

Family Reading.

BE JUST AND FEAR NOT

BY DEAN ALFORD

Speak thou the truth—Let others tence
And tunc their words for pay;
In pleasant sunshine of pretence;
Let others bask their day

Guard thou the fact. Tho' clouds of night
Down on thy watch-tower stoop;
Tho' thou shouldst see thine heart's delight,
Borne from thee by their swoop!

Faith thou the wind—Tho' safer seem
In shelter to abide,
We were not made to sit and dream;
The safe must first be tried.

Where God hath set his throne about,
Cry not, "Thy way is plain;"
His path within, for those without
Is hedged with toil and pain.

One fragment of His blessed word,
Into thy spirit burned,
Is better than the whole half-heard,
And by thine interest turned.

Show thou thy light. If conscience gleam,
Let not the bushel down;
The smallest spark may send its beam
O'er hamlet, tower and town.

Woe, woe to him, on safety bent,
Who creeps to age from youth,
Failing to grasp his life's intent
Because he fears the truth!

Be true to every unmost thought;
And as thy thought, thy speech;
What thou hast not by suffering bought,
Presume not thou to teach.

Hold on, hold on! Thou hast the rock,
Thy foes are on the sand;
The first world-tempest's ruthless shock
Scatters their shifting strand.

While each will just the mist shall clear,
We now see darkly through,
And justified at last appear
The true, in Him that's true.

SPECIE.

Robert Raikes was only a simple-hearted Christian, sincerely desiring to serve God and benefit those around him. His great work began, as he said, as "an experiment, harmless and innocent, however fruitless it might prove in its effect," and when he could write of it as "extending so rapidly as to include 250,000 children, and increasing more and more," he only added in humble reverence;—"It reminds me of the grain of mustard seed." Thus he never forgot who it is that gives the Harvest. He did not even suppose that he could have created "the grain of mustard seed," much less the glorious Harvest itself.

"A LIFE IN A SENTENCE."

I think I could tell you a good deal about him without telling much, or rather by telling you just one thing. That one thing is this: A life is sometimes told in a sentence. I remember one day, when I was walking in Clevedon churchyard, I saw on the tombstone of a Sunday-school teacher, erected by his friends as a token of affection and regard for him, the words—"He loved little children." I thought I never read a more touching epitaph; I am sure no one ever need wish for a better one. It was quite enough to make it clear what kind of a life that teacher lived. Well, that same epitaph would tell you a great deal about Robert Raikes, just because it describes his character. You see it is not whether we are rich or poor, learned or unlearned, or what position in life we fill—whether we rule a kingdom or live a quiet life in a cottage home; it is not these things that tell others most about us. The character is the main point.

It is like the mainspring of the watch; everything depends on it. All the wheels and works, however useful in their places when the mainspring is right, are quite useless when the mainspring is wrong.

The mainspring in Robert Raikes' heart was right. He loved God and therefore he loved the children. He remembered that the Good Shepherd had said, "Feed My lambs."

"WE GOT HIM IN."

I witnessed an instance of brotherly sympathy and kindness the other evening in Spitalfields which I shall never forget. It was a "Robin Dinner." A little lad hungering for a dinner had got no ticket. Vainly he tried to pass the barrier, and, full of disappointment, burst into tears. Some of the other "outsiders" thereupon constituted themselves his friends for the occasion, and pleaded for his admission on the ground that he had "neither father nor mother." The Rector of Spitalfields happened to be close at hand, and, yielding to the urgent, irresistible plea, told the doorkeeper to "pass him in." The successful advocates had gained their object: and, as they left the scene of the action, unfed themselves, it would have been a picture for the Academy, if an artist could have depicted the glowing faces of the boys, as one exclaimed to the others, with triumphant glee, "We got him in!"

Ah! that was a triumph indeed, a triumph worth more than the feast within; for there is no feast that can compare with "the luxury of doing good!"

Robert Raikes enjoyed that luxury; and so may we if we feel and act as he felt and acted. Kind words, and loving deeds, and tender sympathy, were the gifts which Robert Raikes bestowed; and we may all "go and do likewise."

THE GIFT OF READING.

Reading indeed is a precious gift. The poor Indian when he found the missionary was able to send messages to his home by "making chips talk," could not find words to express his amazement. Printing is God's modern miracle. A good book is like a friend, always ready to talk with us, and to talk to good purpose too. In seasons of sickness especially, when we cannot see much of other friends, and have to pass many hours alone, it would not be easy to say what we should do if we could not get hold of some pleasant book. But in health and strength good books are invaluable; and many a Sunday-school scholar who has taken care, like the "busy bee," to "improve the shining hours" of youth, by treasuring up the stores of knowledge they contain, has found himself in after years gradually climbing life's ladder of usefulness. They may not have become as famous as one of their number, the great African explorer, Livingstone; but they have exercised an influence for good "in the state of life to which it has pleased God to call them," and that is quite enough for anyone to do.

"DO WE SING?"

The other day, at one of the "Robin Dinners," of which I dare say some of you have heard, a sweet song was sung by a little boy, one of the "Robins." It made me think of the story of a boy who used to work deep, deep down underground in a coal mine. He was what is called a trapdoor-keeper, his duty being to keep guard at a door all the day long, to keep it shut, and so prevent dangerous accidents that might otherwise happen. Some one who went down the mine said to him, "My boy, don't you find it very lonely here?" The boy said it was lonely, but he picked up the little bits of candle thrown away by the colliers, and joined them together; and then he added, "When I gets a light, then I sings."

Ah! how many get plenty of light, and never sing at all!—From "What do we Owe Him?"

MEASURE OF LIFE.—No life, worth calling life, is to be measured by years.

