

Sunday Reading.

The Temptation of Jesus.

BY REV. DR. LORIMER.

From a sermon preached at Chicago on the 19th ult.

Into the wilderness went Jesus immediately after His baptism. From the statement of Mark that wild beasts were with Him we infer that it was some lonely spot apart from the habitations of man. Tradition has located the scene in the neighborhood of Jericho, on a storm-lacerated mountain known to travellers by the name of "Quarantania," and which, from its grandeur, might well serve as an altar of prayer, and, from its savageness, prove a fit resort for devils. This may or may not have been the battleground chosen for the conflict between the representatives of light and darkness. This was not his sole attempt to dethrone the moral majesty of Jesus. No spot, however retired or sacred, was respected by the genius of evil, and no circumstances, however solemn and pathetic, assured immunity from peril. Such being the case, surely none of us ought to imagine himself secure, and none ought for a single moment to be unprayerful and unwatchful. If the wilderness was invaded, if the influences of baptism, and of forty days' uninterrupted communion with the Invisible, were not sufficient to restrain and overawe the enemy, it is not likely that the mad whirl of city life, and the brief, broken seasons of devotion, which alone seem possible, can afford us adequate protection. The fact is, we are at all times in danger. In the rural home of childhood, in the pleasant haunts of youth, in the delightful associations of friendship, as well as in crowded thoroughfares, and in the gilded halls of amusement, the tempter prowls and skulks. Wherever humanity toils, rests, laughs, or mourns, he is spreading his net, and insidiously is plying his hellish craft. This much we may learn from the legends we have recited, and from the experience of Jesus; and this may convince us that we have more than a speculative interest in the subject of our present discourse, and incline us to derive from its discussion such lessons as may help us to defend ourselves against the powers of darkness.

Adam was tried in Paradise and succumbed; Christ was tried in the desert and overcame; and, in overcoming, His righteousness took on a more decisive character, and by revealing to Him the inexhaustibleness of His resources, nerved and prepared Him for His ministry of suffering and sacrifice. And thus does He prove every man who is capable of grand deeds and ennobling endeavors. The rule of God's providence is: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; if, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" Society likewise is practically governed by the same laws. In humbler stations men are being disciplined for higher ones; they are put on trial for something better; they are made to pass through fiery ordeals that they may verify their worthiness and capabilities.

The form of our Lord's temptation has occasioned considerable discussion. An actual and painful conflict is here set before us in such terms as render it vivid to the least discerning mind; but to go farther, and assume that all was external and visible, is to create the suspicion that the power of temptation resides in the outward circumstances, and that only when something of the same kind takes place in our life will we be in moral peril. When the objective interpretation is insisted on, how reasonable to conclude that the merciful God will not permit the spirit of evil to approach in form less visible than it assumed when seeking to swerve Christ from His saving mission. Such a delusion I dare not encourage; it is ruinous. The most injurious and potent physical agencies are unseen. The cold and cheerless wind, phantom of the buried winter, that sweeps over our gardens in the springtime, and arrests the growth of vegetation is not tangible to sight; and the sewer-gas that creeps into our chambers, and broods over our sleeping hours, and noiselessly wraps us around in the cer-

ements of death, is veiled to our eyes, and hidden from our touch. Maleficent moral influences are equally subtle, insidious, and concealed. When least suspected, some potent seduction may stream into the soul, undermining its fair resolves, and luring to destruction. Like the fabled lodestone mountain, which, it is said, by a secret force, drew from voyaging vessels every particle of iron, so the attractiveness of unnoticed evil may gradually eliminate the iron of virtue from character, and leave it, like the ill-fated ship, a wrecked and wretched thing. Let me pray you, then, not to expect an outward manifestation; rather be upon your guard against suggestions and solicitations that proceed from hidden sources—sources that elude the keenest scrutiny.

