

Sunday Reading.

THEIR EASTER OFFERING.

Doing Justly, Loving Mercy and Walking Humbly With God.

When Irene Stafford met her husband at the door that stormy evening the very first glance at his face told her that something was amiss. She saw him glance quickly, as with new appreciation of its comforts, about their cosy sitting room, sweet with the scent of flowers, warm and bright with fire and lamplight, and then back to her face; but there meeting the question in her eyes he turned his own hastily away, with some remark on the wildness of the gale.

He strove, she saw, to be his natural bright self while they were at the table, but Irene's loving eyes penetrated beneath the assumed cheerfulness, and though she was not to be deceived, she respected his silence, leaving him to choose his own time and way of telling her what was troubling him. And so they chatted on while they were in the dining-room; but when they returned to the sitting-room, he seated in his easy chair before the fire, doubly grateful for the storm, she with her work at the lamp-lit table near him, he gave up all pretence of talking, and with his head laid wearily back upon the pillow fixed his eyes with a troubled gaze upon the dancing flames. Now and then, as on the coming home, he would first glance about the room, and then she would feel his eyes upon her, and finally, when she found it impossible to appear longer unconscious, she dropped her work, and pushing a low stool to his side sat down upon it, saying:

"Leigh, what is it?"

For a moment he did not answer other than by taking between his own the hand which she laid upon his knee; but presently he began, quite abruptly:

"Irene, I want to tell you a story. A man I know had under him in business a boy, a bright, wholesome fellow, one of whom his mother might well have been proud. He was full of fun, up to all sorts of boyish pranks, and constantly whistling about his work. But presently this man began to notice that a cloud had come over the sunny face; the lad had grown quiet and worried looking, had ceased to whistle. And having been a boy himself not so very long ago, and having much to make his own life bright and happy, this man could not but pity and long to help him, but at first could find no way. But one day, coming unexpectedly into the room where they worked together, he found the lad with his arms folded on his desk, his face buried in them.

Going up behind him he laid his hand upon the bowed shoulder and asked what was troubling him. Instantly the boy started to his feet; and, brushing his hand across his eyes, murmured something about a headache, which was doubtless true enough, for he was in a burning fever; but his voice faltered as he spoke, and the next moment he had flung himself into his former position, and with his face in his hands was sobbing his young heart out. Then, little by little, the whole miserable story came out; told, but for that struggle for breath, in a straightforward, manly way, with no excuse offered or palliating circumstance brought forth—the story of temptation met and yielded to. No heinous offence, only little extravagances of dress or amusement, but wrong because they were beyond his means; and when his means would not cover them, little by little, a few cents taken, a few dollars of money which was entrusted to his care—always promising himself that he would pay it back very soon. In fact, from time to time he returned some of it; he always kept a strict account of what he took, and it was the final casting up of that account, and the discovery of the appalling aggregate, which brought him to a realizing sense of what he had been doing. The situation was simply this: he had stolen—he set his teeth and grew ghastly as he reiterated the words—he had stolen two hundred dollars of his employer's money, and must now take the consequences, the very lightest of which would be discharge without a character, while there was a strong possibility of his being arrested and lodged in jail. Nothing, he declared, was too bad for him; but oh! his mother, his widowed mother, living miles away; living but for him, looking forward to the home which he had promised to make for her. Of course, he ought to have thought of all that before; but it would be her death-blow, he knew it would. And the agony in his face was beyond words to describe.

"Oh, Leigh," interrupted his wife, her eyes full of tears, "of course he had done wrong, terribly wrong; but he was so young, and was so repentant! surely the man forgave him—gave him another chance to pay back the money and make a new name for himself?"

"Unfortunately, Irene, 'the man' was not the employer, but simply an employee in a higher position, and with a sure knowledge that the head of the firm would deal with the lad to the full limit of the law, his pet theory being to 'make an example' of such cases. As for 'the man,' there was two courses open to him: either to refund the money himself or to stand by and see things take their natural course—see that boy's life ruined past all hope. But, pity him! aye, that he did, from the depths of his heart; and then thanked God for his great mercy to him, also a sinner, knowing well that, but for that grace and mercy, he might also have stood where that poor lad was standing; for I tell you, Irene—dropping the third person, perhaps unconsciously—I tell you that I was not half so good a fellow at his age as that boy is, though I never sinned just as he has. My position, as to home and surroundings, was so nearly like his till I met you and was welcomed at your house—from which time all my plans and ambitions were changed—that I can understand and thoroughly appreciate the temptation before which he fell; and God alone knows if, left to my temptations as he has been left to his, I should have proved stronger than he. That I was not so left was through no merit of mine, but only of his marvellous goodness. How, then, could I dare judge? how do I ought but pity?"

