

# Sunday Reading.

## A LAYMAN'S SERMON.

Preached in the Editorial Columns of the New York Tribune.

And as thy days, so shall thy strength be.—Deuteronomy, xxxiii., 25.

Human nature is made of very strange material. We are constantly surprised at our ability to bear what seems to be unendurable. Under the pressure of a great incentive we can accomplish miracles, and when necessity compels, we can endure anything.

No man is thoroughly acquainted with himself. There are depths and heights in his soul which he has never explored. In one environment he is a commonplace creature; in another he develops into a hero. The possibility of greatness is hidden somewhere in every man's nature. He is an unconscious giant, but will never do a giant's work until the emergency forces him to. Give him an ordinary road to travel, and he shambles along like a peacock; give him a hill to climb, then thunder in his ear, "You must!" and he becomes transformed from a clod to a god.

It is the sternness of fate which makes man great. His inclination is to be small, to be comfortable rather than noble, to live easily rather than grandly. It is only when a compelling force on the outside drives him, or when he finds himself in a tangle of circumstances from which extrication seems impossible, that he rises to his full height and accomplishes the task which he has looked upon with trembling timidity. In a word, he is almost omnipotent, but does not know it, and never can know it until God proves it to him by giving him the impossible to do.

During the war the farmer's boy was thrilled by a spark of electric patriotism, but great deeds were beyond his thought. He had never seen the heroic element in his nature. He enlisted as a duty, and for months was only an ordinary soldier in the ranks. By-and-by, however, he faced a grave danger. There was death in the air. The bullets were flying fast and he gave up all hope of seeing home again. But with danger came opportunity. That opportunity acted on him like magic. A farmer's boy no longer, he suddenly became a hero, as though some fairy had swung her wand over his head. He was larger in soul than he ever dreamed of becoming, went into the thick of the fight and unflinchingly did deeds of prowess. When the shadows of evening fell and the bloody work was over he had a captain's straps on his shoulders, and was by no means the same man who left the plough in the furrow to follow the tap of the drum. Opportunity in another name for metempsychosis, for there are times when we shed the commonplace and become Knights of the Round Table.

But we can endure as well as do when we must. No one knows how much he can bear until he is tried. Providence has made life hard because every man needs the test of fire. Why this is so it might be difficult to say, but that it is so no one can doubt. We are drowsy until some earthquake shock shakes us, and then we become men. Ill fortune is spiritually worth more than what we call good fortune. The rich man's son is apt to slide down hill, while the poor man's boy climbs to the top. If you have all you want your life is without value. If you have nothing that you want the desire to get the best there is a transfiguring influence, though it involves sacrifice and tragedy.

You are content, and your home is a happy one. Wife and child sit at your winter fireside and you contemplate your surroundings with grateful satisfaction. The sky is blue for you and the sun always sets in beauty. But you recognize the fact that there are storms to be met, and though you have had immunity thus far you know that it cannot last forever. There are burdens to be borne, and you must fit your shoulders to some of them.

When you think of what may possibly happen the tears come to your eyes. Your income may take to itself wings and speed away, leaving you to sit in the ashes of bankruptcy. That seems hard enough, yet you have a feeling that you can bear it if it is inevitable. But when a white hearse rumbles by your door you know that some father's heart is breaking, and it comes to you that a like disaster may visit you. Life is so uncertain and Death is apparently so capricious. If he should look into the eyes of your little one he might want him. Death plucks beautiful flowers for the garden of God, and if he should pluck your flower, the only one you have, mayhap, what would you do, what could you do? You shudder and grow pale. You fall upon prayer that no white hearse may ever stop at your door. Your life would go out like an extinguished candle. There would be nothing left. That misfortune you cannot bear. Anything else, but not that, you say—so have said many, and then they have wept because the prayer was not answered.

Then death steals into your house unawares and your dower is gone. Are your shoulders broad enough for that heavy weight? You will sink under it and lie down by the side of the child in the same grave. No, not that, because "as thy days, so shall thy strength be." When the time comes you find larger endurance of soul than you have credited yourself with, and though the future days may be gray days, the sun never shines in quite the old way, you can bear the sorrow; you do bear it with a fortitude borrowed from the angels.

