

NOVEMBER 27, 1907.

FIVE-MINUTE'S SERMON.

First Sunday in Advent.

TAKING ACCOUNT.

"Brethren know that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep." (Epistle of the day, Rom. xiii. 11.)

There are certain times and seasons in the religious year as well as in the business year that call for special action and attention, and the season of Advent that we enter upon to-day is one of them.

As an account of stock at regular intervals, business concerns of every kind count up their gains and losses at stated times, and bankers and brokers strike their balances.

This special time of accounting is regarded in commercial circles as essential not only to safety but to success. He were a sorry business man indeed who would let his affairs run on from year to year without an overhauling, and his business credit as well as his business capacity would be rated very low.

The truth is, there is no success attainable in any walk of life without the application of this principle. And it must also be applied to the affairs of eternity if we would make a success of the supreme business of life. Now, Lent and Advent are our seasons of religious accounting, and their importance as a help in working out our salvation cannot be questioned.

Our Divine Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the author of our redemption, and the source of all our profit and gain in the concerns of the soul. And so Holy Church, guided by an instinct that is manifestly divine, has set apart the season before His coming and the season before His crucifixion as the special time for us to pause and consider what progress we are making in the way of His salvation.

To-day we are specially appealed to as loyal Christians to prepare for the coming of our Lord. The voice of Advent is the voice of John the Baptist crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths," and the spirit of repentance is the response that is sought for in every Christian soul.

We cannot, therefore, be in harmony with this holy season unless, as St. Paul puts it in today's Epistle, "we cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light," unless "we walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting or drunkenness, not in chambering or impurities, not in envy and contention." It is now the hour for us to arise, make our special accounting, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ by putting off the defilements of sin. If Advent does not mean this much to us it means nothing. We can have no part in its spirit if we continue in a sinful course and refuse to hearken to the inspired voice crying in the wilderness of a demanding repentance.

What meaning can this sacred season have to the besotted drunkard who goes right on in his abominable dissipation? What meaning can it have to the foul creature that goes on wallowing in filthy lust? What meaning can it have to the evil-tempered and the evil-tongued who, in the clamor of their own passions, fail to hear the voice of conscience? What meaning can it have to any soul in the state of mortal sin that does not immediately resolve on repentance?

If the spirit of Advent touches us at all, it should make the sinners pause in their career of sin, the lukewarm fervent and the fervent more fervent still.

People are accustomed to flock to the Advent services: they seem to take a special interest in their religion at this season; but where is the fruit? We see a throng around the pulpit, but do we see a throng around the confessional? All real religion in the Catholic Church leads directly to the sacraments, for the sacraments are the divine antidote against sin; religious observances that do not produce this result are of little practical value. Give proof, then, that you really enter into the spirit of Advent not only by going to church, but by going to the sacraments. You know that it is a season consecrated in a particular manner to the service of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and you are in sympathy with it. Put yourself in full harmony with it by a worthy reception of the Sacraments. Let the crowds of men whom we see in the church now prove their faith and approach the Holy Table. Let the women show their love for our blessed Lord by drawing nigh to the Divine Banquet. Let every soul seek purification in the Blood of the Lamb, and thus be prepared to offer dumb homage to the Babe of Bethlehem. What Christmas joy can be ours if our Advent is mis-spent? "Brethren know that now is the hour for us to arise from sleep."

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OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

GLIMPSES OF POET-LIVES.

It was Whittier who said: "God help us all! I don't care for fame and have no solicitude about the verdicts of prosperity."

"When the grass is green above us, And they who know us and who love us Are sleeping by our side, Will it avail us aught that men Tell the world with lip and pen That we have lived and died?"

"What we are will then be more important than what we have done or said in prose or rhyme."

Genius lives not solely in its accomplishments. Ever interesting must be the personal life of the singer whose words live in deathless numbers. Byron complained whimsically that visitors expected him to talk in poetic measures and to act like one of his own wild heroes.

Mrs. Annie Fields, the publisher's wife, who had many opportunities of meeting the poets of her time, says that neither Longfellow nor his wife was a brilliant talker; indeed there were often periods of speechlessness; but in spite of mental absences, a habit of which he got the better in later years, one was always sure of being taken at one's best and of coming away with a sense of having "breathed a nobler air."

And his eldest daughter says: "All who came were made welcome, without any special preparation and without any thought of personal inconvenience."

