

The Last Day.

BY MRS. M. F. BUTTS.

WERE this the last of earth,
This very day,
How should I think and act?
What should I say?
Would not I guard my heart
With earnest prayer?
Would not I serve my friends
With loving care?

How tender every word
As the hours wane!
"Like this we shall not sit
And talk again."
How soft the beating heart
That soon must cease!
What glances carry love—
What heavenly peace!

And yet this fleeting life
Is one last day;
How long soe'er its hours,
They will not stay.
O heart! be soft and true
While thou dost beat;
O hands! be swift to do,
O lips, be sweet!

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, JULY 21, 1894.

THE BOYHOOD OF JESUS.

BY SAMUEL GREGORY.

"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"—*Luke 2. 49.*

A GOLD-BEATER'S HAMMER.

Not long ago I was talking to a gold-beater, and I said: "Tell me what you can do with a bit of gold as big as a sovereign; how far can you make it spread out under your hammer?"

He said: "Well, suppose you had an image of a man on horseback the size of life—I could take the sovereign and beat it out until there was enough of it to cover the man and the horse all over, and then have gold to spare."

Now here is a golden saying of Jesus, "Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" and there is enough in its beautiful meaning to spread over all thoughts, words, and actions of our life. Everything is in this saying, that God loves me like a father, and that we must every day remember that we are doing his business and work.

AMONG THE BOYS AT NAZARETH.

This is the first saying of Jesus. He was twelve years old when he said this in the temple. During twelve years Jesus had lived in a quiet shut-away place among the hills called Nazareth. Behind the village there was a hill, which the boys used to climb, and from the top of which they could see across the country right away to the sea. Two or three miles off there was a great road from Damascus, along which

merchant caravans travelled. The boys of Nazareth sometimes went as far as the cross-roads, to watch the camels stride along, with bells on their bridles and bales on their backs; or to see a troop of Roman soldiers march by. At home what they saw was chiefly flocks following the shepherd, vineyards, gardens where oranges and fig trees grew, and the yellow barley fields.

When Jesus was seven or eight years old there was terrible excitement, for the Galileans broke out in rebellion, and then the boys saw along the roadside crosses, on which the Roman soldiers crucified the Galileans.

Ordinarily, however, it was quiet life at Nazareth. The boys were well taught at a school in the synagogue. They all went to school. Jew boys had wonderful brains and used them. On Mondays and Thursdays and on the Sabbath, they attended the synagogue for worship, and to read the Scriptures, and chant the Psalms, and hear discussions, for almost anybody might speak in the synagogue if he had anything to say.

When the boys were twelve years old they went to their first Passover, and they were little men after that. It was eighty miles from Nazareth to Jerusalem, where the Passover was celebrated, a long way to walk or to ride on a mule or an ass. Hundreds of people went together. The journey occupied several days, and being spring time when the sky was sunny and the fruit trees in blossom, it was a pleasant holiday excursion.

THE FIRST WORDS OF JESUS.

Jesus made this journey when he was twelve years old. After the Nazareth people had started back his mother missed him; but she was not alarmed at first, thinking that he was with his cousins somewhere in the company. At last she went back to Jerusalem, and found him in the temple. Teachers (Doctors of the Law) taught in the courts of the temple, and Jesus was among them, hearing them and asking them questions. When his mother asked why he had frightened them so by staying behind, he said: "Do you not know that I must be in my Father's house, that I must be about my Father's business?"

COLUMBUS ON THE CLIFFS.

Sometimes boys and girls suddenly think the same thoughts that Jesus did. It is as if they had discovered something.

You have read tales of the discoverer Columbus. I have seen a picture of him as a boy sitting on a cliff. He is looking right away to where the blue sky bends down to meet the blue sea. He is not watching the gulls sail and dive, but seems to be asking questions to himself about what there is over yonder where sky and water seem to meet. The boy was beginning to think.

THE OPENING ROSE.

Before Jesus was twelve years old he often thought about life and about God. He thought while his mother talked to him: and often asked questions which she could not answer. He thought as he heard the man read in the synagogue: so at that Passover in the temple his whole mind was awake. A day will come when you will think and see that you must be about your Father's business. The mind is like a rose that has been slowly growing. One morning it becomes full-blown in the sunshine. All who pass by look at it and feel its loveliness and fragrance. The mind of Jesus opened towards heaven like an opening rose.

HECTOR'S HELMET.

Jesus said of God "He is my Father!" In Homer's poem there is a story about Hector. He was ready for battle, covered with his terrible armour; his helmet covered his face, and great plumes waved on it. Hector wanted to kiss his little boy, but the child did not know who it was, and when he saw the armed figure, and heard the terrible clang of the bronze armour, he cried and ran away. So Hector took off his helmet, and then looked at the child. In a moment the little boy said, "It's my Father!" and ran to his arms.

Now if we are wicked we do not know God, and are afraid of him. What Jesus came to do was to "show us the Father"—to make us know God. It is like taking

off the helmet. Jesus used to say to everybody: "Look who is God?" God is kind! God is love! God is my Father and your Father. That is what Jesus says to us. He died to show us that, and to make us love God, and run to his arms as children to their father.

There is a little memorial stone in a quiet place, with just these words on it—

"Freddy!"

"Yes—Father?"

I think some of you can understand what that means. There are times when all we want to be sure of this that God is our Father, and to be able, like Freddy, when God calls, to say "Yes!"

THE TWO SONS.

