

Sunday Reading.

At the Foot of the Cross.

BY CHARLOTTE CORDNER. Here at thy feet, dear Lord, A sad heart lies, Having no other hope, Beneath the skies, Than thy dear promise gives In words of grace, That we may hear thy voice, And seek thy face. Lift thou my fettered will And set it free; And let thy wisdom shine Full orb'd in me. The tribute of my love To thee I bring, Alas! that it should seem So poor a thing! Dear Lord, thou knowest all! The shame and tears, Oft failure of my hopes, And fruitless years. Yet do we trust thee still, Nor heed the loss. More priceless is thy love And crowned cross. Than all the world can give! Then with us bide; Be near us at the flood And ebbing tide. So shall we learn to sail Life's sea aright, And keep the port of Heaven Ever in sight. —Independent.

The Three Christian Graces.

They are inseparable companions or characteristics of the believer in all stages of his existence. They are not dependent upon time or place or circumstances, but spring out of the unchanging and unchangeable relations of the rational soul to its Maker. Nor can we conceive of any period in the future of the world's history when it will not be characteristic of a disciple that he believes, he hopes and he loves. We may say the same even in reference to the world to come. When the Christian passes within the veil, he still has need of faith. Not, indeed, as to the great central facts of the gospel history; one glance at the Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne lifts him forever above the need of any testimony through human media. He no longer merely believes, he knows with a certitude that admits of no increase. Still he lives a life of faith. What assurance has he, or can he have, that he shall not one day fall, as did those lofty intelligences who kept not their first estate, except from the promise of his heavenly Father which he appropriates by faith? How is he to govern his course from day to day except by maintaining the same absolute trust in the Lord to which he was trained during his earthly discipline? The same is true of hope. In some respects, indeed, fruition takes the place of anticipation. For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? To the glorified saint death is a conquered foe, the resurrection is past, the judgment has pronounced him acquitted through his Lord's righteousness, and heaven has become an actual possession. He is no longer saved in hope, but fully saved in present experience. Still, he has not done with hope, for he is a progressive being. He cannot stand still. And in the upper sanctuary there is room for continued expansion. The word and the works of God are an illimitable field in which the believer expects and desires to make perpetual progress. And this hope maketh not ashamed, for each fresh stage achieved in the attainment and appropriation of truth prepares the way for another, and that for a third, and so on in endless progression. Heaven is anything but a place of idle stagnation, and hence there is always call for the exercise of hope—a hope which is never disappointed, but as soon as it is gratified is re-kindled afresh. There is literally no end to the service, for when millions of ages have rolled away the Infinite Mind will still remain beyond the highest attainments of the finite. And so hope has boundless room for its exercise; and the verse of Pope is to the Christian true in another and higher sense than the poet meant when he said, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

The glorified saint has the gifts both of the right hand and the left of his heavenly Father. He has satisfying truth in present possession, and the bright hope of more and yet more in needless progression. Were it otherwise heaven would be very different from what the Scripture tells us that it is. Seeing that in God's presence are pleasures for evermore, hope abideth, not because "the miserable have no other medicine," but because the present experience of joy prompts and insures the expectation of yet larger measures in the future. Still more obviously does love abide.

Folded with a Prayer Inside.

I fear I did not appreciate Aunt Eunice, though now that she has left us, now that she has passed within "the portals," and is quite beyond the influence of our love or consideration, I realize that she was a saint even while yet her feet lingered upon the thorny path that leads upward to the golden gates. She was always so quiet and gentle, so sympathetic and self-forgetful, that I did not fancy she had ever been otherwise, or guessed that through the fiery furnace she had passed to attain this state of utter self-abnegation. I know now that she was once as impulsive and quick-tempered as I, though surely she must always have been better in every other way. It was when father died that she came to live with us. Mother had always been delicate, and now her constitution gave way entirely, and Aunt Eunice became mother and father both in one. It is wonderful how much can be endured by one whose whole heart is given to the work of serving others. So often I would ask after a day of unusually hard labor, "Auntie, aren't you very tired?" She would invariably smile gently, and make the same answer, "I am glad to do the work the Lord has appointed."

I was not religiously inclined, and had less reverence for sacred things than I should have had; still, though I could not quite sympathize with auntie's conversation, which was always redolent with her deep piety, it never bore to me the slightest resemblance to cant. How many times I have seen her sit quite motionless for a moment when some one of the children was starting out upon an errand, or to school; and one day when I asked, "Of what are you thinking, auntie?" she replied very solemnly, "I never let them go away without sending a prayer upward begging that the good Father will watch over and protect them."

