

Sunday Reading.

A LITTLE SERMON.
Containing a Few Short Stories and Lessons
Drawn Therefrom.

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Delay is dangerous. The time for finding the Lord and obtaining the mercy and pardon he waits to bestow is now. "Now is the day of salvation." Now is the accepted day. To-morrow it may be everlastingly too late.

A king of Scotland, after subduing a rebellion, offered a general amnesty to all who on or before the 31st of December of that year would ground the weapons of warfare and take the oath of allegiance. The offer was gladly accepted, but one chieftain, Malcolm by name, vowed that he would defer the act that would ensure his pardon until the very last moment. So he delayed the time for his departure until the latter part of the last week of the year. But while journeying, a great storm arose. Streams usually placid and fordable, suddenly became swollen and turbulent and much time was consumed and much danger incurred in crossing them. Snow and ice hindered the traveler and when finally he did reach the city that might have been to him "a city of refuge," the final day set had passed. He was at once apprehended, cast into prison and promptly executed as a stubborn rebel.

"Let the wicked forsake his way." Sin must be renounced and renounced forever. Do not delude yourself that by giving up the grosser sins and clinging to the lesser ones you are fully obedient to God's command. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," is too plain to admit of misinterpretation or misconstruction. Unless sin is entirely put away, sooner or later it will germinate, grow and blossom and bear the fruits of unrighteousness and breed everlasting destruction of the soul. Little and secret sins are more frequent sources of danger than the more glaring ones.

There sailed from the city of New Orleans a large and noble steamer, laden with cotton and having a great number of passengers on board. While they were taking in the cargo, a portion of it became slightly moistened by a shower of rain that fell. This circumstance, however, was not noticed, the cotton was stowed away in the hold and the hatches fastened down. During the first part of the voyage all went well, but far out toward the middle of the Atlantic ocean, all on board were one day alarmed by the fearful cry of "fire!" and in a few moments the noble ship was completely enveloped in flames. The damp and closely packed cotton had become heated. It smoldered away and got in a more dangerous state every day until at last it burst into a broad sheet of flame and nothing could be done to stop it. The passengers and crew were compelled to take to the boats, but a number were suffocated and consumed in the fire and many more were drowned in the sea. Now the heated cotton smoldering in the hull of that vessel is like sin in the heart of man.

"For ye shall go out with joy." Oh! the joy and happiness that fill the heart of every child of the Great King! What man may strive for it, and scheme and plan and plot to obtain it, but all in vain, until from the very depths of his heart he can sing:

Oh, the joy of full salvation!
How it thrills my inmost soul,
Spread the news to every nation,
Jesus' blood has made me whole.

A famous king, who had great riches and honors, found, as many others had done before, that these things do not make people happy. He heard of an old man famous for his wisdom and piety, who could tell what we must do in order to be happy. So the king went to see him. He found him living in a very humble way in a cottage on the border of a wilderness. "Sir," said the king, "I have come to you to learn the great secret how I may be happy. The old man received the king kindly and asked him to join him in a walk. He led him along a rough path till they came directly in front of a very high rock on the side of a mountain. On the top of that rock an eagle had built its nest. Pointing to that rock the old man said: "Tell me, royal sir, why has the eagle built its nest on yonder high rock?" "No doubt," said the king, "because it wants to be out of the reach of danger." "True," exclaimed the wise man. "Follow then, the example of the eagle. Build your nest on the Rock of Ages and make your home in heaven. Then you will be safe and beyond the reach of danger and enjoy peace and happiness all your days."

MARTIN'S VISITORS.
An Extract from Tolstoy's Story, "Life is Worth Living."

Martin again took up his work and began to stitch. After working some little time, he saw that it was growing dark and he could no longer see to sew. Looking through the window, he saw a lamplighter pass by. "Well," he thought to himself, "it is time for me to have a light." He arose, and after trimming his lamp and lighting it, he hung it up and again prepared to work.

