



SUNDAY READING

WHY LIFE IS SHORT.

Some Reasons Why Man Does Not Live to the Age He Did.

A long life is not reconcilable with the present state of the world. What the state of the world was before the Flood, in what manner they lived, and how they employed their time, we cannot tell, for Moses has given no account of it; but taking the world as it is, and as we find it, we undertake to convince those men who are most apt to complain of the shortness of life, that it would not be for the general happiness of mankind to have it much longer: for, the world is at present very unequally divided; some have a large share and portion of it, others have nothing but what they can earn by very hard labour, or extract from other men's charity by their restlessness, importunities, or gain by more ungodly arts. Now, though the rich and prosperous, who have the world at command, and live in ease and pleasure, would be very well contented to spend some hundred years in this world, yet we should think fifty or threescore years abundantly enough to spend in hunger and want. And those who are so foolish as not to think this enough, owe a great deal to the wisdom and goodness of God that he does. So that the greatest part of mankind have great reason to be contented with the shortness of life, because they have no temptation to wish it longer.

The present state of the world requires a more quick succession. The world is pretty well peopled, and is divided among its present inhabitants; and but very few, in comparison, have any considerable share in the division. Now, let us but suppose that all our ancestors, who lived a hundred or two hundred years ago, were alive still, and possessed their old estates and honours, what had become of this present generation of men, who have now taken their places, and made as great a show and bustle in the world as they did? And if you look back three, four, or five hundred years, the case is still so much the worse; the world would be over-peopled; and where there is one poor miserable man now, there must have been five hundred; or the world must have been common, and all men reduced to the same level; which, we believe, the rich and happy people, who are so fond of long life, would not like very well. This would utterly undo our young heirs, were their hopes of succession three or four hundred years off, who, as short as life is now, think their fathers make very little haste to their graves. This would spoil their trade of spending their estates before they have them, and make them live a dull, sober life, whether they would or no; and such a life they don't think worth having. And, therefore, we hope at least they will not make the shortness of their father's lives an argument against Providence; and yet such sparks as these, are commonly the wits that set up for atheism, and, when it is put into their heads, quarrel with everything which they fondly conceive will weaken the belief of a God and a Providence, and, among other things, with the shortness of life; which they have little reason to do, when they so often outlive their estates.

The world is very bad as it is—so bad, that good men scarce know how to spend fifty or threescore years in it; but consider how bad it would probably be were the life of man extended to six, seven, or eight hundred years. If so near a prospect of the other world as forty or fifty years cannot restrain men from the greatest villainies what would they do if they could as reasonably suppose death to be three or four hundred years off? If men make such improvements in wickedness in twenty or thirty years, what would they do in hundreds? And what a blessed place, then, would this world be to live in! We see in the old world, when the life of men was drawn out to so great a length, the wickedness of mankind grew so insufferable, that it repented God he had made man: and He resolved to destroy that whole generation, excepting Noah and his family. And the most probable account that can be given how they came to grow so universally wicked, is the long and prosperous lives of such wicked men, who by degrees corrupted others, and they others, till there was but one righteous family left, and no other remedy left but to destroy them all—leaving only that righteous family as the seed and future hopes of the new world.

And when God had determined in himself, and promised to Noah never to destroy the world again by such a universal destruction, till the last and final judgment, it was necessary by degrees to shorten the lives of men, which was the most effectual means to make them more governable, and to remove bad examples out of the world, which would hinder the spreading of the infection, and people and reform the world again by new examples of piety and virtue. For when there are such quick successions of men, there are few ages but have some great and brave examples, which give a new and better spirit to the world.—Selected.

His Most Precious Treasure.

There is a beautiful story told in ancient Greek mythology regarding Æsculapius, the god of medicine, whose temples were built upon hill-tops, where the healthiest breezes of heaven blew about them, and received the votive offerings of those who were cured, from the gold and jewels of the rich to the rude gifts of humble hearts, whose poverty had not extinguished their gratitude. A little schoolboy lay tossing about in a sore fever, and the divinity appeared to him one night standing by his bedside. The boy was not in the least afraid, for the god appeared in a gentle form, and said to him:—"My little play-

fellow, what will you give me if I cure your sickness?" The lad thinking what was his most precious treasure, said—"I will give you my ten marbles." Æsculapius smiled, and said—"For that I will gladly make you well;" and in the morning the fever vanished, and the boy rose and went forth to his play, perfectly restored. Is not the moral of this old-world story self-evident? Does not this bargain of a god with a little boy teach the same lesson as the appearance of Jesus to Mary in such a lowly form that she could mistake Him for the gardener? By what wonderful instinct did the ancient Greeks form such an idea of a Divine being, drawing man's heart to the human heart of God, more than four hundred years before Christ came to prove the reality?

