

Sunday Reading.

The Gathering Place.

Life changes all our thoughts of heaven; At first we think of streets of gold, Of walls as white as snow, wind-driven, Of lofty arches, grandly cold, Of gates of pearl and dazzling light, Of shining wings and robes of white, And things all strange to mortal sight.

But in the afterward of years It is a more familiar place; A home unhurt by sighs and tears, Where waiteth many a well-known face; Where little children play and sing, And maidens and the old men bring Their tributes to the gracious King.

With passing months it comes more near, It grows more real day by day: Not strange or cold, but very dear, The glad homeland not far away! Where no sea toucheth, making moan, Where none are poor, or sick, or lone, The place where we shall find our own!

And as we think of all we knew, Who there have met and part no more, Our longing hearts desire home too, With all the strife and trouble o'er. So poor the world now they have gone, We scarcely dare to think upon The years before our rest is won.

And yet our Father knoweth best The joy or sadness that we need, The time when we may take our rest, And be from sin and sorrow freed. So we will wait with patient grace, Till in that blessed gathering place We meet our friends and see his face. —London Christian Worker.

The Aged Christian.

"At evening time it shall be light,"—Zech 14:7.

Oftentimes we look with forebodings to the time of old age, forgetful that at even-tide it shall be light. To many saints old age is the choicest season of their lives. A balmy air fans the mariners' cheek as he nears the shore of immortality; fewer waves ruffle his sea, quiet reigns, deep, still, and solemn. From the altar of age the flashes of the fire of youth are gone, but the flame of more earnest feelings remains.

The pilgrims have reached the land of Beulah, that happy country whose days are as the days of heaven upon earth. Angels visit it; celestial gales blow over it, flowers of paradise grow in it, and the air is filled with seraphic music. Some dwell here for years, and others come to it but a few hours before their departure, but it is an Eden on Earth. We may well long for the time when we shall recline in its shady groves, and be satisfied with hope until the time of fruition comes.

The setting sun seems larger than when aloft in the sky, and a splendor of glory tinges all the clouds which surround all his going down. Pain breaks not the sweet calm of the twilight of age; for strength made perfect in weakness bears up in patience under it all. Ripe fruits of choice experience are gathered as the rare repasts of life's evening, and the soul prepares itself for rest.

The Lord's people shall also enjoy light in the hour of death. Unbelief laments, the shadows fall, the night is coming, existence is ending. Ah, no! crieth Faith, the night is far spent, the day is at hand. Light is come—the light of immortality, the light of a father's countenance. Gather up thy feet in the bed, see the waiting band of spirits. Angels waft thee away, Farewell, beloved one, thou art gone, thou wastest thy hand. Ah! now it is light. The pearly gates are open, the golden streets shine in the jasper light. We cover our eyes, but thou beholdest the unseen. Adieu, brother; thou hast light at even-tide, such as we have not. "O long expected day begin. Dawn on these realms of woe and sin; Pain would we tread the appointed road And sleep in death, and wake with God." —Spurgeon.

A Sermonette on Peace.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

How shall I find peace? To answer this universal question we offer a brief sermonette, having no time or space for a discourse. One thing is certain. Sin can make us suffer, but it never can give us solid satisfaction. It can torment, but it cannot tranquillize. What a powerful picture of a soul without God is that drawn in the prophecy of Isaiah, which describes it as a 'troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' This is the work

of Memory. Let the wrong-doer try to hide his sins as carefully or to bury them as deeply as he knows how, memory will throw them to the surface as troubled waters heave up what has been flung into their depths. When a vessel had sunk in Lake Erie, an effort was made to raise the bodies of the drowned passengers by firing heavy cannon over the spot; and the jar brought them up. So the tremendous artillery of God's justice—manned by those two gunners Memory and Conscience—brings up to our eyes the hideous sins which we thought were buried forever. Conscience utters two great voices. One of them declares 'Great peace have they who love God's law; in keeping his commandments is great reward.' The other voice is, 'There is no peace to the wicked; they are like the troubled sea which cannot rest; the wages of sin is death.' Just in proportion as we hear and heed these voices, conscience becomes our sweetest comforter, or our most terrible tormentor.

