

Sunday Reading.

For the Christian Messenger. As it Happens.

A hungry fox one summer day, Came prowling round to kill or steal, A little lamb became his prey. At last, thought he, I have a meal. Just then came croakings harsh and loud, And four winged creatures, big and black, Came sailing like a thunder cloud, And pounced like lightning on his back. "Was ever fox in such a plight," He muttered growing big with wrath, "But I have teeth and I can fight, I'll clear the vermin from my path." But soon relaxed his little brow, And feeling worsted in the strife, Thought he, I'll try discretion now, And save my valor and my life. 'Tis but defeat and not disaster, Reynard reasoned as he led, And his nimble feet flew faster, Than the ravens o'er his head. He reached his den, the danger past, He bravely shouted, "Robbers, cravens," And like poor music, ceased at last, The barbarous croakings of the ravens. But lo, when they retraced their flight, They saw with anger and surprise, A brute canine they durst not fight, Serenely bearing off the prize. 'Tis sometimes thus with men and nations, Who strive o'er matters great and small, For though the prize be clutched they know not, What dog may get it after all. S. S.

The Wild Flowers.

BY THOMAS SPURGEON.

Little E. came running into the house holding some flowers in her hand which she had gathered in the fields. "O, grand'ma," she said, "I do so love the wild flowers!" "And why, my dear, are you so fond of them?" enquired her grandmother. "Was not the following a sweet reply? "Well, you know, they're not like those that grow in the garden and everybody cares for!" "I do so love the wild flowers, They're not like those that grow In carefully tended gardens With all they want, you know! They have no one to care for them, And few their beauty see, They hide among the undergrowth In sweet humility. If I could be a drop of dew I'd like to fall on such: Poor things, they get so little love, The others have so much! Is this not like our Saviour? For he himself confessed He came to seek and save the lost; He loved the wild flowers best. The poor, the sick, the sorrowful, Despised and counted nought, These are the ones he welcomed, And with his blood-price bought. Or, if thou art a wild flower, Despair not at thy lot; Perchance thou art to Jesus A wild forget-me-not. A wild one on account of sin; If thou that sin confess He says he will forget the sin, And love thee none the less."

BAD NEWS AND GOOD NEWS.—Quaint old Thomas Fuller makes the following striking observations: "Lord, I find the genealogy of my Saviour strangely checked with four remarkable changes in four immediate generations: "1. Rehoboam begat Abija; that is, a bad father begat a good son. "2. Abija begat Asa; that is, a bad father, a good son. "3. Asa begat Jehoshaphat; that is, a good father, a good son. "4. Jehoshaphat begat Jehoram; that is, a good father, a bad son. "I see, Lord, from hence, that my father's piety cannot be entailed; that is bad news for me. But I see, also, that actual impiety is not always hereditary; that is good news for my son."—Evang. Messenger.

In some parts of Germany, it is the custom, whenever a child is born, to plant two fruit trees on the public highway in commemoration of the event. Thus fruit is abundant and common property. In Spain, a similar custom among the rural people is never to eat fruit out of doors without planting the seed. The roads are lined with trees, whose fruit is free for all. An old proverb says "The man has not lived in vain who plants a good tree in the right place." Why should not such a wise idea be adopted by our own population?

Your Best Always.

BY C. H. SPURGEON.

Sir Joshua Reynolds was one of the most distinguished painters of his day; and, in answer to the enquiry, how he attained to such excellence, he replied, "By observing one simple rule, viz., to make each painting the best." Depend upon it that the same thing is true in the service of God. He who wishes to preach well should endeavor each time to preach his best. The audience may be small, and the hearers illiterate; but the best possible sermon will not be thrown away upon them. It may be that the minister is invited to make one among several speakers at a tea-meeting. Never let him talk mere nonsense to fill up the time, as so many have done in days past; but let him use the occasion as an opportunity for quietly uttering the most important truths. It is for the preacher's own good that he should never descend into mere drizzle. Beyond all expectation, he may be accomplishing a great work, when his only idea is that he is doing a little one as well as he can. Our firm opinion is that we often accomplish most when the occasion appears to be the least favourable.