MORNING THOUGHTS.

Some Fragments of Thought Compiled by Rev. Geo. Bruce of St. David's Church.

(From Morning Thoughts For Busy Days.)
"Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest."—2 Kings, iv. 7.

When the widow closed the door upon herself and her two sons and began to pour the oil in obedience to the word of the man of God, she did something, as another widow did long afterwards, who dropped her mites into the treasury, which was to exert an influence far beyond anything she could have thought of. When she took that cruse in her hands it became a fountain from which there flowed a stream of gracious influence which did not cease when the oil was staid. It became one of the streams which have formed the river revealed to the prophet, which grew broader and deeper and vaster till it became a river to swim in, that could not be crossed over. And empty hearts have been filled here through all these years, not failing, though the empty vessels run out in the widow's room; nor shall this fountain fail so long as there are empty hearts to be filled or homes to be gladdened by the grace of God. None shall ever come to be sent empty away. The proclamation is ever to the messengers, "Bring me yet a vessel," and while a life is in need of grace the oil will flow, till it be said, "there is not a vessel more."

"In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul."—Ps. xciv., 19

What trust is here! What sweet restfulness of confidence! Thy comforts delight my soul. What comforts are these? Not the pillows on which the world tries to rest, for they reverse Jacob's experience, and their hope of succession three or four hundred years off, who, as short as life is now, think their fathers make very little haste to their graves. This would spoil their trade of spending their estates before they have them, and make them live a dull, sober life, whether they would or no; and such a life they don't think worth having. And, therefore, we hope at least they will not make the shortness of their father's lives an argument against Providence; and yet such sparks as these, are commonly the wits that set up for atheism, and, when it is put into their heads, quarrel with everything which they fondly conceive will weaken the belief of a God and a Providence, and, among other things, with the shortness of life; which they have little reason to do, when they so often outlive their estates.

Whiter than snow."—Ps. li. 7.
Whiter than the driven snow. Whiter than the snow as it falls from the heavens. Is it possible? Is this not a figure to illustrate the truth rather than a literal truth? We can remember how, in our childhood, we hailed the first snow. What joyful glee to see the feathery flakes falling so softly, and covering the ground, hard, and bare, and black, and cold, with the spotless robe. We forgot cold as we revelled in it. Perhaps we disregarded warning and wise injunction, and braved the remonstrance and reproof which were sure to follow, as we trooped in all aglow from the wild turmoil. And what impressed these eager, fun-loving spirits with a sense of something like awe was the spotless purity of the snow. Its wondrous crystals we could not see, but its wonderful, dazzling whiteness called up feelings which we scarcely understood. How we plunged our little hands into the soft heap and filled them, alas, only to find what we grasped stained and defiled. Even the whitest results of the laundry grew dingy and yellow beside it, and snow—new fallen snow—became the emblem of purity, of spotless perfection. How often has it come back to us since then in contrast with the stains of passion, and foolishness, and sin, and worldliness? God's blessed emblem written on the child's heart—symbol of purity and truth.

A Live Church.

Here are some figures of the year's work of one of the famous New York Episcopal churches. Grace Parish has just issued its year book for 1892. The receipts according to the treasurer's report, have been \$56,615.60. There were expended for external charities, \$29,004.70; for parochial charities \$29,109.88, leaving a balance on hand of \$1,501.02. The parish contributed to the building fund of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, \$3,988.39, and expended \$3,550 on the new deaconess' school. The fresh air work of the parish cost \$4,061.88 and \$2,000 were devoted to the interior decoration of Grace Church.

NEWS AND NOTABILLIA.

It is stated that 856,000,000 heathens are sitting in darkness.

The Lenten season will begin February 15, and Easter Sunday will thus fall on April 2.

Christianity is being like-minded with Christ; considering Him our sanctification as well as our redemption. It is endeavoring to live to Him here, that we may live with Him hereafter.

As the tree is fertilized by its own broken branches and falling leaves, and grows out of its own decay, so men and nations are bettered and improved by trial and refined out of broken hopes and blighted expectations.

Nothing so cements and holds together in union all the parts of a society, as faith or credit; which can never be kept up, unless men are under some force or necessity of honestly paying what they owe to one another.—Cicero.