The malignancy of temptation does not depend on your belief in the personality of Satan. Some persons deny his existence; and it has seemed to me, from the joy expressed with the denial, that it is regarded as disproving the reality of sin's serpent-like fascinations. But this is a mistake. The thing to be dreaded is here, as we know from experience, whether embodied in a fallen archangel or not. If we follow the Bible strictly, we shall scarcely doubt the existence in our world of a supremely wicked agent, who is seeking to corrupt and to destroy. But on the supposition that we have taken its representations too literally, does that lessen in any perceptible degree the fact that there is in the earth a potent something that makes for unrighteousness? Deny it as you please, the reality is unquestionable. Admitting that it is the spiritual atmosphere which has been formed by the iniquities of buried generations, or the shadows of all the transgressions committed deepening into darkness, or the moral contagion of vice, or the distillation of its essence, will any practical advantage be gained thereby? None that I can detect. Theology may gain something by the denial of Satan's personality, but human life is not benefited. There might just as well be a literal Devil as an actual Hell of evil among men. You may blot out belief in the existence of the first, but all your speculation cannot extinguish the fires of the second. Judged likewise by reason, it seems probable that we should receive the Scripture testimony on this subject just as it reads. There are not a few human devils in the world; foul, malignant creatures, who delight in mischief. Many of them were once comparatively upright, but they kept not their first estate. They fell, and, like the ruined angels, now find pleasure in trying to drag down others to their miserable level. Providence does not wholly discard them, but uses them, in spite of themselves, to develop good in others. Their vile scavenger work only bespatters themselves with filth, and brings into clearer relief the virtues they would blacken. The stars are not dimmed by the envious clouds of night, they are simply obscured for a moment, and will break forth again in lustrous brightness; and the diamond is not injured by the gutter into which it may be hurled by hate, but will shine there as radiantly as in a regal crown. So the power of these human devils is not equal to their maliciousness, but is overruled, and is oftentimes made tributary to the growth and expansion of those graces which adorn the saintly soul. But if such mortal fiends traverse the earth, seeking whom they may devour, the existence of one superior to them all, of higher rank and different nature, who is prowling in search of prey, and who, at last, to the infinite relief of the universe, will swallow up his pernicious allies, ceases to be incredible.

The manner and method of Christ's temptation are fully as important to understand as the form. You will observe that Satan approaches Him as a friend. He finds him hungering, and kindly points out how bread can be obtained; he finds Him asserting a great claim, and he indicates how it can be verified; and he finds Him on the threshold of a magnificent enterprise, and he shows how it can be made immediately successful. His words are, therefore, respectful.

To comprehend the method of Satan we must bear in mind that a sinful disposition is not the only avenue of ap-

proach to the soul. Indeed, the more corrupt it is, the less necessity for him to interfere; for it will work out a sad destiny unaided. The master mischief-maker rather assails the innocent, and aims to overthrow the upright. No glory is won from blows inflicted on a fallen foe. It is the enemy, armed and active, on whom he opens fire or surprises in the night. This explains why he so persistently besieged our Lord. To subdue the righteousness of the Prince of Righteousness were to secure everlasting fame, and to subvert the innocence of the Innocent, to crown himself with the lurid honors. But how could he obtain access to a sinless soul? How open the mysterious gates when not a traitor exists to sell the key? The answer is, by other approaches to the citadel of virtue than either inbred or developed iniquity; for such there are, and three of them are revealed in the narrative we are studying: They are:

The instinct of self-preservation. The feeling of self-confidence. The hope of self-aggrandizement. Jesus had fasted long, and, being weakened in body and yearning for food, Satan counted on His yielding. There is no sin in hunger, though it often leads to sin, and hence the tempter said: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." No harm apparently could come from the miraculous supply of pressing want, and physical infirmity would plead for the employment of this means. And yet, sent as He was to use His resources exclusively for the good of others, and restrained by a Divine law from delivering Himself by supernatural means, whether in the wilderness or on the cross, had He consented, He would have incurred the guilt of the man who, for the sake of preserving life, sets at defiance God's ordinary commandments. Bread is an imperative necessity. This Jesus doubtless realized, though never for a moment wavering or gravitating towards the sin of Esau, who, for a morsel of food, sold his birthright. The instinct of self-preservation often leads to crime. Many a youth and maiden have fallen into evil courses seeking to make bread out of the hard stones of vice and dishonesty, because they and theirs were starving.

