

Pastor and People.

HAPPY THOUGHTS.

Oh, 'tis good to think of heaven,
Of a home with Jesus there;
Where no sting of death can enter,
And no cry of woe or care;
There the stream of life is flowing,
Full of water pure and clear;
On its banks are loved ones resting,
Loved ones to our hearts so dear.

Good to think of them in glory,
As they gather close and near;
Talking of past toil and trial,
Never more to shed a tear
Living in the Saviour's presence,
How their love and joy increase;
Safe at home, with Him forever,
Every heart is full of peace.

Oft we think we hear the music,
Hear the tuneful harps of gold;
But the sacred joy and rapture
Of that song can ne'er be told.
Now in lofty tones ascending,
Then it falls in softest waves,
As they sing of Christ the Saviour
And the precious blood that saves.

Happy thoughts of heaven, wafted
From that bright celestial land,
How they calm and soothe our anguish,
When 'mid scenes of grief we stand!
Gently as the dews of evening
Come their messages of love,
Calling us beyond our sorrows
To the peaceful scenes above.

To the company of heaven,
Where the hosts of God we meet,
And with holy saints and angels
Worship at our Saviour's feet.
Hallelujah! glory, honour,
Unto Him who once was slain;
Lofty songs of adoration
We will sing again, again!

—S. L. Cuthbert.

THE EARLY MORNING HOUR.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D.

Each new day comes to us full of promise, offering us all that lies in its possibilities. How much may be done with it if we are only wide awake! How much may be put into it, and given to it, to carry into eternity if we are only earnest, and diligent and prayerful? We may load it up with lumber only fit to be burned in the fire, or we may charge it with sacred treasure, whose preciousness will never pass away. We may make it a source of holy joy or of humbling regret and sorrow, just as we use it or abuse it. And that depends to a very large extent on the character we give to the early morning hour. That is the key to the day. That in an unquestionable way determines what the day shall be. A good start in the great majority of cases wins the race. It is a tremendous advantage.

Many allow the early morning hour to escape them, and run after it the whole day, and never overtake it. Time lost is gone forever beyond recall. And time misused becomes an enemy, because it takes away the keenness of desire to make the most of every moment, and it induces a debilitating carelessness which suffers opportunities that are beyond all price to slip unimproved. Few men of note have wasted the early morning hour; they have rather found in it the best time to pray, to reflect, to plan, to put forth their noblest powers in lofty endeavours. They have put to the proof the pithy proverb:

Early to bed and early to rise,
Makes a man healthy and wealthy and wise.

The note we strike in the morning keeps sounding out all day. It takes its colour from the hue that tinges the spirit on its embracing the dawn. Bishop Hall, of Norwich, one of the choice spirits of the first half of the sixteenth century, says: "Now, when sleep is rather driven away than leaves me, I would ever awake with God; my first thoughts are for Him who hath made the night for rest and the day for travail; and as He gives, so blesses both. If my heart be early seasoned with His presence, it will savour of Him all day after. While my body is dressing, not with an effeminate curiosity, nor yet with rude neglect, my mind addresses herself to her ensuing task, bethinking what is to be done, and in what order, and marshalling (as it were) my hours with my work." Here we have the character of the man unveiled.

Like to the good bishop was the good soldier, Hedley Vicars. It was a rule of his never to read any letters before prayer, and until he had read and meditated upon his morning portion of God's Word. He affirms, "I never enjoy any day that has not been commenced alone with God." He also gives us a notable experience he had while visiting friends at Birch Hall, Essex. He slept one morning later than usual, and had gone down to family prayers without having had time for his private devotions. "My soul was the worse for it," he said, "for nearly three weeks after."

How often has this been the experience of others! What do we not lose by losing our hold upon God in the early morning? Could we reckon it up what a long and heavy bill it would be! But we are unable to do this, because we have not our senses exercised by reason of use to discern good and evil. We lose incalculably by sheer ignorance and stupidity. To know the effect of the right use of the first waking hour, that is, in prayer to the God of our life, in meditation on His

Word, which is to be our guide, in committing our way to Him as the All-wise, let us keep it sacred to such employments, and the light and strength and wisdom it ministers will soon become apparent.

