

Life's Secret.

"The secret of life is giving"—
Not paltry silver and gold,
Though "the poor" have always with you,"
And their needs are manifold.

"Tis the life itself must be given;
Not as the martyr dies,
But often, what is far harder,
The living sacrifice,

Or the humble cup of water
In the Master's name bestowed,
To comfort some wayworn pilgrim,
To lighten his weary load.

Aye, life that is worth the living
Is like his, the Prince of life,
Who laid aside heaven and glory,
For sorrow and toil and strife;

Meta E. B. Thorne, in Onward

"Good" Weak Men.

BY IAN MACLAREN,

The story of Eli is one of the most suggestive because it is not one of the most obvious of tragedies.

The excellent virtues of this judge were neutralized and deprived of their force, not as happens with some good men by the existence of a great besetting sin, but simply by a certain defect in character, to which very little importance is often attached, and which is even mistaken for a form of goodness.

The evidence of his weakness appears in the slack government of his own house, and his shameful leniency towards his sons. Eli himself was a man of personal purity and religious reverence, but he was afflicted with two unworthy and unprincipled sons. Although they were the sons of the high priest, and themselves priests of the living God, they forgot the law of God and the obligations of their holy office.

WEAKNESS VS. BADNESS.

It is indeed a question whether huge unblushing sinners doing their wicked will without shame, like Hophni and Phinehas, are a greater injury in life than a man who is thoroughly good and hopelessly weak.

Much has been said about the cruelty of certain stern parents, and the injury which they have done to their children. It is likely that the world has lost as much through the laxity of kind-hearted parents who have had no strength to control their children, who have allowed them to grow up to be fools and prodigals.

The God who is behind all things, and above all things, is a God of love, and is justly called our Father in heaven; but if we imagine Him to be only a larger and more expansive Eli, who will simply regret human sin and gently remonstrate with human sinners, but who in no circumstances will use either the rod or the sword, then we do not know anything of Him who gave the Ten Words from Mount Sinai the first time, and then gave them

their virtues strength of will and moral courage.

Weak kings have been a calamity to the state, for their weakness bred anarchy and disorder; whilst strong kings, who have held the reins of government in a firm hand, and have been a terror to evil-doers, created that atmosphere of discipline and righteousness in which the national life flourishes; and comes to a height.

Weak citizens, who have not enough enthusiasm and enough resolution to take part in national affairs and to meet the enemy in the gate, are a greater hindrance to the kingdom of God in the commonwealth than wilful sinners and profligates. Their foolish and sickly tolerance creates a soil in which any evil may flourish, and in which no hardy virtue can live. Had such people their way, more wrong would never be redressed, nor even open evil-doing punished, which means that men who did righteousness would not be supported, nor excellent goodness received in just reward.

SELFISHNESS AND WEAKNESS.

If any one supposes that this weakness is only a trifling fault, then let him understand he has not gone to the root of it and discovered its origin. This weakness must not indeed be looked upon simply as an excess of charity and benevolence, the attitude of a man who cannot think evil of other people because he is himself so good, who hesitates to punish another because he hopes good things from him. The reason of this weakness in nine cases out of ten is simply and solely a form of selfishness. It is a timid refusal to look facts in the face, a persistent self-delusion that things are better than they seem, an indolent dislike to give one's self trouble, a shrinking from the sight of a whole some pain in other people, and a secret terror of unpleasant consequences if one did his duty.

If those who bear rule in the family and in the state are too good-natured to do justice and to encourage goodness, and have reached such a height of pseudo-charity that they leave evil to redress itself, then the moral laws of the universe come into play, and God takes the matter in His own hands. It is not to be endured that Hophni and Phinehas should corrupt religion and strike righteousness in the face, and, however tender Eli may be with his sons, another father will take them in hand. These sons of Belial came to their just end, and their doom was a wholesome lesson to the people, who learned that God could not be set at naught in His holy place, nor the moral life of community corrupted with impunity.

EASY-GOING PUNISHED.

If parents refuse to teach their children subordination and good living then their children will have to learn the lesson in a harder school, or else will receive the reward of evil-doers. If easy-going communities will not check injustice and redress wrong, then the people will one day take things in their own hands, and a bloody revolution will be the judgment of God.

The tragedy of Eli's life and his inglorious death is a solemn warning to every of us who in his own home, or in his business, or in public affairs, is shirking disagreeable duties, and claiming his cowardice under the pretences of kindness, and making it his chief aim to be pleasant all round both to the good and to the bad. If we do not arouse ourselves and give ear to our conscience, and play the man, and do the hard deeds which are needful, then we shall have a rude awakening, and the judgment shall fall both upon ourselves and upon our children.

