

Pastor and People.

PRESENT SERVICE.

A rock-bound lichen long'd to pierce the sky,
Like spear of grass that grew beside its bed,
The grass sigh'd low for petals rosy red,
The rose for wayward wings of butterfly
Which tried to reach the lark's ecstatic cry;
A child sighs long for sword and martial tread,
The earth-chained man for freedom with the dead,
For higher bliss immortal spirits try,
While angels press—to hymn their wisest love—
Where dread archangels throneward bend the knee.
But God said—"Children, duty is the price,
And life of use the gate that leads above,
The lichen's present service done for Me,
Is incense sweet as angel's sacrifice."

Toronto, September 19, 1889.

A. Cox.

FRUITS OF FAMILY WORSHIP

TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO. PROVERBS XXII. 6.

The much-neglected duty of family worship has in it possibilities for good which a simple striking incident may help careless parents to realize, as well as encourage those who are faithful. It is found in connection with the above text in an admirable collection of "Old Testament Anecdotes," which with companion volume on the New Testament has recently been published by Messrs. Armstrong & Son, of New York.

The opening scene is a dark one in every respect. At midnight in one of the inaccessible ravines in the Black Forest a century ago, a strange auction is in progress. The place was lighted by torches, which cast a ghastly glare through the darkness of the Abyss. Savage-looking men, armed to the teeth, were sitting in a circle, while one stood in the midst, holding up articles for sale. It was a gang of brigands who had that evening robbed a stage coach. According to their custom, they were engaged in selling the stolen articles among themselves. After a good many pieces of dress and travelling bags had been disposed of, and while the glass and the bottle were going from hand to hand, and each member of the company vied with his neighbour in making unseemly jokes and setting the Assembly in a roar, a New Testament was held up last of all. The man who acted as auctioneer introduced this 'article' with some blasphemous remarks, which made the cavern resound with laughter. One of the company suggested jokingly that he should read a chapter for their edification. This was unanimously applauded, and the auctioneer, turning up a page at random, began reading in a voice of mock-devotion. While the company were greatly amused at this sacrilegious scoffing, it was not observed that one of them, a middle-aged man, who was one of the eldest members of the gang and used to be foremost in their crimes and in their debauchery, became silent, and clasping his hands on his knees, was absorbed in deep thought. The passage which the auctioneer had read was the same which that man's father had read thirty years ago at family worship on the day when he, to escape the hands of the police, fled from the parental dwelling, never to return again. At the sound of the words which he remembered so well, the happy family circle, of which he had been a member, rose to his fancy. In his imagination he saw them all seated round the breakfast-table which was covered with the blessings of a new day. He saw his venerable old father sitting with the open Bible reading the chapter which was to prepare them for prayer. He saw his tender-hearted mother sitting by his father's side, attentively listening to the Word of God. He saw himself with his brothers and sisters joining in the devotional exercises, which entreated for them the guidance, protection and blessing of God during the day. He saw it all as clearly before his mind as if it had happened that morning. Since leaving home he had never opened a Bible, never offered up a prayer, never heard a single word which reminded him of God and eternity. But now, at this moment, it was as if his soul woke out of a long sleep of thirty years—as if the snow of a long, long winter melted away on a sudden at the sound of that well-known Bible word; and all the words which his good father had spoken to him from his childhood, and all the lessons, admonitions and prayers of his pious mother—which then were scornfully given to the winds, now came flying back to his memory, as the winter crop bursts forth through the snow when the vernal sun unshackles the fields, and causes the hidden life to rise from the long dreary grave. Perfectly absorbed in those hallowed recollections, he forgot all that was round him, heard nothing of all the scoffing, laughing and blaspheming that was passing in his presence, until on a sudden he was waked out of his reverie by a rude tip on the shoulder, which was accompanied by the question: "Now, old dreamer, what will you give for that book? You need it more than any of us, for you are undoubtedly the biggest sinner under the firmament?" "So I am," he answered, struck to the very bottom of his heart by the truth which he recognized in that rough joke. "Give me the book. I will pay its full price." The next day the brigands dispersed through the neighbourhood to turn their bargains into money. The man who bought the Bible went also on his errand, but he directed his steps to no receiving house. He repaired to a lonely place where he spent the whole day in the agonies of unspeakable remorse, and

