

THE EFFECT OF SIN'S EXPULSION.

By Dr. George Matheson.

"When she was come to her house she found the devil gone out and her daughter laid upon the bed."—Mark 7: 39.

The immediate effect of cure is not a sense of exultation. This is true even of physical illness; the patient is most apt to feel his weakness in the hours of convalescence. But it is supremely true in the spiritual world. This maiden had been what we should call regenerated; an evil spirit had been cast out of her. Yet the immediate effect is not encouraging. Instead of being elevated she is prostrated; she is found lying on a bed. She had lost her old energy. That energy had come from delusive desires; but it had probably made her charming. She had found that she had been chasing a shadow; but, during the chase, she had been brilliant. To find that it had been a shadow was gain; but it was gain that involved loss—not permanently indeed, but for today and tomorrow. It took away the zest from life; it dimmed for a time the sparkle of the eye; it substituted the heavy step for the wings of an eagle. A disillusioned soul is like a weaned child. When a young man first abandons the wine-cup he probably for a time abandons something more. He may lose his sparkle, his humor, his brilliancy. He may lack the genial zest, the ready repartee, the mirth that made others merry. His comrades may miss in him the laugh that brought light and the charm that gave cheer and the buoyancy that for a night lulled care. He and had to pay for his freedom, and it is no wonder if for an hour he is impoverished. It is a dreary season between Egypt and Canaan. It is well called the desert. Our treasures are often wrapped with our trespasses so that to part with the latter is to part with the former. The resurrection from sin reveals at first but an empty tomb where the spices of life are useless and there is nothing worthy to be embalmed.

And yet, my Father, such is not the rest Thou hast in store for me. Thou hast not lifted me out of the passions of sin that I may enter a life of passionlessness. I may be exhausted for a day, I may be prostrated for a night upon my bed. Yet my goal is not a couch, but a crown. There is coming to me a new passion, a fresh energy, a second youth. Hast Thou not said that the joyous things of this world are but shadows of things to come. Yes, my Father, and therefore I shall get back the equivalents of all that I have lost. Beyond these forty days of the wilderness there glimmers the light of a second Cana where the water once more shall be turned into wine. Thy latest word to every soul is this, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk!" Mine will be again the sense of morning, the glad look-out, the prospect of a promised land. Mine will be again the impulse of the young, the heart of expectancy, the blood made rapid by hope. Mine will be again the disbelief in limitations, the confidence in destiny, the faith that mountains will be removed. Mine will be again the poet's dream—the belief that somewhere there is a city paved with gold. Mine will be again the communion of brotherhood—joined by the cup that quickens yet inebriates not, that dwarfs the care without making oblivious of the joy. Mine will be again the forgetfulness of earth's decay—the trust that love will last, the hope that charity will be changeless, the sense that pity will be permanent, the faith that affection will abide, the instinct that sacrifice will survive, the assurance that between man and man devotion will not die. The fruits of Thy new world will give back the vintage of the old; he who begins upon the bed will culminate on the wing.

HOUR BY HOUR.

Choosing "first His kingdom, and His righteousness" is not a choice that can be made once for all, else the world would blossom with saints springing into life in some moment of rapt enthusiasm. It is, instead, a daily, hourly choice—deciding for the church service through the rain this morning, instead of the quiet hour by the fire-side; for the gentle silence this afternoon, instead of the sharp retort that may be well deserved; for the unwelcome task instead of the coveted leisure; for resolute rousing of one's own care to sympathize with some other one's burden. In all these and a countless host of other little daily commonplaces, the choosing of the kingdom goes on. It is the selecting, day by day, of the threads we will weave into each day's loving kindness, self-sacrifice, faithfulness.

It does not sound like so grand a thing as "his kingdom, and his righteousness;" but the kingdom is slowly gaining territory and permanence within; and what is righteousness but doing right? The promise of "all these things" that are to be added to those who make this choice—the needed things of food and clothing, friends and home—is fulfilled in the same gradual way. Day by day, the blessing comes, as the need arises. The unexpected success, the friendly interest, the work and wage that do not fail; all the things that gladden and cheer an unselfish heart with the comfort a selfish one cannot know—these are the promises kept.—Forward.

UNCHANGEABLE.