Longfellow was one of the kindest of men. Good deeds "sweetened all his days." His publisher testified to this while the poet was still among the living: "He is one of the most occupied of our literary men and scholars, yet he finds time for the small courtesies of existence, those minor attentions that are so often neglected. One day, seeing him employed in cutting something from a newspaper, I asked him what he was about. 'Oh,' said he, 'here is a little paragraph speaking kindly of our poor old friend X—; you know he seldom gets a word of praise, poor fellow, nowadays, and thinking he might not chance to see this paper, I am snipping out the paragraph to mail it to him this afternoon. I know that even these few lines of recognition will make him happy for hours, and I could not bear to think that he might perhaps miss seeing these pleasant words so kindly expressed.'"

This poet with the ideally poetic heart was especially kind to those who most needed kindness. Mrs. Fields tells us that he once invited an old friend who had fallen into extreme helplessness from ill health to come and make him a long visit. Longfellow's devoted patience and care for this friend of his youth was a signal example of what a true and constant heart may do unconsciously in giving expression and recognition to the bond of a sincere friendship. Long after his friend was unable to rise from his chair without assistance or go unaccompanied to his bedroom, Longfellow followed the lightest unexpressed wish with his sympathetic vision and with the smallest offices unbidden.

"Longfellow, will you turn my coat collar?" the invalid visitor would ask on a plaintive way, and says Mrs. Fields, it was a beautiful lesson to see the quick and cheerful response which would follow many a like suggestion.

The Longfellow children were blessed in their father. "Grave Alice" of the poem writing of her childhood days in the Youth's Companion, says that the presence of the poet father was a constant attraction, and the first move in the morning was to his dressing-room where the neatly arranged drawers and shelves and orderly toilet articles were looked at with envy and delight contrasted with the turmoil of the nursery, where he was always a welcome and restful visitor. Taking a fretful and tired child in his arms, he would walk up and down quickly, singing some little rhyme, and peace and happiness were soon restored.

His inventive genius was constantly in demand. In addition to drawings and valentines there were wooden molds of various shapes, in which figures were made from melted lead. There were scales made from orange peel with string and a bit of wood, such needed by amateur shop keepers. There was also a plentiful supply of money, both silver and paper. The silver money, the West being still undeveloped, was made by rubbing bits of tinfol over coins, and the paper money came from the covering of old-fashioned matches, with a picture of Mr. E. Byam and the following inscription, which constituted its legal tender:

For quickness and sureness The public will find These matches will leave All others behind.

Without further remark We invite you to try 'em, And remember all good That are signed by E. Byam.

A much valued member of the very useful household was a gay little fellow called little "Merry thought." He was a wishing-bone, with head and feet made of sealing wax, so that he could stand alone, dressed in a cape of red flannel, with a feather in his cap—quite a hero of romance.

Longfellow was evidently afflicted with the ailment of which another poet said: "I was born into childhood and I've never outgrown the complaint."

Mrs. Brookfield is another writer who was fortunate enough to know a great poet intimately. Tennyson had many poetical eccentricities, from which our beloved American poet was singularly free. Mrs. Brookfield says that when Tennyson—then a young man fresh from college—first visited her father's

house, his ability, his imposing presence (he was six feet tall and extremely handsome), together with his diffidence and reserve, made the other young people stand not a little in awe of him. Nevertheless they were inclined to laugh, when, during the evening in a pause of the conversation, the young poet rose and gravely approaching the venerable master of the house, himself noted for his poetic gifts, laid his hand with respectful curiosity upon his head, remarking:

"You must do a great many foolish things, sir, with this great bump of benevolence of yours."

"I dare say I do," replied the genial old gentleman, not at all offended, though he must have been surprised. Tennyson, like Longfellow, was no great conversationalist. An American admirer who visited the poet laureate said that he knew his work demanded from him the sacrifice of what the world calls pleasure. His constant preoccupation with the business of his life rendered him often impatient of wasting hours in mere "personal talk," but it was his chief joy when his friends were gathered about him to read from other poets, or on his own books.

He had a theory that poetry should always be given out with the rhythm accentuated and the music of the verse strongly emphasized, and he did it with a power that was marvellous.

Apropos of Tennyson's fame, which "rang around the chiming earth," a curious anecdote may be retold here. It will be remembered that General Grant once consulted a dentist who had formerly repaired the warrior's teeth.

"I am Ulysses S. Grant," announced the General. The man of teeth was polite—nothing more. He had actually never heard of General Grant. But when the surprised hero had opened his mouth for the examination of molar defects he heard the dentist say: "I know who you are now. You are a man whose teeth I fixed five years ago."

