

Two Premiers and the Lord's Day.

The *Butwark* very aptly calls attention to the fact that in the course of a discussion on the proposal to open museums on the Lord's Day, the late Earl of Beaconsfield said—"This is a great change, and those who suppose for a moment that it could be limited to the proposal of the noble baron to open museums they will find they are mistaken. Of all Divine institutions the most Divine is that which secures a day of rest for man. I hold it to be the most valuable blessing ever conceded to man. It is the corner-stone of civilization, and its removal might even affect the health of the people." Then Mr. Gladstone, in reply to a deputation on the same subject, said—"The religious observance of the Sabbath is a main prop of the religious character of the country. From a moral, social, and physical point of view, the observance of that day is a duty of absolute consequence." And again, writing to Mr. C. Hill, in 1876, Mr. Gladstone says—"Believers in the authority of the Lord's Day as a religious institution must, as a matter of course, desire the recognition of that authority by others. But, over and above this, I have myself, in the course of a laborious life, signally experienced both its mental and physical benefits. I can hardly overstate its value in this view, and for the interest of the working men of this country, alike in these and in other yet higher respects, there is nothing I more anxiously desire than that they should more and more highly appreciate the Christian day of rest."

The Congregational Pilgrims.

The *Belfast Witness* says:—"Much interest attends the pilgrimage of American Congregationalists to the classic sites and scenes connected with the Pilgrim Fathers. Dr. Davidson (Bishop of Winchester) entertained them at Farnham Castle, and made a graceful speech which seems to have greatly delighted the American visitors. They have seen Cambridge, where their hero John Robinson once flourished, they have attended the erection of a John Robinson Memorial Church, they have enjoyed Gainsborough, the quaint town which figures as St. Ogg's in "the Mill on the Floss," and which was an early cradle of the Congregational revolt, also Scrooby and other places sacred in their history. The American Ambassador, Mr. Bayard, accompanies them generally, and has made some pleasant conciliatory speeches, cementing the friendship of England and the United States. The movement thus glorified was a just and necessary revolt against what Milton calls 'The Prelates' Rage.' These pious Englishmen loved Scripture truth and freedom of conscience. Being persecuted here, they arose and removed to the 'wild New England shore' in order to get for themselves, and hand on to their children, 'freedom to worship God.' They put their pith and their Puritanism into the religion and civil government of North America, and have colored the whole life of the United States jointly with Presbyterians up till now. The co-religionists of Dale, of Birmingham; of Jay, of Bath; of Binney, of London, are heartily welcome. We hope they will enjoy their pilgrimage, that their visit will recall the great religious and civil principles for which their fathers and our fathers contended, even to martyrdom. And among other results, we believe such interchange will promote good feeling and brotherhood between the two grand English-speaking nations.

Entrance into Christ's Kingdom.*

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HOW THIS ENTRANCE IS SECURED.

The rich young ruler, running to Christ and asking "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" expressed the common idea of the way salvation is secured,—by good works. This gratifies pride and accords with man's independent disposition. This is the essence of all religions of man's device. Christ answers by saying that goodness is an attribute of God and no one else need expect to attain it. This is equivalent to saying that there can be no salvation by

good works. The Revised Version changes the language here, but not the main thought nor the force of the argument. The change simply brings out the argument more clearly.

But Christ suggests, in order to test the young man, the legal method of salvation, viz., by perfect obedience. No doubt entrance into eternal life would be effected by keeping the commandments, but who has done this? The young ruler thinks he has. When Christ repeats the second table of the law, he claims to have kept it all. He is sincere in this idea and beyond a doubt has done well, for Jesus loves him, but he is lacking still. He makes no profession regarding the first table of the law, that pertaining to man's duty to God. Christ, indeed, does not raise this issue: He is content to take him on the ground where evidently he considers himself strongest, and test him by his relations to his fellow-men. One who loves his neighbor as himself is unselfish, unworldly and self-denying, finding his reward hereafter. The right test for this particular young man is to require him to dispose of his property, give it to the poor and join the wandering disciples who follow ever their great teacher. The test proves to be too much. The young ruler is not equal to the self-denial. He is not perfect. He is amiable but property has the first place in his heart. He does not hold it subject to the will of God, as an instrument to benefit men. He does not love his neighbor as himself.

Christ here indicated the *Christian Method of Salvation*, that is by following Christ. The legal method fails: no one is equal to it, "for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." Even perfect future obedience could not atone for past sin. In this emergency Christ offers to lead us to safety. He will guide us into eternal life. All that is necessary is to "follow Him." By this phrase is indicated not only the duty of faith in Christ but also the kind of faith required. There must be an active obedient committal of self to Christ. Only by self-abnegation can we follow Christ. "Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Christ does not require a general surrender of riches; he does not forbid the acquisition of property. This was a special case. The times were peculiar. The young man needed the drastic given him and in this treatment of him there was a principle that applies in all cases, viz., that we must hold all we have subject to the will of Christ. He may require it or He may not but He does require a readiness on our part to surrender it at His demand. Riches are not wrong in themselves but are undoubtedly a temptation. We must not trust in them but in Christ alone.

HOW ENTRANCE TO THE KINGDOM IS REWARDED.

Peter, the spokesman as usual, declares that the disciples have renounced all for Christ and asks, "What, then, shall we have?" Christ brings out three considerations in reply.

1. Those who follow Christ shall share the dignity and authority of Christ. The twelve apostles shall judge the twelve tribes. Elsewhere a similar promise is made to all Christians. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that we shall judge angels?" In the reconstruction of society through Christian influences, Christian men come to the front and take the direction of affairs. They have influence and authority everywhere. Japan is controlled by Christian ideas. It is this, more than anything else, which has given the Anglo-Saxon such a wonderful ascendancy in modern civilization.

2. More than this, Christian self-denial is accompanied with temporal and eternal blessings. There are persecutions to be sure. No Christian is certain to escape them. At the same time, prosperity is connected with right doing. The law-abiding citizen is prospered; the meek inherit the earth; those who deal generously by others are similarly treated. Even persecutions are a blessing in disguise. They purify and ennoble. They build up character and make the possessions of the hereafter far greater. Had the rich young ruler left his possessions for Christ's sake he would have inherited eternal life, a treasure worth infinitely more than his paltry earthly substance.

The third great principle is that in the distribution of rewards all are alike in receiving one thing,—eternal

*An Exposition based on (Matt. xix. 16—xx. 16); in the Bible Study Union Course on "The Teachings of Christ."