

Sunday Reading.

IN THE TIME OF NOAH.

Lessons to be Learned from the Story of the Great Flood.

God never abandoned his purpose in the creation of man. Adam and Eve had failed him, Abel's life had been cut short, Cain had become hardened and a reprobate; but even in the seed of Seth, who was born in Adam's likeness and not in God's, our heavenly Father had a people. "A remnant according to the election of grace." There was an Enoch who "walked with God," to whom God could, even in those early times, confide his first communication regarding the future coming of our Lord. When the light of Enoch's life shone no more on earth, God raised up another witness, Noah, who like Enoch "walked with God," or in a current exactly contrary to the popular opinion of his day. It was an age of materialism; "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," was the order of Noah's day; these earthly things, "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," absorbed men; they lived for nothing else, self-will reigned supreme; they ignored all accountability to God, and "took them wives of all which they chose," even those amongst them who were called the sons of God, "who called upon the name of the Lord," or called themselves by the name of the Lord! God had his witnesses, but men in Noah's time shut their eyes to the light as they do now, and God was reduced to the necessity of bringing matters to a crisis. It was an awful moment for that generation when it was determined in the councils of the Most High; "My Spirit shall not always strive with man for that he also is flesh, yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." Up to that time, God's spirit had striven; Enoch and Noah were the fruits of his striving; now God would be no longer mocked; man would not have God, and God would cease to force himself upon man. Yet God was in no hurry to destroy; and one hundred and twenty years he waited in the awful dignity of his patient love, while the one only man in that generation who understood him gave time, and strength, and money to the preparation of the ark; indisputable witness to the faith of Noah, in his constant declaration that God's judgments were coming upon the earth. It was only to a man whose real acquaintance with God was such that he could have had the courage to hold on his separate walk with God; willing to be misunderstood, despised, scorned—that God could confide his purposes or make known his covenant. To be great with man is at the price of living at a distance from God, to be in the secrets of the Lord is at the price of being "despised and rejected of men" as our Lord himself was. It must have been an awful revelation to Noah when God opened his heart to him, and let him see with his eyes the heart of man only evil continually and the earth corrupt before God,—for "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth"—and to carry in his own heart as a reality that which his generation refused to believe, that they, and the very earth they lived for, were daily approaching nearer to destruction! And then that he should so enter into the thoughts of his God that he could see there was no other way for the glory of God or for the redemption of the human race, but death.

Quietly and solemnly the work of preparation went on in the councils of heaven and in the obedience of the man of faith on earth. At last all was ready, and while some were gathered at a banquet and some at a marriage feast, while they were saying: "Peace and safety," sudden destruction came upon them unawares, and they did not escape. So shall it be in the coming day of the Son of Man. Noah had prepared an ark to the saving of his house, and he, his wife, his three sons and their wives, rose nearer heaven with every mighty overflow of the fountains of the great deep, which swept the despairing, shrieking multitude to their awful, hopeless doom. And Noah, who knew the long suffering of God which had waited a hundred and twenty years, could not ask him to reverse his sentence, he said there was no other way. That generation would not be saved consistently with God's holiness, they must abide by their decision and perish! Oh the madness of men who persist in ignoring God! "No fool hath said in his heart: There is no God." "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." The tear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Noah's was indeed a life of separation, carried in the ark over the rivers of a buried earth to be the father of a generation of men upon a cleansed earth, he lived between the dead and the living, having no place to plant his foot upon the judged earth, and as yet no ground to stand upon in the new order of things. But in the will of his God, he found in the ark, with its only opening upward on the God side, a possibility of existence. Many who are looking for the coming of the Lord find themselves in a somewhat similar position, severed from the past crucified with Christ, the world knows them not; citizens of heaven their only window is above, from whence they look for a Saviour, yet in the will of God they are at rest. Altogether Noah was nearly a year in the ark without seeing either land or water; then he removed the covering of the ark, and saw that the earth was dry; but he waited for God's direction before he ventured forth with his strange ship's company, and the first thing he did on the cleansed earth was to take possession of it for God; he raised a memorial for God by building an altar and offering sacrifice. And this he did, not meanly, but of every clean beast and fowl Noah gave one in sacrifice. Tithes the Lord, gave the order under the law, but Noah gave a seventh, not a tenth to the Lord. And the Lord smelled a sweet savor, and

the Lord said in his heart: "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake." And he renewed to Noah the blessing which he had pronounced upon Adam in his state of innocence, and added the gift of animal food, saying: "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things." But from the beginning blood, which is the life of all flesh, was forbidden, and the righteous law of God, was instituted: "Surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man." The regicide, the homicide, the suicide, is guilty of sin against the image of God; it is sacrilege in the highest sense.

