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The Lord's Day.

AN ESSAY BY A SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

Published by request.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

In this divine and important command given to Moses, with such appalling and terrible majesty, amid the awful thunder and lightnings of Sinai, the Almighty plainly requires one seventh portion of our time to be sacredly redeemed from worldly cares, and pursuits; and devoted to holy purposes.

The obligation of this command extends to all; and the grand aim to be accomplished by this holy day applies with equal force to every offspring of his creative power. No violation of the law of God, (except the sin of idolatry) is threatened with greater punishment than that of Sabbath breaking.

This holy day was blessed and hallowed by God himself. In this arrangement we not only feel that he requires a consecration of it to himself; but also that in his wisdom, and goodness, he had in view the promotion of the happiness of his creatures.

The Sabbath as its name implies is a day of rest, and as such it is indeed a gracious and merciful design; especially in consideration of those who have to endure toil, anxiety, and sorrow, during the week. Were it not for the enjoyment of this day, many persons would never have a moment's respite from their wearisome toil, and be deprived of all the joys of their own family circle.

The Sabbath as a day of rest is necessary for our intellectual, physical, and moral improvement. This admits of no contradiction. Should the violation of this holy day become a general practice untold evil must follow. Instead of such a course resulting in the acquisition of riches, as men of avaricious dispositions have supposed, they would find that continuous exertion for worldly aggrandizement, would waste their physical frame, cause sickness and earlier death, from the absence of the necessary rest afforded by the lawful enjoyment of the holy Sabbath.

The Sabbath is not only a season of rest for man but also for the brute creation, for it is said, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt do no work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates." Here we see God's kindness and love displayed in providing rest not only for man, but also for the lower animals.

Under the considerations already mentioned the Sabbath must ever be considered a lasting benefit to mankind; but more especially should we prize it as a precious and heavenly boon inasmuch as it affords a glorious opportunity for religious worship and meditation. Were it not for this blessed season of repose and reflection, and also for the study of the Holy Bible, the worship of God would be neglected, the mind become engrossed by the things of time, thus leaving the animal powers to gain the ascendancy. Where the Sabbath is disregarded man degenerates to a heathen or an infidel. But where the Sabbath is loved and venerated, peace sheds its hallowed influence; piety is promoted, the mind aspires after something congenial to its immortal state, and we long for that period when this earthly Sabbath shall be exchanged for the Sabbath of eternal rest.

The Sabbath was instituted as a memorial of the finishing of the work of creation. In this thought we are furnished with food for meditation, and themes of praise. Though we do not allow the mind to range above the globe which we inhabit, here, in contemplation of the diversified objects of nature, which are every where presented to our view; all proclaiming the majesty of Him who spoke and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast, the mind is lost in wonders so sublime, and overpowered by such reflections; we feel ourselves as nothing, and are led to say "Lord what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that thou regardest him."

We are also to consider the Sabbath as a memorial of our blessed Saviour, and for this reason the Sabbath has been changed from the

seventh to the first day of the week. The sacredness of the Sabbath is indeed magnified as a commemoration of this eventful period; a period to which we look for a glorious redemption, through the death of our risen Lord. Here again, we have the most sublime subjects for contemplation. The Son of God manifested in the flesh; the image of the Creator veiled in human form. When we contemplate the glorious deliverance from sin and death, achieved by this illustrious person, we must surely say, Was ever love like this? Did ever grace stoop so low? and with Hervey we must still farther say "Should the sun be shorn of all his radiant honors, and be degraded into a cloud of the valley, great, great, would be the abasement, yet nothing to thine, thou Lamb of God, thou Prince of peace, when for us men and for our salvation thou didst not abhor the coars accommodation of the manger, thou didst not decline the gloomy horrors of the grave."

The Sabbath is indeed hallowed by the resurrection of such an exalted and heavenly being, even Jesus the Son of the Highest, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of his person; one who is ever actuated with fervent zeal for the honor and glory of his heavenly Father, and for the happiness of mankind. While for a moment we reflect upon the condescension of the Saviour, we seem to trace him through his lonely pilgrimage upon earth, going about as he did performing offices of mercy to sinful and fallen man. We view him in the garden of Gethsemane. Here we see him

Asking while the gushing crimson flows,
Wrung from his frame by mightiest woes,
Asking that the cup by heaven applied,
If heaven approve, be turned aside.

