

# Sunday Reading.

## GOING ASTRAY.

There are few Real Causes for Justifiable Rebellion.

I know of a few cases where marriage has been under the red-hot anathema of parents and all the neighbors, but God approved, and the homes established have been beautiful and positively Edenic.

But while we may admit that there are real cases of justifiable rebellion, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred—y-a, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, these unlicensed departures and decampments by moonlight are ruin, temporal and eternal. It is safer for a woman to jump of the docks of the East River and depend on being able to swim to the other shore, or get picked up by a ferry-boat. The possibilities are that she may be rescued, but the probability is that she will not. Read the story of the escapees in the newspapers for the last ten years, and find me half a dozen that do not mean poverty, disgrace, abandonment, police court, divorce, death and hell. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there."

Satan presides over the escapee. He introduces the two parties to each other. He gets them to pledge their troth. He appoints where they shall meet. He shows them where they can find officiating minister or squire. He points out to them the ticket-office for the railroad train. He puts them aboard, and when they are going at forty miles an hour, he jumps off and leaves them in the lurch; for, while Satan has a genius for getting people into trouble, he has no genius for getting people out. He induced Genah to take ship for Tarshish when God told him to go to Nineveh, but provided for the recalcitrant prophet no better landing-place than the middle of the Mediterranean Sea.

The modern novel is responsible for many of these abscondings. Do you think that young woman would sit up half a night reading novels in which the hero or heroine get acquainted in the usual way, and carry on their increased friendliness until, with the consent of parents, the day of marriage is appointed, and amid the surrounding court of kindred, the vows are taken? Oh, no! There must be flight, and pursuit, and narrow escape, and drawn dagger, all ending in sunshine, and parental forgiveness, and bliss unalloyed and gorgeous. In many of the cases of escapees the idea was implanted in the hot brain of the woman by a cheap novel—ten cents' worth of unadulterated perdition.

These evasions of the ordinary modes of marriage are to be deplored for the reason that nearly all of them are proposed by bad men. If the man behaves well, he had a character to which he can refer, and he can say: "If you want to inquire about me, there is a list of names of people in the town or neighborhood where I live." No; the heroes of escapees are nearly all either bigamists, or libertines, or drunkards, or defrauders, or first-class scoundrels of some sort. They have no character to lose. They may be dressed in the height of fashion, may be cologne, and pomatum, and padded, and diamond-tinged, and flamboyant-crowned until they bewitch the eye, and intoxicate the olfactory; but they are double-distilled extracts of villany, moral dirt and blasphemy. Beware of them. "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there."

## Learning Scripture.

There was a Corsican boy who could recite forty thousand words, whether sense or nonsense, as they were dictated, and then repeat them in the reversed order without making a single mistake. A physician, about sixty years ago, could repeat the whole of "Paradise Lost" without making a mistake, although he had not read it for twenty years. Euler, the great mathematician, when he became blind, could repeat the whole of Virgil's "Æneid," and could remember the first line and last line of every page of the particular edition which he had been accustomed to read before he became blind. One kind of retentive memory may be considered as the result of sheer work, a determination toward one particular achievement without reference either to cultivation or memory on other subjects. This is frequently shown by persons in regard to the Bible. An old beggar man at Stirling known fifty years ago as "Blind Alick," afforded an instance of this. He knew the whole of the Bible by heart, inasmuch that if a sentence was read to him he could name the book, chapter and verse, or if the book, chapter and verse were named he could give the exact words. A gentleman, to test him, repeated a verse, purposely making one verbal inaccuracy. Alick hesitated, named the place where the passage was to be found, but at the same time pointed out the verbal error. The same gentleman asked him to repeat the nineteenth verse of the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Numbers. Alick almost instantly replied "There is no such verse." That chapter has only eighty-nine verses. Cassendi had acquired by heart six thousand Latin verses, and in order to give his memory exercise he was in the habit of daily reciting six hundred verses from different languages.—[Spate Moments.