Much depends on your faith. No soul that looks at heaven can be rushed by anything that happens on the earth. Once get a glimpse of the future, once see the boy in the garments of the immortals, and through your heart breaks you would not call him back. It is faith that lightens our load while doubt doubles its weight. One glance at God, and tate can do you no further harm.

## "Mothers' Meeting."

The Rev. F. B. Meyer, of London, has started a new kind of mother's meeting. Instead of the dismal, bare room to which the mothers are generally invited, he assembles them once a week in a hall converted into a comfortable sitting room, with crimson drugged floor, comfortable

chairs and small tables, and groups of flowers. The attendance averages from 250 to 300, and the women are divided into groups, each of which is in charge of a young lady who acts as hostess and sees that they are comfortable and happy. Needlework goes on, and Mr. Meyer walks about among the groups, giving an "informal talk" on hygiene and other practical and homely topics. Singing follows, and each woman pays a half-penny for tea and biscuits. A half hour "talk" on Bible subjects winds up a pleasant two hours. Babies are provided for in an adjoining room and looked after by voluntary caretakers. These happy Monday afternoons are much looked forward to by the hard-worked mothers in a poor and crowded district.

## TALMAGE ON WEDDINGS.

The Latest Thoughts of the Doctor on this Interesting Subject.

The past month has been full of the tintinnulation of wedding bells. Orange blossoms in a thousand homes and churches, north, south, east and west. Our hotels, our railroads, our places of amusement are thronged with the newly married, and our congratulations go after them. Long life to all those who during the month have united their destinies, and may their cup of earthly experience have no more bitter or sour drops than will just answer to keep it from becoming insipid. God-honored institution marriage! How it marches on from age to age, and the better society becomes the more the institution is honored. Not a mere civil contract, as infidel and atheistic men would have us believe, for it had a divine starting in Paradise. What a morning that was of the world's first wedding! Sky without a cloud. Atmosphere without a chill. Foliage without a crumpled leaf. Meadows without a thorn. It shall take place in church, the great temple of a world, sky domed, mountain pillared, sapphire roofed. The sparkling waters of the Gihon and the Hiddekel will make the front of the temple. Larks, robins and goldfinches will chant the wedding march. Violet, lily and rose burning incense in the morning sun. Luxuriant vines sweeping their long opulence through the forest aisle. Upholstery of the spring morning. Wild beasts standing outside the circle looking on like family servants from the back door gazing upon the nuptials—the eagle, king of birds; the locust, king of insects; the lion, king of beasts, waiting. Carpets of grass like emerald, for the human pair to walk on. Hum of excitement as there always is before a ceremony. Grass blades and leaves whispering and the birds a-chatter each one to his mate. Hush! all the winds. Hush! all the birds. Hush! the waters. For the king of the human race advances with his bride—a perfect man leading to the altar a perfect woman. God, her father, gives away the bride, and angels are the witnesses, and tears of morning dew stand in the blue eyes of the violets, and Adam takes the smooth hand that had never been worn with work or stung with pain into his own stout grasp as he says: "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh."

Tumults of joy break forth and all the trees of the wood clap their hands, and all the galleries of the forest sound with carol, chirp and chant, and the circle of Edenic happiness is complete. For while every quail hath answering quail, and every fish answering fish, and every fowl answering fowl, and every beast of the forest appropriate companion, at last, man the immortal has for mate woman the immortal. Married in June of the year one, Adam, first man to Eve, first woman, high heaven officiating.

Away, then with the coarse notion that marriage is a mere civil contract. It is a Paradiseal six thousand year old divine institution, and all the laws since Blackstone or before Blackstone cannot properly marry two hearts unless God Almighty has first married them. All these make sensible people looks upon marriage as an important step. Instead of being lassoed by a curl, or trading hearts in a philopena, they realize that between cradle and grave the most tremendous place is the marriage altar, and that while before that altar and the twin standards unseen either the white angels of blessing or the horned and hooped and fire-nostrilled gorgon of despair. Applaud, therefore, all honest marriages, and frown upon everything that would put them to ridicule. Have nothing to do with those slushy pamphlets and books which tell how impossible men meet impossible women and get into impossible difficulties, and with impossible results, and villainy went unwhipped and virtue fell dead. The fact is that many of the young married people of this day get their heads so filled with false and sentimental notions in regard to the plain, serious, old-fashioned institution of marriage of life. There she goes lounging around the house with a twenty-five cent novel under her arm, her slippers run down at heel, the furniture undusted and the socks undarned, and everything from cellar to garret a domestic chaos. Go home and gather up all the Frenchy stuff and pitch it into the kitchen grate.

