

THOUGHTS FOR FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

"We then as workers together with Him beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

How touching is this appeal, this solemn voice, coming to us on the First Sunday in Lent, and sustaining the note of awful warning which was sounded in our ears on Ash-Wednesday. What weight it carries when we make real to ourselves that he who spoke it had indeed a right to call himself a co-worker with Christ, as he was, so far as weak humanity could be, a fellow-sufferer with Him. In all things had he approved himself as the Minister of God; and who can read unmoved the catalogue of his labours, his virtues and his afflictions? He then as the ambassador of Christ, as the voice of God Himself, beseeches us that we receive not the grace of God in vain! It is the grace of God which, through the Church's ordinance, gives us the season of Lent, with its calls to repentance and amendment, with its faithful commemoration of that awful time when the Light of the World passed forty days and nights for us in the desolate wilderness, suffering the pangs of hunger, alone and forsaken, the season of Lent forming, as it were, the somber prelude to that dreadful scene when we shall behold the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" drinking for us, to the very dregs, the cup of agony and shame and woe. O let us humbly and thankfully receive this grace of God which would sway our hearts and minds and draw them from the world, not only from its absorbing pleasures, but from the cares and anxieties which are often quite as fatal to the life of communion with God, and fix them upon things eternal in the Heavens. Not in vain let the Apostle's pleading voice be heard! The grace is ours if we will but claim it and use it aright. Let us not be of those to whom the Church's times and seasons pass unheeded, or it may be, scoffed at. To such the great Apostle of the Gentiles, with his burning words and fervor of heavenly love, speaks but an idle tale; but in us may his passionate appeals, his tender entreaties find thankful hearers. If we endeavour earnestly to draw near to God through this Lenten Season, He will most surely draw nigh to us, and we shall taste the joy unspeakable of those who in this life live as in His Presence, and in the life to come shall see Him face to face.

"Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord . . . and I will receive you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

A TALENT FOR WRETCHEDNESS.

There are fortunate people who have what may be called a talent for happiness. Theirs is the habit of looking on the bright side. However perplexing the situation, however hedged about with embarrassments and obstructed by hindrances, they either see beyond it halcyon skies and a smooth pathway, or they manage to extract the present sweetness from its bitterness. In reading two books of recent travel, one the record of a solitary woman's adventures in the East, the other of another woman's travels by herself in the West, I was struck by the contrast in the two experiences. The pages of one are sprinkled with sunshine, and her ink has a golden sparkle. Those of the other are acerb, complaining and solemnly cynical. But we need not go to books for our illustrations. Cheerfulness is in part dependent on health and temperament, as well as on grace and a Christian conscience. It is almost impossible to wear a radiant face when one has a deranged digestion, or to be equable and tranquil when the nervous fountains are in a state of exhaustion.—Yet who does not know invalids whose rooms of suffering are full of a divine peace, and who cannot think of some who out of great tribulation have entered into a hallowed region which no storms invade? And, on the other hand, there are those who, regarded as to outward circumstances, appear to have everything in their favor, yet who manage to be so uniformly miserable that it may be assumed that they have a talent for wretchedness.

To be successfully wretched one must have a certain measure of self-love.—Wounded vanity is a more potent faculty and a more subtle source of

trouble than we sometimes imagine. The oversensitive woman who is always feeling slighted and neglected, who thinks her acquaintances and friends do not treat her as well as she deserves, and who goes about her home with a tearful, injured air, is not as uncommon as we wish she were. Nothing should be more resolutely discouraged in children than this touchiness of disposition, which is easily affronted, and which is after all only a form of inordinate selfishness. I know young people who are so marred by this peculiarity of character that in talking with them one has always the feeling of a sailor among quicksands. There is no predicting the unseen and unexpected shoals on which the conversational boat may strike. Unhappy themselves, these victims of morbidness make others unhappy, and go through the world without having the good times to which every honest and conscientious person is entitled.

It is easier to be wretched than to be cheerful, if we consent to let lower feelings rule us.

We may rise above our complaining words, by using the old-fashioned receipt of prayer and pains, or yielding to them we make ourselves as frost to the tender flowers of love and charity at home.—*Christian Intelligencer.*

I KNOW A THING OR TWO.

"My dear boy," said a father to his only son, "you are in bad company. The lads with whom you associate indulge in bad habits. They drink, smoke, swear, play cards, and visit theatres. They are not safe company for you. I beg you to quit their society."

"You needn't be afraid of me, father," replied the boy, laughing. "I know a thing or two. I know how far to go and when to stop."

The boy left his father's house twirling his cane in his fingers, and laughing at the "old man's notions" about him.

A few years later and that lad, grown to manhood, stood at the bar of a court, before a jury which had just brought in a verdict of guilty against him for some crime in which he had been concerned.