## The Duty of All.

"Keep the commandments"—that is the duty of all. The Law of God must be honored, every jot and tittle of it, for it is holy and just and good. The law cannot be kept by thee; it is kept, fulfilled, magnified by thy Lord and Master for thee, and His law keeping is counted mine and thine when we are united by a living faith to Him. To quote the words of the Editor of Sunday School: "It is the keeping of the commandments. But by Christ first and not by men. And faith in Christ makes His keeping mine. Then Christ dwells in the heart by faith, and lo, the issue is love. I keep the commandments myself now. For what is keeping the

commandments but love? And faith works by love. That is the manifestation of its energy, of its vitality. I keep the commandments now—yet not I but Christ that dwelleth in me. I work and the work is love, but it is Christ that worketh in me to will and to do of his good pleasure."

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"—is the gospel message. No new message can supersede this old one. They are deceivers who preach a different Gospel, and who place instead of Christ any man, or woman, or society, or system of doctrine, or any penances, indulgences, pilgrimages, relics, tortures, money payments, or anything else. It is better ever to listen to the voice of duty and to follow the path of safety.

## WHEN JESUS WAS BORN.

Present Era makes the birth of Christ in Roman year 7541.

The death of Herod the Great is relied on with most certainty to fix the year of Christ's birth. Josephus, who gives a full account of Herod's death, mentions an eclipse of the moon which occurred shortly before he died. (Ant. 17: 6, 4.) This eclipse is the only one alluded to by Josephus, and which the birth of Jesus could not have occurred, since, according to Matt. 2: 1, 6, Jesus was born while Herod was still living. The question to be determined would be the year of this eclipse. Astronomical calculations name an eclipse of the moon March 12 and 13, in the year of Rome 750, and no eclipse occurred in the following year that was visible in Palestine. Josephus (Ant. 17: 8, 1) says that Herod died thirty-seven years after he was declared King by the Romans. In 714 he was proclaimed King, and this would bring his death, counting from Nisan to Nisan, as Josephus usually does, "in the year 1st Nisan 750 to 1st Nisan 751, according to Jewish computation, at the age of seventy" (Andrews). Herod died shortly before the passover of 750, then, according to the eclipse and the length of his reign. Gasdri contends for Jan. 24, 753, as the date of Herod's death, because there was a total eclipse of the moon Jan. 10. So he put his death fourteen days later. Mr. Padge argues for the eclipse that occurred July 17, 752, as the one preceding Herod's death. He thinks that this makes unnecessary the abstraction of two years from the reign of Tiberius, on the theory that Tiberius was contemporary ruler with Augustus for two years. But he finds difficulty in lengthening Herod's reign so long, and his theory has gained no great acceptance as yet.

Our present era makes the birth of Christ in the year of Rome 754, and is due to the Abbot Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century. Hence it is clear that if Herod died in the early spring of 750, Jesus must have been born at least four years before 754, the common era, and likely in the year 749.

It has been inferred by some that Jesus was at least two or three years old when Herod slaughtered the infants at Bethlehem, Matt. 1: 16. Thus the year would be put two years further back to the end of 749 or beginning of 748. But this is not demanded by the "two years" of Matthew, for Herod would naturally extend the limit so as to be sure to include the child in the number slain, and a child just entering the second year would be called two years' old by Jewish custom. No more definite note of time comes from this circumstance, save that the massacre probably took place some months before Herod's death, which fact would bring the Saviour's birth back some time into the year 749.

## Messages of Help for the Week.

"O earth! earth! earth! hear the word of the Lord." Jeremiah 22, 29.

"God be merciful unto us and bless; and cause His face to shine upon us, that Thy way may be known upon the earth, Thy saving health among all nations." Psalm 67, 1-2.

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness: For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Luke 12, 15.

"Search the scriptures. John 2, 39.

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord; come before His presence with singing. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: Be thankful unto Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations." Psalm, 100.

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Col. 4, 6.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor., 3, 18.