We behold him again suspended upon the cross encompassed by the waters of affliction and the agonies of death, the veil of the temple is rent from the top to the bottom, the rocks of Mount Calvary rent asunder, the sun shrouded in deep eclipse, hiding his face from such an awful scene, thus causing darkness to surround the whole land of Judea, while the graves are opening, the dead arising, and the Prince of life, self-exiled from the smiles of his Father, which hitherto animated him amid his sorrows on earth, giving his life a ransom for sinful man. But on the third morning after this solemn scene—which has ever after been the Lord's Day—we see him bursting the prison doors of the tomb. It was on the holy Sabbath that celestial messengers were sent to announce to the disconsolate disciples that "he who was dead is alive." And at last on this holy day we behold him seated on a resplendent cloud attended by myriads of angels entering into heaven itself, "There to appear in the presence of God for us."

Since the Sabbath was instituted for such gracious and wise purposes, let us not trifle away its precious moments but spend them as becomes rational beings, destined to an immortal state. May it be our chief aim to spend this holy day in the fear of God, so that all our acts and doings may result in the extension of his kingdom, and the glory of His name. Then the promise recorded in Isaiah shall be ours. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight the holy of the Lord honorable, and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

HELEN E. SAUNDERS.

Hebron, Yarmouth, July 1st 1867.

The Parish Schools of Burmah.

The following from the *Friend of India* is forwarded to us from Burmah by our friend Rev. A. R. R. Crawley.

A very singular experiment is going on in British Burmah, which deserves the study of all who care for the spread of education or are interested in the dogmas and ritual of purely human creeds. For the past six months Col. Phayre's scheme of introducing good secular books into the Kyongs or monasteries, and inducing the Phongyees or Abbots to teach them has been slowly winning its way.

so simple a fact as this should promise in time to revolutionize the whole of Burmese thought and life we propose to toll our readers.

In every village of Burmah, however poor, there is a Buddhist Kyong, which serves at once as parish church, parish school, and parsonage. The whole essence of Buddhism is that merit, culminating in Niebban or absorption into Gautama, or in fact annihilation, can be obtained by meditation and abstinence from certain ordinary pleasures. Of this in its perfect form, in such a world as ours, none are capable, and they are venerated accordingly by the mass of the people. But such veneration will not of itself entitle the ordinary sin-stained man or woman to a share of the monk's merit. Accordingly the Burmese manifest a very great amount of liberality in their erection of Kyongs and their gifts to the monks. The monks are known as Phongyees, Rahans or perfect men; in Europe the early Portuguese writers have made them known as Talapains, from their using books of palm leaves, the two Pali words for which are Talapat. They form part of a vast hierarchy embracing in theory the whole male population. Women are neither educated nor do they possess spiritual capacities. With rare exceptions every Burmese and Siamese boy who has attained the age of puberty, or even earlier, enters a Kyong, donning the yellow dress of its monks. The youths remain there for a year or two under the title of Shyins, corresponding to the novices of the very similar Roman Catholic system. Their main object is to acquire merit by the study of the sacred books; their secondary end, as a means to this, is to learn reading and writing. On returning to the world they doff the priestly dress, but many prefer to wait till they are twenty years of age when they may become full priests, Patzins, Rahans or Phongyees. The last term is sometimes reserved for the head of a Kyong, who is generally appointed as in most state churches by the builder of the monastery or his descendants. All the Kyongs within a certain district are placed under a Tsata-dau, or Grand Master like that of the religious orders of Europe, and the hierarchy is completed by the Thathans, or him who has power and control over all religious affairs, a Patriarch in short. He is appointed by each Burmese king on ascending the throne and his predecessor gives way to him. The Patriarch visited by one of the English envoys requested an interest in his prayers. The hierarch visited by Bishop Bigandet more recently was as intolerably conceited as he was ignorant. Such is the ecclesiastical machinery of Buddhism in Burmah.

