

GENERAL READING.

THE DISCIPLE THOMAS.

A STUDY.

BY JENNY BURR.

There are only four passages in the Gospels which give any account of the disciple Thomas; yet from these brief chronicles a man's entire character has been inferred, and the Christian world has united in giving him the name of "the skeptic." Whether from some inherent quality, or as the result of circumstances, Thomas holds the pre-eminence among the famous twelve for unbelief.

If he had been less out-spoken, he might have escaped the surname he bears. Wherever he appears in the sacred narrative, the characteristic of directness of speech is prominent. He was not guarded in his utterance, and like all impetuous, unguarded people, he fell into trouble. The passage in the eleventh chapter of John shows that he shared in Peter's ardent, impulsive temperament. Though a questioning, reasoning nature, yet there was no coldness in his unbelief.

If Thomas holds pre-eminence among his disciples for doubting his Lord, it is only pre-eminence, for the others doubted too. Three of the evangelists—Matthew, Mark and Luke—agree in saying that the disciples did not believe the report which Mary Magdalene and the other women brought of the risen Jesus. Their stories seemed even as "idle tales." And if the easy credulity of women was to be a matter of scorn, the testimony of the two disciples who had seen Jesus on the way to Emmaus was equally disregarded. Indeed, it is not anywhere stated that the ten believed until they had actually seen. When Jesus appeared in their midst, just as the two returned from Emmaus were telling their adventure, He showed them His hands and feet, and at this ocular demonstration their faith yielded; so that, in demanding to see the wounds in the body of his Master, Thomas asked no more than the others had received.

The trouble with Thomas lay back of all this. His was a melancholy nature inclined to look on the dark side of things. Hope, in him, as with the others, had sunk very low during the dread events of the trial and the crucifixion; but unlike them, he brooded in solitude over the destruction of his hopes. He had no heart to join in the meetings of his companions, and as day after day of the miserable week succeeding the crucifixion passed, the conviction that all had been only a splendid delusion, settled like lead upon his heart. If rumors of the resurrection reached him, he was too filled with the terrible certainty that Christ was dead, to pay much heed to them. His absence from the company was occasioned by his tendency to see the dark side, and the tendency grew by the absence it fed on; so that when he did finally join the more hopeful and sociable band of disciples, he was in the gloomiest mood, and ready to exact the strongest proofs of his Lord's identity.

But when Jesus appeared the second time to the disciples, and singling out the skeptical Thomas, offered him his own tests, the unbeliever was conquered at once, and his reply was the most generous tribute to the deity of Christ which had been offered. He yielded far more easily than he said, or possibly supposed. He was one of those who always overstate, and, as a consequence, are obliged to take back a part.

The connection between melancholy and unbelief is very striking in the brief narratives told of Thomas. When informed of the death of Lazarus (John xii) his sad heart imagined to itself the death of them all. Knowing as they all did that to go into Judea then was perilous to them, he desponded more easily than the others as to the result of that journey. His despondency was so deep that if his Master died, he wished to die also. The object of his love gone, life would no longer have any interest for him.

At another time, when Jesus told His disciples of His approaching departure, and reminded them that they knew the way, Thomas was the first to feel the difficulty of a saying which was no doubt mysterious to them all (John xiv). He exaggerated his own

ignorance, and, as usual, overstated. The idea of Christ's going away was enough. The fact darkened his whole horizon, and there was no room for either faith or knowledge.

Solitude and sorrowful brooding during the long week after the crucifixion confirmed Thomas in his first unbelief of the resurrection as reported by the ten. Cheerful company might have saved him much mental distress, and have encouraged him in spite of himself to believe that Christ had risen, "as He said."

COURAGE FOR GOD.

A poor boy, in a foreign country, about twelve or thirteen years old, became impressed with religion by reading God's word. He was apprenticed to an ungodly master, a tailor, who made his men work on Sabbaths as on other days. Before long, the boy, fearing lest he should be doing wrong, came and asked advice of a pious friend as to what he ought to do—whether he should obey his master when he forbade him to attend the worship of God, and forced him to work instead?

The answer, of course, could be but one—that both he and his master ought to keep the day of the Lord; and that if his master would not obey God's command, he, for his part should follow his conscience, and say to his master, "We must obey God rather than man."

After a time the boy returned to his friend, and with tears in his eyes told him that his master had whipped him because he refused to work on Sabbaths. His friend endeavored to strengthen him, telling him that it was better to suffer on his back than in his conscience, and encouraged him to work on, for that God would not allow him to suffer more than he could bear.

The next Sabbath, the master, with the whip in his hand, came to the boy, who sat reading, and said to him: "Choose, now, which you will; either to work or to taste this whip."