In Sweden the turtle dove is looked upon as sacred. The Swedes call it "God's bird" and "Noah's bird," from a notion that it is the same species of bird that the commander of the ark sent out to bring back tidings of the receding flood.

He is but half prepared for the journey of life who does not take with him that friend who will forsake him in no emergency—who will divide his sorrows, increase his joys, lift the veil from his heart, and throw sunshine amid the darkest scenes.

The Church of the Heavenly Rest, New York, of which Rev. D. Parker Morgan is the rector, will be consecrated on May 19, by Bishop Potter. The church, through Dr. Morgan's efforts, has just been cleared of a debt of \$87,000. The sum was raised in less than one month, the subscriptions ranging from \$1 to \$10,000.

To work and live only for one's self, will by no means promote happiness. On the contrary, it is a source of intense misery. The secret of many a joyless life which has gone out in bitterness, suicide, or insanity, may be found in the selfishness which dominated it from its beginning to its close. To live in love is to live in everlasting youth.

It is because so few have definite goals before them that so many fail; it is because so many aim at impossibilities that so few succeed; it is because there is too much wishing for success, with so little unremitting striving after it, that so many end with wishing; it is because there is too much eagerness for speedy triumph that so many end in defeat.

From about the thirteenth century the sacred character of Christmas joy-songs was almost entirely lost sight of in a jocoseness which we would call profanity. The Puritan parliament abolished Christmas and carols altogether, as savouring of Popery. But feasting and revelry returned with the Restoration, and with the latter also the old observance of Christmas.

This is the thing which I know—and which, if you labor faithfully, you shall find also—that in reverence is the chief joy and power of life; reverence for what is pure and bright in your own youth; for what is true and tried in the age of others; for all that is gracious among the living, great among the dead, and marvellous in the Powers that cannot die.

May we all be delivered from wrath and malice, and bitterness and narrowness ourselves. May we soften the asperities, and soothe the alarms and fears of others. May we honour all men, love the brotherhood, love God, and honour the Queen. Let our patriotism be steeped in piety, and let us not only by vote but by voice and prayer do our part as instruments of the Divine righteousness in promoting the kingdom of God.

According to the report of the Presbyterian board of foreign missions, in 1892 there were: ordained missionaries (165 native), 375; lay missionaries (339 female), 384; churches, 391; communicants, 30,479; added 1891-1892, 3,430; contributions on field, \$38,731.28; schools, 771; scholars, 29,011; scholars in Sunday schools, 26,388; students for ministry, 167; printing establishments, 12; pages, issued in twenty-one languages, 119,000,000; hospitals and dispensaries, 43; patients treated, 100,000.

Christian unity is being practically illustrated by some of the protestant churches on the West Side. The Grace Methodist, the West End Presbyterian and the Hope Baptist churches, all located in the neighborhood of 104th and 106th streets, held union services on Thanksgiving day, and watch night services were held in the Methodist Church, in which the pastors of all three of these churches took part. The three churches also co-operate in the West Side Excise League movement, and their pastors exchange ministrations.

Bishop Brooks preached in New York, Christmas day at the Church of the Incarnation, Thirty-fifth street and Madison avenue, of which the Bishop's brother, the Rev. Arthur Brooks, is rector. This is the first time Phillips Brooks has preached in New York city since he was made Bishop. The fact that he would preach at the Christmas service was not announced, this precaution being necessary to prevent the great crowd that would have turned disappointed away from the edifice, that could not hold the overflow the announcement of his name as preacher would have caused.

The temple of the Grace baptist church, Philadelphia, is one of the most remarkable structures of its kind in the world. Under its domed roof and within its hewn stone walls there are Sabbath school rooms, dining rooms, kitchens, business offices, boiler rooms, electric light plant, an armory, reception, reading and library rooms. The main auditorium of the temple has the largest seating capacity of any church edifice in the United States. It contains 3,500 plush covered opera chairs. There is in addition, room for 600 more chairs without encroaching on the main aisles. Its present actual seating capacity is 4,108, which can be increased to 4,600. During the opening exercises in March, 1891, over 9,000 people were present at each service. The grand organ when complete will cost \$20,000. It has the largest unpaid choir in the world, and fourteen different organizations hold meetings within its walls. The structure cost \$250,000. Rev. Russel H. Conwell, L. D., is pastor of this church. He will be remembered by PROGRESS readers as a writer of a history of the St. John fire.

The Thought Amid The Storm.

