



THE MASTER'S TENDERNESS

Jesus saith unto them: Come and break your fast.—St. John xxi.: 12. (R. V.)

Last Sunday I was reading a sermon called "The Fire on the Shore," which attempted to explain the mysterious event described in the last chapter of St. John's Gospel. It was considered to be a parable of the life beyond death. The net, which was full of great fishes, was explained to mean the Church, with its harvest of souls. The fish, which Christ had already prepared for the refreshment of the disciples, represent the souls saved in Old Testament days. The fire "was typical of the propitiatory work of the Redeemer, through whom alone the men of any age can be presented as a sacrifice acceptable unto God"—so says the writer of "The Fire on the Shore."

Now, I have no reason to object to this parabolical way of studying the Bible. If our Lord found parables in such everyday duties as sowing seed, sweeping a house, weeding a field, making bread, etc., it is very certain that He intended to teach deep spiritual lessons to the whole Church that spring morning by the Sea of Galilee.

But we must not let our perception of parables blind us to facts. A great deal of the Bible—probably much more of it than we formerly supposed—is intended to convey spiritual truths in allegorical fashion. But the Bible is not only brimming with parables, it is a record of facts. Let us examine the account given in this chapter as if it were a bit of history written in any other book.

Seven men had been fishing all night long and had nothing to show for all their hard work. The morning was breaking and they were feeling discouraged and tired out. Did anyone care for their disappointment? Did it matter to anyone that they were cold and hungry? Yes; a cheery voice comes from the beach asking in friendliest fashion if they have anything to eat. Their answer is short and gloomy, "No."

But the stranger on the shore does not turn away, although His friendliness meets with no encouragement. His help is not asked, but it is needed, and the cry of need is in His ears a call for help. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship," He says, and when the advice was taken, their weariness and discouragement vanished, and the toil of the long night was forgotten in the joy of finding the net full of great fishes.

When the fishermen reached the shore they found themselves expected. There was a fire on the shore to warm them and dry their wet clothes. Breakfast was ready, and the Master not only gave a hearty invitation, "Come and break your fast," but He also reversed the usual position of master and servant. He waited on His hungry disciples with the pleasure of a man serving his dear friends, giving them bread and fish with His own hands—the hands that were pierced because of His love to them.

Probably it is intended to give us some idea of the welcome that will meet each faithful worker when the Great Morning shall break on the shore of eternity.

"Where the Light forever shineth,
Where no storm ariseth more,
Where the SAVIOUR meets His loved
ones on the shore."

But, as I said, it is also a record of facts. No wonder those men loved One who, though He was so evidently far above them, was so thoughtful and considerate, so friendly and obliging, so

tender and practical in caring for their ordinary needs. They were cold and wet and hungry, so He provided a fire and a good hot breakfast. They were weary, so He waited on them. Has He changed since then?

In these last days, we are told, God has spoken unto us by His Son, "by Whom also He made the worlds." Think of the thoughtful consideration for our comfort and pleasure which is shown everywhere in this world of ours. We are hungry for beauty, for the mystery of infinite distance, for harmonious coloring and graceful forms. We soon tire of looking at a never-changing wall—as invalids know. Think of the changing beauty and coloring of sky

and landscape and sea. There is infinite variety and harmonious coloring everywhere. Just think what we should have suffered if the sky had been a glaring crimson all over, and the grass and trees had been black. But no mother could prepare a nursery for her darling with more thoughtful tenderness and profusion of beauty than our Father has lavished on us. As Browning says:

"I find earth not gray, but rosy,
Heaven not grim, but fair of hue.
Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.
Do I stand and stare? All's blue."

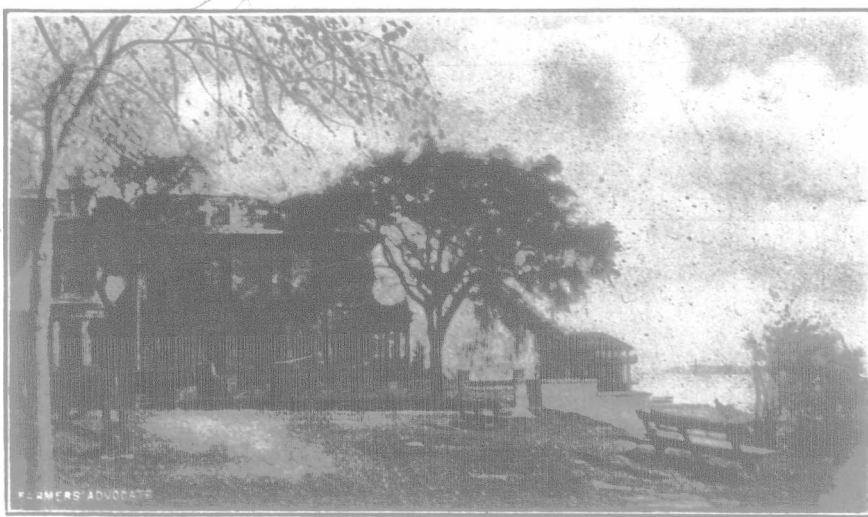
There is a tradition that when Moses was keeping Jethro's flock, a little lamb ran away and was lost in the desert. Moses searched for it for hours, and when he found it he laid it in his bosom, saying, "Little lamb, thou knowest not what is good for thee, trust me, thy shepherd, who will guide thee aright." Because of his tenderness to one stray lamb he was chosen to be shepherd to God's people. And the Good Shepherd never fails in thoughtful tenderness for each of us.