Time may set his finger there,
Fix the smiles that curve about
Her winsome mouth and touch her hair,
Put the curves of youth to route;
But the "something" God put there,
That which drew me to her first;
Not the imps of pain and care,
Not all sorrow's fiend accursed,
Can kill the look that God put there.

Something beautiful and rare,
Nothing common can destroy;
Not all the leaden load of care,
Not all the dross of earth's alloy;
Better than all fame or gold,
True as only God's own truth,
It is something all hearts hold
Who have loved once in their youth.

That sweet look her face doth hold
Thus will ever be to me;
Joy may all her pinions fold,
Care may come, and misery;
Through the days of murk and shine,
Though the roads be foul or fair,
I will see through love's glad eye
That sweet look that God put there.

Night carries our vision farther, millions on millions of miles farther, than does the day. The morning sun drops the curtain that evening has lifted. But for this long conical shadow on the earth we should never have seen one of the stars of heaven. It is the one divinely provided telescope-tube through which we can study the most stupendous of all the visible works of God. It is, in its way, a shadow of the Almighty, and it had taught us more of God, and of the infinite ranges of His power and wisdom, than a thousand added suns could ever have taught.

It is the Apostle who, describing the most dreadful sins of a heathen world, traces the whole course of sin back to its fountain head in lack of thankfulness. It is the want of this grace embitters the most favored lot. To the "cheerful heart" every condition in life presents occasion for praise; to the ungrateful, no condition.

FAITHFULNESS.

Some Bible Hints.

Fidelity is a habit, and must be cultivated in little things, because great opportunities come too seldom to form a habit (Luke 16: 10).

Even in what is my own, self-respect would compel me to be faithful; how much more, when I have nothing that is my own! (1 Cor. 4: 1.)

No one can be "faithful unto death" without being faithful all his life; for death may come at any time (Rev. 2: 10:).

Fidelity is the crown of life; it is the splendid flowering and climax of all our energies and talents (Rev. 2: 10).

Suggestive Thoughts.

Faithfulness is built on faith. No man can be faithful without help from the unseen.

Faithfulness is more than a deed, it is a desire; more than doing a duty, it is loving to do it.

True fidelity is faithful in the dark. Faithfulness does not consider ease or difficulty, reward or oblivion, comrades or loneliness; it considers only the commandment.

A Few Illustrations.

Many are satisfied with planning future fidelity, which is like making a meal on pictures of food.

Praise for faithfulness is like breaths about an engine; the engine will work without them.

The longer a tower stands the more likely it is to fall; but the longer faithfulness endures the more certain is it.

The longer a horse obeys his rider, the fewer commands he needs. So our obedience will unite our wills with the will of God.

To Think About.

Is my chief desire to do my duty?
Do others think of me as faithful?
Is my fidelity waxing or waning?

A Cluster of Quotations.

It goes a great way toward making a man faithful, to let him understand that you think him so.—Seneca.

Nothing is more noble, nothing more venerable, than fidelity.—Cicero.

By my tasks of every day.

By the little words I say,

My allegiance I proclaim—

My allegiance to a Name—

Prove my right His cross to wear.

Cross and name of Christ to bear.

—George Klingbe.

Faithfulness can feed on suffering,

And knows no disappointment.

—George Elliot.

DAILY READINGS.

M., Oct. 15. The faithful Colossians. Col. 1:1-8.

T., Oct. 16. Practical faithfulness. Tit. 2:1-15.

W., Oct. 17. Faithful against error. Jude 1:4-23.

T., Oct. 18. Paul's faithfulness. Acts 20:18-21.

F., Oct. 19. True Thessalonians. 1 Thess. 1:1-10.

S., Oct. 20. Peter's faithfulness. 2 Pet. 1:12-15.

S., Oct. 21. Topic—Faithfulness. Luke 16:10; 1 Cor. 4:1-5; etc. 2. 10. (Honorary members meeting.)

The home of a good man is pleasant to him that is weary; but the dwellings of sin are on the path of the lost.

For the upright man there is a smile on the face of God; but for the man who wilfully deceives his brethren there is a rod in his hand.

The fountain of life is hid with Christ. Christ has enough for us, though we see not whence he has it.—Henry.