## The World's Refuge.

The whole world will at last come into the refuge of Christ. The windows of heaven will be opened; God's trumpet of salvation will sound, and China will come from its tea-fields and rice-harvests, into the light. India will come forth, the chariots of salvation jostling to pieces her juggernauts. Freezing Greenland and sweltering Abyssinia, will, side by side, press into the kingdom; and the transformed Borneas cannibal preach of the resurrection of the missionary who has slain. The glory of Calvary will tinge the tip of the Pyrenees; and Lebanon cedars shall clap their hands; and by one swing of the sickle Christ shall harvest nations for the skies. In the rush of the winds that set the forest in motion, like giants wrestling on the hills, we see the tossing up of the triumphal branches that shall wave along the line of our King as he comes to take empire. In the stormy diapason of the ocean's organ, and the more gentle strains that in the calm come sounding up from the crystal and Jasper keys at the beach, we hear the prophecy: "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters fill the sea."

## TEST OF LOVE.

One of the Invariable Signs of Inward Conversion.

Giving, in the cause which Paul advocated, was doubly a test of love. If a man loved his fellow-men, the knowledge that some were in need would certainly move him to relieve their need. If he loved God and was a follower of Christ, he would give for Christ's sake. Thus, to neglect giving, was to show that there was not the love for God and men in the heart that there ought to be. It was a serious condition that these men were in; they had faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence and love for their teacher, but they lacked this grace of giving. They were apparently selfishness was worse in a Christian than in any one else. They were rich because Christ had become poor for their sakes, therefore, if they were really followers of Christ they would make sacrifice for the sake of others. If a man refrained from giving to those who were in need, he did not have the spirit of Christ and was not following him. There is no flaw in the Apostolic argument. No wife would believe that her husband loved her, however much he protested that he did, if he habitually neglected her, was unmindful of her wishes, spent his income on himself, while she lacked food and clothing. Christ was not there, but if he had so identified himself with his people that he had said, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto these my brethren ye did it not to me." In withholding the help from the Jewish Christian poor, for whom Paul pleaded, these Corinthians were withholding gifts from Christ himself. The inference that they did not love him was logical. They had given another proof too. Paul intimates that while he was serving them as their pastor, he had toiled for his own support and had actually accepted help from other churches, while he was laboring for the Corinthians. Evidently it was a church that needed admonition on this matter. Paul would not command; it was a subject on which commands were out of place. The gifts ought to be spontaneous, as they would be if they loved Christ. The Apostle was concerned, not about the lack of gifts, but about the barrenness which their absence supplies.

This test is not worn out nor discarded. They who love God, love their fellow-men still; and their love is not idle. It is one of the invariable signs of genuine conversion that love to the whole world springs into life. Especially is there love toward those who have fellowship with us in the blessed hope. They are brethren and their need is our concern. If they lack the necessities or even the comforts of life, while we have more than we need, their cry goes up to heaven against us and we shall not be held guiltless. If the men who break to us the bread of life are suffering poverty and if the agencies which are engaged in propagating the Gospel in the world are restricted in their efforts by lack of funds, while we are hoarding our money, we shall be called to account for it. Pointing to the hoarded thousands, Christ asks: "Lovest thou me more than these?" Dare we refuse to give while we all around us are followers of Him who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor?

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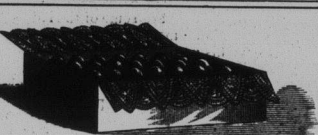
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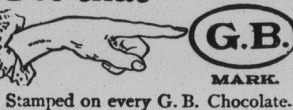
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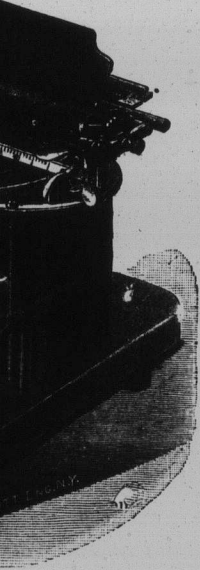
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