler apparently used neither bow nor sling to bring down his prey, but nets and traps. Of all the net was the most effective apparatus, whether it was used to intercept the birds in their flight, or to enclose them by being dragged over the ground, or to be suddenly folded round them by the vigorous pulling of cords. The snare or noose was attached to a thin elastic piece of wood, and so fastened down at a tension that the touch of the bird could release it, carrying noose and bird into the air, Amos 3 : 5. Or a clapboard raised at one end was so delicately adjusted that the touch of a bird made the support collapse, bringing down the board on top of its victim (Luke 21 : 34, "suddenly," Rev. Ver.).

THE LESSON APPLIED

1. One of the safest refuges against temptation is to be found in prayer. It is recorded how, on several occasions just before Christ faced some crisis in His ministry, He turned

in prayer to His Father. Temptation is always a crisis with us, and the refuge which was open to Jesus is not closed to any of His followers. "Watch . . . and pray, that ye