The best way for us to honor the marriage institution which has been so often celebrated lately, is for us who are now in that relation to faithfully perform all our duties, not taking easy offense from each other, remembering that hasty words and hasty actions sometimes are not a matter of the heart, but merely a matter of the nerves. Husbands at the store worn out with anxiety, wives at home worn out with household cares, sometimes have their equipoise of spirits unbalanced. There are but few American men or women who have any nerves worth speaking of. These delicate telegraphic wires of the human body get damaged in the storm and lightning of temper run over them very irregularly. Quit all the slights and be economical with censure, for there will before long be a hearse standing at your door that will take away out of your presence the best friend you have on earth, and the rich boon God in his omnipotence and infinity has capacity to bestow, a good wife.

## The Minister's Daughter.

In the minister's morning sermon, He had told of the primal fall, And how thenceforth the wrath of God Rested on each and all.

And how, of his will and pleasure, All souls, save a chosen few, Were doomed to the quenchless burning, And held in the way thereto.

Yet never by faith's unreason A sinner's soul was tried, And never the harsh old lesson A tenderer heart belied.

And, after the painful service On that pleasant summer day, He walked with his little daughter Through the apple-bloom of May.

Sweet in the fresh, green meadows Sparrow and blackbird sung, Above them their tinted petals! The blossoming orchards hung.

Around on the wonderful glory The minister looked and smiled, "How good is the Lord who gives us These gifts from His hand, my child."

"Behold in the bloom of apples And the violets in the sward, A hint of the old, lost beauty Of the garden of the Lord!"

Then up spake the little maiden, Treading on snow and pink: "O, father! these pretty blossoms Are very wicked, I think."

"Had there been no Garden of Eden There never had been a fall; And if never a tree had blossomed God would have loved us all."

"Hush, child!" the father answered, "By His decree man fell; His ways are in clouds and darkness, But he doeth all things well."

"And whether by His ordaining To us cometh good or ill, Joy or pain, or light or shadow, We must fear and love him still."

"Oh, I fear him!" said the daughter, "And I try to love him, too; But I wish he was good and gentle, Kind and loving as you."

The minister groaned in spirit, As the tremulous looks of pain And wide, wet eyes uplifted Questioned his own in vain.

Bowing his head he pondered The words of the little one; Had he erred in his life-long teaching? Had he wronged to his Master done?

To what grim and dreadful idol Had he lent the holiest name? Did his own heart, loving and human, The God of his worship shame?

And lo! from the bloom and greenness, From the tender skies above, And the face of his little daughter He read a lesson of love.

No more as the cloudy terror Of Satan's mount of law, But as Christ in the Syrian lilies The vision of God he saw.

And as when, in the clefts of Horeb, Of old was His presence known, The dread ineffable glory Was infinite goodness alone.

Thereafter his hearers noted In his prayers a tenderer strain, And never the gospel of hatred Burned on his lips again.

And the scoffing tongue was prayerful, And the blinded eyes found sight, And hearts, as flint aforetime, Grew soft in his warmth and light.

## The Hope Beyond.

So still and cold— And yet, maybe, in some far distant place Supernatural lights her fair young face, And joys more thrilling than on earth she knew Start the warm pulses of her life anew.

So cold and pale— And yet, maybe, her calm life's sombre night Has lost its twilight in the mellow light That glids a landscape more entrancing far Than all the pictures of our dreamings are.

So pale and still— And yet, maybe, her cheek divinely glows With tints far richer than the opening rose, While round her eyes of liquid azure blue Smiles play and ripple as they used to do.

So pale and cold— And yet, maybe, from out death's dreamless rest She has awakened to be ever blessed; To share a life of love those only know Whose robes are whiter than the drifted snow.

Pale, still and cold— And yet, maybe, beyond the murky sea, Across which death one day will carry me, Her joyous soul will be the first to come And bid me welcome to my Father's home.

Life, joy, and love— And yet, maybe, we may not understand Life's rich abundance in that farther land Till some sweet day we lay our burdens down And change the cypress for the olive crown.