Let us try to trust Him, though we may not understand everything He sends. We are assured of His considerate love in a thousand ways. We have the outward beauty of flowers and trees, the sweet sounds of the summer breeze, the rippling water, the songs of birds, and the pleasant hum of insects. There is an infinite variety of good things provided for us to eat—meat, vegetables, fruit, etc. If our Father had not taken delight in giving us pleasure, would He have got together so many things for our enjoyment? And see how we are waited on. We plant seeds and the great sun exerts himself to make them grow. We launch ships and the mighty wind puts his shoulder against the sails; the giant force of steam is harnessed to our carriages; electricity could de-

stroy us in a moment, but it submits obediently to do our work and runs errands at our bidding. But these things are not the greatest proof of God's considerate tenderness. He has given us that marvellous sweetener of life—human love—to reveal something of His own Love which passeth knowledge. The lives that are rich and full and sweet, are those which are rejoicing in an atmosphere of love—love given and received. Never call yourself "poor" while you love and are loved. Margaret Sangster sings:

"There's always love that's caring,
And shielding and forbearing,
Dear woman's love to hold us close
and keep our hearts in thrall;
There's home to share together,
In calm or stormy weather,
And while the hearth-flame burns, it
is a good world, after all.
The lisp of children's voices,
The chance of happy choices,
The bugle sounds, the hope and faith,
through fogs and mists that call;
The heaven that stretches o'er us,
The better days before us,
They all combine to make this earth
a good world, after all."

And what can we do to follow the example of our Master? Does He ask us for great sacrifices most days, or for the little tokens of tender, considerate thoughtfulness that reflect His care for the tired fishermen on the shore?



A BEAUTIFUL OUTLOOK

In a certain home one day, the grocer had forgotten to send some eggs. It was a bacon-and-eggs dinner, and there was a probability of the one who had cooked the dinner having nothing over for her share. The master of the house jumped up from the dinner-table, mounted his wheel, and returned from the store with a dozen eggs before the family realized what he was going to do. He proved himself a true master by providing for a servant—as Christ has commanded: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister."

Emerson says: "'Tis the fine soul that serves," and again: "It never troubles the sun that some of his rays fall wide and vain into ungrateful space, and only a small part on the reflecting plant. Thou art enlarged by thine own shining."

DORA FARNCOMB.

A MIDSUMMER SONG

O father's gone to market-town, he was
up before the day,
And Jamie's after robins, and the man is
making hay,
And whistling down the hollow goes
the boy that minds the mill,
While mother from the kitchen-door
is calling with a will;
"Polly!—Polly!—The cows are in
the corn!
O, where's Polly?"

From all the misty morning air there
comes a summer sound—
A murmur as of waters from skies and
trees and ground,
The birds they sing upon the wing, the
pigeons bill and coo,
And over hill and hollow rings again
the loud halloo:
"Polly!—Polly!—The cows are in
the corn!
O, where's Polly?"

Above the trees the honey-bees swarm
by with buzz and boom,
And in the field and garden a thousand
blossoms bloom.
Within the farmer's meadow a brown-
eyed daisy blows,
And down at the edge of the hollow
a red and thorny rose,
But—Polly!—Polly!—The cows are
in the corn!
O, where's Polly?

How strange at such a time of day the
mill should stop its clatter!
The farmer's wife is listening now and
wonders what's the matter.
O, wild the birds are singing in the wood
and on the hill,
While whistling up the hollow goes the
boy that minds the mill.
But Polly!—Polly!—The cows are
in the corn!
O, where's Polly?

VERSES FOR KIDDIES

When she went to the party, Elizabeth
Lou,
Had her hair tied on top with a ribbon
of blue,
But she hadn't a very good time, and
I think
'Twas because of a girl with a ribbon
of pink.
"For all the girls chose her, the whole
evening through.
Just because she wore pink!" sobbed
Elizabeth Lou.

At the very next party Elizabeth Lou
Wore a ribbon herself of a roseate hue.
But would you believe it? That same
girl was there
With a bowknot of blue tying up her
brown hair.
And the very same thing proved again
to be true:
"They still like her best!" wept Eliza-
beth Lou.

Now between you and me, it had
nothing to do
With those crisp little loopings of pink
and blue.
But one little girl wore a smile on her
face,
The other a frown in the very same
place.
A smile and a frown! Now which of
the two
Do you fancy was worn by Elizabeth
Lou?

—Youth's Companion.

LOVING

Unless you can think when the song is done
That no other is soft in its rhythm,
Unless you can feel when loved by one
That all men else go with him,
Unless you know when unpraised by his breath
That your beauty itself wants proving,
Unless you can say—for life—for death,
Oh fear to call it loving.

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day
On the absent face that fixed you,
Unless you can love as the angels may
With the breath of Heaven betwixt you,
Unless you know that his faith is fast
Through beholding and unbeholding,
Unless you can die when the dream is past,
Oh never call it loving.

ELIZABETH BROWNING.