This seemed an odd fancy to me at first, though afterwards I became quite accustomed to it; and when the time came that I was to leave home and go away for a whole year as a teacher, very frequently during the week of preparation I saw that look of abstraction come over her dear face, and knew that her soul was looking toward the throne of divine mercy. It was the last day before my departure, and when auntie had put the finishing stitches into my pretty new cloak, she held it thoughtfully a moment, folded it carefully, and laid it into the open trunk, then drew me close to her heart, saying gently, "It is folded with a prayer inside, my darling; may the prayer shield your soul in time of temptation, as the cloak will shield your body in time of storm and cold. May the Lord cover you with the robe of righteousness. Promise me to pause one moment every time it is drawn about you, and ask our Father's protection."

I could not keep the tears back, it was so hard to leave home and all the dear ones, and auntie looked so wan and sorrowful; but soon I was off on the rushing train, and in the bustle of reaching a new home, entering a new life, I fear I was very unmindful of all her tender injunctions. At first I did think of her words each morning as the cloak was donned for the walk to the school-house; but soon my natural indifference to serious things asserted itself, and if her loving prayer clung about the folds of the garment, it did not penetrate my soul, it was entirely forgotten. Some months had passed, and of course I had found my share of trials

in the new life; but one day a very heavy one beset me. I was much astonished and mortified to have one of the school trustees call, and in a manner decidedly harsh state that he desired I should make no further criticisms upon the rules established by the board, that such criticisms were quite beyond my province—I was employed simply to do their bidding. It was in vain I protested that I had made no criticisms whatever. I saw that he did not believe me, and when he left the room remarking, "Young ladies are generally a little thoughtless with their tongues," my indignation knew no bounds. School had just been dismissed for the day, and sitting alone thinking it over, I was at first so angry and reckless that it seemed I could do nothing but send in my resignation, and take the night train for home—but mother—Auntie—the children—no, I could not do it, at least not yet; I would wait a few days.

The next morning on the way to school I met another of the trustees. His bow of salutation was so stiff, his manner so frigid, that again I felt insulted; he, too, had evidently heard something to my discredit; and with a tantalizing sense of being struck in the dark by an unknown hand, I entered upon my duties heavy-hearted. The day was a hard one, and so were many that followed, for I was always foolishly sensitive, and besides the unmistakable and unjust displeasure of the trustees, I suffered from countless imaginary slights and indignities. One day the culmination came in the form of a visit from a lady who declared herself my friend, so good a friend that she felt it her duty to tell me that it was rumored a new teacher was desired at the end of the session. I could no longer control myself, and in terms of indignation assured her that I would resign immediately, that they should not wait until the close of the session for a new teacher. She was almost affectionate in her manner, and expressed herself as much interested in my welfare, adding, at last, that in her opinion all the trouble arose from the fact that Mrs. Ellis had told Mrs. Jackson that Mrs. Staunton had said I had made very unbecoming speeches regarding the system adopted by the trustees.

When she took her departure I hurried to my room, bent upon going immediately to Mrs. Staunton, and demanding how she dared so misrepresent and defame me. I repeated defiantly the stinging and sarcastic speeches by which I would vindicate myself and mortify her; I aggravated myself by thinking what a martyrdom I was enduring, and the angry tears were filling my eyes, and a hot flush burning into my cheeks, when I hastily shook out my cloak to prepare for the walk. I cannot say how it was, but in an instant the scene had changed, I was at home, auntie had thrown her loving arms about me, her prayer had enveloped me and filled the atmosphere, and again I heard her gentle voice, "May the prayer shield your soul in time of temptation, as this cloak will shield your body in time of storm and cold."

In a torrent of tears I threw myself upon my knees, and implored that Father who was all in all to her, Lord-Shepherd, and Comforter, to lead me, too, to hold me safe from temptation and from the result of my own angry impulses. I think it was the very first time that I had ever really prayed, and when I rose from my knees such a sense of peace, of relief, I had never before experienced, while the burden of the last few weeks seemed quite lifted from my soul.

I went, as I had intended, to Mrs. Staunton's, but ah, how differently. Instead of anger and pride my heart was full of humility and an eager desire to know only the truth, and I had decided that should it be wisest to resign, I would do so in a respectful manner, and then return home. I can never be thankful enough for auntie's prayer. It saved me then. I believe, through God's mercy, it will have saved me at the end. I found it was all a mistake about Mrs. Staunton; she had said nothing whatever about me, and after I had explained to her all I knew of the matter, my perplexity and mortification, she proved herself a true, good woman, and became my best friend in the place.

