

Sunday Reading.

THE DARKEST HOUR.

Sorrow May Endure for the Night but Joy Cometh With the Morning.

"It's no use," said the little lame cobbler, dropping his head upon his hands and looking, as he felt, the personification of despair. "I've offended the Lord somehow, and he won't let me have a chance to keep a home over my head. I know I'm not all I ought to be, and I'm punished."

Becky went across the room and patted her husband on the back.

"Now, don't take on, Nick don't," she said. "That can't be, for he knows all knows how good you are. Better times'll come. They're sure to; and you'll be rewarded for all your patience yet. 'The darkest hour is just before the dawn.'"

"I've got up hope, Becky," he said; "what with the rent and the bill for medicine. It was like me to get sick just at the worst, and no work coming in; and the new shop with the gilt sign tempting folks from our shabby basement even for the mending of old shoes. I'm crushed down. Why you are as thin and white as a ghost. You haven't tasted meat this week, Becky."

"No more have you," said Becky. "But la, why there is folks thinks meat unwholesome. Vegetarians, Nick, they call 'em; where I lived once, I saw one."

"Did he say bread was unwholesome, too?" asked Nick. "Oh, gal, I wish I'd left my living out at service, rosy and bright and happy; but I meant to do better, I did. If I was an able bodied man, I'd work somehow and somewhere, but it's the last or nothing with me. Becky, why didn't you take Tim Rolf, the wheelwright, and send the limping little cobbler about his business?"

"I didn't like Tim," said Becky, "and I just knew how nice and cosy we'd be together. Never quarrel, Nick. And how we used to go to Hoboken and have lemonade in the garden and come home after dark a'ternoon, and how we used to go to church Sunday morning in good clothes as good as any one."

"Used," sighed poor Nick.

"Why, it can't be all uphill," said Becky. "I haven't time to go out galivanting now, but la, I don't miss it. We're steady married folks now, you know."

"Oh, Becky," said the cobbler, "you try to keep up heart, but you know it's come to starving."

They look at each other, and then Becky put her arms about her husband. She did not weep upon his bosom; she was so big and strong, and he so frail and small, that it only seemed natural to reverse matters. She hugged him up to her shoulder and covered his head over with her apron and put her cheek down outside the bundle thus made, and snuggled and patted him as if he had been a baby. But she cried, too, and the apron was wet through in no time.

It was a bad state of things. No money, no food, no fire, and winter at its coldest. The children sent to school breakfast for the sake of the warmth and comfort of the schoolhouse. No work to be had; the little cobbler also helpless as man could well be, except at his trade, and Becky's washing stopped, for heaven only knew how long, by a great feline in the palm of her right hand. But Becky loved the queer little mortal she had married so well that she stopped crying first, and picked up his head and patted it, and kissed him between the eyes—great, frightened, light blue eyes, that seemed dead to crying.

"You stay home and mind the place," she said. "I'm going out a while. Perhaps there'll be a bit of luck, who knows?"

She put on her bonnet and shawl—such a thin little shawl—which had been used for an ironing cloth, and had an iron shaped across between the shoulders—and took up a basket.

The cobbler looked at her.

"Becky," he said, hoarsely. "Becky," she knew just what he meant.

"The little children, Nick," she said; "we could starve—but then poor criers. Nick it won't seem like begging when it's for them."

And then the door shut behind her—and poor Nick limped after her, as though to stop her; then paused, and fairly flung himself down upon the floor, wishing he were under the ground beneath it.

"God forgive the man that marries a woman to starve her," he sobbed. "Why, if I'd known it would have come to this, I'd never have courted her. It's time I was dead."

Perhaps being a strange, impulsive little fellow, there might have been a tragic end to this scene, but that the children came in from school, and began to cry—partly at the sight of their prostrate father partly because of hunger—and Nick forgot himself to do what he could for them.

He had no dinner, but he had great deal of love to give them, and some pieces of red kid. Only the youngest chewed the basket were gone together, impressed them with a hope of provisions.

Meanwhile, Becky had gone a begging. It would be horrible, no doubt, she thought; to take food from strangers—but she found there was one thing even more terrible, not to take it.

