

Sunday Reading.

Solomon Ray, Junior.

BY MRS. S. R. GRAHAM CLARK.

Old Solomon Ray left a nephew gay, Who pondered much his uncle's way, And wondered quite If it was right To scrape and dig, and be so tight. He studied the question by the aid Of a good old book, the people said. And soon 'twas clear Just how and where Men ought to spend and ought to spare. Young Sol was poor: nothing was spared Of all for which his uncle cared. His lands were sold, His hard earned gold Went to the lawyers, we are told. Yet Solomon Junior, young and brave, Determined for the Lord to save. With might and will, He labored still, And cut his expenses to the mill. A happy man, his dollars went On many a lovely errand sent. His face grew bright, His step grew light, And all things flourished in his sight. He fed the hungry, clothed the poor, And never drove one from his door. On good intent, All that he lent Was to the Lord at His own per cent. Well, he died one day, as all men must, For life is fleeting, the best but dust; And angel bands Took his worn hands, And bore him safe to heavenly lands. With tearful eyes, men told that day The good deeds of this Solomon Ray; And hearts were sad He'd oft made glad, Some lost the only friend they had. His wife and heirs were too bereft Not fight o'er what the good man left. His will was just, And yet he must The most to mission boards intrust. O Solomon Junior, rest in peace! And may thy sacred tribe increase! The lesson heed, All that may read: Now give thy gold to those in need.

The Kaaba of Mecca.

The Kaaba of Mecca, the chief sanctuary of the Mohammedan religion, was a place of pagan worship before the time of Mohammed. It is still essentially a heathen temple, although the Mohammedan authorities say that it was built by Abraham and Ishmael for the worship of the pure God, and only temporarily perverted to pagan purposes. The principal object of veneration is the 'black stone,' which is fixed in the south-east external angle of the building. It is a small black mass, a span long, and is placed in the wall at a height to be conveniently kissed by a person of middle size. It has been broken by fire, and the pieces are kept together by a silver setting. This black stone, which is either of volcanic formation or, perhaps, an aerolite, is said to have been given to Abraham by Gabriel and was an object of popular adoration long before Mohammed gave it a place in his religious system. The Kaaba itself has been destroyed and rebuilt many times, until probably not a vestige remains of the original structure; yet it is believed that it preserves, essentially, the outlines and dimensions of the original pagan shrine. It is a massive structure, about fifty-four feet long, forty-two feet wide, and thirty-five to forty feet high. There are no windows and the entrance door is seven feet above the ground. It is built of large irregular, and unpolished blocks of stone. Although the rudeness of the structure is still preserved, religious veneration has added many outward ornaments. In Mohammed's time it was covered with striped yemen cloth. The wealthy caliphs substituted a covering of figured brocade; and the Sultan sends every year, with the pilgrim caravan from Cairo, a new covering of black brocade ornamented with a broad band, on which are inscribed, in golden letters, passages from the Koran. The cover has openings to show the sacred stones; and a richer curtain is supplied for the door, which is silver gilt. The interior of the Kaaba is opened to the public but a few times each year. The floor and walls are overlaid with richly-variegated

marbles; the upper half of the walls is plated with silver, and the roof veiled with colored silk. The annual pilgrimage to Mecca gathers each year from fifty thousand to sixty thousand persons from all parts of the Mohammedan world.

This ancient pagan shrine, adapted to the worship of Islam with but slight changes, is a good illustration of the progress of that religion. If the heathen will consent to a few outward observances and ceremonies, he may remain in his old superstitions, and still be a good enough Mohammedan. The few demands made upon converts to Islam no doubt, account for the rapid progress the religion is making in Africa and other parts of the world. Yet the prominence it gives to the great truth of the unity of God gives it a strong hold on those who once embrace it. Among all the false religions of the world, Mohammedanism is the greatest obstacle to the universal triumph of Christianity. The study of its character and prospects derives new interest at the present time, from the career of El Mahdi, or the 'False Prophet' of the Soudan.—Missionary Magazine.

Lydia the first convert in Europe.

