

HUGH MILLER ON THE SABBATH.

In his "First Impressions of England and its people," Hugh Miller makes the following forcible remarks upon the importance of the Sabbath. Though written for England, they apply equally to us, while the Reformers he describes can be found this side of the Atlantic.

"Among the existing varieties of the genus philanthropist,—benevolent men bent on bettering the condition of the masses,—There is a variety who would fain send our working people to the country on Sabbaths, to become happy and innocent in smelling primroses, and stringing daisies on grass stalks. An excellent scheme theirs, if they but knew it, for sinking a people into ignorance and brutality,—for filling a country with gloomy work-houses, and the work-houses with unhappy paupers. 'Tis pity rather that the institution of the Sabbath in its economic bearings, should not be better understood by the utilitarian. The problem which it furnishes is not particularly difficult, if one could be made to understand, as a first step in the process, that it is really worth solving. The mere animal, that has to pass six days of the week in hard labour, benefits greatly by a seventh day of mere animal rest and enjoyment. The repose according to its nature, proves of signal use to it, just because it is repose according to its nature. But man is not a mere animal; what is best for the ox and the ass, is not best for him; and in order to degrade him into a poor unintellectual slave, over whom tyranny in its caprice may trample rough-shod, it is but necessary to tie him down, animal-like, during his six working days, to hard, engrossing labor, and to convert the seventh into a day of frivolous, unthinking relaxation. History speaks with much emphasis on the point. The old despotic Stuarts were tolerable adepts in the art of king-craft, and knew well what they were doing, when they backed with their authority the Book of Sports. The many unthinking serfs, who early in the reign of Charles the First, danced on Sabbaths round the Maypole, were afterwards the ready tools of despotism, and fought that England might be enslaved. The Ironsides, who in the cause of civil and religious freedom, love their clown, were staunch Sabbatarian.

In no history, however, is the value of the Sabbath more strikingly illustrated than in that of the Scotch people during the seventeenth, and the larger portion of the eighteenth centuries. Religion and the Sabbath were their sole instructors, and this in times so little favorable to the cultivation of the mind, so darkened by persecution and stained with blood, that, in at least the earlier of these centuries, we derive our knowledge of the character and amount of the popular intelligence, mainly from the death-testimonies of our humble martyrs, here and there corroborated by the incidental evidence of writers such as Burnet.*—In these noble addresses from prison and scaffold,—the composition of men drafted by oppression almost at random from the general mass—we see how vigorously our Presbyterian people had learned to think, and how well to give their thinking expression. In the quieter times which followed the Revolution, the Scotch peasantry existed as at once the most provident and intellectual in Europe; and a moral and instructed people pressed outward beyond the narrow bounds of their country, and rose into offices of trust and importance in all the nations of the world. There were no societies for the diffusion of useful knowledge in those days. But the Sabbath was kept holy: it was a day of which every dissipating frivolity was excluded by a stern sense of duty. The popular mind, with weight imparted to it by its religious earnestness, and direction by the pulpit addresses of the day, expiated on matters of grave import, of which the tendency was to concentrate and strengthen, not scatter and weaken, the faculties; and the secular cogitations of the week came to bear in consequence, a Sabbath day stamp of depth and solidity. The one day in the seven struck the tone for the

* Burnet, afterwards the celebrated Whig Bishop, was one of six divines sent out by Archbishop Leighton, in 1670, to argue the Scotch people into Episcopacy. But the mission was by no means successful. "The people of the country," says Burnet, "came generally to hear us, though not in great crowds. We were indeed amazed, to see a poor commonalty so capable to argue on points of government, and on the bounds to be set to the power of princes in matters of religion.—upon all these topics, they had texts of Scripture at hand, and were ready with their answers to anything that was said to them. This measure of knowledge was spread even among the meanest of them,—their cottagers and their servants."

other six. Our modern apostles of popular instruction rear up no such men among the masses as were developed under the Sabbatarian system in Scotland. Their aptest pupils prove but the loquacious gabblers of their respective worships—shallow superficialists, that bear on the surface of their minds, a thin diffusion of remembered facts and crude theories; and scarcely do we see them rising in the scale of society; they become Socialists by hundreds, and Chartists by thousands, and get no higher. The disseminator of mere useful knowledge takes aim at the popular ignorance; but his inept and unscientific gunnery does not include in its calculations the parabolic course of man's spiritual nature; and so, aiming direct at the mark, he aims too low, and the charge falls short.

What's the Use of Doctrines?