It was a trying moment for that brave little fellow; but after a very short pause he plucked up his courage and answered, "You may whip me if you choose; but my conscience commands me and I will not work."

This answer, one might have thought was enough to soften the heart of the ungodly master; and it had such an influence with him that he did not punish the boy at that time.

This was a truly brave boy! What boy who reads this will be as brave the next time he is called upon to obey God rather than man? This is the sort of courage boys want—courage for God; not to fear anything so long as we are pleasing and obeying Him.

"I WISH I HAD CAPITAL."

We do not know the author of the following, but he preached one of the best practical sermons to young men that we have read this many a day:—

"I wish I had capital." So we heard a great strapping young man exclaim the other day in our office. We did want to tell him a piece of our mind so bad, and we'll just write to him. You want capital do you? And suppose you had what you call capital, what would you do with it? You want capital, haven't you got hands and feet and muscle and bones and brains? and don't you call them capital? What more did God give to anybody? "Oh, they are not money," say you. But they are more than money, and no one can take them from you. Don't you know how to use them? If you don't it is time you were learning. Take hold of the first plough or hoe or jack-plane or broad-axe that you can find, and go to work. Your capital will soon yield you a large interest. Ay, but there's the rub. You don't want to work; you want money or credit that you may play the gentleman, and speculate, and end by playing the vagabond. Or you want a plantation and negroes that you may hire an overseer to attend to them, while you run over the country and dissipate; or want to marry some rich girl, who may be foolish enough to marry you for your good looks, that she may support you.

Shame upon you, young man! Go to work with the capital you have, and you will soon make interest enough upon it and with it to give you as much money as you want, and make you feel like a man. If you can't make money upon

what capital you have, you couldn't make it if you had a million dollars in money. If you don't know how to use bone and muscle and brains, you would not know how to use gold. If you let the capital you have lie idle and waste and rust out, it would be the same thing with you if you had gold; you would only know how to waste.

Then don't stand about like a great helpless child, waiting for some one to come in and feed you, but go to work. Take the first work you can find, no matter what it is, so that you be sure to do it as Billy Gray did his drumming,—well. Yes, what you undertake, do it well; always do your best. If you manage the capital you already have, you will soon have plenty more to manage; but if you can't or won't manage the capital God has given you, you will never have any more to manage.—*Coltage Hearth.*

THE WIFE'S PIN MONEY.

We do not know if it be possible for a man to understand a sensitive, high spirited woman's reluctance to ask for money, because he can put himself in her place. It would require an impossible stretch of the imagination for him to conceive what his feelings would be if he were compelled to ask somebody when he wanted a new hat or a coat, or a pair of shoes. Perhaps he might be able to approximate to something near her state of mind, if he could recollect his abject terror, when, as a boy, he approached his father to crave the boon of a few extra dollars. A lady said to us, "I have lain awake half the night, dreading the stern necessity of asking my husband for money the next day." Another said, "If I was absolute mistress of even the paltry sum of one hundred dollars a year, so that I could spend it without being responsible to any one, I should feel that a great weight was lifted off me." A wife who does her share of work for the family, and by careful management and contributing adds to the common fund, is entitled to her share of the profits, and the division should be justly and cheerfully made by the head of the firm, as any other partner. If woman were so recognized and trusted, many whose souls are now tormented about the vexed question of their "rights," would be contented and happy! "keepers at home."—*Toledo Blade.*

PURITY OF CHARACTER.

There grows a bloom of beauty over the surface of the plum and apricot, more exquisite than the fruit itself—a soft, delicate flush that overspreads its blushing cheeks. Now, if you strike your hand over that, it is gone forever; for it never grows out but once. The flower that hangs in the morning impaled with dew; arrayed as a queenly woman never was arrayed with jewels; once she shakes it so that the beads roll off, and you may sprinkle water over it as you please, yet she can never be made again what it was when the dew fell silently on it from heaven.

On a frosty morning you may see panes of glass covered with landscapes—mountains, lakes and trees, blended in a beautiful fantastic picture. Now lay your hand upon the glass, and by a scratch of your finger, or by the warmth of your palm, all the delicate tracery will be obliterated. So there is in youth a beauty and purity of character, which when once defiled can never be restored—a fringe more delicate than frost work, and which when torn and broken, will never be re-embroidered. He who has spotted and soiled his garments in youth, though he may seek to make them white again, can never wholly do it, even were he to wash them with his tears.

