

FIVE-MINUTES' SERMON.

Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost. AVOIDING THE OCCASIONS OF SIN.

"They shall love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart." (Matt. 22, 37)

The love of God and our neighbor is justly called the queen of all virtues. Our Saviour Himself praises it as the first and greatest commandment of our holy religion. But Jesus wishes us to understand that it is not a love in words, but one in deed, as He explains in the following text: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them he it is that loveth Me." (John 14 21.)

But why is this efficacious love so seldom found in Christians, that the life of the majority is rather a sad chain of promises and infidelity, of: Whom do I love? God to day and the devil to-morrow. Is this caused only by inconstancy and human frailty? Would to God it were so! But, alas! the cause is generally to be found in that mad frivolity, which intentionally seeks the dangers of sin, which criminally plunges into the occasions of sin. They wish to love God, but not to avoid that which must necessarily separate them from His love. They desire the life of the soul, to preserve the precious treasure of sanctifying grace, but do not wish to renounce that which will most certainly bring them the death of the soul, and how then could it be otherwise, than that Satan triumphs and in them is verified the warning word of holy scripture: "He that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Eccl. 3, 27.)

There is, for instance, a person with whom you have contracted a frivolous courtship. As often as you approach her, your angel guardian weeps, and so will you one day weep, when at the hour of death your sins will arise before you. For you, this person is a snare of Satan and the occasion of eternal damnation. Or there is a resort, a society, which as often as you enter, you drink to excess or deile your tongue with obscene language. This resort, this society is for you a net, wherein Satan the artfully trapper of soul, wishes to ensnare you. If you have no wish to avoid these nets, these fetters of Satan, then cease pretending to love God, for it is a lying, detestable protestation. Satan is dearer to you than God, and he will most assuredly obtain possession of your soul.

If a child has once been burnt it shuns the fire and thinks: "I now know how great is the pain of fire." If a person, by his imprudence, contracted a disease, he will certainly take care of himself, saying: "I paid dearly for my indiscretion, but it has taught me a lesson for the future." Should not you, O Christian, think and act thus, when there is a question of the greatest danger, that of being separated from God by mortal sin, of becoming a reprobate for all eternity?

Perhaps you answer, it will indeed be different. If I seek that person, that house, that society, that companion, I shall certainly be on my guard. I have taken a firm resolution. Ah, fool! If you only knew how Satan rejoices over your resolutions. As the proverb says: "With bacon one catches mice." Behold the devil too has a trap and excellent bait, to catch souls. And this trap, this bait are the approximate occasions of sin. Are you, poor sinner, holier than David, or the Apostle St. Peter? Are you wiser than Solomon, or stronger than Sampson? All these fell sadly when, trusting to their own strength, they shunned not the danger. And will you do likewise and yet remain firm? Ah, no, if your soul is dear and precious to you, be warned and flee, otherwise your perdition is inevitable.

But, say you, it is so difficult to part from that person, to remain away from that society. True, dear Christian, it is difficult, but there is something much more so, and that is, to burn forever in hell. Probably you suppose one can go to Heaven as it were half asleep, without exertion? Do you think Jesus excused you when He said: "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. 11, 12.) Do you imagine the great gospel truth does not concern you? If thy eye scandalize thee, cut it off, for it is better, without eye, with one hand or one foot, to enter into life, than to be cast into that unquenchable fire." (Mark 9, 46.)

But you say, my companions will ridicule me, if I shun their society. To be ridiculed for this, ah, what a calamity! Which is worse, to be laughed at by your companions, or by the devil? In your last hour, when solitary and alone you must appear with all your sins before God's tribunal, will your companions assist you? Hence, let them laugh and mock, but do you save your soul and never forget what the catechism of your holy religion teaches, viz.: that every one who will not shun the proximate occasion of mortal sin, confesses sacrilegiously and that the absolution of the priest will only cause him to descend deeper into hell. Therefore give up that sinful courtship, renounce that evil communication, never again place a foot in lewd company, cast all bad books and pictures into the fire, yes, flee, avoid the dangers, the occasions of sin, as you would pestilence and cholera, or venomous serpents. Be careful in your intercourse with others, watchful over your senses, be fervent in prayer and in receiving the sacraments. Behold, this is to love God above all, and to secure in death that glorious, imperishable crown of victory. Amen.

OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

Dan's Friend.

Gentleman Dan, as his schoolfellows called him, because of his weakness for collars innocent of ink, and hands perceptibly washed, had no chum until Joe Clayton, in some playground dispute, made unflattering, though purely fanciful, allusion to Dan's mother.

The result was a pitched battle, in which clothes and countenances suffered considerably; and after which a Ragamuffin Dan walked away arm-in-arm with his thenceforth inseparable comrade, their little bosoms swelling with the consciousness of a well fought fight.