Self-confidence is a more common and less excusable pathway to the abyss. It is written that the tempter took Jesus into the Holy City and placed Him on a pinnacle of the temple, by the literalists supposed to be the roof of the Stoa Basilike, or Royal Porch, that looked sheer down into the Vale of Kedron, and urged him to cast Himself from the height, as God had promised to bear Him up by angel hands. Satan in this particular spoke the truth. Had Jesus complied, He might have expected that His deliverance would have convinced the people of His Divine Sonship. But he knew that such presumption would not win his Father's approval. God had assured Him of help in every hour of need; but He would not be blameless if He first created the need, and then asked the help. Deliberately to make the danger and then call for deliverance would have evinced the most unwarranted self-assurance, as though he could play with the Divinely-settled order of government. At critical moments in His ministry, Jesus was not lacking in self-confidence, and, on account of its strength in Him, Satan hoped to triumph; but as it was far from self-assertion, He was saved from sin. To have confidence in self is not wrong, and yet it may be veiled weakness. The youth who thinks that he intends no harm, and who, believing God's angels will help him through, appropriates money committed to his trust, will at last find that presumption is not piety. Should he in the same spirit venture where others have been destroyed—among drunkards, gamblers, and profligates—he will find no angels there to keep him from dashing his foot against a stone. If, in the course of duty, he is exposed to evil influences, he may pursue his way undismayed, for he has God's promise to fall back on; but if he courts ruin, he has neither friend nor refuge. Thousands go down into the night of sin and shame, because they over estimate their strength. Having through God's mercy once escaped the maelstrom, they dare it the second time, and then, abandoned to their own

presumptuous folly, they sink to rise no more.

Self-aggrandizement, within proper limits, is legitimate. It is laudable to crave success. Jesus must have desired the establishment of His kingdom, and the recognition of His authority. Christ desired real success, not a sham. He sought to renew the nations in righteousness, thus converting them to His empire, not to sway a nominal sceptre over them. We are not always anxious for a kingdom, but we are not always concerned about its character. Hence, fortunes are amassed at the cost of integrity, political triumphs are achieved by the sacrifice of personal dignity, positions of honor are won through deceit, and cherished plans are accomplished by trickery. But, after all, what has been gained? Manhood has been subverted, and the interests of the community seriously imperilled, to gratify a senseless lust for power.

Thus the Spirit of evil takes things that are right in themselves and perverts them to our undoing. Our hope of safety lies in decision and in reliance on "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "Get thee behind me, Satan," was the prompt reply of Christ to His enemy. A similar rebuke will often dissolve the enchanter's spell. To parley with temptation, to tolerate its presence, to look half-wistful upon its face, is finally to yield. When the fox in the fable was invited to den of the lion, he politely but firmly declined. He did so, because he noticed many footprints going towards the den, but none returning from it. Wise fox! He saw no necessity forebode; for, as the feet-impressions were all in one direction, it was morally certain that whoever entered "left hope bend." So every youth knows that the house of sin has gates that open one way, and whoever passes them will find them closed to his return. We should be halt irresolute? If he knows not how to acquire decision in retreating, if he is ignorant how best to meet the solicitations of evil, let him go to hear the teachings of revelation, and like Jesus, he will find them sufficient for his guidance and protection. "His written" enough for counsel, enough for courage, enough for reason is written" in this precious volume; and who transcribes its sacred words on his soul, and transmits them into contact, may journey in safety amid the flims of temptation and the evils of Satan's brood. Achilles was invulnerable at every point but one, and yet he entered unarmed into battle. We are vulnerable at more points than one; then let none of us be so rash as to brave the strife of life unclothed with that panoply which is furnished in the armory of sacred truth.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.
Letter from Germany.

