

Sunday Reading.

A Good Sermon.

A preacher to an audience of miners introduced the Lord's Prayer in the devotional part of his services. The oldest man in the "camp" said it was good, but he didn't believe it was original, which put some of the rest to thinking they had heard it before somewhere, but nobody could locate it. The London audience who listened, in the following instance, to a sermon not one word of which was original, we presume were better informed, though probably somewhat surprised:

About the middle of the eighteenth century, John Wesley, preaching in a chapel in London observed one of his friends among the congregation, whom he had never been able to persuade to preach in his presence.

Without asking his consent, Wesley announced that this brother would preach there the next morning at five o'clock.

The preacher thus announced would not say anything, for fear of disturbing public worship, and because he could not well seem to oppose Mr. Wesley's wishes.

Accordingly at five o'clock the next morning he was in the pulpit, not doubting that Wesley would be somewhere in hearing.

After singing and prayer he said that being called before them contrary to his wishes, and as he had done violence to his own feelings in deference to Mr. Wesley, and was now expected to preach, weak, inadequate, and unprepared as he was, he should give them the best sermon that ever was preached.

Opening the Bible at the fifth chapter of Matthew, he read our Lord's sermon on the mount, from beginning to end, without a word of note or comment, closing the impressive service with singing and prayer.

The preacher of this unique sermon was Edward Perroet, whose hymn, "All hail the power of Jesus' name," is known wherever devout worshippers lift up their praises to the Lord in the English tongue.—The Christian.

Religion—a Present Enjoyment.

By C. H. SPURGEON.

Religion has its present enjoyments. Speak, ye that know them, for ye can tell; yet ye cannot recount them all. O, would ye give up your religion for all the joys that earth calls good or great? Say, if your immortal life could be extinguished, would you give it up, even for all the kingdoms of this world? O, ye sons of poverty, has not this been a candle to you in the darkness? Has not this lightened you through the heavy shades of your tribulation? O, ye sons of toil, has not this been your rest, your sweet repose? Have not the testimonies of God been your song in the house of your pilgrimage? O, ye children of sorrow, racked with pain, has not religion been to you a sweet quietus in your sufferings? Is not religion worth having in the sick chamber? And ye men of business, speak for yourselves. You have had struggles to pass through life. Sometimes you have been driven to a great extremity, and whether you would succeed or not seemed to hang upon a thread. Has not your religion been a joy to you in your difficulties? When you have been fretted and troubled about worldly things, have you not found it pleasant to enter your closet, and shut to the door, and tell your Father, in secret all your cares? And, O, ye that are rich, cannot you bear the same testimony, if you have loved the Master? What had all your riches been to you without a Saviour? Can you not say that your religion did gild your gold, and make your silver shine more brightly? For all things that you have are sweetened by this thought, that you have all these and Christ too. Was there ever a child of God who could deny this? We have heard of many infidels who grieved over their infidelity when they came to die: did you ever hear of any one on his death-bed looking back on a life of holiness with sorrow? Never, never did we know a Christian who repented of his Christianity. We have seen Christians so

suffering, that we wondered that they lived; so poor, that we wondered at their misery; we have seen them so full of doubts, that we pitied their unbelief; but we never heard them say, even then, "I regret that I gave myself to Christ." No; with the dying clasp, when heart and flesh were failing, we have seen them hug this treasure to their breast, and press it to their heart, still feeling that this was their life, their joy, their all. O! if ye would be happy, if ye would be saved, if ye would strew your path with sunshine, and dig out the nettles and blunt the thorns, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Seek not happiness first; seek Christ first; and happiness shall come after. Seek ye first the Lord, and then He will provide for you in this life, and He will crown it with everything that is glorious in the life to come.

Judicious Cheerfulness.

By S. O. CURTIS.