For a moment the silence which fell was

unbroken save by the crackling of the logs and the howling of the storm without. Irene Stafford was thanking God that he had honored her with the love of such a man.

Presently, however, she turned and looked at him with a soft radiance in her eyes which he did not understand.

"And what did you say to help him?"

"For of course you promised to help him." "I took him home, Irene; and oh! such a place to call by that name! I have not been able to drive the memory of it from my mind. What wonder that he sought amusement elsewhere! I sat with him for a while, and I did promise to try and help him; but till I had seen you I could do no more."

He did not tell her, however, how he had talked to the boy; how, with a tenderness which left no doubt of his deep sympathy, but with an uncompromising honesty which—for the lad's own sake—would not disguise or detract from the great wrong which he had done, he led him to see against whom he had most deeply sinned; and finally, kneeling beside him, with his hand in his, had prayed forgiveness for him, and pointed him to the most forgiving and tender of friends—that loving Father whose heart is pained to all its wondrous depths to see his children sin and suffer for sin, and who only 'waits to be gracious' till they turn to him. Nor how, as they rose from their knees, he had fairly taken the boy in his arms, given him that promise, and so left him, humbled and with true repentance in his heart, which was manifested by his readiness to accept to the full the consequences of his deed, it must needs be.

"Till you had seen me! Leigh, you did not think that I would gainsay what you saw fit to promise?" his wife was saying almost reproachfully.

"No; but I had no right to give a promise which would involve deprivation for you without your consent; for, Irene, it will be years before he can repay such a debt—his mother must not miss the part of his income which he scrupulously sent to her; she is to be spared the knowledge of his trouble; and so, for the present, it will amount, practically, to giving the money. It was not for me to decide; in fact it was a question if I ought to mention it to you at all."

"As if you could have kept it from me!" she said, with a contented little laugh. But she knew well what he meant; knew that the only money which they could use for such a purpose from their slender means had been laid by, almost penny by penny, for a certain object; understood fully the dashing to the ground of what hopes and plans for them both it signified. But she never hesitated.

"Would you deprive me," she said earnestly, of this privilege? What sort of a helpmate should I be if at such a time as this I could bid you harden your heart—bid you, for a little self-gratification, without that which may do so much, so very much, for this young brother—for whom Christ died! Leigh, Easter is so near, and He died, you know, 'that they which live should not henceforth live unto Him which died for them, and rose again'; and how better can we do that than by making this our Easter offering? Surely you did not doubt what my decision would be?"

"Nay," he said gladly, "for the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her; still it was for you to decide."

"And I have decided," she said.—"American Messenger."

Messages of Help for the Week.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words. Then * * * I will * * * feed thee with the heritage of Jacob * * * the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isaiah, 58: 13, 14.

"Look upon mine affliction and pain; and forgive all my sins." Psalm, 25, 18.

"He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings, and he hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." Psalm, 40: 2, 3.

"One of the two which heard John speak * * * was Andrew. * * * He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found * * * Christ. And he brought him to Jesus." John, 1: 40-42.

"Jesus said * * * Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4: 13, 14.

"There is no respect of persons with God." Rom. 1: 11.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15: 4.

A Lesson From a Child.

In one of his sermons the late Pastor Spurgeon told the following anecdote: "A little girl was once asked in a Sunday School about her father, who never went to any place of worship: 'Is your father a Christian?' 'Yes,' she said, 'father's a Christian, but he has not worked at it much lately.' Well, there is a good deal of that about many. They have not worked much at it lately. They are very much like certain tradesmen who hang up a board announcing that they are of a certain trade; but at the same time there is a little notice hung up on the door to say that they have gone out of town for a fortnight."

Moody and Sankey Still Popular.

Although twenty years have elapsed since the great Moody and Sankey meetings in Boston there has been no apparent diminution in the success of these religious leaders in making converts, as the recent remarkable demonstrations in Washington have shown. But in this lapse of time Moody has grown stout and gray and Sankey's shrill voice has not improved in quality. It is not the purity of their voices in oratory or singing that effects these results, but rather their simple, manly and straightforward way.