(From our correspondent.)

BERLIN, Feb. 13th, 1882.

Prince Bismarck is in hot, very hot water again. He stands accused of meddling and advising the Emperor in opposition to the wishes of the people. Prince Bismarck says the publication of the Imperial edict, which he also signed, was justified. The Emperor is his own Prime Minister, and the edict pursued was the same as had been adopted by all previous Prussian monarchs, who had never before had their legal authority called into question. The Chancellor upholds the Law of Divine Right in such an imperious manner, as to awaken the utmost antagonism on the Liberal side of the house. He has even accused the Liberal leaders of calling him a cowardly fiery statesman is Prince Bismarck. He usually succeeds in carrying his views by force, but when the Prussian Chancellor argues that the rights of Prussian kings have never been questioned, he must surely be troubled with a short memory. After the turbulent events of 1848 the Prussian monarchy had a hard fight to subdue popular and revolutionary ideas. After several years of negotiation, the representative of the "Society of the Cincinnati" of Philadelphia, Mr. Heinrich Leo, finally closed a contract last week with Professor Siemering, of

Berlin, for the erection of an equestrian statue of George Washington in the city of Philadelphia. According to the terms of the contract the statue must be in the place prescribed in ten years from date. The entire cost is fixed at 594,000 marks. Although the jury awarded the prize to Professor Siemering's plan at the time, that award carried with it no obligation on the part of the artist to carry his plan into execution. Many a local obstacle had evidently to be overcome before the contract could finally be concluded. Now that it is much satisfaction is felt in German art circles.

American exporters of meat to Germany are likely to encounter a formidable competition. Prominent medical men have frequently deplored the almost impossibility of supplying the poorer classes with that modicum of meat which is requisite for the physical preservation of our workmen. A trial which is now being made with an importation of meat from the Russian steppes is being watched with interest. It is well known that those steppes contain enormous herds of cattle, which latter are slaughtered for their hides, while the meat, for want of proper means of transportation, is mostly allowed to perish. Last year a first and small experiment was made to ship some meat thence in a salted state, which experiment proved so successful as to lead to the extensive shipments, now on their way, and speedily expected to arrive. Should they turn out to be equally successful they will prove a boon to the working population not only, but to thousands of households. The meat resembles in taste Hamburg smoked beef, while its price is about 40 per cent. less than that of fresh beef. It is sent here without bones or tallow, and, after passing the proper medical inspection, promise to become a cheap and popular article of food.

The mildness of the weather has brought back here quite a number of families who had left for the South in November last. There has not been such a winter in these parts in the memory of the oldest inhabitants, and although there has been a good hard frost during the night since the 10th, the days have been lovely spring days from sunrise to sunset. Excavations, which are expected to produce interesting results, are about to be commenced at Boltzheim, in Alsace, where there are a number of tumuli, which were raised over the remains of Pagan chieftains before the country was invaded by Julius Caesar, and continued to be erected until the introduction of Christianity. The body of the deceased was interred with whatever articles had been cherished by him in life, and it is believed the present archaeological investigation will bring many of these curiosities to light.

AUGUST.

For the Christian Messenger.
The Wine Question.

Dear Editor,—

I address you at this time not for the purpose of argument, but to adduce, as briefly as possible, some of the abundant authorities in support of the statements made in a previous letter headed "Clippings from the Class Room," to show your readers how very "little orthodoxy"—notwithstanding the boasting—they received from the pen of your correspondent "Tirosh" in a late number of the MESSENGER.

We hope your readers will bear with us while we call attention to some of the points made by your contributor.