but for the consoling words which his Bible held out to him, he would certainly have made away with himself. But God had mercy on that repenting sinner, and sent a message of mercy and peace to his heart. The next day on entering a village where he resolved to speak to a minister, he heard that the gang was overtaken the night before by a detachment of soldiers, and taken to prison. His resolution was confirmed now all the more. He told the minister the whole of his life's story, and requested him to direct him to the police office where he gave himself up to the hands of justice. This proof of the sincerity of his repentance saved his life. His comrades were all put to death, but he obtained a reprieve from the Grand Duke, to whom his story was reported. After an imprisonment of some years he was set free on account of his exemplary conduct. A Christian nobleman took him into his service, and he proved a blessing to his master's household till he died in peace, praising Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners, of whom he confessed himself to be the chief.

W. M. R.

MOCK CHARACTERS.

Mock characters, like false light, are worse than darkness. There is any number of skin-deep saints in the world at all times; and sheep's clothing and long robes are always in great demand in the market. Indeed, we all use cosmetics of the moral kind to remove freckles or wrinkles. To meet the respectable, smooth-shaved, decorous, venerable ornaments of society we sometimes see, you would not suspect that any slanders could find birth against men so soft-spoken, so frank and so confidential. But they do. Raven black and dead eyes, and drawn down corners of the mouth, and an unexceptionable tie, don't always stand for godliness. *Cucullus non facit monachum*—"The cowl does not make the friar." That highly respectable board of directors, so hale, loud spoken, well fed, seem, every man of them, fit for prizes at an exhibition of commercial moralities; still they are in trouble about loans, or contracts, or prospectuses. That manufacturer sings loud in his pew on Sundays, but makes thirty-five inches to the yard on Mondays; and that prosperous shopkeeper has strangely dark windows; and does that one believe his own puffs? The millennium has not come yet, and can hardly be hoped for, by appearances, at any very short date. Somehow, the bottles do not show the same strawberries all the way down in all cases; and jockeys sometimes forget to tell a horse's faults; and there have been books written on adulterations and tricks in trade; and men's words or writings are not always the unclouded expression of their thoughts. And yet to meet men, how nearly perfect they seem; in their suavity, innocence and sentiments. There are a good many Siberian crabs, and apples of Sodom, and huge pears that look like honey and eat like wood. We have our panics, and thousand liquidations, and a hundred millions of railway stock unproductive, and bankruptcy court revelations. The crop of knaves and half knaves is by no means extinct. There is a dark side to a good many things beside the moon; and has not the sun its spots, not to speak of eclipses that happen pretty widely throughout the universe?

Be you, young man, a contrast to all this. Character that is only a mask is beneath you, and mere conventional goodness is a lie of the devil. Determine from the first, to be transparent and truthful to God and your fellows, let Mephistopheles say what he likes. It is better, after all, to have the universe on your side than against you. Curses, like chickens, come home to roost; and so do falsities, if not outwardly, yet in your soul. I pray you don't offer a prophet's chamber in your conscience to Satan. Life is sacred; keep it so. We are born for a purpose, and can serve it only as we serve God. Humanity is a whole, not a mere mob of generations, and has a destiny in which every one has a set part. The little moment of our being is great enough to live well in and leave true work behind it. Play the man, not the trickster. Evelyn saw men at Leghorn staking their liberty for life in mad gambling, and, having lost, presently led off into slavery. He who has to do with a lie stakes his soul, and loses in any case. Character, pure and noble, chimes in with the eternal harmonies; but falsehood is a hideous clangour, now and forever. What any life, however humble, can do, is a secret with God; it may widen its influence through ages, or it may leave a trace seen only by him. But if valiantly, earnestly, nobly lived, by the light of God's truth and laws, it is holy forever. The City of God slowly rises through the ages, and every true life is a living stone in some of its palaces. You were made for God, young man, from eternity, and no lie is of him, be it in trade or profession, in act or in work. Insincerities are marks on the devil's tally and so are all hypocrisies and shams. Let your character be real, the shining warp and woof of each day working out the part God has set you in the great loom of Time.—Cunningham Geikie, D.D.

A GOOD ARGUMENT.