Door after door was slammed in her face. Once a dog was set at her, or she thought so. Professional beggars had made themselves nuisances to many people, and how

were they to know real poverty when it asked alms. Men whom they had pitied as paupers, were proved owners of real estate. Cripples and blind men whom they had aided were found to have bound up strong limbs and glared their eyes together—so they were hard upon real distress and refused the broken bread.

At six o'clock that evening, Becky stood at a street corner with one crust in her basket—no more.

Beyond lay a pawnbroker's shop, and Becky looked at its golden balls and at her wedding ring. She had worn it fifteen years, and it was thin and frail, but pure gold. Through all she had kept it until now. Must it go? The thought was worse than begging.

Becky took a step forward, another back. Then she began to cry a little. Nick's ring that he put on her hand so long ago—oh, dear! oh, dear!

But she grew brave again, and walked into the shop and pawned one ring! It was not much they gave her for it, but it would buy supper, and perhaps Nick wouldn't notice, and perhaps she could get it back. That was a very faint 'perhaps,' however.

A woman was in the pawnshop as she waited, bargaining with the proprietor over a suit of little girls clothing—costly things, strangely out of place in her hands. Becky noticed this, saying to herself that they were better fairly come by. But she had forgotten all about it, when, coming out of the baker's, a little voice fell on her ear, and, looking down, she saw a barefoot child of four, in wretched rags, sobbing piteously.

Becky was soft of heart; but in poor quarters, crying children are common enough, and her own were waiting for the loaves in her basket. She walked on hastily, and so upset the toddler. Then Becky needs must stop and pick her up.

"Why don't you go home to your mother this night time," she said, "and not stand here to be knocked down?"

And a little silver thread of a voice answered:

"I can't find mamma. I can't find my home. Where is mamma? Oh, mamma!"

Becky knelt down. A white head of crumpled curls, and a pair of blue eyes, swimming in tears, she could just make out.

"I'll take you home, only say where," she said.

But the child could tell nothing. It was plainly lost. Becky took it in her arms, and made inquiries at the corner grocery, where she bought a slice of ham, but no one knew the child. It was growing late, too, and Becky could not leave it to its fate.

"I'll take it home," said she, "and tomorrow find its folks."

So when the cobbler and his children saw the dear one at last, they entered by it not only mother and a basket but a baby also.

"It's a poor, lost child," said Becky. "I'm going to keep it to-night. Its parents are poorer than we are; you can see that by its bare feet and only one little frock, poor thing! Now hold her, Nick, while I cook supper. I didn't beg it, Nick—so don't fret."

And then, keeping her ring-finger out of sight, Becky tried the ham and made gravy, cut and bread, and sent for two cents' worth of milk—which, judiciously diluted, made a quart of milk and water, and tried to be very cheerful.

The lost child cried; but Becky fed it, and soon coaxed it to talk; then came a story of a "bad dress," and a "nasty woman."

The youngest, who had chewed the red kid, acted as interpreter. Soon it was discovered that some woman described as "nasty," had taken away the child's blue dress and other garments, and had whipped her.

Becky listened intently.

"That dress was blue, Nick," she cried. "I knew it wasn't hers—a tipsey, ragged woman; and folks that own their things don't come to pawning. I—"

Then she paused—the secret was out. Nick's eye had danced toward the wedding-finger, and back again to her face.

"Oh, Becky," he cried. "Becky, I didn't think."

Becky flushed scarlet.

"I didn't mean to tell," she said, "but now it's out; I'm married all the same, thank God. It was at the pawnshop I saw the blue dress." And she told them of the woman whom she had watched and of her suspicions. "The child has been stolen," Nick said. "It's a gentle child, you can see; and if we can but find its name out, we may save some one trouble, and take up a basket."

The cobbler looked at her.

"Becky," he said, hoarsely. "Becky," she knew just what he meant.

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Perhaps being a strange, impulsive little fellow, there might have been a tragic end to this scene, but that the children came in from school, and began to cry—partly at the sight of their prostrate father partly because of hunger—and Nick forgot himself to do what he could for them.

