

The Quiet Hour.

The Prodigal Son.*

BY WAYLAND HOYT, D.D.

Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me (v. 11). Four wonderful pictures this matchless parable hangs before us,—the soul and its sin, the soul and its suffering, the soul and its repentance, and the soul and its reception. Let our exposition be the beholding of these four pictures. Verses 11-13 paint for us the first picture,—the soul and its sin. Whence does the soul's sin spring? Against the righteous restraints of home this young man chafed. So he comes with a demand at once unlawful and unfilial.

Into a far country (v. 13). Where does the soul's sin place the soul? In the place of relation. Sin necessarily places it in moral distance from God. This young man had determined on the license of his own will then the farther the far country the better.

He began to be in want (v. 14). Verses 14-16 paint the second picture,—the soul and its suffering. The soul in its sin must get to be a soul in suffering, because (a) God is what He is; God is holy; and therefore toward sin cannot be complacent, and therefore cannot make sin blessed; because (b) man is what he is, for every man has a conscience; and, while conscience applauds the right, it as truly bites back in remorse upon the choice of wrong; and remorse is the bitterest sort of suffering; because (c) law is what it is; penalty, suffering, is the necessary expression of the law against transgression; because (d) such is the invariable human experience. Notice in the case of this young man, sin brought the suffering (a) of want; sin always spreads a famine as to the noblest things; (b) of friendlessness—how many fool friends the young man had while his portion lasted! now he had to "join himself" to a citizen of that country; (c) of dependence and subjection—"and he sent him"; the young man was no longer his own master; sin is bondage; (d) of degradation—"to feed swine"; what miserable wages the devil pays; (e) of isolation—"and no man gave unto him."

But when he came to himself he said (v. 17). Verses 17-20 paint the third picture,—the soul and its repentance. Repentance is right-minded thought about one's self, "when he came to himself"; the young man waked up to a right and real moral consciousness. It is by the refusing of this right and real thinking about one's self that men avoid repentance. Repentance is also dissatisfaction and regret—"How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare and I perish with hunger!" the moment he began to let himself really front the facts, the young man began to be smitten with dissatisfaction and regret. Repentance is confession of sin—"I have sinned." Repentance is resolution toward the right—"I will arise and go to my father"; all the foregoing is useless unless it culminates in resolution to seek with confession, prayer, abandonment of the far country, the father's face. Repentance is the actual carrying out of the resolution—"and he arose and came to his father." Repentance is sorrow for sin, confession, and forsaking of sin. It is the last step which gives value to the first steps.

*S. S. Lesson, Oct. 28, Luke 15:11-24.—Golden Text.—I will arise and go to my father.—Luke 15:18.

His father saw him and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him (v. 20.) Verses 20-24 paint the fourth picture,—the soul and its reception. For the repentant soul there is the reception of a longing and watching love. The father had been on the lookout. Such is God's heart. For the repentant soul there is a quick reception—"and ran"; the heart of God runs to welcome "What a rebuke does that word 'ran' furnish to those who think that a sinner can come to Christ too soon; can be reconciled too quickly! God runs, sinner, to you. Will you not run to God? He makes haste; Oh, make you haste!" For the repentant soul there is the reception of the utmost welcome—"and fell on his neck and kissed him." All his tears must have fled as he found himself wrapped in a welcome certified by a father's kiss. For the repentant soul there is the reception of a larger answer to its prayer than it dare pray for; he begins his confession, and is going on to pray for but a servant's place, and the father breaks in upon his prayer, crying out, "Bring forth the best robe," etc. That is God's heart. For the repentant soul there is the reception of a perfect reinstatement; the reception is back to a son's place, never merely to a servant's place.

But if you will not thus return to God and be thus received of him!—Christian Endeavor World.

"The Tree of Life,"

BY NICOL MOFFAT.

A tree is known by its fruit. Life also agrees with the food or fruit which has been the nourisher. Had our first parents eaten of the tree of life there would have been a different image still upon the face of humanity. They took instead a far different fruit which has produced a far separated character.