How to SUCCEED.—Before departing for his foreign home, Bayard Taylor made the following remarks respecting the rules of success, that are worth their weight in gold to any and every young man, as the experience of one whom all delight to honor:

"I have always reverently accepted them; first, labor; nothing can be had for nothing; whatever a man achieves he must pay for it; and no favor of fortune can absolve him from his duty. Secondly, patience, and forbearance; which is simply dependent on the slow justice of time. Thirdly, and most important faith. Unless a man believes in something far higher than himself, something infinitely purer and grander than he can ever become—unless he has an instinct of an order beyond his dreams, of laws beyond his comprehension, of beauty and good and justice, beside which his own ideals are dark, he will fail in every loftier form of ambition, and ought to fail."

A DEBT OF HONOR.

One day, while a dunning tradesman was in the room of a nobleman, vainly endeavoring to extract money, a letter was brought requesting the payment of a very large sum lost at cards. This debt was settled before the wondering eyes of the tailor, who was far from pleased at seeing money which he considered he had a prior claim to going into other hands. "That was a debt of honor," calmly remarked the nobleman. "And may I ask what you call a debt of honor, my lord?" "A debt of honor is one contracted verbally, and one the payment of which cannot be exacted by law." "Thank you, my lord, then from henceforth I prefer to have no claim on your lordship," and the wily man tore his bill in two. The stroke of diplomacy succeeded, and the tailor got his money.

FAMILY READING.

GENERAL FISK ON THE THEATRE.

A lady friend of Mrs. Fisk called on them the other evening, at their rooms at the St. Nicholas Hotel, and requested them to go to the theatre, and hear Mr. Booth in "Romeo and Juliet."

"I cannot go," said the General; "I have an engagement."

"Ah! but you can get released from that engagement," she insisted. "What is it, if it may be so impertinent?"

"It is the evening for my prayer meeting," and I make it a point always to be present when possible."

The lady seized his hand, and tears filled her eyes, as she exclaimed: "General! you have preached me the best sermon I have heard for many a month. I too, am a punctual and faithful in my duties as you are; but I am not. But do you really think it is wrong to attend the theatre?" she added after a slight pause.

"It would probably do me no harm," he replied. "But suppose I was to go for this reason, mindful only of my own pleasure, or of its influence upon myself. I take my seat. Yonder is a young man who has been enticed to the place, not without some misgivings of conscience. He casts his eye up, and says to himself with satisfaction, 'Ah! there is General Fisk. He is a good Christian man. I heard him deliver an address to a Sabbath school the other Sunday; surely I must be all right in Christian company.' No, said the noble Christian man, I cannot lend my influence thus."

CURE FOR TROUBLE.

When disposed to grumble over things that cannot be helped, I am reminded of a neighbor of mine who once surprised me by throwing away an old rusty knife. It was one of a set of silver-plated knives, and had been spoiled by carelessness. I asked her why she threw it away. "It is not worth while to be uncomfortable," she said. "Life is short, and I believe in being as happy as I can, and will be happy so far as I can control circumstances. What's the use of keeping a rusty spoiled knife on the shelf, where it would cut me every time I looked at it by its unpleasant reference to my carelessness? You see, acting on this theory I have thrown it away. I intend to pursue the same course in everything that troubles me. What I don't like I shall put away if I can; I will not eat unpalatable food nor associate with disagreeable people, and when I feel discouraged or blue I put on my things and take a pleasant walk or call on some cheerful neighbor, and come back cheery myself, with a good appetite for tea. People who are unhappy, discontented and who just endure life, don't know how much they miss for want of a little effort on their part to make themselves happy." Is not the lesson which this embodies worth learning?

A SENSIBLE GIRL.—Some months ago a young English woman came to N. York to marry a young man to whom she was affianced in England, and who had come to this country two years before to engage in business. She was to marry him at the home of a friend of her mother's with whom she was stopping. During the time she was making up her wedding dress, he came to see her one evening when he was just "full" enough to be foolish. She was shocked and pained beyond measure. She then learned for the first time that he was in the habit of drinking frequently to excess. She immediately stopped her preparations, and told him she could not marry him. He protested that "she would drive him to destruction," promised her he would never drink another drop, etc.

"No," she said; I dare not trust my future happiness with a man who has formed such a beastly habit. I came three thousand miles to marry a man I loved, and now, rather than marry a drunkard, I will go three thousand miles back again. And she went.

Let all respectable women imitate her example, and all men who love law and order, to see if the passengers who are on the broad road to perdition won't conclude to take the temperance route.

FREDDIE.

Our dear little boy was watching, with his grandma one Sabbath, the people returning from church. She pointed one and another out to him saying, "This is a Baptist lady, this is a Methodist," etc., when Freddie, seven years old, said, "Grandma, do you belong to the Presbyterian Church?"

"No," was the answer.
"To the Baptist?"
"No."
"To the Methodist?"
"No."
"Well, Grandma," said he in his quiet, earnest way, "if I were in your place, I'd get in somewhere."

