

should look upon cheerfulness as a moral obligation, never occurs to them.

The reason, perhaps, is not far to seek. All down the centuries Christians have held the strange belief, that somehow cheerfulness and piety were hardly compatible in the same individual. The Pharisees, the pious of their day, looked askance at Jesus because of the mirthful company He sometimes kept. The Puritan looked upon the gaiety of the Cavalier as almost as great an offence as his sins. Dr. Johnson upon one occasion made the remark, "This merriment of parsons is mighty offensive." Only the other day, indeed, a minister's son told me that the reason he did not study for the ministry was because of the good time his father and his father's ministerial friends would have, when they met together for a few days at a Sacrament season. A strange reason surely,—but it is in line with the average thinking of the ages on the matter.

But such a view is, in reality, a travesty on religion, above all, on the Christian religion. For, although the shadow of the cross darkened Christ's life almost from the beginning, there was nevertheless a touch of genial gladness in His nature, which was constantly revealing itself. When, in His early ministry, He wandered with His disciples among the Galilean grain fields, He compared His little company to the rollicking, care-free, guests at a marriage feast. He so enjoyed sitting down with men at their banquets, that His enemies slandered Him by calling Him a gluttonous man and a winebibber. The background of His parables, as has been frequently noted, is one of merry-making. The children pipe in the market place. The kingdom of heaven is as when a man makes a great feast. The prodigal comes home to music and dancing. These are only a few of the many hints we get as to His genial outlook upon life. The cross was before Him, as He knew; the cloud of men's hate and passion was soon to break upon Him; but it could not hide for Him the shining of the sun. Such was the geniality of Christ's character. Ought it not to be binding upon us,—as much so as any one of the Ten Commandments?

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Their First Lesson

By Esther Miller

Five new pupils! The new teacher sat and surveyed them very solemnly, for it was her first attempt. She had the Lesson well prepared, and a little hymn and a pretty text to teach them. Oh, yes, she was all ready; but the question that troubled her was, What ought she to strive to impress upon them most strongly? What would they carry away from this their first day at Sunday School? That they would receive some lasting impression, she well knew, and she was anxious that it should be the right one.

An older teacher passed on her way to her class, and paused to smile at the five little newcomers. One, a tiny man of four, was gazing about him very solemnly, his big eyes filled with awe. The visitor stooped, and patted him on the head. "This wee man is learning his first lesson well, Miss S.," she whispered, "reverence; that is the foundation lesson the pupils must all learn." She passed on to her place, and the new teacher smiled, for she had received the answer to her question. Why had she not thought of it before? Reverence, she knew, was the foundation of religion, and without the foundation her building would be in vain.

Before she was through that afternoon's work, the new teacher had come to the conclusion that there was no place where the growing child might so easily learn to be irreverent as in Sunday School. A class of boys near her were noisy and rude, and made facetious remarks upon the Bible passages as the teacher expounded them. A half-dozen large girls disturbed the solemnity that should have characterized the place, by laughing and talking about their clothes.

And so the teacher set herself with all her might, as the days went by, to inspire her little ones with the proper feeling for all things sacred. God's day, God's holy Word, God's house: these she found played an important part in the child's religious life, and these she strove to have the pupils treat with the deepest respect. She insisted upon a quiet and respectful manner in Sunday School, she talked to them seriously upon how they should conduct themselves going to and from their homes, and sometimes accompanied