NIGHT LIFE OF YOUNG MEN.

One night often destroys a whole life. The leakage of the night keeps the day forever empty. Night is sin's harvesting time. More sin and crime is committed in one night than in all the days of the week. This is more emphatically true of the city than of the country. The street lamps, like a file of soldiers with torch in hand, stretch away in long lines on either sidewalk; the gay-colored transparencies are ablaze with attractions; the saloons and billiard halls are brilliantly illuminated; music sends forth its enchantment; the gay company begin to gather to the haunts and houses of pleasure; the gambling dens are aflame with palatial splendor; the theatres are wide open; the mills of destruction are grinding health, honor, happiness, and hope, out of thousands of lives. The city under the gaslight is not the same as under God's sunlight. The allurements and perils and pitfalls of night are a hundred-fold deeper and darker and more destructive. Night life in our cities is a dark problem, whose depths and abysses and whirlpools make us start back with horror. All night long tears are falling, blood is streaming.

Young men, tell me how and where you spend your evenings, and I will write out the chart of your character and future destiny, with blanks to insert your names. It seems to me an appropriate text would be, "Watchman, what of the night?" Policeman, pacing thy beat, what of the night? What are the young men of the city doing at night? Where do they spend their evenings? Who are their associates? What are their habits? Where do they go in, and what time do you see them come out? Policemen, would the night life of young men commend them to the confidence of their employers? Would it be to their credit?

Make a record of the nights of one week. Put in the morning paper the names of all the young men, their habits and haunts, that are on the street for sinful pleasure. Would there not be shame and confusion? Some would not dare to go to their places of business, or some would leave the city: some would commit suicide.

CHRIST OUR LIFE.

"I come that they might have LIFE, and that they might have it more abundantly."—John x. 10.

"I am the way, the truth, and the LIFE."—John xiv. 6.

"I am the resurrection and the LIFE: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he LIVE."—John xi. 25.

"I give unto them eternal LIFE; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."—John x. 28.

"Because I LIVE, ye shall LIVE also."—John xiv. 19.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I LIVE; yet not I, but Christ LIVETH in me."—Gal. ii. 20.

"Ye are dead, and your LIFE is hid with Christ in God."—Col. iii. 3.

"When Christ, who is our LIFE, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."—Col. iii. 4.

A Calcutta missionary declares that idolatry in that city is rapidly becoming an irksome thing. The recent pooja, in honor of Sarasvati, the goddess of learning, was celebrated with much show but little heart. The number of images made for worship is constantly diminishing, and worshippers are growing indifferent. The census of missions is to be taken next year, and it is estimated that it will show an increase of 200,000 native Christians in India, Ceylon and Burmah for the last ten years, 500,000 in all. Where is the doubter in the success of Christian missions?—Heathen Woman's Friend.

"HOW MUCH OWEST THOU?"

It was my lot to live for some years in one of those antiquated Welsh towns with an unpronounceable name (to a Saxon) of which a willingly incredulous stranger might say, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Among the members of my church was an old Welsh lady, Mrs. O—.

Providence had once smiled upon her in temporal affairs, but the Father tried his child by taking away from her the light of her eyes, as "by a stroke," and children withered and died, one by one, so that she lived "alone, yet not alone."

"'Twas little she could do, for poverty, as is often the case, was accompanied by sickness—so that by the earnings of her needle she barely subsisted. Parish authorities added to it a weekly pittance, and this was all she had, save the kind gifts of friends.

I often visited her in her little room, and often found her confined to her bed. Visiting her one day I found her in great weakness. She said:

"Sir, if you will look in the little cup on the shelf, you will find the Lord's money."

"But the Lord does not wish you to give to His cause what you absolutely need, I can't take it."

And then the "hot ram" fell down her aged cheek, as she said, "Tis but little I can give to the Lord, but what did He give for me? He loved me and gave Himself for me. Take it, sir, I can't eat my morsel happily if you don't."

And so I took it, and murmured blessings on the head of her whose heart "the love of Christ" did so "constrain," and prayed evermore I might remember, "Ye are not your own." Reader, "how much owest thou unto the Lord?"

DOUBT AND FAITH.

Mr. Spurgeon tells of himself, that one day he had told his people that he had just come out of some doubts. One of the elders of his church said to him:

"Mr. Spurgeon, why didn't you tell them that you had been swearing, that you had an awful time blaspheming?"

"Oh, I couldn't tell such a thing."

"If you had, would you have got up and told them?"

"No, sir: I never could have told that on myself."

"You might just as well. I would like to know if doubting is not just as dishonoring to God as blaspheming."

Mr. Spurgeon thought the elder was right. Yet people seem to think it a good deal of a virtue to doubt, and they praise it, and tell about their doubts. And it is doubts, doubts, all the time. If God says a thing, that is enough. When the Lord bids us to come we want to walk right out; and let the devil come and cast his insinuations, and ask us, "How do we know this is true?" we want to say, "Christ says it," that is enough. If that plank don't hold, what will?

There was a man converted up in my native town, and I was telling him we wanted to start an association there, and get all the young Christians together, and we did not want any man to join that association that did not believe in that Bible from back to back. This young convert spoke out, calling me by name, "That is right, Dwight. If that hitching post don't hold, none will." I think the old farmer had it. If the Lord's word don't hold us what will? If we cannot feed on God's word, what can we feed on? If we can't walk on the promises of the Lord, what can we walk on?

WORTH REMEMBERING.—It is not what we earn, but what we save, that makes us rich. It is not what we eat, but what we digest, that makes us fat. It is not what we read, but what we remember, that makes us learned. All this is very simple; but it is worth remembering.