Yet all the time the universal craving is for heart-peace. Everybody wants that. The auction-rooms of business and pleasure are thronged, and the busy auctioneers are continually crying 'peace, peace,' when they are really bidding off cheats and delusions. They have no genuine peace to give. Satan's policy is to give people satisfaction by gratifying their appetites and selfish desires and unsanctified cravings. This is about like the attempt to extinguish a fire by heaping on bituminous coal, or to quiet a drunkard's appetite by administering brandy. Satan's plan only perpetuates the heart's disease, and increases its disquietude.

In the midst of the noisy world's clamors, crying off its miserable frauds, there stands one majestic personage who with a divine calmness utters the deep, loving offer, "My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." Christ's method is the opposite of the world's and of the father of lies. Christ gives peace by healing the diseases of the soul. Instead of the wretched device of attempting to satisfy restless and unholy cravings, he expels them and brings in the new sources of joy. The world's false peace begins in delusion, goes on in sin, and ends in perdition. Christ's peace begins in pardoning grace, goes on in quiet trust, and ends in glory.

Is an unconverted world-worshipping heart like a troubled sea, casting up foam and mire? The benignant Jesus can enter even such a heart—if it will invite him—and say to the angry waves 'peace, be still; and it will smooth out, like Galilee's lake, into a placid calm, reflecting the stars of heaven in its depths. Two things Jesus can give which ensure tranquility of soul. The first one is pardon of sin, and reconciliation with a holy God. 'Justified by faith, we have peace with God.' The other is a deliverance from the tyranny of ungodly desires and lusts, and the occupation of the soul with pure, satisfying occupations. Obedience to Christ is a wonderful tranquillizer. Rest to a true Christian is simply the unhindered permission to do his perfect will. Dam up a clear, swift-flowing brook, and it foams with anger; pull away the obstruction and it joyfully darts along its bright course wherever its silver feet shall lead it. Peace is not sluggish stagnation; it is the deep, strong current of a soul flowing in harmony with God.

Before our blessed Lord went out to his dying agony on the cross, he made his will. He had not a shekel of silver to bequeath, or a denarius in the pocket of his coarse robes. A poorer man there was not that night in all Jerusalem. Yet he makes a bequest that outweighs all that the markets of the world can offer—a richer legacy than Caesar leaves to imperial heirs. 'Peace I leave with you.' Such peace as he had possessed amid innumerable persecutions and buffetings, amid poverty and obloquy, and such as filled his divine soul in view of Gethsemane and Calvary. 'My peace I give you.' A gift is all the dearer because it has belonged to our dearest friend, and is linked with him or her in our memory forever. Our Lord's gift is of his own 'peace,' which had dwelt in his own divine breast, and is poured out into the hearts which open to him. It is a peace which passeth all understanding; it keeps the heart from dis-

trressing commotions, from racking doubts, and from uneasy apprehensions of the judgment to come. This is genuine happiness. This heals the sore spot, and cures the heart-aches. Believer, you may have this, just in proportion as you turn away from the lying frauds of Satan's auction-rooms, and thankfully accept your share of your Master's legacy. 'My peace' in this world will be the prelude to 'my glory' in the next world. Open your soul to the inflowing river, while you gladly sing

"Thy reign is perfect peace, Not mine, but Thine: A stream that cannot cease For its fountain is divine. Oh, depths unknown! Thou givest of Thine own Pouring from Thine, and filling mine." —N. Y. Evangelist.

Personal Testimony for Christ.

A young Christian traveler found himself in a commercial room one night where the party being large and merry, it was proposed that the gentlemen present should give a song. Many of usual character on such occasions were sung. It came to the turn of our young friend, who excused himself on the plea that he knew no songs they would care to hear. In derision a gentleman present asked if he could not give them one of Sankey's hymns, and several others cried out that they would join in the chorus. He decided to take them at their word, and chose one of the well known hymns, with its simple gospel teaching—and with a silent prayer that God would use it for his glory—he sang, as perhaps he never sang before. All present joined in the chorus. Before its close there were moist eyes and troubled hearts. The spirit of jollity and fun was gone, but the spirit of God was there. Several gathered around our young friend, thanking him for his song. He retired to rest, grateful for grace given.

