

Sunday Reading.

Beauty for Ashes.

[Isa. lxi. 3.]

That beauty out of ashes springs,
Is truth that every flower sings,
And all the loveliness of earth
From dust and ashes gains its birth;
Decay is harbingers of bloom,
And brightness is the child of gloom;
In parable like this displayed
Is Nature's endless masquerade.

But ashes into beauty turned
That on the seer's rapt vision burned,
Were symbols only of decay,
Where joy and gladness fade away,
Where sorrow weaves the shroud of bliss,
Where the dark pall of anguish is,
And Nature no alchemist knows
In which she can transmute such woes.

Whose can the wondrous office be,
Whose the celestial chemistry,
To kindle beauty from the dust
Of blasted hopes and blighted trust,
Of hearts consumed in passion's flame,
Of ruined peace of every name;
And where is this enchantment wrought,
Surpassing human art or thought?

The fervid seer in vision spelled
The Chemist of the Cross beheld,
Who in His blood doth solace pour
For broken hearts for evermore;
And kindles beauty out of death
By the sweet vigor of His breath;
For this did God appoint His Son,
And Christ the miracle hath done!

O mourners over ashes cold,
The saddest that the grave can hold,
O ye heart broken with great woes
Whose dirges swell and never close,
Believe this alchemy divine
That makes the grave with beauty shine;
Within the gates of Zion dwells
The Christ of whom the prophet tells.

WM. C. RICHARDS.

Chicago, August, 1882.

Them that are afar off upon the Sea.

BY REV. TIMOTHY HARLEY.

Leigh Richmond, widely known as the author of the "Dairyman's Daughter," when addressing a meeting held in Edinburgh, for the advancement of religion among sailors, related the following facts: "When I reflect on the character and circumstances of seamen, I cannot, without peculiar interest, recollect the time when a young man went to sea, whose feelings were ill-suited to all the contingencies of a seafaring life. I remember that the time came when it was said the vessel in which he had sailed had been wrecked, and that the young man was dead, and no intimation had reached the ears of his affectionate parents of any change in his views as to the things of God. And I remember the time when that young man was so far restored again to his family, that although they saw him not, they heard that he had been saved from the shipwreck. That young man, too, was found by the blessed God while on the ocean, with the Bible only, which his father, at parting, had put into his hand. It was blessed to him in the midst of the carnal companions by whom he was surrounded. This means of grace, without any human instruction, was made effectual to the salvation of his soul. The time came when that young man, who had been a foe to religion, lifted up, in the Bay of Gibraltar, at his masthead, a Bethel flag, and summoned the sailors to prayer, and prayed with them, and bade the missionary exhort them. And when I tell you that that young man is my own son, you will see that I may well say, God bless the sailor's friend!"

Now, although I have not the same reason for sympathy with seamen, and the efforts put forth for their welfare; yet I have sufficient knowledge of their claims, and sufficient interest in their condition, to prompt in me the fervent prayer, God bless the sailor, and the sailor's friend!

And as now is the time when we are apt to be brought more closely in connection with seamen than at any other period of the year, I purpose founding a few thoughts on a clause in the sixty-fifth Psalm—"Them that are afar off upon the sea;" and I ask consideration of three points, namely, the sailor's distance, the sailor's dangers, and the sailor's demands.

I. THE SAILOR'S DISTANCE.—He is "afar off." 1. Far off from home. Few words in our language have richer meaning than that blessed monosyllable *home*. Around it cling and cluster the most hallowed associations. It speaks of father and mother, of sister and brother, and of a dearer one still, and a nearer one yet, than all others. It bears the memory back into the scenes of childhood's innocence and youth's enchantment, while it shuts out for the time the

heavier thoughts of manhood's stern reality. Home is the fairest spot on earth, and has been well termed "Heaven's fallen sister;" yea, the divinest conception of heaven itself is that of an eternal home. We have all felt the force of the old proverb, "Home is home, be it never so homely." And when we who have ourselves been "far on the deep blue sea," were nearing the shore whereon our homebound voyage would end, with what a gladsome mind we sang, "Home again, home again, from a foreign shore!" And our joy was full when we entered the door of "that dear hut—our home." But the sailor must leave his home, with all its attractions and endearments, with all its comforts and snailies, to spend day after day, month after month, going hither and thither upon the restless sea. It is mockery to say that his "home is on the deep;" and it is irony to offer him a home when he lands on a distant shore. You may provide for him a place where to lay his head, you may make his abode a harbour of safety and rest, but you cannot give him a home. This leaving home, this absence from the centre of so much blessing, is not the least among a sailor's trials, nor least among his disadvantages. How shall we wonder if when removed far from the remembrances of domestic influence, he should yield the reins to his evil inclinations; or when beyond the reach of domestic encouragement, he should become indifferent as to whether his course be approvable or not? My friends, when you are thanking God for the amenities and enjoyments of a happy home, do not forget them that are "afar off upon the sea."

