

THE POWER OF OPTIMISM.

Lord, if I am to do thy work, inspire me with thine optimism! I cannot enter on my ministry if I am impressed with the utter hopelessness of the human soul, with worthlessness of the human body. If I am to watch in the Gethsemane of the sick, I must have a heart; not too heavy. If I am to read that thy disciples in that ward were "sleeping for sorrow," I used to wonder at the expression; but I see it all now. They could not watch with thee because they had no hope of thee—they despaired of thy cause. If I am to be kept from sleeping on duty my eyes must be appointed with the oil of gladness. Anoint with hope, O Lord, the eyes of all that work for thee. Anoint those that tend the couch of pain; give them the vision, not of death, but of life! Anoint those who seek to redeem from sin; give them a vision of the white-robed throng. Anoint those who visit the home of the bereaved; give them the vision of the things that cannot die! Anoint those that knock at the dwellings of the poor; give them a vision of the poverty that made us rich! Anoint those who labor in heathen lands; give them a vision of the many mansions! Anoint those who are teachers of the young; give them a vision of the full-grown man! Anoint those who are personal sufferers; give them the vision that they are preparing to be ministering spirits in the kingdom of their Father! Not solemnity, but sunshine; not heaviness, but happiness; not the weight of reflection, but the wing of rapture, is the preparation of those who are called to follow thee.—George Matheson, in "Some Thoughts for Life's Journey."

WHAT THOMAS MISSED.

Will disciples who do not go to prayer-meetings please read John 20:19-28? Here an account is given of the first Christian prayer and conference meeting.

The ratio of attendance was much greater than it usually is now, as all the disciples—Judas having gone "to his own place"—were present, except Thomas. He was absent and apparently not excused. Perhaps it rained, or possibly he had an important engagement; he may not have felt very well, or, after a tiresome day, may have felt the need of physical relaxation. At any rate, he was absent, and he missed a great deal.

In the first place, he missed seeing Jesus. For the Master came to that first prayer-meeting, and spoke at it.

In the second place, Thomas missed the mysterious gift of the Holy Ghost, which those present received from the Saviour.

In the third place he lost his faith in Christianity. When the disciples next met him he had blossomed out into a full-fledged agnostic. He flatly refused to accept their united testimony, and declared that nothing short of full scientific proof could ever convince him of the resurrection. What a price to pay for neglecting to go to one prayer-meeting!

But it is substantially what the Christian of nowadays loses if he absents himself from the more intimate meetings of Christ's disciples. He, too, misses the visions of Jesus, the unction of the Spirit and the assurance of faith.—Selected.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

Mon.—A day of rest (Exod. 20: 8-11).

Tues.—A day of worship (Isa. 58: 13, 14).

Wed.—A day of holy memories (John 20: 19-23).

Thurs.—A day of loving service (Mark 3: 1-6).

Fri.—The outcast's day (Isa. 56: 3-8).

Sat.—A pattern for all days (Rom. 14: 5-12).

GOLDEN GRAIN BIBLE READINGS.

By J. A. R. Dickson, D.D., Galt.

What God Says of Strong Drink.

The violence it creates, Prov. xx. 1. Its physical and moral blight, Prov. xxiii. 29-35.

Warnings against its use, Lev. x. 9; Prov. xxxi. 4-5; Hos. iv. 11; Eph. v. 18.

Warnings against accompanying with drinkers, Prov. xxiii. 20.

Woe to him who puts the bottle to his neighbors lips, Hab. ii. 15.

Error comes through its use, Isa. xxviii. 7.

Woes pronounced on drinkers, Isa. v. 22.

Not to be looked on even, Prov. xxiii. 31.

Total abstinence for the good of others urged, Rom. xiv. 21.

God's approval of total abstinence, Num. vi. 23; Luke i. 15; Jer. xxv. 210, see verse 19.

From all this we see that the Bible is a thorough temperance book. Its whole trend is in favor of total abstinence. Let us take our stand on its sure ground.

GOD'S VOICE IS OFTEN AT A CHILD'S PILLOW.

