

## Happiness at Home.

It has been well said that "the road to happiness lies over small stepping-stones." Some of these stepping-stones I should like to point out. The river of life flows daily on, and daily you have to cross it in many ways. I should like to be sure that when you crossed it after your hours of work and came home again, you crossed it by these stepping-stones, and had on the other side, nestled comfortably up on the bank, a good store of home happiness to which to return. He is happiest, said the great German poet Goethe, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home.

And, first, it must be in its own way as sacred a place as the Church itself. What a charm, somebody has said, has home—that magic word embodying sentiments the most holy and pure! Nothing must come there which would defile it or destroy the spell of its peace. Just as you would wish it to be clean and sweet to the outward eye, so you must labour to keep away from it all images or thoughts or memories or associations which are contrary to what is right, good and true. Let Jesus Christ Himself be the chief inmate of the home, and have everything to suit Him. Of course, we ought to keep away from ourselves at every time and in every place, everything which is wrong; but in other places, outside our home and our Church, we cannot help jostling against what is wordly or disagreeable or even sinful. In our homes we can by God's gracious help avoid these things. Do not put up a picture, I mean, for instance, because it is a picture. Think what the picture means. What is its motive? Was the man who drew it or painted it imbued with the Spirit of Christ? Or is it some flaunting, vulgar, garish thing, full of the world, the flesh or the devil? In the same way we ought at all times to keep from ourselves all language, all conversation, all jokes which are not suitable to the sisters of Jesus Christ, but especially in a place where much of our lives is spent, and we every day return into ourselves, and make a fresh start. "There is no happiness in life, there is no misery in life, like that growing out of the dispositions which consecrate or desecrate a home."

We cannot too often insist that home should have its own daily worship. What can be more beautiful and blessed, what can bring purer happiness into the day, what can spread a more golden light over the life than when father and mother and children all kneel down together the first thing in the morning the last thing in the evening, to implore the pardon and blessing of God? Even the pagan Greeks saw the beauty and the meaning of this. There was an old poet called Bion, who flourished about three hundred years before Christ; and this is what he said about it: "Most salutary is family worship as a means of promoting domestic happiness, and adding to the attractions of home. It is something to bring the members of a family together twice a day: for in proportion as those who have duties towards each other live apart, they will cease to care for one another."

Some happiness is destroyed by every appearance of anger, crossness and sulkiness. Few cautions are more important than this, because the temptation to lose our tempers is so common. We are, perhaps, wearied out with our day's work, and our nerves are irritable, and we feel exactly like the fretful porcupine, ready to take offence at the first thing which displeases us. Or somebody makes a noise when we want to be quiet; or somebody is a greater favorite than we are ourselves, or somebody thwarts our wishes, or somebody is herself cross and disagreeable. So we fall out. How dreadful a storm is in a home! Things may quiet down again, and sharp, bitter words may be forgiven, but a terrible injury has been done to the atmosphere at home. The angel of home happiness has for a time fled away. And what has happened once may happen again. We cannot be too strict in guarding ourselves against these evil tempers and passions. A day will come when the dear father or mother or brother or sister who has suffered from these angry outbursts of ours will be taken away from us. Then we can no longer touch them by the hand, and say that we loved them all the time, and did not mean it. It will be too late. What would we not give to have back the time that is past, and to avoid with the utmost horror

these mad moments of vexation which made us for a time like evil demons, the enemies of our home!

"Domestic love! Not in proud palace halls  
Is often seen thy beauty to abide,  
Thy dwelling is in lowly cottage walls  
That in the thickets of the woodbine hide,  
With hum of bees around, and from the side  
Of woody hills some little bubbling spring  
Shining along through banks with harebells dyed;  
And many a bird to warble on the wing  
When morn her saffron robe o'er heav'n and earth doth fling

"O love of loves! To thy white hand is given  
Of earthly happiness the golden key;  
Thine are the joyous hours of winter's even  
When the babes cling round their father's knees;  
And thine the voice which on the midnight sea  
Melts the rude mariner with thoughts of home,  
Peopling the gloom with all he longs to see.  
Spirit! I've built a shrine; and thou hast come,  
And on its altar closed, for ever closed, thy plume!"

There cannot be this presence of love, this absence of anger, without *forbearance*. You must not expect ever to have what you call your rights. If you try to assert them there will be perpetual struggling, fighting and discord. Be content with the place which others assign you. Win their love and esteem by your own modesty and friendliness. You cannot expect everybody always to understand you and do you justice. Be thankful and glad when they do. "In a happy home there will be no fault-finding, overbearing spirit; there will be no peevishness nor fretfulness; unkindness will not dwell in the heart or be found in the tongue." Oh, the tears, the sighs, the wasting of life and health and strength and time, of all that is most to be desired in a happy home, occasioned merely by unkind words!

"The angry word suppressed, the taunting thought,  
Subduing and subdued the petty strife  
Which clouds the color of domestic life,  
The sober comfort, all the peace which springs  
From the huge aggregate of little things,  
On these small cares of daughter, wife or friend  
The almost sacred joys of home depend."

Lastly, I must mention the stepping-stone of unselfishness. Perhaps more depends on this than on any. Here lies the key to all happiness in every circumstance of life. "Even Christ pleased not himself." That is our motto and our ideal. "Every act of self-denial will bring its own reward with it, and make the next step in duty and in virtue easier and more pleasant than the former." Take the selfishness out of the world, and there would be more happiness than we should know what to do with. When once people find you to be unselfish, they will love and esteem you as a daily and constant benefactor. Your influence for good will grow in proportion as they find out that in all honor, profit and advantage you put others before yourself.

"Wouldst thou inherit life with Christ on high?  
Then count the cost and know  
That here on earth below  
Thou needs must suffer with thy Lord and die.  
We reach that gain to which all else is loss  
But through the Cross!  
Not e'en the sharpest sorrows we can feel,  
Nor direst pangs, we dare  
With that great bliss compare,  
When God His glory shall in us reveal,  
That shall endure when our brief woes are o'er  
For evermore!"

## Christ's Intercessory Prayer.\*

BY REV. ADDISON P. FOSTER, D. D.

The intercessory prayer of our Lord offered just before His death is a marvel of sublime spirituality. It has not its equal in human language. It breathes the atmosphere of divinity and indicates that He who uttered it was very God. Its lofty grandeur is surely more than human. In it Christ prays for Himself and for His disciples.

## CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIMSELF.

His first desire is, as it was in the shorter formula of prayer which He taught His followers, that God's name

\*An Exposition based on (John xvii.); in the Bible Study Union Course on "The Teachings of Christ."