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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Golden Text	i
Hard on the Hebraists	i
The School in Revival	ii
The Epworth League in Revival	iii
The Shadow on the Rock	iv
Six Hints from Teacher to Scholar	iv
Choosing and Using a Sunday-school Library	v
Destructive Teaching	vi
Home Class Incident	vii
Opening and Closing Services	vii
International Bible Lessons	76
Primary Teachers' Department	117
Book Notices	129
Autographs of the Evangelists	129

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VOL. XXXI.]

FEBRUARY, 1897.

[No. 2.

The Golden Text.

I LIKE to think on the Lord's-day morn,
Of the hosts of children, far and wide,
Their faces fair and their brows unworn,
Who blithely sit at a mother's side,
Conning, in tones so low and sweet,
Over and over, with patient care,
Till by heart they know it and can repeat
The Golden Text, be it praise or prayer.

For praise or prayer it is sure to be—
The beautiful verse, a polished gem,
Culled from the sacred treasury,
And fit for a royal diadem.

I like to think that the children dear
Will know that truth when their heads are
grey;
That the hallowed phrase their souls will cheer
Many a time on the pilgrim way.

I sometimes muse on the Lord's-day eve,
When the Golden Texts have all been said,
And my tender fancies I like to weave
Over many a small white bed.
The children sleep till to-morrow's morn,
Armed for whatever is coming next;
Their strength and courage alike unshorn!
And the sword they will carry—the Golden
Text.

—Mrs. Sangster.

Hard on the Hebraists.

In that charming volume, entitled "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," by Ian Maclaren, which we could wish might be enjoyed by every reader, may be found a racy passage which we cannot resist the temptation of transcribing here for the benefit of such as may not have seen the book, and who may be tempted by this *morceau* to procure it for themselves. It goes to show how a Drum-

tochy witness held his own in an ecclesiastical court. A minister was on trial for alleged intoxication. The advocate in the case had found himself utterly baffled by the shrewdly evasive answers of the canny Scotchman, who was indisposed, in so serious a matter, to commit himself.

Finally the advocate plumply asked him, "Was there a smell of drink on him?"

"Noo, since ye press me, a'll juist tell ye the hale truth; it was doonricht stupid o' me, but, as sure as a'm livin', a' clean forgot tae try him."

Then the chastened counsel gathered himself up for his last effort.

"Will you answer me one question, sir? You are on your oath. Did you see anything unusual in MacOmish's walk? Did he stagger?"

"Na,"—when he had spent two minutes in recalling the scene—"na, I cudna say stagger, but he might gie a bit trimmil (tremble).

"We are coming to the truth now. What did you consider the cause of the trimmiling, as you call it?" and the innocent young advocate looked around in triumph.

"Weel," replied Drumtochy, making a clean breast of it, "since ye maun hae it, a' heard that he wes a very learned man, and it came intae mind that the Hebrew, which, a'm telt (told), is very contrary langidge, hed gaen doon and settled in his legs."

Now whatever may have been the facts with reference to the Rev. "Maister MacOmish," the ingenious, not to say ingenious answer of the Drumtochy witness, suggests a possible and charitable explanation of the "shakiness" of some of our great modern biblical scholars, which is to be found in the fact that the Hebrew, with which they are so constantly conversant, and which is said to be such a "contrary language," has "gone down and settled in their legs." Let us hope that they will get their legs settled by-and-by.—*Baptist Teacher.*

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Sunday School Banner.

W. H. WITTHROW, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, JANUARY, 1897.

The School in Revival.

THE great aim of all our Sunday-school teaching is the conversion of the children to God and their instruction in righteousness. Unless this be accomplished, all our efforts are in vain, all the self-denial and devotion of teachers, all the elaborate preparation of the lessons, all the machinery of school and library fail of the accomplishment of their highest mission.

For a variety of reasons—the ampler leisure, the longer evenings, the better roads—the winter season of Canada is specially adapted for revival work. This should engross much of the time and thought and prayer of superintendents and teachers. There should be earnest supplication to the throne of grace for the bestowment of the Divine Spirit, without which all teaching and preaching is in vain, that the hearts of the children may be opened to the reception of the truth and their souls divinely touched and sweetly led into the joys of salvation. All school or other entertainments that will interfere with this should be laid aside.

The mere historical setting of the lesson or explanation of its outer facts are well enough in their way, but it is the inner meaning that should be impressed upon the hearts of the scholars, the personal application to their consciences of the mind and will of God as revealed in these lessons. An after school concert for prayer of teachers and scholars should, we think, be held throughout the winter, not less often than once a month, oftener if practicable.

A tender watchfulness over the spiritual condition of the scholars should be observed by teachers, and personal conversation should be held with each one. If this may not be secured in the class, let the teacher seek the scholars at their respective homes or invite them individually to the home of the teacher. Great tact and skill may be required, but it is worth it all, and the divine illuminator of the Holy Spirit will give the needed help if earnestly sought. "He that winneth souls is wise," "He that turneth many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever."

In this connection we have pleasure in calling attention to the following judicious remarks from the revival number of the *Epsworth Herald*:

THE REVIVAL IN THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

The revival must be carried into the Sunday-school. It is a fruitful field. Much good seed has been sown. It has fallen on fertile ground. For months preparations for the coming harvest have been going forward. If wisely conducted the harvest will not be difficult. Great care must be taken, however. It is so easy to blunder. And blunders at this time reach on and on in their baneful influence.

As a rule we do not favour turning the school into a general revival meeting. Children have tender feelings. They are susceptible in the extreme. They will take almost any stand and commit themselves in almost any way the superintendent and teachers may desire. We were in a school not long ago when every child under twelve or fourteen years of age came to the front, and in a few minutes later, upon the suggestion of the superintendent, professed conversion. Some were converted, we hope, but there was no opportunity to instruct and direct such a multitude. The matter was then dropped, and next Sunday everything went on as though nothing unusual had occurred. It is an awful thing to trifle with the religious sensibilities of a child.

When the Church is moved by revival influences, let the study half-hour be shortened. After prayerful preparation let the teachers have a heart-to-heart talk with their scholars. Make an appointment for a little prayer-meeting after the school. It may be held in the church or at the teacher's home. This will give opportunity for the careful instruction which every awakened child needs. Or the pastor might hold a short service at the close of the school, inviting such only to remain as

are interested. Then carefully explain what is involved in the service of Christ. Ask the children to be Christ's, not because it will please the pastor or superintendent or teachers, but because Christ loves them and asks their love and service in return.

Childhood conversion is a glorious fact. We venture to say that one-half the adult readers of this paper gave themselves to Christ before they were fifteen. This fact is both startling and inspiring. How much less we would need to hammer away at the hard hearts of old sinners if we would, like those of old, bring the children to Jesus!

That boy! Covet him for your Master. That girl! Lead her to the cross. Be careful. Do thorough work. Let no precious young soul be deceived. *Let the Holy Spirit tell them when they are saved.*

The above applies with equal force to our Junior Leagues.

The Epworth League in Revival.

THE secret of the success of the Epworth League and similar young people's associations is its intense moral earnestness. It is no mere social club or reading circle or entertainment society. Its object is the salvation of souls. We rejoice to know that more and more it is devoting itself to this glorious work, and that more and more the divine blessing is accompanying its efforts. The same blessed tidings comes also from the Leagues of the United States. They are taking part far and wide in this work. The following testimony we glean from a recent number of the *Epworth Herald*. We heartily endorse the earnest exhortation which that article contains:

Many chapters are already in the campaign. A Pennsylvania pastor writes us that in almost every devotional meeting of his chapter for two months souls have been converted. Another tells us of a company of young people who some time ago covenanted together to plead with some unconverted friend every day. "You need hardly be told," the happy pastor writes, "that a great revival is under way." A district president sends word that the chapters throughout the district are observing days of fasting and prayer in preparation for the coming Pentecost. Mr. O. L. Doty, president of the fifth general district, has issued a stirring appeal to young Methodists throughout Ohio and Kentucky, calling upon them to definitely dedicate themselves to the work of soul-winning. Several recent conventions have ended in Pentecostal power and glory. The whole Epworth League,

north, south, east and west, seems to be moving up. That our young people are stirred with such a profound sense of their responsibility is a reason for unspeakable thanksgiving. The cloud, "little as a human hand," is already to be seen in the sky. It will enlarge. It will overspread the heavens. Soon there will be a sound of abundance of rain.

But not all our chapters are alive. Like some churches, they have a name to live, but are dead. The members think more of "having a good time" than of serving the Master in whose name they are organized. Some are frivolous. Others are indifferent. Others find their chiefest pleasure in the society of worldly associates. Oh, for a breath of the Divine Spirit to awaken them from their sinful security, and show them what poor, aimless, barren, joyless lives they are living!

Young people of the Epworth League, we plead with you to get ready for the revival campaign. Humble yourselves before God. Put pride under your feet. Confess your sins. Get near the cross. Be not satisfied with anything short of a definite, glorious, religious experience. Claim by faith all the fulness of redeeming grace. Surrender yourselves utterly to Jesus. Make a sweeping consecration. Put everything on the altar. Seek the baptism of fire. *Seek, seek, seek* until the Spirit falls upon you. Spend much time in prayer. Get the burden of unsaved souls upon you. Ask God to melt your heart. Get the compassion which your Master had. Pray about your unsaved friends until you are consumed with a resolute passion to see them saved. Then go to your pastor and tell him you are ready for service.

What will all that mean? It will mean wonderful things for yourself, for your chapter, for your church, and for the multitude of unsaved young people all about you.

Clear the way. Proper literary entertainments, sociables, debates, etc., are good. But they are not in order during a revival. Nothing is in order but eager soul winning. Sidetrack social engagements. Postpone that proposed visit. Turn away from everything which is in any degree diverting. Let your young friends know that you have only one thing on hand just now—a work of unspeakable importance. "This one thing I do." Do it! Do it!

THE February *Methodist Magazine and Review* has a sixteen-page article on the bitter cry of Armenia, with eight full-page illustrations of the greatest tragedy of the age; a striking article on the "Dead Cities of the Zuyder Zee," an illustrated story of the Boer War, and many other special features. The story of Philip Strong, a subscriber says, is alone worth the price for a year. To schools two or more copies will be sent at \$1.60 a year.

The Shadow on the Rock.

BY REV. J. LAYCOCK.

I STOOD upon a rocky beach
And listened to the breaker's roar,
As following one another, each
Rushed madly up the shore.

And as each anger-crested wave
Fell back exhausted to the sea,
I thought of One whose presence gave
Rest to the storm-swept Galilee.

I stood in awe upon the deck
Of a great vessel far from land,
Looking upon the foam and fleck
Of surging billows, fierce and grand.

And as they bounded o'er the prow,
With greyhound speed and lion roar,
Sweeping the deck, I did avow
My faith in Jesus Christ once more.

The vessel wreck'd, to a lone plank
I clung in desperation wild,
Thinking of one who almost sank
Through unbelief, doubt's vagrant child.

One hopeful glance toward the skies
I cast, breathing a fervent prayer—
"Help, Lord"—then to my glad surprise
Christ unto me came walking there.

The gale o'erpast, a rock I spied
Jutting up weirdly from the sea,
With lightning-rent clefts in its side,
And steps hewed in them as for me.

To that strange rock with failing strength
I swam with aspiration high,
And climbing it, I stood at length
Alone between the earth and sky.

With mingled feelings, understood
By Him alone who heareth prayer;
One moment filled with gratitude,
The next with sorrow and despair.

O God! must I on this rock die;
No friend, no loving guardian near;
The sunshine flooding earth and sky
With joy while I am pining here?

No food to eat, I can but die,
Unless for me the manna fall;
No drink; to thee, O Lord, I cry—
A fainting soul, O heed my call.

Standing with outstretched arms in prayer,
Beneath me on that rock did fall
A shadow, singularly rare—
My shade in cross-form, that was all.

My palms, extended in the light
Of crimson sunset, even there
Brought to my view the blessed sight—
Then Calvary rose sublimely fair.

And filled with joy, I sang a song
Of my Redeemer on the tree,
Then "Rock of Ages" did prolong
My soul's glad lay of melody.

O, welcome light on human form,
In pleading posture thus to give
Hope from a shadow cross—the storm
Of doubt and fear from me to drive.

A voice—methought I was alone—
Who spake! Some angel in my breast;
"Soul, heard'st thou not the Holy One
Inviting thee to heavenly rest?"

"Look up, the Sun of Righteousness
Shines on thee from a tranquil sky!"
I looked, then came the fond caress
Of love that makes it sweet to die.

A sail, a sail came on my view,
No mirage vain my soul to mock;
A boat, well-manned with angel crew,
Swift bearing down upon the rock.

In weakness, tottering to its ledge,
I stumbled into death's deep sea.
The pilot standing on the bridge
Stooped down and quickly rescued me.

Saved, saved, upon life's vernal shore,
I stand 'mid heaven's rescue crew,
With Christ, my Lord, where storm no more
Nor rocks with cross shades come to view.

And yet, methinks, for evermore
His cross, transfigured, gloriously
Enwreathed with thorns he meekly bore,
In my rich jewelled crown shall be.

O, could I fling back through the night
Some strains of rapture o'er death's sea,
To all who dwell in the faint light
Of life where reigns mortality,

My song should be: The former things
Are passed away, have fled for aye,
The light of heaven forever flings
All death and darkness from its sky.

Gladstone, Man.

Six Hints from Teacher to Scholar.

1. SET apart a regular time each day for the study of the lesson.
2. Read the "home readings" every day.
3. Try to be present at school every Sunday during the year.
4. Always bring a Bible with you to Sunday-school.
5. Come to Sunday-school prepared to enter heartily and devoutly into all the exercises.
6. Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds that we may understand and apply that which we read.

Choosing and Using a Sunday-school Library.

BY PHILIP E. HOWARD.

Two methods make steadily for the general use of a Sunday-school library. First, the right selection of the books; second, the lively cultivation among the children of a library-using habit.

No one brain is competent to the task of selecting books which shall prove to be the right books for any Sunday-school. Indeed, one of the shallow absurdities of library mismanagement is the purchasing of a lot of books merely as recommended by some one who has the lot for sale. That lot may be, in the main, good Sunday-school books; but who knows that the lot is good for *your* school? Not he who has never seen your school. Not he who has never read the books.

Nor within the limits of the school should one person—not even its chief literary light—be trusted to decide what books are suited to the school. A wise choice involves familiarity with the school tastes, its limitations of mind, and intellectual, moral and religious needs, as well as a knowledge of the proposed books. Therefore a representative library committee should be appointed from among the teachers and officers by the superintendent. And that committee should be chosen because of special fitness in at least the following particulars:

1. Close touch with the varied needs of the school.
2. Capacity for knowing what a book is.
3. Readiness to receive new ideas.
4. Nearness to the boy-heart and girl-heart.
5. Calmness of temper and judgment.
6. Willingness to work.

To agree upon a standard of fitness by which to measure all proposed books is the first work of the committee. Let these questions be clearly decided: Shall we accept (1) Books not suitable for Sunday reading? (2) For their literary value, books that contain no well-defined moral or religious teaching? (3) Standard novels? (4) Fairy stories? (5) Secular history? (6) Books of reference? (7) Poetry? (8) Popular scientific works on natural history, etc.? (9) Short stories without a distinct moral? (10) Otherwise unobjectionable humorous literature? (11) Books having denominational tendencies away from the school's own denomination? (12) Books of counsel and devotion? (13) Books of no literary merit? (14) Expensive editions? (15) Books printed on inferior paper, or in poor type, or with misleading illustrations? (16) Books in delicate bindings?

The head librarian ought to be chairman of the library committee. If he is not fitted for

the chairmanship of the committee, he is not likely to be the right man for head librarian. He ought to be a lover of books and a lover of children—not a machine for checking library records. I use the masculine pronoun merely for the sake of convenience. Perhaps the best man for the place in your school is a woman. Then put her in the place. And let the office, at all times, have in full its deserved dignity and prominence, by bringing the head librarian into helpful touch with teachers and scholars in their choosing of books from week to week. Encourage visits to the library on the part of the teacher and scholar, and let the librarian know how much that office can mean by referring library matters to him always.

How to cultivate among the scholars a library-using habit is the second method, to perfect which is within the sphere of the library committee, working together with superintendent and teachers.

At the outset, it should be borne in mind that many children in your school have never acquired the reading habit. Some have only a vaguely latent interest in books of any sort. These never think of using the school library, because they never, voluntarily, read a book. Pioneer work can be done just here by the teacher. He who loves a good book is not slow to learn and tell its charm. The teacher who will talk tactfully and glow a little over a taking book, is likely to kindle an answering glow of curiosity and longing in the unbooked child. And to say that "this very book may be found in our library" is a practical climax much to be desired. Hence the committee must see to it that exceptionally attractive books are on the way to the library, or already a part of it, before any interest in the library can be awakened.

In illustration of this need, I recall a class of boys of an average age of fifteen years, whom their teacher tried to interest in a city Sunday-school library. The boys avowed that the library was not for them, that never a book in it was worth their while. The teacher hopefully undertook to disprove this by examining every book in the library. The collection was fair, but the boys were about right in their judgment of it. It was not for them apparently. It could not especially interest them.

Many a book is "good," but not attractive. And yet many a good book is attractive. A book deserving of a place in a Sunday-school library must be both good and attractive. It must not come to the boy-mind or the girl-mind as a smug intruder, all too plainly ready with its medicine's dose, but rather as the bright-eyed, confidence-inspiring, welcome friend, who looks you frankly, winsomely in the face. There are such books—hundreds of them—and of these the library committee, the superintendent, and the teacher, can confidently tell the scholar. To have such books in the library is of first importance in

awakening the scholar's interest in library-using.

A shareholder is interested in his holdings. The scholars may well have holdings in the library. In Greenway Mission each class of the thirty or more, with a few exceptions, contributed enough money to buy one book. The committee chose a book for the class, and that book bears the class name. Of course, any expressed desire of a class for a particular book was granted by the committee whenever practicable. From the day when these class subscriptions were first mentioned by the superintendent, the use of library books has increased from a little armful to nearly one hundred volumes each Sunday. As new books have been added, temporary catalogues have been issued—not to the scholars, but to the teachers—with the special request that the teachers help the scholars in choosing suitable books from the catalogues. Simple as these two stimulants are, the results have been highly encouraging. Over one hundred new books have been added to the library during the year in which this plan has been in operation, and a goodly proportion of the lot look beautifully old and worn already. Loaned, with many others, by a kindly book-store for examination, read and discussed by a committee, bought and paid for with a fund partly of the scholars' own giving, and mainly of the teachers' raising, this company of good books is as popular with the school, and as much its own, as its Christmas festival—which is saying much at Greenway. And not a book of them all is doomed to a clean, ornamental existence. While there are thumb-marks and broken backs there is hope.—*S. S. Times*.

Destructive Teaching.

"The black deacon of our Mission Church," Dr. Gordon writes, "gave us a very significant answer not long since. He was complaining of his Ethiopian pastor that he did not expound the Word. When we expressed surprise and remarked that we had supposed he did, he replied, 'He can take the Bible apart as good as any man I ever seed, but he can't put it together again.' This in learned phraseology would mean that he excelled in destructive criticism, but not in constructive." In these Old Testament lessons some will be tempted to show their learning and give reasons why the old views are not correct. It may be "the taking apart" will be well done, but "the putting together," a failure. What should be prominent in every lesson should be the positive truths to live by. There is not one lesson but is full of them. These are God's truths to help men; the other things, men's opinions.—*Augsburg Teacher*.

Bits of Sunday-school Experience.

BY J. R. PEPPER.

DEVOTION.

No matter how interesting, how instructive to the intellect, if the school be not permeated with a real spirit of devotion it may teach some very harmful lessons. There need be no long-facedness about it. Nothing is more important for the young to learn than to be orderly and devout in the services of God's house. Much of mature church vandalism may be traced to improper ideas gained in tender years.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ORDER.

No school can be sincerely devotional while disorder reigns, and no superintendent who has the respect and co-operation of his teachers will have any difficulty in securing perfect quiet and attention. What can be more beautiful than to be perfectly quiet in the Lord's temple, as if waiting for Him to appear, as indeed you are. It affords fruitful moments to think of what one is really there for.

READING THE SCRIPTURES

should always be done in a devout, thoughtful manner, clear and distinct, so that even the partly deaf ones can hear. Nothing so mars the beauty of God's book as a slovenly, careless manner of reading it. This part of the superintendent's work is worthy of the most careful attention on his part. It may otherwise be made a very meaningless message to those who hear.

PRAYER AT THE TEACHERS' MEETING.

That prayer, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," is never more needed than when about to look into the Word to gather its fruitage for others. Hence we always have one or more prayers for guidance just before beginning our study on Wednesday nights, both by male or female teachers.

THE TEACHERS' PRAYER MEETING.

For about twelve years we have had a Teachers' Prayer Meeting just before the opening of the school. Very few times in all of those years has it been omitted, and then for special reasons. Many of us have had interpretations new and fresh at that meeting that did not come out of the whole week's study. Whatever other preparation is made, nothing can take the place of the quickening of the Holy Spirit. Even dull material may at that moment be shot through and electrified by the incoming Spirit until a gushing heart fountain and a loosened tongue will tell the story that day.

CONVERSION THE GOAL.

Any Sunday-school whose many radiating lines of work do not converge at the cross of Jesus Christ, and ultimately win the soul for him, falls short of its mission. Music and blackboards, charts, diagrams, and all other devices, if they simply charm the ear and eye, while the heart roams far away in other paths, are very poor, though they be ever so perfect.

I would rather sit on a stone under a brush arbour with a teacher whose heart is all inflamed with love for the Lord, and whose only desire is to save those under his care, than to have the most faultless external equipment without any heart in it.

May God move us mightily in this higher service of the Sunday-school in the closing years of this wonderful century!—*Sunday-school Journal*.

Home Class Incident.

A CORRESPONDENT furnishes the following interesting incident :

Among those to whom we first proposed the study of the Sunday-school lesson through the Home Department were an aged couple who had been for years members of the Sunday-School, but had grown too infirm to attend as formerly. They were quiet, silent people, to whom the gift of speech had been denied. Through a devoted professional teacher, the plan was communicated and explained to them. Evidently it gave them great pleasure to know that provision was made for them to continue the study of the lessons, and they expressed their gratitude.

It was always a satisfaction to think of them as members of the class, and of the possible helpfulness of this system to them, but the touching incident related of the close of the old man's life impressed us with the real value of this organized work.

The last time the new *Quarterly* came to them, he was too weak and frail to peruse its pages, but he kept it by him on his bed, would allow no one to remove it, and would clasp it to his heart as if it were a precious object, and through it he could express his faith and his devotion to his Church and to his Lord and Master.

It made a great impression upon those about him, and we could but feel that it had been a blessing in the household and a great comfort to the departing saint in the last days of his pilgrimage. Our effort to express sympathy and interest in them had more than fulfilled its mission, and we are confident that this little illustration must commend the work. It warms the hearts of those engaged in it and does certainly bring forth fruit.—*The International Evangelist*.

Opening and Closing Services.

OPENING SERVICE.

- I. SILENCE.
- II. RESPONSIVE SENTENCES. [Psalm 121.]
 - SUPT. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help.
 - SCHOOL. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.
 - SUPT. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved :
 - SCHOOL. He that keepeth thee will not slumber.
 - SUPT. Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.
 - SCHOOL. The LORD is thy keeper : the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.
 - SUPT. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.
 - SCHOOL. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil : he shall preserve thy soul.
 - SUPT. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

III. SINGING.

IV. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, OR THE APOSTLES' CREED.

V. PRAYER, followed by the Lord's Prayer in concert.

VI. SINGING.

LESSON SERVICE.

- I. CLASS STUDY OF THE LESSON.
- II. SINGING LESSON HYMN.
- III. RECITATION OF THE TITLE, GOLDEN TEXT, AND OUTLINE by the school in concert.
- IV. REVIEW AND APPLICATION OF THE LESSON by Pastor or Superintendent.
- V. SUPPLEMENTAL LESSON. [Special lesson in the Church Catechism may here be introduced.]
- VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS [especially of the Church service and the Epworth League and week-evening prayer-meetings.]

CLOSING SERVICE.

I. SINGING.

II. RESPONSIVE SENTENCES.

- SUPT. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.
- SUPT. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

III. DISMISSAL.

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

FIRST QUARTER: STUDIES IN THE ACTS AND EPISTLES.

LESSON VI. TRUE AND FALSE GIVING.

[Feb. 7.]

GOLDEN TEXT. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 1 Sam. 16. 7.

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

Acts 4. 32, to 5. 11. [*Commit to memory verses 32, 33.*]

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Bar-na-bas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Le'vite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

1 But a certain man named An-a-ni'as, with Sap-phi'ra his wife, sold a possession,

2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Pe'ter said, An-a-ni'as, why hath Sa'tan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And An-a-ni'as hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Pe'ter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Pe'ter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

REVISED VERSION.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul: and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus:

34 and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that

35 were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto each, according as any one had need.

36 And Joseph, who by the apostles was surnamed Bar-na-bas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Le'vite, a man of Cyprus

37 by race, having a field, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

1 But a certain man named An-a-ni'as, with 2 Sap-phi'ra his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at

3 the apostles' feet. But Pe'ter said, An-a-ni'as, why hath Sa'tan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price

4 of the land? Whiles it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not

5 lied unto men, but unto God. And An-a-ni'as hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that heard

6 it. And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Pe'ter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And

9 she said, Yea, for so much. But Pe'ter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at

10 the door, and they shall carry thee out. And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and

11 buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things.

Time.—A. D. 30. **Place.**—Jerusalem.

Home Readings.

- M.* True and False Giving. Acts 4. 32-37.
Tu. True and False Giving. Acts 5. 1-11.
W. Sacredness of vows, Eccles. 5. 1-6.
Th. Warning against hypocrisy. Matt. 6. 1-8.
F. Lying lips. Prov. 12. 13-22.
S. Insincere offerings. Mal. 1. 6-14.
S. Blessing on true giving. Mal. 3. 8-12

Lesson Hymns.

No. 31, New Canadian Hymnal.

Thy life was given for me!
 Thy blood, O Lord, was shed.

No. 33, New Canadian Hymnal.

Seeking the lost, yes, kindly entreating
 Wanderers on the mountain astray.

No. 34, New Canadian Hymnal.

I was a wandering sheep,
 I did not love the fold.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

1. True Giving, v. 32-37.

What common religious experience had the early Church?

In what further respect had they a common life?

What testimony did the apostles constantly bear?

To what command was this giving obedience?

How was personal need in the Church prevented?

Was this a voluntary socialism, or was it for us to follow?

What was a Levite's generous offering?

What change of name was made in his case?

What kind of giving is pleasing to God? 2 Cor. 9. 7.

What gift precedes all others in true giving? See 2. Cor. 8. 5.

2. False Giving, v. 1-11.

What false givers are here named?

Wherein was the falsity in their giving?

Who prompted the evil deed?

To whom was this falsehood really told?

What evidence is here given as to the deity of the Holy Ghost?

How long and how fully had Ananias the right to control his property?

How did Peter's rebuke affect Ananias?

Was this a natural event, or a divine judgment?

Why the apparent haste in burying him?

How much did the wife know of what had occurred?

What question did Peter ask her?

What untruth was there in her answer?

Into what wicked agreement had husband and wife entered?

What did Peter declare to Sapphira?

What followed his words?

Were his words a malediction or a prediction?

What says the GOLDEN TEXT about God's knowledge?

Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson are we taught—

1. The folly of a lie?
2. The wickedness of a lie?
3. The peril of a lie?

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. Verses 32-37.

What helped to unite Christians?

Why did they have less love of gain?

What gave them such great power?

To what fact did they bear witness?

Mention the two effects of God's grace.

Why were lands and houses sold?

Where was the money placed?

Who were aided from this fund?

What was Jesus afterward noted for?

Why was his generosity remarkable?

2. Verses 1-11.

What did Ananias sell?

Point out his wrong.

How can one be guilty without actually doing the wrong deed?

Where did Ananias bring the money?

Who tempted him?

Is a man to be blamed for being tempted?

How did Ananias lie?

How and when was Ananias punished?

Why did his burial follow so quickly?

When did Sapphira meet Peter?

How did he give her a chance to repent?

Of what crime was she guilty?

What did they agree to do?

Why should we fear?

Teachings of the Lesson.

1. Love delights in giving. Church support is no burden or drudgery to a real Christian.

2. Faithful testimony for the Lord brings great grace from the Lord.

3. No secret can be hidden from God's eye. To lie to the Holy Ghost is a perilous experiment.

4. Sin brings sure punishment. The wages are certain to the persistent wrongdoer.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

How many believers were there now?

How did these Christians live?

How did they show that they loved one another?

What did Barnabas do?

Were all the new believers good people?
What did some still have? **Proud, foolish hearts.**

What did Ananias think he would do?
What shows that he did it to be praised?
What did both Ananias and Sapphira forget?

That God sees all hearts.