Fortunately for their schoolmaster's peace of mind, the boys' friendship began, only a few days before their school days ended.

Soon after they were entered as clerks, one in a city library, the other in a brewery near by.

Together they gained their experience of life, and Dan's innate purity of mind did much to restrain his less fastidious friend from the coarser forms of pleasure.

Together they discussed social and religious, literary and political questions.

Their views differed widely, and they argued hotly; but when downright rupture seemed imminent, Clayton would say solemnly to himself, "Hold your tongue, Becket; hold your tongue," and the disagreement was forgotten in simultaneous laughter.

Becket was his second name, and Mrs. Clayton used to say he had this habit of self-admonition from childhood.

But whether the phrase had been used towards him, and had stuck in his memory, or whether he had evolved it from his inner consciousness, she did not know.

When it was possible the two lads arranged to have their annual leave together.

One July they hired a boat for a week and went up the river.

Joe signalled himself the first morning by diving into about eighteen inches of water, decolored by the apparent depth, and removing portions of cuticle from his nose.

The next day proved so warm that, paddling up a backwater, they moored the boat, letting her swing under the overhanging branches, and stretched themselves lazily in the bottom.

The rippling waters seemed to deepen and echo Dan's baritone as he sang "If this be vanity, who'd be wise? Vanity let it be."

Clayton began to talk of the future, planning it, as if of necessity it included both their happy lives, and no others.

Dreaming happily, they were unconscious that the boat had slipped her moorings and was drifting out mid-stream.

A little steam launch, careering round a bend in the river, whistled in vain: in one instant of time her bow had struck the rail craft.

That instant of time, however, sufficed for Joe to fling himself across his friend, so that his chest covered Dan's head.

When they were dragged out of the water, a few moments later, Dan was unhurt, but Joe was dying.

A medical man among the pleasure party on board the launch did what little could be done.

Dan, his gray eyes fixed, his face steady, knelt beside his friend, both alike heedless of dripping clothes and of the sympathetic onlookers.

Twice Joe groaned, then checked himself sharply. "Hold your tongue, Becket; hold your tongue," he said faintly, and even then as his eyes met Dan's they both smiled. Then Joe lay still, looking up at the blue summer sky—his lips moving, but making no sound, while the men standing round took off their hats and the women sobbed.

Presently, powerless to raise his hands, he looked again at Dan who made the sign of the cross, and said softly, but distinctly, "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend."

Two words Joe uttered clearly, the name of the God Man who laid down His life for His friends, and the name of His Virgin Mother.

And then Joseph Becket Clayton learned the only thing worth knowing.—The Irish Rosary.

"S. P. C. M."

"Can you help me for a few minutes, Marion?"

"I would like to, but I don't see how I can."

The tone was not impatient, but hurried.

"I have this essay to finish for the society this evening, I must go to our French club in an hour, then to a guild meeting, and get back to the conversation at 5 o'clock."

"No, you can't help me, dear. You look worn out yourself. Never mind. If I tie up my head, perhaps I can finish this."

"Through at last," said Marion, wearily giving a finishing touch to the "Developments of Religious Ideas Among the Greeks," at the same time glancing quickly at the clock.

Her attention was arrested by a strange sight. Her tired mother had fallen asleep over her sewing, that was not surprising, but the startled girl saw bending over her mother's pale face two angels, each looking earnestly at the sleeper.

"What made that weary look on this woman's face?" asked the stern, strange looking angel of the weaker, sadder one. "Has God given her no daughters?"

"Yes," replied the other; "but they have no time to take care of their mother."

"No time!" cried the other. "What do they do with all the time I am letting them have?"

"Well," replied the Angel of Life, "I keep their hands and hearts full. They are affectionate daughters, much admired for their good works; but they do not know they are letting the one they love most slip from their arms into yours. Those gray hairs come from overwork and anxiety to save extra money for the music and French lessons. Those pale cheeks faded while the girls were painting roses or pasties on velvet or satin."

The dark angel frowned.

"The girls must be accomplished now," exclaimed the other. "Those eyes grew dim sewing for the girls to give them time to study ancient history and modern languages; those wrinkles came because the girls had not time to share the cares and worries of every-day life; the sigh comes because the mother feels neglected and lonely while the girls are working for the women in India; that tired look comes from getting up so early while the poor, exhausted girls are trying to sleep back the late hours they gave to study or spent at the concert; those feet are so weary because of their ceaseless walk around the house all day."

"Surely the girls help, too?"

"What they can. But their feet get weary enough going around begging for the charity hospital and the Church and hunting up the poor and the sick."

"No wonder," said the Angel of Death, "so many mothers call me. This is indeed sad—loving, industrious girls giving their mothers to my care as soon as selfish, wicked ones."