In that beautiful part of Germany which borders on the Rhine there is a noble castle, which lifts its old grey towers above the ancient forest, where dwelt a nobleman who had a good and devoted son, his comfort and his pride.

Once, when the son was away from home, a Frenchman called, and, in course of conversation, spoke in such unbecoming terms of the great Father in heaven as to chill the old man's blood.

"Are you not afraid of offending God," said the Baron, "by speaking in this way?"

The foreigner answered, with cool indifference, that he knew nothing about God, for he had never seen Him.

No notice was taken of this observation at the time; but the next morning the Baron pointed out to the visitor a beautiful picture which hung on the wall, and said: "My son drew that!"

"He must be a clever youth," replied the Frenchman blandly.

Later in the day, as the two gentlemen were walking in the garden, the Baron showed his guest many rare plants and flowers, and, on being asked who had the management of the garden, the father said with proud satisfaction: "My son; and he knows every plant, almost, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall."

"Indeed!" observed the other. "I shall soon have a very exalted opinion of him."

The Baron then took his visitor to the village, and showed him a neat building which his son had fitted up for a school, where the children of the poor were daily instructed free of expenso.

"What a happy man you must be," said the Frenchman, "to have such a son!"

"How do you know I have a son?" asked the Baron, with a grave face.

"Why, because I have seen his works, and I am sure he must be both clever and good, or he never could have done all you have shown me."

"But you have never seen him," returned the Baron.

"No; but I already know him very well, because I can form a just estimate of him from his works."

"I am surprised," said the Baron in a quiet tone; "and now oblige me by coming to this window and tell me what you see from thence."

"Why, I see the sun travelling through the sky, and shedding its glories over one of the greatest countries in the world, and I behold a mighty river at my feet, and a vast range of woods and pastures and orchards and vineyards and cattle and sheep feeding in rich fields."

"Do you see anything to be admired in all this?" asked the Baron.

"Can you fancy I am blind?" retorted the Frenchman.

"Well, then, if you are able to judge of my son's good character by seeing his various works, how does it happen that you can form no estimate of God's goodness by witnessing such proofs of his handiwork?"

THE UNFAILING HAND.

A traveller following his guide amid the awful Alpine heights, reached a place where the path was narrowed by a jutting rock on one side and a terrible precipice on the other. The guide, holding on to the rock with one hand, extended his other hand over the precipice for the traveller to step upon and pass round the jutting rock. He hesitated, but the guide said: "That hand never lost a man." He stepped upon the hand and passed on safely.

The child of God who takes the Saviour as His guide in this world of darkness and danger, has the help of an unfailing hand. Who that has ever trusted Him has been disappointed? He stretches out His hand for our help and deliverance. He holds us by His right hand in the midst of danger. And He has said: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." "That hand never lost a man;" blessed are they who can lie safely within its hollow, protected by its almighty grasp.—*Episcopal Recorder*.

HIS FATHERLINESS.

By the mystery of the incarnation our whole being is fringed on every side with fatherliness indescribable; our little lives, which seem sometimes so stricken, so abandoned, so tired, are objects of unfathomable love. It is recently recorded of a little lad in a London hospital, upon whom it was necessary to perform a surgical operation, and to whom it was impossible, owing to heart-weakness, to administer chloroform, that his father said to him: "Do you think you can bear it, my son?" "Yes, father," he replied, "if you will hold my hand." That is a picture-lesson of the position of the believer in the midst of the perplexing trials of life. The operation is inevitable, the anodyne is unattainable, a fine and noble soul can only be made perfect through suffering; but God, in the incarnate, ever-present Jesus, and as a loving, interested friend, holds the hand of the believer with the firm grasp of sympathizing omnipotence.—*Congregational Magazine*.

MURMURING.

No blessing comes to the murmuring, complaining, discontented heart. When once this evil of discontent has entered into the soul, nothing is right. Even the "angels' food" was not good enough for the murmuring Israelites, and "the corn of heaven" could not satisfy those whose souls were filled with the discontent of earth. But when once the heart has found rest in God, and all its murmurings are hushed in sweet submission to his will, there is peace in believing, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and a hallowed confidence in the kind providence of Him who hath done all things well. "Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do unto me."