He had not been long in his bedroom when he heard a knock at the door. It was opened by a young traveler who requested permission to come in. He was in deep trouble. The song had brought back to his memory the strains he had heard a deceased mother sing. He knew his life had not been right, and the inquiry had been upon his lips, "What must I do to be saved?" He was pointed to Christ, and retired with a brighter hope. Scarcely had this inquirer left than another knock was heard at the bedroom door. This time it was an elderly traveler. The song had reminded him of lost peace and joy. He was a backslider, and the singer had the joy of pointing another sinner back to a loving Saviour. It was nearly two o'clock before he could lie down, but it was with heartfelt joy and gratitude to him who had thus honored his personal testimony for Christ.—Domestic Journal.

Two Styles of Eloquence.

The late Rev. Dr. Plumer was devoted to his work. He magnified his office, because he regarded it as the noblest vocation to which a man could be called. While pastor of a Presbyterian church in Richmond, Va., he addressed the State Legislature in opposition to a bill, but so impressed the members of the Legislature by his ability and eloquence, that they offered to elect him to the United States Senate. 'Gentlemen,' answered Dr. Plumer to the committee which tendered him the office, 'I thank you for the compliment; but I am engaged in a great work, and I can't come down.' He was once preaching in a village church, when the darkened sky foreboded a severe thunder storm. The theme was trust in God. While the preacher was uttering an eloquent description of the Christian's faith in the Heavenly Father, a thunder-clap shook the meeting-house and a flash of lightning illuminated the horizon. The people started; but the preacher, lowering his voice, calmly said, 'Yea, he trusts Him though the earth quakes at the rolling of the thunders, and men cower at the flash of lightnings.' In an instant the audience recovered itself, and listened till the minister reverently said, 'Let us pray!'

The company in which you will improve most will be least expensive to you.—Washington.

The Healthfulness of Humor.

A wise physician, who never studied medicine, says that a laugh will cure anything, from hypochondria to the mumps. I believe it. If a man can get up enough vitality to laugh, he is in a fair way to throw off disease. The only way that health is ever restored is by vital reaction. Drugs do not repair the system—they only produce the proper conditions under which it may repair itself. And laughter does this better than drugs. It is itself part of the restorative process. It stirs the blood and wakens up the slumbering force of life, and sends the very thrill of health along the benumbed and feeble nerves. Come to us with cheer, ye faithful servants of the sick, and ye shall wake us from the very slumber of death. How many sinking ones have been saved by the blessed influence of a laugh!

But there is a sickness of the mind which is ministered to by humor, as well as a sickness of the body. The soul has pulses that need quickening. The man who is not susceptible to genuine humor, or who shuts every avenue against it, is in a fair way to become a hypochondriac and a suicide. The human mind needs the enlivening influence of laughter. I believe that every man ought to have at least three good laughs a day, to keep him in moral and intellectual health; and I would have these laughs come, if possible, at the table. Three times a day we all relax the active powers of the mind and body, and seek to refresh and recuperate the energies by food, and by pleasant conversation. I think the latter is almost as much an energizer as the former, because it brightens and warms and strengthens the mind, just as the food ministers to the body. We must have healthy minds, as well as healthy bodies, in order to be at our best. The man who has depressed feeling, mentally, can hardly enjoy the highest physical vigor. Table humor is one of the most healthful things in the world. And how natural it is, when the mind is in its normal condition—a very provision of nature for the happy assimilation of bodily and mental vigor at the same time. If one of the family has a good story, or a pleasant bit of news, or a little personal quip coming to him in a moment of relaxation, does he not save it in his memory, like a bit of uninvested capital until the hour when all are gathered again about the table? He will not waste his treasure by expending it before the time. When he invests, he wishes to be as large a shareholder as possible in the general mirth. And he gains a double share of profit by holding his contribution until the right time. It is appreciated to the full, blessing both him who gives and him who receives. The mind is lightened, and perhaps cleared of little depressing cares by its influence; pleasure and surprise, twin elements of humor, send a flush to every cheek, and brighten every eye. It quickens both mental and physical appetite, and puts the whole system in better condition to receive benefit from food and rest. Humor is certainly most healthful when it is enjoyed at the proper season, and there could be no more fitting season than at the times of natural rest and refreshment.

