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feb10

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS.

BY REV. JOHN POLLOCK.

"How can I preach to-day?" I sighing said,
As languidly I laid my weary head
Upon the vestry mantle. All was still:
The bell had ceased. The beadsle wait-

ing, stood,
Then anxiously inquired if I was ill;
I answered "No." And then in dreamy mood

I entered with him, climbed the pulpit stair,
Sat down—the people thought I bent in prayer.

Perla's I prayed, although no words did lend
Expression to my yearning. Then I preached,
And prayed, and felt relieved when I had reached.

The accustomed benediction at the end
Of my performance! Oh, how sad I felt,
And sick at heart! And in my grief I knelt.

And poured my disappointment in the ear
Of the Master whom I longed to honor more.

And then I heard a footstep coming near—
A sob—a timid knocking at the door.
"Come in!" "O, sir, you'll pardon me
for speaking

A word or two; but, oh, I could not go
After so many years of weary seeking,
Until I just had come and let you know
How much the tender words that you have spoken

Have comforted a heart that's well-nigh broken!
God bless you for them, sir." She said no more,
But pressed my hand and vanished through the door.

Again I knelt. "O Father, pardon me!
And teach me more and more to trust in Thee!"

Long time I wrestled there; and, as I prayed,
Methought a tender, loving Hand was laid
Upon my head; and, as I walked along
Towards my home, my spirit sang this song:

"Behold, when I am weak then am I strong!"

The Sabbath-School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

[FROM PELOUBET'S NOTES.]

Second Quarter.—Lesson 8.—May 23.

JESUS AT BETHESDA.—JOHN V. 5-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Wilt thou be made whole?

JOHN V. 6.

Bethesda means "house of mercy," or "house of the bubbling (water)." The site is uncertain. The traditional spot is near Castle Antonia, at St. Stephen's Gate, where is a pool 360 feet long, 120 feet wide, and 80 feet deep, now half filled with rubbish. But Dr. Robinson rejects this, and thinks that the fountain of the Virgin, south of Ophel and the temple, near the pool of Siloam, was Bethesda. Several have observed the sudden rise and fall of the water in this fountain. Dr. Robinson saw it rise a foot in five minutes, and a woman assured him, that at certain seasons it is repeated two or three times a day, but in summer it is seldom observed more than once in two or three days.

THE IMPOTENT MAN.—VERS. 5-7. And a certain man was there. In one of the five porches of the pool of Bethesda. Which had an infirmity. The origin implies rather a loss of power than a positive disease; probably it was a nervous disease of a paralytic type. His disease was probably the result of the sins of his youth (ver. 14.) When Jesus saw him lie, and knew. This and ver. 14 show that the whole life of sufferer is present to the eye of Jesus, as that of the Samaritan woman was in chap. IV. He saith unto him. Why did Jesus make this selection? It may be that this was the most pitiable of all the cases. More probably Jesus read the man's past life and present condition of mind, and saw that he was in a state to receive spiritual good from the healing. Wilt thou be made whole? This question was to rouse the man out of his despondency. It was the first step towards his having sufficient faith; he must be inspired with some expectation of being cured.

I have no man. He is not only sick but friendless. When the water is troubled. The occasional and intermittent disturbance of the water is not to be understood as a regular occurrence, but as something sudden and quickly passing away. Hence the man's waiting and complaint. The short bubbling is to be regarded as occurring only in one fixed spring-point in the pool, so that one person only could let it exert its influence upon him. To put me into the pool. Implying that the gush of water did not last long.

HIS DOUBLE CURE.—VERS. 8-14. Jesus saith unto him, Rise. As in case of the paralytic (Mark ii. 9), Christ makes no inquiry as to the man's faith. Christ knew that he had faith; and the man's attempting to rise and carry his bed after 38 years of impotency was an open confession of faith. Take up thy bed. A simple litter or stretcher such as a sick man would be carried round the streets in. And walk. These commands would test the man's faith and prove the completeness of his cure.

Immediately the man was made whole. The instantaneousness of the cure indicates its miraculous character.

The Jews said... It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. The general Sabbath command was, Thou shalt do no work. Nehemiah, enforcing this command, forbade the carriage of commercial burdens (Neh. xiii. 19.)

From this the Pharisees had deduced the doctrine that nothing must be carried on the Sabbath. Either he must have left his bed at the pool, to be stolen, or he must have been allowed to take it home with him.

He that made me whole, the same said, etc. The words seem to say that one who could heal me, must certainly have the right to tell me what to do.

What man is that which. They ignore the miracle, and attack the command. They ask not, "Who cured thee, and therefore must have divine authority?" but "Who told thee to break the Sabbath, and therefore could not have it?"

He that was healed wist (knew) not who it was. Jesus had been at Jerusalem but little, and the man was so lame that he could not go around to see. He may have heard of him, though he had never seen him.

Afterward. Probably not long afterwards, perhaps the same day. Jesus findeth him in the temple. It is a good sign. It is as though he was there returning thanks for the great mercy which had been so lately vouchsafed him. Sin no more. Rather, no longer continue to sin. How his sickness was connected with his sin must remain undefined; but the connection is implied. Let a worse thing come upon thee. More sinning after this warning would deserve greater punishment, and after so long a course of sin a repetition of the sins would naturally produce greater evils than any he had yet experienced.

PERSECUTION FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE. Ver. 15-18. The man departed and told the Jews, etc. He expected, probably, in the simplicity of his heart, that the name of him whom so many counted as a prophet, would have been sufficient to stop the mouths of gainsayers.