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again the second time from Mount Calvary. What He says, that also He will do, and He is the living force behind the moral laws which no man can flout with impunity. For repentant sinners He is a refuge and a Saviour; for the unrepentant He is a judge and an avenger; and for sin, at all times and in all circumstances, and to all men, He is a consuming fire.—C. E. World.

"Holy Ground."

A gentleman was visiting a friend who owned a pretty country place in Northamptonshire.

One morning, as he took an early stroll in the pleasant meadows, from which the new-mown hay had just been carried, he came to a hillock, crowned with some fine old trees, and beneath it was a little dell, where daisies grew so thickly that it seemed as if a white carpet had been spread over the turf. There were weeds a-bong them, too, poppies and campions, and nightshade and rambling briers—a veritable wilderness in contrast with the surrounding meadows, so trim and neat.

"Why don't you clear away all this," asked the visitor of an old laborer working near, "and make it in keeping with the other parts of the estate?" "Why, sir, th' master do think that ere spot better than all the rest, tho' I've never heard for why. He won't let no rake nor spade go anigh it."

"Tis holy ground," he says. 'Tud be as much as my place wur worth 't set spade to it."

The visitor was puzzled. He had heard of graves where sacred memories gathered until the place seemed holy ground, but this was simply a wild dell, where meek-eyed daisies and flaunting weeds ran riot.

In the evening, being again near the place in company with his host, he said—"What a strange fancy of yours to have that spot in such disorder."

A shadow fell across Mr. Russell's pleasant face, succeeded almost instantly by a tender smile, as he replied—"It does seem fanciful to those who do not know. You remember our two bairns, Owen and Clarice? They used to pass a great deal of their holiday-time in that little dell. In the bright, warm weather they would set out their tiny tea-things in the shade, and sometimes they would play at church there, singing hymns, and managing between them a little accordian very nicely, which they called their organ."

"They were good children, giving us very little anxiety, and, at work or play, happy and busy as bees. Of course, they had their childish trials and vexations, real enough to them, but somehow there always seemed a charm in the daisy dell. Whatever the trouble or sorrow, no sooner had they been to their pleasant retreat than it seemed to vanish; the brow grew smooth again, the merry laugh rang out."

"The daisies grew in that dell so quickly that at last I gave my gardener orders to root them up."

"But I had reckoned without my host. Both children came running to me in great consternation, Owen crying out—

"Oh, papa! don't let it be done. You will spoil our carpet; and besides—and besides, we call it 'holy ground.'"

"He stopped, looking very red and distressed; and then Clarice, who understood why he hesitated, came forward with real Christian courage, though her shy, blushing face showed with what effort, and said, 'Papa, Owen and I often say our prayers there; when anything vexes us we tell Jesus Christ about it. When you were ill the other day, we knelt down on the daisies and asked God very earnestly to make you well again, and He heard our prayer; and ever since then we have called it holy ground. But this has been a secret between us till now.'"

"I was greatly touched to find how truly my dear ones had received the Kingdom of God as little children. 'You may be sure their request was granted. I promised they should do as they liked with their daisy dell. No gardener should touch it; from thenceforth it would be to me also 'holy ground.'"

"They were wild with delight, Clarice insisting on walking round the hill-top on tiptoe, while Owen, simulating a wooden leg, hopped round in her wake. Dear innocent bairns! Their merry laughter floated on the summer air; I have heard it often in memory, I hear it still in my dreams."

"Six months afterwards I lost them both in scarlet fever. Do you wonder that I still keep to my promise and leave the daisies to weave their slippery carpet here at will?"

"I call it holy ground. Where daisies wrap the sod, The place where human need and care Sent up a voice to God."

"I call it holy ground, When two or three are there, And Jesus, standing in the midst, Breathes peace up on the air."

Have you a "holy ground," some sheltered place in the garden; or some quiet room where you may be alone with God, where you may speak to Him as to a friend, confessing your shortcomings, and asking His all-powerful help in every time of need—Silvia Penn.

The Burden of Souls.

The expression is, perhaps, somewhat old-fashioned; the experience that it signifies is, however, perennial in the hearts of all those in whom the Spirit lives and reigns. Wherever we read the history of God's church, in his Word, or out of it, the characteristic feature of his followers has ever been—love for men. In the Old Testament that love, limited of necessity to the one race, was, within that limit, an intense and persistent passion. Patriarch after patriarch, and prophet after prophet identifies himself with his people in absolute self-devotion, that he may be the means of blessing and of saving. Abraham pleads for Sodom, and Moses for Israel; Isaiah, with his breaking heart in every word, cries, "O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord;" and Jeremiah tells us, in his great and crushing sorrow, "for the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt."