Tennyson, so the story goes, once consulted an eminent Scotch surgeon about some affection of the lungs, and some years afterward went to him again on the same errand. On being announced the poet was nettled to observe that the surgeon not only did not remember his face, but did not even recognize his name. He mentioned his former visit. Still the surgeon failed to recall him.

Then the surgeon put his ear to his patient's chest.

"Ah," he said, "I remember you now. I know you by your lung."

The poet was no more familiar to the surgeon than was the general to the dentist. Each was but a remembered patient. It would not, perhaps, be polite to call these specialists stupid, but they knew very unnecessarily "absorbed in science."

We all know the genial genius who was scientist as well as poet, "and a wit, to boot"—Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. He is dead but a few years, and in his later life he was a splendid example of cheery old age—"an old man snapping his fingers at time."

After the death of his wife and daughter the aged poet was very lonely, although, with his usual geniality, he strove to make light of his desolation lest he should trouble others with his own trouble. "If the Lord thinks it best for me to stay until I tumble to pieces, I'm willing, I'm willing," said the octogenarian.

He jests of "dotage" with young autograph hunters. Said he: "When young men and maidens come skipping in with a air of saying, 'Please give me your autograph and be quick about it; there may not be much time left,' I want to say: 'Take care, young folk; I may be dancing over your graves yet!'"

Holmes was uniformly kind to young people, giving them wholesome encouragement and precious advice. To young authors in particular he was a beneficent godfather. Little children he loved intensely. "I never wrote a poem to a child, I believe," he said once. "I love children dearly; I always want to stop them on the street, but I have never written about them; nor have I written much about women. I don't know why, but I care too much to do the Tom Moore style of thing." Like Whittier, he might truly have written:

The years are many, the years are old, My dreams are over, my song are sung, But of a heart that has not grown cold, I bid goodspeed to the fair and young!

Jodo, in Catholic Standard and Times.

Nervous Prostration is a deplorable condition of body, to which the mind to some degree responds; the sufferer becomes a victim to a legion of disagreeable sensations, arising from the impairment or exhaustion of nerve or vital force. Sleeplessness, too, comes to rob the sufferer of nature's sweetest solace and restorer, and a disordered digestive function contributes its quota to the already full cup of misery. Cure is possible in one way only—the nervous system must be strengthened; the digestive and assimilative function must be restored.

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CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN.

The Church Progress.

During the winter some young men's societies would like to have successful business men deliver addresses before them, but they do not know just whom to invite or what to ask them to speak about. Why not get a Catholic doctor to talk about "The Care of the Body," "Manhood," or "The Life-giving Power"? A Catholic lawyer might be urged to discuss "Contracts," or "The Monroe Doctrine," or "International Law and the Cuban Insurrection." A Catholic journalist could tell "How a daily newspaper is made," or "How to become a successful reporter or editor." A banker or real estate dealer might be induced to take as a subject—"Money-Saving and Spending it," or "Building Associations." Get a man to talk about what he knows best—something in the line of his pursuit—and you'll most easily persuade him to speak and derive the most benefit from his discourse. Here are a few more topics for practical talks by teachers, merchants, builders, statesmen, patriots and patriarchs:

"How to Use the Dictionary." "Some Points on Memory Training." "Everyday Chemistry." "Architectural Facts Everybody Should Know." "How a Railway Gets a Right of Way."

"Electric Sparks: a Talk on the Practical Uses of Electricity." "The Money Question." "Building a Sky Scraper." "How to Read aloud—Some Elocutionary Points." "The Care of the Eye."

"How to Achieve Business Success." "How to Sell Goods." "Reading the Line of One's Business."

"Business Forms and Customs." "Citizenship—What does it mean?" "Evils of Partisan Politics." "Paper Making." "Choice of Life Work."

Stay at Home. Is it worth while to risk so much to obtain so little? we may well ask the young men who are turning their eyes eagerly toward the Alaskan gold regions. It would seem not. They might be obliged to come back to their old homes broken down with disease, and with habits of dissipation fastened upon that they would find difficult to overcome. With frugality and temperate habits one may acquire a moderate competence on a comparatively small income. This is proved in the case of many immigrants who have earned large families and saved money on salaries that others let run through their fingers, so that they were without anything to show for their labor in the end. The man who will not lay by something for a rainy day, when he has a small income, is not likely to do so when he has a larger one. And the man who goes to regions where he does not have the restraining influence of church and home and female society is apt to find opportunities for wasting money that he would not embrace elsewhere, even if they were presented to him. Gambling is one of the greatest vices followed in purely masculine society, and where there are no women at all, it is pursued with a feverish excitement that not seldom results in the atrocious crime that Cain brought into the world.