Four pilgrims—unknown, friendless, objects of scorn to the inhabitants because of their foreign and Jewish aspects—entered the city of Philippi. The Sabbath came. Knowing that if there were any devout Jews in the city they would probably resort to the neighboring stream, these pilgrims went forth to the river side where 'prayer was wont to be made.'

Among those gathered on the banks of the little stream was a woman named Lydia. At once Paul began to preach to her Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection. She listened. She gave attention to the things spoken by Paul. Faith came by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Only in attending to God's message is there hope of salvation through the truth.

While attending, the Lord opened her heart.

Doubtless Lydia, had she recorded her experience would have stated that the truth preached to her seemed divine, essential—just what she needed as a poor sinner—and that she accepted it, believed and was saved. She could have no consciousness that a power beyond and above her 'opened her heart' to believe. But the divine record tells it all—the Lord opened her heart.

The rosebud drinks in the sunlight and the dews, and opens its petals in beauty. The stem and leaves seem to loosen and open of their own force. But it is the light and the moisture from above that wakes all to a new life. While it is impossible for the subject of divine grace to trace the entrance and effects of God's Spirit upon the heart—while it may appear to our consciousness that our wills and our affections acted of themselves—yet conversion is God's work 'You bath he quickened who were dead.' Not by works of righteousness which we have done. The Lord opened the heart. The Lord himself, by divine gracious power, regenerated the first convert in that great Europe whose missionaries are now preaching the same glorious gospel to Asia and throughout the earth.

The first Baptism in Europe.

The stream on whose banks Paul preached and Lydia was converted gave its name to the old city. Crenides, the 'city of Springs,' was its name before its conquest by Philip of Macedonia.

So soon as Lydia believed with all her house she was baptized. The stream was hallowed, or at least made memorable, by the first baptism in Greece and in Europe.

Paul had preached Christ to her and her household, whoever they were. She believed, and so did her household—believed in Christ's death and resurrection. Then came the imperative duty and privilege of picturing the truth, of 'obeying from her heart the form of doctrine.' She was buried with Christ in Baptism, planted in the likeness of his death, and raised in the likeness of his resurrection. It was a living tableau—the embodiment in living form of the truth and the fact of Christ's atonement, and her union with Christ

by faith. There'ore we were buried with Christ by baptism unto death.

Her baptism might well be described by Mrs. Sigourney's lines: "Then with a firm and fearless step The watery path she trod, And gave with wondrous, deathless trust, Her being to her God. And when all drooping from the stream She rose like lily's stem, Methought that spotless brow might wear An angel's diadem." —Christian Repository.

Corporate versus Individual.

BY THE LATE REV. WM. M. BAKER.

Drop an ingot of gold into a vessel of aqua fortis, and it will vanish as utterly as if into the air. So of almost any Mr. Smith of your acquaintance: in how many cases out of a hundred, if he goes into a corporation, and of almost any kind, he is gone, vanished, passed away as if into the other world. Your Mr. Smith may be a man of the purest gold as son, brother, father, husband; in business, in society, in state, in church—as an individual Mr. Smith, mind—yet it is all the same for him to go into a corporation. Not merely does he dissolve therein, but he does it so completely as to leave in the aqua fortis into which he has disappeared hardly the least color, odor, flavor, trace, of any sort whatever, of the man he was while as yet an undissolved individual. Please observe that it is not of any particular corporation of which we speak. It may be a railroad, insurance company, business firm, political caucus or party, an association to spend a Summer day upon the green grass picnicking, a syndicate to delve beneath the sod and explore, as a mining company, the bowels of the earth for metals precious or otherwise. The object for which the corporation exists makes small difference. The banded agglomeration of men becomes an all disintegrating aqua fortis if it is a gas trust; equally if it has charge of an almshouse, as in Philadelphia of late. It may be the board of directors of an insane asylum, or of a bank; of a metropolitan newspaper, or of an orphanage; it makes apparently no difference. The trustees of a church will do things in erecting the edifice, renting the pews, paying the salary of sexton and pastor, which its individual constituents would cut off a right hand—as separate Mr. Smiths, observe—rather than be guilty of. Worse, the Rev. Mr. Smith may be a refined, scholarly, sensitive, polished, devout clergyman in pulpit, parlor, sick room, prayer-meeting; yet the instant he answers to his name on the roll-call of Association, Conference, Presbytery, Assembly, it may be left to any man who has ever attended these if it is not Gospel fact that he will then and there do things, say things, discuss points, make speeches all of a sort he would rather die than be guilty of when he is off to himself as a man.