There are some people who are always bubbling over with humor, in season and out of season; everything is turned by their Midas touch to sparkling merriment. What unconscious physicians these people are! It doeth one good like a medicine to hear their voices, and to see their funny faces, always running over with laughter, like a mountain spring. The healthiest and the longest lived persons almost always have a tang of humor in their make-up. There is something wonderfully preservative in laughter. A man who cannot laugh is like a tree from which the worms or the winds have stripped all its leaves. It soon grows feeble and sapless, and dies before its time. The healthy tree laughs with its myriad leaves for generation after generation, sound at heart and beautiful to look upon; and when it dies, the woodman cuts it down, and finds the allotted number of rings in the firm white wood, and a core as sound and sweet as the sapling's. So it is with the man whose disposition is one of sunshine and laughter. He lives merrily and dies cheerily, and the world is better

for him. His memory does not pass away, like that of the sour, glum misanthrope. There may be grander things about a man than his humor, but there is nothing by which he will be remembered so long. After his wisdom and his learning are forgotten, if he ever laughed, that laugh will be his memorial. It will go ringing on, when every other utterance has died away. Happy are they who are happy!—Interior.

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1883.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson V.—JULY 29, 1883.

THE READING OF THE LAW.

Joshua viii. 30-35.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 33-35.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing." Deut. xxx. 19.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

The Lesson, Josh. viii. 30-35.

T. Blessing and Cursing, Deut. xxviii. 1-29.

W. A Retrospect, Deut. xxix. 1-9.

F. Good and Evil, Deut. xxx. 10-29.

S. Life and Death, Deut. ch. xxx.

S. It Might Have Been, Lev. xxvi. 1-13.

S. Glory and Shame, Mark viii. 27-38.

TWO WAYS SET BEFORE ISRAEL.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Thanksgiving, Vs. 30, 31. II. The Law of Life, Vs. 32-35.

III. Blessing or Cursing, Vs. 34.

PLACE.—Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, with the Valley of Shechem between.

QUESTIONS.—What was the great object of this solemn ceremony? Who had ordained it? What else had he directed? Who spoke through him?

Vs. 30, 31.—What was erected? What is Jehovah called? What were offered? What did these offerings mean?

Vs. 32-35.—What was written on stones? What was read? Describe the ceremonies. What was read last? vs. 34. What book have we from God? Where ought its precepts to be written? Heb. viii. 10.

Vs. 34.—On what conditions would the blessing come upon Israel? On what conditions the cursing? Repeat Golden Text. Did the nation fully and constantly obey God? What if they had? Deut. xxvi. 19; Ex. xix. 6.

What will become of the millions of unbelieving Jews of all ages? 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. Has the church ever fully obeyed the teachings of Christ? What if it had? What is set before us in the gospel? If we are disobedient and unbelieving, what will be our fate? What are the conditions of glory and shame?

Scripture Searchings.—Collect the passages in which Christ recognizes Moses as the inspired author of the Pentateuch (i. e., the Five Books.) What remarkable things in the life of Christ took place in this Valley of Shechem?

Israel, purged from the sin of Achan, went up against Ai, a second time, and destroyed it. At this point Joshua ceased, for a while, the work of conquest, to engage in solemn religious ceremonies commanded of the Lord, through Moses.

NOTES.—Vs. 30, 31.—Built an altar, etc. According to the command of God, through Moses (Ex. xxvii. 5). He did not wait until he had destroyed all the nations, but paused in the midst of his career of conquest, and went with the whole company of Israel, men, women, and children, with such proselytes as Rahab and her family, into the very heart of the country, to obey God's command (Deut. xi. 29; xxvii. 2-26) in observing a most solemn and impressive religious service, described in the above references. Mount Ebal, the mount of cursing, and Mount Gerizim, the mount of blessing, were twin mountains, about thirty miles from Jericho, in the interior. Between them was the Valley of Shechem, some five hundred yards wide. A modern traveler speaks of a "natural amphitheatre formed by a recess in Mount Ebal, exactly facing a similar recess in Mount Gerizim, admirably adapted, both in size and acoustic properties, for the assemblage of a large concourse of people to hear the reading of the law." The altar erected to Jehovah God of Israel, was a declaration that the land was his, and was a formal taking possession of it in his name, although it was not half conquered. It called for faith on the part of Israel to do this. That they could march so far at that time unmolested, shows how their enemies were paralyzed by fear of them. It was appropriate that the altar should be built on the mount of cursing, as that which the altar represented has taken away the curse of the law. It was made of whole (unhewn) stones, as man's work upon it