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Door after door was slammed in her face. Once a dog was set at her, or she thought so. Professional beggars had made themselves nuisances to many people, and how

slumbers by an arrival, and the odd baby in their midst was taken out to their distress and consternation, for they had counted on keeping her.

And Nick and Becky forgot their own troubles in the parents' joy. And Nick said it was like poetry and Becky said it was like a play.

And so it was—one with a happy ending—for what should the lady do but beg and pray Becky to tell her she would like best, and Becky confessed that to have her wedding ring back was the hope of her life and this led to the cause of its pawning and all the story of poverty and sorrow. Then the dark hours ended and day broke; and there was food in the house, and fire; and as it happened that baby Minnie's father needed just such an honest man for work as poor Nick could do, he gave the place to the cobbler; and from that day there was enough and to spare in the little home, because of the simple goodness shown to baby Minnie.

"So it's never time thrown away to do a kindness to any one," says Becky, often; "for somehow you always are rewarded for it. If I'd left the little lost beggar's child, I should have been in the street and never stopped to care for it—as I might have done in such trouble—where would Nick have been and the children and me this night? Not that I did anything but what a Christian ought, but see how we were paid for it?"—Happy Hours.

A woman was in the pawnshop as she waited, bargaining with the proprietor over a suit of little girls clothing—costly things, strangely out of place in her hands. Becky noticed this, saying to herself that they were better fairly come by. But she had forgotten all about it, when, coming out of the baker's, a little voice fell on her ear, and, looking down, she saw a barefoot child of four, in wretched rags, sobbing piteously.

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the house, to prayer-meeting, shutting the front door with a bang. "What does all papa? Why is he so worried so cross and unreasonable always? He never has a word of praise for us when things are at their best, and he is forever blaming every one when they are the least bit wrong. I am ashamed of my father. Don't let us go to prayer-meeting. Papa did not wait for us."

"Darling," said Mrs. Freeholder, "don't allow yourself to speak with disrespect of your father. Business worries him, probably. He really does not mean all he says. It is simply a matter of habit into which he has fallen, and personally, though it used to hurt me, I do not mind it so much now. I am distressed at the impression it leaves upon our friends, because it is some how puts the wife and the home into a false position, when the head of the house indulges in unkind reflections in the presence of guests. When we are alone I can endure it."

"Yes, mamma, you do endure it. Your lip quivers, your eyes are blurred with tears, you cannot help shrinking as if you had been struck when one of the boys is near, and sent away from the table. When I grow up and am married, I will begin right. The first time my husband dares to find a word of fault I'll crush the thing in the bud. See if I don't!"

Mother and daughter went to prayer-meeting, entering the lecture-room late. Mr. Freeholder, from his seat at the pastor's right, sent them a severely reproving glance which the wife did not trouble herself to return, with one of defiance. Mr. Freeholder sometimes felt as if he could shake Agnes, she was so lacking in dutiful behavior, but she was beyond the age of parental correction, and, at home, he occasionally spanked one of the babies as a vent for his anger with their sister. That look of hers, across the room, made him very uncomfortable tonight.

"Big as she is," he said to himself, "she'll find that I'll punish her in a way she'll feel. My lady will be ordered to her room, and shut up for a day or two, on a diet of bread and water, if she doesn't learn to control her eyes and her tongue."

Poor Mr. Freeholder! At that instant the pastor, with benignant face, and courteous tone, said, gently imperious:

"We will be led in prayer by Brother Freeholder."

It was a beautiful prayer, but not a syllable, not a sentence in its course, aroused any other sensation than that of antagonism in the heart of Agnes Freeholder. Her mother instinctively guessed her state of mind, and was not surprised, when, the meeting over, and an opportunity afforded young people to meet the committee, and unite with the church, Agnes, who had lately been seriously considering the matter, walked resolutely past the door. She said nothing, but had she spoken she would have said that her father's crossness and her father's prayer were, in combination, her stumbling-block on the threshold of the kingdom.

"Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones," says the Saviour, and "woe to him by whom the offence cometh!"

