

Sunday Reading

Good Night.
 A few brief hours of waking; that is all.
 A few brief hours, and then the shadows fall,
 And quell the tumult and the glaring light.
 A golden gleam of morning, mounting high;
 A twilight purple in the western sky.
 Only a little while, and then, good night
 A wish is verified. Perhaps a fear
 In stern reality's dread shape draws near.
 You've labored wrong—perchance you've toiled
 aright.
 It matters not, when all is dark and done,
 If you be he who lost or he who won
 'Tis but a little while, and then, good night.

On Sunday Observance.

Edersheim, in his 'Life and Times of Jesus,' gives a long chapter on the ordinance and law of the Sabbath as laid down in the Mishnah and the Jerusalem Talmud. It is a mournful reading. Its puerilities exceed belief. 'In no less than twenty-four chapters matters are seriously discussed which one would scarcely imagine a sane intellect would seriously entertain. Through sixty four and one-half folio columns in the Jerusalem and one hundred and fifty-six double pages of folio in the Babylon Talmud does the enumeration and discussion of possible cases drag on. And yet in all these wearisome details there is not a single trace of anything spiritual, not a word even to suggest higher thoughts of God's holy day and its observance.' The trivialities are not worth reproducing. Jesus did not deign to take any notice of them. He broke them all down by defending his disciples for what they had done, and by working miracles forbidden by the traditional regulations. He claimed that the Sabbath was not violated by eating when one was hungry—thus sweeping away at one stroke all the dietary regulations of the rabbis. He declared that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, and to save life. He gathered up the whole matter in two pithy sentences: 'The Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath.' and 'The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.' The argument is very simple and very radical. The weekly day of rest and worship is demanded by the highest good of man, and inasmuch as Jesus is the Son of Man, the best interpreter of what man is and what man needs, his use of the Sabbath is that which corresponds to the divine intention.

It is plain from this statement of the case that Jesus recognized the binding authority of the Fourth Commandment. He did not work upon the Sabbath. Luke tells us that when Jesus visited Nazareth for the first time after his baptism, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, 'as his custom was.' That had been his habit, and he adhered to it. The Sabbath always found him in the synagogue. He was a regular church goer, empty as the services were. He did not draw men away from them nor did he absent himself. There is no record of his ever having offered any sacrifices in the Temple, nor of his encouraging others to do so; but the synagogue he frequented with careful regularity. We can imagine how sorely he must have been tried by many a service, especially during those years in Nazareth when he was debarred from speaking. But the divine authority of the Sabbath was all the time freely recognized and heartily respected, not only as a day of rest, but as a day of worship. He remembered it, to keep it holy.

It is equally clear that he regarded the self-constituted guardians of the Sabbath as its greatest foes. They made it an intolerable burden to the people. They made it a gloomy prison, not the radiant, roomy palace of the King; just as they converted the house of prayer into a den of thieves. The abuses were not attack in detail. They grew out of a common root, and that root Jesus tore up with ruthless yet loving hands. He made the Sabbath a day of life and liberty. It was, in his view, God's day with man, and man's day with God, the day of the Father with his children, when all ceremonial regulations were an impertinence. It was made for man, not man for it. As made for man, its observance is a high and sacred duty, its maintenance a serious and solemn obligation. To part with it, to neglect, to bridge or deny its use to others, is to suffer in one's inheritance. It is the badge of man's freedom, of his divine sonship. But he was not made for it, and therefore no hard and fast regulations can be laid down for its observance. Jesus leveled the whole elaborate rabbinical structure; and he reared nothing in its place. He left every man free to determine for himself the method of Sabbath observance.

This was certainly audacious. It might seem as if so radical a method could result only in the abandonment of the old Sabbath observance, as if the day must go down with the traditional ceremonial observance. And that is what actually hap-

pened. Christianity could not appropriate the Jewish Sabbath, not even the day of the week. The new wine could not be kept in the old bottles. We cannot trace the change which substituted the first day of the week for the seventh. It was natural that the day on which Jesus rose from the dead should become a memorial day. But it was inevitable that a day, out of which all life and joy had been crushed by puerile and offensive legislation, should surrender its scepter of authority to another day in which the freedom of Christ should come to the throne. And in this matter, too, the liberty which Jesus advocated comes to its rights. For so long as one day in seven is kept as a day of rest and worship, the divine authority of the Sabbath is recognized and honored.