God having prepared the way, drew near to Noah; his original thought to unite man to himself still uppermost he spoke unto Noah, and now to his sons with him, saying: "And I, behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you." And God did not even stop at the sons of Noah but drew near to him in covenant even the very animal world in the fullness of his grace and love. "I will establish my covenant with you," he said, "neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood." This is God's covenant with everything that breathes: whatever there may be, a repetition of the flood can never be, for God hath said it and bound himself by promise. In his heart he had already said, and some way communicated to man, "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." Terrible troubles shall come, but no second flood.

And God said: "This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you for perpetual generations: I do set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." We read in (Rev. 4: 3) that there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald, and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne were the four living creatures. As the four faces of the Cherubim make one living creature so the variegated colors of the rainbow make one circle of glory round about the throne.

Evidence of the Deluge.

There is testimony outside of the Bible of such a catastrophe as the Deluge having taken place. Traditions of a great flood have been found among the Persians, Hindus, Chinese and other Asiatic nations. They appear, too, in early Greek literature in the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha. Geo. Smith found it also, in a form closely resembling the Bible narrative, inscribed on the tablets in the Library of Ashurbanabal, king of Assyria. That account represents Isdubar, his family and servants and flocks and herds being saved from a flood in a ship, which he had been instructed to build of wood and line with pitch. From its window, after the ship was aground, Isdubar sends out a raven, a dove and a swallow, and finally emerges himself, and finds that all the human race have been drowned. But there is this radical difference between the two accounts, that while the Assyrian represents the catastrophe as the result of a quarrel among the gods, the Bible, true to its ethical purpose, describes it as God's punishment of a wicked world. There are no means of ascertaining the approximate date of the Deluge. The standard chronology sets it 1656 years after the Creation, but the whole system is manifestly unreliable. The scene, according to general belief, was in the Euphrates basin, and Hugh Miller, the great geologist, had a theory that it was caused by a subsidence of the land, which permitted the waters of the Persian Gulf, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean to inundate the country. In confirmation of his theory, he pointed to the fact that the Dead Sea is still 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean.

The Origin of Earrings.

There is a strange tradition among the Arabians, that earrings came into use in the following way: When Pharaoh summoned Abraham and reproached him for his untruth (in saying that Sarah was his sister), Abraham prayed for the king and Allah healed the king, who now gave Abraham many rich presents and among others an Egyptian slave named Hagar. She bore him a son, whom he called Ishmael. But Sarah was barren, and the more jealous since the light of Mohammed shone on Ishmael's forehead, she demanded of Abraham to put away Hagar and her son. He was undecided until commanded by Allah to obey Sarah in all things. Yet he entreated her not to cast off her bondmaid and her son. But this so exasperated her that she declared she would not rest until her hands had been imbued in Hagar's blood. Then Abraham pierced Hagar's ear quickly and drew a ring through it, so that Sarah was able to dip her hand in the blood of Hagar without bringing the latter into danger. From that time it became a custom among women to wear earrings.

Heaven.

The lesson hour was nearly past
When I asked of my scholars seven,
"Now tell me each one please, in turn
What sort of place is heaven?"

"Oh, meadows, flowers and lovely trees!"
Cried poor little North-street Kitty;
While Dorothy, fresh from country lanes,
Was sure 'twas "a great big city."

Rosy, it seemed, had never thought
Of the home beyond the river;
She simply took each perfect gift
And trusted the loving Giver.

Then up spoke Edith, tall and fair—
Her voice was clear and ringing;
"While Dorothy, fresh from country lanes,
Was sure 'twas "a great big city."

To Esther, clad in richest furs,
"Twas a place for 'out-door playing';"
But Bridget drew her thin shawl close,
For "warmth and food," she was praying.

The desk-bell rang. But one child left,
My sober thoughtful Flory;
"Why, heaven just seems to me a place—
A place—where you're never sorry."

—Sunday School Times.

ST. BERNARD DOGS.

The Story of Their Virtues Briefly Told in Simple Language.

As we stand around the window looking out at the beautiful snow-clad earth, little Robert claps his hands and screams with delight as Menthou—a handsome St. Bernard dog—dashes around sniffing the snow and then rolling over and over again, shaking his shaggy coat, only to bound off, making the snow fly in every direction. For a short time little Robert watches him with delight, and then with a wise look on his wee face says:

"Mamma, why do they call him a St. Bernard?"

So mamma told how the noble dogs derived their name from the Hospice of St. Bernard. The Hospice of St. Bernard is the highest habitation in Europe and is a famous mountain pass in the Pennine Alps, between Piedmont and the Valais. The pass attains an elevation of more than 8000 feet above the sea level, and almost on its very crest, on the edge of a small lake which is frozen over nine months out of the twelve, stands the hospice, founded in 962 by Bernard de Menthon, a Savoyard nobleman, for the benefit of pilgrims to Rome, and now largely taken advantage of by travellers across the Alps.