2. Far off from the house of God. We who have been accustomed to attend the sanctuary every Lord's Day from our youth up, and to receive the dew of heaven in the distilling of the Word of Life, can hardly estimate the loss of those, who, for months, and even years, never enter the house of God, nor go with the multitude that keep holy day. During life at sea, it is the exception, not the rule, for the Lord's Day to be sacredly observed. On many of the ocean steamships no religious service is held, unless some Christian minister is on board; while on sailing vessels, any observance of the first day of the week is very rare indeed. The injury to the sailor from this lack of the means of grace is incalculable. An earnest warning would often deter him from sin; a loving invitation would often woo him to holiness; a bright example would often attract him to a better life; and these armaments of the world, in conjunction with the sweet influences of spiritual songs, and the pure atmosphere of prayerful worship, would enable him to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." But as it is he hears not the sound of the trumpet; no village bells call him to the house of prayer; and although a thousand hymns are sung, and ten thousand prayers are offered; a thousand sermons preached, and ten thousand hearts made glad; no sound of these reaches his ear: he is "afar off upon the sea," where one day is as another, and where the Sabbath and the sanctuary are unknown. Oh, do not wonder if when the sailor comes into port it be difficult to get him to the house of worship. "Use is second nature;" and having been so long away it would be an unusual event for him to enter a church. And, alas! too frequently he finds that having been out of sight so long he is out of mind; and excuses his neglect with the bitter reflection, "No man careth for my soul." He is far off from God's house.

3. How many a sailor is far off from God himself! The majority of seafaring men are thoughtless and irreligious. They are no worse than others by nature; but they have few checks upon their propensities, with few surroundings of a kind calculated to sanctify the soul and soften the heart. On the sea they are prayerless and without God; on shore they find companionship among birds of their own feather, give themselves up to the desires of their own hearts, and live strangers to grace and to God. Gratefully we remember that there are many exceptions, and that hundreds who cross the main are bound for two ports, their arrival at the haven of eternal glory being well assured, though their earthly destination may never be reached. Would God that all sailors were saints! But after we have acknowledged every exception, we must fall back upon the melancholy rule that those that are "afar off upon the sea" are far off from God.

II. THE SAILOR'S DANGERS.—These are twofold—those of the sea, and those of the shore. 1. On the sea he is well acquainted with perils such as Paul encountered when he was "a night and a day in the deep," and such as the writer of the 107th Psalm so graphically portrays: "They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their

soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end." He who does "business in great waters" has no choice of weather, and the winds and waves show him neither favour nor fear. He is "rocked on the cradle of the deep," but to him the commotions of the sea have in them more prose than poetry. When we remember how few are the average years of the mariner's life, and read the appalling statistics of the number of vessels that either founder, or are sunk, or wrecked, year by year, with the number of noble men who sink annually to the silent depths of an ocean's grave, we feel that no class of men more richly deserves our sympathy than those who "go down to the sea in ships." 2. On the shore the dangers are of another kind, but often are far more deceitful and destructive. "Lewd fellows of the baser sort," loafers about the docks, "landsharks" hang along the shore, waiting for arrivals; and when the sailor plants his foot on terra firma, he is on ground that may require his "sealings," even more than the deck. He needs to be firm-footed if he is to stand steady and upright amid the surges of temptation that now rise and roll around him. Drunken and depraved men will seek to lead him astray; and amid the seductions of the "grogshops," and the entangling snares of the "strange women," how shall the sailor, set free from the restraints of duty or subordination and with every opportunity to sin, keep himself from the ways of transgression? The dangers of the sea are great, but the dangers of the shore are greater; the dangers of the sea beset the body, but the dangers of the shore beset body, soul, and spirit; the sea has slain its thousands, but, in a worse overthrow, the shore has slain its ten thousands.