Presently he put his tools away and brushed up the scraps, after which he placed the lamp on the table. He next took down the holy book from the shelf. He intended opening it at a place which he had marked with a piece of leather, but on placing the book on the table, it opened at an entirely different place, and as he did so he remembered yesterday's dream. At the same time he heard a noise in the room, as if some one was moving behind him. He turned suddenly around and fancied he saw a number of people standing in the corner, but he was unable to recognize them. Presently a voice whispered: "Martin, oh, Martin, did you not know me?"

"Whom?" muttered Martin.

"Me," repeated the voice. "It is I," said Stepanovitch (whom he had fed), smiling pleasantly as he advanced from the dark corner; and then like a clover he vanished.

"And this is I," said another voice, when the woman with her child (whom he had succored) stepped forth. The woman also smiled, while the infant laughed gleefully; and they, too, quickly disappeared.

"And here am I," said the third voice;

when the boy, with an apple in his hand, came forward. He also smiled, and instantly faded away.

Martin was now almost overcome with a feeling of joy, more sweet than he had ever before experienced. He began to read the following passage, at which the Bible had accidentally opened:

"For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

And Martin understood that his dream had been realized, and that the Saviour had in very truth visited him that day, and that he had received him in the proper spirit.

INTERVALE LAND.
How Dr. Talmage Got a Text From a Sail on the St. John.

I was sailing down the St. John River, Canada, which is the Rhine and the Hudson commingled in one scene of beauty and grandeur, and while I was on the deck of the steamer a gentleman pointed out to me the places of interest, and he said: "All this is intervale land, and it is the richest land in all the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia."

"What," said I, "do you mean by intervale land?" "Well," he said, "this land is submerged for a part of the year; spring freshets come down on all these plains are overflowed with the water, and the water leaves a rich deposit, and when the waters are gone the harvest springs up and there is the grandest harvest that was ever reaped."

And I instantly thought, "It is not the heights of the Church, and it is not the heights of this world, that is the scene of the greatest prosperity, but the soul over which the floods of sorrow have gone, the soul over which the freshets of tribulations have torn their way, that yields the greatest fruits of righteousness, and the largest harvest for time, and the richest harvest for eternity. Bless God if your soul is 'intervale land.'"

Washington's Mother.

In a recent biography of Washington some of the charming incidents of his life not hitherto related by biographers are brought out, which show his domestic character and beautiful nature. One of his strongest traits was the love he bore his mother. When the news reached her that the General had won the day at Yorktown, this patriotic lady exclaimed: "Thank God! the war is ended, and we shall be blessed with peace, happiness and independence, for at last our country is free."

Shortly after Cornwallis surrendered, Washington started out for Philadelphia, and on the way he stopped at Fredericksburg to see his mother. Seven years had elapsed since he had last seen her; he had left her a young, ardent patriot, his honors yet to be won on the field; he returned a hero, admired and almost worshipped by his countrymen. But it was not of the hero or the soldier she thought, but of her dear boy. He sent a courier ahead to notify her of his arrival and, with that fine old courtesy that prevailed in those days, to inquire when it would be "her pleasure to receive him."

When he did come, it was not with pomp and surrounded by brilliantly-decorated companions in arms, but alone, and on foot. The mother's eyes kindled with love when she greeted him and after a fond embrace she said: "You are growing, old George; care and toil have been making marks in your face since I saw it last." Her voice is said to have been singularly sweet, and he loved its cadence as she called him by name. She inquired as to his health, and she spoke much "of old times and old friends, but of his glory not a word."

Thought He Meant Them.

To a friend with whom he was speaking on the unexpected application of sermons, the late Pastor C. H. Spurgeon once related a remarkable experience. "Two weeks ago," he said, in my Sunday evening sermon I supposed the case of a young man who had got into fast company, and meaning to have his fling unfettered, was on the eve of starting to India, in order to escape the restraint of a godly, widowed mother's influence. I spoke as if I knew such a young man was present and pleaded with him to retrace his steps ere yet he had broken his praying mother's heart. At the close of the Monday evening prayer-meeting a young man was shown into my room. As soon as he was alone with me he wished to know who had informed me as to his movements. He could scarcely believe me when I told him I had received no information concerning him, and did not even know his name. The same week, after the Thursday evening service, another young man wished to see me alone; wanted to know who had been telling me about him? I asked, what about him? About his fast life, and his intention to leave the country, and escape his praying mother's influence. He had been very depressed ever since. He said I appealed to him on Sunday; he wished to see about it, but could not come on Monday evening as he had intended. "But," said he, "there is one mistake you made, Mr. Spurgeon; you told the people I was going to India, and it is China I am booked for."