1. Distinction is made by him between fermented and unfermented wine. The truth is that the juice of the grape is not properly called wine until after it has fermented. Webster gives the following definition: "A beverage prepared from grapes by squeezing out their juice and allowing it to ferment." Appleton's American Cyclopædia defines it as "originally and properly the name of the liquor obtained by the fermentation of the juice of grapes;" and Smith's Bible Dictionary gives it as quite certainly established that even *tirosh* signifies fermented grape juice, which would certainly make the term more applicable to your correspondent. "Tirosh (it is then said) in the ordinary and popular acceptation referred to fermented intoxicating wine."

2. The interpretation is objected to, that Christ's command not to put "new wine into old bottles" implies that the wine was fermented, and therefore intoxicating. Surely Smith's Bible Dictionary is an authority upon this subject, and it is there stated "a certain amount of fermentation is implied in the distention of the leather bottles when new wine was placed in them, and which was liable to burst old bottles."

The theory advanced by "Tirosh" is also noticed, but the writer of the article says concerning it, "it detracts from the spirit of the comparison which implies the presence of a strong, expansive, penetrating principle." But that which was placed in bottles does not appear to have been unfermented wine, must, but that which had nearly completed the process of fermentation, (see Bible Dic., *ibid*).

3. Whether or no there is "abundant proof" that the Jews used, and use, only unfermented wine at the Passover, and that therefore such was used at the institution of the Supper, let the following testimonies taken from the January number of the Pres. Rev. make answer:

Dr. F. Delitzsch, of Leipzig, who is one of the greatest authorities upon this subject, says, "The wine of the Passover has at all times been fermented wine."

The Rev. D. Edward, of Breslau, a missionary of scholarship, who labored in Moldavia, Gallacia, and Silesia, answered an inquiry thus: "In all my intercourse and negotiations with Jews for nearly forty years, and in all my acquaintance with their literature, I have never met an allusion to any such practice as the use of unfermented wine at their feasts, or in the temple libations. The one rule they insist upon since the captivity, is that the Jews beware of *nesekh*, wine prepared by Christians."

The Rabbis of the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau, who are the most learned Jews in Germany, have made this statement: "Unfermented wine is not regarded as wine, and would not suffice for the fulfilment of the duty to drink wine on the Passover eve." One of the most learned Jews of America, Dr. Wise, editor of *The American Israelite and Deborah*, writes thus: "All Jews at all times have used at the Passover not only wine and cider, but also vinegar made of wine or fruit. In all Jewish ceremonies, as marriages, circumcisions, the beginning and close of the Sabbath, the feast of Passover, wine—fermented wine, and not *mist*—has been and is still in use."

These statements are all from the best of authorities and are unequivocal. 4. Your correspondent quotes Dr. S. M. Isaacs as saying that "In the Holy Land they do not commonly use fermented wines." Showing this statement to one who has travelled widely in Palestine I received this ejaculation rather than reply, "Nothing could be more absolutely false."

The following bear the same testimony: Dr. Justin Parkins, an eminent missionary in Persia, says: "When simply expressed, it (*i. e.*, the juice of the grape) is called 'sweet,' *i. e.*, sweet liquor. It is not drunk in that state, nor regarded as fit for use, any more than new, unsettled cider at the press in America; nor is it even called wine till it is fermented."—(*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jan., 1869).

Rev. Benjamin Labaree, Jr., a missionary among the Nestorians for seven years, writes thus: "With the most careful inquiries I have been unable to learn that any wine is ever manufactured in the country which is not intoxicating. * * * The simple, unfermented juice of the grape is never used as a beverage."—*Ibid*.

Dr. Eli Smith, long resident in Syria, says: "Unintoxicating wines I have not been able to hear of. All wines, they say, intoxicate more or less."—*Ibid*.

5. As to whether the prohibition of leaven from the Passover in any way excluded wine sufficient answer may have been given. Yet, thinking that the deliberate statements of one of the first scientists in America may not be uninteresting to many, I give in full the letter of Prof. Prescott, of Michigan University, by whom, your correspondent thinks, modern science has been "terribly mangled":