

A TEN-MINUTE SERMON TO CHILDREN.

"Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."—MATT. vii. 17.

WHEN I was a little boy I used to take great delight in reading the wonderful tales about the times when everything seemed to have the power of speech—when not only the animals and birds and fish and crawling things spoke to one another, but even the trees and plants and flowers would hold conversations. Hearing these stories so often and thinking about them so much I finally came to half believe that all these things could think and talk together, and sometimes I would sit down beneath some great tree and listen to the rustling of the leaves and wonder what they were talking about, and wish that the old tree would begin talking to me in a language that I could understand, and tell me of all the wonderful things it had seen in its long life. I did not then know that there was a language in which even a tree could impart wisdom to those who were wise and thoughtful. When Christ was in the world, walking and talking with men, he often referred to trees and compared them to the people about him. He used to walk about with his disciples and notice all the ordinary things of nature; indeed, nothing was too insignificant for him to observe and draw from it great truths for his followers. "He would point out the beautiful flowers or the grain of wheat and teach them how these things were like certain people. So when he spoke of the good tree bringing forth good fruit and the bad tree bringing forth bad fruit, or none at all, he was only showing by the tree that good things did not proceed from bad sources or that good deeds were not to be expected from an evil heart, and that our own lives were like the growing trees, some growing like trees in good ground, better and stronger and more fruitful every year; others dwarfed, unfruitful and useless.

Once upon a time there was a great King who had many children, and he was desirous that they should all grow up to be useful and good. He did not want them to live in idleness all their days and grow proud and selfish and wicked; so he made a beautiful garden and sent them to live in it, giving each a seed to plant in the garden that he might have a tree of his own. Now, these seeds were not all of the same kind and when planted would grow into different kinds of trees. But this great King commanded his children to take great care of their trees, whatever kind they proved to be. If one happened to have an apple tree he was to look out that it was a good apple tree. If another should get a plum tree it was his duty to take such care of it that it should be a good plum tree and yield much fruit; and he said that those of his children who proved themselves to be industrious and obedient to his commands should finally reign with Him in his great kingdom, and when He called them they must bring with them some of the fruit of their trees that He might know they were worthy to be His children. Here was an opportunity given them to show their love and gratitude to their Father by trying to cultivate their trees so that they might meet Him on the day He called them with their hands full of beautiful fruits, and be received into His palace and hailed as princes and heirs to the great kingdom. One would hardly believe that any were so foolish as to neglect their trusts; but when their Father began to call them, one by one, and said to each, as he answered to His call, "My son, what fruit have you brought me?" there were many who hung their heads in shame, for in their hands were only a few withered fruits; and there were others whose hands were empty, and they dared not look their loving Father in the face, while those who had been faithful, came with joyful faces and glad hearts, laden with the beautiful fruits which their own tree had yielded, and these the Father knew had been true to their trust because *He knew them by their fruits*.

Perhaps, ere now, some of my audience of little folks have guessed who the good Father was and who were His children, for, indeed, the great King is our Father in Heaven, and the garden this world. We are His children, and to each of us He has given a tree to cultivate; that tree is our own life, and it is for us to think seriously what

fruit we are bearing. Let us ask ourselves these questions: Is my life making any one better and happier? Are the fruits of my life gentleness, kindness, patience, truthfulness, honesty and love? Happy is the boy or girl who is ready with such fruit when the Father calls. Happy is the life which is "like a tree planted by the river of water which bringeth forth its fruit in its season," for that is the life which our Father loves.

But think again: Is my life making those around me unhappy or wicked? Do I ever say words which will make an evil impression upon the minds of those who hear them? Are the fruits I am bearing stubbornness, disobedience, anger, envy, pride, hatred, or strife? Do I find any satisfaction in making any of God's creatures suffer? Do I hurt the feelings of my play fellows? Am I cross, rude, or cruel? Look well to your tree, for it grows late. Shake off such withered fruits from its boughs and cultivate it anew by observing our Father's commands. He has told us in the Bible what to do and how to make our lives acceptable to Him. Let us learn to think more of Him; His goodness and His power; His kindness and His love; His kingdom waiting for us; and having learned to love Him, we shall find joy and happiness in taking such care of the tree He has given us to cultivate, that we shall not meet Him empty handed when He calls us, nor hang our heads in bitter shame when He says, "My son, where is thy fruit?" but meet Him with confidence and with happy hearts and the fruits of a goodly life.

CONTENTMENT.

It has always been, and always will be, a universal complaint and lamentation, that the life of man and troubles are individual companions, continually and closely sticking one to the other; that life and misery are but several names for the same thing; that our state here is nothing else but a combination of various evils (made up of cares, of labours, of dangers, of disappointments, of discords, of disquiet, of diseases, of manifold pains and sorrows); that all ages, from wailing infancy to querulous decrepitude, and all conditions, from the careful sceptre to the painful spade, are fraught with many great inconveniences peculiar to each of them; that all the face of the earth is overspread with mischiefs as with a general and perpetual deluge; that nothing perfectly sound, nothing safe, nothing stable, nothing serene, is here to be found; this, with one sad voice all mankind resoundeth; this our poets are ever mournfully singing, this our philosophers do gravely inculcate; this the experience of all times loudly proclaimeth; for what are all histories, but continued registers of the evils incident to men? What do all describe, but wars and slaughters, mutinies and seditious tumults and confusions, devastations and ruins? What do they tell us, but of men furiously striving together, circumventing, spoiling, destroying one another? What do we daily hear reported, but cruel broils, bloody battles and tragical events; great numbers of men slain, wounded, carried into captivity; cities sacked and razed, countries harassed and depopulated, kingdoms and commonwealths overturned? What do we see before our eyes, but men caring, toiling, bickering; some worn out with labour, some pining away for want; some groaning under pain? And amidst so many common miseries and misfortunes, in so generally confused and dismal a state of things, is it not ridiculously absurd for us, doth it not argue in us a prodigious fondness of self-love, heinously to resent, or impatiently to bemoan our particular and private crosses? May not reasonably that expostulation of Jeremy to Baruch reach us? The Lord saith thus: "Behold that which I have built I will break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not; for, behold, I will bring evil on all flesh."