A Dream of Judgment.

I am in the burnished Judgment Hall of the Last Day. A great white throne is lifted, and the Judge has not yet taken it. While we are waiting for his arrival I hear immortal spirits in conversation. "What are you waiting here for?" says a soul that went up from Madagascar to a soul that ascended from America. The latter says: "I came from America, where forty years I heard the Gospel preached and the Bible read, and from the prayer I learned in infancy at my mother's knee until my last hour I had Gospel advantage, but for some reason I did not make the christian choice, and I am here waiting for the judge to give me a new trial and another chance."

"Strange," says the other: "I had but one Gospel call in Madagascar, and I accepted it, and I do not need another chance."

"Why are you here?" says one who on earth had feeblest intellect to one who had great brain, and silvery tongue, and marvelous influence. The latter responds: "Oh, I knew more than my fellows. I mastered libraries, and had learned titles

from colleges, and my name was a synonym for eloquence and power. And yet I neglected my soul, and I am here waiting for a new trial." "Strange," says the one with the feeble earthly capacity: "I knew but little of worldly knowledge, but I knew Christ, and made him my partner, and I have no need of another chance."

THE CURSE OF SOCIETY.
The Scandal-Monger Who Flitches from Me My Good Name.

We often sit with amazement and hear people tear to pieces reputations that have been a quarter of a century forming. Men, and women too, seize with avidity evil reports, and like maggots run in and out the carcasses of fallen character. Society becomes a great slaughter-house in which honorable names are strangled and butchered. When a man begins to totter a little in his integrity or Christian principle, instead of gathering around to steady him, and keep him from complete prostration, we come out from our homes and our associations to push him flat down. Tale-bearers almost always deal in superlatives. If a man shows a little impatience, they say he was livid with rage. If he was seen taking a glass, they call him a besotted inebriate. They put the blow-pipe of their exaggeration into the slightest inconsistency, and blow till the cheeks are distended, and the bubble swells, and the story is rounded into a great orb in which swim all the rainbows of conceit, and you can see almost anything you want to see. They are heads, good for nothing but a chase. When you hear evil of any man, suspend judgement. Do not decide till you have heard the man's defense. Be lenient with the fallen. You see a brother fall and say, "I never could have done that!" Perhaps you could not, because your temptation does not happen to be in that direction; but you have done things in the course of your life that these fallen men would never have done, because their temptation was not in that direction. Perhaps the devil that inhabits you is avarice, a more respectable vice. You grind the faces of the poor. You have an infernal clutch for the throat of the unfortunate. There is no more mercy in your heart than there is grace in a lion's paw or a rattlesnake's tooth; and though your sin does not bring upon you so much of social opprobrium as the conduct of the man you condemn, I do not know but that your sin in the sight of God is as loathsome and damnable as his. He surrendered to one temptation; you surrendered to another. Do not say in boasting, "I never could have done such a thing as that!" You don't know what you would do if sufficiently tempted. You have an infinite soul-force. If grace directed it, a force for the right, if evil influences seize upon it, a terrific force for the wrong. There are passions within your soul that have never been unchained. Look out if once they slip their cables!

In our criticisms of others, let us remember that we have faults which our friends have to excuse. How much would be left of us if all those who see inconsistencies in us should clip away from our character and reputation? It is an invariable rule that those who make the roughest work with the names of others are those who have themselves the most imperfections. The larger the beam in your own eye, the more anxious are you about the mote in somebody else's eye. Instead of going about town slashing this man's falsity, and this woman's hypocrisy and that one's indiscretion, go home with the ten commandments as a monitor, and make out a list of your own derelictions.

Why the Hand Came Down.

The force of parental example was probably never better illustrated than in the following incident, related in The Christian Standard: A lady, in addressing a children's meeting, asked all the children who had pious mothers to hold up their hands. Little Bertha, the pastor's daughter, put up her hand partly, but quickly drew it down again. The lady said: "Bertha, why do you not put your hand up?" "Well," said Bertha, "I was just thinking."