Dear Freddie only lived a few months longer—a little mound tells the story, but his words live after him—"apples of gold in pictures of silver."—*Interior.*

"SITTING UNDER HIS SHADOW."

Many years ago, one stormy winter day a minister was visiting one of his people—an old man—who lived in poverty in a lonely cottage a few miles from Jedburgh. He found him sitting with the Bible open upon his knees, but in outward circumstances of great discomfort—the snow drifting through the roof and under the door, and scarcely an ember of fire upon the hearth.

"What are you about to-day, John?" was Mr. Young's question on entering.
"Ah, sir," said the happy saint, "I am sitting under his shadow with great delight."
"Oh, wonderful 'consolation in Christ,' the river which, from the beginning of time to the end, 'maketh glad the city of our God!'"

PLEASURE OF A CHILD.

Douglas Jerrold wrote thus pleasantly of child life: "Blessed be the hand that prepares a pleasure for a child, for there is no saying when and where it may again bloom forth. Does not almost every body remember some kind hearted man who showed him kindness in the days of his childhood? The writer of this recollects himself at this moment, as a bare-footed lad, standing at the wooden fence of a poor little garden in his native village, where with longing eyes, he gazed on the flowers which were blooming there quietly in the brightness of a Sunday morning. The possessor came forth from his little cottage; he was a wood-cutter by trade, and spent the whole day at work in the woods. He was coming into the garden to gather flowers to stick in his coat when he went to church. He saw the boy and breaking off the most beautiful carnation, which was streaked with red and white he gave it to him. Neither the giver nor the receiver said a word, and with bounding steps the boy ran home, after so many events of many years, the feelings of gratitude which agitated the breast of the boy expresses itself on paper. The carnation has long since withered, but now it blooms afresh."

HOW TO DISCOURAGE A MINISTER.

Eleven ways are suggested by the *Advocate*, by which a minister may be broken down in spirit and ruined in influence. We condense the advice, hoping it may provoke some to repentance:

1. Go to church occasionally, and when you go, go late; take no part in singing, nor in following the Scripture readings, but keep up whispering.
2. Find all the fault you can. Point out his deficiencies before your children and others.
3. Don't aid his work, but despise his lack of good sense.
4. Tell tales to him about the people and their criticisms about him.
5. Tell him how much his predecessors were thought of.
6. Keep away from all week-day meetings.
7. Get up gayeties, particularly some entertainment near the communion season.
8. Require him to be present everywhere.
9. If he preaches at home, insist on exchange; and if abroad, complain that he is never at home.
10. Keep back his salary.
11. Keep talking about "general dissatisfaction."

Patience continuance in these practices will surely drive away both the Spirit of God and the minister of God.—*Church Union.*

WHAT CAN I DO FOR THE CHURCH?

I can give my whole heart to God by faith in Jesus Christ, and thus secure a special blessing for myself and the church of which I am a member.

2. I can set my brethren a good example, and so help them to grow in grace, and that will be a blessing to the church.
3. I can through faith, be courageous and cheerful, and thereby strengthen and encourage the church in its herculean work.
4. I can pray for the prosperity of the church, and God hears the prayer of faith.
5. I can, by a godly life, illustrate to the world the saving power of the Gospel, and thereby lead souls to Christ.
6. I can induce others to attend divine services with me.
7. I can give part of my earnings for the support of the church.—*Trinity Ch. Record.*

THE ROCKET AND THE STAR.

Two rockets stood side by side in a garden. One of them said to the other, "I have been standing here for the last five minutes looking at the stars. I wonder what men see to admire in them! There is that insignificant little speck yonder. I'm sure I could give a thousand times the light of his petty glimmer."

Just then the man came round and touched the rocket with his torch. Up it went with a whizz and a blaze till it came to its utmost elevation, and then it burst itself; there was a pop and a glare and down came the rocket-stick and all was over, and the little star looked demurely down as much as to say:

"Ah, Mr. Rocket! and where are you now?"

There are many firework Christians.

POWER OF A LITTLE CHILD.

Recently two men engaged in an angry dispute on the street, during which one shook his fist beneath the other's nose, and appeared to have worked himself up to a fever heat of passion. Just then a little girl, almost an infant, who had been going by, but stopped apparently paralyzed by the man's fury, moved quite close to him, and looking up into his face, inquired:—

"What makes you so cross mister?"
It was so unexpected that the man evidently felt a complete revolution of feeling. Gradually his countenance cleared, and finally lit up with a smile, as he patted the little peace-maker's head, and remarked as he moved away, ignoring the other man altogether:—
"I guess you're right little pet."