III. THE SAILOR'S DEMANDS.—He calls upon us for, 1. *Our prayerful solicitation*. When the Baptist was beheaded, and his disciples could do nothing to avenge, as before they could do nothing to avert the calamity, they "took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus." The least that we can do for the men whose services on the deep are so essential to the welfare of nations, families and individuals, and whose lives are so full of hardships, privations, and dangers, is to bear them continually upon our hearts in prayer before God. We can go and tell Jesus, whom the winds and the sea obeyed, who stilled the raging of the Galilean lake when His trembling followers cried, "Master, we perish!" we can tell Him of those who need His presence as the pledge of their safety in every storm, as the protection of their spirits on every shore, and as the peaceful port into whose bosom they may calmly pass when the last voyage is ended, and the anchor of hope forever dropped. On the wings of the wind comes the voice of a great multitude, as ten thousand sailor's cry, "Brethren, pray for us!" But let us add to our prayers,

2. *Our practical sympathy*. What can be done for the seaman? Much has been done already, and much is being done still. Can anything be added? If so, let it be begun at once. If not, let us sustain existing operations. Let not seamen's chaplains go unsupported, or but half-supported. They are a noble band of workers, and are engaged in a noble work. If Seamen's Homes and Bethels are needed, let us build them. Our wealth is the "abundance of the seas;" let us not "muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn," by neglecting the sailor through whom we have been enriched. Let every effort possible be put forth by us in behalf of His temporal and spiritual happiness; and when He, whose is the sea, for He made it, shall come in His kingdom, He will not forget our "work of faith and labour of love," done for the sailor, in the name of the sailor's best Friend.

Finally, let us remember that we all are mariners, navigating the tempestuous ocean of human life; and God grant that when we have crossed the bar of death, we may enter the "river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God," and when we have landed on the celestial shore, to "go no more out," may we meet many a happy sailor whom on earth we had sought to bring unto the desired haven of the saints' everlasting rest.

A great German defined the difference between Socialism and Christianity in a very clever epigram. Socialism says, "What is mine is mine." Christianity says, "What is mine is thine; the difference is infinite. But the epigram needs correction. Christianity really teaches us to say, 'What seems thine is not thine; what seems mine is not mine; whatever thou hast belongs to God, and whatever I have belongs to God; you and I must use what we have according to God's will.'"

R. W. DALE.

Humbled and Exalted.

REV. S. C. WOODROW.

"Humble yourselves," writes Peter to the Christian Jews of the Dispersion, "under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." The exhortation is not to the cultivation of passive but of active graces. The Apostle's idea of Christian life was not embodied in the religious quietism which aimed only at rapt moods or spiritual peace: at slothful joys, and dainty sympathies. He believed in a religion that was noble, self-forgetful, and practical. A sympathetic study of his words will prove this.

1. "Humble yourselves"—man's act! "He may exalt you"—God's act. Only the humbling which is the soul's free choice, only the exalting which is effected by God, are intended.

Two things were implied in the attitude of soul suggested by the word "humble": an acknowledgment of the wisdom and of the righteousness of God in their trials. It was difficult for these Jews to see the wisdom or to feel the righteousness of God in the manifold tribulations which had come upon them owing to their confession of Christ. They might have asked, Are not the interests of Christianity injured, if not jeopardized by our sufferings? Would not some Divine interposition, like the miracles of Egypt and the Red Sea, convince our adversaries that Christianity is invested with the authority and backed by the omnipotence of God? A very natural argument of human wisdom which we are using every day. How often is it thought that to enlist genius, or riches, or political power on the side of Christianity is to ensure its success!

But how unwise is human wisdom. Christianity wins its way best by its simple truth, and by the exhibition of love, self-denial, and piety on the part of its disciples. No greater misfortune ever befell the Church of Christ than its alliance with the State, and its consequent external prosperity. The Church's wealth, its union with what was high and powerful in the world, only corrupted its purity, weakened its spiritual strength, and multiplied nominal professions of its claims. None of these accessories attracted or converted one genuine disciple. No; it was the blood of the martyrs which was the seed of the Church; it was the sufferings of these believing Jews which made the Gospel a power in Asia Minor.