Let it be freely acknowledged that association is indispensable. There are objects to be gained, work to be done impossible without. We will gladly agree to all which may be advanced as to the impulse, continued force, esprit de corps, uniformity, economy, every other virtue which comes from the combinations of men. None the less is corporation, somehow, and in spite of every precaution, an evil, if a necessary one, like cholera. That it is so no one can deny any more than that to become incorporated tends to demoralize the individual in proportion as he goes most deeply into it, as treasurer, chairman, president, moderator, king, emperor. That, the invariable significance of the brand, "A Boss," establishes beyond doubt. No one will deny the effect it had upon Constantine and Nero alike, if not equally, to become head of that tremendous corporation, the Roman Empire. It is agreed that, with rarest exception, the crown wrought a worse malady in the brain than did the shirt of Nessus in the body of the wearer. All men consent to the historical fact that there was a greater or less madness, glowing at times into a demonic wickedness, in the cases of Charles V and Philip II, of Spain, Charles IX, of France, as in that of Tiberius; of Napoleon I and III, as in that of Caligula; and when we get down and down, to the very hemlock, what, in each and every instance, was it but the deadly quietness of corporation, of which

these drank deeper, by which these were poisoned worse than others? To put it squarely, yet seriously, we cannot conceive of Satan as utterly apostate until we recall that he is one—the leading one—of a corporate conspiracy of evil angels. It is impossible to imagine him descending as a separate archangel, singly and alone, into the abyss of his sin and punishment.

But we comprehend best the dangers to the individual of leaving his personal self outside the door of a corporation, as a Moslem leaves his slippers on the threshold of a mosque, when we run down the dates of Time and see what it has been to a man—even the best of men—to merge his individuality in a league of the most sacred kind. We do not say it was because he found himself the head of the race that Adam disobeyed, or because he was a second father of the race that Noah fell into his transgressions; but why it was that Miriam sinned, and Aaron, we do know; and it is as poor an excuse for yielding to the pressure upon us of an organized heathenism now as it was then to plead: "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief." To say nothing of Eli, yielding to his wicked sons, as Samuel, with the doom of Eli still ringing in his ears, yielded to his worse sons; surely David is more fearfully punished for his numbering of the people than he was for the death of his child. Nor is the apostasy of Solomon any the less that it was to a corporation of three thousand women and over before which he fell headlong. What was Jexebel to Ahab, or to Elijah, but the shrill scream and scolding of idolatrous Israel, through her painted lips, driving them to sin? The transcendent glory of Daniel consisted in his defiant individuality against the wickedness—corporate, crowned and moving to the rhythmic unanimity of "all manner of music." Imagine, coming down the ages, that the condemnation of Christ had been put to the say-so of Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Gamaliel. Do we suppose for an instant that they would have been as detestably dumb, each under his own fig-tree, as when he found himself member of the Sanhedrim? One or two of them did barely murmur a word or two, which accomplished nothing, for Christ, Approached in private, would their accents have been as uncertain? Behold Annas and Caiaphas. The pressure upon these rival high-priests makes them one against Christ, as it made Pilate and Herod one. Singly, not one of these would or could have decided as he did. Who so bold for Gentile freedom in Christ from Jewish observance as Peter, until, that is, certain Jews, coming down from Jerusalem, bring the old and organized Judaism to bear on him?