It gives us the mastery of the day. It will bring us into connection with the source of strength, and enable us to walk in the light of God. It will cultivate a devotional mood and a prayerful spirit. It will give us the consciousness of a presence on which we may lean, and which we may love, and with which we may commune. Our morning plea should ever be that of Moses, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." And our Example, ever clearly seen by us, should be the One who is before and above all others, Jesus Christ Himself.

Of Him it is written: "And in the morning, rising up, a great while before day, He went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed." Under the monition of His good Spirit this has ever been the habit of the holy. The cry of David, the sweet psalmist, is: "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee; my flesh longeth for Thee." Again he speaks thus to his soul: "Awake up my glory; awake, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early."

We therefore come into fellowship with the purest and sweetest souls of all time in the right use of the early morning hour. In its subdued and holy quiet, in its favourableness to reflection, in its dewy freshness, in its freedom from distractions and in its ability to secure concentration of the mind and heart upon the object of adoration and worship, it is pre-eminently conducive to the highest and noblest ends of life. Anxiety touching any part of the day should certainly centre on its beginning. That is its key-note. Its first hour decides its destiny. It is said of the famous Matthew Henry that he was an early riser, and put a great value on his morning hour; he would often be in his study by five of the clock in the morning, and sometimes by four. In a paper which Robert Murray McCheyne wrote anent "Reformation in Secret Prayer," he says: "I ought to pray before seeing any one. . . . I feel it is far better to begin with God—to see His face first—to get my soul near Him before it is near another. 'When I awake I am still with Thee.' It is best to have at least one hour alone with God before engaging in anything else." At the same time he adds: "I must be careful not to reckon communion with God by minutes or hours or by solitude. I have pored over my Bible, and on my knees, with little or no communion, and my times of solitude have been often times of greatest temptation."

No doubt this may be the case, but of what value is it to us? It discovers to us ourselves. Our weak points. Our frequent cause of failure. It directs our attention to that part of our city wall that needs to be built up and made strong. That is the point at which the enemy may come in at a flood. Because this is discovered to us we are not to turn it into an argument against secret prayer. (See Matt. vi. 6.) That would be to lose all. We must rather employ it as an incentive to more lively and whole-hearted intercourse with God; more direct and simple dealing with Him.

We are told that this was a caution and advice Philip Henry frequently gave to his children and friends: "Be sure to look to your secret duty; keep that up whatever you do. The soul cannot prosper in neglect of it. It is secret trading that enriches the Christ." He observed that apostasy generally begins at the closet door. Secret prayer is first neglected and carelessly performed, then frequently omitted, and after a while wholly cast off, and then farewell to God and Christ and all religion."

This is unquestionably true, and is confirmed by the history of the Church. And it is but another proof of the supreme importance of the right use of the early morning hour. Let us think of this in the light of this fact so well expressed by one of the wisest: "Every day is a little life, and our whole life is but a day repeated."

NO WORK THAT PAYS BETTER.

It costs something to be a good mother. There is no more exacting and exhausting work in the world than a true mother's work. But there is no work in all the world that pays better. No reward in God's service is surer, richer, grander than the reward to a faithful and faith-filled mother.

And as to the idea that a mother can neglect this work in the earlier years of her children's life, and make it up to better advantage in their later years, that is as baseless in fact as it is in philosophy. No mother on earth ever yet won her child's freest, truest confidence in its maturer years if she had failed of securing it before that period. No mother would deserve such confidence if she deliberately postponed their seeking until then.

It may be—it often is—a wise mother's duty to be measurably separated from her children in their latter training, when they must be at school or at labour; or in the enjoyment of well-chosen companionship outside of their home; but this should never be accepted as a necessity until the mother's hold on the children's confidence is so strong, through the experience of the years that are gone, that only the close of life can diminish, can change the conscience-power of that hold.

As a rule, a child's taste, and character, and trend in life and even its permanent destiny, are practically shaped before the child is seven years of age. A mother's failure of a motherly devotedness in those first seven years can never be made good by seven times seven years of devotedness thereafter.