As God was wise, so He was righteous in permitting such persecutions to befall them. Their experience linked them with their Lord and Master. In the light of His Cross they must not "think it strange concerning the fiery trial" which tried them, "as though some strange thing happened unto them." It was a part of God's great plan in His redemption of the world.

2. There is a connection between "humble" and "exalt"; the one is the means to the other. It is God who exalts, but the humbling of oneself before Him puts the soul on the path which leads to exaltation. Let us see how this is. First, the humble soul can trustfully cast all its care upon God. So long as we regard our trials with disaffection, we must bear their whole weight alone. Faith is hindered; prayer is hushed. But when we look upon God's dispensations as perfectly wise and righteous, we are emboldened to lay them all down at His feet; and in the very act all the bitterness has gone, and the burden becomes easy and light. Again, we shall be awakened to renewed watchfulness. The discovery that we had so nearly impeached the Divine wisdom and righteousness, and that we are so blind and weak, will teach us to be more vigilant lest we should be overtaken in a fault. This is another step towards the exaltation with which God, at last, will crown our life. Once more, our experience will have stimulated us to strenuous resistance of evil. And the Apostle by a very striking phrase, suggests the secret of a successful conflict—"steadfast in the faith." From the Gospel, its truths, its promises, its inspirations, we must derive the energy which shall make us victors in the strife. Nothing so paralyses the soul as scepticism. When the Gospel is only half believed, and the manifold speculations of the age attract by their plausibilities, we are sure to be disheartened or defeated. "According to your faith be it unto you" is the Divine word. The faith which trusts in the unseen Christ is armed with invincible courage, and endowed with the means of success. "Whom resist steadfast in the faith,"—and, by the pledged word of God, the devil shall flee from you, and your victory shall be complete. Thus from humble to exalt; for "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne."

The humble must come first, and this

order our soul sees to be good. It is better to be humbled now and exalted hereafter than to be exalted now and hereafter humbled. God's ways are wise and just. Besides, the humbling is only for a little while, and the exaltation is for ever. "The God of all grace, who has called you unto His eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall Himself perfectly establish strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever." The little while is never either too short or too long. Unless the iron is kept in the furnace a sufficient time it cannot be wrought into forms of beauty or instruments of use. So, in God's dealings with us, there is adaptation and measurement. Notice the phrase, "in due time." The exaltation will be bestowed in due time, not before we are ready for it, or when we have been worn out and crushed by superfluous afflictions. Place yourselves then in God's hands, that He may make you perfect after the image of Christ, and crown you with a blessedness which shall endure for ever.

Is there a disposition to complain that the process is slow and painful? Think rather of the *patience of God*, who, by these gradual means, meets us for Himself. In every masterpiece of art we see proofs of persevering toil as well as of human genius; and so in every perfected human character, wrought into the beauty of Christ, we see proofs, not only of the wisdom and power, but also of the long-suffering and forbearance of God. It takes so long to fashion some of us into Christ-likeness. There is so much evil to be removed, and so many attainments to be completed. Let this thought of God's patience with us still every murmur, and rebuke all unbelief; and let us yield our whole natures with such loving obedience to His moulding and sanctifying grace that the process may be rendered easier and shorter. The due time will soon dawn upon us, if by faith we entrust ourselves unreservedly to His Divine discipline. "After we have suffered a little while He shall Himself, perfect, stablish, and strengthen us."

Foreign Missions of the Salvation Army.

General Booth is extending his operations, and proposes to send a contingent to India under the command of Judge Tucker to attack the strongholds of Hindooism. A mass meeting, or rather a grand review, with a march from the barracks in Grosvenor-street to the Free trade Hall, was held a fortnight ago to afford the Manchester regiments an opportunity of taking leave of their comrades. Even in the afternoon the immense building was well filled and in parts crowded. Banners and bannerettes made the platform gay; an efficient band greatly helped the singing and swelled the volume of sound which gave effect to the choruses sung; officers in uniform gave a semi-military appearance to the assembly; and the radiant contingent, some of them brown enough to be taken for natives of the East, and all of them attired in the dress of the people of India, were conspicuous and almost picturesque. It transpired that Judge Tucker, who had, as General Booth informed the congregation, given up his office and a salary of £800 a year to enter the ranks of the Salvation Army, hailed from India, several of whose languages he can speak, and is about to return thither with five or six comrades to claim India for the Captain of Salvation. The party intend to dress like the natives, to eschew European customs, and to adapt themselves to the manners of the people, hoping thereby to enlist many in the ranks. It is a bold enterprise. Nor is India the only foreign field on which the Salvation Army propose to fight. A Yorkshire soldier volunteers for service in India and offers £50 towards the expenses of the mission, while the editor of the *War Cry* tells his readers "We have a Hallelujah Lass who says she cannot sleep for thinking of Africa." This at least is one of the signs of "a live church." We shall rejoice greatly in the success of any Christian evangelists in the missionary work, and many as are the difficulties of the campaign, doubt not that soldiers who go forth will give a good account of themselves and the enemy. "The world for Christ" is a war cry which all Christians raise. *London Freeman.*