What power was given to Peter?
What did he tell to Ananias?
What happened then?
Who came to Peter soon after?
Did she know that Ananias was dead?
What did she tell Peter?
What happened to her?
What did God want to teach the young Church?

To be true.

Never Forget—

That "Thou God seest me."
That to pretend is to be untrue.
That a lie kills something in the soul.

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

[For the entire school.]

1. What did the members of the Church in Jerusalem do? **Sold their possessions and gave to the needy.**
2. What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira? **Lying to the Holy Ghost.**
3. What led them to lie? **The love of money.**
4. Whom did Peter say they tried to deceive? **God.**
5. What punishment came upon them? **Sudden death.**
6. What is the GOLDEN TEXT? **"Man looketh,"** etc.

OUR CHURCH CATECHISM.—10. What does our Lord say of those who reject Him? He declares that they ought to believe in Him; and that they would believe in Him if they humbly and patiently listened to His words. 11. What is His warning to them? That His word shall condemn them at the last day.

THE LESSON OUTLINE.

Lights and Shadows in the Pentecostal Church.

I. THE CHURCH'S GLORY.

1. **Its Unity.** *One heart and one soul.* v. 32.
Be of one mind. 2 Cor. 13. 11.
In one spirit. Phil 1. 27.
2. **Its Fellowship.** *All things common.* v. 32.
If any fellowship. Phil. 2. 1, 2.
Every man another's wealth. 1 Cor. 10. 24.
3. **Its Testimony.** *Witness of the resurrection.* v. 33.
I delivered unto you. 1 Cor. 15. 1-4.
Both to small and great. Acts 26. 22, 23.
4. **Its Generosity.** *Acts the apostles' feet.* vs. 34-37.
Do good unto all men. Gal. 6. 10.
Bountiful eye....blessed. Prov. 22. 9.

II. THE CHURCH'S SHAME.

1. **Selfishness.** *Kept back....price.* v. 2.
Covetousness....idolatry. Col. 3. 5.
They that will be rich. 1 Tim. 6. 9.
2. **Hypocrisy.** *At the apostles' feet.* v. 2.
Not every one that saith. Matt. 7. 21-23.
Hypocrites....heap up wrath. Job 36. 13.
3. **Falsehood.** *Lie to the Holy Ghost.* vs. 3, 4.
Lying lips....abomination. Prov. 12. 22.
Yea, for so much. vs. 7, 8.
All liars....in the lake. Rev. 21. 8.
4. **Death.** *Gave up the ghost.* vs. 5-10.
The wages of sin....death. Rom. 6. 23.
Sin....bringeth forth death. James 1. 15.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

General Statement.

Our last lesson left the blind man, with Peter and John, standing on trial before the Sanhedrin. They were sent aside while their case was discussed, and brought back to hear the decision—not punishment this time, for they had become the heroes of the common people; but a command not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. The apostles' prompt reply was, "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." When dismissed they hastened to their fellow-Christians, who began at once a service of thanksgiving and prayer. This was followed by a repetition of the supernatural signs of Pentecost. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spoke the word of God with boldness." So says verse 31; and the story of our lesson follows. We notice the sweet spirit of unity that bound together the hearts of these early Christians. They literally lived for one another. Self-seeking was not anywhere seen. Men eagerly sold their homes that the money might be used by others who had greater need than they. The apostles continued to work miracles; but by far the greatest of miracles was the "great grace" which showed itself in beauty in every disciple. We see a perfect specimen flower from this garden of God in the lovely life of Barnabas. In horrible contrast to his whole and pure soul came Ananias and Sapphira. Already I have written of their sin and punish-

ment; but the questions which arise concerning both are so important it may be well to repeat here in brief what is elsewhere said at length. Their actual misdemeanor was that with ostentation they sold their property, pretending to give all its price to the needs of the Church, but withholding a portion for themselves. Their *sin* was much deeper than this act; it was the spirit of the Pharisee, pretense to special consecration while living for selfish ends; it was not miserliness merely; not lying merely; it was *lying to the Holy Ghost*; conscious, defiant, blasphemous hypocrisy. A great part of our Lord's mission on earth was to proclaim God's everlasting hostility to the Pharisaic spirit, that sort of contemptible hypocrisy which lays down duties for others and dodges one's own. If the infant Church stood for anything at all in the world it stood as a protest against this venomous spirit, which had saturated with poison every religion, false and true, and which had so permeated the Jewish hierarchy that its discordant leaders harmonized in a hurry to put Jesus to death. And now, before the Christian Church is a year old, in steps a man with the heart of a hypocrite, and performs an action so admirable that, if he had not been unmasked by God, he would at once have been put on a pedestal as a saint.

Verse 32. Peter and John have been released. Their Christian friends unite in thanksgiving and prayer, and the Holy Spirit descends upon them all; and while the house in which they are assembled is shaken the worshippers are lifted to a holy courage, and so filled with heavenly affections that at once they find themselves of **one heart and one soul**—one in love and purpose, in feeling and will. Nowadays we familiarly use the word "body" for a club, or church, or society of any sort; and when a society is harmonious it has, of course, one heart, one soul, for its body. With the early Christians this became true to an unequal degree. They were the "body of Christ." The heart of each overflowed with love and kindness toward all who had become fellow-members of that Body. If one of them saw another in pain or poverty he became in pain or poverty himself till that other was relieved. **Neithersaid any.** At Pentecost (Acts 2. 45) the wealthier disciples had freely given to the poorer, but now none claim their goods as their own, although they truly own them. Such was the power of love, making five thousand **one**.

33. With great power. Spiritual power; essentially different from intellectual power or social influence; it came from the residence of the Holy Spirit, not only in their hearts, but in their words. As an illustration, Mr. Gladstone, when Prime Minister, published a book of strong and beautiful thoughts in translucent style. It is a noble book, such as in any case would be effective on the thought of thousands. But the political and social position of the author carries its influence much farther than it could go alone. The two forces work together, but are different in kind. Now, these disciples had a certain forceful truth to utter, which of itself was impressive; they had a certain measure of intellectual ability (how much, perhaps, we of the nineteenth century cannot properly measure); they had by their very lack of social position a certain advantage with common people; but added to all these they had, by direct gift, a divine power in every sentence which multiplied to an untold degree the effectiveness of their message. The passing of years does not weaken the

influence of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*; but the power of that book does not reside in its thought, or its style, or the social position of its author; for the first two are not remarkable, and the last is hardly known; it resides rather in the Holy Spirit, attached as a supernatural Motor to every chapter, every sentence, every word, in answer to the prayer of the writer. Centuries ago the weeds hid his grave; but each year careless people by the thousand take up his book to be thrilled and made thoughtful and devout by the divine power with which (we may reverently say) by means of prayer he endowed it. We must never forget or ignore the reality of this divine power. Such power attended the apostles when they preached. Such power will back every word you utter, every sentence you write, if you attach yourself to God and are filled with the Holy Spirit. **Witness.** Testimony. Notwithstanding threats the apostles continued to make the **resurrection of the Lord Jesus** the emphatic fundamental fact of their teaching. **Great grace.** "Grace" is primarily a gift. All gifts which would help these Christians to perform their holy task were given them—health, ability, logic, eloquence, personal magnetism, attentiveness of hearers.

34, 35. Neither was there any among them that lacked. Christian love (glorified in the First Epistle to the Corinthians under the name of CHARITY) here had its perfect manifestation; but we must not assume that socialism based on religious neighborhood originated with the Christian faith. At all public religious feasts in Jerusalem there was a sort of temporary community of goods; and though many, perhaps most, citizens found themselves to be indirectly reimbursed by the stir of trade that such sudden inflows of people brought, nevertheless in its beginning this public hospitality was essentially religious. **Possessors of lands or houses.** This is interesting, for it seems to point to wealthy converts resident in Jerusalem. Most of the early converts to Christianity apparently were poor, but there were not lacking believers in Jesus among the rich and aristocratic families of the capital. **Sold them and brought the price.** This primitive

Christian socialism was: 1. Spontaneous; not apparently the result of any political theory or social philosophy, but of an immediate need. 2. Voluntary; not to any degree compulsory ("was it not thine own? was it not in thine own power?"). 3. Exceptional, or at least not universal; long after this, Acts 12. 12, Christians are still mentioned as owners of houses. 4. Temporary; the method proved inadequate to the needs of the growing Church; but the spirit shown in that beautiful sentence, verse 32, with which we begin our study, "Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own," is the very essence of Christianity. Such a spirit always animates the true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, though circumstances may greatly modify its manifestation. **Laid them down at the apostles' feet.** Gave them into the apostles' charge. There is less furniture in the East than with us, and by consequence more things are laid upon the floor. **Distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.** And probably with the slightest possible form or system; perhaps without "bookkeeping."

36. Joses. Joseph; to become famous hereafter by the name of **Barnabas** as the associate of Paul. It is a beautiful compliment to his character that the **apostles** ceased to use his name, and called him, instead, **Son of consolation.** He was a Jew born outside the Holy Land, one of the "dispersion." Just how far foreign-born Levites enjoyed the tribal privileges of ministrations at the temple, and the secular advantages which came therefrom, is not now known. The island of **Cyprus**, where he was born, was so completely given over to idolatry of the baser, more sensual sort, that in Latin and in nearly all modern languages the word Cyprian came to be used for a person wholly given over to immorality. But Barnabas was born there—like a lily growing in the ooze of a swamp.

37. Having land. Whether in Cyprus or in Palestine we know not. **Sold it, and brought the money.** Verse 34 tells of others who acted in the same way. Barnabas may have been the first, although mentioned later, or (which is probable) he may have been the richest member of the infant Church, and have sold *all* of his property. **Laid it at the apostles' feet.** The same phrase that we found in verse 35.

1. But. In distinction from others, and in special contrast with the course of Barnabas. **Ananias** means "Grace-of-the-Lord." **Sapphira** means "Beautiful." **Possession.** "Real estate," as we learn from verse 3. The whole narrative here, as in verses 34, 35, shows that the action of those who sold property was entirely voluntary.

2. Kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it. Ananias reserved for

himself a portion of the proceeds of the land which he sold. Of course he had a right to do this, for he was under no obligation to give a penny of it. But others (see verses 34, 35, 37) had brought the entire proceeds, and Ananias also was ostensibly doing this. What he said when he brought the money is not told, but every part of the story shows that he pretended to give the whole, when he really gave only a part. For the sin of which these two were guilty, see Lesson Statement. **Laid it at the apostles' feet.** For the third time this peculiar phrase occurs.

3. There the money lies while **Peter** speaks; he knows the facts by the teaching of the Spirit, and acts under inspiration. **Satan.** The Hebrew proper name for the prince of fallen angels; Matt. 9. 34. **Filled thine heart.** Notice that the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost, while Ananias was filled with Satan, and neither could have been filled with either without personal consent.

4. While. "Whiles," as the word is printed in most Bibles, is merely the old form of "while." **Remained.** Before the sale. **Thine own.** The Church had no claim upon it. **Why hast thou conceived?** An assertion of personal responsibility. We are not responsible for Satan's suggestions; we are responsible when we adopt them. **Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.** This reminds one of David's confession, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," made in the very act of confessing his wrongdoing to men. Crimes against men may be committed, but all sins are against God.

5. Ananias hearing these words fell down. Peter did not strike him dead.. It was "the act of God." An act of solemn righteous judgment. **Gave up the ghost.** Surrendered the principle of life. **Great fear.** This "great fear" would not only make Christians more conscientious, it would hinder those who had not been spiritually changed from joining the holy cause; the little society seems to have been imperiled by its sudden popularity.

6. Young men, who were present, **wound him up in linen, carried him out** to some proper place, perhaps a tomb, and **buried him.** The careful medical and civic superintendence of burial, which is the chief safeguard of life in modern days, was unknown in the ancient world; it is indeed a product of Christianity.

7. Three hours after. We cannot at this distance of time explain the lengthy service of the Church, nor Sapphira's ignorance of her husband's death.

8. Tell me. The whole narrative implies that Peter acted throughout under the direction of the Holy Spirit. **So much.** "So much and no more." **Yea, for so much.** A deliberate lie.

9. Agreed together. Conspiracy to do wrong

greatly aggravates guilt. **To tempt the Spirit of the Lord.** To try or test whether he be as discerning, pure, and powerful as he claims to be. **Shall carry thee out.** The Spirit directed Peter to pronounce this penalty.

10. Then fell she down. Dead beside her money. **Straightway.** Immediately.

11. Great fear. Great love had been given to

all the Church by the Holy Spirit, and now they are made afraid to offend him. Christians are solemnly set apart to his service, and their sins peculiarly displease him. "The reason for this selection was to present and record at this *beginning* of the Christian Church a representative and memorial instance of the just doom of the hypocrite." — *Whedon.*

CRITICAL NOTES.

Verse 32. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul. This beautiful state of things, the cementing of a great multitude numbering thousands, of diverse languages and nationalities, into a common brotherhood, was the natural result of the Gospel. Isaiah (2. 4), Joel (3. 10), and Micah (3. 10) had told of nations that should come under its sway: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." The message of the angels announcing the birth of Jesus was—Luke 2. 14: "On earth peace, good will toward men." **They had all things common.** In doing this the disciples yielded to the natural impulses of their first love. There is no evidence in the New Testament history of the Church that this custom was continued in Jerusalem or repeated elsewhere. Paul in his exhortation, 1 Cor. 16. 2, 3, that the richer shall help the poorer, assumes that each possessed his own. Those who insist that Christians of the present day are not strict followers of the Master because they are not communists do so in ignorance of the Gospel history.

33. With great power gave the apostles witness. The effectiveness of the witness for the resurrection consisted, not in the fact that it proved the Gospel, but that the fact of the resurrection, to which there were so many living witnesses, was a welcome doctrine to a world sunken in poverty, ground by tyranny, and having but little hopes unless it be in the life to come. **Great grace was upon them all.** Grace has in theology various meanings. Among them, (1) the unmerited love and favor of God shown in the salvation provided in Christ; (2) the divine influence acting within the heart, to regenerate, sanctify, and keep it; (3) the power to exercise saving faith, to live the Christian life, and to endure with patience the trials of the earthly Christian life. See *Standard Dictionary*, art. "Grace." Here it probably means the favor with which the disciples were received among the people.

35. Distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. This would be very unsatisfactory to the average communist of our time. He wants it all.

36. Joses. Revised Version, "Joseph." **Barnabas.** So called because of his style of preaching

He afterward became one of the foremost missionaries, Acts 13. 2; was called by Luke an apostle, 14. 4. **A Levite.** As such in early times he could not have owned land. Later the regulation was not adhered to so strictly, since we read that the prophet Jeremiah (33. 7-9) purchased a field, and did not necessarily apply outside of Palestine. **Cyprus.** A fertile island which abounds in forests and mines. Many Jews lived there. Cyprus is of considerable importance in early Church history.

1. But. Luke, with the frankness and honesty which characterize the inspired writers, now reveals the first blot upon the character of the infant Church. In sad contrast with the generous benefaction of Barnabas stands the abortive attempt of one man and his wife to gain from the disciples the name for good deeds without paying the price. The holy emulation which sprang up among the disciples was doubtless followed by a hearty expression of appreciation among the people. This Ananias coveted not in the sense of Paul, 1 Cor. 12. 31; but of Moses, Exod. 20. 17. Not having been disenthralled from the bondage of Mammon, but having gained admission to the ranks of the believers without having been born again, he sought, together with his wife, to gain by hypocrisy what he did not deserve because of benevolence.

2. Kept back. (*ἐνοσίχθωνοι, enosichthonoi*), from a Greek word signifying to withdraw covertly and appropriate to one's own use. It would appear from the word used that Ananias sold the land, not necessarily his whole property (for it was altogether a voluntary matter), intending or pretending to give the proceeds to the apostles to be used for the poor. "When they declared that the whole amount of the sale now belonged to the Church, and to its poor members in particular, but at the same time retained a part of the sum, they were guilty of embezzling, and, indeed, virtually, of stealing money." — *Lange.*

3. Why hath Satan filled thine heart? This question implies that Ananias could have resisted the temptation, for why should he be asked why he did a thing if he could not help it? Peter's assumption that Satan, the prince of evil spirits, a personal agent, was the cause of the temptation, was

the simple knowledge of a truth revealed to man through the Bible. His knowledge of the intended deception may have been obtained by ordinary means.

4. Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? "The force of the expression is 'to lay anything deep in the heart,' and implies deliberation on the part of the offender." The fact that his wife was privy and party to the plan shows that it had been previously determined. **Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.** Comparing the third verse with this we see that the Holy Ghost is God. It is not implied that Ananias had not tried to deceive men, for he had, but that was comparatively so unimportant as not to be worthy of mention. The enormity of the sin consists in the attempt to make lying to be possible on the part of a disciple of Christ. The terrible punishment that befell Ananias and his wife reminds us of the warning given to our first parents: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

5. Hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost. "To wretched men the fate of these two persons will ever seem to be unreasonably severe." In all moral issues some professing to be Christians also take sides with the world. The dividing line is not on the basis of church membership, but of vital sympathy with the Lord Christ, whose cause is at stake. In this instance the punishment was not meted out because they were sinners above others, but in order that the Church from the very beginning might have for all time a memorial of the just doom which awaits the hypocrite.

6. Carried him out and buried him. The Jews were accustomed to bury the dead much sooner than we do, partly because of more rapid decomposition in the warmer climate, and partly because of their peculiar religious feeling relating to defilement by contact with a dead body.

11. All the Church. "The stretching forth of God's hand in the healing of the lame man tended to build up the Church, the severe penalty of Ananias to save it from the danger of a shallow profession as substitute for saintly piety."—*International Revision Commentary.*

Thoughts for Young People.

Three Observations.

1. Great grace and perfect love are synonymous. New trials, new crosses, new duties demand new graces; the grace is ready on the asking. If perfect love filled all believers, making them of one heart and soul, how brethren would strengthen one another, how ministers would preach, how Christians would give money, how the Church would multiply its missions, how soon the world would be converted!

2. "Hypocrites do the devil's drudgery in Christ's

liery."—Henry. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death," James 1. 14, 15. Perfect truthfulness in character; transparency of soul; seeming and being alike; professing no more than is, seeking no credit, honor, or praise for more than we are to do—this is simple honesty. That Satan suggests and urges is no excuse for or palliation of the sin.

3. God sees not as man sees. There is a wide difference between man's estimate of sin and God's as to its character, its enormity, its influence, its proper and just penalty. God spared the avowed foe and persecutor, and smites down the professed friend.

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

The most ancient form of community of goods is found in the monasteries of the Buddhists, where an attempt is made to reach an ideal sanctity by renouncing both property and marriage. Greece had a form of community of goods ascribed to the order of Pythagoras. Plato was the author of a work on an ideal state of society in favor of communism, the best that has ever been written. Archontes and warriors were to be wholly dedicated to the state, and were to own nothing in the form of private property. The sect of Essenes among the Jews practiced a sort of communism similar to that among the Buddhists. The personal property of a Buddhist priest is restricted to three robes, a girdle for the loins, an alms bowl, a needle, a water strainer, and a razor for shaving the head, the law requiring that the hair must not be allowed to grow beyond two inches. Among Chinese Buddhists food obtained by a mendicant must be divided into three portions, one to be given to any man who may be found in want, another to be carried to some quiet place for birds and beasts, and the third for his own use. But there is nothing of any of these forms of communistic living or doctrine found in any of the history of the apostolic or early Christian Church.

It is said that the Christians continued to go to the temple, which it is well known they did so long as Jerusalem stood, and that they continued in "breaking of bread from house to house," which Mr. Wesley supposes to have been the daily observance of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Dr. Bloomfield thinks there was a common participation of meals taken in charitable communion and thankfulness and followed by prayer, and perhaps from these arose the first idea of the *agape* or love feast which was afterward introduced into the Church. The bread of the Jews was thin and hard, and was first broken before being distributed. But whatever form of bread is used, it is never cut

with a knife, but broken with the hand, even if it is a large soft loaf. The unleavened cakes are crisp, and if used soon after being cooked, as is the custom, they are very palatable, though rather hard to digest. The size of the loaf varies in different localities, being commonly round and five or six inches in diameter. In the rural districts a sort of pancake of unleavened dough, a foot in diameter, is the commoner bread.

The burial of Ananias was after oriental form, the body being swathed in pure white linen. One of the Methodist missionaries, the Rev. J. T. McMahon, who died in the Himalaya mountains, was buried at his own request after native fashion, his body placed between two boards wrapped round with white cotton cloth. No coffins are used in the East, till one gets among Chinese. Burial occurs soon after death as the climatic conditions preclude delay.

By Way of Illustration.

Verses 32-37. They first believed; this made them of one heart and one soul; and as the next step they had all one purse. To seek the common purse without the common faith and love would be to seek an effect without a cause. This form of communion has passed, but its spirit has never perished. The early Church appointed seven deacons, "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," to care for the poor, and they were solemnly ordained for the work. In the Middle Ages thousands of the fortunate gave their all to the poor or into the treasury of the Church. Princes begged themselves, and then begged their bread barefoot. Today no great disaster can befall a community by fire or flood or pestilence but that the stores of the Church and the abundance of the wealthy and the pennies of the poor rush to the rescue. Wheat trains are loaded on Western prairies, corn ships sail into welcoming harbors, Red Cross agents follow barbarous armies. In the early centuries cultured paganism was amazed to see Christians give not only wealth, but tenderest personal ministrations. The Church, as a whole, is vastly nearer the ideal of self-sacrifice than when the apostolic Church had all things common.—*C. M. Southgate.*

False giving. When Barnabas made his gift the devil promptly presented a counterfeit of that noble generosity. The whole history of the Church is given in the parable of the tares. No sooner does God work grace than the devil sows tares. Cain counterfeited Abel's acceptable sacrifice. Janes and Zambres counterfeited the miracles of Moses in the wilderness. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord. Moses had his Korah, Joshua had his Achan, Elisha had his Gehazi, Jesus had his Judas, the apostles had their Ananias, Paul had Alexander the coppersmith. The danger of the Church has never been from without. The

more she has been persecuted the more she has prospered; but when those within are false, her power is paralyzed and she is defeated.—*Bible Studies*, '92.

There is a short prayer in the *Book of Common Prayer* which says, "Grant that we may not so strive for things temporal that we shall lose things eternal." On Columbus's first visit to America an Indian gave a handful of gold dust in exchange for one of the Spaniard's cheap toys, and no sooner did he possess it than he bounded to the woods, looking often behind him, fearing that the Spaniard might repent of having parted with such a treasure. We need to know the value of our heavenly inheritance, and then we shall not want to barter it for a little earthly treasure which will perish with the using.

Before the Class.

Approach to the lesson. Bring up the scene with which the last lesson closed—the court scene. After sending Peter and John out of their presence they confess that a great miracle had been wrought in the healing of the lame man. But in order that it might not spread farther they called the prisoners in and forbade them to preach. This the bold disciples refused to do, but, after being threatened, they were allowed to go free. They at once sought the rest of the disciples (why?), and there followed that tender prayer meeting. Call attention to the nature of the one recorded prayer on that occasion. What was it for? *Not for protection and safety, but for boldness and power in preaching the word!* A great outpouring of the Holy Spirit followed. No wonder. With the Holy Spirit came the boldness. It is always so. Here our lesson begins.

Method of presentation. Our lesson to-day is one of strong contrasts. They are represented by Barnabas "the good," and Ananias the hypocrite, as far apart as white and black. Speak of the effect of complete personal consecration on the part of the young Church, as evidenced by such expressions as "of one heart," "of one soul," "all things common," "great power," "great grace," etc. Explain each of these expressions, and show how all hinged upon the complete surrender of self and goods to God. Make it clear that "stewardship" implies now all that is desirable in the plan they adopted then. We are not to give all to God, and then go without—except in the sense that it is all his, anyway, and we are to use it for his cause. That may require the giving up of all property, but usually not. A man who gives the Lord's cause a proper share of his profits will in the end give more, and do more good, than if he gave all he had at once and thus deprive himself of his producing capital. Show how genuine fel-

lowship begat confidence in each other. Barnabas is the type of the man who lays himself and all he has on the altar. Ananias and Sapphira are the type of an exactly opposite character. Do not dwell, in small classes, too minutely upon the details here given. Make it very plain, however, that it was God and not Peter who took the life; and God knew more than the record gives us. This wicked man and his wife deliberately planned to deceive—to pass for more than they were worth.

In classes not too young it would be well to show that the great danger to the infant Church came from within. It was hypocrisy. Imprisonment, trial, and persecution from without only strengthened the Church. It is still so. If criticism comes up that the punishment was too severe, explain that perhaps nothing less would have produced the fear that fell upon them as a wholesome warning. It was so with the first Sabbath breaker, Num. 15. 26, also with Achan; and Uzzah, Josh. 7. 1; 2 Sam. 6. 6-7. The surgeon's knife seems more unkind than the poultice, but if needed it is really not so.

Practical teachings. Verse 32. When people get close to God they get close to each other.

Verse 33. Great power comes only upon the truly consecrated.

Verse 34. God takes care of those who commit all to him.

Verse 37. All we have is God's, and we are but the stewards of it.

Verse 2. A part kept back bars out the whole.

Verse 3. No sin can be successfully covered up.

Verse 3. All sin is against God.

Verse 4. Deliberate sin is the deepest sin.

Verse 5. Those who are guilty before God will have no word of self-justification.

Verse 8. One sin always leads to another.

Heart thoughts. Am I "of one heart" with all of God's people? Have I the power in God's service I ought to have? Have I laid myself and my all upon the altar?

The Teachers' Meeting.

Begin with the incident of Barnabas, the community of goods, and the motives. . . . Show the sin of Ananias, and get the scholars to analyze its elements: (1) Selfishness; (2) Inordinate longing for the appearance of sanctity; (3) Deceit; (4) Conscientious hypocrisy; (5) . . . ; (6) . . . ; (7) . . . What sins are here warned against? Obtain answers from the class, and suggest illustrations of each sin. . . . Especially point out the evil of lying, and show how a lie may be spoken without words. . . . The dangers of sin in the Church. . . . Why are not sins punished in the same way now? . . . The attributes of God: (1) Omniscience; (2) Holiness—hatred of sin; (3) Interest in his people; (4) Presence in the Church; (5) His power, etc. What does this suggest that the character of the Church should be?

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

NO. 1.

More love to thee, O Christ.
Take my life.
Yield not to temptation.
Lord, I care not for riches.
Stand up, stand up for Jesus.

NO. 2.

Seek, my soul, the narrow gate.
Ever looking upward, as a trusting child.
My body, soul, and spirit.
All for Jesus.
Ready to follow God's command.

References.

FREEMAN'S HANDBOOK. Ver. 36; Use of the term "Son," 650. Ver. 6; Preparation for burial, 822; time for burial, 826.

Heart Talks on the Lesson.

Here is a glimpse of social life according to God's ideal. This is the way it will be when love displaces selfishness in the management of affairs in this world, when the will of God is done here as it is in heaven. It was not brought about by awkward coercion. The apostles did not say to the people, "You have no right to keep your property for yourself, you must equalize it with those who have less." There would have been revolution and rebellion if they had. These good times, when "there was none among them that lacked," came to pass as all true reform must come, through the changed hearts of the people. There was a common sentiment of benevolence; a public opinion as to the rights of property holders which, by the law of cause and effect, resulted in a beautiful and peaceful adjustment of capital and labor. The social sky is stormy, but here is a little patch of blue which foretells a clear day in prospect. The Gospel of Jesus will yet solve the problems and settle the unrest of humanity. The love which swept the selfishness out of these hearts and made everyone perfectly happy to say that nothing he possessed was his own will some day rule this world. Doesn't your heart bound joyfully at the prospect? Should it not make you an enthusiastic and devoted follower of Him who is the great example of unselfish loving and giving, and who has power to make us like himself?

Some one has said, if St. Luke were describing modern instead of primitive Christianity, he would have to change the phraseology of these verses of our lesson somewhat this way: "And the multitude of them that professed were of hard heart and stony soul, and everyone said that all things which he possessed were his own; and they had

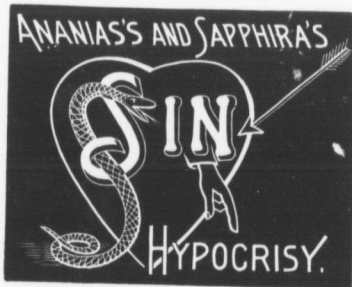
all things in the fashion, and with great power gave they witness to the attractions of the world and the love of gold; and great selfishness was upon them all. There were many among them that lacked love, for many that were possessors of lands bought more, and sometimes gave a small part thereof for the public good, so that their names were heralded in the newspapers and distribution of praise was made to everyone as he desired." Pity, if it be true!