"Ah, the hours are so crowded!" said Life, wearily. "Girls who are cultured or take an active part in life have no time to take care of the mother who spent so much time in bringing them up."

"Then I must place my seal upon her brow," said the Angel of Death, bending over the sleeping woman.

"No! no!" cried Marion, springing from her seat: "I will take care of her if you will only let her stay."

"Daughter, you must have had a nightmare. Wake up, dear. I fear you have missed your history class."

"Never mind, mamma; I'm not going to-day. I am rested now and I will make these button holes while you curl up on the sofa and take a nap. I'll send word to the guild professor that I must be excused to-day, for I am going to see to supper myself and make some of those muffins you like. Now go to sleep, mamma dear, as I did, and don't worry about me. You are of more consequence than all the languages or classes in the world."

So after being snugly tucked in a warm afghan, with a tender kiss from her daughter, usually too busy for such demonstrations, Mrs. Henson fell into a sweet, restful sleep.

"I see we might have lost the best of mothers in a mad rush to be educated and useful in this hurrying, restless day and generation," Marion soliloquized, as she occasionally stole a glance at the sleeping mother. "After this what time she does not need I shall devote to outside work and study. Until she gets well restored I will take charge of the house and give up all societies but one. That I'll give up myself, if the other girls won't join—a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Mothers."

And Marion kept her word. A few months later one remarked to her: "We miss your bright essays so much, Miss Marion. You seem to have lost your ambition to be highly educated. You are letting your studies get ahead of you, I fear. How young your mother looks to have grown daughters! I never saw her looking so well."

Then Marion felt rewarded for being a member of what she calls the "S. P. C. M."—Christian Commonweal.

THE IRISH AND THEIR FAITH.

The following passages are from a speech of Dr. Cahill which was pronounced at a public dinner in Glasgow, March 17, 1862. Although venerable in age, yet it is still young, and will bear many repetitions yet in years to come.

In fact, Catholicity, if I may so speak, is almost natural to an Irish before he is baptized; he inherits faith by a kind of frechold grace which St. Patrick has bequeathed to the most remote posterity of Ireland. You can efface every feeling from his heart but Catholicity; you can crush out every sentiment from his mind but the love of his altars; you may break him to pieces and crush him into dust, but like the diamond in fragments, the faith shines in him to the last. The smallest particle of the Irish nature—the poorest, the most abandoned of Ireland's sons, reveals the sparkling inheritance as well as the most noble and lordly possessor: in fact, the darkness of the night is more favorable for seeing the native light of the fragment than the golden hours of noontday sunshine, and thus the midnight of national trial is the best time to behold the effulgence of Ireland's creed and to test the essential splendor of her national faith.

The victory rests with America's Greatest Medicine, Hood's Sarsaparilla, when it enters the battle against impure blood.

Mr. Thomas Ballard, Syracuse, N. Y., writes: "I have been afflicted for nearly a year with that most to be dreaded disease Dyspepsia, and at times worn out with pain and want of sleep, and after trying almost everything recommended, I tried one box of Parnesse's Vegetable Pills. I am now nearly well, and believe they will cure me. I would not be without them for any money."

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CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN.

It is well for our young men (and the old ones, too), to remember that nothing great can be accomplished without great care and great perseverance. Every man who has achieved success won it through hard and thoughtful work and through self-denial, and many of them "stooped to conquer."

Lowering Taste and Intellect. The careless and thoughtless glancing over the daily newspapers and the indiscriminate reading of commonplace fiction—which forms the intellectual fare of the great majority of people—is responsible for much of the cheap wit and the inanities which are rattled off as a substitute for conversation.

Steadiness of Purpose. Go where we will, we find men who commenced life in the most favorable circumstances, but who are such complete financial wrecks that there is little hope of their reformation. They may be honest and temperate, they may even possess the natural ability of a high order; but, lacking in steadiness of purpose, they have not succeeded. Had they had sufficient will-force to stick to one thing, no matter how disagreeable it might have been at first, had they been content to advance slowly, they would have no reason now to talk of the "luck" of those who have pushed forward into the front ranks.

A Temperance Tip. Twenty-five years ago I knew every man, woman and child in Peekskill, N. Y. And it has been a study with me to mark boys who started in every grade of life with myself, to see what became of them. I was up last fall and began to count them over, and it was an instructive exhibit. Some of them became clerks, merchants, manufacturers, lawyers and doctors. It is remarkable that every one of these that drank is dead; not one living of my age. Barring a few who were taken by sickness, every one who proved a wreck and wrecked his family did it from rum and no other cause. Of those who were church goers, frugal and thrifty, every single one of them without an exception owns the house in which he lives and has something laid by, the interest of which, with his house, would carry him through many a day. When a man becomes debased by gambling, rum or drink, all his finer feelings are crowded out, and the poor women at home suffer—suffer for those whom they love better than life.—Chauncey Dewey.

