

Our Young People

A SUMMER MEETING, TO DISCUSS HAPPINESS.

Topic for Aug. 27—"Green Pastures: the Christian's Pleasures."—Ps. 23: 1-6.

"In His Presence is fulness of joy."

In the Green Pastures.

By Rev. F. N. Peloubet, D.D.

The first sentence of this psalm is the fountain whence flow all the streams of joy noted in the sentences that follow. The first and highest joy of the Christian is that he has such a Shepherd to love, to follow, and to obey.

Before we can enter His green pastures we ourselves must be His sheep, loving, following, and obeying Him. Professor Drummond says that he knew a Sunday-school scholar whose conception of joy was that it was a thing made in lumps and kept somewhere in heaven, and that when people prayed for it, pieces were somehow let down and fitted into their souls. But Christian enjoyment is the by-product of the Christian life, the Christian spirit, the Christian virtues, just as the fragrance is of the rose, or the flavor of a peach. You cannot have the fragrance or the flavor without the rose or the peach. You cannot have the pleasures of the Christian without first being a Christian, and the more Christian you are, the higher and sweeter the joys.

True religion is in its very nature joyous. The Christian has sorrows, but they are not the fruit of religion. Religion does not create the darkness, but it throws light upon it, brings comfort in sorrow, awakens songs in the prison and in the night.

Let us wander around the green pastures and see what Christian pleasures we can find there.

1. We find food there. The soul needs food as really as the body does. Every faculty of the soul requires feeding, so that it may grow and be strong and active. Whenever the soul has an appetite, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, then the satisfying of that appetite gives pleasure. We often do not have great Christian joy, because we do not hunger enough for the virtues whose activity brings joy.

All the pleasures of body and mind, all that makes life delightful, when within the limits of God's laws, belong to the green pastures of the Christian. Religion does not drive us from every temple of pleasure, nor put flaming cherubim at the gate of every Eden, nor write over every field of delight, "No trespassing here." It is not true that

"Each pleasure hath its poison, too,
And every sweet a snare."

See what Paul says in 1 Tim. 4:1-5. Do you remember Browning's story of the two camels? One ate almost nothing, and accepted only the poorest fare, with no care for his body, in order to save for his master. But when he bore his load through the desert, he was too weak to make the journey, and died among the sands, so that his master lost both load and camel. The other, for his master's sake, ate the most nourishing food, and took the best care of himself, enjoying his food and his work; and he bore his burden swiftly and safely through the desert.

2. We find there the waters of rest, gently flowing amid green fields, satisfying the thirst of the soul, invigorating body and soul with

the refreshing influences of the Holy Spirit.

3. We find the pleasures of holy activity, where to do right, and love God and man, is as natural and joyous as the play of a child or the morning song of a bird. The activity of evil passions is ever painful, as of anger, hate, temper, selfishness; while the action of virtues, as of love, kindness, generosity, is pleasurable in its nature.

4. We find social pleasures. There are many sheep in the flock, and each one's pleasure is greater because it is shared with others. The most exquisite delights are dimmed and faded if enjoyed alone.

5. We find the softened pleasures which come from comfort in sorrow, strength in weakness, the virtues wrought in us by suffering. The darkness has its blessedness in the stars unseen by day, and the new songs in the night. Enemies and dangers show us new qualities in the Shepherd, and new proofs of His love.

I have in my study a shepherd's crook and a staff from Palestine. The crook is to help up any sheep that has been caught among the rocks of the ravine. The staff is to defend the sheep from wolves and robbers. As the shepherd walks before his flock, and they see him carrying the rod of help and the staff of defence, they are comforted. But sometimes the flock are caught in the ravines by the sudden darkness, and they cannot see the shepherd. Then he takes his staff and pounds upon the rocks. The sound can be heard a mile or more, and the sheep, hearing it, know that their shepherd is near though unseen. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

6. We find the joy of victory, than which there are few greater joys. Having conquered sin, temptation, or a bad habit, or a great wrong, or a "spiritual wickedness in high places," the Christian thrills with a greater joy than that of Caesar entering Rome under his triumphal arch. With "the whole armor of God" upon him, the Christian feasts in the presence of his enemies in perfect security, for all things are compelled to work together for his good.

7. His cup runneth over. There is no limit and no end.—Christian Endeavor World.

Our pleasures are mere entertainments. We are entertained like passing guests at the inns on the roadside. Yet even after the choicest meals we dare not linger. We must take the pilgrim's staff again and go on our way to the Father.—Professor Drummond.

Diversions, rightly managed, increase rather than diminish my spirituality. I now feel that I am never serving my Master more acceptably than when, for His sake, I am using means to preserve my health and lengthen my life.—David Brainerd.

"The wheels of time have no reverse motion. If the work of a day is not done in its day, it can never be done. Occasion has a forelock and is bald on the hinder head."—Alexander MacLaren, D.D.

Hints for Talks and Testimonies.

How do we know that God meant that we should find pleasure in life?

What pleasures does a Christian lose that are right for any one else, and why?

What pleasures has a Christian that no one else has?

What is the Christian idea of pleasure?

What special pleasures may a Christian find in nature?

What should be a Christian's object in his pleasure?

What should be the effect of a Christian's pleasures?

What ways to pleasure did Christ point out?

What change does old age bring in Christian pleasure and in other pleasures?

How shall we get most from Christian pleasures?

For the Future.

When the Duke of Wellington said that the battle of Waterloo was won on the cricket field of Eton, he expressed a truth full of suggestion to all young people. The decisive battles of your experience will be lost or won according to the use you make of to-day's training, of its pleasures and recreations, as well as of its work and study.

For Daily Reading.

Monday, Aug. 21.—Ways of pleasantness.—Prov. 3:13-18.

Tuesday, Aug. 22.—Delight in God's law.—Ps. 1:1-3; 119:161-168.

Wednesday, Aug. 23.—Pleasures of obedience.—Ps. 119:1-16.

Thursday, Aug. 24.—Pleasures of service.—Luke 15:3-7; Rev. 22:1-5.

Friday, Aug. 25.—The river of God's pleasures.—Ps. 36:1-12.

Saturday, Aug. 26.—Pleasures forevermore.—Ps. 16:1-11.

Sunday, Aug. 27.—Topic, Green Pastures; the Christian's Pleasures.—Ps. 23:1-6.

So Live.

"So live, that when thy summons comes to join

The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take

His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed

By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch

About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

—Bryant's *Thanatopsis*.

A Good Retort.

A New England Episcopal bishop met a young minister at a social gathering and was introduced.

"Ah, Mr. —, I am pleased to meet you. I am told that you are a Congregationalist."

"Yes, Bishop, I am a Congregationalist."

"Ah, well, Mr. —, excuse me, but while I recognize you as a gentleman, I cannot recognize you as a Christian."

"That is all right, Bishop. While I can recognize you as a Christian, I cannot recognize you as a gentleman."