would pollute it (Ex. xx. 25). The altar was not for sin-offerings, but for burnt offerings and peace-offerings; as Israel was treated now as God's people, in communion with him as his worshippers. As such they were to express the language of consecration to his service in the first kind of offerings, and of the peace of communion with him in the second.

Vs. 32.—He wrote there upon the stones. Not the stones of the altar, but upon stone pillars set up by its side. These were plastered with plaster (Deut. xxvii. 2), and Joshua wrote upon the soft cement with a stile; or, more likely, with red paint, on the polished surface when dry, a copy of the law of Moses. More correctly, a copy of the second law, or Deuteronomy,—perhaps the summary of the law contained in Deut. iv. 44 to xxvii. 19. It was to be written "very plainly" (Deut. xxvii. 8), and before all the children of Israel, that they might know to what they assented.

Vs. 33-35.—Particular care is taken in these verses to state that the whole nation was present: the elders, officers, judges, priests, Levites, all the congregation of Israel, the women, little ones, and strangers (proselytes). Two of Israel were enough to spy out Jericho, and the army alone did the fighting; but all must hear the law. According to the accounts here and in Deut. xxvii., the ark of the covenant, with the priests and Levites and leading men were in the valley, while the people were ranged on the mountain slopes. Half of them. Six of the tribes that had sprung from the lawful wives of Jacob: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin, were upon Gerizim, the mount of blessing. The other half, upon Mount Ebal. Then the priests, by Joshua's command, read all the words of the law, transcribed upon the pillars. Then, taking their position upon Mount Ebal, the priests read, with a loud voice, the cursings written in Deut. xxvii. 15-26, twelve in number. After each curse, the people on Mount Ebal responded with AMEN. The blessings (see Deut. xxviii.) were read on Mount Gerizim; but there is no account of the people responding to them with Amen. This silence seems significant. While man readily breaks the law, and must assent to all the judgments which are due to transgression, none are found who "observe and do all his commandments" (Deut. xxviii. 1). "There is none good, no, not one." None can merit the blessings of obedience, for the law is broken by all; and while living under it, we are under its curse. It is only in Christ, who became the end of the law for righteousness, that we can take our place on Gerizim, and say Amen.

SUGGESTED LESSONS.—Time spent in worship is not lost time. The duties of conquest pressed upon Joshua, but the duty of religious services was still more pressing. A lesson to those who are too busy to attend prayer-meetings. The law written in plaster "decayeth and waxeth old," but the law written on the "fleshy tablets of the heart," remains. Joshua wrote, not his name, nor his deeds, upon the pillars of stone; but the law of God. So should it be our care to exalt Christ and not ourselves in our work. The "little ones" were present at the reading of the law, even though there was much that they could not understand.

Help for Parents, or for the Teacher of the Primary Class. Review the story of Achan, describe briefly the second effort against Ai, which was successful, distinct directions having been given to Joshua. This was a point hallowed by some of their oldest memories. Their minds would naturally be occupied with thoughts of father Abraham, who here had first encamped and built an altar; and of Jacob, who also had built an altar here, and had dug a well. They had come to this spot for a purpose, and at the command of Moses. Describe the place. Deuteronomy xxvii. and xxviii. show the precise character of the orders of Moses. It is by many eminent authorities regarded as probable that the people responded to both the blessings and the curses, by a hearty AMEN. A practical thought running through the Lesson is that of PERFECT FAITH AND TRUST in God. The people believed in their leader, and in all that was read to them under direction of their leader. "The women, and the little children, and the stranger" shared in the faith and trust. They were in the midst of a land which was as yet for the most part unconquered; but they had perfect trust in the power of the Almighty arm. They paused for worship, though surrounded by enemies. —Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.