But Jesus also said: "I must do my Father's work!" We must all do that. We have to be good, and kind, and true, and help everybody all we can. Once Jesus told a story about a man who had two boys. The man said to the first boy: "Go, work in my vineyard!" The boy said: "I won't!" In a little while feeling sorry and ashamed he set off to the vineyard and helped to gather the ripe grapes. The man told his second boy to go, and this boy smiled, and said: "Yes, father, I'm going!" But he never went near the vineyard.

Some are like the second boy. You feel as if you will be good, and work hard, and do what you are told, and serve God. But you forget so soon. You make good resolutions, and then break them, and do nothing.

Some again are like the first boy. You are not thoughtful and earnest, and you don't try to do anything. You grieve your father, and mother and God. Now do the rest of the first boy's part. Say nothing but go and do better. Whenever anybody tries to do that God comes to help him. All that we have to do is our Father's work. You know what it is to be earnest and good, and you know that it is happiest for anybody. Hear the bees in the garden, how they sing among the flowers, as they work and store away sweetness for days to come!

THE ANT AND THE GRASSHOPPER.

It is a terrible thing not to be earnestly at work. You remember what the ant said to the grasshopper. A grasshopper went to an ant, when winter was coming on, and said he wanted help. "But," said the ant, "what have you been doing all the summer?" "Well," the grasshopper said, "I spent my time chirping and jumping about and enjoying myself." "Then be off," said the ant, "for I spent the summer working hard to prepare for the winter."

"I MUST."

There is one grand word that Jesus used—the word "must." He said, "must be about my Father's business!"

In all of us there is a conscience that says, you must not be selfish and neglectful: you must not want to do as you like: you must not forget God: you must do what is right: you must pray and love God, and lived as Jesus lived. You must, says conscience. You must, says the Word of God. You must, says the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We all know that we must. Let us say: "By God's help I will!"

THREE STAGES OF HOLY LIFE.

There are three great sayings of Jesus about the work of life.

At the beginning of his life he said to his mother: "I must be about my Father's work!"

In the midst of his work he said to his disciples: "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day."

And at the end he said to God: "Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do!"

TRIAL AND TRIUMPH.

STORY OF A TEMPERANCE HERO WHO WOULD NOT BREAK HIS PROMISE.

THE days of heroism are never past, and the history of temperance in the days when it was everywhere denounced would afford some noble specimens. I have often spoken of Willie Bartlett, and it will interest those of your readers who admire pluck wherever it is found to read of his

trial and triumph. Willie's father was a noble father, one of the multitude whom the drink sweeps away who are said to be nobody's enemies but their own. He died terribly false, as Willie's mother and the fatherless children soon felt. Burdened with debt and with six small children to support, her prospects were very dark indeed. Early in life, however, she had become a true Christian, and though her husband, who had once walked with her in the narrow path, had been led away by the drink fiend, she remained faithful, and now that the day of trouble had come she knew where to go for support and guidance.

After awhile Willie's mother determined to apprentice him to his father's trade, and after some negotiations the master agreed to take him. Having a high regard for his father, the master took him into the works and gave him in charge of his principal foreman. As soon as the master had left the foreman said:

"Well, Willie, we'll make a man of thee here for thy father's sake, and we must have a footing to drink thy success, and as I know money is not very plentiful at home, I will pay for it myself," and immediately one of the other lads was sent for a quart of beer.

Poor Willie was bewildered with this arrangement, for his mother had trained him up a strict abstainer and had taught him to hate his father's murderer—the drink. The beer was soon brought, and the men gathered round and each drank to Willie's success. Then the foreman poured out a glass and offered it to Willie:

"Now, my lad, drink success to all."

Willie quietly replied, "I am a teetotaler and never touch the drink."

Irritated at the boy's reply, the foreman said: "None of that nonsense. We'll have no teetotalism here. Take the drink at once."

Willie said, "I promised mother I would never touch the drink, and I never will."

"Look here," said the man, "We are not going to have two masters here; so drink it up."

"I cannot, and I will not!" said Willie.

Mad with the boy's rebellion against his orders, the foreman said: "This is all nonsense! You will have it in you or over you!"

"Well," said Willie, "I can't help it. I will never drink. You can throw it over me if you like. I have brought here a clean jacket and a good character. You may spoil my jacket if you will, but you shall never spoil my character."

Struck with the boy's earnest look, the man's better nature prevailed, and turning away he said to his mates:

"He's a rum one, but I believe he'll make a man."

The prophecy was right, for to-day Willie is a prominent temperance worker and is at the head of a large establishment noted for their intelligence and high principle.—*Pacific.*

DRAW NEAR TO HIM.

If you stand a quarter of a mile off from your father, you will be sore puzzled to know what he says or what he means; but if you go within five feet of him, everything will be plain. So, if you stand off and away from God, your Heavenly Father, in the midst of earthly absorptions, you will undoubtedly be much at a loss to know what is his will; but if you live near to him, walking with God (as the Scripture expression so significantly gives it), you will have no difficulty of this sort.—*Anon.*

THE boy who smokes every cigarette offered to him, then wishes a common cigar, in time, not satisfied till he can have a "filthy pipe," will soon become so confirmed in the use of vile tobacco, that he will be likely to continue the unfortunate habit as long as he lives, while the one who declines to take one, resisting the temptation, continuing to resist all temptations, as often as they are offered, becomes stronger and stronger in his ability to practise self-denial, in his ability to rise above temptation, becoming more and more a man, truly manly, at each time that he shows his independence.—*J. H. Hanford.*

Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow. He who would search for pearls must dive below.—*Addison.*