## What the Age Demands.

We want a man to walk once more among The wrangling Pharisees to drive the beasts And money mongers from the temple courts; To bring the gospel back again and prove How all unlike some churches are to Christ! We want the Christ again to tell some saints Their sins; that they were sent to bless the poor And they have sold themselves unto the rich; That they were sent the messengers of love, And they have driven love out of their creeds; That they have gathered and threw out pieces of bone, Nor trouble when their duty led to death; Oh for the Christ again! He! He would dare To tell some churches how they lie and cant, And talk of serving God and serve themselves, And take of serving souls to save their cause, And pare and narrow God's divinest truth.

## Messages of Help for the Week.

"Now be not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary." 2 Chronicles, 30: 8

"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Colossians 3: 2

"The just shall live by faith." Rom. 1: 17

"Peter said unto him . . . thy heart is not right in the sight of God." Acts 8: 20, 21

"If, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." Gal. 3: 17

"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Gal. 3: 24

"These things have I spoken unto you that ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but of good cheer: I have overcome the world." John 16: 33

## A Bicycle for a Text.

In Bailundu, in West Central Africa, the king has manifested an antipathy to mission work, for reasons well understood. Recently, however Mr. Read, one of the missionaries at the station, has received a bicy-

cle from home. He has become an expert in using it, and has made several long journeys on it. Some one told the king about it and his curiosity was excited. It could not be gratified without an interview with the missionary. Finally aversion yielded to curiosity and Mr. Read has had a long talk with him, using the opportunity to disabuse his mind of his long cherished prejudices. Mr. Read is succeeding in his work. Referring to a case of interest as showing the growing confidence of the natives and the chiefs in the missionaries, he says: A man seriously injured by falling from a tree was brought to him for treatment. He was one of the king's servants.

Mr. Read adds: "It is evident from this and other cases that, although the natives cling to their own doctors and their fetiches, yet our manner of treatment and our medicines are looked upon with growing favor by them. Would that they would look more favorably upon the remedy we offer them for their souls' diseases!"

## A SUCCESSFUL YOUNG MAN.

And How it Was That He Was a Successful Young Man.

A young man who had been born and brought up in New England country town began to prepare for college, and decided that after his college course he would go to the Pacific States, and begin life in the spirit of a pioneer.

During his two years of preparation for college he was the most active member of his own church—which was declining in numbers, owing to the removal of many families to the city—and of the Village Improvement Society, which had become a social feature of the town. Through his efforts the church was repaired and its lawn and churchyard beautified. He marked historic places on the old roads, and set up new guide-posts. He secured a drinking fountain for the public square, gave entertainments in the poor-house, and set out an orchard on the old home farm.

An old farmer with crumbling buildings and sinking walls, met the young man one day under the cool village elms, and said to him:

"They tell me you are going to college?" "I hope to go."

"And then out West?" "Yes, that is my purpose."

"Then if you are going away to leave us all, what makes you take so much interest in these affairs of the old town? What you are doing will never do you any good; and we'll all be gone if you should ever come back again."

"I think we ought to try to be of some service in the community in which we live," said the young man. "All places are endeared to us where we have tried to do good. They make pleasant memories. I am sure, if I have done anything for the benefit of the old town, I shall not regret it."

This young man graduated well and went to the Pacific slope. He succeeded in life. With his good sense and eager, unselfish spirit it could hardly be otherwise. He became mayor of a young city, was sent to congress, and did much for the development of his own state. It was success organizing in his soul that prompted him to secure the fountain for the square in the old, elm-shaded New England town. Seeing what ought to be done, and then doing it, is the way that success begins.

More than this, it is those who think of things outside of their own little lives who are most likely to succeed. Such people make the world better, and impress pleasant memories upon the mind that the coming years cannot efface.



## A Bright Lad,

Ten years of age, but who declines to give his name to the public, makes this authorized, confidential statement to us:

"When I was one year old, my mamma died of consumption. The doctor said that I, too, would soon die, and all our neighbors thought that even if I did not die, I would never be able to walk, because I was so weak and puny. A gathering formed and broke under my arm. I hurt my fingers and it gathered and threw out pieces of bone. If I hurt myself so as to break the skin, it was sure to become a running sore. I had to take lots of medicine, but nothing has done me so much good as Ayer's Sarsaparilla. It has made me well and strong."—T. D. Mc. Norratur, Kane.

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