Coming down to the New Testament, St. Paul strikes a high note of self-sacrifice when he tells us, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren." That wish in Jesus' history becomes an awful realization, he is cut off for the transgression of his people. In his case, and in obedience to the spirit which he has inspired, love becomes universal. The outstanding thing seen in the life of Christ is his feeling for men, his love, yearning, infinite, incomprehensible. And his truest follower has most of this spirit; his every follower must have some of it.

The Christ-like impulse, after man's salvation, is a necessity in the heart that is conscious of his saving grace. The burden of souls is unescapable. The deep, abiding, Spirit-born desire to win men for God and the good, is part of what it means to be a Christian. And it is the great essential for the accomplishment of the Christian's work. Without it the true and worthy motive, that alone makes highest accomplishment possible, is lacking.

Just now it is important that we ask ourselves the question, Is that our motive, our purpose, our high ideal? We seek a great and wide-spread revival. Why? That we may round out the century well, bring about a forward and successful movement in the history of our church, and accomplish great things before the churches and the world? Or is it that the Christ-love for men is in our hearts, as a very fire in our bones, so that what we really long for is that he may save the souls for whom he died.

That love, born of the Spirit, and, therefore, abiding, fills every year with special effort, and makes every day rich in opportunities. And that love, not the feverish, sentimental thing that sometimes passes for it, will bring forth fruit that "shall remain."

—Chris. Guardian.

How to Help the Pastor.

Much advice and many suggestions have been given on this subject. Its importance justifies its being kept before the people. The Preacher's Magazine for July gives the following, credited to "Selected":

Score these twenty things for your pastor, and he will be successful: 1. Encourage his strong points and fortify the weak ones.

2. Leave as much of his human nature as is sanctified to godly exercise without "let or hindrance."

3. Cover what is not sanctified by your "fervent, effectual prayers."

4. Meet generously the "benevolent enterprises" of the church.

5. Pay your church dues as God hath prospered you, if little, at the first opportunity; if much, by that much the sooner. (To pray and pay are faith and works with but a letter's difference between them—old, but true.)

6. Attend the preaching of the Word, Sabbath morning and evening.

7. Attend the weekly prayer-meeting, lest by your absence it may prove weakly.

8. So live with Christ that you will have an experience and the exhortation to attend religious services will be unnecessary.

9. Find some place regularly in the Sabbath school.

10. Be with him in seasons of revival. These are the times that try his soul. Be found where the light thickens and the enemy presses sorely.

left hand know what the right doeth"—Christ's symbol of secrecy.

12. Have family prayer and let him know it.

13. Line the complaining lips with the gold leaf of silence.

14. Meet him at the parsonage, upon his return to you from conference or assembly, with a hearty welcome.

15. Drop in on him at his leisure moments for a short, friendly call.

16. Be free to let him call where he can do the most good. No monopolies in the pastorate, save for the unsaved.

17. He has sympathies; do not necessarily tax them. He has a stomach; do not let him into the secret by swamping him with your "sumptuous fare."

18. Talk about and talk up church matters; think over them until you can say, "There is no church like our church and no pastor like our pastor."

19. Be as religious as possible and as cheerful as religious.

20. Finally, rejoice with him when he rejoices and weep with him when he weeps; score this for him, and our word for it, he will be successful; otherwise you may seriously doubt his call to the ministry; you will have delivered your own soul.

Suggestive.

Teach self-denial in your homes. It is not kind to the child to allow him everything he asks. Teach him that the truest and greatest happiness is to be found in denying himself and helping others.—Selected.

It is said of some oriental kings that they never appear in the same garment to those who seek an audience. Moreover, that whatever be the garment in which they are attired themselves, their attendants have a duplicate gift ready to present to the stranger or supplicant. It is even so with the Shepherd King of Israel! He ever comes to His needy people arrayed in the garb of some new promise or specially adapted blessing. He comes with the robe of righteousness to the spiritually naked. He comes with a garment of healing for the bruised and broken. He comes with the garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness. For every sorrowing thought of the heart He has a counterpart and corresponding comfort.—Macduff.

We shall not love heaven more for loving earth less; the needful thing is not that we abate, but that we consecrate, the interests and affections of our life.—Martineau.

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