Perhaps one of the most remarkable facts observable in the church on earth, is the ignorance of its members in reference to the great system of revealed truth. Where one is found who can give an intelligent account of the doctrines which he professes to believe, how many are there who are struck dumb when closely interrogated on this subject! One of the results of this ignorance is a depreciation of those high and sublime truths which God, in his wisdom, has revealed. Even professed followers of Christ are not unfrequently heard to say, "What's the use of doctrines? I dislike doctrinal preaching. It does more harm than good." This language is not simply surprising; it is ungracious and ungodly. It affords sad evidence of an unenlightened mind and an unsanctified heart.

What is doctrine? Is it not the exhibition of God's being and attributes? and should we not wish to know all which it is possible to know of our Creator, Sovereign, and Judge? Is it not the statement of our own moral relations and destiny? and can we safely be ignorant of these? Is it not the development of God's government of the world? And should we not eagerly receive all the light on this subject which God has vouchsafed to communicate? Is it not the revelation of God's only method of mercy through the substitution of Jesus Christ as a Redeemer? and can we, with safety, neglect such knowledge?—On these great topics God has been pleased to communicate certain and definite knowledge, and not one iota of it can be disregarded without hazard to the soul. It is the sanctified knowledge of what God has revealed that gives stability to our faith, intelligence to our hope, enlargement to our views, activity to our duties, and sweetness to our enjoyments.—Faith must necessarily fluctuate, hope waver, energy be paralyzed, and happiness be clouded where there is ignorance of the doctrine of the Bible. It is greatly to this cause that we are to attribute the progress of danger, error and the meagre attainments in piety now so observable. To assert that practicable godliness is possible without some adequate knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible, is to say far more than we are authorized to do. No man has a right to do what God has not done.—divorce doctrinal and practical religion. They are wedded indissolubly. To quarrel with the plain statements of God's Word, is to quarrel with him; and wherever there is a revulsion in the soul at the statement of any of God's truths, it is positive evidence, so far, that the soul is not established in grace. We speak, not of unavoidable ignorance, but of that which results from wilful neglect of the means of information. Such ignorance is sin, and if not obviated, it may prove ruinous.—From all this we may legitimately infer that ministers of the gospel are solemnly obliged to indoctrinate the people of their charge by private instruction and public teaching.—Without this they can never hope to have growing Christians in their churches and intelligent co-workers in the service of the gospel. It may be inferred also, that no Christian who has a proper regard for his soul, will speak disparagingly of the doctrines of the Bible, but will faithfully and prayerfully devote himself to their study.—*Presbyterian.*

The Doctrines of Grace

NECESSARY TO THE ASSURANCE OF HOPE.

A well grounded hope cannot exist except it be built upon the doctrines of grace. The doctrines of election, effectual calling, and the perseverance of the saints, or their being "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," are necessary to the existence of such a hope.

It may be objected, however, that a good hope often is enjoyed, where these doctrines are rejected. To this it may be replied, that one of two things must be certain in every such case. Either that hope is a false one or else the substance of these doctrines is held, although the names are rejected. For an individual to hope that he shall be saved, or have any confidence of it, without the effectual work of the Spirit, implied in those doctrines, in renewing the heart, and keeping the Christian effectually from falling away, is presumption; for it is hoping to be saved without the effectual grace of God, and that is hoping to be saved by works, which is wholly contrary to the instructions of the Bible.

The doctrines of grace all correspond to each other, and if one is rejected, you may as well reject them all, for they must all stand or fall together, and assurance or even hope, that is well founded, cannot exist, but on the foundation of the doctrines of grace. Take away these doctrines of grace, and the anchor of hope is gone. Though you may think to sustain it, yet there is nothing left that is sure and steadfast. You are cast loose on a sea of error, and what the end will be, is all a matter of uncertainty. Your boat may be foundered on the quicksands of a wild enthusiasm, or be dashed in pieces on the rocks of infidelity. But on the ground of the doctrines of grace, hope, and even assurance may be attained, which will be as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, enabling it to outride all the storms of life in safety, being assured of reaching the desired haven at last.—*Recorder.*

Patch-Work Finished.

"I had as lief," says Cowper, in one of his beautiful letters to John Newton, "I had as lief my tailor should sew gingerbread-nuts on my coat instead of buttons, as that any man should call my Bristol stone a diamond." And yet this is just what many a false religionist is doing; just showing off Bristol stones for diamonds. Some are doing this with a positive consciousness of the cheat; others, like the conceited Pharisee, vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind, so that they themselves really believe in the cheat, and boast themselves of it; others, with such a deification of natural amiableness in the place of true piety, that they regard a man's native virtues as being even better than grace, and prefer natural Christians to new created ones.