I think the first virtue is to restrain the tongue; he approaches nearest the gods who knows how to be silent, even though he is in the right.

In speaking of the benefits of trial and suffering, we should never forget that these things by themselves have no power to make us holier or heavenlier. They make some men morose, selfish, and envious. Such is the effect of pain and sorrow when unsanctified by God's saving grace. It is only when grace is in the heart, when power from above dwells in a man, that anything outward or inward turns to his salvation.—*Dr. Newman*.

SELF MADE MEN

Columbus, the discoverer of America, in 1492, was a weaver. Franklin the illustrious philosopher, was a journeyman printer. The eloquent Massillon, as well as the brilliant Flechier, arose amidst the humblest vocations. Niebuhr, the celebrated traveller, was a peasant. Sixtus V was the son of a gardener, and in his youth was employed in keeping swine. The great Rollin, the historian, was the son of a cutter; and Burns, the celebrated Scottish poet, was a ploughman. Esop, the author of the fables which have so often delighted us in days gone by, was a slave. Homer was a beggar. Daniel Defoe, the author of Robinson Crusoe, was apprenticed to a hosier. Sir C. Shovel, the English admiral, was apprenticed to a shoemaker, and was afterwards a cabin-boy. Demosthenes, the greatest orator, was the son of a butcher. Hogarth, the painter, was an apprentice to an engraver of arms on silver plate. Virgil, the great Roman poet, was the son of a baker. Mallet a good writer, rose from extreme poverty. Gay, the poet, was an apprentice to a silk mercer. Ben Jonson was a bricklayer. Porson, the renowned professor, was the son of a parish clerk. Bishop Prideaux was at one time employed to sweep Exeter College in England. Akenside, the poet, was the son of a butcher. Pope was the son of a merchant. Cervantes, a well-known Spanish writer, was a common soldier. Gifford and Bloomfield, both excellent poets, were shoemakers. Howard, the philanthropist, was apprenticed to a grocer. Halley, the well-known astronomer, was the son of a soap-boiler. The parents of Sir Richard Arkwright, were very poor, and he was a barber for a number of years. Belzoni, the celebrated Egyptian traveller, was the son of a barber. Barry, an eminent painter, was originally a mason. Blackstone, the celebrated lawyer, was the son of a linen-draper. Blacklock, a Scottish poet, blind from his infancy, was in a distressful state of poverty. Buchanan, the Scottish historian, was a private soldier. The witty Butler was the son of a farmer. Canova, the celebrated sculptor, was the son of a stonecutter. The Empress Catherine of Russia was born a peasant, and lived in the state of a servant for many years. The intrepid navigator, Captain Cook, began his career in the merchant service as a cabin-boy. Curran, the orator of the Green Isle, was the son of poor parents, and had to contend with many hardships. The celebrated Sir Humphrey Davy was the son of a carver, and was apprenticed to an apothecary. Dodsley, the author of several works, was at one time a stocking weaver, and afterwards a footman. Drake, the great navigator, was the son of a shepherd. Hunter, the anatomist, was apprenticed to a carpenter. Falconer, the poet, was the son of a barber. The ingenious Ferguson was the son of a shepherd. Lord Hardwicke was the son of a peasant, and he became Chief Justice of England purely from his own abilities. Haydn, the celebrated music composer, was the son of a poor cartwright. Herschel, the astronomer, was the son of a musician. The great Dr. Johnson was the son of a bookseller. Sir Thomas Lawrence was the son of an innkeeper. La Fontaine, the unequalled fabulist, was the son of an overseer of woods and forests in France. Milton, the poet, was the son of a scrivener. Parkes, the eminent chemist, was the son of a small grocer. Pizarro was never taught to read in his youth, but was employed to keep hogs. Pollock, the poet, was the son of a carpenter, and he worked some time at that business. Allan Ramsay was bred a barber. Raffaele, the eminent Italian painter, was the son of a peasant. Richardson, a well-known writer, was the son of a joiner, and worked as a printer. Shakspeare, the great dramatic writer, began his career poor, and as a menial. Stone, the celebrated mathematician, worked as a gardener, and taught himself to read. Kirk White, a young poet, who died at the age of twenty, was the son of a butcher.

We want all our young people to bear in mind that there are two hard things to do; to talk of yourselves without being vain; and to talk of others without slandering them.

A Boston minister, it is said, recently gave the following answer, to the question—What do Unitarians believe?—"They believe that eighteen hundred years ago, in Bethlehem of Judea nothing in particular happened!"

Just as the strengthening of the whole constitution of the body makes any particular and local affection disappear, so by degrees, by the raising of the character, do the lower affections become—not extinguished or destroyed by excision, but ennobled by a new and lofty spirit breathed through them. This is the account given by the apostle. He speaks of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, and his remedy is to give the vigor to the high, rather than to struggle with the lower. "This I say, then, walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."