The way to make unselfish society is to make unselfish individuals. So the question for you and me is this: "Have I found out for myself the joy of sharing with others in the true spirit of love whatever I possess?" There is a very serious lesson for us in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Probably their first impulse to share in the general benevolence was from the Holy Spirit. But Satan by specious reasoning persuaded them not to do just what they at first clearly saw was right. So they made a pretense of obeying the Spirit while really following the suggestion of the evil One. They wanted the credit of benevolence while secretly seeking their own advantage. God hates hypocrisy; a lie is abomination to him. Jesus sits over against the treasury now as really as when the rich men and the poor widow cast in their gifts.

He sees "how" we give. He would rather have your mite with your love than a purseful without it. He loves a cheerful whole-souled giver. When the heart is full of love giving is a great joy. When the Church is full of love through the Holy Spirit nobody will be afraid of "the collection;" it will be an interesting and delightful part of the worship.

Blackboard.

BY J. T. HARTNAGEL, ESQ.



LESSON VII. THE PRISON OPENED.

GOLDEN TEXT. We ought to obey God rather than men. Acts 5. 29.

[Feb. 14.]

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

Acts 5. 17-32. [Commit to memory verses 29-32.]

[Read verses 12-32.]

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Is'ra-el, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors; but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

REVISED VERSION.

- 17 But the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy, and laid hands on the apostles, and put them in public ward. But an angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them out, and said, Go ye, and stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.
- 21 And when they heard this, they entered into the temple about daybreak, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Is'ra-el, and sent to the prison house to have them brought. But the officers that came found them not in the prison;
- 23 and they returned, and told, saying, The prison-house we found shut in all safety, and the keepers standing at the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were much perplexed concerning them whereunto this would grow.
- 25 And there came one and told them, Behold, the men whom ye put in the prison are in the temple standing and teaching the people. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and behold, ye have filled Je-ru-sa-lem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29 Then Pe'ter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Je'sus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Is-ra-el, and forgiveness of sins.

32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

them, but without violence; for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, We straitly charged you not to teach in this name: and behold, ye have filled Je-ru-sa-lem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. But Pe'ter and the apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Je'sus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree. Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Is-ra-el, and remission of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Time.—Not definitely known, but probably between A. D. 30 and A. D. 33. **Place.**—The Hall of the Sanhedrin; the prison; the temple—all in Jerusalem.

Home Readings.

M. The Prison Opened. Acts 5. 17-32.

Tu. Rejoicing. Acts 5. 33-42.

W. Jonah's prayer. Jonah 2. 1-9.

Th. Fearless obedience. Jer. 26. 8-15.

F. Suffering for Christ. 1 Peter 3. 8-17.

S. Blessed in trial. Luke 6. 17-23.

Sa. Boldness for truth. Dan. 3. 8-18.

Lesson Hymns.

No. 139, New Canadian Hymnal.

Jesus, thy Blood and Righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.

No. 137, New Canadian Hymnal.

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee.

No. 138, New Canadian Hymnal.

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

1. Prisoners, v. 17, 18.

Who were these prisoners?

By whom were they put in prison?

Why were the Sadducees so indignant?

What warning of the treatment had the apostles received? Luke 21. 12.

2. Preachers, v. 19-28.

Who released the prisoners?

What command did the angel give?

What was the response of the apostles?

Wherein did this show true courage rather than rashness?

Who sent for the prisoners in the morning?

What report did the officers make?

How then were the prisoners released?

What did the council think of this report?

What new surprise was brought to them?

Why were the apostles arrested without violence?

Where were the prisoners taken?

What question was asked them?

What charge was made against them?

What was meant by "bring this man's blood upon us?"

3. Witnesses, v. 29-32.

Who were the witnesses?

What duty did Peter declare? GOLDEN TEXT.

To what three things were the apostles witnesses?

Who else was a witness?

How did this boldness affect the council?

Who pleaded for these witnesses before the council? Verses 34-39.

What wrong was done there? Verse 40.

Teachings of the Lesson.

1. The path of duty is the way of safety. God shields those who are true to him. He can make a prison tolerable or deliver from prison as he will.

2. Whom should we obey, God or man? His orders must govern at all hazard. "The higher law" demands our supreme loyalty.

3. God honors faithful witnesses. The Holy Spirit is his witness to confirm human testimony.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. Verses 17, 18.

Who had the apostles arrested?

What had this high priest done before this?

Where were the prisoners confined?

Why was this necessary?

2. Verses 19-28.

- Who released them?
 What message was given by the angel?
 Why should they speak in the temple?
 What does he call the Gospel?
 How soon did the apostles start again?
 When the council met what did they do?
 What discovery did they make?
 How did the officer find the prison?
 What made the rulers afraid?
 Why was no violence used?
 What were the charges?

3. Verses 29-32.

- When may legal authority be disobeyed?
 What did Peter claim for Jesus and his apostles?
 With what did he charge the assembly?
 How does Christ rule?
 How does he give repentance?
 In what way does the Holy Ghost witness for Christ?
 How may we have God on our side?

Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson do we find—

1. How God takes care of his people?
2. Whom we ought to obey?
3. What Christ gives to men?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

- What power was given to the apostles?
 In whose name did they work miracles?
 What did this show?
 What did the high priest order one day?
 Why did not the apostles stay all night in prison?
 What did the angel tell them to go on doing?
 Where did they go in the morning?
 Where did the Sanhedrin meet to try them? **In the Hall of Judgment.**

THE LESSON OUTLINE.**How God Helps His People in Persecution.**

- BY ANGELIC MINISTRY.
The angel of the Lord. v. 19.
 Encampment round about. Psalm 34. 7.
 Ministering spirits. Heb. 1. 14.
- BY DELIVERANCE.
Brought them forth. v. 19.
 In six troubles. Job. 5. 19.
 Knoweth how to deliver. 2 Peter 2. 9.
- BY DIRECTION IN DUTY.
Go, stand and speak. v. 20.
 It shall be given you. Matt. 10. 19.
 The Comforter... shall teach. John 14. 26.
- BY FEARS OF ENEMIES.
They doubted of them. v. 24.

- What surprised them?
 Where did they send men to find the apostles?
 What did the high priest ask?
 What did Peter answer?
 Was this right?
 Who were the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus? **The apostles.**
 When are we his witnesses? **When he has risen in our hearts.**

Three Things to Remember.

God knows when we suffer for his sake.
 He will send his angel to deliver us.
 It is noble to "stand up for Jesus."

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

1. Where were the apostles put by the rulers? **In the common prison.**
2. How were they set free? **By an angel.**
3. What did they then do? **They preached in the temple.**
4. Before whom were they again brought? **Before the council.**
5. What did they say to their accusers? **GOLDEN TEXT: "We ought to obey," etc.**
6. What was their testimony concerning Jesus before the council? **That he was Prince and Saviour.**

OUR CHURCH CATECHISM.—12. What blessing

does He pronounce on believers? To Peter he gave it thus: **Matthew xvi. 17.** And to Thomas He gave it thus: **John xx. 29.** 13. How does our Lord teach us His religion? By His word and by His Spirit.

- No wisdom... against the Lord. **Prov. 21. 30.**
 In nothing terrified. **Phil. 1. 28.**
- V. BY POPULAR REGARD.
They feared the people. v. 26.
 Common people heard... gladly. **Mark 12. 37.**
 People magnified them. **Acts 5. 13.**
- VI. BY IMPARTING COURAGE.
We ought to obey God. v. 29.
 What the Lord saith. **1 Kings 22. 14.**
 Open my mouth boldly. **Eph. 6. 19.**
- VII. BY THE SPIRIT'S TESTIMONY.
Also the Holy Ghost. v. 32.
 Comforter... shall testify. **John 15. 26.**
 Sent down from heaven. **1 Peter 1. 12.**

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

General Statement.

The five verses between the last lesson and this tell of the continued miraculous power given to the apostles, of the regular meetings of the Church in Solomon's porch, of the increased popularity of the Christian movement, and of the steady increase of Christian membership. So great became the reputation of Peter as a wonder-worker that the sick were brought in beds to the streets that his shadow, falling upon them, might exert curative influence. The incident told in this lesson follows immediately after the last lesson. The date is not exactly known, but it was probably between A. D. 30 and 33. The first scene of the story is the hall of the Sanhedrin, the next a prison, the third the temple courts—all in Jerusalem. Behind the story of the lesson lie three great facts, which have to do both with the spiritual and natural world. The *first fact* is illustrated in the first two verses. Always Satan and his minions are plotting against the followers of Jesus. Always the success of the Gospel fills with indignation the hearts of those who hate it. Always, except when checked by fear, the spirit of evil will use force against Christianity, and persecute where it cannot seduce. The *second fact* is that God's angels minister to all believing souls. To what extent each of us is attended by a guardian angel we may not know, but we do know that all natural forces and all heavenly forces are alike "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation." For us prison doors may not be shot back; miracles may no longer be within our reach; but if we are true believers "sickness and sorrow, pain and death" are all heavenly attendants—angels sent, not only to beckon us nearer to God, but to enhance our comfort on earth and our felicity in heaven. The *third fact* is the worthlessness of public opinion. It is a great dead force, like physical weight, which by the movement of the center of gravity may suddenly lurch over from one side to the other. The changes of view recorded in the gospels and the Acts—of the common people concerning Jesus; of the disciples concerning their Master; of the Pharisees concerning the Christian movement; in short, of all classes of the people—are very full of edification to faithful readers now. The voice of the people is not the voice of God. Nevertheless, it is a good thing to have a restraining public sense when bad men are seeking the overthrow of God's work in the world.

Verse 17. The high priest. Either Caiaphas, who was actual high priest, or Annas, who in some way still retained the name and much of the power. **Rose up.** Was aroused to action. It was time for them to "rise up" if they meant to save their cause. **They that were with him.** His associates; religious and political leaders. See Acts 4. 6. **The sect of the Sadducees.** Christians and Sadducees are at cross purposes through all time; must be so. **Filled with indignation.** Because their authority was contemned. They were bound to defend their own notions at all hazards and against all evidence; for, if the cause of Jesus went up, theirs must go down.

18. Laid their hands on the apostles. Not personally, but by the proper officers. Probably all the twelve were now arrested. **In the common prison.** "In public ward." They were thus marked with disgrace as criminals. It was now probably afternoon, and their trial could not be held till the next day. During the interval they would get no food, according to oriental custom, except by the pitiful care of friends.

19. The angel. It was God's purpose to convince the Sanhedrin that it was warring with omnipotence. The angel is sent not to preach, but to liberate the imprisoned preachers, for men, not angels, are to call their fellow-men to repentance. **By night.** During the night.

20. Stand and speak. Take a bold stand. **In the temple.** That is, in its courts, where they had been arrested, and where the Christians

seem now to have stately met. It was the gathering place of the multitudes, and had become at once the fountain-head of the new sect and the center of opposition to it. **All the words of this life.** The life of Jesus's love in the soul, the spiritual life, the new life in Jesus.

21. They entered into the temple. They probably took their stand in Solomon's porch. **Early in the morning.** About daybreak; the morning sacrifice was at sunrise. People are a stir earlier in the hot climate of Palestine than with us. **The high priest came.** Came to the "hall Gazith," where the apostles were expected to stand trial. The full length of the temple inclosure stretched between it and Solomon's porch. **The council.** The Sanhedrin. **And all the senate.** This may be a mere repetition for the sake of emphasis, or it may mean that the emergency was so great that the high priest and **they that were with him** recognized unusual need of counsel, and called together men of age and acknowledged wisdom.

22, 23. The officers. Policemen we should now call them. They were Levites, under orders of the Sanhedrin and high priest. **The prison truly found we shut.** An empty prison, with doors securely shut, and military guards with stiff precision standing at their respective posts! **With all safety.** Clearly this prison had not been broken open. Are we to picture the angel opening the doors, leading out the twelve, and replacing locks and bolts, while the keepers, wide awake,

still knew nothing of it? The mere facts are stated; of the details we are not told. **No man within.** This probably means "within" the cells in which the apostles had been confined.

24. The captain of the temple. The commander of the Levite police. **Chief priests.** Not high priests, but leading members of the priestly aristocracy. **They doubted of them.** "They were much perplexed concerning them."

Whereunto this would grow. What would come of all this. It really seemed as if this strange force which made illiterate men wise, restored health and life, and flung back prison bars, might be "of God."

25. Came one and told them. What he told them was even more astonishing, if possible, than was the emptiness of the prison. This quiet defiance of religious and civil authority presented a problem even harder to explain than the miracle. Why did the apostles not hide?

26. The captain himself arrested them this time. Without violence. To-day's courtesy was unlike yesterday's brutality. The apostles did not fear the rulers, but the rulers feared the people, which shows the steady increasing popularity of the apostles. They were loved and revered for their piety, for their supernatural power, and, perhaps most of all, "for the enemies they had made." **Stoned.** Most of the "stonings" recorded in the New Testament were due to mob violence, and the people were now greatly excited.

27. When they had brought them. Across the temple courts from Solomon's porch to the "hall Gaziath," where the Sanhedrin statelyly met. **They set them before.** On that very spot, surrounded by these judges, Jesus had stood; Peter and John had been there a few weeks before; now all the apostles are to be tried. **The high priest.** Either Annas or Caiaphas, as we have seen. Dr. Gloag believes the Sanhedrin to have been divided into two factions, led respectively by Annas the Sadducee and Gamaliel the Pharisee. **Asked them.** The high priest conducted all examinations before this court.

28. Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach? So the first charge is disobedience to magistrates. See Acts 4. 18.

Why did they not ask, "How did you escape?" Perhaps they did not dare to. **In this name.** Concerning this person. **Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine.** Jerusalem was the heart of Hebrew worship. "Doctrine" means teaching. The charge is, "You are infecting our entire holy nation with your heresy." **Intend to bring this man's blood upon us.** The rulers wanted to shuffle their guilt on Judas and Pilate, but their own imprecation, "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matt. 27. 25), was still in their memory. The high priest calls Jesus **this name and this man** as if feeling a contempt for him and disdain to speak his name.

29. Peter and the other apostles. Peter was clearly the foremost of the apostles. **We ought to obey God rather than men.** A thoroughly safe rule, but we must be sure that God really commands us. We should obey every law except it requires us to do wrong. When wicked rulers command us to sin against conscience we must refuse, and submit to the penalty.

30. The God of our fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our nation and our religion, whom we all adore, **raised up Jesus** from the grave, the very Jesus **whom ye slew. Hanged on a tree.** Crucified him. Ye slew him, but God raised him. Of what use was it to prohibit such men from proclaiming the resurrection?

31. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. Peter declares that the proudest of his judges owes allegiance to the carpenter Rabbi. The word **repentance** had no technical, theological meaning in those days. Peter declares that Israel's duty is to "turn about" in heart and life, so as to get **forgiveness of sins.**

32. We are his witnesses. We are not rabbis, we are not theologians, we are not doctors, we are not priests; we are **witnesses** of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. And so are we, as truly as was Peter. **So is also the Holy Ghost.** God himself was bearing testimony to their mission, giving divine attestation, not only by the performance of miracles, but by the transformation of their characters.

CRITICAL NOTES.

Verse 17. Then. Revised Version, "But." To express the contrast with the marvelous facts set forth in the preceding verses, 12-16. **The high priest.** Probably Annas, since he is called the high priest, Acts 4. 6, although the office at this time was nominally filled by Caiaphas. See John 11. 49. Annas kept the title because he had once held the office, and was at this time probably the most influential person among the Jews. **Rose up.** Becoming excited at the spread of the new doctrine,

he proceeded to take active measures looking to its suppression. **The Sadducees.** Luke does not say that Annas was a Sadducee. Pharisees and Sadducees united in opposition to the common enemy. The latter were touched by the preaching of the doctrine of the resurrection. **Indignation.** Revised Version, "jealousy." The high priest and those with him were indignant at the defiance of their authority, and jealous of the success of the new doctrine.

18. The common prison. Not as a matter of punishment, but as a place of safe keeping pending the trial which should ensue.

19. The angel of the Lord. Those interpreters who would eliminate from the Scriptures all supernatural phenomena would ascribe the release of Peter and the others to an earthquake, a flash of lightning, or the keeper of the prison, or some resolute Christian. In that case, why not eliminate the whole account? The doctrine of angels, "that host of heavenly spirits that, alike to Jewish and Christian opinion, wait upon the Monarch of the universe, and are sent by him to earth, now to execute his purposes, now to make them known to men" (*Thayer*), is supported by nineteen references in the Book of Acts. The reason for supernatural interference at this juncture lies in the need which the apostles had when, without leadership, few, feeble, and poor, they ventured to antagonize the entire hierarchy of the Jews, who at a single stroke might blot them out of existence. Only by some extraordinary interference in their behalf could the coming storm be averted and the fierce onslaught of the enemy be turned from its course.

20. Go, stand and speak. Who could execute such imperious and seemingly rash command unless conscious of divine help? **The words of this life.** Not only the blessed life in Christ generally, but especially the future life which had so aroused the Sadducees.

21. They entered into the temple early in the morning. Revised Version, "about day-break." "The people of the East commence the day much earlier than is customary with us. The arrangements of life there adjust themselves to the character of the climate. During the greater part of the year in Palestine the heat becomes oppressive soon after sunrise, and the inhabitants, therefore, assign their most important duties and labors to the early hours of the day. Worship is often performed in Jerusalem before the sun is up."—*Hackett*. **The high priest came.** To the hall of the Sanhedrin, not knowing that the apostles were released, to confer concerning the disposition which should be made of them. **Called the council together.** Sent out a summons. **And all the senate.** Not only the Sanhedrin, numbering seventy-two, but also all the elders, even though not members of the body—a special meeting because of the urgency of the matter. It was a question not only whether the workers of certain miracles were prophets of God or agents of Beelzebub, but whether the influence of the people, who were largely in sympathy with the apostles, was to be checked.

22. When the officers came. They are made unwitting witnesses of the escape of the apostles, notwithstanding that the doors are closed and everything about the prison is in perfect order.

The angel had executed their deliverance so noiselessly that even the guards did not know they were gone.

24. High priest. The same as in verse 17. **The captain of the temple.** The Jewish priest in command of the guard of the temple.

The chief priests. This order is supposed to have been made up (1) of the men who had formerly borne the title and rank of the high priest, (2) of the heads of the twenty-four priestly courses.

Doubted of them whereunto this would grow. If bolts and bars could not hold the disciples, what could be done with them? Besides, if the report went out that a miraculous interference had procured their release, what might the people, already favorably inclined, undertake in their behalf? When the apostles were brought before them the priests were very careful to say nothing about the details of their escape, not desiring to give publicity to such a perplexing matter.

25. Standing in the temple. Points back to the command of the angel. Implies also the fearlessness of the apostles, who, as soon as able, resume the work in which they were engaged when arrested.

26. Lest they should have been stoned. The popular favor had now reached its culminating point. The people having heard of the healings which had occurred, would be greatly incensed and aroused to the point of violence when they heard for the second time of the arrest of the apostles. The Jewish people seem to have been quite ready to resort to violence. See John 10. 31.

28. Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?

All reference to the manner of escape is avoided. No mention is made of the name of Jesus, strongly contrasting with the prominence given to it by Peter, verses 30, 31. That which was most offensive to them, and upon which they could best hope for popular opinion to sustain them, was the violation of the decree of the Sanhedrin, Acts 4. 21. **To bring this man's blood upon us.** How different their cringing fear from the reckless bravado of the day when they cried out, "His blood be upon us, and on our children."

29. We ought to obey God rather than men. Verses 29-32 contain the fifth speech which Peter has made as recorded by Luke. Acts 1. 16-22, prepared the way for the election of a successor to Judas; 2. 17-39, followed the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; 3. 12-26, was addressed to the people when they saw the lame man healed; 4. 8-12, is his defense before the leaders. Peter here boldly lays down the fundamental principle which, in 4. 19, he had set forth as a question of conscience for them to take into consideration.

This proposition was one which even the rulers could not deny. The divergence lay in the application. The rulers held that they were to decide

what was the voice of God; the apostles held that every individual is responsible for the answer so far as his own conduct is concerned. The former doctrine finds an illustration in the Roman Catholic Church. The latter is represented by Luther, who, in the presence of the Diet of Worms, said: "I cannot but adhere to the word of God, which has possession of my conscience." This represents the doctrine of Protestantism. The doctrine that the king or the Church or the pope must be obeyed leads to the dethronement of conscience. The doctrine that "the voice of the people is the voice of God" may, however, be used as a cloak for lawlessness, anarchy, and the supremacy of the demagogue.

In the application of the principle here laid down the apostles never resorted to the use of force in resisting the regularly constituted authorities. They escaped from their oppressors if they could, 1 Cor. 11. 32, 33; secreted themselves from arrest, 19-19; yet when dragged before magistrates resisted not, but "followed his steps who, when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself unto him that judgeth righteously." See 1 Peter 2. 22, 23.

30. Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Revised Version, "slew, hanging him on a tree." The apostles thus intimate that the Jews were as responsible as the Romans for the death of Jesus.

32. We are his witnesses of these things: his crucifixion, "hanged;" his resurrection and ascension, "exalted." **So is also the Holy Ghost.** By giving to believers inwardly the witness of their adoption, and externally by the manifestation of power, as on the day of Pentecost, the miraculous healing of the lame man, the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira, and the release of the apostles from the prison. To this we may well add the spirit of boldness and the remarkable power and wisdom with which they spoke on these several occasions.

Thoughts for Young People.

1. "The prison doors of evil habit are opened by the angels of God." The apostles' chains were doubtless heavy; but

"Chains yet more strong and cruel bind
The victims of that deadly thirst
Which drowns the soul, and from the mind
Blots the bright image stamped at first."

But thousands rejoice to-day that God has released them from the worst thralldom to this and other evil habits.

2. *The victories of grace are as marvelous to the unregenerate as was Peter's deliverance to the council.*

"Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!"

3. *Delivered by the power of God, let us at once publicly declare and glorify the grace of God.*

"O that the world might taste and see
The riches of his grace!
The arms of love that compass me
Would all mankind embrace."

4. *Peter's proposition in verse 29 was a sharp sword.* For its effect on different characters, see verses 33 and 39. It is a truth that cannot be gainsaid.

"Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go,
My daily labors to pursue;
Thee, only thee, resolved to know,
In all I think, or speak, or do.

"Thee will I set at my right hand,
Whose eyes mine inmost substance see;
And labor on at thy command,
And offer all my works to thee."

5. *Men as ministers are co-witnesses with the Holy Ghost.*

"Father of mercies, bow thine ear,
Attentive to our earnest prayer:
We plead for those who plead for thee;
Successful pleaders may they be.

"O clothe their work with power divine,
And let their words be ever thine;
To them thy sacred truth reveal;
Suppress their fear, inflame their zeal."

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

The Hebrews do not appear to have included incarceration among their legal punishments. The persons were put in ward during the desert wanderings. But in the time of the kings we read of prisons as a sort of appendage to the palace. Private houses are sometimes used in Persia, kept by speculators, where prisoners are maintained at their own cost. In fact, in Palestine in Gospel times friends had to supply the prisoner with food or he was left to starve. This speculators' prison was the only kind known in Judea previous to the captivity. Under the Herods there were royal prisons attached to the palace, or in the royal fortress. Dungeons tell no tales, and the utmost cruelties were practiced in these places. The royal prisoner was treated after the Roman fashion, chained, fettered, or put in the stocks. Under the more ancient usage, as in Jeremiah's day, the prison often consisted of some dry well, though that one had mire into which Jeremiah sank. It is probable that the common prison in Peter's case was a ward in the cellar of the ruler's palace, with a floor of earth and one small window. Van Lennep says twenty centuries have produced

no change from the barbarities of Eastern prison life; all sorts of people, murderers or debtors, are crowded together. He says he has seen maniacs confined in the same dungeon with criminals. Great mortality ensues from the filth and want of ventilation as well as from the lack of rest.

Egypt had special places used as prisons, under the custody of a military officer, and they do not appear to have improved since Joseph's day. The prison at Cairo, Egypt, according to a well-known authority, is yet "composed of dark, loathsome, and pestilential passages, where the prisoners' feet are made fast in stocks; they are chained to the wall, and cold water in buckets is poured upon them until they have given up all their money to their tormentors."

In Jerusalem the sacerdotal authorities had a prison under supervision of special officers, while the Romans used Antonia as a prison, and at Caesarea they confined prisoners in the *pretorium* of Herod.

When the imprisoned apostles reached the temple they at once began to teach; a great offense in itself, for they were not learned in the rabbinical lore. The great power of the Jewish doctors over the public utterance of the people is scarcely more marvelous than that of their control over the veriest technicalities and smallest details of the life of the Jewish community. From the earliest dawn, and even before, and throughout the day, even till his eyes are closed in sleep, says a modern exponent of present-day customs of the Israelites, the law-observing Jew in the East is in his actions and thoughts under the direction of a thousand and one petty legal restrictions that make up his religion. It was this sort of detail in control of the Hebrew community that the Sanhedrin sought to maintain, and it was a vast offense for unlettered men to pretend to be teachers, much less to resort to the temple to proclaim a new doctrine, and one diametrically antagonistic to their influence and faith. Hence they brought them to stand before the Sanhedrin in the center of the circle of seats. It is significant that the officers who arrested them were afraid of the violence of the mass of the people and of being stoned themselves while arresting men who were to be arraigned for blasphemy, the punishment of which was stoning.

By Way of Illustration.

The apostles released. "God's providence is my inheritance" became the motto of many a soul who found God's tender care never ceasing. And a rich inheritance it is! Rutherford, whose prison walls used to resound with praise, wrote, "What matters whether it rains or shines, I lay my head to rest on the bosom of Omnipotence." The Scotch Covenanters, pursued by their enemies to a hilltop, prayed, "O Lord, wrap thy plaidie about us," and

a mist arose and enveloped the hilltop, and the pursuers passed by. God cares for his own.

Persecution. The high priest told these persecuted men that they had filled Jerusalem with their doctrine. The Church has always flourished on persecution. It has been compared to the earth which becomes more fruitful when it is torn up by the plow; and to the grape which makes the sweetest wine when it is most pressed and beaten. If a man should throw precious stones and rich jewels at another with intent to kill him, the other might gather them up and enrich himself with them; even so have persecutors enriched the children of God, until they have rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake.

"We must obey God rather than men." The Church of the first three centuries sealed this declaration with the blood of countless martyrs. Wyclif, Huss, and Savonarola reaffirmed it amid flames. Luther dared the wrath of the pope upon this issue. Cranmer and Latimer died for it upon the plains of Smithfield. Through the ages it has been the inspiration of those who have contended for both religious and civil liberty. As one has said, "How much the world owes to the word that Peter uttered before the Sanhedrin that day." Senator Seward in the crisis of the antislavery reform said upon the floor of the United States Senate, "There is a higher law than human constitutions." It was simply the truth that Peter announced before the Sanhedrin.

"Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree," I think our clergy are not severe enough on their congregations. They do not sufficiently lay upon the souls and conscience of their hearers their moral obligations, and bring up their whole lives and action to the bar of conscience. The sermons which I think are most needed are of the class which offended Lord Melbourne long ago. He was one day seen coming from church in a mighty fume. Finding a friend he exclaimed, "It is too bad; I have always been a supporter of the clergy, but it is really too bad to have to listen to a sermon like the one we had this morning. The preacher actually insisted upon applying religion to a man's private life." Now that is the kind of preaching the world needs. It is the kind I like.—*William E. Gladstone.*

Verse 31. "Him hath God exalted." The Jews feared the resurrection of Jesus. Why? They reasoned that if such power were his, he would return and visit vengeance upon them. Peter's declaration was the blessed truth that he had been exalted to be a Saviour, that he might forgive sins. As the moisture of the earth is raised to the sky, that it may descend and bless the world, so Jesus was exalted to bless the world. If God exalts us in any way, it is that we may help him save the human race and bring blessing to the world.

Before the Class.

Approach to the lesson. Our lesson follows closely upon the one of last Sunday. Yet the few intervening facts recorded are important. We learn that many were added to the Church despite the danger attending such a step. Also that the disciples wrought many miracles, the favorite one being that of healing the sick. The news of one such miracle would bring dozens of other sick people to them to enjoy the same blessing, until the streets of the city bore the appearance of a hospital, with the sick lying everywhere. Peter was looked upon as the greatest of the company, and the unfortunate sick felt satisfied if but his shadow might fall upon them. The shadow of some men is better than the actual presence of others. Not one sick person went away unhealed.