We need not say that, as it wants spiritual and intellectual life of even the meanest kind the influence of the Phongyees is evil and is steadily deteriorating. There is less hypocrisy than exists in Rome or Spain, because the moment a Phongyee feels unable to control his desires he may put off the yellow dress and return to secular life, assured that the merit he has laid up in Gautama's bank is real, even if it will not bear such interest as to advance him to the desired point of Niebban. In relation to women, for instance, a Phongyee is forbidden to be in the same room or conveyance with, or to touch or receive anything from a female. He may not caress a female child, handle a female animal, or even lift his own mother out of the ditch, unless no aid is available, when he may offer her his dress or a stick to pull her out, but he must imagine that he is only moving a log of wood! As to food, again he is forbidden so many things, and restricted from all solids from noon one day till the morning of the next, that he is ever chewing betel nut. Except when eating, Bishop Bigandet tells us, his mouth is full of betel and the masticating process is incessantly going on while the reddish spittle over trickles down. With a very few exceptions the Phongyees are represented as incomparably idle and painfully ignorant. They know nothing of the grammatical rules of their own vernacular, while Pali, the language of their sacred books which they so often profess to know, is as far above them as Latin above their Spanish brethren. As a rule laymen are better informed than they. They never advance beyond memory work, and even that is contemptible for their reading is desultory and dreamy, and it is confined to a few sacred books. The quaint description given by Mr. Hough, the Director of Public Instruction of

the Phongyees in our provinces is not half so severe as Bishop Bigandet's of those beyond it—"as a rule they are remarkable for indolence, luxuriating in betel-nut, sleep, offensive exhalations and pariah dogs." To this class is entrusted the education of every boy in Burmah. We need not say that no girl is taught, for the presence of a female near a Phongyee is so contrary to rule, that, when visiting a sick man in an upper room, the priest dare not enter the house lest a woman be above him and therefore administers his consolations through the window. And the whole education given is saturated with Buddhism, the only books taught being religious. It is impossible to break down such an organization from the outside. It is hopeless for the State to attempt to substitute a secular system such as the village schools of India. The Phongyees will not submit to training in a Normal School like the Goo-roos of Hindostan. All that can be done is that attempted by Colonel Phayre—to induce the monks to use our books in giving instruction. Mr. Hough who, we regret to see, has gone to England so soon after beginning the experiment, has started the scheme and it promises to be successful. In four months he has gained admittance into 45 Kyongs with 115 pupils, all of whom receive instruction from our books through our teachers. In no instance has the lazy ignorant Phongyee attempted to teach. The work first begun is the most colourless of all—a Manual of Arithmetic and Land-Surveying. In these four months the youths have nearly gone through its whole course. The more advanced have now been supplied with a text-book of Geography called "The House I Live In," and with an American missionary's "Outlines of History." These books are popular even with the Phongyees, and improved editions with skeleton maps are now being published to meet the demand. The difficulties overcome in introducing this novel system have been considerable. There are no caste prejudices, and the pupils can at least learn to read and write. But the Phongyees are suspicious in proportion to their ignorance. Mr. Hough's appointment led to the most extraordinary rumours, such as that the English Government had resolved to supervise the Kyongs and make the priests read and teach "white books." The first object to secure the co-operation of the most intelligent in Rangoon. The ignorant argued that the earth is flat and that night is caused by the lofty Mye Moh Tung which obscures the sun's rays. Sectarian jealousy was even a greater enemy than ignorance. At Maulmain the Phongyees are divided into race sections, according as they are Burmese, Talains or Shans, and they quarrel with great bitterness. Like a true Pope one went so far that the Commissioner had to interfere.

"One morning during this excitement I was invited by a Phongyee who had received a book to come and see him. I did so, and was seriously asked if I meditated evil. Had I come to bring them into trouble? No European had before visited their Kyongs on such a mission, why should I take so much trouble? I assured him it was only for their good; that the Chief Commissioner out of regard for their welfare, and wishing them to increase in knowledge had sent me to them with books that they might be taught, and I had no intention to interfere with their religion. "I must believe you," he said, "give me two more books and let your teacher come and teach them. I will tell my brethren what you say." Before leaving Maulmain my books were taken in two and twenty Kyongs, but shortly after coming away my teachers reported the return of books from eight of them. There are still fourteen where they are in use by forty pupils."

Now that the novelty has worn away and suspicion has been disarmed we trust Colonel Fyche will see that the good work is not spoiled by indifference on the one hand or rashness on the other. In no country in the world is education so entirely in the hands of the priests and confined to purely religious books as in Burmah. In truth every boy becomes for a time a priest. The whole male population passes through the Kyongs and the Phongyees are venerated with a hearty and far from slavish obedience. If the light of truth, even though it be secular, can be poured into every village monastery and with the sanction of the village priest, while the