And finally, the words of Jesus in which, as the Son of Man, he claims lordship also of the Sabbath, provide us with the law of its observance. Our liberty is not license. The day of rest is not ours to use as we please. Christ alone is Lord of the Sabbath. It is, therefore, our day of rest in his service. We may use it, we ought to use it, as he used it. We, too, are summoned to consecrate its hours to the worship of God and to the doing of good, as did he. It is a simple rule, which will not and cannot secure rigid uniformity in the observance. No one can formulate the law for another. It may even be that what is obligatory upon me, may be forbidden to you. In such matters we cannot judge each other. But to keep the day holy, to subordinate self to God, and to our fellow men, is the special duty of all on this day, as it is the supreme law of all life. And so, some time, the present distinctions of days shall vanish in the Eternal Sabbath of the heavens, when all worship will be work, and all work will be worship.

The Curse of Work.

Why does God permit evil? That is a question which we ask generation after generation. Some try to solve it by dismissing evil as non-existent; others get rid of the other term—God. But no one recognizing both evil and God can answer the question, Why God permits evil? There is, however, a range of facts within our observation, of facts which bear upon this primal mystery, and they offer some subjects of wonder and praise in which we may fruitfully employ ourselves. Grant the existence of God, and the existence of evil, and life may be very profitably occupied in observing how God is ever at work in turning evil into good, or drawing out of admitted evil good which, so far as we can see, would not, but for the evil, have come into being.

The beautiful, 'symbolical narrative in Genesis iii, is an illustration drawn, perhaps, from that loftiest region of purely human faculty, the poetic imagination, but enforced and interpreted by the spirit of God. For his sin Adam is condemned to till the ground in the sweat of his brow. The soil is cursed. Thorns and thistles are to make his toil painful. At last he is to rest in the dust from which he sprang. This is the dread punishment of his disobedience—the curse upon human nature. But observe. It is out of this earliest curse that the grace of God elicits the greatest earthly blessing of man. From the beginning, and to this day, it is in tilling the reluctant earth that the healthiest manhood is born, and it on the soil, in close contact with it, that womanhood bears the seed which bruises the serpent's head.

O happy husbandman, O twice and three times blessed
 If they but knew the secret of their rest!

So sang Virgil in the days of Augustus, when the luxury of Rome was ruining the agriculture of Italy. 'Back to the land, is the cry of our own day, because health, sinew, morals, the force on which the life of the city and of the nation depend, are

the product of the wrestle with Nature in tillage.

The life of the fields, following the plough down the long furrow, watching the weather, contact with springing crops with blossoming, flowering and fruiting things the commerce with the milk-giving kine, the helpless sheep, the other dumb creatures of the farmstead, the mystery of the lamb season or of Nature, these are the influences which form the bone and sinew of a nation. Our Lord's parables were borrowed principally from these country labors; and they suggest that the cycle of ploughing, sowing, waiting and reaping was designed to be a spiritual parable to the sons of man forever.

Tired brains dwell with infinite rest upon those quiet country ways:

The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
 The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea.

There is some mystery of peace and promise in it all. No wise man despises the clodhopper or uses the term bucolic with contempt. He is aware that those kinds are curiously near to God; and in the sacred victories over the soil which is cursed, they gain more lasting victories over sin.

Love has been known in huts where poor men lie; Christ appears to him as the great Rustic, with suggestions of flowering hill-sides and fruitful fields. The heavy brains and slow movements of the tillers of the ground he will not despise. 'The sympathy of the agricultural poor with one another is hardly credible to fine people who live in towns,' says Mark Rutherford. 'If we could have a record of the devotions of those women who lie forgotten under the turf round country churches throughout England, it would be better worth preserving than nine tenths of our literature and histories. Surely in some sense they still are, and their love cannot have been a thing of no moment to the power that made man.'

I was in a country churchyard the other day, a little country churchyard; the graves of the rich had their monuments, but the graves of the poor were indistinguishable mounds, like the waves of a gently heaving sea. But I was told that in the spring, while the graves of the rich were coarse with tangleweed, Nature covered the plot of the poor with a blue carpet of hycinth. The heart of the Father is tender to his children who till the soil. He nourishes and blesses their charities; they are by no means the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. They supply the life of the great cities. They likewise people the Heavenly City. Thus God's love has changed the curse of the toil of the earth into a blessing; and agriculture is the symbol of an imagined Golden Age.