Therefore, we would say—ponder well before you decide to go to the Yukon. There is a peril to both soul and body there, and if you are getting a comfortable living here, why should you give up in the pursuit of gold which too often brings misery instead of happiness. Remember that a contented mind is better than great riches.

Injuring the Heart. The heart accustomed to a quiet life may be dangerous and permanently crippled by excessive strain in athletic exercises such as bicycle riding. Experience in medical practice teaches that the patient with a weak heart must be extremely cautious. The demonstration of dilation of the healthy heart under sudden violent exertion is a surprise. Yet this seems to be no doubt that it does occur. A number of clinical observers in Germany, England, and elsewhere have detected by percussion and observation of the change in the point of apex beat that both ventricles of the heart dilate under these circumstances and remain dilated for a longer or shorter time after the exercise is over. In the Deutsche Medicinische Wochenschrift Dr. Schott of Bad Nauheim brings to the aid of the diagnostician the Roentgen ray, affording ocular proof of the enlargement of the dimensions of the ventricles. He shows by such photographs that the shadow image of the dilated right ventricle first returns to normal dimensions as respiration becomes natural. The bulging left ventricle, however, which may reach so far to the left that its apex beats outside the nipple, has been found still dilated eighteen minutes after cessation of the effort. This shows the need of caution by all.

Who can Best be Spared? Business Education says: "Young men, this is the first question your employers ask themselves when business becomes slack, and it is thought necessary to economize in the matter of salaries: Who can best be spared? The barnacles, the shirks, the makeshifts, somebody's proteges, somebody's nephews and especially somebody's good-for-nothing. Young men, please remember that these are not the ones

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who are called for when responsible positions are to be filled. Would you like to gauge your future for a position of prominence? Would you like to know the probabilities of your getting such a position? Inquire within! What are you doing to make yourself valuable in the position you now occupy? If you are doing with your might what your hands find to do, the chances are ten to one that you will soon become so valuable in that position that you cannot be spared from it; and then, singular to relate, will be the very time you will be sought out for promotion to a better place. These are some suggestions that are well worth considering.

A Spontaneous Act of Faith. When Cardinal Vaughan was preaching at Arles the other day on the occasion of the French celebration of St. Augustine's mission to England, his reference to an old Provençal hymn so worked upon his delighted audience that, we are told, "the whole multitude with one accord broke forth into an uncontrollable outburst of applause, and for several minutes afterwards the frantic clapping of hands by men and women, priests and laymen, re-echoed through every part of the spacious cathedral." Not unfrequently in olden times the sermons of the fathers were so interrupted, but since the custom of reserving the Blessed Sacrament in our churches was introduced, a greater severity of manners has rightly prevailed there. An occasion such as this celebration in lovely Provence among those favored children of imagination and poetry, and under the magic of the English Cardinal's eloquence might well be an exception to the rule, and the incident which otherwise would be deemed unbecoming was but a grand amen to a splendid act of faith.—Provident Visitor.

Nothing is clearer than that true politeness has its foundation—its true inspiration—in Christian charity. True politeness makes self secondary and is first considerate of the good of others. There is, indeed, a worldly politeness—a mere external polish which is without heart and saturated with selfishness and hypocrisy. The poet says well:

"A man may smile and smile and be a villain; Christianity is a religion of love—of devotion to the good of others. It teaches us not only to respect the rights and privileges of our neighbor but to love him as ourselves and to do to him as we would have him do to us.

Kindness is Twice Blessed. Kind words cost no more than unkind ones. Kind words produce kind actions, not only on the part of those to whom they are addressed but on the part of those by whom they are employed; and this not incidentally only but habitually, in virtue of the principle of association.

The Good Thief. Is it possible that the devotion to the good thief originated from Mary Queen of Scots? asks a writer in the Liver pool Catholic Times. For we read on the morning of her martyrdom, about 4 o'clock, the Queen, who was in the habit of having the history of some saint read to her after her evening prayers, was unwilling to depart from this habit, and after having hesitated as to whose life she should select on this solemn occasion, she fixed upon that of the greatest sinner of all, the repentant thief, saying with humility: "Great sinner as he was, he had still sinned less than I have. I will therefore pray for him in remembrance of our Saviour, trusting he will have pity upon me in the hour of my death, even as our Lord had pity upon him."

I think I have read of a devotion or a church dedicated to St. Damien, the good thief. Our Lord said to him: "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Surely, then, we have evidence here to prove that the repentant thief is a saint in Heaven. What an example have we from Mary Queen of Scots, therefore, never to neglect the devotion of the communion of saints!

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