Method of presentation. There is so much in this lesson that the difficulty will be rather what to omit than what to use. It contains the account of a mighty contest. God, on one side, working through his faithful servants, is opposed by the chief authorities of the country. God's care for his own, the boldness of the disciples, the bitter determination of the chief priests, are all described with such vividness that the lesson bristles with life. Look first at the enemies of the Gospel. The high priest, Annas (Acts 4. 6), is the leader of willing followers, including the chief priests, verse 24; the council, verse 21; the Sadducees, verse 17. They are mad because the Gospel condemns them and because the people so gladly accept it. They see their own authority taking wings. This heresy must be put a stop to at once, so they imprison the apostles, as if closing the blinds will stop the shining of the sun. They have done their work. Now God acts. An angel sets them free. Teach that plain truth, and don't explain the angel away. Notice what the angel said. Not, "Now you are out of their hands—flee for your life." Rather, "Go right back to that place of danger and do again the very things that got you into trouble." It shows that nothing is so important as the Gospel message. Notice, also, with what promptness the disciples obey. "Early in the morning" they were back in the temple teaching. It is easy for God to thwart the plans of his enemies. It is worthy of note that he did it in this case, and at the same time kept his disciples busy doing the very thing those enemies were trying to stop. Peter and his companions offered no opposition when arrested and taken before the authorities again, well knowing that the God who could open the prison would open their mouths at the right time and give them the right words to speak, Matt. 10. 19. In the formal arraignment notice the definite charge, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine," and the equally specific reply, "We ought to obey God rather than men." If we wholly obey God can we wholly trust him to take care of us under all

circumstances? The very thing these wicked men feared—namely, that Jesus's death would be charged to them—was done, and it was their conscious guilt that made them wince. "Prince and Saviour." The former gives his relation to God, and the latter his relation to men. One is the top-most, the other the lowest, round of the same ladder. Notice, in closing, that witnessing for God is the highest service we can render him. Also that only to those who obey is the promise of the Holy Ghost.

Practical teachings. Verse 17. The Gospel hardens those it does not soften.

Verse 18. To imprison the accuser does not nullify the accusation.

Verse 19. We can trust God to deliver us from all our enemies.

Verse 20. The place of danger is the only safe place for us to be if God wants us there.

Verse 21. Prompt obedience is the sign of true discipleship.

Verse 23. "Man proposes—God disposes."

Verse 26. The kingdom of God is not advanced by violence.

Verse 28. Temporal authority is brief and held by a slender thread.

Verse 28. "The guilty conscience needs no accuser."

Verse 29. "We ought to obey God rather than man."

Verse 30. Nothing but God in the life can remove the fear of man.

Verse 31. Jesus died to save the very ones who killed him.

Verse 32. Only the obedient may expect the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Heart thoughts. What is my feeling toward those who hate me? Would I be willing to go to prison for Christ's sake? Do I fully realize God's constant care for me? Do I withhold the message because of the fear of men? Am I witnessing daily for God?

The Teachers' Meeting.

Show the connection between this lesson and the last.... Explain "high priest," "Sadducees," "common prison," "Angel of the Lord," "early in the morning," "council and senate," "captain of the temple," etc.... Show the gradual progress in these appearances before the rulers: (1) In the apostles' testimony; (2) In the severity of their trials.... Show the spirit of the persecutors: (1) Unbelief (Sadducees were skeptics); (2) Hate; (3) Cruelty; (4) Fear; (5) Conscientiousness of guilt.... The spirit of the persecuted Church: (1) Patience; (2) Testimony; (3) Conscientiousness; (4) Courage; (5) Faith.... Show how God helps his people in persecution.... Find in the Bible similar deliverances of God's people from danger.

...General teachings concerning persecution ... Our duty: (1) "Go, stand and speak," verse 20; (2) "We ought to obey God," verse 29; (3) "We are his witnesses," verse 32.

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

No. 1.

Within God's temple now we meet.
Though troubles assail.
All the way my Saviour leads me.
Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.
Yes! for me, for me he carth.

No. 2.

Father, to thee my soul I lift.
Lord, if by thy command.
In heaven love abiding.
Learning of Jesus.
O guide to richest treasures.

References.

FREEMAN. Ver. 17: The Sadducees, 695. Ver. 18: The prison, 72. Ver. 21: The "council," 718. Ver. 28: The temple captain, 787.

Heart Talks on the Lesson.

There is one great word in this lesson. If it could find its way, with all its weight of meaning, into the depths of your soul, and mine, this might prove the best lesson of the year. There are many little words of large significance. We use them so freely every day that we lose a due sense of their importance.

The kernel of this lesson is compressed in this word of one syllable, which should be spelled in big letters—*OUGHIT*.

"We ought." Let us look at it. It is not always the most engaging word. We are not glad to see it when it stands straight in front of us sometimes. We would prefer it to keep out of sight. But it is a good word, and its attractiveness depends upon the way we look at it. It is like those pictures which, turned one way show a frowning face, and turned the other way the same face beaming with smiles. I wish we might be so much in love with it that, whenever we see or hear it, it would mean for us the happiest thing in the world.

What does it mean? An obligation of duty; something which we owe; the right thing which, without any qualification, is always the best thing.

It is quite natural for "I wish" to come in conflict with "I ought." These two have many a

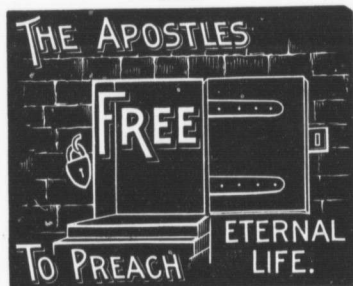
lively tussle in most minds before they come to a good understanding and work peaceably together. It is a grand achievement when the "I wish" of the heart gives cordial assent to the "ought" of the conscience. There is a conscious strengthening of the moral fiber every time we look a duty full in the face and say, "Though I do not like you very well now, I will take you for my friend and do just as you say." It is wonderful how the disagreeable grows attractive, like a homely person whose worth we learn upon close acquaintance.

A sense of moral obligation must be seriously cultivated. Excuses for self-indulgence are readily found. Before we are aware the sense of obligation to God and to our fellow-men slip away until we grow careless of both. There is need of a quickened conscience in society and in the nation on Sabbath keeping, honesty, truthfulness, and many other moral questions. But society is made up of individuals.

It is the "we ought" in each individual conscience which determines the social and national character.

There is peril in these pleasure-seeking, money-getting times. The question is not, "Do I wish to obey God?" but, "Ought I obey him?" It is an obligation. If we fail to meet it Jesus says we shall be counted as debtors until we have paid the uttermost farthing. If we meet it as these brave apostles did, we shall have the joy of triumph over every outward and inward foe.

"For right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win."



LESSON VIII. THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR.

[Feb. 21.]

GOLDEN TEXT. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Rev. 2. 10.

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

Acts 6. 8-15; 7. 54-60. [Commit to memory verses 57-60.]

[Read chapters 6 and 7.]

8 And Ste'phen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Lib'er-tines,

REVISED VERSION.

8 And Ste'phen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people.
9 But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogue called the synagogue of the Lib'er-tines, and of the Cy-re'ni-ans, and of the Al-ex-

and Cy-re'n-ans, and Al-ex-an'dri-ans, and of them of Ci-li-ci-a and of A'si-a, disputing with Ste'-phen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Mo'ses, and against God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council.

13 And set up false witness-es, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law :

14 For we have heard him say, that this Je'sus of Naz-a-reth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Mo'ses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Je'sus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him : and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Ste'phen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Je'sus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

an'dri-ans, and of them of Ci-li-ci-a and A'si-a, disputing with Ste'phen. And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by

11 which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Mo'ses, and against God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the council,

13 and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this

14 holy place, and the law : for we have heard him say, that this Je'sus of Naz-a-reth shall destroy

15 this place, and shall change the customs which Mo'ses delivered unto us. And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his

16 face as it had been the face of an angel.

54 Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with

55 their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and

56 saw the glory of God, and Je'sus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see

57 the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. But they cried

58 out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord ; and they cast

59 him out of the city, and stoned him : and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet

60 of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Ste'phen, calling upon the Lord, and saying,

61 Lord Je'sus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not

62 this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Time.—Uncertain, but probably A. D. 37 (possibly in the month of May). **Place.**—The Hall of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem ; the Valley of Jehoshaphat near Jerusalem.

Home Readings.

- M.* The First Christian Martyr. Acts 6. 8-15.
Tu. The First Christian Martyr. Acts 7. 51-60.
W. The roll of honor. Heb. 11. 32-40.
Th. Our Example. Heb. 12. 1-6.
F. More than conquerors. Rom. 8. 21-39.
S. The eternal glory. 2 Cor. 4. 7-18.
S. A crown of life. Rev. 2. 1-11.

Lesson Hymns.

No. 140, New Canadian Hymnal.

Now I have found the ground wherein.

No. 141, New Canadian Hymnal.

Thy way, not mine, O Lord.

No. 143, New Canadian Hymnal.

Oh, for a faith that will not shrink.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

1. Faithful, v. 8-15.

Who was the first Christian martyr?
 What office did he hold in the early Church?
 What is the record of Stephen's character and work?

Who engaged in dispute with him?
 Find on the map the localities from which these people came.

What was the first result of the contest?
 To what course did Stephen's opponents then resort?

What classes were enlisted against him?
 Before what council was he taken?
 Who there testified against him?
 What was their testimony?
 How did Stephen appear to the council?
 Name another Bible character whose face shone.
 How long does God require fidelity? GOLDEN TEXT.

2. Crowned, v. 54-60.

How was the council affected by Stephen's words?

Of what spirit was Stephen possessed?

- What glorious vision did he see?
 What prophet had a similar vision?
 What testimony did Stephen bear?
 What five things did the rulers do?
 For what offense was stoning permitted? Lev. 24. 16.
 What part had Saul in this affair?
 How was the martyr engaged when he died?
 What two prayers did he utter?
 Why had similarly prayed before this?
 What is meant by "he fell asleep"?
 What blessedness was in store for Stephen? Rev. 14. 13.

Teachings of the Lesson.

1. The world has no answer to true Christian testimony. Falsehood and violence are a confession of defeat. False witnesses are the last hope of a lost cause.
2. A shining face shows a good guest within. When the Holy Spirit dwells in one the glory will be revealed. Divine peace can transfigure any countenance into real beauty.
3. Heaven opens to dying saints. Visions of glory may tide the faithful over the river. When eyes close to earth they may see glories never before known.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. Verses 8-15.
 Who was Stephen?
 What power did he possess?
 How many synagogues were in Jerusalem?
 Why were there so many?
 Why did the Jews dispute with Stephen?
 Why were they not able to get the better of him?
 What five things did they charge him with?
 Why were the people stirred up?
 What view did he hold about the worship of God?
 To what did they compare his face?
2. Verses 54-60.
 What effect had Stephen's address?
 Mention two things Stephen saw.
 Why did Jesus appear standing?
 What did they express by stopping their ears?
 Where were blasphemers stoned?
 What duty fell upon the witnesses?
 What part did Saul take in the matter?
 To whom did Stephen pray?
 For whom did he plead?
 To what did Christ compare death?
 What does this imply?

Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson are we shown—

1. How to work for Christ?
2. How Christ's glory is shown by his disciples?

3. How we should treat our enemies?
4. How a Christian should meet death?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

- Why did the apostles need helpers?
 How many were chosen?
 Who was the chief one?
 Why did wicked Jews hate him?
 What did they finally do?
 How did Stephen look as he listened to the false accusations?
 Who was falsely accused before this? **The Lord Jesus Christ.**
 What did the high priest ask Stephen?
 How did he answer?
 Why did his words displease the judges?
 What did Stephen say he saw?
 What did they do then?
 How did they kill him?
 For whom did he pray?
 What young man stood by to see him killed?

Am I—

- Brave and faithful, like Stephen?
 Do I look to God in time of trouble?
 Can I pray for those who do me harm?

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

(For the entire school.)

1. What did Stephen do? **He preached the Gospel with power.**
2. What did his enemies do? **They accused him to the council.**
3. How did his face appear before the council? **Like that of an angel.**
4. What did Stephen see as he looked up to heaven? **Jesus on the right hand of God.**
5. What did the council do when they heard his words? **They stoned him.**
6. For what was the last prayer of Stephen? **For forgiveness to his enemies.**
7. What is our GOLDEN TEXT? **"Be thou faithful,"** etc.

OUR CHURCH CATECHISM.—14. What is His word? The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments, which are the sacred books of the Christian Faith. 15. How does the Old Testament teach Christianity? The Scriptures of the Old Testament were written by many holy men, who prophesied that the Christ was coming, and foretold also what He would suffer and do and teach.

THE LESSON OUTLINE.

The Successful Worker.

I. HIS CHARACTER.

Men of honest report. 6. 3.
Clean hands....pure heart. Psalm 24. 3, 4.
Your conversation honest. 1 Peter 2. 12.

II. HIS SPIRITUALITY.

Full of the Holy Ghost. 6. 5.
We have received....the Spirit. 1 Cor. 2.
9-14.
Not in the flesh, but....Spirit. Rom. 8. 9.

III. HIS EARNESTNESS.

Faith and power....wonders. 6. 8, 9.
Earnestly contend for the faith. Jude 13.
Instant in season. 2 Tim. 4. 2.

IV. HIS INSIGHT.

Wisdom and spirit....spoke. 6. 10-15.

Knowledge of his will. Col. 1. 9.
Wisdom and revelation. Eph. 1. 17, 18.

V. HIS COURAGE.

Ye stiff-necked....in heart. 7. 51-54.
Thy face strong. Ezek. 3. 8.
Be not afraid. Luke 12. 4.

VI. HIS COMMUNION.

Saw the glory of God. 7. 55, 56.
Seeing him....invisible. Heb. 11. 27.
The things....not seen. 2 Cor. 4. 17, 18.

VII. HIS LOVE.

Lay not this sin. 7. 57-60.
Father, forgive them. Luke 23. 34.
Love your enemies. Matt. 5. 44.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

General Statement.

The season of undisturbed preaching lasted long—perhaps for years, and converts greatly increased. Then came a low buzzing, foretoking trouble, and threatening the unity of the Church. A very little thing can destroy love, and when love goes power for good is lost. The Hellenists (Greeks, as the text calls them; Jews in blood and religion, but born in foreign lands, and speaking the languages of the places in which they were born) complained that the charitable distributions among the poor were made in a partial manner, and to the neglect of their widows; that the Christian Jews (born or resident in Palestine, who spoke the Hebrew tongue, or rather the Aramaic) got more of the good things of life out of the "Christian socialism" than the Hellenists. Now, if we remember that the wars and tumults of that age made many widows, and that there were many Christians in Jerusalem who were non-producers, we shall see that if this was a fact at all it was a very serious fact. The wealth of the Church had been laid at the apostles' feet, but their public work of preaching had so increased that they had probably been obliged to employ others to distribute to the needy, and they seem to have employed Hebrews for this duty. The apostles called the disciples together to state the case to them and to request them to nominate distributors. This was really the first attempt at organization in the Church, and it arose from expediency; but the apostles seem to have held in their own hands the right of confirming or rejecting. Seven men were chosen—men well spoken of by their acquaintances, as all church officers should be, and who were full of the Holy Ghost, and full of common sense. Their duties were to be much like those of a Methodist steward. The apostles were thus left free for spiritual work. It is noticeable that the names of these seven men are all Greek names, and so it is probable that they were all Hellenists. Very soon one of them came to the front as a preacher of such force that he became the center of public attention, and for the time being the most conspicuous representative, intellectually and spiritually, of the Church. And now this trouble being remedied, the Church increased at an unusual pace, and "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." This brings the story up to the beginning of our lesson, where we see that Stephen's preaching aroused special opposition.

Verse 8. Stephen, one of the seven, said in verse 5 to be "full of faith and the Holy Ghost," as descriptive of his character, is here **full of faith** (or, rather, **grace**) and miraculous **power**, as divine bestowments for his work. Until now only apostles have been mentioned as working miracles.

9. The synagogues of Jerusalem were arranged according to nationalities, and even according to trades. Five are mentioned in this verse, all of which were composed of foreign-born Jews.

Libertines were descendants of Jewish freemen at Rome whom Tiberius had expelled from the capital. **Disputing.** The service of the synagogue seems to have consisted largely in discussion. Stephen's view of Christianity was far in advance of those of the apostles. His "gospel" seems to have been almost identical with what was afterward called Paul's gospel, the belief that Judaism and the Mosaic law were to fade away before the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

10, 11. Resist. Unable to reply to his argu-

ments, the Hellenists of these five synagogues resolve to put him down by force. They thus show their zeal for Jewish institutions, and their criminal folly. **Suborned.** They procured by collusion men to testify falsely against him.

12. Stirred up. They meant mischief. Talking around, they excited the people first; and the popular feeling aroused the elders and scribes, and this prepared the way. **Caught.** Suddenly arrested. **Council.** The Sanhedrin, before which he was arraigned for trial.

13. False witnesses. Such as the Jews brought against Stephen's Lord. The charge was blasphemy. It had four specifications, respecting **Moses, God, the temple, the law.**

14. Heard him say. They had perhaps heard Stephen utter the very words recited, but they took them out of their connection and misrepresented them.

15. Face of an angel. Calm under false accusation, undisturbed by peril, peaceful through love of Jesus, anointed with the Spirit who was to speak through him, no doubt there was a supernatural brightness in the confessor's face, such as we suppose the angels wear. The practical lesson is the faith and power which every worker for Jesus may have.

To the early disciples the speech, of which we have a fragment here, must have indicated more than it does to us. Stephen was showing that the temple worship was preparatory to something better, and was evidently intending to show that Christ was a divinely appointed Saviour, when he was interrupted. It would be of much value to our students, both teachers and scholars, to compare with the beginnings of Stephen's speech Peter's argument, Acts 3. 12-30, and Paul's argument, Acts 13. 15-59. Stephen's hearers probably gave some token of impatience and displeasure, and he suddenly quit his argument and burst forth in the bold appeal which we have in verses 51 to 53.

54. Heard. Stephen's motive was to show his judges their awful sin, and, if possible, lead them to repentance. But such was not the effect. They were **cut** (literally, "sawn through") **the heart,** and became so enraged that they **gnashed their teeth** in their passion. Yet Stephen, by his boldness of speaking, magnified Christ, whose servant he was.

55. Full of the Holy Ghost. As he had been during his entire presence before the Sanhedrin. The indwelling Holy Spirit, filling his soul, gave the angelic brightness to his face, guided his defense, Matt. 10. 17-20, and now so quickens his eyes that he is able to see **into heaven** itself. We must interpret the language literally. It was no mere foretaste of the heavenly joy, no mental elevation to a full conception of the things named. He **saw** what is stated, just as we all could if God should open our eyes. The view confirmed and

strengthened him in that awful hour, and put on record a lesson for us as well. **Glorify of God.** The dazzling splendor in which God dwells, and which, as in the pillar of cloud and fire (often called the "glory"), betokened his presence. It was the divine Shekinah. **Right hand.** The place of honor and power, Acts 2. 25; Heb. 1. 3.

56. I see. It was not as if he saw; but he truly saw. **Son of man.** Jesus had told this very Sanhedrin of his place henceforth as at "the right hand of power," Matt. 26. 64; and Stephen now almost repeats his very words, declares that he sees him there. This was to them a horrid blasphemy, and it doubly maddened them. **Standing.** It is a beautiful thought of Chrysostom that Jesus, who is usually described as sitting (Psalm 110. 1) has here risen, as if he would certainly see the treatment of his servant and be ready to hasten to his help. The glorious vision magnified Christ, as it proved him the living and glorious Lord.

57. Cried out. Screamed. They would hear no more, and **stopped their ears.** The court broke up into an infuriated mob, which rushed all together upon the prisoner, as if to destroy him on the spot.

58. Out of the city. Lev 24. 14. No formal verdict was taken; no sentence was pronounced. By common consent the mob determined that he should die, and took him in the midst of them beyond the city walls and **stoned him** to death. It was rank murder. Yet they observed the legal form in stoning. The **witnesses** who had testified in the case, laying off their outer garments, threw the first great stones upon his breast, as the law required, Deut. 17. 7. Their **clothes** they put in charge of a young man (between twenty-five and forty, probably about thirty years old) by the name of **Saul.** He was doubtless present at the trial, was perhaps a member of the Sanhedrin, and certainly approved the stoning, Acts 8. 1. This is the first mention of him.

59. Calling upon. The word *God*, in italics, is not in the original. He called upon Jesus, as the next words show. The dying martyr prays to Jesus; so should we. **Receive my spirit.** And Jesus received it. Stephen was no materialist; nor did he believe his soul would lie in the grave till the resurrection.

60. Lord. "Lord Jesus," as in verse 59. **Lay not.** Put it not to their account. How like the prayer of Jesus, "Father, forgive them!" Luke 23. 35. **Fell asleep.** Not in writhing and anguish, but calmly and sweetly. "Asleep in Jesus—blessed sleep!" The early Christians were wont to speak of death as a sleep; but it was sleep of the body and not of the soul, as verse 59 shows. Thus Stephen magnified Christ, his Lord, in his triumphal martyrdom. "If Stephen had not prayed," says Augustine, "the Church had not had Paul."

CRITICAL NOTES.

Verse 8. And Stephen. His name, derived from the Greek word signifying crown (*στέφανος*), stands at the head of the list of deacons. Five or six years have elapsed since the pentecostal outpouring. The Church, seemingly, is about to relapse into a delusive repose. Stephen's mission is to bring out the idea set forth by Christ in his conversation with the woman at the well (see John 4. 21), that God might be worshiped acceptably everywhere and anywhere, and that the Gospel is for the world. The opposition which he arouses results in the dispersion of the disciples, who from this time "went about preaching the word." See Acts 8. 4. **Full of faith and power.** Revised Version, "full of grace," according to the best manuscripts. Grace in the New Testament commonly signifies the "free, spontaneous, absolute loving kindness of God toward men." Power signifies inward moral or spiritual virtue.

10. And there arose certain of the synagogue . . . disputing with Stephen. Their purpose was not to learn nor to instruct, but to get the advantage of by entangling them in a discussion. Disputing about religious matters is a poor sign of a pure heart, or of a love of truth, or of a desire to benefit in any way. "The most zealous controversialists and most skillful disputants, who select religious truth as their truth, as their topic, usually have the least religion and faith of all." **The wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke.** The grace of God in the heart of Stephen, backed up by faith in Christianity, together with the power to exemplify it by miracles, made him more than a match for them all—five synagogues against one man.

11. They suborned men. Beaten in argument, they put forward other men, to whom they gave secret instructions what to say. **Blasphemous words.** Contemptuous language concerning Moses and his institutions implied contempt of God, and laid one liable to the penalty of death by stoning, as set forth in Deut. 13. 6-10. Note that this was the charge on which, so far as the Jews were concerned, Christ was condemned. See Matt. 26. 65.

12. They stirred up the people. On a former occasion, (see 5. 26), popular favor had protected the disciples. The people, at one time very attentive to Jesus (see Luke 19. 48), a little later cried, "Crucify him." Nothing is more uncertain than the clamor of the multitude.

13. Set up false witnesses. They charged that Stephen made a business of talking in such manner as to bring into disrepute among the people five things: Moses and God, verse 11; the temple and the law, verse 13; and the customs of Moses, verse 14. What he undoubtedly taught was that the Gospel was superior to Judaism, and would

supplant it; that no one could be justified by the law; and that henceforth men might worship God acceptably everywhere. In so far as the new religion should supersede the old, there was truth in the charge. It was false in so far as Stephen was held to have spoken contemptuously of the old, or to have signified that the new was antagonistic to it and should supplant it by force. Nor is there any reason to believe that he made a business of arguing in any irreverent and blasphemous manner.

15. Saw his face as it had been that of an angel. Like that of Moses, Exod. 24. 20, when he came down from the mount bearing the two tables of stone. It was not simply the features of tranquillity, but the Holy Ghost rested upon him in unusual measure. Augustine says: "So transfigured was he by the rays of the Sun of righteousness, that even to his enemies he seemed a being not of this world."

54. These things. A remarkable speech, in which the Sanhedrin, assumed by themselves to be as nearly perfect as men in this world can be, are reproached with holding ungodly sentiments, with violating their own law, and with having incurred guilt in crucifying Jesus. The abruptness of the close indicates that Stephen was interrupted before he had finished. **Cut to the heart.** As with a saw. **Gnashed on him.** Shows the fierceness of their rage. The word of God is a two-edged sword. The same truth which in substance, under the preaching of Peter, resulted in the conviction and conversion of the multitude, on this occasion excited them to uncontrollable rage, resulting in the death of the preacher.

55. Being full of the Holy Ghost. The effect of which was that, full of love—the perfect love that casteth out all fear—he had no anxiety for his own safety, was self-possessed, and saw only the things of God. **Saw the glory of God.** What was revealed to Abraham, verse 2, now appears to the vision of Stephen. **And Jesus.** The triumph of Jesus as he is now revealed to Stephen points to the victory he is shortly to achieve.

56. I see the Son of man. This title, which Jesus often applied to himself, was never elsewhere applied to him by another. **Standing.** Elsewhere Jesus is always represented as sitting. See Mark 16. 9; Eph. 1. 20; Psalm 110. 1. Chrysostom says: "Stephen saw Jesus standing because Jesus had risen from the throne, as it were, to succor his persecuted servant, and to receive him to himself." I think the attitude indicates rather the active personal interest which Jesus had in the events then occurring on earth.

57. They cried out with a loud voice. The sitting of the Sanhedrin was suddenly brought to a close, without any judicial action, by the howl-

ing mob, when Stephen bore witness, according to the vision, of the exaltation of Jesus, whom they had slain.

58. Cast him out of the city. To a place possibly called "the place of stoning," situated near the main road to Shechem, on the east side, a little to the north of the Damascus gate. Turbulent as was this mob, they would not have dared to defile the holy city with blood. Assuming him to have been regularly convicted—he was not—they were acting in accordance with the law, Lev. 24. 14-16. **Stoned him.** According to the rabbi, "the person to be stoned was placed on an elevation twice the height of a man, from whence with his hands bound he was thrown down, and then a stone as much as two men could carry was rolled down upon him by the witnesses, after which all the people present cast stones upon him." The witnesses laid down their **clothes**. The law (see Deut. 17. 7) required the witnesses to cast the first stone. This was a check against hasty accusation. In order to be ready for the task they laid aside their loose flowing outer garments. **A young man.** The Greek word signifies one not over forty years old. Saul was old enough to be intrusted with the important commission of persecuting the Christians at Damascus. Since in his epistle to Philemon, written about A. D. 63, he calls himself aged, and since the death of Stephen took place about A. D. 35, he was probably at this time between thirty-five and forty years of age. **Whose name was Saul.** For the first time we meet with the name of one who was to be the most famous in the whole history of the Church. He had probably come from his home in Cilicia to attend upon the instructions of the great teacher, Gamaliel. See Acts 22. 3. From the fact of his leadership in the persecutions which shortly followed he was probably the bitterest enemy the disciples had. But he thought he was doing God service. From Acts 26. 10, it is thought by many that he was shortly after this elected a member of the Sanhedrin.

60. Lay not this sin to their charge. Commending his own soul trustfully to Jesus and praying forgiveness for his enemies. No parallel to this can be found outside of Christian experience. **He fell on sleep.** Our word "cemetery" is a derivative of the word here rendered "fell asleep." To the heathen death meant entrance into nothingness; to the Christian, the continuance of life under new conditions. A cemetery is a place to lie down to sleep.

Thoughts for Young People.

1. "Full of faith and power." Then look for "wonders," and "wisdom," and "Spirit," and "the face of an angel." If the trolley be connected with the electric wire the force will come. With

immeasurably greater certainty does the Holy Spirit come, with all benign accompaniments, when connection is made between the human heart and God by prayer and faith.

2. *To be filled with the Holy Ghost makes one useful in the truest sense.* The right kind of men to do all kinds of work in the Church are they "of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom."

3. *Three great mistakes were made at this time:* (1) It was believed that persecution would crush the Church. Perhaps, even some Christians thought so. But "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."—*Tertullian.* (2) It was forgotten that "God is a Spirit," and that while forms are helpful, "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Because the priests failed to recognize this truth they cared for the temple more than for its God; for the means more than for the grace; for the form instead of the power. (3) The third mistake was true to misguided enthusiasm; and so we have Saul of Tarsus, the sincere ritualist, trembling before the least omission, approving the bloody deed, and believing that it was serving God. Enthusiasm without large information and providential direction is dangerous.

4. *Note the different conduct of two high priests.* The earthly one unfairly presiding at the trial; the heavenly One rising up as if ready to come down, and opening heaven for his faithful witnesses.

5. *Witnessing for Jesus.* He who would bear convincing testimony must be ready with it at all times and in all sorts of ways.

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

It is desirable to place this lesson in its oriental setting. Great wonders and miracles are not at all uncommonly believed to be worked by special religious agents. So-called miracles and wonders are common enough in all oriental countries. The Hindus are accustomed to these, and as they have not a critical sense they are easily imposed upon, yet these have great influence among the people. A miracle worker readily secures a great following, and the authorities have to be very careful that seditions and revolts do not occur under this kind of influence. Oriental peoples are always specially sensitive to the religious motive. It is little wonder therefore that the Sanhedrin should be anxious as to whereunto this thing would grow. A great uprising would have been deleterious to the Jews under the Roman rulers, who were already oppressing them, and from time to time limiting their religious movements.