Is there not just a very little danger of overdoing the matter of cheerfulness, or rather, mistaking the manner of presenting it? Cheerfulness itself, in the right time and place, is a most desirable and beautiful thing, to be both cherished and imparted cordially. Yet in these days, when it has become the fashion or habit of so many of our teachers by the voice or pen, to preach the gospel of cheerfulness almost to the exclusion of any other, there is, notwithstanding, a large class of people weighed with various sorrows left to go unhelped and uncheered. And their would-be helpers deplore the fact, marveling why people do not take comfort when they might. But is it not possible, good workers, that you recommend it too soon and thoughtlessly? Is there not a gospel of helpfulness that precedes in natural order that of cheerfulness?

Your little child comes to you with bitter weeping, holding out a finger with a splinter in it. You glance at it carelessly, knowing that tiny bit of wood under the skin will not cause a felon, or fever, or lockjaw. You say smilingly, "My little dear, how can you cry so when you have so many comforts, luxuries, and playthings? Do be cheerful, always cheerful." Still the finger aches and bleeds, and the sobs go on. You turn away, saying, "Strange that child makes such an ado this lovely day, in spite of a good home and so many happy environments." And all the time it is your business to remove that splinter! That done, the child's kitten and candy, kind parents and sunshine, assume their proper place as consoling agents, and he goes his way rejoicing. So many grown people are children still, and cannot feel the comfort until after the cure.

Many, indeed most people, are so constituted that they cannot rise at once from the depths of misery to the heights of happiness simply by some one admonishing them to "be cheerful and brave." There are generally several steps in the ascent, long and tedious, it may be. To some, material aid in mitigating the evils of poverty, or easing the burden of labor or care, proves to be the helping hand upward from the "slough of despond." Others need the inspiration of social contact and interest. Others, still, need most of anything sympathy—true, tearful, listening, waiting sympathy in their present trouble of whatever kind. It may be that of bereavement, and the mourning one needs an ear to hear the pitiful story of the parting and the loss, and a heart to feel it in every throb. The friend that will lend such an ear and heart to the poor stricken soul is a godsend. The surcharged being must pour itself out once and again before relief comes, and until then it may be simply impossible for the sorrowing one to look up and see the sunshine of the Father's smile. If it is an absurd because a useless task to attempt to hasten nature in her processes, it is quite as useless to interfere with the similar progression of grace. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Somebody must help with long pity and patience the struggling, overburdened soul with more than a mere cheerful exhortation, usually. Even Christ the Mighty

could not bear his own cross all the way. Happy the Cyrenian who helped, and happy all who know how to bear others' woes until the good cheer comes to the bearer and sufferer together.

To those under the ministry of sorrow let some one bring the supplemental ministry of aid, and thus prepare the way for the ministry of cheerfulness to do its appropriate and lovely part.

A Missing Heiress.

A singularly romantic incident has just been reported to have taken place at Dublin. A young woman, who occupied the position of a domestic servant, was discovered to be the heiress of a fortune of about £13,000 per annum. She had been placed, when an infant, in Rathdown Union Workhouse, where she spent her childhood. She was then sent out to menial service at which she remained for some years. A few days since some gentlemen waited upon her with the surprising intelligence that it had just been discovered that she was the daughter of a baronet who had recently died leaving her this great wealth. They found very little difficulty in persuading her to have faith in the good news. As soon as the proof was presented she joyfully believed. She at once left her lowly kitchen, her menial toil, and former companions, and, putting on the attire of a lady, accompanied these gentlemen to a new home in England, there to find fresh pursuits and different associations, to be the mistress of a baronial hall, and to lead altogether a new life.

Not a few persons on hearing this intelligence have felt a wish that a similar good fortune was theirs, and yet are remaining careless or ignorant that a still nobler position and greater wealth has been bequeathed to them. For some time past the fact that the heiress to the estate was missing had been made generally known in the public papers. But either she did not see the announcement or did not believe it was for her. So is it with the heiress of whom we now write.

The estate to which we refer is of unspeakable value. It was bequeathed on the death of the Son of the King of kings. It is in the glorious realm of Heaven. Its worth cannot be computed. With the title comes the favour of God, adoption into His family, and the gift of everlasting life.