Well do we remember a young man who was called to preach on a certain week-day morning, at the anniversary of a village chapel. He was somewhat surprised to find that only eight persons were present in a spacious edifice; but he gave himself up, heart and soul, to the service as thoroughly as if eight thousand had been gathered together. It was a time of refreshing to the eight, and to the preacher himself, and so nine were benefited! What was the result? In the evening the audience filled the place: the rumour of the morning sermon had been industriously spread by the villagers, the scantiness of the audience being a factor in the singularity of the news; and every available person was mustered to cheer the poor young man, who was such a singular preacher. What was far better, there were memorials of good having been accomplished in the salvation of souls. A brother minister, who was present in the morning, because he was the preacher of the afternoon, remarked that if it had been his lot to conduct that morning service the slender congregation would have taken all the life out of him, but that he saw the wisdom of always doing one's best under all sorts of circumstances, for it would be sure to lead to something larger by-and-by. Let every young speaker think of this, and throw all his energies into a discourse in a cottage to a dozen old ladies. It is an old saying that, when the farrier's name is up, he need not take care how he makes his horse-shoes; but it is a gross and wicked falsehood; for the more a man has succeeded, the more it is incumbent upon him to do better, and still better, that his reputation may not become a falsehood, and that younger men may not find in his example an excuse for trifling. He who can do best should still do his best: the best of the best is no better than our God deserves.

Perhaps there is no greater evil under the sun than "a great sermon," which people speak of as "quite an intellectual treat;" and yet, in another sense, every sermon should be great, and every address should be solid. The toleration of slight work in the service of God shows a want of reverence for his holy name. If Dr. Johnson was right in his proverbial saying, that "Whatever is worth doing at all, is worth doing well," with what emphasis should we accept the sentence if the work is to be done for the Lord of hosts. How dare we offer to him that which costs us nothing? How dare we think that any workmanship which has been performed in a slovenly manner is fit to present before the infinitely glorious One? A high respect for the Lord God should be the leading motive for holy carefulness in every service, but, next to this, self-respect ought to urge us to thoroughness. Let us do nothing unworthy of servants of the Lord Jesus. We treat ourselves with contempt when we perform inferior work: we ought not to condescend to such drudgery. We are the children of a God who puts all his heart into the creation of a tiny moss or a microscopic insect. He does nothing by "contract-work," nor should those who

are "imitators of God, as dear children." Trifling should be left to worldlings, for whose little day it may suffice as an ignoble pastime; but to immortal men earnest, hearty work is alone suitable. Let us put all our hearts even into a conversation with a little child, or a talk with a peasant, or the writing of a letter to a friend, if we feel called upon to seek usefulness by any of these methods. Let "thorough" be our watchword, and let all that we attempt for God and truth be carried out in such style that we may not be ashamed to see it all again by the light of the Great White Throne. No "scamping" should ever be dreamed of by those who are building in the New Jerusalem,—building in prospect of the fire which shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

The Work of our Hands.

"The work of our hands establish thou it." I read the words over again, going back a little. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and the work of our hands, establish thou it." "The work of my hands, day by day," I said almost scornfully, as I thought of the homely work my hands had to do—the cooking, the housework, the patching, the mending, the rough, hard work I sometimes had to put them to. And I smiled as I thought of such work being established forever. I smiled again almost bitterly, as I thought "It is established that my hands must work, if not forever, for all my earthly time." "Please comb my hair now, mamma; the first bell is ringing," and Neddie tapped my hand with his comb. I patted and smoothed my boy's tangled locks. "The work of my hands," I said, and perhaps more gently than usual turned up my boy's face to kiss his lips as he went to his school.

