

Our Home Circle

THE LAST DAY.

Were this the last of earth,
This very day,
How should I think and act?
What should I say?
Would not I guard my heart
With earnest prayer?
Would not I serve my friends
With loving care?
How tender every word
As the hours wane!
"Like this we shall not sit
And talk again!"
How soft the beating heart
That soon must cease!
What glances carry love—
What heavenly peace!
And yet this fleeting life
Is one last day;
How long so'er its hours,
They will not stay.
O heart be soft and true
While thou dost beat;
O hands be swift to do,
O lips, be sweet.

Mrs. M. F. Butts.

THE SKEPTICAL SHOEMAKER.

"I have read," said the shoemaker, "a good deal about the heathen gods, and I believe the account of Christ is taken from some of the heathen writings or other."

"Will you abide by your own decision on two questions that I will put to you?" said the Bible-reader. "If so, I will freely do the same. I will abide by your own answers; by doing so we shall have much time, and arrive quicker at the truth."

"Well, said he, 'out with it, and let us see if I can answer; there are but few things but what I can say something about.'"

"Well, my friend," replied the reader, "my first question is, suppose all men were Christians, according to the account given to us in the Gospels concerning Christ, what would be the state of society?"

He remained silent for some time in deep thought, and then was constrained to say, "Well, if all men were really Christians in practice as well as theory, of course we should be a happy brotherhood indeed."

"I promised you," said the reader, "that I would abide by your answer; will you do the same?"

"Oh, yes," he readily replied; "no man can deny the goodness of the system in practice; but now for the other question; perhaps I shall get on better with that; you have got a chalk this time against me."

"Well my next question is this, Suppose all men were infidels, what then would be the state of London and of the world?" He seemed still more perplexed, and remained a long time silent, the reader doing the same.

At length he said, "You certainly have beaten me, for I never before saw the two effects upon society; I now see that where the Christian builds up, the infidel is pulling down. I thank you; I shall think of what has passed this afternoon."

The sequel was that he was fully persuaded in his own mind to give up all his infidel companions and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. But the change did not stop here. When first the reader called he had to sit on an old, dirty chair, with a number of half-starved children sitting in their rags on the floor around him, neglected and uncared for; now they have removed to a better home in a cleaner street.—Within, all is cheerful and happy. The father, no longer faithless, delights in the company of his wife and children, all of whom are neatly dressed; and his chief happiness is to read and speak to them of the things which belong to their everlasting peace.

"Where the Christian builds, the infidel pulls down." Why is this? The fact cannot be denied. Infidel France wrote, "Death is an eternal sleep," above her cemeteries, and then tore down civilization and quenched the light of humanity in seas of blood.—And French communists in 1871, while arresting ecclesiastics and describing them as "servants of a person called God," dug down the foundations of law, order, peace and truth, and with fire and sword destroyed their fellow men by thousands, and made the streets of Paris red with blood.

The fruits of Christianity are as precious as those of infidelity are vile. Where the precepts of Christ have sway, war is unknown; robbery, dishonesty, intemperance, violence and lust are forbidden; and under their benign influence, property is secure; life is sacred; poverty is provided for; sickness is pitied; infancy is nurtured; old age is revered; womanhood is cherished; and manhood is ennobled. Such are the fruits of true Christianity;—and infidel virtues mostly spring from Christian roots. Skepticism cannot blot out a father's godly counsels or a mother's fervent prayers. And as a result there are often traces of Christian principle where there is no Christian profession; as there are plenty of people who practice infidelity while they profess Christianity. Do not be deceived by names or professions.—Set genuine infidelity and genuine Christianity side by side, watch their fruits, and make your choice.—E.

He veiled the cloak to make her it begins to rain.

"OLD PROBABILITIES."

As "Old Probabilities," Gen. Meyer was well known throughout the country. He was the pioneer in the system of storm signalling, which is now employed nearly all over the world. By means of this system warning of approaching storms is sent by telegraph to the regions that are to be traversed, long before the violence of the storm is felt. There is probably no class who will so deeply regret the death of "Old Probabilities" as those who follow the sea, and it will be hard to find a sailor either in the cabin or the fore-castle, who is not familiar with the square flags, the burgees, and the lanterns of the Signal Bureau. A scene that is frequently enacted down the bay fairly illustrates the respect with which masters of ships regarded "Old Probabilities" danger signals. When the square red flag with a black square in the centre is hoisted over the Signal Bureau ships bound out are run in under the lee of the Horseshoe, and the masters of vessels which have just hauled out into the stream preparatory to departure overhaul their ground tackle and clear away their bower anchors. To such efficiency had Gen. Meyer brought his bureau that last year the probabilities fully verified amounted to seventy per cent.; while those that were verified in part amounted to twenty per cent., and those which failed were only ten per cent. The last Congress gave Gen. Meyer what he had long desired, a full Brigadier General's commission.