A Work of Duty. Although it may be true that the best service is that which we render joyfully with our hearts, and because we love our work and its object, yet there is a grandeur in the work of a man who does what he dislikes, and what is abhorrent to his nature, from a stern conviction that it is his duty to do it.

It is easy to work when we love our work. We bear days and nights of toil and privation with patience when we are doing what we wish to do. We think of the fulfillment of our desire, and with that end in view our hearts go out toward its accomplishment, and nothing is hard that helps us to bring it about. Or if we are working for one we love, the task may be hard and unpleasant, but we labor joyfully, happy that we are making the comfort of the loved one. But when none of these elements enter into our labor: when the work is ungenial, and the object one with which we do not sympathize; when there is no love anywhere to soften the pain, and no interest to make the time pass quicker; when nothing upholds the spirit but the stern demand of the daily duty, and nothing eases the tired mind but the grim thought that one more day's work is over—what then? Is such service as that worth nothing? May God's pity rest on such a life! Far harder to face cannon, by which one's life may go out quickly, is it to live through such a living death, but when lived uncomplainingly and resignedly as the lot assigned by Divine Providence, it uplifts and ennobs. Even out of its grime comes beauty and out of its drudgery springs heroism.

Opportunity. Opportunity is a favorable occasion, time, or place for doing a thing. The word is an invitation to seek safety and refreshment for the soul, an appeal to flee from danger by taking refuge in high thoughts and worthy deeds, from which flows increase of life and joy. Emerson calls America but another name for opportunity, because in America more than elsewhere it is possible for all men and women to improve not only their conditions but themselves. Life is good, and opportunities of doing and becoming good are always with us. What we call evils—as poverty, neglect and suffering—are in truth opportunities for good. Lowliness is young ambition's ladder. Poverty is the north wind that lashes men into Vikings.

Since life is great—nay, of incalculable and infinite value—no opportunity by which it may be improved can be small. Greater things remain to be done than have yet been done. God

and His universe still wait on each individual soul, offering opportunities. In the midst of the humble and inevitable reality of daily life each one must seek out for himself the way to the higher life. Our strength, our worth, our greatness, will be proportional to the industry and perseverance with which we make right use of the hundred little opportunities which are always occurring, whether for becoming good or for doing good. It is not opportunity that is lacking to any of us—there is a place and means for every man; but we lack the will, we lack faith, hope and desire; we lack watchfulness, meditation, and earnest striving.—Bishop Spalding.

Realizing our Ideals in Life. The great distance between men's present condition and his ideal is often a disturber of his confidence in the worth of making any effort. But there can be no wider difference between any real and any ideal in life than between the tiny acorn and the mighty oak, towering in the forest. The familiarity of the transition from the one to the other may hide from us the beauty and tenderness of Nature, in her revealing of possibilities. The language of progress from one to the other has been but constant growth in perfect harmony with the aim of the acorn. Man's growth in any line toward any ideal is precisely analogued in this; and as it is impossible to tell when the acorn ceases to be acorn and becomes oak, so it is impossible to say when man realizes his ideal and projects that realized ideal before him as new real to be idealized and realized.

Man can not place before himself models too perfect for his copying. The child, in learning to write, copies from the most perfect engraved plates that the ingenuity of man can command. The closer it keeps to that copy, the better will be its work, and, having the general lines well in mind, its individuality will assert itself to modify its interpretation and imitation of the plate.

Man can not place his ideals too high so long as the consciousness of the distance does not weaken his confidence. The mariner guides his ship by his compass, and his compass represents the harmony of obedience to the polar star, toward which it points. The highest ideal of Christianity is Christ, the founder and rock of the religion. Christ is the perfect, the ideal. Every suffering for the right that good may come makes man a miniature Christ; every suffering for love of man and sorrow at his sin is a miniature Gethsemane, and every surrender of evil, standing bravely by what is true and just, no matter what the cost, is but a miniature crucifixion. No ideal can be too high, but man must make his efforts to attain that ideal proportionate to its greatness.

Man must be satisfied to grow slowly—a little day by day, so long as he grows surely. And, as for the end, it matters not, walk steadily in the way of right; follow step by step in obedience, and the end is beyond your placing, your concern. Men like to have a guaranteed policy on living, with the end all clearly elaborated in advance; they have little patience with this living. They may pray for their daily bread, but they would greatly prefer to see it all stored for years to come. They like to have large visions of assured futurity; they want to know all their strength and powers at once, all made solid and certain, as Gibraltar is ever prepared for a seventeen years' siege.

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