"Well, Bertha, what were you thinking?" Bertha replied, "Well, mother prays, and she goes to prayer-meeting, and she goes to the sacrament, and I guess she must be a Christian."

"Well, Bertha, put up your hand." Hesitatingly she put it up partly, and quickly drew it down again. The lady again asked Bertha why she did not put up her hand, when she answered: "Well, I guess mother is a Christian, but she scolded awfully when she has to wash the dishes."

The lady who was present ventured to tell the mother, and I reckon a more astonished woman you never saw. Parents cannot be too careful in what they say and do in the presence of their children. We may well fear that things are not right at home when our children can only say, "I guess father and mother are Christians." They should be able to say, "The best Christians that I know anything about are my father and mother."

A Hint for Summer Studies.

Will you take from me a little word of advice—a hint which I will warrant, before a summer is over, to add very much to your stock of happiness in the present and to the store of sweet memories you would treasure up for the future? Begin at once the study of some branch or other of nature's workshop. Let it be what you will, according to your taste or opportunity—botany, geology, entomology, ornithology—anything that will bring your face to face with the thoughts of God written on tables of stone or illumined like golden missals on the petals of the flower, or shining on the insect's wing, or "made to be twittered or sung" by the bird. The hand-books or introduction to these cost but few pennies, and are easily mastered, but the wealth for heart and mind these humble keys open up will exceed all your power to estimate.

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear Lord who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

From Spurgeon's Last Sermon.

"Settle this in your heart: 'Whether I am up or down, the Lord Jesus is the same. My time is ended, although I had much more to say. I can only pray the Lord to give you to believe in him. If I should never again have the pleasure of speaking for my Lord upon the face of this earth, I should like to deliver, as my last confession of faith, this testimony—that nothing but faith can save this nineteenth century; nothing but faith can save England; nothing but faith can save the present unbelieving Church; nothing but firm

faith in the grand old doctrines of grace, and in the ever-living and unchanging God can bring back to the Church again a full tide of prosperity, and make her to be the deliverer of the nations for Christ; nothing but faith in the Lord Jesus can save you or me. The Lord give you, my brothers, to believe to the utmost degree, for His name's sake! Amen."

Messages of Help for the Week.

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." Psalm 89: 7, 15.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." Prov. 15: 1.

"He whom God raises again saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13: 37-39.

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Romans: 1: 16.

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans: 6: 23.

"Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." 2 Cor. 8: 9.

"Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." 2 Cor. 13: 11.

Taine On Christianity.

Although Taine was a deeply learned man, he was very meek in spirit and often read the Bible in his family circle. According to his wish Rev. Mr. Holland officiated at his funeral. In all his writings Taine professed the highest respect for Christianity. In our days many think it shows a great and free mind, when a person speaks contemptuously of God and his word. It will therefore not be superfluous to hear what Taine said of the worth of Christianity. His observations are based on history.

"To-day, after eighteen hundred years," he says in an article, "the Gospel has the same effect in both continents of the globe as it had in Palestine. In the place of self-love it puts love for our fellow-men. Neither in substance nor in practice has it changed; in its Greek, Catholic or Protestant shape it is still for more than four hundred millions of people, the great wings with which man lifts himself above this world. Through patience and hope man becomes content with his lot. Wherever these great wings have been injured during the last eighteen hundred years the morals of public and private life have disappeared. No philosophy, no art, no government, no law can effect what Christianity has done for the world. The old Gospel is to-day the best means of culture for all classes."

"He Lives in Our Alley."

"Where," said a teacher to his class of little ragged boys gathered from the crowded courts of the great city, "where is Jesus Christ?"

Quickly the answer came from a brightly-lit fellow, in a tone of the utmost confidence, as though there were no manner of doubt about it:

"Oh, he lives in our alley now!"

What a revelation of faith and hope and love embodied in the daily life and work, was wrapped up in that answer. The alley had been the abode of poverty, dirt and misery. The women quarrelled, the men drank, the children were neglected. But a lady came to reside in the neighborhood who offered her services as a district visitor to the pastor of the parish.

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