The following is the description of the missing heiress. She has become conscious of being a sinner in the sight of God, she hates sin and is humbled in considering her condition, she feels herself feeble for doing any good, she earnestly desires to live a holy life and give herself entirely to the Saviour, whom she feels to be worthy of her best love, and she is willing to be saved in God's own loving way.

Should this meet her eye, we are authorized to tell her good news. She gains the estate the same way the young Dublin heiress gained hers. She must first believe the testimony and then act in accordance. In believing she will be acknowledged to be the child of God. Her faith will compel her to break off with old and degrading associations and pursuits, and she will seek to be attired with the beautiful robes of righteousness befitting her station.

Let all young maidens who read this see in the now well-known story an illustration of justification by faith. Before this heiress believed she was a poor toiling servant girl. Had she attempted to gain admission to the society of rich people, she could not have done it. By faith she rose to be a well-dressed, free lady, and was accepted as an equal by persons of distinction. But her faith was no fancy. She had good evidence for believing. It is important to note this. The Salvation of the Christian is not built on fancy. But it comes by faith in the Word of One who never has and never can deceive. Pardon for sin, acceptance with God, and all the blessings of everlasting life are received on the most perfect of all evidence, the testimony of God. No doubt the Dublin heiress asked for proof, and possibly when first afforded her she had a very hazy understanding of its nature. But she soon found that in trusting the word of the gentlemen who waited on her that she was not following a "cunningly-devised fable." Our proof is the promise of God, the best evidence of all.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. Luthard's Apologetical Discourses.

Translated from the German by Prof. D. M. Welton.

NINTH DISCOURSE.

Christianity in History.

III.

Among the greatest considerations must be placed that of the victorious course of Christianity in the history of the world.

Everything seemed to conspire to make its triumph utterly impossible. Its origin was against it; it seemed to be a Jewish sect. Its representatives and adherents had nothing to commend them; they belonged mostly to the lower and more uncultivated classes. Its doctrines were a hindrance; they seemed to be a piece of folly. Its worship of God was suspected; since the Christians had no image of God, they were regarded as atheists. Of their mysterious rites the most wicked and immoral things were related. Public opinion was prejudiced against them, the philosophers combated Christianity with intellectual weapons, the magistrates with brutal violence, and still Christianity triumphed.

Already under Nero, as the Roman historian Tacitus informs us, it had reached an extraordinary diffusion, and it availed but little that Nero, in order to exculpate himself from the crime of burning Rome, put a great number of Christians to death, not so much because they were the originators of the conflagration as that they were hated of the whole human race—still they grew. We have an interesting letter of the younger Pliny, Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor, written to his friend the emperor Trajan, about seventy years after the death of Christ, which gives us a clear picture of the state of Christianity at that time in those regions in which Paul and John labored. "Everywhere," writes Pliny, "this superstition has spread in the cities, in the villages and in the country, the temples of our gods stand desolate and for a long time no offerings have been presented. I had several servant maids arrested and put to torture, but I found nothing in them but an excessive pernicious superstition. They came together before sunrise, they confessed, to sing praises to Christ as to a God." They solemnly bound themselves with an oath, he added, to live a moral, earnest life. And a hundred years later Tertullian in his apology to the heathen could say: "We are of yesterday and we have occupied your whole land, cities, islands, the camp, the palace, the senate, the forum; only the temple have we left to you." This course of victory the greatest persecutions which threatened the Christians—ten of them are mentioned—could not arrest. No age, no sex, was spared, all the power of the empire was summoned individual emperors as Decius and Diocletian, the most energetic of them, considered it as their life-task to banish Christianity from the earth, because the existence of the Roman state was endangered by it—but the arms of the executioners relaxed sooner than the fidelity of the Christians; Diocletian was obliged to relinquish the work; he retired from the scene and Christianity lived; and in Constantine it ascended the throne of the emperors and since then it has also externally ruled the Roman world.