"It is only the work of some idle, thoughtless busy-body," she said kindly. "I am sure you need feel no further anxiety; only do your best in the faithful discharge of your duties, and I will speak to the trustees myself; I know them all quite well." I did not realize until then how I had dreaded being obliged to give up my first work, and admit it a failure—how I had shrunk from mother's disappointment and auntie's sad face. And now, in a happy home of my own, with precious little ones about me, I never let them go out from the roof-tree without sending a prayer after them; and if the time should ever come for them to seek work of their own, my eager soul will fold many an earnest prayer within the garments they will bear away with them.—N. Y. Observer.

Preaching Old Sermons.

It is said of the elder Dr. Beecher that an intelligent parishioner, in Litchfield, once pleasantly took him to task for preaching old sermons, asking the Doctor if he ought not to be every Sunday giving his people constantly fresh views of truth from the fresh studies of their minister? The Doctor, as pleasantly replied, "If a sermon was well studied and carefully prepared, so as to be thoroughly instructive and impressive the first time it was preached, is not that a good reason for preaching it again; and if it has manifestly done good once, why should it not do so again and again, whenever it may be repeated?" And, said the good Doctor, "I convinced him, and he convinced me!" And the anecdote is told of the late Dr. Samuel B. Swain, that he once said to the Theological Club, of which he was a leading and greatly respected member, "I have been giving considerable time to the reading of some of my old sermons, and," he added playfully, but in a peculiarly grave tone, "I honestly declare to you, brethren, I have been surprised to find how good some of them are." Rev. E. N. Kirk, of Boston, once said, "If I find an arrow hits the mark, I pick it up and shoot it again," meaning that he often repeated a sermon which he found had done good. Dr. Griffin is said to have preached one of his sermons some ninety times; and it was the means of the conversion of scores, not to say of hundreds of its hearers. And the writer has one sermon which he had preached some fifty times, and which he has reason to know has been blessed to the conversion of more than half that number of persons.

"SCARCELY SAVED."—A gentleman who was climbing the mountain of Banda, in Borneo, describes himself as once in great peril, owing to the loose and friable nature of the stones and volcanic debris on the mountain side. The danger was, that once beginning to slip, there would be no power to stop, and a frightful precipice below would render destruction certain. He lost his footing and do what he would he did not seem able to regain it. The loose material continually gave way with his weight, and he seemed at an accelerated pace to be carried down. Just then, however he saw a fern growing out from among the stones, and, by a sudden effort as he was sliding down, clutched at it in hope to break his descent. Happily the fern was firmly rooted and held. He was then able to regain his footing and escape the peril. Are there not helpful circumstances in life that are the means of stay and rescue in some downward course? It may be often a little thing that checks moral and spiritual declension, but its power is blessed when proved. Some incident, or truth, or example, or encouragement, or promise comes within reach and we grasp it. Men are rallied, steadied, and enabled with recovered power to pursue an upward way.

It's right to trust in God, but if you don't stand to your halliards, your craft'll miss stays, and your faith'll be blown out of the bolt-ropes in the turn of a marlin-spike.

Sin is never at a stay; if we do not retreat from it we shall advance in it; and the further on we go the more we have to come back.—Barrow.

Fundamental Truths of Christianity. LUTHER'S APOLOGICAL DISCOURSES. Translated from the German, by Prof. D. M. Welton. TENTH DISCOURSE.

THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.

No question lays claim to so much religious interest at the present time as that concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. No other question rightly demands an equal interest. For it is the question of Christianity itself; the question of universal history. It pertains to Him who, in the words of Jean Paul, is the purest among the mighty, the mightiest among the pure;—to Him who, with his pierced hand unhinges empires, turns the stream of the centuries from its bed, and still commands the ages. Our time indeed has not so much taste for dogmatic as for historic questions; but doctrine is transmitted and enshrined in history. The conflict about doctrine has been transferred to the sphere of the life of Jesus. But what contrasts stand over against each other there! Contrasts as great as the distinction between the Eternal Son of God and the son of Joseph. These contrasts are old, yet heightened at the present time.

From the beginning Christians have rendered divine honor to Jesus. In the New Testament they are thus designated who called on the name of the Lord Jesus. And Pliny in his letter to the Emperor Trajan speaks of hymns which the Christians sang in their meetings in honor of Christ, hereby reverencing him as divine. If we knew nothing of the teaching of the Apostolic Church concerning the Person of Jesus Christ, this fact would be sufficient evidence to us of the divine honor which was paid him. But early we meet with a double opposition to the teaching of the church,—a Jewish and a heathen. The Jewish error saw in Jesus only a prophet, although the highest; but it denied to this human actuality the superhuman majesty of Jesus. The heathen error saw in Christ a superhuman being descended from a higher world, but it resolved the historical reality into mere appearance. In the first, history is emphasized at the expense of the idea; in the second, the idea at the expense of history. The church saw in Jesus Christ the unity of both,—of history and the idea of the human and divine. How both indeed could come together in a complete unity, was ever a problem to its thought, and never will the thought completely cover the reality. But where, even in questions which pertain to the natural life, so soon as these questions go beneath the surface of things,—where do we find complete reality so that nothing more remains to be known? And the faith and confession of the church are independent of the endeavors of conceivable thought fully to solve the mystery of the Person of Jesus. Herein the different churches are one. Differences of teaching on this point are of small importance in comparison with agreement in faith: Christians of all churches bow their knee together in the name of Jesus.