Years after, John Freeholder bore his cross in humiliation, when his sons fled their home as if it had been a prison, his daughters remained obstinately outside the church, and even his wife, patient to the last, treated him with tolerant pity. It was restrained temper and petty despotism had brought forth their legitimate consequences.

Margaret E. Sangster, in "Christian Herald."

SUNDAY CHRISTIANITY

A Better Kind That Which Extends Over Every Day of the Week.

A goodly portion of the world labor under the delusion that religion and Christianity are synonymous terms; but this is a grievous mistake. They are as different as night from day.

Religion is a matter of form and creed, a dry theological husk, born in the mind or in the imagination, and capable of changing its colors as the chameleon changes, taking its immediate surroundings.

Christianity is a beautiful flower that has its roots in the soul and is watered and fed by the divinity that makes us kin to the one eternal God.

A far larger portion of the world, even among so-called Christian people, has so far mistaken the relative terms as to pin all its faith on religion, regarding it as the sole and subtle essence of Christianity; hence we have the tribe of Sunday Christians almost as innumerable as the sands of the ocean.

These people pay the strictest adherence to the old fashioned puritanical method of Sunday observance. They go to church three times a day, if there happens to be that number of services, and their devoutness, in comparison with their usual week-day demeanor, partakes somewhat of the nature of a masquerade, and is apt to produce much cynical amusement among the ungodly.

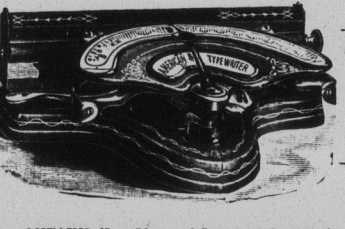
There is a funeral stillness about their houses on the Lord's holy day of which every member of the family partakes, no less volens. Nothing of a strictly secular nature is indulged in; their reading is of the Scripture without regard to its beauty or appropriateness; and such a thing as play or trifling social conversation is particularly interdicted during the legal period of the Sabbath day.

But when Monday comes this feeling is put away with the Sunday garments, and the Sunday Christian becomes once more of the world worldly, and Christ and His teachings are almost entirely forgotten until another Sunday reminds him of the duty that he peculiarly applies to that day.

It is very true that we should "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and that on that day we should pay due reverence to the God who ordained that day and who gave us His commandments concerning it. But we should not confine our Christianity entirely to that day. It should be apparent in our lives and actions

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every day of the year.

The true Christian will be one on Monday as well as on Sunday, and on Saturday as well as on any other day of the week. He will be a Christian at home as well as at church on the street as well as when sitting comfortably in his well cushioned pew.

He will not wear his Christianity as a garment to be put aside with his Sunday garment and to remain undisturbed until another Sunday shall roll around.

He will carry it with him to his office, to his store or his shop. It will be with him when he makes an entry in his ledger, weighs out a pound of butter or rice or a piece of iron. It will enter into all his transactions with his fellow man, and it will not take a recess while he is engaged in a horse trade or is expatiating on the merits of a piece of property that he is offering for sale.

The true Christian will be a Christian in failure as well as in success, alike in poverty or wealth, and in the judgment that he casts upon his neighbor as well as in the estimate that he places upon himself.

He will recognize in every human being a human soul as precious in the eyes of the Father as he thinks his own life may be, and he will adjust to his neighbor as well as to his brother's the golden rule of divine justice—N. Y. Advertiser.

A Message From God.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man; But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust." James 1:12-14.

STRONG ENGLISH WORDS.

When a person says "I suffered excruciating pain," he expresses a fact in the strongest words afforded by the English language. The word "excruciating" comes from *crux*, a cross, and signifies an intensity of agony comparable only to that endured by one who undergoes the barbarous punishment of crucifixion. There are some diseases which, for a time, cause pain of this acute and formidable nature. To find a relief for it, when possible, is at once the impulse of humanity and the studious desire of science. Two brief examples may indicate what success is attending the effort to both comfort and cure cases of this kind.