Cowper says of himself, in another of his sweet letters, "The deceitfulness of the natural heart is inconceivable; I know well that I passed upon my friends for a person at least religiously inclined, if not actually religious; and what is more wonderful, I thought myself a Christian when I had no faith in Christ, when I saw no beauty in him that I should desire him; in short, when I had neither faith, nor love, nor any Christian grace whatever, but a thousand seeds of rebellion instead, ever more springing up in enmity against him.—But, blessed be God, even the God who has become my salvation, the hail of affliction and rebuke for sin has swept away the refuge of lies. It pleased the Almighty, in great mercy, to set all my misdeeds before me. At length, the storm being past, a quiet and peaceful serenity of soul succeeded, such as ever attends the gift of living faith in the all-sufficient atonement, and the sweet sense of mercy and pardon purchased by the blood of Christ. Thus did he break me and bind me up, thus did he wound me, and his hands made me whole."

Thus is every man cured, whom God takes in hand. But some men choose to be their physicians, and will not submit the case to God's judgment. Like our self-righteous Pharisee, they first deny that there is any fatal or incurable sickness. God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, covered with the leprosy of sin. Here is, in the first place, a pretence of being better than other men, and in the second place a pretence of being grateful to God for it. It is just as if a man should waylay his neighbor, and rob him of a thousand pounds, and then thank God for having so much money in his possession.

And God says distinctly, "Woe unto them that cover themselves with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin. This denial of their native depravity is such a covering, adding sin to sin; and this successive denial of every indictment brought against them by the Divine law, is such a covering, adding sin to sin. But God says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper." And Job curseth his own self, if he had covered

his transgressions as Adam, by hiding his iniquity in his bosom. And again, God says, "Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works."—*Independent.*

Lord, What Will Thou Have Me to Do?

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth," of all the varied forms of kindness and of good. Stand in your lot and work around you; in your own home, in your own neighborhood, your own town, county or State; and if God enlarges the ability and opportunity, "break forth upon the right hand and upon the left; but don't wait for a large field; cultivate the spot you have, and help your neighbors.

Don't forget the prayer meeting and the Sabbath school, nor "to do good and communicate;" for "with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Remember that to put a sound gospel tract into a family, is like giving them a draught of the water of life; to put there an evangelical volume, is like furnishing them a "water-pot of two or three firkins;" nay, some volumes might rather be likened to a reservoir; but to supply them with the Bible, is to open a fountain of living waters by the very hearth-stone. It is like planting a perennial spring in the traveller's track across the great Sahara.

Do any or all of these, and a blessing shall return into your own bosom, and God shall be glorified in you.—*N. Y. Observer.*

The Young Christian Tried.

S. W. was a youth of nineteen, who maintained a close, consistent walk with God.—There had been no revival for years in the place, and the youth who would have been his natural associates, were imprudent, and in their social interviews engaged in such amusements as he considered inconsistent for a Christian. They invited him several times to their parties, but he thought it wrong to dance and to waste his time in similar amusements.—he declined their invitations. They gave him no credit for his integrity, but said that S. W. was of a cold, unsocial temperament, possessing none of the common cheerful feelings of youth, while at the same time they knew better, and in their hearts respected him. Two or three years rolled away, when God heard the prayers of those who wept and prayed over this sad declension; and most of these youth became penitent and embraced their Saviour. When they saw their sins, and became anxious about their souls, they all came to S. W. for instruction. As he was of an affable, social disposition, all could easily approach him, and his conduct had been so consistent while others had gone astray, that all had confidence in him. His words were as if an angel had spoken. He had been praying and reading his Bible while they had been dancing, and now, while he has been in other respects rewarded, he enjoys the highest respect and esteem of all.—*Central Watchman.*

THE SINNER'S PRAYER.—God hath put arguments into the sinner's mouth to plead with him for mercy. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." Rise, sinner, he calleth thee; go to the Lord; and when thou goest, tell him, Lord, thou hast bid me come, and behold here I am. I come Lord at thy word; I come for a little water, I come for thy wine and thy milk. I have brought no price in my hand, but thou hast bid me come without money and without price. Though I have no grace, yet at thy word I come for grace; though I have no Christ, I come for Christ; though I cannot call thee Father, yet, being called, I come to thee as fatherless. "With thee the fatherless find mercy." If I am not thy child, may I not be made thy child? Hast thou not a child's blessing left yet to bestow upon me? Thou hast bid me come, come for a blessing; bless me, even me, also, O Lord. Wherefore hast thou sent for me? Shall I be sent away as I came? I came at thy word; do not say, begone out of my sight. I cannot go at thy word, I will not go, for whither shall I go from thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Since thou wilt have me speak, Lord, answer. Though I dare not say, be just to me a saint; yet I do say, I will say, I must say, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."—*Richard Allestree.*

Urbanity will often lend a grace to actions that are of themselves ungracious.