In Paradise the fruits grew without toil; and man fell. In the South Seas the fruits grow without toil; that is the most serious difficulty in attempting to raise, civilize and Christianize the inhabitants of those lovely islands. In the redeemed and to-be-redeemed earth, the fruits grow only with travail and heavy sorrow, with watchfulness, fear and disappointment; and in the wholesome toil, man becomes wholesome, pure, patient and strong.

But what applies primarily to the culture of the ground applies also to work of all kinds, and to the weat of the brow which is the 'curse of Adam.' Surely God has turned his curse to good, for toil is the chief blessing that he has awarded us in this life. 'Blessed is the man who has found his work,' was Carlyle's beatitude. 'The wise man asks nothing of this world, but that he may be well and constantly employed in it, may have long hours of toil relieved by short hours of ease and unbroken slumbers. That we want leisure, life without work an easy competence, that herein lies the goal of desire, is the delusion of Satan, a delusion by which he is constantly leading many of us astray. He tempted us and we fell, and toil was given us as our punishment; but God turned the toil into a redemptive blessing; straightway the devil tried to put us out of heart with toil, and to lure us back to idleness in which we should fall again. What you should pray for, what, to be candid, most healthy people do pray for, is that you may have work, a life filled with strenuous toil, opportunities of using the faculties which God has given you.'

The blessing of this world is not rest, but work.

"Bearing a Pitcher of Water."

For aught that appears in the narrative, the man whom Jesus thus described and identified to the disciples as their guide to the place where they were to observe the Passover, was totally unconscious of the purpose which he was thus made to serve. He seems to have been a mere servant, not 'the good man of the house,' as suggested by Dr. Watson in that charming little book, 'The Upper Room.' According to St. Mark xiv. 14, Jesus simply told his disciples to follow this man, and to make their arrangements with the proprietor of the house into which this presumable servant entered.

It was a coincidence, this meeting of the disciple with the man bearing a pitcher of water. Thus Moses, as he journeyed toward Egypt under divine command, met his brother who was to be his spokesman before Pharaoh; and thus, probably, each of us has at some unexpected moment met the individual whose person or whose deeds were to give a special direction to our lives.

Thus 'it came to pass;' but these coincidences were all shaped and directed by other than human plans or intentions.

It was by virtue of his office as a prophet that Jesus was able to say: 'There shall meet you such a person, and so conditioned.' When it came to pass, and they found as had said, how their faith in Him was strengthened!

So it was when He bade them 'Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye shall find.' The miracle gave a basis for their belief in other words; 'I will make you fishers of men.' So the foretelling the circumstances of his death finally gave force to their faith in the Crucified; and so, at this time, by their experience of his truthful foresight, the disciples were quickened to appreciate and accept the promises of the upper room. 'I will not leave you comfortless'; 'I will come again'; 'I will prepare a place for you.'

Faith Overcomes all.

There is nothing which faith does not overcome; nothing it will not accept. Faith passes beyond all earthly things, pierces all shadows to attain the truth; keeps it ever in a firm embrace, and will never let herself be separated from it. The simplicity and elevation which faith gives to the soul make it satisfied with everything.

Nothing is wanting to it; nothing is too much for it; and at all times it blesses the Divine hand which causes the waters of grace to flow so gently upon it. It has the same tenderness for friends and enemies, being taught by Jesus Christ to regard all men as God's instruments.

—Bishop Huntington.

FRANKLIN'S LAST WORK.

It was the 'Question of Representation of Different States.'

The last important work of Franklin's public life was done in the convention of 1787, which framed the Constitution of the United States. He was an aged man,—eighty-one years,—and suffered so much from the gout that he could not stand for any great length of time. His speeches were accordingly read to the convention by a colleague.

His great work in the convention was the settling of the question of the amount of representation to be given to the smaller states. They were apprehensive that it representation in both Houses of Congress should be in proportion to population, their interests, if not their liberties, would be in danger from the states which outnumbered them in inhabitants.