I turned to the sitting-room, drew up the shades in the bay-window, so my few geraniums might have all the sun's rays they could, shook down the coal in the stove, dusted the chairs, straightened out the table cover and books, and brushed the shreds from the carpet; sighing a little over the thin places that the best arrangement of mats could not quite cover. The rooms looked neat and tidy. "The work of my hands," I repeated mechanically. Just then the sun shone out bright. It lit up my room like a kind smile. "The beauty of the Lord our God," I repeated softly.

I went to my homely work in the kitchen. Patiently I tried to go through my every-day routine of duty. For I said to myself, "If this is always to be the work of my hands, surely I must let the beauty of my Lord rest upon it." "You look very bright to-night, wife," said Will, when he came in after his day's work. "Has it been an easy day?"

I thought of the cooking and ironing, of my tired hands and feet, and smiled as I said, "I had a good text this morning."

How to begin a Home.

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

Did you ever hear a gray-haired man or woman say, "Ah, well, if I had my life to live over again, and could have my present experience to guide me, I would manage things very differently!" But the fortunate individual does not exist to whom that chance has been given. Once gone, time never returns, and therefore it is of the greatest importance for you, dear readers, who are rich in youth and hope, to use these golden days to advantage.

You are beginning a home. Yours is a grand opportunity. What will you make of it? What sort of home shall this be, to which you go, I trust, while the joy-bells are still ringing for your wedding?

The first thing I would say to you is, do not begin in a boarding-house. Let your home from the first have the sweet seclusion of being your very own. Sit at your own table, spread for two. Shut your door upon the rest of the world, and feel that your house, or your flat, or your small apartment, as may be, is hemmed in with sacred privacy.

Larger or smaller, determine that your home shall be carried on honestly. Pay for things as you get them. Be resolved to live within your income.

To this end let husband and wife be perfectly candid to each other. There should be a financial basis, and a scale of expenditure, thoroughly understood by each other.

An immense amount of friction, of humiliating irritation and trouble, would be saved if people who are beginning home life would act with common sense and fairness about money matters. The husband is the bread-winner. The wife is the loaf-giver. He directly earns the family income. She also helps to earn it by caring for the internal economy of the household and leaving him free to attend to his business or his profession.

Domestic financing is commonly carried on in a loose hap-hazard way, to the last degree absurd. You, hand in hand at the altar, do not dream that so sordid a thing as money could ever give either of you a headache.

Well, take my advice and it never will. Buy nothing for which you cannot pay, keep out of debt, and have a common purse, each partner being fully in the confidence of the other. And as we are stewards of the divine bounty, let it enter into your home plan to give systematically, as God prospers you, to the poor, to home and foreign missions, to the cause of God and the coming of his kingdom.

Begin your home in a spirit of unselfishness. Your love for each other should not make you careless of social duties. Exercise a simple yet generous hospitality, inviting guests to your house, and giving them of your best, not in the way of food and lodging only, but in the interchange of thoughts and opinions. Nothing brightens a house and breaks its routine like neighborliness. Be at home to friends, and let the home wear an air of welcome to all who are within its doors.

A home should have its ideal to which it aspires. Of all people they are most to be pitied who are satisfied with to-day, in the sense of having nothing to climb to to-morrow. "To live that each to-morrow finds us farther than to-day" should be our aim. Be the furnishing plain, be the margin for luxury narrow, still let the frugal housewife look forward to something better farther on.

You ought to think much of your day of small things in this regard. It is delightful to have to economize, so that the new picture on the wall marks an event in the home history, and the new rug on the floor is an episode, and the new book on the shelf is cause for a family festival.

Talking of home history, why not write one? Why not set down, day by day, in a book, the pleasant happenings of life? Your children—and you will be blessed indeed if they fill the home nest with laughter and song—will by and by prize such a volume as above rubies.

Do not isolate the new home by being strangers and pilgrims, with no rest for the soles of your feet, among the churches. Have a church home from the beginning; a pew, and a place, and a pastor, and Christian friends of your own, so that your household shall be one of the lights on some golden candlestick that shines in your community for Jesus.