From St. Petersburg, it is reported that eight white horses intended to draw the Czar's carriage at his approaching Coronation have been poisoned.

Penance in an English Church.

The Clevedon correspondent of the Press Association telegraphs:—Last evening a man named Llewellyn Hartree did penance at All Saint's Church, East Clevedon, for the seduction of a servant girl who now awaits her trial for manslaughter. The church was crowded, and after the evening prayer, as the Vicar was about to enter the pulpit, he requested the audience to remain seated. He then said, "We are about to deal with a matter of a most ancient character—a case of church discipline. It is a very common reproach to us English Churchmen that we are the only body of Christians in the world amongst whom holy discipline is dead. Among the Catholics, or in the Eastern Church, the Presbyterians of Scotland, or the English Dissenters, I know not any body of Christians where salutary discipline is dead except the Church of England. I believe as firmly as any one in this church that it would be a perfectly intolerable evil for the parish priest at his own discretion to call before him in the church any notorious offender for public rebuke, but it becomes very different when he acts with the consent of the churchwardens, congregation, and parishoners. The offender will now come into the church and ask forgiveness of his fellow-men, the one he has wronged, and Almighty God." The churchwardens then brought the man into the church. On reaching the chancel steps the Vicar motioned the man to kneel. This he did, and the senior churchwarden handed the Vicar a paper when he said to the man, "do you acknowledge this to be your handwriting?"

He in a low voice said "Yes." The declaration was then read as follows:—"I Llewellyn Hartree, do acknowledge to be guilty of a most grievous sin, for which I do hereby ask forgiveness of my fellow-men, and of the woman I have wronged and of Almighty God. In proof of my repentance I promise to carry out the penance laid upon me in the presence of this congregation." The vicar then said, "The penance laid upon you is that you go to the Assize Court at Wells, when it shall next be held, and take your place where I shall set you, beside the prisoner at the bar. Will you accept that penance? The man answered, "Yes." Turning to the congregation the vicar said, "I am going to ask you all a question. Seeing that this man has humbled himself in the house of God, and provided he comes at his promise, will you forgive him? If so answer 'I will.'" The congregation replied, "I will." The Vicar continued, "One thing more; will you all, so far as opportunity may permit, so help this man towards living a better life, and shield him from reproach in this matter? If so answer 'I will.'" The congregation replied "I will." The vicar then turning to the young man pronounced these words, "God be with thee, my son, and give thee the peace of true repentance to live a better life from this time henceforth. Amen." The Vicar afterwards ascended the pulpit and preached a sermon from the 21st verse of the 18th chapter of St. Matthew.

A Beautiful Custom.

The warmest hearts, the most sensitive consciences and the most sympathetic souls are usually to be found in the humbler walks of life. It is among the lowly that we find some of the most beautiful customs put in practice. Here, for instance, is one:

In the mountains of Tyrol it is the custom of the women and children to come out when it is bedtime and sing. Their husbands, fathers and brothers answer them from the hills on their return home. On the shores of the Adriatic such a custom prevails. There the wives of the fishermen come down about sunset and sing a melody. After singing the first stanza, they listen awhile, for an answering melody from off the water, and continue to sing and listen till the well-known voice comes borne on the waters, telling that the loved one is almost home. How sweet to the weary fishermen, as the shadows gather around him, must be the songs of the loved ones at home that sing to cheer him, and how they must strengthen and tighten the links that bind together these dwellers by the sea! If we listen rightly may not we hear the singing of loved ones who await our coming beyond the river?