Paul rebukes him; but Saul must get away from Jerusalem before he will yield even to Christ breaking upon him. And, alas, even Paul! Twenty-five years he had preached Christ, daunted by no man or mob of men. But, on a visit to Jerusalem, he is arrested, imprisoned, carried to Rome, and lies in a dungeon there while the world waits to be converted. And why? He is supposed by the mob to have polluted the temple. How does that happen? Because he goes therein, banded with others, to offer a sacrifice in conclusion of a vow. A sacrifice! When his entire preaching was of a Christ who had fulfilled all sacrifice by his own death! And do any of us imagine for an instant that the aged Apostle would have committed such a deadly sin against the inmost essence and meaning of his Gospel if he had not been influenced to do so by "James and all the elders"? Corporate expediency has power to crush with its anaconda folds the robust and determined "chiefest of the apostles" and who of us may hope to be able to resist?

If we demand, Why is it that the earnest and devoted individual is so often injured by going into an organization? many answers spring up. A man cannot carry with him into a corporation the sensible wife to whose counsels he at other times listens. Is not that one reason? By a singular delusion, we abdicate individual responsibility when we are members of a corporate body, or suppose we do, which may have its effect. Even when public criticism rests heavily upon an association or

board, there is this much in it of the principle of the arch, that it can endure almost any weight. The pressure is so diffused that it is scarcely felt by the separate brick or block. Of all men alive, the "Public Man"—i. e., the representative of aggregated humanity—is considered the least accessible to truth; just as corporations are, in religion as in science, the granite citadels which hold out longest. What a homage it is, too, to the individual, in distinction from the corporation, that, whatever Reform smashes the crystallized Error, it is the individual Reformer outside and under ban of the Sanhedrim who almost invariably originates and carries it on to conquest. The weapon before which "the forts of folly" fall is, however it confuses the metaphor, not the catapult heaved by the many, but the cannon-ball, so to speak, of the one. As a flag flies not from a forest but from a single staff, so in the hour of triumph and over-never multitudinous a wrong, the banner flies invariably from the one—the one Luther, Savonarola, Washington, Cobden, Lincoln, Gladstone—wherever it is. It is Abraham, not a tribe, which goes out and off to originate the Church; it is Joseph detached from Israel, yet not of Egypt; it is Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist, preferring the wilderness. Here is God's people, by his own act of incorporation, which, by official acts, rejects and slays the Son of God. We know the story ever since and always of the Copernicus, Newton, Harvey, Jenner; of Wickliffe, Zwingle, Calvin; of the first advocates of foreign missions indignantly set down upon by the Presbyterian Sanhedrim.

The Church is divine, is the Body and Bride of Christ; all organization has its essential uses; but Heaven seems most of all the Heaven of those to whom the Judge has said, man by man, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" There is food for much reflection in the words "I saw no Temple therein." In distinction from an assembly, even for worship, the individual is declared to be "the Temple of God." Except for purposes of song, there is nothing in revelation which is not in accordance with the fact that corporation is but a transient necessity, like marriage, of this complex, because dissolvable earth; and that the glorious, joyous, eternal world hereafter turns forever upon these two poles—God and the sinner saved by grace, the individual sinner made saint. It is to the individual the initial revelation is made—Adam, Eve, Cain, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Paul, Luther—even as to Daniel and Ezekiel, each off from men, by himself: "When thou prayest," as if it were the chiefest form of prayer, "enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut to thy door." May Heaven bless every association and corporation, which benefits men; but the personal piety of the man, the woman, surely that it is which makes a man or woman the soul of an organization, which alone enables him and her to resist whatever it may weaken his and her individual influence and communion with God.—N. Y. Independent.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Future Life.

OPEN LETTER TO REV. DR. (UNIVERSALIST) OF BOSTON.