The victories of Mohamedanism are not to be compared with those of Christianity. Mohamedanism made its appearance "as a religion of this world, as a religion of conquest and of sensual pleasure," and its gospel was the sword. Pascal says of it: "Mohamed established his dominion by murder, Christ established his by being murdered." In the opinion of men Mohamed chose means and ways of conquering, and Jesus means and ways of being conquered." Accordingly instead of saying: because Mohamed conquered, Jesus could easily conquer, it would rather be said; because Mohammed conquered, Jesus would be overthrown. Christianity is extended by conversion, and what that means is know by Him who knows what it is to convert an individual man. Let the attempt be made to extirpate the principle of selfishness from a single human heart, and some idea will be gained of the struggle with the power of selfishness in the world. External circumstances have indeed contributed to the diffusion of Christianity; as the unity of the Roman empire, intercourse among the nations, the unity of language and culture. But these external circumstances were a work of divine providence. The time was indeed pervaded with the feeling that something new and better was to come. But this was the divinely willed result of the foregoing

development, which should prepare the way for Christianity in the hearts of men. Indeed the moral spirit of Christianity was a great power. Such a loftiness of moral purity, such fervor of brotherly fellowship the world had not yet seen, and the heathen could not help wondering. "See how they love one another," they exclaimed; "how ready they are to die for one another!" "They love one another almost before they are acquainted." Even Julian, the apostate, speaks with astonishment of the holy intercourse and brotherly love of the Christians. And Lucian also, the scoffer, says: it is wonderful how these men succor one another in their misfortunes. "The most of them,"—this is the sense of a long passage in a writing of the celebrated physician Galenus concerning Plato, of which this is the only passage extant—"are not in a position to philosophize, but they live like philosophers." "What women the Christians have!" exclaimed the astonished Libanius, when Chrysostom told him of his mother Anthusa. But this was the fruit of the new spirit of Jesus Christ; this morality was itself a miracle. "They are in the flesh,"—so speaks an old Christian writing, the letter to Diognet, of the Christians,—"but they live not after the flesh. They stay upon the earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey existing laws, but in their life they stand above the laws. They love every person, and by every person are persecuted. They are reviled, but bless in return; they are treated insolently, but show respect. Doing good they are punished as evil doers, and rejoice in the punishment as promotion in life." The martyrs, however, in their steadfastness were the most impressive preachers of Christianity, and "their blood was the seed of the Church." "Boys and maidens," says Lactanz, "silently conquered their tormentors," and it also happened that they even converted their executioners. It was no fanaticism, but a still, peaceful, sober sense in which they went to death, without thinking of the ignominy of their avowal was in prison in the eyes of the world, and many died whose names God only knows; it was the luminous reflection of the new inner life, which proceeded from the spirit of Christ.

All these means worked together—could not but cooperate; for otherwise indeed Christianity could not have conquered the world. But they were the means employed by God and his Spirit.

To conquer heathenism was not so easy a matter as it seemed. For the heathen religion was most closely intertwined with the total public, civil and intellectual life, so that it seemed impossible to loosen it from the same and set it aside. Whoever was an enemy of the paternal religion, seemed to be an enemy also of the state and the whole of civilized life. The entire life of the state was grounded on religion, was interpenetrated by it: the political and religious spheres formed a complete unity. All state acts were at the same time religious acts, all public affairs had a religious character. Christians seemed to be enemies of the state, and patriotism seemed to demand hostility to Christianity. For Christianity appeared to be the most dangerous thing the state had to contend with. All the apologists of the early centuries felt called upon to defend Christianity against this reproach. And the same was true of culture in general. This also, art and science and mental cultivation, had been developed in connection with religion. It seemed to be the annulling of the intellectual growth of many centuries, to aim at bringing Christianity into the ascendancy. Christianity was regarded as barbarism. The apologists of the first centuries had occasion repeatedly to repel this aspersion. We may also to day obtain a lively impression of Christianity. We need only, for example, to go down into the dark subterranean rooms or vaults in which the Christians secretly assembled to celebrate their mysteries, and then therewith compare one of those charming Grecian temples; in which the people presented their offerings, or one of those vast amphitheatres in which they gathered to witness gleeful plays, or perhaps look upon the bloody conflict of Christian martyrs with wild beasts, to perceive and feel what a moral power belonged to Christianity in order to overcome the might of the heathen religion and the heathen life.