We are still hungry and are being fed with one or other of these same kinds of fruit. It is written upon tables of stone—Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it Holy. The spiritual nature of mankind needs the fruit that God furnished to all who obey Him in this commandment. It is life giving, inspiring and ennobling. It grows in our garden of religion; it is there because we used it. But another says—eat, drink and be merry; the bicycle is better than the Bible; the fruit of earth sweeter than that of Heaven.

Is it any wonder then that many a young person who is being tempted from that fruit which hangs from His holy day, is not growing in grace, in influence, and in service? There is little spirit in his words and little in his prayers, because there is little of the life-nourishing fruit, daily and especially "Lord's-day" partaken of.

The sum of the ten commandments is Love to God and love to man: the second part being organically related with the first. To love our neighbor as ourselves we must love God with all our heart. How the world needs those who have been nourished from fruit like this! But another says that is not business: and acts accordingly. These get into the church to conduct the affairs, speak and pray as witnesses. But conversions are rare, and aggressive work chilled. Why is it? The answer is that same old one—the fruit of the tree of life which makes strong and efficient has been changed for another producing death by degrees.

"What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul" is a question we all need to consider very frequently. That this might not occur every man must eat of the tree of Life. What the tree of life was to our first parents in the garden, Jesus Christ is to all men in the world. All pathways no doubt led to that tree in the garden, and there should be many well beaten ways where we may reach Christ to receive His blessing.

Prayer is one of these. The preparation of heart, the closing of the closet door, the humbling of mind and heart are all "drawing near," where the rich food will be supplied. Pray until the soul is stronger, until the heart is purer, until the spirit of God excludes that of self. In prayer the fruit of the tree of Life is partaken. If we pray we grow, if we neglect it we starve.

The Scriptures are another way. Let us draw near in them until we can say—He is altogether lovely; until we can claim with joy—that what things were once gain now we "count loss for Christ"; until His face is as well-known, His voice as real, His hands and His side as plain as if these things that are invisible were so no longer.

Serving Him in Christian work is another. We shall learn that we were born to serve. A heart full of good resolutions, being realized in deeds, will have as a reaction health and peace.

The drunkard will leave his cup and oaths and wife beaving. He finds a place in the church on Sunday with solemn face and respectable clothes. He wins the name for honor and usefulness. And when he dies a smile of hope is on his face. Or the Sabbath breaker becomes a Sabbath keeper, instead of luring people from church, he begins to urge them to attend. He listens to a sermon as if it were lifting him to higher things. He is looked upon as a man worthy of a place of trust. They choose him to be an elder. Members come and go while he does his part. Finally as they hear of his death the wish goes up—"Let my end be like his." He lived by the Tree of Life.

The Rise and Development of Presbyterianism in Beckwith.

The history of Presbyterianism in the township of Beckwith, in the County of Lanark, is co-eval with the history of its settlement by people from Perthshire, Scotland. Not long after they came, i. e., in 1818, they petitioned the Associate Synod of Scotland for a minister, in answer to which petition the Rev. Geo. Buchanan, M. D., was sent to them, who commenced his labors in 1822. His pastorate continued twelve years, during which, in 1832, the congregation built a stone church and stone manse on the glebe of one hundred acres on the seventh line, received from the government. He was succeeded by the Rev. John Smith from Cromarty, Scotland, who was inducted into the charge on Nov. 3rd, 1833. His pastoral work and life ended in the field in 1851. During his pastorate the tempest of the Disruption broke upon the church in Canada, which, in 1844, resulted, in the case of the Beckwith church, in a large section of its people "coming out" on the Free Church side and building a place of worship of its own at Black's Corners, naming it Knox church.

The history of the old kirk, Beckwith, is filled up with three pastorates from the time of Mr. Smith to the time of the union in 1875. The old kirk drew its people chiefly from the west and south sides of the township, while the Free church gathered its flock from the north. In those days Carlton