My Dear Sir,—

I had intended writing you a few lines as to your lecture of last Sunday evening before this. Have been very busy and seize this present opportunity. I must thank you very heartily for so kindly acceding to my request and choosing the subject I suggested. Your discourse was very clear and logical and kindly in spirit and gave me just the information I wished regarding your views of the Future Life. I got many new and valuable ideas as to the other—than—the ordinary methods of interpreting certain difficult passages of the Scriptures. But after all, Dr., I cannot say I could accept your view. And of course I say this without prejudice. I cannot possibly reconcile with your view, Christ's horror of sin, Christ's awful sorrow for sin, Christ's denunciation of sin, the whole attitude of the Christ with reference to sin. I must regard it as something more awful than you appear to regard it, more enduring in its deadly work in the soul of man, more limitlessly differentiated from righteousness.

It is quite possible to conceive that much of careless, thoughtless, ignorant sinning, the sinning springing out of heredity or a wretched environment might be considered of quite trifling import, might be pardoned, as you say, with the removal of the sad condition of our human life, through that tender and all embracing love of our Father. But Dr., there is a sin of the soul, there is a conscious, willful sinning against the Divine light in the soul. There is such a thing as a conscious choosing of the known evil from day to day. There is in our poor world, yet a world of infinite possibilities, such a thing as a sinning against the Holy Spirit in "the innermost holiest of the Conscience." This is a general, a quite universal fact. I cannot think this applies to a few people only who lived in the time of the historical Christ. And in view of the terrible tragedy of a persistent refusal of the Truth, it appears to me arose the unutterable sorrow of the Christ for those who were in the nature of things fast passing on into the Night.

There are many people in the world who know what this sinning means, who have been again and again brought face to face with it. There are many people in our world who are, it may be, subjected to a terrible pressure of temptation. It may cost something for them to adhere steadily to a true and noble life. Yet, notwithstanding the enormous pressure brought to bear on them from the kingdom of Evil, they may feel and know, so clear may be their Light, that should they yield in spirit, they should be sinning knowingly, against the Holy Spirit. They are assured by the consciousness of God in them, they know through their Moral Sense that it would be possible for them to go on yielding to the voice of evil until the Spirit would no longer strive with them, until the soul might become so hardened as that in the nature of things, in the unchangeable laws of God, it might be beyond recovery. The soul that has grieved away the Holy Spirit by long persistence in wrong doing has lost the power to love righteousness. Therein it has lost the power to love God. Therein it is lost. "The wages of sin is death."

"Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." And does not the all-wise Master in the realm of spirit have this spiritual death clearly in mind when he tells us that the way of life is straitened and the way leading unto destruction is broad. I am assured, my Dear Sir, you will pardon me for objecting so strongly to your conscientious beliefs, because I know you to be very fair and very charitable in your views and an earnest lover of the Truth.

I must be permitted to add that truly your expounded views of the nature of sin and its penalties do certainly tend, in my individual case at least, to create in me less horror of sin and to remove some of the strongest motives for a righteous life. Why? Because I get the idea, the feeling, that after all, God makes light of sin, regards it all as a creature of time and circumstance and misfortune and that He does away with its effects as soon as we enter that other life. One of my strongest motives for a constant struggling after righteousness in heart and life is God's abhorrence of sin and the quite infinite difference He has established between it and goodness. And this last is the assertion of my moral consciousness!

You have said and you will doubtless say again that God readily pardons the sinner here in this life after long years of sinning and you ask me why may He not pardon the sinner in the other life. I cannot agree with you that God, in accordance with His universal laws of the nature and working of sin, does readily pardon here that man who has for long years sinned against the Holy Spirit in his conscience—that Holy Spirit which is indeed the veritable, loving Christ, the Truth, in his spiritual and glorified existence. Such a man may be beyond recovery—unless God save him against his own will, which is not God's method of saving souls. Such a man may be saved so as by fire, or after aonian time possibly. The tendency of such a man may be down and down into that kingdom of Darkness which is denominated Death.

Very respectfully,
Yours for the Truth,
E. M. CHESLEY,
Boston, February, 1884.

The criticism to which the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have been exposed, says the Echo, respecting their ownership of public-houses has had some effect. They own a drinking establishment of doubtful repute in a crowded London parish and, a new tenant being wanted, the Commissioners have accepted just half the rent they were offered by a brewing firm, on the understanding that it will be closed as a liquor shop and turned into a boys' home.