"Nearly all my life," writes an intelligent woman, "I have borne the burden of what appeared to be incurable illness. I always felt heavy, weary, and tired. My appetite was poor, and after eating I had a cruel pain at my chest and between the shoulders. Frequently the pain was so intense that I was impelled to loose my clothing and walk about the room. My nerves were disordered and irritable, and I was, consequently, easily disquieted and upset. My sleep was habitually bad, and I seemed none the better for spending a night in bed. Eating but little my strength waned, of necessity, and I came to be very weak. For a long time I got about feebly and with difficulty."

"In August, 1887, I had an attack of rheumatic gout, which gave me the most harrowing experience of my life. The complaint took its usual course and refused to yield to the ordinary treatment. Through the partial failure of the liver and kidneys drooping set in and my legs and feet became puffed and swollen. I suffered excruciating pain and was confined to my bed for thirteen weeks. Remedies of every description were tried, but to little purpose."

"My brother, visiting me one day, said he had been cured of an attack of dropsy by a medicine called Mother Seigel's Syrup. I got a bottle from Mr. Hewett, the chemist, in Seven Sisters' Road, and after taking it felt a trifle easier. I continued taking it, and soon the pain and swelling abated. I could eat without pain or incon-

venience, and by a few weeks' further use of the Syrup I was not only free from any local ailment, but felt better than I ever did in my life before. Since then I have enjoyed continuous good health, taking a dose of Mother Seigel's Syrup occasionally for some transient indisposition. You are at liberty to publish my letter." (Signed) (Mrs.) Elizabeth Rogers, 42, Plevna Road, South Tottenham, London, September 13th 1895.

"In January, 1892," writes another, "I had an attack of influenza, and was confined to my bed for eight or ten days. Subsequently I was very weak, and could get up no strength. What little food I forced down (having no appetite) gave me excruciating pain, so that I was afraid to eat. I came to be exceedingly weak and had frequent attacks of dizziness. I was worn almost to a skeleton, and none thought I would recover."

"In June, 1892, Mr. Smith, a friend of ours, recommended me to try Mother Seigel's Syrup, which I at once procured of Mr. George Coombs, the chemist in Huddersfield. After taking it for only one week I felt greatly benefited. I could eat better, and food agreed with me. Continuing with the Syrup I grew stronger and stronger, and soon felt even better than before I was attacked by the influenza. You are free to print this statement if you wish to do it. (Signed) (Mrs.) Ruth Halliday, 44, High Street, Huddersfield, Torkard, Nottingham, March 19th 1893."

Intense pain may or may not indicate urgent danger to life, but it is hard to bear, and very exhausting just the same. In cases of rheumatic gout (Mrs. Rogers) the pain is caused by a poisonous acid in the tissues, originally produced by the decomposition of food in the stomach—indigestion or dyspepsia. The same poison acting in the liver and kidneys creates the other symptoms mentioned. In the case of Mrs. Halliday the ailment was dyspepsia, which in the first place invited influenza, and then remained to torment her.

It is best and easiest to prevent pain by using Mother Seigel's Syrup immediately when the illness appears.

Ministering to a Quiet Kentucky Flock.

In a pleasant, social little Kentucky town, not long ago, a new minister arrived. Fervent in his mission against the world, the flesh and the evil one, and not duly considering the points of his compass, he delivered from his pulpit the first Sunday a tirade against card playing. On Monday the wealthiest member of his flock called on him and said:

"Oh, dear Brother Parker, your sermon was very unwise. You will offend half your people if you talk against cards. We are just a little quiet community all by ourselves here, and we play cards whenever we want to. Don't say anything more about card playing."

So the next Sunday the new preacher launched out on dancing. Again the wealthiest member invited him to say that his church people had danced all they wanted to, and he must not say anything more against dancing. The evil of horse racing was his subject the following Sunday, and this brought the rich member to him in great distress of mind.

"Great goodness, Brother Parker! this is one of the finest horse sections in the State. You are beside yourself when you try to put down horse racing."

"Well," said the dependent preacher, "if you say so I'll have to let evils alone. Next Sunday I'll abuse the Jews."

"All right," remarked the wealthy member, "but don't overlook the fact that I'm the only Jew in your congregation."