The little daughter of a native judge, in one of the mountain towns of Japan, whose wife had become a Christian, loved to hear her mother read the New Testament, and was particularly fond of Luke's Gospel. She listened eagerly to the story of Jesus' birth in a manger, and all the wonders of his life and death; and was eager to tell her heathen playmates the news of His love and mercy. But she was taken sick with diphtheria, and soon lay at the very door of death. While her mother, who loved her just as much as mothers do, Christian lands love their children, sat weeping beside her, she opened her eyes and said, "Mother, please put you Gospel of Luke under my head for a pillow, for it is so beautiful."

It was done according to her wish, and while she thus rested on her loved Saviour's Word, He called her away.

THE GOD OF THE AGED.

Rust has been the ruin of many a bright intellect. The celebrated Dr. Archibald Alexander of the Princeton Theological Seminary kept young by doing a certain amount of intellectual work every day, so that he should not lose his touch. He was as full of sap on the day before his death as he was when a missionary in Virginia at the age of two and twenty. He prepared and often used a prayer that was so beautiful that I quote a portion of it for my fellow disciples whose life-clock has struck three-score and ten:

"O most merciful God, cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not if my strength faileth. May my hoary head be found in righteousness. Preserve my mind from dotage and imbecility, and my body from protracted disease and excruciating pain. Deliver me from despondency in my declining years, and enable me to bear with patience whatever may be Thy holy will. I humbly ask that my reason may be continued to the last, and that I may be so comforted and supported that I may leave my testimony in favor of the reality of religion and of Thy faithfulness in fulfilling Thy gracious promises. And when my spirit leaves this clay tenement, Lord Jesus, receive it. Send some of the blessed angels to convey my inexperienced soul to the mansions which Thy love has prepared; and O, may I have abundant entrance ministered unto me into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

This beautiful petition flooded his closing years with sweet peace and a strength unbroken to the last.—Interior.

WHY OBSERVE THE LORD'S DAY.*

By Rev. Robert Speer.

All the steps in the change by which the early Christians dropped the observance of the Jewish Sabbath and substituted the Lord's Day we do not know. The Jewish Sabbath was part of the ceremonial institutionalism of the Old Testament, and Christianity at once began to release itself from all bondage to the old law; but the principles of the old order were permanent principles, the principles, especially, of the rendering to God of certain times and certain income, not as a sign that all the rest were the individual's and not God's, but as a sign of the very opposite.

Accordingly, Paul, while making no mention of the law of the tithe as still binding, sets forth a principle of giving more exacting still. On a certain day the Christians were to lay aside in proportion as God had prospered them. The implication clearly is that the grace of the gospel would draw forth far more than was prescribed by the old law, and it is evident that it did, and that a tenth of the income would have seemed a very paltry offering on the part of these early Christians. But no prescription was before their minds. They acted on the principle of stewardship.

And so, also, as to their time. The Jewish day was no more binding on them. The only thing of consequence was the principle embodied in the Jewish observance. That principle, probably with no conscious thought about the matter, guided aright by the fulness of their love and the spontaneous leadings of a true obedience, they fulfilled in their observance of the Lord's day, the day with which the greatest event in His life and theirs, the resurrection, was associated. From the beginning they met specially on that day. On that day Paul told the Corinthians to give heed especially to the other principle which the tithe had represented in the Old Dispensation. So all that was of eternal significance in the old symbol of the Jewish Sabbath passed on to the Lord's day.

So far as the principle is concerned, any day of the week would answer. There is no more reason for adhering to the Jewish Sabbath than to any other provision of the Old Testament law. None of it is binding upon us as law. The principles embodied in it are binding upon us and upon all men. But just as we can worship God anywhere without the ritual possible only in Jerusalem, so we can observe any day. The only point of importance is that Christians should agree upon one day and act in unity, and the natural day is the day which the instinct of the early Church, acting upon the facts of its history, at once hallowed, the day of our Lord's resurrection, when once and forever the old, whose end had been served, gave way to the new, the letter to the spirit.

We observe the Lord's Day because we are the Lord's people. All our life is from him. Our one business is to glorify and serve him, and to become like him by the loving and living help of the Spirit. One day is none too much to give from all our common activities, to think in specially, and undisturbed by daily tasks, of his goodness and graces, and to spend in service of others in special ways impossible in the round of duties of other days. The true observance of this one day as the Lord's Day will make all our days days of the Lord.

*Y.P. Topic, Sunday 18th April. — Why We Observe the Lord's Day (Mark 16: 1-6; Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor. 16: 2; Rev. 1: 10).