Incident at a Vestry Election.

It was Charles II who said that Episcopacy was the only religion fit for a gentleman, and there are no doubt many in this day and generation who share that monarch's opinion, with the unexpressed proviso that it can only continue so if the objectionable "lower classes" are kept out.

This is brought to our mind by hearing of an incident which occurred at the last Easter vestry election of an ultra-fashionable "high" church not a hundred miles from New York city, where, as it happened, a certain carpenter was nominated for vestryman. Thereupon much indignation was expressed by certain gentlemen present at the idea that the vestry of St. Dives' Church, which had always hitherto been composed exclusively of gentlemen, should have upon it a carpenter, a mere tradesman. It was too good an opportunity to lose, and we are glad to learn that there was somebody present who reminded his hearers of a certain carpenter of two thousand years ago.—The Advent (Episcopalian.)

Remarkable Revival in Russia.

One of the most remarkable sects in Russia, the Dukhoborts, or 'Wrestlers with the Spirit,' are just now in the midst of an extraordinary religious revival, which bids fair to embrace the whole community, and to entirely change their religious system. The 'Wrestlers' are chiefly found in the Caucasus, and in certain parts of the South of Russia, where they live in isolated communities. The articles of their belief chiefly strike a stranger as the preference they show for women elders and presbyters; their antagonism to printed books, including printed bibles; a species of communism which obliges them in good years to divide their surplus among those who are in straits; and the religious significance they attach to certain articles of wearing apparel. The present revival has taken the form of a purely evangelical movement, and is probably the result of the labors of the banished Stundists.

In Memoriam—M. E. D.

DIED OCT. 27th, 1893.

She is asleep—our cherished one,

She will wake to life divine;

In her narrow bed we laid her,

By that silent peaceful river,

Beneath the whispering pine.

She is gone—life's thread is broken,

Her immortal soul has fled;

Gone to meet our Heavenly Father,

To receive her crown of glory,

By her angel guardian led.

She was called away so quickly,

Her only loving good-bye,

To her dear ones gathered 'round her,

At that last sad precious hour,

Was the fond look of answering eyes.

Oh, Death!—to take a life so needed,

It cruel seems—unfair,

To rob those helpless little ones,

Of a mother's holy love,

And her tender fostering care.

'Twas the will of our Heavenly Father,

It must be just and meet;

Will not her angel spirit

Still guard their gentle slumbers

And guide their wandering feet?

If every prayer from the heart is granted,

How much must a mother's be granted?

He who "loves the little children,"

Will not resist her pleading,

For her darlings here on earth.

Until they cross life's stormy sea,

She will watch upon the shore;

She will be first to meet them,

And with loving arms will greet them,

To be parted nevermore.

F. JOSEPHINE S.

F'ton, Nov. 19, 1893.



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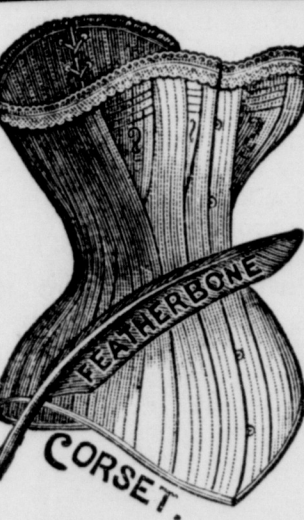
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"ALL that lot, piece or parcel of land situate on the Eastern side of Spring Street in the City of Portland, in the County of Saint John, and known and distinguished on the plan of building lots near William Wright's Cottage Northward of the City Road, being Numbered Ten (10) bounded as follows: Commencing on the Easterly side of Spring Street, at a point distant forty feet from the Northwestern corner of lot number eight (8) thence from last mentioned point running Northerly on Spring Street forty feet, thence at right angles Easterly one hundred and forty-one feet, thence at right angles Southerly forty feet, and thence at right angles Westerly one hundred and forty-one feet to the place of beginning."

For terms of sale and other particulars apply to the Plaintiffs' Solicitors.

Dated this 20th day of February, A. D., 1894.

CARLETON & FERGUSON,

Plaintiffs' Solicitors.

E. H. McALPINE,

Referee in Equity.

W. A. LOCKHART, Auctioneer.