Rationalism has expunged the divine side, indeed everything supernatural from the person of Jesus. And when he spoke also of a "heavenly manifestation on this sublunary sphere," it considered this only a form of expression. Jesus, it affirmed was only the greatest of moralists. But men were convinced that His words and works were more than those of the moralist. Christianity is a phenomenon which reaches out far beyond the bounds of simple morality. The picture that meets us in the Gospel is far too great to be comprehended by "the wise rabbi from Nazareth." Philosophical speculation sought to grasp the deeper idea of Christianity. But when Rationalism represented history at the expense of the idea, Speculation represented the idea at the expense of history. Jesus is only a symbol, the symbol of divine wisdom, as Spinoza taught, or the ideal of perfection, as Kant and Jacobi taught, or the union of the divine and human, as Schelling and Hegel taught. How far Jesus himself approached this idea—far he did not reach it—we cannot say; moreover this is a matter of little consequence, for it depends only on the idea, not upon the history. What so

mightly captivates us in the Gospels, is the historical reality of the Person of Jesus. This it is that especially engages our attention. It is impossible for us to stand by the idea and feel satisfied with it. Strauss endeavored, from that philosophical standpoint, to get the better of history. He resolved it almost entirely into invention, which owed its origin to the poetical spirit of the Christian community, and only a small insignificant portion of historical reality remained. But if the Jesus who meets us in the Gospels is the product of the Christian community, of what is this community the product? The poor remainder of the history of Jesus, which Strauss leaves to us, stands in no relation to the working of which he is said to be the cause. Renan is convinced that the power of history is too great to be resolved into myths as Strauss has done. In this respect his book shows an advance beyond that of Strauss. He pays a tribute to historical reality. The philosophical mind of the German could satisfy itself with abstractions and notions, the sincere mind of the Frenchman demands historical facts. He rightly says that between the prodigious working which Jesus performed and the cause of it which lay in his person there was a necessary correspondence,—that the gospel history in its essential features could not be otherwise than real. Even in the view of Terrain, according to which the history proceeded, it assumed the character of evident corporality. To him Jesus is a "Man of huge dimensions." But he tries to escape the confessions which, according to his entire naturalistic method of contemplating the world, he cannot make. He multiplies his beautiful and bombastic words, only that he may not speak the one word, that the person of Jesus is a miracle, and the essential essence of His history supernatural. For he simply denies the supernatural and miraculous, because he knows no real world beyond this finite world, and no personal and free God and no personal immortality. Yet miracles constitute an essential part of the life of Jesus. But he explains these even as deception and imposture, and ascribes to Jesus the practice of the discreditable axiom that the end sanctifies the means, i.e., he prefers to deny the moral character of Jesus rather than admit that here we have to do with supernatural power. But so long as there exists a moral sentiment it will resist the imputation that Jesus employed all kinds of deception not compatible with ordinary morality, such as the pretext of being a discerner of the heart; or that he defiled the purity of his teaching by mingling fanatical enthusiasm with knowledge, in order hereby to make his teaching efficacious, since the world was willing to be deceived; or that he proclaimed himself the Son of God, and made this a fundamental article of his kingdom, while at the same time his better knowledge repudiated this ground; or that in Gethsemane he thought in sad despair of the clear streams of his native country, and of the Galilean maidens who had so freely given him their love—thoughts which could only come into the diseased fancy of a son of modern Paris. No, so long as the Gospels exist, so long will they in their lofty simplicity and holy sublimity furnish a refutation to these insults against Him who was the purest among the pure. Let us now question the Gospels concerning the person of Jesus. And first we may be allowed to offer a word concerning the Gospels in general. Jesus himself neither composed nor left behind him any writings. For he was no philosopher or founder of a religion in the ordinary sense. His Person and his work—these are the writing which he inscribed in mighty traces in the history of mankind, and the operation of his Spirit in our hearts, that is the writing which he still every day ineffaceably executes within us. His disciples however composed writings, from which we learn particularly concerning him, and by which also oral traditions and announcements concerning him, which have gone through the world since the day of Pentecost, are supported and defended. Indeed we should feel assured concerning Jesus if there were no gospels; the church itself, the existence of the church would then be our gospel. And we could feel