Guard against small displays of temper, against jealousy, against slight misunderstandings.

Husband and wife should be chief friends to each other, and no entering wedge of alienation should disturb or fracture their intimacy.

"It is the little rill within the lute, that by and by will make the music mate."

Love must rule the happy home, and love must be long-suffering sometimes, since we are men and women; not saints and angels.

If you want your home to rise in beauty and symmetry, build it on the Bible.

I beg you to have family worship, always, at least once a day. Read the Bible together, and together seek the presence and the benediction of the Master. That is a cold and cheerless abode in which there is no room for Christ. Let the time never be that your little ones as they come, and your friends as they visit you, shall be surprised at a call to family prayers. Courage, dear young people, if this appeals you at the outset! It will soon become your dearest and most hallowed privilege.

Begin right! Go on right! Your home will be a type of heaven.—Christian Union.

Christ's Jewels.

BY REV. THEODORE L. OUTLER, D. D.

The Lord Jesus, when on earth, was one of the poorest of men. He was born to poverty; he was cradled in a stable; he went through his brief life on foot; he had no home during his ministry in which to lay his weary head; and his crucified body was buried in a family tomb borrowed from an almost stranger. Yet he was all the time laying the foundations for the most magnificent possessions in the universe of God. He was accumulating the only treasures that can outlast this fleeting globe. They are innumerable human souls redeemed by him unto everlasting glory. To them his prophetic eye looked forward when he said, "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels." More closely rendered, the passage is, "They shall be my peculiar treasure in the day I am preparing."

For one, I like the familiar phraseology in our common version. Christians are Christ's jewels. They are purchased by atoning blood; at an infinite price was this divine ownership secured. As the pearls are only won from the depths of the sea by the dangerous dive of the fishers, so were the pearls for Messiah's crown brought up from the miry depths of depravity by the descent of that divine Sufferer who came to seek and to save the lost. The most brilliant and precious gem known to us is of the same chemical substance as the black and opaque coal of the mine. Crystallization turns the carbon into the diamond. The grace of the Lord Jesus transforms an opaque soul, as black by nature as the jet, into a jewel which reflects the glory of Christ's countenance. All the luster that the ripest Christian character possesses is but the reflection of that Sun of Righteousness. He who lives nearest to Jesus shines the brightest. The tarnish which makes some Christians no more rightly than a common pebble of the mire, comes from contact with an evil world. A "pearl cast before swine" is not more out of place than is a professed follower of Jesus in the society of scoffers, or in the haunts of revelry.

Not all precious jewels glitter in conspicuous positions. The Master has his hidden ones; there are costly sapphires beneath coarse raiment, and up in the dingy attic of poverty. That self-denying daughter who wears out her youthful years in nursing a poor infirm mother, is a ruby of whom the Master saith, "Thou art mine in the day when I gather my jewels. Many a precious pearl do the Wells and the Wanamakers fish up from the dregs of ignorance into their mission-schools. From an awful depth did Jesus rescue that converted inebriate, near whom we sat last Sabbath at the communion-table. All soul-saving work is a pearl-fishery for King Jesus.

We are his workmanship, said the great apostle; and the luster of a gem depends much on the polishing. This is often a sharp and a severe process. Many of God's people can recall the times when they were under the terrible file, or were pressed down to the grinding-wheel. Blessed be the affliction, however fierce, that gives new luster to the diamond! the Master spendeth no time upon worthless pebbles! only his jewels are polished after the similitude of a palace. Nor is this process only wrought by the divine hand; every Christian must strive to make his or her own character the more shapely and beautiful. In a charming little volume from the pen of one of the daughters of Dr. C. of New York, (its anonymous authorship forbids any fuller mention), it is happily said "that the more highly polished the precious stone is, the more brilliantly it reflects the light. The roughnesses must be smoothed by careful painstaking self-control, the untrue angles must be cut down by self-sacrifice, the surface must be evened by daily work and spiritual exercise—even trials and sorrows must be borne patiently, knowing that they will give the character an added luster which will more worthily reflect the Master's image."