And therefore. On this account, as related below. Did the Jews persecute Jesus. His language indicates not a legal persecution but a malicious pursuit. Because he had done these things on the sabbath day. No less than seven miracles are recorded as wrought by him on the Sabbath day, some of them among the most conspicuous and memorable in his ministry.

But Jesus answered them. Giving his reasons for doing as he had done. My Father worketh hitherto (until now) and I work. Like him, Jesus worked, and we should work. There is no record of Jesus doing a single secular work on the Sabbath. His works on the Sabbath were works of mercy, of religion, of teaching, of helping men. And these are our Sabbath works.

Therefore the Jews sought to kill him. They have now a second reason for their persecution. To kill him. Nothing less than this would do for them. Because he not only had broken the sabbath. He did relax what they supposed to be essential to the preservation of the day, but what was really destroying it. But said... that God was his (own) father. His father in the highest peculiar sense. Making himself equal with God. "On the same level with God."

The greatness of our needs, our friendless and helpless condition, does not repel, but attracts the Saviour to our help.

At Bethesda only the first comers had seeming opportunity for healing. The Gospel is abundant and free to all. One's healing does not hinder, but helps, the healing of others.

When Christ commands us to do anything, he will give us strength to perform the command.

Christ demands faith of us, usually embodied in some act.

The faith that obeys Christ's word is the faith that saves.

All the works of God are works of mercy. Jesus worked several miracles of mercy on the Sabbath. It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

Faithful the Sabbath with worship, devotion, spiritual life and culture. Jesus was accustomed to go to the synagogue (church) on the Sabbath.

DIALOGUE ABOUT HINDU WOMEN AND GIRLS.

SOPHIE S. SMITH.

Mamie: Mother, can you tell me something about Hindu women and girls? Miss Crosby asked us to find out all the facts we could and bring them to the next meeting of the Mission Band.

Mother: Do you know where the Hindus live?

Mamie: In India.

Mother: What is the part of the house called where the women live?

Mamie: The Zenana.

Mother: Yes, the high-caste women live in these Zenanas exclusively, never seeing any one but their servants who wait upon them, and occasionally the husband and father, for all the women and girls in a Zenana are either wives or daughters of the master of the house.

Mamie: Do they never go anywhere?

Mother: No; the children never

go to church or Sunday-school or out on the street to walk or play, and the women are not allowed to look out on the street, much less to go to places of amusement or to visit their friends.

Mamie: How do they spend the time; do they read and study?

Mother: They neither read, write nor sew, but occupy their time in conversation with each other, and doing fancy work.

Mamie: Poor things! They must get very tired of living such lives.

Mother: They are tired, it is true; but they cannot help themselves. Girls are married at ten and twelve years of age, and then they lose even the comfort of their mother's love and sympathy.

Mamie: Do they have to leave their mother so young?

Mother: Yes; they go to live with their husband's mother, who rules the house and leads them a wretched life.

Mamie: If the husband should die while the wife is young could she go back to her mother?

Mother: No; she must remain where she is, and her life becomes even more miserable than before. The widow used to burn herself on her husband's funeral pile, but that has been stopped, and the poor little widow has all her jewels and pretty clothes taken from her, made to wear coarse garments, to sleep on the bare floor and fast two days in each week.

Mamie: I should think they would want to die.

Mother: They would, if they could die on their husband's funeral pile; for they believe they should then go to heaven; but if they die in any other way they must pass into the body of some ugly beast.

Mamie: What does a woman do after she is married?

Mother: A high-caste woman is taken to the Zenana, where she lives among the others, doing nothing; while the low-caste woman is taught to cook her husband's food and do all kinds of rough work. In either case she must regard her husband as a god, look neither to the right nor to the left when in his presence, but keep her eyes upon him, ready to obey his commands. When he eats, she stands behind and waits upon him, and when he has finished, eats what is left.

Mamie: How glad I am that I was not born in India.

Mother: Yes; we should be thankful that our lines have been cast in such pleasant places, and pray that these poor, ignorant, suffering women may have their burdens lifted, and the blessings of peace and happiness come into their lives.

Mamie: Thank you, for telling me so much about them. I will write it down and then I shall not forget it.

BELLS OF JUSTICE.

It is a beautiful story that in one of the old cities of Italy the king caused a bell to be hung in a tower in one of the public squares, and called it the "bell of justice," and commanded that any one who had been wronged should go and ring the bell, and so call the magistrate of the city, and ask and receive justice. And when in the course of time the lower end of the bell-rope rotted away, a wild vine was tied to it to lengthen it; and one day an old and starving horse that had been abandoned by its owner and turned out to die, wandered into the tower, and trying to eat the vine, rang the bell. The magistrate of the city coming to see who had rung the bell, found this old and starving horse. He caused the owner of the horse, in whose service he had toiled and been worn out, to be summoned before him, and decreed that as his poor horse had rung the bell of justice, he should have justice, and that during the remainder of the horse's life his owner should provide for him proper food and drink and stable.

You will find this incident beautifully told by Longfellow in his "Tales of a Wayside Inn."

Next to a superintendent in the power of making and shaping a Sunday-school, comes the secretary; indeed, no superintendent can do his best work in and for a Sunday-school without the aid of a good secretary. The secretary's work enables the superintendent to see his school as it is, both in its membership and in its habits; it also enables him to hold up before his teachers the dangers and the possibilities of the school. Without the work of a good secretary any Sunday-school is liable to lose scholars and teachers almost imperceptibly; with a good secretary a Sunday-school can be kept up to its own best standard of regularity in the attendance of both scholars and teachers. He who can fill a secretary's place may feel that his position is one of large responsibility and influence. And whoever would promote the best interests of a Sunday-school may feel that he is doing so when he co-operates heartily with the secretary of that Sunday-school.—S. S. Times.

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