The hospice is occupied by St. Augustine monks who with their noble dogs of St. Bernard breed have rescued many hundred travellers from death by exposure to cold or burial in the snow, which in winter ranges from 10 to 40 feet in depth. The St. Bernard dog is remarkable for great size, strength and sagacity. The dogs not only accompany the monks and servants of the hospice in the benevolent excursions which they regularly take through the most dangerous parts of the pass, but are sent out by themselves to search for travellers who may have wandered, and this their extremely acute scent enables them to do. They soon learn what places are most proper to be searched and when the weather assumes a threatening aspect some of them show great alertness, as if desirous to be at work. They carry a small flask of wine or brandy attached to their necks, of which the traveller may avail himself. When they find a traveller is too much exhausted to proceed by their guidance to the hospice or if they cannot by their own efforts dig away the snow which has covered him, they run and give the alarm by signs that are at once understood. One famous dog, Barry, was said to be instrumental in saving the lives of forty human beings. His most memorable achievement was the rescue of a little boy whose mother had been destroyed by an avalanche, and whom he induced to mount his back, and so carried him safely to the hospice. The origin of this valuable race of dogs is not well ascertained, although they are supposed to have sprung from a progeny of a Danish dog left at the hospice by a traveller, and of the Alpine shepherds' dogs. Another account represents an English mastiff as one of their progenitors. There are two sub-varieties however, one with rough hair like that of the Newfoundland, the other with close, short hair.—[Portland Transcript.

Self-Denial in Little Things.

The art of going without, says Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, may be slowly, but it can be brightly learned. It needs due patience, some pluck, and, doubtless, the proper share of christian grace and resignation. But it needs something else, if I may say so, just as important and more apt to be overlooked. It needs the more worldly qualities of good spirits, a good sense, and inventive ability. It is not enough to give up one's trip. One pretends to do it gracefully, graciously, and even with a disposition to be jolly about it. It is not enough distinctly to buy no new clothes, or to go without trousers, or substitute corn-beef for sirloin. It is worth while to see "the fun" in it, since it has got to be done. It is not enough to cut down the open fires, and curtail the egg bills, and wear the overcoat shiny in the seams, or even to resign from the club and read the magazine at the public library. Rather make an interesting game of deprivation and play for the stakes of sweet temper, and a merry courage, and the class of values which are to be had by going without another class.

The Inner Voice.

"I saw a little spotted turtle sunning itself in the shallow water. I lifted the stick in my hand to kill the harmless reptile; yet I had seen other boys, out of sport, destroy birds, squirrels, and the like, and I had a disposition to follow their wicked example, but at all once something checked my little arm, and a voice within me said, clear and loud, 'It is wrong.' I held my uplifted stick in wonder at the new emotion, till the turtle vanished from sight."

I hastened home and told the tale to my mother, and asked what it was that told me it was wrong. She wiped a tear from her eye, and taking me in her arms, said: "Some men call it conscience, but I prefer to call it the voice of God in the soul of man. If you listen and obey, it will speak clearer and clearer, and always guide you right; but if you turn a deaf ear or disobey, then it will fade out little by little, and leave you all in the dark without a guide. Your life depends, my boy, on heeding that little voice."

To Keep the Congregation Awake.

A document is kept in a church in Harlem, Holland, which tells that in the year 1625 a certain Hans Zink was engaged, for a sum equalling a little over a shilling a week, to wake up all those in the congregation who went to sleep during the sermon on Sunday. Zink was a human alarm for twenty years, but at the end of that time was dismissed, because he had been caught napping himself while preaching was going on.

When the Angelus Was Instituted.
Pope John XXII., in 1327, ordered that the faithful should recite three Ave Marias when the bells rang on the eve of festivals; the Council of Lavaur, 1368, ordered the bells to be rung at sunrise; and either Calixtus III., 1456, or Louis IX., of France, 1472, ordered the bells to be rung at noon and the aves to be recited.

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Messages of Help for the Week.

"How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Psalm, 84, 1-2.

"Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." Jeremiah, 49, 11.

"He that planneth the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" Psalm, 94, 9.

"I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. . . . And I lay down my life for the sheep." John, 10, 14-16.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. . . . God will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor., 10, 12, 13.

"Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort: who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." J Cor., 1, 4.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Ephesians, 6, 11.

An optimist is a man who looks on the bright side of everything, so long as everything goes his own way.

You see in no place of conversation the perfection of speech so much as in accomplished woman.—Sir P. Steele.

Hope is the feeling that makes a man believe that something will happen which he knows will not.

Be honest, dishonesty seldom makes one rich, and when it does, riches are a curse.

Be generous, meanness makes enemies and breeds distrust.

"Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father."



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 finger 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. M., Norcutt, Kans.

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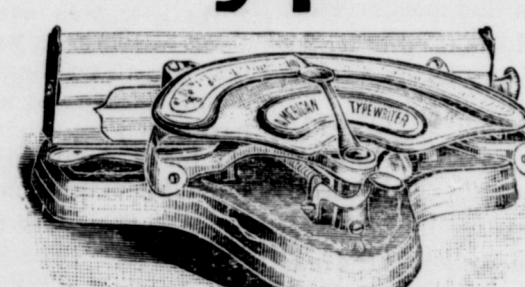
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