DENOMINATIONAL BETTER THAN UNDENOMINATIONAL WORK.

Many earnest Christian workers labour under a delusion with regard to the efficiency of churches and ministers. They are constantly insisting that important fields are not being cultivated, that certain classes of people are not being reached, and that some new agency must be invented in order to accomplish this work. Mr. Dwight L. Moody, who has recently organized a training school in Chicago for the purpose of preparing candidates for intelligent and efficient Christian effort, says: "I found hundreds of families in cities like this never coming in contact with churches or their representatives. The bulk of our Church-members are taken up with their own household and business cares, and unless some persons are set apart and trained for this work I do not see how it can be done. . . . There is a class of people that practically have no homes, and they go out in the evenings where they have genial companions and amusements. This is a source of vice and crime. My thought has been to establish places of meeting open every night for these people where they might find some uplifting influence. Then they will find their way to the churches."

The facts stated here cannot be questioned. Some of the measures proposed commend themselves to intelligent Christians. But the idea that this work cannot be done through the churches, or that it can be better done by independent and undenominational agencies, is preposterous. Not many years ago the same facts and arguments were used to show the necessity of organizing Young Men's Christian Associations. It was stated that the cities were filled with young men who were practically without homes, and that these young men would not go to the churches, and could not be reached through the churches; but if Young Men's Christian Associations should be established on an independent religious basis, and undenominational in their operations, these throngs of wandering youths could be reached, and then they would find their way into the churches.

Are the churches now crowded with young men? Has the attendance of young men upon religion services in the churches increased or diminished since the organization of these associations in our cities? It has not increased. No fault is found with the Young Men's Christian Association. Doubtless it can produce a record of good accomplished which will abundantly compensate for all the labour and money expended. But it has not proved a remedy for the evil which it was intended to overcome. Mr. Moody sees with pain precisely the same condition of affairs which zealous Christians saw twenty-five years ago, and he now deems some other undenominational scheme absolutely necessary to accomplish what the churches cannot do. And after his new thought has been developed into a system, and operated by his own indomitable and sanctified energy for twenty-five years, these unhappy conditions will not have been materially improved thereby.

The error lies first in expecting to convert these great cities in a few days, and becoming impatient and losing confidence in the appointed means because the work is not all done speedily. It is also a mistake to imagine that some other agency besides the church and some other machinery besides that already employed would accomplish this work more rapidly. Mr. Moody has been a tower of strength during the past quarter of a century. It is doubtful if any living man has achieved more for Christ; and yet if he had anchored more firmly to the churches, and operated in them and through them, instead of on independent and undenominational lines, the fruits of his labours would have been more enduring and no less abundant. We have enough machinery, and it is good enough. We need no new systems or schemes, but we need to put sanctified wisdom and energy to those which already exist.

A certain horror of sectarianism and Denominationalism has taken hold of some Christians. They must adopt a platform on which all Christians can stand and work together. We have such a platform already in the New Testament, but it does not require us to abandon our Denominationalism in order to co-operate intelligently and efficiently. In the effort to frame undenominational platforms and systems some well-meaning Christians have laid aside many denominational doctrines and usages which are most important and effective, and their work is superficial and transitory. The outside world delights in the term "undenominational" so long as it is interpreted to mean opposition to the denominations; but when they are told that it signifies not rivalry but co-operation with the churches, then it has no more charm for them than the churches have. History proves that nearly all the substantial and durable fruits of Christianity in modern times have been produced through denominational teaching and effort.—*N. Y. Christian Advocate.*

DRIFTING AWAY FROM GOD.

I was invited to be present at a wedding in a distant city. I was not able to reach the house of my friend till late in the evening of the day before the auspicious event. We sat in the pleasant parlour chatting for a time; then, though we were all weary, and the hands of the clock indicated that it was almost midnight, the bride-elect said: "Papa, we must have evening prayers to-night, just the same as usual."

Then turning to me, she added in a low tone: "I am so afraid that in the bustle and preparation we may drift away from God."

There is often danger that the current of the world may sweep us along with it, but if anchored by prayer we need not fear.—*American Magazine.*