The larger states, on the other hand, feared, if each state had an equal vote in the Senate, that their money would be lavishly expended. The solution of the problem—its difficulty came near breaking up the convention—came from Franklin, who suggested that the representation in the lower house should be in proportion to population, but in the Senate each state should have an equal vote, and that money bills should originate in the lower house.

Writing of this stroke of political genius, Mr. S. G. Fisher, the author of 'The True Benjamin Franklin,' pronounces the arrangement 'one of the most fundamental principles of our Constitution.'

'Without it,' he adds, 'there would be no federal Union. It has never been changed, and in all human probability never will be so long as we retain the semblance of a republic.'

After the Constitution had been engrossed, it was doubtful whether all the members of the convention would sign it. Franklin wrote a happy speech, penetrated with humor and persuasiveness, and his colleague read it so the convention.

He admitted that the Constitution did not satisfy him—he had advocated a council in which the executive authority should be vested; that the legislature should consist only of one house, and that the President should receive no salary. But although it was not as he would have had it, he would sign it; for it was better than the old Articles of Confederation, and even a new convention would not make a more satisfactory one.

Then he added that he was old enough to doubt the infallibility of his own judgment, and to believe that others might be right occasionally as well as himself.

'There was a French lady,' he said, 'who in a dispute with her sister, remarked, 'I don't know how it happens, sister, but I meet with nobody but myself that is always in the right.''

The members of the convention laughed, and thereby those who were dissatisfied did not close their hearts to the final appeal: 'On the whole, sir, I cannot help ex-

pressing a wish that every member of the convention who may still have objections to it would with me on this occasion doubt a little of his own infallibility, and to make manifest our unanimity, put his name to this instrument.'

He did not persuade all the members, but not many of them refused to affix their signatures to the great charter of our liberties.

PRESIDENT KRUGER AT HOME.

He Evidently Believes That Charity Begins at Home.

At the present time President Kruger of the Transvaal, by his astuteness in dealing with the British colonial office, is brought so prominently into public notice that anything that relates to him personally is read with interest. Last week we gave a view of him in his relations to statecraft. To-day we present him in his domestic relations in a rather amusing incident, told by a lady who called at the presidential residence with several friends, under the escort of a rising young diplomat.

The party were shown into the drawing-room, where they had to wait a short time, and the diplomat was unwise enough to make himself comfortable in what was obviously the best chair in the room—wide, well-cushioned and inviting.

When the president arrived he paused a moment on the threshold, looked keenly about the room,—he has a face, she says, like a wonderfully wise old gorilla,—and fixing his piercing eyes upon the snugly ensconced youth, walked quickly up to him, saying almost roughly:

'You must not sit there, young man! You must get up at once and take another seat. That is my wife's chair, and nobody else sits in it.'

The young man rose, half-vexed and half-abashed, and seated himself elsewhere and Oom Paul then condescended to make himself agreeable to his guests as best he could.

Shortly after Madame Kruger entered, and was able to settle her ample person and voluminous skirts in the wide embrace of her favorite chair, whence, as from a household throne, she dispensed a cordial and simple hospitality. The rough old man evidently thinks that politeness begins, as charity should begin, at home.

An Insulting Pronoun.

The ritual of society, as women make it, is very exacting the world over, even in almshouses. The London Outlook reports a serious trouble among a set of workhouse officials.

The infirm nurses, three in number, had demanded a separate sitting room and the delight of Sunday dinner therein, and the matron had sought to humble them by sending the cook to enjoy her Sunday dinner in their company. The brawny cook described what occurred as follows:

'Well, Nurse Blank she come down and got inside the door. 'Four covers' she says. 'Four? Who's the fourth?' 'Me,' says I. 'You!' she says, and with that she tosses her head and walks away.'

Here cook drew a long breath, then continued: 'If it hadn't a' been Sunday, gentlemen, I should have let her have it for calling me 'you!''

Rather at Sea.

Charles Sumner, the distinguished United States senator, had little sense of humor and was not at home in the small cut-and-thrust skirmishes of general society. At an official ball in Washington he remarked to a young lady who stood beside him—

'We are fortunate in having these places for standing here. We shall see the first entrance into Washington society of the new English and French Ministers.'

The young lady replied: 'I am glad to hear it; I like to see lions break the ice.' The senator remained silent for a few minutes, but presently said: 'Miss—, in the country where lions live there is no ice.'

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