The place of the Jewish synagogue should also be carefully studied. There was but one temple, but the synagogues were everywhere, even in the remotest parts of the Roman world. There were four hundred and eighty of them in Jerusalem

alone, and nearly every foreign colony in the city had its own, partly from race jealousy and partly from difference in languages as well as from peculiar prejudices against foreigners on the part of the pure and unmixed old Palestine Hebrews, and more intensely so by those who had their ancestral habitations in the holy city. These synagogues of foreigners were generally named after their respective geographical divisions, as the Alexandrians who came from that city in Egypt, the Cyrenians, from another section of Africa, the Cilicians, who came from that part of Asia Minor. There was, however, still another synagogue which embraced representatives of several countries combined, who, though originally born in Judea, or the descendants of such as were born there, had been carried away into foreign countries by some conqueror, and had obtained their liberty, having been sold into slavery. On returning to Jerusalem these were styled "freedmen." The Romans called a freed slave "libertus," and his child born after the parent had obtained his freedom "libertinus," the plural being "libertines." There were many slaves in Rome and other parts of Italy who had been at different times transported from Palestine who afterward received their liberty and in many instances returned to Jerusalem. Sixty-three years before our era Pompey overran Jerusalem and carried vast numbers away, who were sold into slavery, most of whom the Romans afterward liberated, which they did in numerous instances because their tenacity for their religious usages made them unadjustable as servants. Twenty years or so before the time of this lesson the Emperor Tiberius expelled these from Rome, and many naturally resorted to the holy city. Paul was a libertinus or the son of one, but as the Cilicians had a synagogue of their own, he would probably resort to that rather than to the more mixed company of the Libertines.

One more feature must be recalled to get the whole force of the setting. Most of these large synagogues had connected with them rabbinical schools or colleges under the charge of some famous rabbi, and the young men connected with these stood ready to combine, as they now did, to challenge any comer to argument. In this case they met more than their master.

The crowd, after hearing Stephen's address, gave some of those manifestations of passionate hate which once seen in an eastern crowd can never be forgotten. The long tyranny of oppression which renders men powerless to take vengeance in their own hands, added to the fiery passion of the oriental nature, has developed great resource in expression of abuse and other signs of dislike and furious hate. To spit upon one is one of those forms; to put the fingers in the ears and run away, or gnash with the teeth, showing the most passionate malice, indicative of what they would do if they dare, are as common as for brawling men in our land to double

up their fists. But the intensity of madness which an oriental can put into his countenance in the act of gnashing his teeth must be seen to be appreciated. The stopping of the ears was common when one was obliged to hear words which he considered blasphemous, or he might, as he was required to do, rend his garments, the rent of which was never to be mended, and he would gnash with his teeth when he wished to signify the feeling that would impel him to kill the offender. In the case of Stephen all this was but the preliminary to stoning him.

The law required that the witnesses in the trial, who swore against a person for any offense the punishment of which was stoning, should throw the first stone, making them thus the executioners of the judgment. It was a provision intended to deter men from careless or criminal testimony in such grave cases. Stoning was especially directed in the case of blasphemy. Content for Jehovah came within the scope of blasphemy. Though the Jews had no right to execute capital punishment in any form, the authorities often took no notice of their doing so. Saul was a young man and held the clothing, the outer garments of the witnesses, which were thrown off while throwing the stones. A man was accounted young till forty years old.

By Way of Illustration.

Verse 8. Stephen's life was Christlike. Martin Luther once said, "If any man knocks at the door and asks if Martin Luther lives here, I always answer, 'No, but God lives here.'" Do we not want Jesus Christ to come and be mighty in us? You say, "I am utterly impotent." Ay, but if Christ is in you, he that is mighty in you will do great things.—*F. B. Meyer.*

Persecutions. "O Lord, give me enduring grace," is the prayer repeated many times by Amanda Smith, the colored evangelist. It was the highest type of grace—that for which she sought. We read that the secret of Moses's victories lay in one trait—"he endured as seeing him who is invisible." We are told of the "blessedness of the man that endureth temptation." St. Paul urges his disciples "to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and emphasizes as one of the crowning qualities of love that it "endureth all things." And the Master declares, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Stephen's shining face. Be beautiful, and you will by and by appear so. Carve the face from within and not dress it from without. Within lies the robing room, the workshop of the sculptor. For whoever would be fairer, illumination must begin in the soul; the face catches the glow only from that side.

"He looking up steadfastly into heaven." Heaven is not so very far away. Out of it and down to the earth have come many times angels of the Lord; but of it has come again and again the voice of God; into it Ezekiel, John on Patmos, Paul caught up to the third heaven, have been permitted to look; and into it Enoch, Elijah, and the Lord Jesus have gone as through a curtain of cloud and blue azure. If only we could keep in mind that God has two worlds whereof he has made us citizens through Jesus Christ, we should not make such one-sided interpretations of his providences down here.

Stoned him. Stephen's was the first Christian death. The hatred of angry men, the cruel stones, the dreadful suffering, could not reach the citadel of his soul. He thinks only of his assailants. They can persecute, but he can pray, and by his prayer entwine the greatest life Christianity has known in the meshes of the net of service. "If Stephen had not prayed," says Athanasius, "Paul would not have been."

The Christian's triumph over death. "What do you think of dying?" said a friend to an old Scotchman. "It matters not," replied he, "because, if I die I shall go and be with Christ, and if I live Christ will be with me."

At the Ku-Cheng massacre in China there were six Christians killed. When their bodies had been rescued they were given Christian burial, and upon each coffin was placed a verse of Scripture:

"The Master has come and calleth for thee."

"Not counting their lives dear unto themselves."

"Faithful unto death."

"Jesus only."

"She asked life and thou hast given it, even life forever and ever."

"Where I am, there shall also my servant be."

—Student Volunteer.

Before the Class.

Approach to the lesson. We left the council in session and the apostles standing before them as prisoners. Peter has fearlessly accused them of being the murderers of Jesus, and they, full of rage, seek to have the apostles put to death. Then the wise, cool-headed Gamaliel appears upon the scene and cautions moderation. He tells them that if these men teach on their own authority it will come to naught, but if from God, all they can say will be futile. Instances familiar to them are cited, and they yield to his judgment. Before dismissing their prisoners, however, they beat them and forbid them to teach any more. However, they are no sooner at liberty than they take up their work again with renewed vigor. About this time we read of a disturbance in the infant Church—the

first Church quarrel on record, if indeed it can be called a quarrel at all. It was settled by the selection of seven men, deacons, to take charge of the matter which caused the trouble. This is the first exaltation, so to speak, of the lay membership of the Church. One of these men was Stephen, and our lesson tells of his faithfulness and martyrdom.

Method of presentation. A crisis is reached in the history of the new Church. During the seven years of its existence, it has grown to wonderful proportions, and the priests and leaders see their authority being rapidly undermined. A decisive stroke must be made. Naturally those the most aggressive would first feel the approaching storm. New work develops new men. Stephen springs into prominence. He is "full of faith and power." Do these go together always? Is power conditional upon faith? Why? He was a miracle worker. He had the power before he displayed it. The power is in the trolley wires before the cars come along. Plain preaching creates opposition. Why? It did with Stephen. A dispute arose, and Stephen was more than a match for them all. Why was this? How did he get that power and wisdom? Is it for us? When argument fails trickery begins. They hired men to lie, and made their charge one punishable by death. Then they tried to create public sentiment against him by stirring up the people. Without this they would not have dared to arrest him and bring him before the council. Notice the charge. How inconsistent! They appeared wonderfully jealous of the "holy place and the law," all the while in reality caring nothing for the real sanctity of either.

The charge is the same as against Jesus. If blasphemy had not been punishable by death it would have been another charge, for they wanted to kill Stephen. What a contrast was Stephen's angelic face in that angry crowd! Like the shining of the sun through a rift in the clouds of a thunder storm. After the false witnesses had sworn to the lies the authorities gave Stephen an opportunity to speak, and his wonderful sermon takes nearly all of the chapter. It is a masterly sermon and a terrific arraignment of his accusers. The gigantic figure of Abraham, the beautiful life of Joseph, the rich experience of Moses, neither of whom had fallen into their error of supposing a simple place was holy; then the cutting accusation that they, with all their outward show of religion, were really guilty of the death of many of God's chosen ones and of the Just One himself. This was too much for them. Describe the scene. A fierce angry mob gnashing their teeth—stones in their hands upraised to cast. A man with a calm demeanor, radiant face, no trace of anger, looking up to heaven. In that moment between the raising and casting of those stones he sees into heaven, and, strengthened by the glorious vision, declares it to the angry bystanders. This decides the case. They dare not kill him in the

city, so they stop their ears so as not to hear what to them was condemnation, and drag him outside of the city. Here the tragedy takes place. They more fierce; Stephen more calm—a new personage is in this scene. A silent young man in charge of the garments of those who did the wicked work. He said not a word, but he never forgot that day. Read what he says of it twenty-three years later, 1 Cor. 15. 9. See Stephen upon his knees! How like Jesus! How could he pray for those who were killing him? The blood of such martyrs speaks louder than their lips.

Practical teachings. Verse 8. Power is the result of faith, and cannot be had without it.

Verse 9. Aggressive godliness always meets with opposition.

Verse 10. Burning words backed by a godly life are irresistible.

Verse 11. Where argument ends trickery begins.

Verse 12. Lying about a good man only advertises his goodness.

Verses 13, 15. Holiness is not a place, but is often in a face.

Verse 54. Nothing cuts like the truth.

Verse 55. Glimpses of heaven come often in our darkest hours.

Verse 57. We cannot shut out the truth by stopping our ears.

Verse 58. The power of God can change the wickedest man into a faithful servant.

Verse 60. Only the grace of God can enable us to pray for our enemies.

Verse 60. Killing the messenger does not kill the message.

Heart thoughts. Have I the power I should have as a Christian? Do I reflect any rays of heaven from my face? Can I sincerely pray for my enemies? Would I be willing to be stoned to death for Jesus's sake?

Teachers' Meeting.

Briefly as possible, but carefully, draw out the facts which led to Stephen's pre-eminence and death. Points that may be considered (if there be time) are: (1) Palestinian Jews and Hellenists; (2) Possible causes of the dissatisfaction concerning the distribution of funds, the appointment of deacons; (3) Why Pharisaic hatred centered on Stephen, and spared the apostles; (4) The charge brought against him; (5) His defense.... The leading characters of the lesson: I. Stephen. (1) "Full of the Holy Ghost;" (2) Lifted above his earthly pains; (3) Personally cared for by the Lord; (4) Full of forgiveness and charity; (5) Peaceful while in the hands of a murderous mob; (6) Leaving a precious memory; (7) Successful in his failure. II. Saul. (1) A leader from the outset; (2) Sincere; (3) Thorough; (4) Falling even in his success.... Spirit of the Church: (1) A spirit of equal love to all, Hel-

lenists and Hebrews; (2) Boldness in denouncing error; (3) In harmony with the Spirit of God; (4) Gifted with divine insight; (5) Turning persecution into a means to spread the Gospel.... Incidental topics: (1) The qualifications of deacons; (2) Analysis of Stephen's address; (3) Causes for alienation of popular sympathy from the Church.

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

No 1.

How firm a foundation.
Is this thy time of trouble.
O holy Saviour! friend unseen.
My Jesus, as thou wilt.
Pain's furnace heat within me quivers.

No 2.

Forth in thy name.
The Lord, he is my strength.
Jesus all my grief is sharing.
I am safe in the Rock.
Nearer the cross.

References.

FREEMAN. Ver. 9: The synagogue, 636. Ver. 12, 15: The "council," 718. Ver. 55: Testimony given standing, 661; Post of honor, 656. Ver. 58: The outer garment, 207; Executions outside the walls, 727.

Heart Talks on the Lesson.

Whatever is of value costs something. Gold is dug from the heart of the earth, while for the miner

"Death lurks in the dark behind him
And hides in the rock before."

Pearls are gathered from the sea at peril of the diver. For everything you possess that is worth having somebody has paid a price. Our Christianization cost the suffering and blood of our forefathers. The salvation of your soul, and mine, though it is offered to us without money and without price, is not "free" in the sense that it is given for nothing. O, the priceless offering for our redemption in the sufferings and death of Jesus!

The establishment of the Christian faith, which makes all of value there is in our lives, in this world or the next, cost the blood of martyrs. In all lands, wherever the religion of Jesus has been taught, men and women, from the days of Stephen until now, have paid for it the price of persecution, deprivation, and death.

It is a mistake to imagine the best things can be obtained easily. If one excels in scholarship, art, or music, it is by laborious study. The majority of honest men who have money will tell you it was gained by hard work, either of brain or hand. What is true of the highest intellectual and

material possessions, is true of the spiritual. If you would have the best, you must pay the price. An easy-going Christian is never a spiritual millionaire. We may not be burned at the stake or stoned to death for our faith—the times may not require it; but the same spirit of rejoicing courage to face all tests and conquer through them is needed in every age and in every Christian.

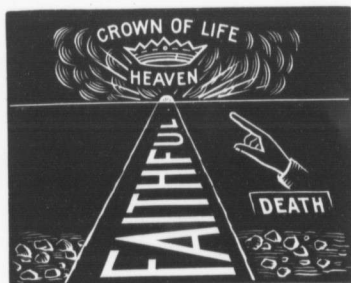
The martyr spirit is the spirit of Jesus; always gentle, never yielding to opposition, hatred, or compromise. We have the opportunity to be martyrs every day, and the glory of it is worth all it costs.

There are certain characteristics essential to the true martyr spirit. Stephen had deep convictions; he believed with all his soul the truth of Jesus. He was full of faith. From his speech before the council we see that he had informed himself on all points of the subject, and had intelligent grounds for his faith. He was full of the Holy Ghost. With convictions and the strong faith without the Holy Ghost, he might have been a fanatic, but not a true martyr. With unswerving devotion to the truth, the Holy Spirit filled him with love for his opponents. That is preeminently the fruit of the Spirit.

He had a vivid consciousness of the personal presence of the Lord Jesus.

All these characteristics of the martyr spirit may and ought to distinguish every Christian. It was very sad for a young, educated, devoted man to die in such a cruel way, doubtless his friends said. But Stephen never thought of death. He saw heaven opened, and Jesus receiving him to its glory and fellowship. Such is always the outcome of the true martyr spirit. It looks like dying to those who do not understand; for the martyr himself it is life at its best.

Blackboard.



LESSON IX. THE DISCIPLES DISPERSED.

[Feb. 28.]

GOLDEN TEXT. They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

Acts 8. 4.

AUTHORIZED VERSION.

Acts 8. 1-17. [Commit to memory verses 5-8.]
[Read also verses 18-25.]

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Je-ru'-sa-lem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Ju-de'a and Sa-ma'-ri-a, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Ste-phen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

5 Then Phil'ip went down to the city of Sa-ma'-ri-a, and preached Christ unto them.

6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Phil'ip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

8 And there was great joy in that city.

9 But there was a certain man called Si'mon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Sa-ma'-ri-a, giving out that himself was some great one:

REVISED VERSION.

1 And Saul was consenting unto his death.

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Je-ru'-sa-lem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Ju-de'a and Sa-ma'-ri-a, except the apostles. And devout men buried Ste-phen, and made great lamentation over him. But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

4 They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word. And Phil'ip went down to the city of Sa-ma'-ri-a, and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Phil'ip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did. For from many of those which had unclean spirits, they came out, crying with a loud voice: and many that were palsied, and that were lame, were healed. And there was much joy in that city.

9 But there was a certain man, Si'mon by name, which beforetime in the city used sorcery, and amazed the people of Sa-ma'-ri-a, giving out that

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

12 But when they believed Phil'ip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Je'sus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Then Si'mon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Phil'ip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Je-ru'-sa-lem heard that Sa-ma'-ri-a had received the word of God, they sent unto them Pe'ter and John:

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

16 For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Je'sus.

17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

10 himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying,

This man is that power of God which is called Great. And they gave heed to him, because

that of long time he had amazed them with his sorceries. But when they believed Phil'ip

preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Je'sus Christ, they were

baptized, both men and women. And Si'mon also himself believed: and being baptized, he

continued with Phil'ip; and beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed.

14 Now when the apostles which were at Je-ru'-sa-lem heard that Sa-ma'-ri-a had received the

word of God, they sent unto them Pe'ter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed

for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: for as yet he had fallen upon none of them: only

they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Je'sus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

Time.—Immediately after the events of the last lesson; probably in the summer of A. D. 37.
Place.—1. Jerusalem. 2. "A city of Samaria," probably either ancient Samaria (Sebaste) or Sychar.

Home Readings.

M. The Disciples Dispersed. Acts 8. 1-8.

Tu. The Disciples Dispersed. Acts 8. 9-17.

W. The gift of God. Acts 8. 18-25.

Th. Persecution foretold. Matt. 10. 16-23.

F. Partakers with Christ. 1 Peter 4. 12-19.

S. Joy in the city. Neh. 8. 5-12.

S. Samaritans believing. John 4. 27-30; 39-42.

Lesson Hymns.

No. 190, New Canadian Hymnal.

Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armour on.

No. 189, New Canadian Hymnal.

Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free!

No. 188, New Canadian Hymnal.

Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb.

QUESTIONS FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS.

1. The Church Scattered, v. 1-4.

Whose death marked the beginning of persecution?

What part had Saul in this murder?

Tell what you can of Saul's previous history?

What honor was paid to Stephen's memory?

What part did Saul take in persecuting the Church?

Where did the disciples go from Jerusalem?

What company remained there?

What did they do who were scattered abroad?

GOLDEN TEXT.

2. The Church Growing, v. 5-17.

Who first preached in Samaria?

To what elect company did this man belong? See chap. 6. 1-6.

What effect had Philip's preaching in Samaria?

What miracles were wrought by him?

What wonder worker had before flourished in Samaria?

How had Simon been regarded?

Why had he been so revered?

Name any other sorcerer of the New Testament.

What were the themes of Philip's preaching?

How did the people show their acceptance of the truth?

What effect had this on Simon?

What embassy was sent from Jerusalem?

For what did these apostles pray?

What requirements had these people met? Acts 2. 38.

How many of them had received the Spirit?

What more did the apostles do, after praying?

With what result?

What proposal did Simon make! Verses 18, 19.

What was Peter's response? Verses 20-23.

What then was Simon's prayer! Verse 24.

Teachings of the Lesson.

1. "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church." Persecution is Satan's blunder. The scattering of the Church meant the increase of the Church. Head winds will propel a vessel as truly as favoring breezes.

2. A renewed heart is the secret of a renewed life.

True repentance means good fruits. The Gospel demands right doing as proof of right being.

3. The Holy Ghost is God's best gift to the Church. He is the source of life, light, power, peace, and abiding joy. He is the constant proof of God's love.

QUESTIONS FOR INTERMEDIATE SCHOLARS.

1. Verses 1-4.

How did Saul regard Stephen's death?
When were other Christians persecuted?
To where did they go?
Why was Stephen's death mourned?
How did Saul treat believers?
What helped to spread the Gospel?

2. Verses 5-17.

What Philip is here mentioned?
Where did he go?
What did he preach?
What success had he?
Why did they believe his message?
Have we any proof?
Can we have anything better than healing?
Why was Samaria glad?
What did Simon do then?
How did he gain influence?
Why did people leave Simon and join Philip?
Was Simon a true convert?
Whom did the apostles send to Samaria?
How did these messengers help the new converts?
How was their prayer answered?
Of what was laying on of hands a sign?

Practical Teachings.

Where in this lesson are we shown—

1. How persecution aids the truth?
2. That a renewed heart is the secret of a renewed life?
3. That the Holy Spirit is God's best gift to the Church?

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNGER SCHOLARS.

What followed Stephen's death?
Who was very active in persecuting Christians?
What did many believers do?

What good came from this?
What did the apostles do?
Where did Philip go?
Who was Philip?
Why did the people believe what he said?
Why was there great joy in Samaria? **There is always joy where Christ is received.**
Who was Simon?
What had he been?
What did he now claim to be?
Who came from Jerusalem to help Philip?
For what did they pray?
When did the Holy Ghost come upon the believers?
Why could not Philip do this? **He was not an apostle.**

Learn from the Lesson—

That trials may do great good.
That it is easy for a true disciple to help others.
That Christ will not dwell in a false heart.

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

[For the entire school.]

1. Who took part in the murder of Stephen? **A young man named Saul.**
2. What did Saul do afterward? **He persecuted the Church.**
3. What was one of the results of the persecution? **GOLDEN TEXT: "They that were scattered,"** etc.
4. Where was the Gospel planted by Philip? **In Samaria.**
5. What followed the laying of the apostles' hands on those who had been converted? **The gift of the Holy Ghost.**

OUR CHURCH CATECHISM.—16. What has our

Lord said about the books of the Old Testament?
He calls them the Scriptures, says that they testify of Himself, and that they will not pass away.

Luke xxiv. 44, 45; John x. 35; v. 39; Matt. v. 17.

THE LESSON OUTLINE.

Traits of the Early Church.

I. ITS FIDELITY IN TRIAL.

1. *A great persecution.* v. 1-3.
In the world . . . tribulation. John. 16. 13.
2. *Scattered abroad. . . preaching.* v. 4.
Furtherance of the Gospel. Phil. 1. 12.

II. ITS CATHOLICITY.

- To the city of Samaria.* v. 5.
By my spirit baptized. 1 Cor. 12. 13.
Neither Jew nor Greek. Gal. 3. 28.

III. ITS GROWTH.

With one accord gave heed. v. 6.
If God be for us. Rom. 8. 31-37.
A great multitude. Rev. 7. 9, 10.

IV. ITS TRANSFORMING POWER.

1. *Unclean spirits. . . came out.* v. 7.
Greater works than these. John 14. 12.
2. *Great joy in that city.* v. 8.
Rejoice in the Lord alway. Phil. 4. 4.

3. *Simon . . . himself believed.* v. 9-13.

To save sinners . . . chief. 1 Tim. 1. 15.

V. ITS DISCIPLINE.

Apostles . . . sent . . . Peter and John. v. 14.

First apostles. 1 Cor. 12. 28.

Ye shall bind on earth. Matt. 18. 18.
VI. ITS SPIRITUAL ENDOWMENT.

Received the Holy Ghost. v. 17.

Given to every man. 1 Cor. 12. 7-11.

Gifts of the Holy Ghost. Heb. 2. 4.

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

General Statement.

It is a very interesting stage in the development of the Christian Church to which our attention is now called. For the first time since the death of our Lord all popular sentiment is turned against the Christians. The esteem in which their leaders were held for so long a time was doubtless largely due to their public devotion to the temple ritual service, to the fact that whatever they might believe about Jesus of Nazareth, they were Israelites and Jews of the most intense sort. The opposition which now suddenly burst out against them was due to the daring with which a foreign-born Jew who had become a Christian asserted that the temple service was at best only temporary and proclaimed a doctrine which was nearly or quite as expansive as that of Paul, that in the sight of God there was neither Jew nor Gentile, and that the only use of the Mosaic ritual was to be a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ. That in the midst of the wild persecution the apostles were themselves apparently permitted to remain at peace in Jerusalem, is, as we hint in our notes, indicative that there were already in the Church the beginnings of that deviation between the Judaic party and the broader party which we see so distinctly noted throughout Paul's writings. Philip, one of the men chosen with Stephen to distribute the wealth of the little company to those who had need, was among those forced to leave Jerusalem. He went straight to the people who were held by the Jews in even greater detestation than were any Gentiles—the Samaritans, who hissed and cursed and stoned the Jews who passed through their territory. Philip preached the simple Gospel to them, and his word was attended by divine power, and many believe it upon the Gospel. But that city had already a wonder-worker, Simon, who had declared that he was himself the great power of God, and yet now, strange to say, avows himself a humble believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. The care with which he watched Philip, the suspicion that he had of some superior art on the part of the evangelist, and his subsequent offer of money for the baptism of the Holy Spirit have marked him as a notable character in the history of the early Church. How sincere he was it is impossible for us to say. The rebuke which he received is one full of lesson to all of us.

Verse 1. Saul. Probably at this time he was a member of the Sanhedrin. **Consenting.** Taking pleasure in; approving of. **At that time.** Immediately; on that very day. **There was a great persecution.** A sudden outburst of antagonism, both legal and illegal. **The church which was at Jerusalem.** The company of believers in Jesus. We are not to think of an elaborate organization such as each of the denominations now is. **All scattered abroad.** Read Acts 11. 19, 20. The Christians knew that the persecution would come; their Lord had told them so, and now that it came they recognized in it an opportunity to spread the Gospel. **The regions of Judea and Samaria.** Far away from the mobs of Jerusalem. **Except the apostles.** The apostles did not yet stand at Stephen's point of view, and for that reason, perhaps, escaped persecution; for no one could find fault with them for neglect of the Mosaic ritual. It is probable, too, that the great veneration in which they were held by the common people made it inexpedient for the authorities to attack them.

2. Devout men. This phrase in the New Testament means men careful of their religious duties; not Christians, usually, but conscientious Jews. Taken in connection with the last three

words of the last verse it shows, first (probably), that not all Christians indorsed Stephen; and secondly, that not all Jews indorsed Stephen's murderers. **Great lamentation.** Thoroughly characteristic of an oriental funeral; in this case especially useful as a notable protest against the savage outburst of the Jews. One interesting fact which we cannot fully explain is implied by the story of the gospels and the Acts. During our Lord's life the Pharisees seem to have been his chief antagonists, but it was the Sadducees that brought about his death, and the opposition to the apostles in the early days seems to have been almost exclusively from Sadducean sources. But now the Pharisees have joined them again, and Saul, a Pharisee, become conspicuous in the attack.

3. Made havoc. Laid waste. See Gal. 1. 13, and 1 Cor. 15. 9. **Haling.** An old word akin to "hauling." **Committed them to prison.** Read Acts 22. 4, 19; 26. 9-11.

4. Therefore. Because of the persecution. **Preaching.** "Proclaiming" in every way, by discussions in the synagogues and by personal appeals. In most cases the preaching was to Jews. **The word.** The Gospel of Christ.

5. Philip. To be carefully distinguished from Philip the apostle. His name appears second in

the list of seven, Acts 6. 5; and he is the only one of the "deacons" besides Stephen who is mentioned again in the Bible. Twenty years after he had won for himself the beautiful title of "evangelist," Acts 21. 8. **The city of Samaria.** Probably, though not certainly, the capital city of the Samaritans.

6-8. The people with one accord gave heed. The contrast must have been delicious to Philip, who had just escaped from the howling mobs of Jerusalem. **Hearing and seeing the miracles.** If a comma were placed after "hearing," it would bring out the sense better. See the Revised Version: "they heard the preaching, and saw the signs." **Unclean spirits.** Whether or not the demoniacal possession of the New Testament has any exact parallel in modern life it would be rash to attempt to say. There are diseases, the direct result of vice, which bear close resemblance in their symptoms to those given in the New Testament record. **Palsies.** Cases of paralysis, which is more common in the East than here. **Great joy.** On the part of everybody; those who had suffered in their own persons, those who had suffered from their human sympathy, and those whose hearts exulted in the manifested power of Jesus.

9-11. A certain man called Simon. There are nine men of this name mentioned in the New Testament. A brother of Jesus, a disciple, a leper of Bethany, a Pharisee, the father of Judas Iscariot, a tanner, one who is called "of Cyrene," and one surnamed Peter who became the greatest of the apostles. The Simon here mentioned, if we are to believe early Church writers, was known throughout the world; he had "greatly astonished the sacred senate and people of the Romans." Strange legends grew up about him, but of trusty history concerning him there is little or none. **Used sorcery.** Like many of the religious teachers of the day. The Roman empire was full of sorcerers who did strange and seemingly impossible things, the doing of which was probably based upon slight knowledge of physical laws unknown to the general. The "black art" owed less probably to familiar spirits than to the gift and subtleties of the wizards themselves.—*Dr. Hanford.* Modern spiritualism is the nearest counterpart of ancient sorcery. **Bewitched the people.** Astonished them; charmed them. **Giving out that himself was some great one.** He probably declared himself to be a personification of the Great Power of God; that is, incarnated Omnipotence. **From the least to the greatest.** Low classes and high. **This man is the great power of God.** This should read, "This man is that power of God which is called Great." "Power" seems to be used here as Paul used it, Rom. 8. 38, and Eph. 1. 21, to describe a celestial being. **To him they had regard.** "They

gave heed to him." **Of long time.** His reputation had outlasted years of criticism. **Bewitched.** Amazed, charmed. **Sorceries.** Apparent miracles.

12. When they believed Philip. Recognizing that he outdid the wonders of Simon, and that he coupled with his signs a message of sweet relief from moral woe. **The kingdom of God.** The dominance of divine purity. **The name of Jesus Christ.** A righteousness built upon the story of the Gospel. **They were baptized.** They were being baptized; there was one long and steady addition to the Church.

13. Simon himself believed also. Doubtless with sincerity, but not with depth. That Philip could outdo him on his own field was evident. To Simon's low sense of spirituality Philip was simply a superior wonder-worker, so he, Simon, must now learn Philip's secret. If, as is possible, he believed that Jesus was the Messiah, his was such a belief as did not change the sordid nature of his heart. **He was baptized.** Philip doubtless believed that Simon's Christianity was genuine. Superhuman discernment was not always given to the early preachers of Jesus. **Wondered.** The same word as is above rendered "bewitched."