When these jewels are made ready for his many crowns, Christ will take them home unto himself. Luther said that there is great divinity in the pro-

nouns of Scripture. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord." This claim is founded on the purchase made in redeeming blood. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit confirms it, and every true believer is also self-surrendered to the ownership of Christ. Up to the hour of conversion we had other proprietors—self, sin, and the devil. Now Jesus says to each Christian, "Thou art mine, I own thee, I will instruct thee, and polish thee, and put thee where it pleaseth me. I will take care of thy salvation, and no man shall pluck thee out of my hand. Thou shalt be my peculiar treasure in the day of my triumphant appearing. I will place thee in my crown!"

What a coronation day that will be. All else on this globe will be but as lumber and rubbish—fit only for the flames—in comparison with his choice ones. Then shall the homeless man of Nazareth come into full possession of his magnificent trophies. The lost in hell will be outnumbered by the saved in heaven. They that curse him in the pit will be far fewer than they that crown him in the Paradise. On the head once bleeding with the thorns will flash the diadem of his imperial glory. And then will all the universe confess that the ransom was worth all its bitter cost of agonies, when the King shall ascend his throne of victory, and be encircled with the constellations of his jewels!—N. Y. Evangelist.

The Refiner of Silver.

Some months ago a few ladies, who met together in Dublin to read the Scriptures, and make them the subject of conversation, were reading the third chapter of Malachi. One of the ladies gave it as her opinion, that the Fuller's Soap, and the Refiner of Silver, were the same image, both intended to convey the same view of the sanctifying influence of the grace of Christ; while another observed, "There is something remarkable in the expression in the third verse: 'He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.'" They agreed that possibly it might be so, and one of the ladies promised to call on a silversmith, and report to them what he said on the subject. She went accordingly, and without telling the object of her errand, begged to know from him the process of refining silver, which he fully described to her. "But sir," said she, "do you sit while the work of refining is going on?" "Oh, yes, madam," replied the silversmith; "I must sit with my eye steadily fixed on the furnace, for if the time necessary for refining be exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver is sure to be injured." At once she saw the beauty, and the comfort, too, of the expression, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." Christ sees it needful to put his children into the furnace, but he is seated by the side of it; his eye is steadily intent on the work of purifying and his wisdom and love are both engaged in the best manner for them. Their trials do not come at random; the very hairs of their heads are all numbered. As the lady was leaving the shop, the silversmith called her back, and said he had still further to mention that he only knew when the process of purifying was complete by seeing his own image reflected in the silver. Beautiful figure! When Christ sees his own image in his people, his work of purifying is accomplished.

The resurrection of Christ was no mere resuscitation. It was not like the resurrection of Lazarus, for he came back to the old life and died again; so did Jairus's daughter, so did the son of the widow of Nain; so did those who were raised from the dead by Elisha. But our Lord Jesus Christ did not come back again to the old life. He passed into the grave by one door, and He came out by the opposite; that is, He passed clear through it, and went into the broader life beyond, to a higher and nobler life, and He left both doors open. So that now, what was before a dark cave with no outlet, has become a tunnel, through which we can see the light beyond, and the green fields, and the pleasant pastures of the land of heavenly promise. That is the meaning of His resurrection; that is the comfort it gives to us now. Moreover during those forty days He spent upon earth when He appeared to His followers again, it was the same body, yet how changed! for it came into the midst of His followers when the doors were closed. It appeared and vanished in singular fashion, no more a natural body, but now a spiritual body, adapted to the new life which He had gone to manifest. And in those glimpses of Himself during those forty days, He has given us the forecasts of our bright resurrection life above.—Dr. Wm. N. Taylor.