Before he was sentenced he addressed the court, and said among other things, "My downward course began in disobedience to my parents. I thought I knew as much of the world as my father did, and I spurned his advice; but as soon as I turned my back on home, temptations came upon me like a drove of hyenas and hurried me to ruin."

Mark that confession, ye boys who are beginning to be wiser than your parents. Mark it, and learn that disobedience is the first step on the road to ruin. Don't forget, but ponder it well.—*Selected.*

NOT ALONE.

We do not labor alone. However feeble our hands, that mighty Hand is laid on them, to direct their movements and to lend strength to their weakness. It is not our speech which will secure result, but His presence with our words which shall bring it about, that even through them a great number shall believe and turn to the Lord. There is our encouragement when we are despondent. There is our rebuke when we are self-confident. There is our stimulus when we are indolent. There is our quietness when we are impatient. If ever we are tempted to think our task heavy, let us not forget that He who set it helps us to do it, and from His throne shares in all our toils, the Lord still, as of old, working with us. If ever we feel that our strength is nothing, and we stand solitary against many foes, let us fall back upon the peace-giving thought, that one man against the world, with Christ to help him, is always in the majority; and let us leave issues of our work in His hands, whose hands will guard the seed sown in weakness, whose smile will bless the springing thereof.—*A Mac-Klaren, D.D.*

"When a good thought comes to us in the house of prayer or elsewhere, let us act upon it. When an opportunity presents itself for doing good, let us seize upon it at once. Be active, practical, working Christians. Ask, and get an answer to the question, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

If a plan suggests itself by which we may show some kindness, or in any way promote the temporal or spiritual welfare of those around us or at a distance from us, let us bring it to some practical result. So also let us nourish every impulse to prayer and to praise. Let us be sure these holy desires and feelings and self-denying resolves spring from the Spirit of God. Human instrumentality may be employed, but human instrumentality in itself is powerless."—*From "The Forgotten Truth," by Rev. C. Bullock.*

THE NEW BABY.

"How do you do, little Mary?" said I.

She put her finger in her mouth, but did not speak. I sat on the sofa, holding the new baby. Mary did not like the baby, and that was why she stood over so far away and frowned.

"Is your dolly pretty well?" I asked.

She blushed, and hung her head. Then she ran and climbed upon mamma's bed with that big, big wax dolly, and began to cry.

"Dear little Mary!" said mamma, putting her arm about her, and holding her close to her heart. But little Mary only cried the more.

"O mamma," said she, "I love you, I love papa, I love all the folks, but I don't love the baby! Baby is naughty!"

Mamma looked sad. She knew Mary had not been happy since the little brother came. She did not like to have any one rock him, or sing to him, or kiss him. She wanted all the kisses herself; and then, too, she was so afraid mamma would forget to love her, now that the new baby was here.

Poor little Mary! This was a sad mistake. Her mother's heart was very large,—large enough to hold and love two darling children just as well as one.

I went away, thinking how dear and sweet that baby was, with his soft blue eyes, and smiling mouth, and cunning hands; but I did not like to think his sister Mary had frowned at him, and said such unkind words.

Four weeks after this I saw the pretty baby again. He was pale and weak, for he had been very ill; but the doctor said he would soon be well. He lay in his mother's arm, and Mary knelt beside him, kissing his dear little hands, and face, and feet.

"Mary loves her brother now," said mamma.

"Oh, yes; I knew that the moment I saw her."

"She was very sorry when she thought God was going to take him away," said mamma, "and she means now to be always good to him if God lets him stay here with us."

"Oh, how glad I am!" said I.

And then little Mary hid her face in her baby brother's bosom, and I heard her whisper: "I love mamma, I love papa, I love you, and I love God!"

Tears came in mamma's eyes, but she kissed her little daughter with a tender smile; and I thought I had never, never seen her look so happy before.

—*Our Little Ones*

WHOSE BOY AM I?

I'd just like to know whose boy I am. Every morning when the postman comes, he says, "Hal-lo! whose little boy are you?"

Then I have to say: "Papa's, and' mamma's an' grand-pa's an' grand-ma's, an' great-grand-ma's, an' uncle Charlie's, an' aunty Lou's, an' aunty May's, an'—"

But when I ain't through, he's gone, an' he always laughs when he is going. I like to be some folks' boy, but not everybody's. When I do things papa likes, such as pick up chips, and don't cry when I'm hurt, then I'm papa's boy.

An' when I'm hurt, an' do cry, then I'm mamma's boy. An' when any of my gran'ma's come, they say, when I'm right there before 'em, "An' where's gran-ma's boy to-day?" An' cook says: "Be my good little boy," an' las' night a man came on our steps an' he said, "My son, is this Mr. Nelson's house?" an' when I said no, he said, "Thank you, my boy;" an' a p'lice-man said jus' now, "Run in, my boy, or you'll freeze." I don't like to be a man's boy that I never havn't seen before at all, I don't.—*Babyland.*