And Christianity became dominant over heathenism, and did not destroy but preserve the culture of the old world, took it up into itself purified, blended with it, and handed it down to after-ages. And after it took possession of the Roman empire, it placed at the feet of Jesus the German people, who came upon the stage of history, made them its bearers to futurity, and developed in them a new intellectual life. Many convulsions the church had subsequently to endure, conflicts within,

enemies from without, through the false religion of Mahamed and the wild hordes of Huns and Mongols. But the church endured all these dangers and conflicts and grounded itself only the more firmly in the hearts of men, and in the collective life of mankind. Indeed, towards the end of the previous century a succession of men arose, who, by all the means in their power, sought and hoped to put an end to the cause of Jesus Christ, and soon also a storm arose in France which threatened to overthrow the entire Christian church in that land. But the storm is over and the church still stands, and from the distress and mighty shaking of the times, faith in Jesus Christ gained new strength and gladness. Not less are our days of conflict, and the great determination with which it is waged in the intellectual sphere argues for the influence of Christianity. But the representatives of the church's cause are so little disheartened that they join with its defence at home an offensive war abroad; for several hundred years there has not been a time of so much missionary activity among the heathen; and however slowly this cause advances, it yet advances, and we are all the more firmly convinced that the cause of Christ among all nations must still prevail, so that the words of the apostle: every knee must bow to Jesus, shall be verified, and the saying of the poet become true:

There can be no rest  
Till his love conquers,  
And the wide world  
Lies at his feet.

The Baptist Churches in Rome.

A correspondent of the Freeman writes Feb. 12th: "I should like to ask for space to give your readers some idea of what is doing by our denomination in Rome for the spread of the Gospel, as I have observed it in a residence now of fully three months.

There are three important centres—one conducted by the Rev. James Wall, in connection with the Baptist Missionary Society; one conducted by the Rev. Dr. Taylor, asisted by the Rev. J. Egar, in connection with the American Southern Board of Missions; and one conducted by the Rev. N. H. Shaw, in connection with the General Baptists of England.

These agencies are all for the Italian-speaking population of Rome, and the whole of the services are in Italian.

I shall speak of Mr. Wall first, because he is the first in time, his mission having been established shortly after the fall of the secular power of the Pope. Everyone knows the Corso, whether they have visited Rome or no; it runs through the heart of the city. No. 35, with "Sala Christiana" painted over it, and the word "Conferenza" painted on the lamp projecting in front, is the only entrance into a chapel which is playing a conspicuous part in the coming religious change of this country.

My first visit to the chapel was on a Sunday evening at the seven o'clock service. Passing down a corridor about six feet wide and forty feet long, I found myself in a place admirably constructed for its purpose, but far too small for the congregation present, as all the chairs were occupied (there are no pews), and some were standing about the doorway. Signor Canto, one of the Italian evangelists, was conducting the service, and there might have been from 130 to 150 in the settled congregation; with a number of comers and goers besides, who appear to use the service much as most of them use the Catholic churches here—viz., to drop in for a few minutes and look on, or say a prayer and then leave. The very system of Romanism fosters this migratory and casual kind of attendance, and the true spirit of devotion only can eradicate the habit. The hymns were of the Moody and Sankey type, in Italian. Mrs. Wall presided efficiently at a capital harmonium, and the choir consisted literally of the entire congregation—and let me add that so far as volume went I have seldom heard such a choir. The first tune was "Work for the right is coming," and those which followed were sung with equal volume although the rhythm was quaint and the music peculiar, but pleasant and devotional. The prayer was earnest and pleading, the Amen being uttered by all the people together and aloud; and this I may say has been the constant habit with all the congregations I have visited here. The sermon lasted about half-an-hour, the whole service being compressed in little over an hour. There could be no doubt about the deep interest taken in the worship by the people, as it seemed difficult to get them to disperse at its close.

My next visit was on a Sunday morning, at eleven o'clock, when the service was conducted by Mr. Wall, assisted by his two evangelists and one of his deacons. There would be nearly one hundred in the settled congregation with a