14. This verse presents interesting facts to the attentive student. 1. The apostles at Jerusalem felt that the work in Samaria was in their diocese, and that they were responsible for it—a hint that at this early day there was some recognized church organization. 2. The phrase, "they sent unto them," shows that Peter was not primate in the modern sense, had no supremacy there, but went and came as the majority of his brethren voted for him to do. 3. The fast friendship of the two leaders in the apostolic company, in spite of differences in temperament and views, is very interesting.

15. When they were come. They came to examine the work and see if God's hand were in it, to organize the church, and to bestow the divine gifts in their power. **Come down.** As Jerusalem is on high ground people were said to "come down" to almost every other part of the land. **Prayed for them.** They saw that the work of grace was genuine. They could not impart the Holy Spirit, but they could intercede for his endowment upon others. **Receive the Holy Ghost.** Some peculiar manifestation of the Spirit such as was given on the day of Pentecost.

16. Observe that this verse is in parenthesis. **He was fallen.** The word "he" is not in the original. **Upon none of them.** The Samaritans enjoyed the pardon of sins, doubtless, and the consciousness of acceptance, but their church had not yet the supernatural power possessed by that in Jerusalem. **Baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** With their hearts they had exercised faith in Christ as their Saviour; by baptism they had entered publicly into his service.

17. Then laid they their hands on them. Not to give them anything by magical form, but to outwardly indicate the impartation of divine power on their souls. **They received the Holy**

Ghost. And thus the miracle of Pentecost was repeated. Some visible and attractive effects of the gift of the Spirit followed the imposition of the apostles' hands. This was clearly miraculous.

CRITICAL NOTES.

Verse 1. And Saul was consenting unto his death. A frank, though doubtless painful, acknowledgment of the depravity of heart of the best friend the historian had. In Acts 22. 20, Paul confesses it, and in Rom. 1. 32, bears witness to the heinousness of the sin of those who look approvingly upon those who sin. They who take pleasure in the street dog fight, what better are they than the dogs? **And at that time.** About A. D. 36, five years after Pentecost. **All.** Not in an absolute sense. **Except the apostles.** They seem to have escaped, for some reason, the brunt of the storm. Possibly, still impressed that Jerusalem was to be the central point of the kingdom of Christ, they endured it as best they could.

2. Devout men. Probably Jews, the benevolent, conservative men of the time, who did not approve the violence of bigotry. If Christians, Luke would have called them brethren or disciples. **Made great lamentation.** Good evidence that some believed Stephen to have been innocent.

3. As for Saul, he made great havoc. Intensely conscientious, he had no conscientious scruples against the most inhuman conduct. What a contrast with the spirit of him "whom thou persecutest."

4. Therefore. Connects with verse 1. Since they were compelled to go hither and thither they availed themselves of the opportunity to preach the Gospel. The interest naturally excited by the story of the persecution would tend to give them a sympathetic hearing. Thus the scheme employed by Saul to overthrow the truth is turned by the natural laws of a merciful providence into an instrumentality for its extension.

5. Then. From Chap. 8. 4, to Chap. 11. 19, is an episode in the narrative. **Philip.** The second named in the list of the seven deacons, see Acts 6. 5; and later called "the evangelists," see Acts 21. 8. No other circumstances of his life are known to us. **Went down.** Toward Jerusalem was going up. **City of Samaria.** Most probably Sychar, or the capital city then called Sebaste, the Greek equivalent of Augustus, so named in honor of Cæsar Augustus. Verse 7 implies a large population. **Preached Christ.** Christ had himself preached to the people of Shechem, a city of Samaria, nine years before.

6. The people. Revised Version, "the multitude." **With one accord gave heed.** The people of Samaria believed in a Messiah, and were therefore not necessarily hostile to Philip's

preaching. **Hearing and seeing the miracles.** Not because, but when, they saw and heard. The miracles drew the crowd, but the truth only can convert. Miracles are designed primarily as a part of revelation to show forth the mercy and love of God, secondarily to vouchsafe the divine messenger who presents the Gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

7. Unclean spirits. Ceremonially unclean. Probably so-called because the sufferer in this condition wandered into places where he would incur ceremonial defilement. Called elsewhere "wicked." See Matt. 12. 45.

9. A certain man called Simon. Known among early Christian writers as Simon Magus; that is, Simon the Magician, and so-called, by reason of his doctrine, "the father of heretics." He is said to have held that there are two fundamental principles, the stronger, or masculine represented by himself, and the weaker or feminine represented by a Tyrian woman named Helen, with whom he associated. The purpose of the higher power incarnated in him was to redeem the feminine principle which, by reason of having entered into a material form, was held in bondage. The only idea of sin which they had was physical evil. They held, therefore, that all evil belongs to or inheres in matter. The results of this doctrine operate in two directions. First, it leads to asceticism, the believer holding it to be his duty to become holy through the mortification of the body. Illustrations of this are found in monasticism, that system which leads people to live secluded lives as monks and nuns. Second, it leads to sensualism.

The believer, holding the body to be vile and worthless, could indulge in all sorts of licentiousness without polluting the spirit. **Used sorcery.** Some knowledge of chemistry, superior to that of the common people; some sleight of hand, certain mental power now known under the name of hypnotism, together with the well-known disposition of people to be humbugged. **Bewitched.** The same word is used to represent the feeling of Simon in verse 13, and there translated "wondered." In that day there was a universal, but indefinite, longing and expectation for one who should be a Messiah, rendering the people the more easily to be deluded. The thousands who a year ago ran wild after the "Denver Messiah" show how many are ready to be deceived in our own time. Only those, however, who believed on Christ were truly saved.

10. Note that while Simon gave out that he was

"some great one," only the people took him to be "the great power of God."

11. To him they had regard. Where true ideas of religion are most wanting credulity finds the richest soil. People who think they have outgrown the Bible are the first to be "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness."

12. The kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. The kingdom in the days of the Roman empire meant everywhere a compact, outward organization. Christ came not only to set up his kingdom in the hearts of men but to establish societies which, by their cooperation and discipline, should maintain and extend the doctrine and promote the life. Philip was the founder of the first Gentile organization. **They were baptized.** No encouragement is given here to the idea that baptism admitted them to the spiritual kingdom. Rather, as in India and elsewhere in our own time, it was the sign of abandonment of heathenism and error, of acceptance of the new faith, and of installation into the Church.

13. Simon himself believed also. The power of Philip's preaching must have been very great, but we cannot say that the faith of Simon was unto salvation. He believed in Philip. He believed that Philip possessed some power greater than what he had had. He espoused the cause blindly. **He was baptized.** If baptism were equivalent to regeneration, then why was Simon a deceiver?

14. Peter and John. Two by two for mutual encouragement as many times. Further mention of the history of John is not found in this book. No encouragement is here given to the doctrine of the primacy of Peter. He does not send some one, but is himself subject to orders. He is not sent alone, but the distinction is shared jointly with John.

15. Prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Prayer is the first condition upon which God's gifts are bestowed signifying that he is the source. But the awaiting of the coming of the apostles signifies that all things are to be done "decently and in order."

17. Then laid they their hands on them. Outward forms, though not to be depended upon, are not to be ignored. With God nothing is unimportant. The impartation of the Holy Ghost was not conditioned upon the laying on of hands exclusively, as is shown in Acts 10. 44.

Thoughts for Young People.

1. The vacant heart is ready for the entrance of folly and delusion. Better by far to be preoccupied with the truth and God. There is in this world much "good ground" in which the seeds and slips of thorns and thistles are diligently sown by the

evil one. Remember our Lord's story of the house that was "empty, swept, garnished." The memorization of holy texts, the treasuring of inspiring memories, will do much to protect a pure heart from the inroads of sin.

2. Wheat and tares; grain and chaff. There was a Judas among the twelve apostles; there was a Demas among the early ministers; there was an Ananias among the early professors; and a Simon among the converts. But the existence of counterfeit coin is good proof that genuine coin is in circulation.

3. The Spirit: (1) *In the word;* (2) *In the heart;* (3) *In miracles;* (4) *In the Church.* In all these places the work of the divine Spirit is shown by our lesson.

Orientalisms of the Lesson.

Simon Magus is only a type of men who in the East trade on the superstitions of the public. Many of the religious teachers among the Kurds pretend to cure diseases by touch and prayer. One instance is given of a sheik who said he would kill a man and raise him from death. He gave a drug, buried the man, calculating the time the drug would affect the subject, and went with a company to raise him from the dead; but, to his dismay, the effects of the drug had passed off sooner than expected and the man on waking had tried to extricate himself, but had been smothered by the earth thrown over him. A belief in charms and talismans is common throughout the Mohammedan world. Necklaces and beads, also verses from the Koran, are worn to ward off danger. The power of "spells" is greatly regarded. A case is recorded of a figure in the form of a woman with a black pitcher sprinkling water, over which the Persian Babi had repeated incantations for forty days, to render it effective against the enemy in war. A noted highway robber and murderer, who evaded the officers of the law successfully from time to time, was accredited with having some powerful magic which he exercised to produce this result. Astrology is a powerful form of superstition.

In Persia the astrologer is found in the palace and in the hut of the poor. Some have such implicit faith in the signs of astrology that they are directed by the astrologer in all little and great things all their lives. The years are divided into a cycle of twelve, each of which has a special attribute. There is a table by which to find anything, such as, on what day to have a tooth pulled, to put on a new coat, to go on a journey, to take a bath, to see the governor, to get married, to water a garden. Of course all this means a corresponding number of unlucky days, all of which the astrologer can tell; the presence of good or ill luck is always about them in commonly recognized events, such as the bad luck attaching to the number thirteen which the Moslems of Persia avoid, counting ten, eleven, twelve—four-

teen, skipping thirteen altogether. The astrologer is master of the secret science which can reveal all this, and of the antidote, for he can tell in the event of a theft who the thief is, and frighten the man he proposes to name, into giving him money not to charge the crime upon him. These astrologers really understand a good deal of astronomy, calculating eclipses, and gaining reputation by telling them in advance, or by foretelling the appearance of a comet. Fortunate is the great man who can always have an astrologer with him to tell him all the means of securing good luck or of avoiding calamity.

This man Simon was an astrologer of note, and when he saw the miracles of the apostles, supposing of course that they were only tricks like his own, offered them great money to reveal to him the methods by which they were wrought. He had such power over the people that they believed him to be incarnated omnipotence. It is not unusual for the eastern people to think of God being incarnate in whole or in part. The Hindus believe that a single attribute of the deity sometimes becomes incarnated. A worthy magistrate of the British government in the Himalaya mountains was spoken of by them as the "Incarnation of Justice." The Gnostics supposed that some influence emanated from God, which was a part of his essence. Tradition relates that Simon Magus gave out that he was the Almighty who gave the law to Moses; again, as the Son of God; and again as the Comforter, the Holy Ghost promised by Christ. The writings of the early Christian fathers are full of traditions concerning this Simon, whom Josephus calls a Jew from Cyprus, but who, it is generally conceded, was born in a little village of Samaria. He is reputed to have forged literary works in the name of Christ and his disciples.

By Way of Illustration.

The disciples dispersed. When the Church worshipped in caves and dells—was literally in the field marching by day and camping by night—it was invincible. When Israel encamped her apostasies occurred. The pillar of the moving cloud told of a hot sun on the heavenward side and cool sands for the pilgrims' sandals. It is a rolling stone, growing like a snowball with every revolution, that is to fill the whole world. It is the handful of corn scattered on the mountain top that is to yield the abounding harvest; stored in the bin it will sweat and sprout, but will grow to nothing. The leaven of the kingdom spreads. The mustard seed growing gives grateful shade and nests for the birds of heaven. Talents put at interest double themselves. The Gospel cannot stay unless it goes. Christianity in circulation gives tonic vigor to the body of Christ. The arithmetic of the Gospel is that of progression. Add, multiply, and divide are its three rudiments.

"Great joy." Joy is one of the striking characteristics of the new life which Jesus came to give. At his birth the angels declared, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy." When Jesus ascended, "the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy." The kingdom of heaven is said to consist of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace. Paul closes his prayer for the Romans with these words, "The God of hope fill you with all joy." Repentant David prayed, "Restore unto me the joys of thy salvation." Joy in the individual heart and in the church is always a sign of the presence of the Spirit. I have noticed throughout many years of evangelistic work that wherever there is a great and glad spirit of song there are sure to be many conversions, and where the people will not or do not sing there are few turned from darkness to light. It is not the singing that converts, but the singing, when it is hearty and glad, marks the presence of the Spirit.—*Pentecost.*

Simon's power gone. "How shall we turn people against pleasures and practices that are harmful?" was asked at a convention of Christian workers. "By giving them something better," was the response. "The young lady who received to-day a beautiful genuine diamond, no longer cared for the imitation gem which attracted her yesterday." So Simon's charm was gone when the people heard of Jesus.

Baptized with the Holy Ghost. To be saved is one thing, and to be saved and baptized with the Holy Ghost is another thing. There is as much difference between the two conditions as there is between a grate full of coals and that same grate with those same coals set on fire. We must not only possess the truth, it must be on fire in our hearts if we are to be felt in the world.

Before the Class.

Approach to the lesson. Bring up the scene which closed the last lesson. In fact, the first sentence of our lesson should be the last of the seventh chapter. Stephen's death was the beginning of much persecution, which resulted in the dispersion of the disciples. This is a new era in the history of the young Church. It is really enforced missionary work, and from this time the Church does not lose its missionary character.

Method of presentation. The opposition to the Church is now open, and Saul is the leader of it. Persecution was a blessing, though it did not appear to be so. All have read of the mother bird pushing the fledglings out of the nest to teach them to fly. Persecutions drove the Christians out of their home church nest, and they went everywhere preaching the Gospel. In addition to the countries

named it is probable some also found their way to Rome, Rom. 1. 6, 7. See also Acts 11. 19. The Christians thus scattered abroad numbered thousands, no doubt. They were filled with a burning zeal and overflowing with an intense desire to witness for Jesus. Spend some time with Saul. He made a business of what he undertook, whether it was good or bad. He certainly did not resemble the Church of the Laodiceans, Rev. 3. 15, 16. He arrested people so rapidly that they could not be tried at once, and had to be imprisoned. Let the class imagine what would be the effect upon the Church to-day if it were called upon to pass through such persecutions. Would any be willing to die for the cause? Would any deny the Lord?

Next talk about Philip. Where did he go? What did he do there? With what result? What kind of miracles did he perform? What was the general effect in the city—joy or sorrow? Why? What strange character did he meet there? How had the people received him? What effect did Philip's preaching have upon him? What does this prove for the Gospel? The news of Philip's success at Samaria reached Jerusalem, and at once Peter and John were sent to him. The significance of this is seen in that it was a new experience to receive such people into their fellowship and Church. If God approved of this work, as evidenced in their conversion, they could do no less than formally to receive them.

Practical teachings. Verse 1. Consenting to a sin is to be guilty of that sin.

Verse 1. An aggressive Church will meet with opposition.

Verse 1. Persecution strengthened the Church and spread the Gospel.

Verse 3. A man may be in earnest and sincere, and yet be wrong.

Verse 4. It is the duty of Christians to carry their religion wherever they go.

Verse 5. The Church is under commission to carry the Gospel to all parts of the world.

Verse 8. The Gospel of Christ brings joy to all who accept it.

Verse 9. No one is beyond the reach of the Gospel.

Verse 14. There should be joy in the Church at the news of conversions anywhere.

Verse 17. The Holy Ghost is no respecter of persons.

Heart thoughts. Have I ever been persecuted for Christ's sake? Do I take my religion with me wherever I go? Has my religion given me joy?

The Teachers' Meeting.

As a background to this lesson we should have a clear and fresh understanding of the appointment of the deacons; the peculiar character of the preaching of Stephen; the bloodthirsty opposition which

he evoked; his trial; his death; the attitude of Paul; the attitude of the apostles; the dispersion of the infant Church; the opportunity which this dispersion gave to preach the Gospel of Christ. We should note also the character of Philip as shown in the various passages in which reference is made to him. It would be interesting to pass over this lesson and tell the story of Simon's sordid effort and the rebuke which he received. A question which confronts us all is how to obtain the divine blessing. By riches? by power? by science? by self? by pretense? No; it is by the gift of God.... Or, view the lesson as a series of three pictures: I. The Persecutor; II. The Church; III. The Sorcerer. I. The Persecutor was (1) sincere, (2) intense because it was his nature to be earnest in everything. What fighting against conviction? See Acts 9. 5. II. The Church. The time to estimate a Church or a character is when it is in the midst of trial. True Christianity on this question shows itself: (1) By its growth, its germinative power, it propagates itself. (2) By its breadth. It overcomes racial and religious prejudices. (3) By its power, both physical and spiritual. (4) By the joy it brings. In every truly converted soul is placed a fountain of happiness. (5) By its discipline. The Church was a unit whether in Judea or in Samaria. It recognized the central authority of the apostles. III. Simon the Sorcerer. A type of a false Christianity. (1) Even in the true Church, in its purest days, there was a false disciple. (2) He was a Christian in form, but not in heart and life. (3) He supposed that other disciples were on his own plane, and offered money to the apostles to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit. But the character of Simon is detected when the Holy Ghost descends. He that is spiritual judgeth all things.

OPTIONAL HYMNS.

No. 1.

In thy name, O Lord, assembling.
Come, said Jesus' sacred voice.
Guide me, O thou great Jehovah.
A wonderful joy and salvation.
Jesus shall reign.

No. 2.

There's a call comes ringing,
Eternal Father, thou hast said.
In from the highways.
There's work for us all.
Go forward, Christian soldier.

References.

FREEMAN. Ver. 2: Hebrew mode of burial, 350; customs at funerals, 763; lamentations over the dead, 285.

Heart Talks on the Lesson.

Just when the newly formed Christian church seemed on the highway to prosperity—multitudes converted; the members of the new society full of

love and fellowship; great activity in going from house to house in Jerusalem preaching Jesus—all at once came an apparently very disastrous turn in affairs. The good work stopped, and the faithful workers were scattered. Homes were broken up, and men and women no doubt were greatly perplexed and distressed. How could the Lord allow such hindrances to a work so successfully going on in his name? Had he not said he had all power in heaven and in earth, and that he would be with them always? Why did he not show his power and put down their enemies at once? If they could have seen as God sees, and as we see now that the results are plainly visible, they would have known that he was keeping his word with them in permitting these things which seemed to them so unfortunate; they would have known that this persecution, which was apparently the deathblow to the little church, was the best thing possible. Hundreds of people heard the Gospel who would not have heard it if these Christians had not been persecuted out of Jerusalem. No doubt they were themselves driven by it to such close communion with God and to such tests of faith that they spoke with convincing energy to all whom they met.

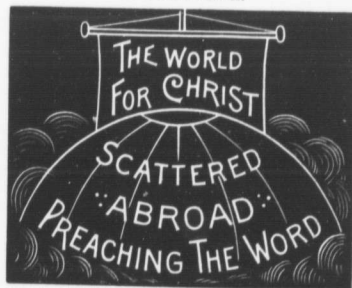
You drop a seed into the ground; it dies, and from it springs a beautiful flower which never would have blossomed had not the life of the seed been given for it. Jesus said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Hard times are often the best times. They try our principles; they exercise our moral and spiritual muscle; they develop character fiber. Do not look at your trials as your worst enemies. Never think of them as proof that God does not love you. That is a very great mistake. He says he chastens us because he loves us. Perhaps you cannot understand that now, but you will understand it better when in the future you look back over the years, and see how good God has been to you in times when you have thought he was very hard, or that he had forgotten all about you and let you drift on the rocks. His children never drift. He keeps his hand on the helm. This is one of the things you must believe and get comfort out of because God says it, and because many of his people have proved it true for themselves. He surely loved the people who composed this little church in Jerusalem, but he allowed them to be persecuted and scattered because greater good would be accomplished for them and for the world in that way than if they had stayed in Jerusalem happy and comfortable and apparently successful.

You are not always getting on the best when things move smoothly. Ships stand still in a calm; they make progress when the winds stir the waves. Our lesson to-day teaches us that God's people are always under his care; that whatever he allows to befall them he will cause to work for their good;

that however dark things seem we must take them bravely, cheerfully, trustfully, because our Father will bring all out right in the end for those who love and obey him.

Blackboard.



Lessons and Golden Texts for 1898.

[It will be well for our readers to keep this list within reach during the year, so that they may refer to it when they wish to arrange their studies for the next year.]

NOTE.—The parallel and related passages mentioned in connection with the assigned lessons will, it is hoped, be studied in connection with the lessons, to give a better understanding of their force and meaning.

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL BY MATTHEW. First Quarter.

LESSON

- I. Jan. 2.—JESUS AND JOHN. Matt. 3. 7-17. *Commit vs.* 13-17. (Study Isa. 40. 1-5; Matt. 1 and 2; John 1. 19-34.) GOLDEN TEXT: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Matt. 3. 17.
- II. Jan. 9.—JESUS TEMPTED. Matt. 4. 1-11. *Commit vs.* 4-11. (Compare Luke 4. 1-13, and Heb. 4. 14-16.) GOLDEN TEXT: For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. Heb. 2. 18.
- III. Jan. 16.—BEGINNING OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS. Matt. 4. 17-25. *Commit vs.* 17-20. (Study also Matt. 4. 12-16, and John 1. 35-51.) GOLDEN TEXT: The people which sat in darkness saw great light. Matt. 4. 16.
- IV. Jan. 23.—THE BEATITUDES. Matt. 5. 1-12. *Commit vs.* 3-10. (Study the whole chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: Ye are the light of the world. Matt. 5. 14.
- V. Jan. 30.—HOW TO PRAY. Matt. 6. 5-15. *Commit vs.* 9-13. (Read the whole chapter.)

LESSON

- GOLDEN TEXT: Pray to thy Father which is in secret. Matt. 6. 6.
- VI. Feb. 6.—OUR FATHER'S CARE. Matt. 6. 24-34. *Commit vs.* 25, 26. (Read Matt. 7.) GOLDEN TEXT: He careth for you. 1 Peter 5. 7.
- VII. Feb. 13.—THE CALL OF MATTHEW. Matt. 9. 9-17. *Commit vs.* 12, 13. (Read chap. 9.) GOLDEN TEXT: Follow me. Matt. 9. 9.
- VIII. Feb. 20.—THE TWELVE SENT FORTH. Matt. 10. 9-15. *Commit vs.* 5-8. (Read chap. 10, and compare Luke 10. 1-20.) GOLDEN TEXT: Freely ye have received, freely give. Matt. 10. 8.
- IX. Feb. 27.—WARNING AND INVITATION. Matt. 11. 20-30. *Commit vs.* 28-30. (Read the whole chapter, and Luke 19. 41-48.) GOLDEN TEXT: Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matt. 11. 28.
- X. March 6.—JESUS AND THE SABBATH. Matt. 12. 1-13. *Commit vs.* 10-13. (Read Matt. 12, and compare Mark 2. 23-28, and Luke 6. 1-11.) GOLDEN TEXT: The Son of man is Lord, even of the sabbath day. Matt. 12. 8.
- XI. March 13.—THE WHEAT AND THE TARES. Matt. 13. 24-30, 36-43. *Commit vs.* 37-39. (Read the whole chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. Matt. 13. 37.
- XII. March 20.—JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED. Matt. 14. 1-12. *Commit vs.* 6-10. (If used as a Temperance Lesson, read the account of Belshazzar's drunken feast, Dan. 5. 1-31.) GOLDEN TEXT: Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Prov. 4. 23.
- XIII. March 27.—REVIEW. GOLDEN TEXT: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Matt. 16. 16.

Second Quarter.

- I. April 3.—THE WOMAN OF CANAAN. Matt. 15. 21-31. *Commit vs.* 25-28. (Read Matt. 15, and 1 Kings 17. 1-24.) GOLDEN TEXT: Then she came and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me. Matt. 15. 25.
- II. April 10.—SUFFERINGS OF JESUS FORETOLD. Matt. 16. 21-28. *Commit vs.* 24-26. (Read Matt. 16. 1-28, and Mark 8. 27-38.) GOLDEN TEXT: He was bruised for our iniquities. Isa. 53. 5. Or, THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS. (Easter Lesson.) Mark 16. 1-8. *Commit vs.* 6, 7, 9. (Compare Matt. 28.) GOLDEN TEXT: Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. 1 Cor. 15. 20.
- III. April 17.—THE TRANSFIGURATION. Matt. 17. 1-9. *Commit vs.* 1-3. (Read Matt. 17, and 2 Peter 1. 12-18.) GOLDEN TEXT: We behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. John 1. 14.

LESSON

- IV. April 24.—A LESSON ON FORGIVENESS. Matt. 18. 21-35. *Commit vs.* 21, 22. (Read chap. 18.) GOLDEN TEXT: Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. Luke 6. 37.
- V. May 1.—THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY. Matt. 21. 6-15. *Commit vs.* 9-11. (Read Matt. 20 and 21.) GOLDEN TEXT: Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Matt. 21. 9.
- VI. May 8.—THE MARRIAGE FEAST. Matt. 22. 1-14. *Commit vs.* 2-4. (Read the whole chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: Come; for all things are now ready. Luke 14. 17.
- VII. May 15.—WATCHFULNESS. Matt. 24. 42-51. (May be used as a Temperance Lesson.) *Commit vs.* 44-46. (Read chaps 23, 24, and Rom. 14. 1-13.) GOLDEN TEXT: Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Matt. 24. 42.
- VIII. May 22.—THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. Matt. 25. 31-46. *Commit vs.* 34-46. (Read Matt. 25, and Rev. 20. 11-15.) GOLDEN TEXT: He shall reward every man according to his works. Matt. 16. 27.
- IX. May 29.—THE LORD'S SUPPER. Matt. 26. 17-30. *Commit vs.* 26-28. (Read Matt. 26; Mark 14. 12-25; Luke 22. 7-20; John 13. 1-30, and 1 Cor. 11. 23-34.) GOLDEN TEXT: As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. 1 Cor. 11. 26.
- X. June 5.—JESUS CONDEMNED. Matt. 27. 11-26. *Commit vs.* 21-24. (Read Matt. 27. 1-34, and John 18. 28-40.) GOLDEN TEXT: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 Tim. 1. 15.
- XI. June 12.—JESUS CRUCIFIED. Matt. 27. 35-50. *Commit vs.* 35-37. (Read Matt. 27. 35-56, John 19. 1-37, and Isa. 53.) GOLDEN TEXT: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 15. 3.
- XII. June 19.—THE RISEN LORD. Matt. 28. 8-20. *Commit vs.* 18-20. (Read Matt. 28, Luke 24, and 1 Cor. 15. 1-20.) GOLDEN TEXT: I am he that liveth, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Rev. 1. 18.
- XIII. June 26.—REVIEW. GOLDEN TEXT: Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Jude 21.

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE TEN TRIBES.

Third Quarter.

- I. July 3.—THE KINGDOM DIVIDED. 1 Kings 12. 16-25. *Commit vs.* 16-19. (Read 1 Kings 12. 1, to 14. 20.) GOLDEN TEXT: A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger. Prov. 15. 1.

LESSON

- II. July 10.—ELIJAH, THE PROPHET. 1 Kings 17. 1-16. *Commit vs.* 2-6. (Read the whole chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord. 1 Kings 17. 16.
- III. July 17.—ELIJAH ON CARMEL. 1 Kings 18. 30-39. *Commit vs.* 36-39. (Read chaps. 17. 17, to 18. 46.) GOLDEN TEXT: And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God. 1 Kings 18. 39.
- IV. July 24.—ELIJAH'S FLIGHT AND ENCOURAGEMENT. 1 Kings 19. 1-16. *Commit vs.* 9-12. (Read the chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Psalm 37. 7.
- V. July 31.—NABOTH'S VINEYARD. 1 Kings 21. 4-16. *Commit vs.* 4-6. (Read chaps. 21 and 22.) GOLDEN TEXT: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house. Exod. 20. 17.
- VI. Aug. 7.—ELIJAH'S SPIRIT ON ELISHA. 2 Kings 2. 6-15. *Commit vs.* 11-14. (Read the chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Luke 11. 13.
- VII. Aug. 14.—THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON. 2 Kings 4. 25-37. *Commit vs.* 32-35. (Read the chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee. Psalm 55. 22.
- VIII. Aug. 21.—NAAMAN HEALED. 2 Kings 5. 1-14. *Commit vs.* 13, 14. (Read the chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved. Jer. 17. 14.
- IX. Aug. 28.—ELISHA AT DOTHAN. 2 Kings 6. 8-18. *Commit vs.* 15-17. (Read 2 Kings 6. 1-23.) GOLDEN TEXT: The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Psalm 34. 7.
- X. Sept. 4.—THE DEATH OF ELISHA. 2 Kings 13. 14-25. *Commit vs.* 20, 21. (Read the whole chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Psalm 116. 15.
- XI. Sept. 11.—SINFUL INDULGENCE. Amos 6. 1-8. (The quarterly Temperance Lesson.) *Commit vs.* 3-6. GOLDEN TEXT: They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way. Isa. 28. 7.
- XII. Sept. 18.—CAPTIVITY OF THE TEN TRIBES. 2 Kings 17. 9-18. *Commit vs.* 13, 14. (Read 2 Kings 17. 1-23; Amos 6; Hosea 5.) GOLDEN TEXT: If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever. 1 Chron. 28. 9.
- XIII. Sept. 25.—REVIEW. GOLDEN TEXT: No good thing will be upheld from them that walk uprightly. Psalm 84. 11.

STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF JUDAH.

Fourth Quarter.

LESSON

- I. Oct. 2.—REFORMATION UNDER ASA. 2 Chron. 14. 2-12. *Commit vs.* 2-5. (Read chaps. 14, 15, and 16.) GOLDEN TEXT: Help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee. 2 Chron. 14. 11.
- II. Oct. 9.—JEHOASHAPHAT'S GOOD REIGN. 2 Chron. 17. 1-10. *Commit vs.* 3-6. (Read 1 Kings 14. 21, to 16. 34.) GOLDEN TEXT: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Prov. 3. 6.
- III. Oct. 16.—THE TEMPLE REPAIRED. 2 Chron. 24. 4-13. *Commit vs.* 9-11. (Read 2 Kings, chaps. 11 and 12.) GOLDEN TEXT: And the men did the work faithfully. 2 Chron. 34. 12.
- IV. Oct. 23.—ISAIAH CALLED TO SERVICE. Isa. 6. 1-13. *Commit vs.* 5-8. (Read Ezek. 2 and 3.) GOLDEN TEXT: I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. Isa. 6. 8.
- V. Oct. 30.—MESSIAH'S KINGDOM FORETOLD. Isa. 11. 1-10. *Commit vs.* 2-4. (Read the chapter, and also Isa. 2. 2-4; 9. 1-7.) GOLDEN TEXT: The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Isa. 11. 9.
- VI. Nov. 6.—HEZEKIAH'S GREAT PASSOVER. 2 Chron. 30. 1-13. *Commit vs.* 10-13. (Compare 2 Chron. 35. 1-19.) GOLDEN TEXT: Yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary. 2 Chron. 30. 8.
- VII. Nov. 13.—THE ASSYRIAN INVASION. 2 Kings 19. 20-22, 28-37. *Commit vs.* 32-34. (Read the chapter, and Psalms 46 and 48.) GOLDEN TEXT: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46. 1.
- VIII. Nov. 20.—MANASSEH'S SIN AND REPENTANCE. 2 Chron. 33. 9-16. *Commit vs.* 12, 13. (Read the whole chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1. 9.
- IX. Nov. 27.—TEMPERANCE LESSON. Prov. 4. 10-19. (The fourth Sunday in November is observed as "Temperance Sunday" in Great Britain.) *Commit vs.* 14, 15. (Read the chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Prov. 1. 10.
- X. Dec. 4.—THE BOOK OF THE LAW FOUND. 2 Kings 22. 8-20. *Commit vs.* 19. (Read 2 Chron. 34.) GOLDEN TEXT: Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. Psalm 119. 2.
- XI. Dec. 11.—TRYING TO DESTROY GOD'S WORD. Jer. 36. 20-32. *Commit vs.* 32. (Read the chapter.) GOLDEN TEXT: The word of our God shall stand forever. Isa. 40. 8.

LESSON

XII. Dec. 18.—THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH. Jer. 52. 1-11. *Commit vs.* 9-11. (Read 2 Kings 25, and Jer. 8.) GOLDEN TEXT: Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. Jer. 29. 13.

XIII. Dec. 25.—REVIEW. GOLDEN TEXT: Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Mal. 3. 7. Or (A Christmas Lesson), Heb. 1. 1-9. *Commit vs.* 1, 2. (Read Luke 2. 1-20.) GOLDEN TEXT: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Luke 2. 11.

Thoughts for the Quiet Hour.

— MAN never deceives himself so much as when he attempts to deceive God.—*Caryl*.

— As a prince, Christ bestows repentance to Israel; as a Saviour, he gives forgiveness of sins.—*Gloag*.

— A joyful heart, which is assured of the grace of God, imparts its brightness to the face.—*Starke*.

— The flight of the eagles of God is boldest when the storm rages most furiously; his stars shine most brilliantly in the darkest nights.—*Hofacker*.

— Betake thee to thy Christ, then, and repose Thyself, in all extremities, on those,
His everlasting arms,
Wherewith he girds the heavens and upholds
The pillars of the earth, and safely folds
His faithful flock from harms.
Cleave close to him by faith, and let the bands
Of love tie thee in thy Redeemer's hands.

—*Quarles*.

— When he takes your work away and bids you no longer to do good and obedient things, but only to be good and obedient, surely that is not the death of faith. That may be faith's transfiguration.—*Phillips Brooks*.

— The Golden Rule settles a hundred difficult points which, in a world like this, are continually arising between man and man. It prevents the necessity of laying down endless little rules for our conduct in specific cases. It sweeps the whole debatable ground with one mighty principle.—*Luther*.

— What mortal in the world without inward calling but would be miserable.—*Goehe*.

— I have lived to thank God that not all my prayers have been answered.—*Jean Ingelov*.

— Self-denial is a kind of holy association with God, who, by making you his partner, interests you in all his happiness.—*Boyle*.

— God's gifts are not for sale, and he who would come by them otherwise than as God has offered them will perish.—*Pentecost*.

— Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion; what a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines or rather indicates his fate.—*Thoreau*.

— In a world where there is so much to be done, how happy that there is so large a portion of daylight! In a world where there is so much to be suffered, how merciful that there is also so much night!—*Blunt*.

— Those who feed upon God's word grow strong and peaceful, and are by God's grace hidden from the strife of tongues.—*Spurgeon*.

Here and There.

The religious body known as Mennonites is very strong in Manitoba, where they have 2,960 families, with a total membership of 20,000. They have 235,160 acres under cultivation. Last year they harvested 3,500,000 bushels of grain, exclusive of flax. Of flax they raised 950,000 bushels. They own 11,000 horses, 8,300 cows, and 10,000 young cattle. It is said that not many years ago the colony borrowed \$195,000 from the Dominion Government at five per cent., and from their brethren at Waterloo, Ontario, \$20,000 without interest. In 1891 they had repaid the whole amount of these loans with interest, and are now quite free from debt, and prosperous in every respect. The creed of these peculiar people forbids them to carry arms. They were originally expelled from Germany by Frederick VIII., and settled in Russia, where the Empress Catherine granted them exemption from military service for one hundred years. Finding there was little probability of a further exemption, they emigrated to Canada, where the Government granted them a fertile tract of ground and freedom from military service forever.

A Hindoo conversing with a missionary, in answer to the question, "Which of all our methods do you fear the most?" said, "We do not greatly fear your schools, for we need not send our children; we do not fear your books, for we need not read them; we do not fear your preaching, for we need not hear it; but we dread your women and your doctors, for your doctors are winning our hearts and your women are winning our homes, and when our hearts and our homes are won, what is there left us."

Mohammedanism has a history of thirteen centuries. It has won 200,000,000 followers, and its degraded and wretched myriads are confined to Southern Asia and Northern Africa. Christianity after nineteen centuries of life, has won 400,000,000 followers, and with the exception of China and Turkey, its happy and enlightened people rule the world.

PRIMARY TEACHERS' DEPARTMENT.

Primary Jottings.

"Thus learned I from the shadow of a tree

That to and fro did sway upon a wall:

My shadow self, my influence may fall

Where I may never be."

Into the homes from which the children of our classes come—yes, and far beyond them—falls the "shadow self," the influence of the teacher of the little ones! It is a truth which may well cause an arrest of thought in our busy lives.

Some one has wisely said that "just as the children and servants in a home reflect the spirit of the father and mother, so the children in the primary class reflect the spirit of the superintendent and teachers. We cannot preach gentleness, patience, love to a little child, but our example will teach them forcefully. In the same way we must teach promptness, system, quiet. If you are late the children will probably be late also. If we whisper to visitors or assistants, they will soon feel that they can whisper to each other. It is what we do, rather than what we say, which influences the children; nay, it is not what we do or say so much as what we are."

Every primary teacher should have a variety of quieting exercises at her command. The one below, much used in primary week-day schools, may be new to some of our readers:

"My hands upon my head I place,
On my shoulders, on my face;
On my hips, then at my side,
And then behind me they will hide.

"Then I will lift them up on high,
And make my fingers swiftly fly;
I'll hold them now in front of me,
Then I will clap them, one, two, three."

To attempt to make a grown Christian out of a child is an awful mistake. "I'll be a good child, indeed I will!" is as far as it can profitably go. Children cannot comprehend the spiritual experiences of their elders, and as soon as they affect them they become hypocrites.

Our children should and can early know love toward God and how to answer the question, "Is it right?" as applied to their daily actions toward their parents, brothers, sisters, and mates.

To bring a child's conscience to healthy sensitiveness is half of its religious education. To teach a child honest and ready obedience to such a conscience is the other half. All other things follow—the added knowledge, the clearer vision, the more perfect comprehension of the meaning of doctrines and beliefs.

The children need religious education. They would get more of it if those who are set over them for instruction would bear in mind that it cannot be successfully imparted without the aid of Christian common sense.

The Selection and Training of Assistants in the Primary Department.

BY MRS. W. F. CRAFTS.

THERE are two ways of using assistants in the primary department:

1. To keep order, mark attendance, etc.
2. To assist in the general work, and to do a part of the teaching.

Which is the better way?

In replying to the question we must consider the present and future good of both scholars and teachers.

"Keeping order" in the usual fashion—that is, taking notice of and correcting everything which children do that is not up to the adult standard of behavior—certainly tends to incite disorder rather than to quiet it. Richter says: "We must excuse children for being children." We may reasonably expect children to be quiet when they are interested in something, and only then. Those teachers who say least about order know best what good discipline is and secure best results.

In this direction then assistants will find their occupation largely gone. In too many large primary classes this is about all they have to do, and they often prove disturbers of the peace rather than helpers to it. It is certainly not just to those who are giving their time to the Sunday school to require of them such insignificant service; but, on the other hand, their duties should be such as will develop their powers as teachers, so that they may, in time, become excellent trained teachers themselves. The Sunday school certainly has need of as many of that sort as can be prepared. Therefore we do not hesitate to say that only after the

second plan should assistants be used in the primary department.

The selection of assistants is all-important, as only those should be chosen who are likely to make good teachers. It will not be difficult to secure them if the following suggestions are followed: Look in two directions for them—in the Young People's Society and among the mothers (and fathers?) of the little children themselves; invite their presence to help in the class for two or three Sundays, without any reference to permanence. At the end of the time stipulated those who will make the best teachers will want to stay, and will probably ask permission to do so. Do not urge anyone to remain who raises the slightest objection to do so. The Lord wants only willing-hearted service. Always be on the lookout to secure teachers in this way among the mothers who are likely to come a few Sundays when their children first start to the Sunday school. This plan of probation works well because persons hesitate to take up the work of teaching for several reasons: they doubt their ability to teach; they think they have not time for it; their interest is hardly sufficient to make them willing to enter upon it. In two or three weeks they can test the situation.

The superintendent should be informed at length who might become permanent teachers, and he should make the appointments, and not the primary superintendent.

How can the assistants wisely enter upon the work of teaching? For the most part they are inexperienced and should be treated as learners themselves. It would certainly not be well to have the children, upon whom right first impressions must be made, receive their lessons from those who had not yet learned how to teach, and so it would seem best that the teacher in charge of the primary department, the so-called "primary superintendent," should teach the lesson to all of the children while the assistant teachers sit in their respective classes, *not to keep order*, but to observe what is taught and how it is taught. They will be all the more able to intelligently follow the work if the primary superintendent has given to them beforehand her teaching plan; this may be done by having a teachers' meeting, or by placing in the hands of the assistants a lesson help which all have agreed to study. If the lesson is well taught by the primary superintendent there will be no need of "keeping order." Any attempt on the part of assistants in that direction would only divert the scholars, therefore they should not be held responsible for the order during the time the

primary superintendent is teaching. After the lesson has thus been given, let the assistants proceed to review the lesson in their separate classes. It is then that the lesson paper or cards containing the lesson for *that day* (and not the coming Sunday) should be distributed. They will be of much help in reviewing the lesson. Having seen an example of good teaching the assistants will know how to set about their work, and they will be able, too, to adapt the lesson to the children of different ages, as the several classes should be formed of children of the same ages.

It should be a part of the plan to keep the assistants in charge of the same classes (which should never exceed twelve children) during all of the time they are in the primary department.

It should also be a part of the plan to have the assistants transferred into the main department with the classes. Then will be bridged over that unhappy and lonesome time which many little children have when they are taken out of the primary department. Some leaders who speak with authority say that the teachers should not be transferred with the children; they urge that good primary teachers should always be primary teachers. It is certainly for the best good of the children that in the new and larger place they should have a teacher who understands and loves them; otherwise many of them will drop out of the school. It will certainly be for the best good of the teachers that they should have opportunity to grow in Bible study and in teaching power which they must do to meet the growing needs of their scholars. When any teacher has reached the limit of his or her growth, then it will be time to make a change, and not until then.

The Teacher's Personality.

BY MISS BERTHA W. TUCKER.

THE infant class room, large, sunshiny, with all the modern equipments of the most approved Sunday school work—organ, sand table, black-board, kindergarten materials, Bible charts and pictures—and in the midst a teacher harassed, ineffectual! Can you conceive a Rugby boy of Tom Brown's day ascribing the uplift of his school life to the Rugby surroundings, or even to the much-lauded public school system of England, to anything or anybody save that unique masterful personality, Dr. Arnold? As the universe of light centers in the sun, the vast theme,

teaching, concentrates itself upon this one luminous point, the teacher.

Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Shall we give as a chief requisite of every teacher this drawing power which, so preeminently, the great Teacher possessed? In one sense it was the literal lifting up which, ever since the cross set in Golgotha, has made men say, "Thou art worthy: . . . for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;" in a still deeper sense, it was the lifting up of utter unworldliness. It is the soft shining of the sky above, not the mud puddles at our feet, which rivets our gaze. If we are to attract the little ones, so near are they to the kingdom, we must indeed, in spirit and in life, be "lifted up" from the earth, its pleasures, its cares, its purposes.

I can think of nothing which so typifies the earth-life as that storm on the Galilean Sea—the little boat beaten, tossed, driven out of its course; that is, the human soul caught in its throes. And the life lifted above the world, the new life which comes of the Spirit, is, in its essence, peace—the winds ceased, the waves stilled, the great calm. I have heard mothers silence their little ones' complaints by "Perhaps Miss Fannie had a headache to-day," or "Grown folks have so many worries, dear; I expect poor teacher was worried." Well, grown folks do have difficulties, but never one more than the all-wise Father sees best; it is kind of the mothers to excuse us, but is it not dragging in the dust the spotless robe of our calling to let ourselves be called "poor teacher?" Need these things be—with the heart-peace?

I am writing, you think, as though our troubled seas were only headaches and worries. When the great deeps of our lives are broken up, how then may we go in peace to our classes? There are times in every human life when work must be put aside, when to his sorrow-stricken disciples the Master says, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile." In Gethsemane Jesus himself did not teach. Yet after, not the desert rest, but the little quiet in the boat on the morning sea; after that, we read, came the healing all the sick, the teaching till evening was come, the breaking of the bread; after Gethsemane was the "lifting up" and the drawing of all men. Those of us to whom, after a great sorrow, it is given to go among little children and minister, will find in a hundred different ways God's

healing balm poured out; if, not after trouble, but in its very midst, we are called to such ministering, it will be to us as wings to the birds; we shall find ourselves lifted sunshineward ere we know it; but always there must be first the touch of the Christ on our hearts, the peace touch.

"Thoughts of the Christ should rise at every turn,
And hold us all day long;
Alone, or when in crowds, each heart should hear
That blessed undersong."

Peace in the class room is not loss of power. The birds in the belfry grow so used to the ringing of bells that they do not notice them. Scolding is never power. But you have seen good-natured teachers who could neither control nor teach their classes. Arthur, in his *Tongue of Fire*, claims that the work of the Spirit in the heart gives, "not the idea of good nature, but of something heavenly."

The children are our truest educators. They know when in the class room they are entertained. They like that kind of attraction well enough, but when something better is put within their reach they lay hold of it. A father who was trying to persuade his two fun-loving little sons to go to a Sunday school nearer their home, was silenced by one of them saying, "Papa, I tell you, you'd better let us go to that school. The teacher there makes lumps come in our throats." The father smiled at the way of putting it, but he understood that the teacher's words entered his boys' hearts with power, and they stayed at the school where she taught.

Let the Spirit add to your peace, power; and what that lifted Christ is to the world, you, in your small measure, will be to your class. There will be one difference: Jesus draws to himself, you will draw to him. If you prefer his glory to your own pride in teaching, you may rejoice to know that every little child in your class some day will whisper, "I love you;" you need not fear that even one will say, "I love you best;" always it will be, "I love Jesus best."

Mothers and Sunday School Lessons.

BY MRS. GEORGE ARCHIBALD.

AN old Spanish proverb says that "an ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy"—a saying not more complimentary to the mother than to the clergy; for the pound of clergy that can equal an ounce of true mother is of no mean grade.

But the motherhood that makes this true is not the mere physical experience of child-bearing. It is rather the spiritual fitness and the loving instinct which moves the woman to serve children with a tender joy in their present and a yearning hope for their future.

Such a mother will not leave to others the religious education of her children; but, realizing that chiefly upon the parent rests the responsibility of moral development, will both go before and follow the work of the Sunday school teacher.

A man at a gambling table unconsciously sang as he played. "Where did you learn that song?" asked his companion. "I don't know what I was singing," he replied. The questioner sang a few notes in connection with the words. "O, that! It is part of a song my mother used to sing." It was a bit of a well-known hymn. "Isn't this a queer place for such a song?" asked the first speaker. The other made no reply for some moments, and then, rising, pushed away the cards, and said, "Isn't this a queer place for a man whose mother sang such a song?" And he walked out.

The future of the man might have been better, or worse, from that time. But mark the influence of that mother who across the years and silence of death could follow into the gambling house the son of her prayers and hopes and draw him away!

It is this mighty motherhood, consecrated to the children's best, that is needed in the Sunday school. With it the power of Christian education is beyond computation. The child who has been steadily taught at home the principles and the practice of everyday religion comes to the Sunday school ready to hear and apply the truth as the teacher presents it. He will be prepared for recitation, and will have a thought of his own in reference to it, whether it be an original thought or that of his mother received into his heart and mind. Could the Sunday school teacher win the mother to as much interest in the Sunday school as she herself feels, the success of Sunday school work would rise to nobler proportions.

But the help must be other than that which springs from a mere good-natured impulse to "help the teacher." It must be that which springs from a grateful appreciation of the fact that the Sunday school teacher is striving to help the mother, and from the devoted unselfishness and wise and steady sense of responsibility that should be part of the equipment of every parent.

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS. FIRST QUARTER.

LESSON VI. (February 7.)

TRUE AND FALSE GIVING. Acts 4. 32, to 5. 11.

GOLDEN TEXT. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 1 Sam. 16. 7.

Primary Notes.

BY MARTHA VAN METER.

[Above the lamp kept on the board during the quarter print "Love Revealing Truth."] The great sun in the sky, giving light and warmth, is a picture of God's love. As it shines into dark places, showing what is there, so God's love shines into dark corners of our hearts *revealing*, or showing what is wrong there. Little Mary said to her mother, "Mamma, please tell me what does 'revealing' mean?" Little Lillian said, "I think I know, mamma; it is God showing something." Lillian was right. Revealing means *showing* something. What is Love showing in this lesson? Yes, it is Truth—beautiful, holy Truth. God wanted all the world to see what he thought about Truth, and so we have this story of what happened to some people who loved money more than they loved truth.

We are going to learn about four great things today. Shall we print them here? You may let the letters as they are printed, and then you may read the words if you can.

- A great family.
- A great father.
- A great sin.
- A great love.

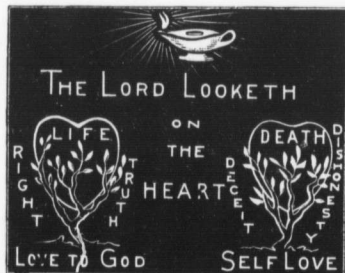
There were now about eight thousand believers in Jesus, and they loved one another and lived like one great family. How many were converted on the day of Pentecost? Yes, three thousand, and then after Peter preached in the temple, the day the lame man was cured, five thousand more believed. So there was a great family of believers now, and they were all very happy. The apostles preached, and everyone, even the children, forgot themselves in trying to help and bless somebody else. Rich men sold their houses and lands and brought the money to the apostles to be used in helping the poor. Every day they prayed to God and sang hymns of praise to him, and God smiled upon them and made their hearts glad.

The reason the rich people were willing to give up their money was that they knew they had a great, rich Father. They believed that if they

loved and trusted him, and did as he told them to do he would take care of them. Little children who have a good father to care for them are not troubled about what they will do to get food and clothes. The part they have to do is to love and obey their good father, and he will give them all they need. All the believers in the world, big and little, belong to the great family of God, and have a great Father, God himself, and so they do not need to worry about anything, but just try every day to be good children and trust their good Father. Do you belong to this happy family? You can belong to it as soon as you want to and are willing to love and obey your great Father.

Who is it that likes to make trouble in happy families? Who likes to make trouble in your heart? You all know, I see. It is the evil spirit. He found some hearts that loved self more than God. [Uncover the heart with "Self-love" at the root.] Here was a man and his wife—I will print their names so you can all see them—who had let a bad weed grow in their hearts. They liked the best places, the biggest apples, the easiest work when they were children, and the evil plant had gone on growing until now it bore such fruit as deceit. [Tell how Ananias and Sapphira planned to pretend that they were giving the whole price of the land.] "Come on," said Harry to Fred, "I've got three pennies to-day, and I don't have to put them all in the missionary box. I'm going to get two sticks of candy." That night Harry's mother asked him if he put his money in the collection, and he said yes. He told his conscience that mamma didn't ask if he put all in. Did Harry disobey, as well as deceive? [Tell the sad result of the great sin, and show how it is true now, as it was then, that sin leads to death.]

Once there was a mother with her little child out on the deep sea in a ship. The ship took fire, and all the people on board tried to get into the little boats to save their lives. At last all were in



except the mother and child, and the boat was so full that they could only let one more into it. The mother kissed her boy and dropped him into the

boat. She would rather die herself than let her son die. That was a great love. But God's love that shows sin is greater. He knows that sin kills the soul, and he has sent Jesus to conquer sin. [Uncover the other heart, and show how love to God grows and bears good fruit that lasts forever. Teach that the Lord looks on both hearts, and that nothing we do can be hid from him, either in this life or in the life to come.]

Kindergarten Hints.

BY MARY J. CHISHOLM FOSTER.

KINDERGARTEN DEPARTMENT.—Giving. Acts 4. 32, 34, 35; 20. 35.

GOLDEN TEXT. "God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. 9. 7.

AIDS TO THE KINDERGARTNER. Holy Bible, Acts 5; *Beauties of Nature* (Lubbock), pages 185-187; *Christianity and Social Problems* (Abbott), "Christ's Standard of Values," pages 179-236; *The Social Law of Service* (Ely), pages 127-156.

ATTENTION STORY.

Peter, John, and James, with all the others who loved the dear Father and all his children, tried to help everyone. They were glad to comfort people in sorrow, and to help those who were lone and sick. The people who were poor and did not have many things were not forgotten, either; and those who had many good things did not like to see others have but little or nothing, so they said that they would not call their things their own, but they would put all the things together and each one should have whatever he needed. They were very unselfish, were they not? Are the dear boys and girls of this class careful not to take and keep too much for themselves? God's word says that he loves a "cheerful giver;" that is, one who is glad to give something which he calls his own to some one else. Let us read about the men who loved Jesus so much that they loved everyone, and wanted to give their things to others. [Read Acts 4. 32, 34, 35; 20. 35.]

Explain unusual words: "Multitude," "possessed," "apostles," "distribution," "blessed."

OUTLINE.

Sunday. Attention Story, Bible lesson, Golden Text, and conversation.

Monday. Talk of those people who loved Jesus being of "one heart." What does it mean? Illustrate this simply, and talk of the spirit of unselfishness. Talk of thoughtfulness for others. Let us care whether they have things or not.

Tuesday. If everyone who loves Jesus now would give something to those who have not good food and comfortable clothing and money to buy what they need, we could say as this thirty-fourth verse says—"Neither was there among them any that lacked." God has given enough for all his children. Because some keep more

than they ought to keep, others have little or nothing to give.

Wednesday. All giving is but following the teaching of Jesus. Tell the story of Mark 10. 21 and 22. Once a young man came to Jesus and asked him how he could be good. Jesus loved the young man, but he knew one very naughty thing about him. It was this; he had a great many "things," and he wanted to keep them all for himself. Jesus said he ought to give some of his things to other people. When the young man heard that he felt sorry, for he did not want to give away anything.

Thursday. Do you think that the young man of whom we spoke yesterday might have spared some of his "things?" I will tell you why he did not wish to give any of them away. It was because he was so used to keeping all his things for himself, that he found it hard to part with them. If, when he was a little boy, he had begun to give away his things, it would have been easy when he became a man.

Friday. Talk of it being better, "More blessed to give, than to receive." Acts 20. 35. Did you ever feel glad to give some of your things to others? Did you feel really happier than when something was given to you?

NATURE WORK. Talk of the forces of nature which give in abundance, and bring out the idea of the returns to be gained, for "those who give, and those who have." This is true of people as well as of trees, brooks, pansies, sweet peas, fruits, and flowers. Let the children give examples of multiplicity. We give one seed, and when it is planted it yields, or gives back, hundreds of seeds. Let the teacher carry out this thought in the moral and spiritual life.

ART WORK. Show a harvest scene, and let the children get the idea, that a wheat field with its many sheaves, and an apple orchard with its laden trees, came from a few grains of wheat and a few apple seeds.

HAND WORK. The children may show in drawing, with sticks, with clay, or with paper folds, some of the things which are useful, and which we may give to others.

The **TRANSITION CLASS** may outline the word upon the lesson card. Choose a bright color.

SCIENCE AT HOME WITH MOTHER. Let the children name some of the blessings they have through their five senses. Some of these, like pleasant sounds, they may keep; but many of the things which they can see and touch and taste and smell they may give away freely and cheerfully. Jesus has given to us an example of loving and caring for others, and in this, as in all his teachings, he says to us as families, "Follow me."

LESSON VII. (February 14.)

THE PRISON OPENED. Acts 5. 17-32.

GOLDEN TEXT. "We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5. 29.

Primary Notes.

[Around the lamp already on the board print "Love Opening Doors." Keep clearly before the minds of the children Who is the Love that does the wonderful works of which they are learning this quarter. This is a good time to teach and impress such texts as "God is love" and "I am the Light of the world." To show that little hands can open strong doors when moved by the mighty power of love, tell the story of a little girl in England whose father was to die for some political offense. The queen, whose trusted servant he had been, was very angry with him, and would not listen to any friend of his who wanted to save his life. But his little daughter dared the queen's anger, and spoke so sweetly that her heart was touched, and she pardoned the father. Show that it was love in the heart of the child that opened the prison doors for the father, and that this love was put there by the Lord of love].

REVIEW. Recall the Love and Truth story. What fruit does self-love bear? What does the Love-to-God tree bear? Who looks upon all hearts? Of what does the lamp remind us? Yes, of God's light and his love. Do you know what was growing in the hearts of the apostles? Yes, it was the Love-to-God tree, and it bore the kind of fruit that God likes to see. Who can tell the names of the fruits on this tree? **TRUTH** was one of them, and this lesson shows how this good fruit caused the apostles to get into trouble.

After Ananias and Sapphira died the people listened to the apostles more than ever. They saw that the Jesus whom they preached had great power, and they came from all the cities around Jerusalem, bringing their friends with them, and the sick were cured, and devils were cast out. So many miracles were done that the high priest thought that these men must be stopped from telling the truth about Jesus, or all the people would go after them. So he sent men to take them and shut them up in prison. He meant to keep them there all night, and in the morning to bring them before the council for a trial. [Show the prison door on the board, tell what a horrible place a prison in the East is, and ask children if they think God saw his friends there and thought about them?]

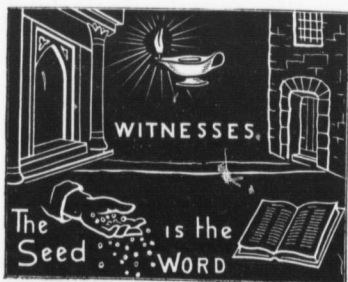
God always sends some one to open prison doors. He sent a little girl, you remember, to open the doors for her father when the queen was so angry; but this time he sent an angel. Whenever God sends to open his doors can do it, for he gives them the power. Do you know why he took the apostles out of prison? He wanted them to keep on telling

about Jesus—that is, to be his witnesses. It was not far from the prison to the temple [see the way], and early in the morning the apostles were preaching there again, as though nothing had happened.