A correspondent of the N. Y. Mail and Express writes as follows:

The recent severe storms encountered on the ocean, accompanied by the loss of some and the providential saving of many lives, calls to memory an incident which happened on board the brig, George Washington (about the year 1838), Captain Reuben Smith, bound from Mobile, Ala., to Providence, R. I., having on board, among others, as passengers, an elderly gentleman, editor of the Charleston, (S. C.) Courier, and a widow, who, with her two children, occupied a state room directly off the main cabin. A severe storm overtook them en route and the vessel was laid to, during the storm of two days, the waves making complete breach over her.

The widow gave expression to her fears by frequent and loud cries, appealing to the sympathy of the passengers. During the din and confusion incident thereto the old Christian gentleman asked for paper and pencil, and, bracing himself as best he could at the small table, was heard to calmly say, "A penny for a thought," when he penned the following lines, which were dropped through the slats in the state-room door, and resulted in giving comfort and assurance to the widow and restoring confidence and quiet during the storm, out of which all were safely brought:

Why, oh, my soul, alarmed by fear,
Because so far at sea?
Is not thy Maker's presence here—
Extends it not to thee?
Who made the land, He formed the deep,
And governs all He made,
And if He deign our souls to keep,
Why should we be afraid?
Then let us place unshaken trust
In His almighty name,
Forever faithful, kind and just,
On sea and land the same.

Gentleness.
Gently I took that which unjustly came,
And without scorn forgave—Do thou the same.
A wrong done to thee think a cat's-eye spark,
Thou would'st not see, were not thine own heart dark.
Thine own keen sense of wrong that thirsts for sin,
Fear that—the sparks self-kindled from within,
Which, blown upon, will bind thee with its glare,
Or smother'd still the tree with noisome air,
Clap on th' extinguisher, pull up the blinds,
And soon the ventilated spirit finds
Its natural daylight. If a foe have kenn'd,
Or worse than foe, an alienated friend,
A rib of rot in my ship's stout side,
Think it God's message, and in humble pride
With heart of oak replace it,—thine the grain—
Give him the rotten timber for his pains!
—Coleridge.

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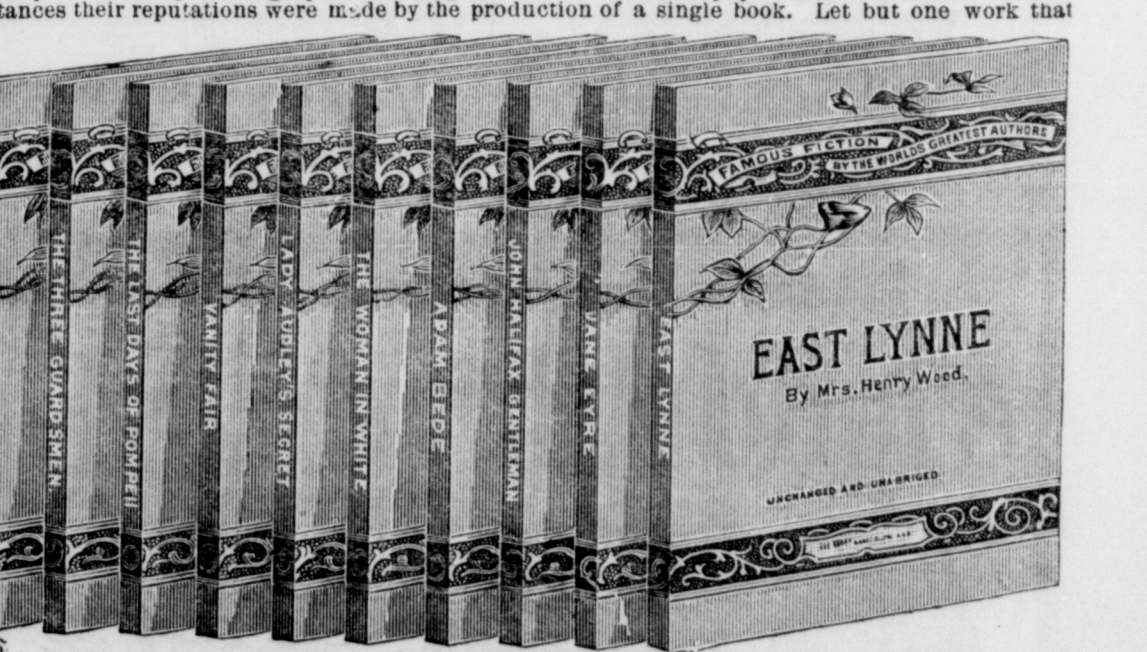
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