[Tell how the judges came into their hall that morning to see the apostles and try them. This council was called the Sanhedrin. There were seventy-two men who belonged to it. They sat in a half circle, and the prisoners stood in a half circle where all could see them. How surprised these judges were to hear that the apostles were not in the prison when they sent for them. Tell how they learned where they were and how they sent for them.]

Just as the Queen of England thought she had the power to kill the little girl's father, so these judges thought they had the power to shut the mouths of the apostles. But you know the queen had not so much power as had the love of a little child, and these seventy-two judges had not so much power as had the love which God had put into the hearts of these few men who loved him. [Teach the Golden Text, and show how God honored them because they put him first.]

[Uncover the hand scattering seed.] What is this little hand doing? What are the seeds put into the ground for? To grow, you say. The seeds are very small, but the plants that come from them will be large. The apostles sowed the seed of the heavenly kingdom every time they preached. They sowed seed each time they helped somebody. All day and every day they were sowing seed for God. We have put the little hand on the board because we want you to remember that little hands can do just this kind of work. What is the true seed? [Show the Bible.] How many know one Bible verse? Then you have one good seed. But many of you know a number of Bible verses. The more verses you know the more seeds you have, and the better witnesses you can be for Jesus. [Urge the learning of texts and show how the little children may use them to help people to get acquainted with Jesus. Close by singing "Bringing in the Sheaves."]



Kindergarten Hints.

KINDERGARTEN DEPARTMENT. The Prison Opened. Acts 5. 17-25.

GOLDEN TEXT. "We ought to obey God." Acts 5. 29.

AIDS TO THE KINDERGARTNER. Holy Bible, P'salm 7; *Peter the Apostle* (Taylor), chap. 14; *Church in the House* (Arnot), page 77.

ATTENTION STORY.

Our story for to-day is one of the many wonder stories in this wonderful book. The stories are better than fairy stories or fables, and are beautiful to think about, and to tell about after we read them. The minister who was called the high priest, and many of the people also, became angry with Peter and John because they talked to the people so often, and so one day they put them in a prison and shut the door. The wonder part of the story is this: an angel came to the prison that night and opened the door and brought them out, saying to them that they might go to the temple and tell the beautiful story about Jesus to all the people. They were very glad to know that they could do this, so they went right away to the temple early in the morning and commenced to teach the people. Well, after the minister rose next morning he met many men who were to be with him, and they were to talk to Peter and John. They sent officers to the prison to get them. The officers came back pretty soon saying that they had gone to the prison and found it shut safely, and the keepers were standing there as usual, but they could not find the men. While the minister and the other men were thinking about this story of the officers, and wondering what would come next, a man ran to them and said, "The men you put in prison are in the temple teaching the people." We may read every bit of this story here. [Read Acts 5. 17-25.] Omit, "which is the sect of the Sadducees."

Explain unusual words: "Enterel," "council," "senate," "returned," "keepers," "whereunto."

OUTLINE.

Sunday. Attention story. Bible lesson, Golden Text, and conversation.

Monday. Let the children tell you what the minister and the people did. Talk of verses 17 and 18. Talk of the duties and the dress of the high priest, and also some peculiarities of the dress of the people at that time, thus bringing some mental picture of their sandals and other articles of clothing.

Tuesday. What did the angel do? Whose angel was this? Of the Lord? that is right. Verses 19 and 20 contain a little story.

Wednesday. What did Peter and John do? They must have been glad to go early in the morning to the temple and teach the people. They loved the people and wanted to help them. Who had taught them how to teach others? Verse 21.

Thursday. What did the officers do? What surprised them? Talk of verses 22 and 23.

Friday. What news did one man bring while the minister and the captain and some other ministers were thinking of all this? Verse 25. Talk of the Golden Text to-day, and of the obedience of these men, who were doing as Jesus had told them to do, when he spoke to them, before he went to heaven. He had said, "Go teach."

NATURE WORK. This lesson may be the general topic of this season, and may be connected with the thought of abundance given last week. The snow is given in abundance, and has its uses. Explain to the children the preserving qualities of the snow, if a great depth be on the ground, and give the idea of God's care for the grass, the bulbs, and the vines, covering them with the white blanket of which we speak and talk in the kindergarten. Snow warms the ground, and when melting in the springtime it refreshes the earth.

ART WORK. Show some pictures of snowshoes, Esquimaux homes, arctic sledges, and icebergs, allowing the children to distinguish which lines are verticals, horizontals, slants, and curves. Many winter scenes may be found in current magazines.

HAND WORK. The children may make pictures of a temple and its porches, using the various gifts, and with sticks and rings combined they make piston sleds, and in the sand table they may model mounds like the snow houses of the children who live in the arctic country.

The **TRANSITION CLASS** may outline the words under the picture of the high priest upon the card.

SCIENCE AT HOME WITH MOTHER. Read a few verses about some of those who heard angel voices. Talk of angel voices that we hear now. Those whom we love and who love us in the home are as angels to us. An angel is one who is good, and who loves, and who serves, so the chief angel in the home is the mother, "good and dear." Mother love and mother service never fail.

Once a good man who had walked in the wood all day was very tired and discouraged. While he was lying under a tree to rest he fell asleep, and by and by an angel touched him and spoke to him. He was awakened, and the angel said, "Arise, and eat," and there was a little cake baked and ready for him, and some water, also, to drink. He ate and drank, and then went to sleep again. By and by the angel wakened him again, and told him that the journey he was to make was too great for him unless he ate again. You may read all about it, and of how God and His angel cared whether the good man was sad, tired, and hungry. The man's name was Elijah, and you will find the story in 1 Kings 19. 4-8.

LESSON VIII. (February 21.)

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR. Acts 6. 8-15; 7. 54-60.

GOLDEN TEXT. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Rev. 2. 10.

Primary Notes.

[Print the Lesson motto, "Love Giving Courage," above the lamp, which is kept on the board this quarter. This, or some other illustration of Christian courage may be helpful.]

A little girl was ill, and the doctors came to perform a difficult and painful operation. When all was ready she said to her papa, "Please ask them to wait a little." "Why do you want to wait, my child?" asked her father. "I just want to lie in your arms a minute and pray to Jesus," said the child. Very soon she opened her eyes and said, with a smile, "Now I am ready." She did not pretend that she was not afraid, but she asked Jesus to help her, and he did. Do you not think this was Christian courage?

Who can tell how large the church was now? How many were converted at Pentecost? And how many after Peter preached in the temple? This was a very large church. How many apostles were there to take care of it? Only twelve! The twelve could not do all the work, and so seven deacons were chosen to help them. The apostles prayed for these deacons and hid their hands on them to give them power to do miracles.

The head one of the deacons was a man named Stephen. He was full of faith in God, and did many wonderful works among the people. [Uncover the lamp.] The light of God's love and truth shone so brightly on Stephen that it gave him great wisdom and power. That light is always shining, but it can only reach those who truly believe in Jesus. Stephen was one of these, and each little child may become an earnest believer who will pray to Jesus for help to become one.

Stephen was now on the way that leads up to heaven and eternal life. [Uncover the rough way.] But it was not all an easy way. Jesus had enemies, and so had the friends of Jesus. The more wonderful works he did the more the Jews hated him. Do you know what a lighted lamp in a dark room does? "Makes the room light," you say. Yes, it makes it light by overcoming the darkness. Stephen was trying to bring the light of God's love and truth into the darkness of the hearts all about him. But light and darkness are enemies, and always will be. The bad Jews were trying to put out the light, while Stephen was trying to put out the darkness. That is just the difference now between good people and bad people. [Print "Enemies" in the path.]

Now, these bad men thought they would stop

Stephen in his way to heaven. So they arrested him and brought him before the great council. Do you remember how large this council was, and what it was called? [Print "False Accusations," and tell of the lies bad men were hired to come there and tell.]

When Stephen heard these things he looked up to God for help, and then something very strange was seen. His face became very bright and shining. The light of God shone through him, and the judges wondered why he seemed so glorious; but the sight only made them more angry, for when we hear God speaking to us of our sin, unless we repent, we shall be made worse than ever. [Tell how Stephen spoke, and how they condemned him. Print in the path "Stones" and "Death," and tell how Stephen met death.]

How did Stephen overcome the trials in his way? Just as we are to overcome the trials that we have—by letting the light of God shine in him and through him. He did not have to get the light to shine, but to let it shine. We shall not have the same kind of trials to overcome that Stephen had, but we shall all have our own kind of trials, and we shall need help from God just as Stephen needed it. What did you learn was the reason that Stephen could do such wonderful works? Because he was faithful—full of faith. There is a verse in the Bible, and it is our Golden Text, that God is speaking to us now. He tells what he will give us if we are faithful. [Drill on Golden Text.]

Perhaps no child here has ever seen a real crown. It is something very beautiful and costly. But it is only for this world. The crown which God promises will last forever, and is more beautiful and costly than we can think! It is the crown of life. Jesus bought it for us, and it cost his precious life. How can you and I have one of these crowns to wear in heaven? Just by being faithful as long as we live. It is not enough to be faithful part of the time. We must be faithful unto death, as Stephen was, and then, when we die, we shall go to be with Jesus, as Stephen did.



Kindergarten Hints.

KINDERGÄRTEN DEPARTMENT. A Story About Stephen. Acts 6. 8-15.

GOLDEN TEXT. Your heavenly Father knoweth. Matt. 6. 32.

AIDS TO THE KINDERGÄRTNER. Holy Bible, Acts 6. 7; *Oratorio of the Messiah*, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" *New Testament History* (Smith); *Two Voices* (Tennyson); *History of the Apostolic Church* (Schaff).

ATTENTION STORY.

One verse in this book we will hear now, before we begin the story for to-day. [Read Acts 6. 15.] Who was this man? Here is his name written in another verse. [Read Acts 6. 8.] Yes, it was Stephen, and our story for to-day is a little one about his patience and sweetness, even when naughty people troubled him, and said what was untrue about him. This story speaks of an angel, and so it is very close to our last lesson. Stephen was a man who loved Jesus, and taught the people about him. He was trustful and strong, and he did wonderful things to help people. At one time some women, and perhaps little children, did not have anyone to look after them, so all the multitude—that means very many people—chose Stephen as one whose work it should be to care for those who had not any helper. [Read part of Acts 6. 5.] As he was a very helpful man it would seem that every one would love him, but some wanted to quarrel, and they brought Stephen before some men called a "council" to see what should be done to him. He was patient as his dear Master Jesus had been, and while the men of the council were looking in his face they could see what we spoke of in our last lesson as being the qualities of an angel, goodness and love. We said, you remember, that any one who is good and loving and serves others is as an angel, for this is just what angels do. Then the minister said, "Are these things which the people say true?" Stephen answered him by telling them all a beautiful and long story of God's goodness to Abraham and his sons and his little grandson Joseph. Then he told them of Moses who had seen an angel at one time, and of Moses's brother Aaron, and also of David and Solomon. Do you remember anything about our lessons of last vacation time, in the summer? We talked then about the little shepherd David who became a king, and last Thanksgiving time we talked about Solomon and something he did. Stephen spoke of it; here it is: "But Solomon built him a house," a temple. Acts 7. 47. We will read the other verses. [Read Acts 6. 8-15.] Omit "blasphemous."

Explain unusual words: "Miracles," nouns of nationalities in verse 9, "resist," "suborned," "stirred," "scribes," "council," "customs," "steadfastly."

OUTLINE.

Sunday. Attention Story, Bible lesson, Golden Text, and conversation.

Monday. Stephen had read his Bible, and told the wonderful story about God's care and love to many men who lived long ago. This shows us that he loved God's holy word. Explain that the Old Testament had been written long before Stephen lived.

Tuesday. Talk of verse 10. The people who did wrong felt his good influence. Show that goodness has its lesson and effect always—naughty people think about it.

Wednesday. These people had made up their minds not to be good, and they would not. They told the ministers that they had heard Stephen say that some things which they did ought to be changed; that he had spoken to them of Jesus, and of a man who had lived long ago, named Moses. They should have made up their minds to be good.

Show how we may will to be good. God and good people will help us.

Stephen showed that he was like Jesus whom he loved, for he prayed for those who treated him cruelly. Show that we are to love everyone, and have the children repeat those words of Jesus, "I say unto you, Love your enemies," "pray for them." **Matt. 5. 44.**

Friday. Talk of the Golden Text. A wealth of beauty and wonder may be found in these four words.

NATURE WORK. Continue the season talk of snow, and give the children facts about the flakes or crystals of snow. See Encyclopedia.

ART WORK. Get some physician to show a large and a small crystal under a microscope.

HAND WORK. The small children may picture crystals with sticks, and draw them upon the board, or sew them with white silk or thread upon dark paper.

The **TRANSITION CLASS** may write upon the lesson card the names of the men whom Stephen mentioned in his story in Acts 7.

SCIENCE AT HOME WITH MOTHER. Speak of the interest which Stephen took in the widows, verse 1, and that he did wonders, verse 8. The loving heart prompts the interest which was shown in the service. This old dear story of love and service is told over and over again in the homes of the land.

The mother's never-failing love and service are like unto that shown by him who served and gave his life for others. Will the brothers and sisters in the home be angels of service, too, with loving hearts and ready hands helping dear mother?

LESSON IX. (February 28.)

THE DISCIPLES DISPERSED. Acts 8. 1-17.

GOLDEN TEXT. They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Acts 8. 4.

Primary Notes.

[Print "Love Going Abroad" above the lamp on the board, and show a sponge. Interest the children in it, telling about its many mouths, and how ready it is to take, while it never gives until it is

made to do so. Ask if children know how to make it give, and let them see that it has to be squeezed, before it will give up anything it has taken in. That is like some people, little people as well as big. They want to get all they can, and keep all they get. Ask children if this is what Love likes to do, and tell that our lesson is about the way true believers go about giving, giving, all the time, as Jesus did.]

REVIEW. [Recall the story of Stephen, and ask what it was that gave him courage to die a painful death, and die loving and forgiving his enemies.] What was it that made his face shine? Where was this light? It was in his heart, and it shone out in loving looks and in kind, true words. That same light of God [what is its name?] can come into any little heart, and fill it full of love and forgiveness.

In what city were the Christians living when Stephen died? But now a great many of them had to go away to other cities and towns. Do you wonder why? It was because the wicked Jews treated the Christian believers so badly. Saul, who became the great apostle Paul, stood by when Stephen was stoned to death, and was glad to see it done. He went about from house to house to find any who believed in Jesus, and when he found them he dragged them away to prison. That was the reason so many went to other places to stay.

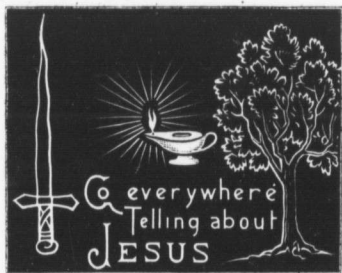
Philip was another one of the deacons. He went away to Samaria to get away from his enemies, and because he was not like a sponge, always getting but never giving, he began right away preaching about Jesus. You remember that the deacons had the power to work miracles given them. Philip cured sick people, and cast out evil spirits, and made the lame walk. There was great joy in the city of Samaria, and the people believed in the Jesus who could do such great works through his servant. It always brings joy when Jesus comes to a city, or to a home, or to a heart. How happy Philip must have felt to see so many people made glad and happy because he did not keep his good news to himself!

Among those who believed in Jesus was a man named Simon. He had been a sorcerer—a man who told lies and played deceitful tricks and made the people think he had some great power. He saw that Philip had greater power than he had, and he thought he would follow him around, and perhaps he would learn how he did these great works. He did not understand that Philip's power came from a new and clean heart. Simon was thinking about himself, and what he could do to make himself great in the sight of the people. Philip baptized him, for he could not see into his heart, but God could.

By and by there were so many believers in Samaria that the apostles who had stayed in Jerusalem, thought they would send Peter and John to see

them. When they came they prayed to God to give the Holy Ghost to these new believers. Simon saw this, and he brought money to Peter and John and asked them to give him the power that they had. This showed that Simon's heart was not right, for he thought he could buy the gift of God. Peter told him to ask God to forgive him for this evil thought.

[Uncover the tree on the board.] What do we call the part of a tree that is under the ground? The roots. Are they of much use? Yes, the tree would soon die if the roots were cut off. Christians are like trees; if they have the good roots of faith and love they will live and bear fruit. And then they will scatter their fruit (good words, good deeds, good thoughts) everywhere they go. If hard trial comes to send them where they do not want to go, even if it should be the sword of persecution, they go cheerfully, giving, giving, all the time, just as Phillip and the other believers did. Saul and the wicked Jews thought they were going to destroy the believers in Jesus by persecuting them, but they only spread the truth about Jesus abroad, for the love and light in the hearts of the believers would not let them keep still. If we get this true light and love we shall want to tell the story everywhere we go. [Close by singing, "I love to tell the story."]



Kindergarten Hints.

KINDERGARTEN DEPARTMENT. The Disciples Dispersed. Acts 8. 3-5; 8. 14, 15.

GOLDEN TEXT. "Follow me." John 21. 22.

AIDS TO THE KINDERGARTNER. Holy Bible, John 21. 15-25; *Peter the Apostle* (Taylor); *Oratorio—The Woman of Samaria* (William Stendale Bennett), "Thou hast searched me and known me," "Therefore with joy shall you draw water."

ATTENTION STORY.

One of those people who chose to be naughty was named Saul, and he tried to put all the men and women in prison. So these good people went away from where he was, and wherever they went they preached to the people and taught

them. They were trying to do as Jesus had told them. A good man named Phillip went to a city of Samaria, the very place where Jesus had been at one time when he was teaching the people.

When other disciples who were up at Jerusalem knew this they sent Peter and John to help him. They prayed together and worked together. These three men had walked over the hills and in the valleys and beside the sea with their dear Master; they had heard his words, and were trying to obey them.

They were teaching of him, and they told the people that if they would obey his words they would be good and busy here, and ready to go by and by to be with him in the heavenly country.

In Samaria the people believed this, "and there was great joy in that city." Acts 8. 18.

We will read the verses. [Read Acts 8. 3-5; 14, 15.]

Explain unusual words: "havoc," "haling," "committed," "scattered," "received."

OUTLINE.

Sunday. Attention Story, Bible lesson, Golden Text, and conversation.

Monday. Tell a little story about Phillip. Who was he? When Jesus first began to preach and was choosing his disciples, one day he asked Phillip to follow him and he did so at once. The day before that John and Andrew and Peter had come to Jesus, and now Phillip was the fourth. He went and found his friend Nathanael, and then there were five. Talk to the children with great simplicity about bringing our friends to Jesus.

Tuesday. Tell a little story about Phillip's friend, Nathanael, coming, and his surprise to find that Jesus knew him and saw him before he came. John 1. 47, 48.

Wednesday. The disciples in another city were interested in what Phillip was doing in Samaria. Verse 14. Teach a lesson of Christian fellowship. There is opportunity for many thoughts on a missionary lesson.

Thursday. Peter and John were ready to go, and the first thing they did was to pray. Praying and working go together. One of our kindergarten prayers says:

"Now before we work to-day
We must not forget to pray."

Teach the need that we talk to God in prayer always before beginning work. To do our work well we must do it cheerfully, and believe that we are pleasing God by doing well.

Friday. Talk of the Golden Text. All the years since Jesus said "Follow me" to John, Andrew, Peter, Phillip, Nathanael, and the others, men and women and children have been hearing and obeying his words. He says "Follow me" to you, and you, and you, dear little children. Say to-day that you will.

NATURE WORK. Speak of Samaria, which was the name of a country, and also of a city within the country. The city had a wall all about it; six thousand people lived there. The country had

beautiful fields, with vineyards of grapes. There were olive yards, also, and almonds, pomegranates, and plums. The birds of Samaria were black-birds, larks, and finches. We may talk of the color of grapes. The teacher may have a "lesson of sense" and taste olives. What is the shape of an almond, and the color of a plum?

ART WORK. Show a picture of Samaria which may be found in a Bible geography.

HAND WORK. The children may draw oval forms to represent the shape of almonds, plums, and grapes. They may color these with crayon. With gift blocks they may build a wall inclosing an imaginary city, either upon the kindergarten table or in the sand table.

The **TRANSITION CLASS** may sew the words given upon the lesson cards. Blue will represent loving tones.

SCIENCE AT HOME WITH MOTHER. Read that wonderful story of the talk which a woman of Samaria had with Jesus a little while before Philip went to that place to preach. It is found in John 4. 5-42. One morning while about her work this woman of Samaria took time to talk with Jesus. Hearing his voice roused her conscience, and being sorry for wrongdoing she was uplifted in her ideas, and strengthened to witness to others that One different from all others had spoken to her, and taught her of goodness, and had given joy to her heart. She was not too busy or too hurried to talk with Jesus, but great was her surprise that he knew her and could tell of her own life. A greater surprise it was when he told her that he was the Christ, and she left the water jar, and forgetting her housework for the time she hurried to the city to tell others to come and see Jesus and hear his wonderful words of life.

"Take time to be holy,
The world rushes on,"

Whisper Songs for February.

SIXTH LESSON.

Teach thy little ones, O Lord,
By thy Spirit and thy word,
Always, everywhere, to be
True in word and act to thee.

SEVENTH LESSON.

True to Jesus every day,
In my work and in my play,
Doing what he bids me do,
Ever faithful, ever true.

EIGHTH LESSON.

Ever true and faithful be,
And some happy day you'll see
Jesus waiting over there
With a crown for you to wear.

NINTH LESSON.

Tell the story, little child,
Tell it by your tempers mild,
Tell it by your words so true,
Tell it by the deeds you do.

Order of Service

FOR THE PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.

First Quarter.

Singing. The Doxology.

Teacher. This is the day which the Lord hath made.

Class. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Teacher. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,

Class. And into his courts with praise.

Recitation or Singing. Tune, "Jesus Loves Even Me."

"I am so glad that there's one day in seven
Made for the weary to think about heaven,
Made for the children to rest from their play,
So I must keep it, 'tis God's holy day."

Teacher. The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him,

Class. Unto all that call upon him in truth.

All. "Before my words of prayer are said,
I close my eyes and bow my head;
I'll try to think to whom I pray,
And try to mean the words I say."

[Prayer by teacher, all joining in the Lord's Prayer.]

THE FIRST PSALM.

Singing. (Hymn appropriate to the lesson.)

THE TWO COMMANDMENTS. (*To be taught.*)

"This is the first and great command,
To love thy God above;
And this the second: As thyself
Thy neighbor thou shalt love.

"Who is thy neighbor? He who needs
The help that thou canst give;
And both the law and prophets say,
This do and thou shalt live."

BIRTHDAY OFFERING.

OFFERING MARCH AND PRAYER.

"Bless, O Lord, the offerings
Which thy children lay
At thy feet rejoicing
On this holy day."

THE SUPPLEMENTAL LESSON.

MOTION EXERCISE OR SONG.

THE LESSON TAUGHT.

ECHO PRAYER.

Singing.

Recitation.

"Good-bye, dear friends and teachers,
May God, our Father, keep
His loving watch between us,
Through all the coming week."

Teacher. The Lord is the strength of my life;

Class. Of whom shall I be afraid?

Teacher. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.

Book Notices.

The Two St. Johns of the New Testament. By JAMES STALKER, D.D. New York: American Tract Society. Toronto: Wm. Briggs. Price, \$1.00.

Few recent writers have sprung into such prominence as the Rev. Dr. Stalker, the author of the "Life of Our Lord," and the "Life of St. Paul." He gives in this volume a beautiful study of two of the noblest characters in Bible story.

It is a rugged picture, that of the stern preacher in the wilderness—the *Vox Clamantis*—that voice so soon to be hushed in death. With a supreme loyalty to truth he preached the evangel of One whose shoe's latchet he counted himself not worthy to unloose. He saw his personal popularity wane, his following falling away, and calmly said, "He must increase or I must decrease." In the loneliness of the grim dungeon of Macherus, for a moment doubt seemed to sap his mighty faith. But for a moment only. The last martyr of the old Dispensation, he merited the words of Jesus, "Among those who were born of woman, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

How different the fate of St. John the Apostle—to be "The disciple whom Jesus loved," to lean upon His bosom, to drink deeply of His spirit, to receive the last commission of the dying Christ, to cherish in his own house the mother of his Lord, to witness for Him for well nigh a full rounded century, to see the heavens open and behold the sublime apocalypse of the New Jerusalem, and to leave that priceless legacy to the ages, the letters which breathe the very spirit of his Master, "Little children, let us love one another, for love is of God."

This book is a helpful study of these holy characters, and will give keener insight into their spirit.

The World for Christ. By A. J. F. BEHREND, D.D. A series of addresses on missions, delivered at Syracuse University on the "Graves Foundation," 1896. New York: Eaton & Main. Cincinnati: Curtis & Jennings. Price 90 cents.

This charming little volume is worthy of a careful perusal, especially by those who believe that the world has been redeemed by Jesus Christ. The lectures are entitled, "The Authority to be Recognized," "The Field to be Won," "The Result to be Achieved," "The Resistance to be Overcome," "The Leaders to be Appointed," "The Agencies to be Employed." The author, in his first lecture, gives a graphic account of his own conversion, which being delivered to Methodist students is very apropos. The subject of the lectures is treated in a very original manner,

which cannot fail to win the attention of the reader. In these days, when the subject of missions is awakening the attention of the Church as never before, the book, "The World for Christ," is a volume for the times.

E. B.

Autographs of the Evangelists.

SOME of our readers there may be who find it difficult to understand why, since God has revealed to us His will in a book, or rather in a library of inspired books, as the Bible truly is, He has not at the same time given us an infallible text. How much labour would have been saved had we possessed the autographs of four evangelists! To this we answer that, had one such autograph existed, some branch of the Christian church, possibly every branch, ourselves included, would have made an idol of the writer's parchment, while neglecting its teaching altogether. We can only seek to comprehend the ways of Providence in one sphere by observing them in another. Man is the heir of all things; yet he is sent into the world to depend for food, clothing, and all the comforts and adornments of life, on his wits. How greatly is he thereby differentiated from the brutes! How immeasurably is the educated man, and especially the scientific investigator, raised above the savage simply as the result of his own efforts!

Is it not possible that He who gave the Word of Life designs to quicken our interest in it by arousing afresh in each successive generation of Christians the desire to approach nearer to its sources, to remove the undergrowth of legend and tradition which has sometimes obstructed its free course, and that we are saved from the danger of finding it trite by the feeling that we possess a divine treasure which, though a gift, is not entirely independent of our own exertions for the measure in which it shall minister to our edification?—"What Language did Christ Speak?" By Agnes Smith Lewis, in the *December Century*.

THE following paragraph, from an exchange, suggests a problem that we would be glad to have our people consider: "The Sunday-school was suspended for the winter because the weather was too bad. Then the public school commenced because it was the only time of the year that the children could be spared from home. Evidently there are a good many people in this world who have yet to learn the difference between a reason and an excuse."—*Sunday-School Magazine*.

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"The thorough study of this period, and all that pertains to it, in preparing his great work on 'The Catacombs of Rome,' has enabled Dr. Withrow to present a vivid picture of it to his readers."—*Toronto Mail and Empire.*

"To read of the calm faith and heroic firmness of the martyrs thrills with a holy awe."—*Toronto Globe.*

"The author studied the Catacombs of Rome, and although 'Valeria' is in the nature of a work of fiction, the scenes, incidents, dates and history are strictly in accordance with the facts. It is graphically written and most interesting throughout."—*Hamilton Spectator.*

"It throws much light upon the early Roman Church to which St. Paul ministered."—*Belleville Daily Intelligencer.*

"The author's large work on the 'Catacombs of Rome' is not yet superseded as the best on the market, after twenty years' steady sale."—*Templar, Hamilton.*

"It gives a vivid picture of early Christian trial and triumph in Rome during the last of the Ten Great Persecutions, that under Domitian."—*Presbyterian Review, Toronto.*

"Dr. Withrow presents the information of his larger volume glossed over with the allurements of a fascinating tale."—*Canada Presbyterian.*

"This is one of the books that one can recommend without the slightest hesitation. Every Sunday-school library in the country should have it."—*Christian Guardian.*

"It gives a very graphic account of the conflict between Christianity and Paganism for the possession of the old Roman world."—*Peterboro' Review.*

"The senior classes of our Sunday-school will welcome its addition to the library shelves."—*Guelp'h Daily Mercury.*

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"Will be a good gift book, as it is handsomely bound and illustrated. It throws much light on the early Christian Church."—*Acton Free Press.*

"The author gives in the form of a story the substance of the information contained in his expensive work on the Catacombs."—*Brantford Expositor.*

"An engrossing story of early Christian life in Rome."—*St. Mary's Journal.*



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