The causes which are said to have led to the organization of a weather bureau here are interesting. In November, 1854, while the Anglo-French fleet was operating in the Black Sea against Sebastopol, the tidings flashed across the wires that a mighty tempest had arisen on the western coast of France, and was on its way eastward. The despatch was sent from Paris by the French Minister of War, and it reached the allied fleet in time to enable the ships to put to sea before the cyclone had travelled over the intervening five hundred leagues. In an official report the French minister afterward wrote: "It appears that, by the aid of the electric telegraph and barometric observations, we may be apprised several hours or several days in advance of great atmospheric disturbances happening at the distance of 1,000 or 1,500 leagues."

Less than three years after the famous Black Sea storm there appeared in an American paper a formal proposal for the establishment of a daily weather report by telegraph, and the transmission of storm warnings to the seaports of the American lakes and the seaboard.

Gen. Meyer established a series of signal stations, extending from the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico, and thence northward and eastward, both inland and on the coast, taking in the great lakes and the highest mountain peaks. At each station he placed careful observers whom he had himself selected. These persons were regularly enlisted in the army as sergeants, and the code which he selected for their guidance has proved thus far a bar to carelessness and incompetency.

THE WORKMAN'S DAY.

The Rev. Dr. Alterbury, of New York, recently delivered a sermon in Detroit on the Sunday question, closing with the following truthful observations:

To return to our own country, said Gladstone, "the 16th century is the century for workmen." and of all countries, America is the country for workmen. Of all classes, workmen have the most interest in preserving the Sabbath. Difficult political problems are before us. How are we to assimilate the vast masses that are flocking to our shores? The relation of labour and capital presents its perplexing problem. Take away the Sunday rest and you make it tenfold more difficult. The Sabbath lays her hand of restraint upon capital, and brings relief to the laborer, while by elevating the masses, it affords security to the employer.

And observe that as soon as you make Sunday a mere holiday, a day of amusement, you lose it altogether. This has been the experience of Europe. Destroy the popular reverence for the Sabbath as a holy day of religious rest, and the barriers of law and custom will soon have to give away. And if men work for a pleasure on Sunday, they will soon have to work for a living on that day. To workmen, especially to those who come to us from the old world, let me say, don't girdle the tree which shelters you. You come to this land because our institutions promise you greater prosperity than you could find in your European homes. Respect these institutions. They are what have made us free and happy. Chief among these is our Sabbath. Learn that true liberty is to be found only in "liberty in law." And you, American citizens, guard your Sunday rest with zealous care. Respect it in your own person; respect the equal right of others to its enjoyment, and observe above all, that the true and best benefit of the rest-day is that which cannot be enforced by human law, but which comes from loving obedience to Him who said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

A THOUGHT.

When in the evening at my work I hear my baby cry,
As he does often when he wakes, and finds I am not nigh,
Arising from my seat in haste, my work I put away,
And hastening to the cradle side, my hand on him I lay,
I do not stir or speak to him, my voice he does not hear,
And yet he ceases crying, for he knows that I am near.

So, dearest Lord, in sorrow, when in pain to thee I cry,
Forgetting in my hour of grief that thou art always nigh,
Although thy voice I cannot hear, thy face I cannot see,
O let me feel, my Father, that thy hand is laid on me,
Then will my sorrow end in joy, then will my troubles cease,
For, with the laying of thy hand, will come eternal peace.

Grace V. Abbott.

PUTTING OFF.

A minister determined to preach on the text, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." While in his study thinking, he fell asleep, and dreamed that he was carried into hell and set down in the midst of a conclave of lost spirits. They were assembled to devise the means whereby they might get at the souls of men. One arose, and said: "I will go to the earth and tell men that the Bible is all a fable—that it is not divinely appointed of God." "No, that will not do," another said; "let me go. I will tell men that there is no God, no Saviour, no heaven, no hell;" and at the last words a fiendish smile lighted up all their countenances. "No, that would not do; we cannot make men believe that." Suddenly one arose, and with a wise mien, like the serpent of old, suggested, "No, I will journey to the world of men, and tell them that there is a God, that there is a heaven—yes, and a hell too—but I'll tell them there is no hurry; to-morrow will do, it will be 'even as to-day,'" and they sent him.

SHAKING HANDS.

Let us consider the value of our digital arrangements with reference to the venerable custom of "shaking hands." The classification is numerically significant of the varieties in the act itself. First, there is the one-finger variety, significant of extreme condescension and high-mightiness. When an exalted individual permits you his forefinger, he distinctly says, semaphorically, that you must not presume on the slightest familiarity. You are in the presence of Augustus, and the delicate little ceremony is intended to impress you with the important fact. Then there is the two-finger variety. This is condescension also, but of a milder type. It is leavened with a touch of kindness. Still you must not presume. This variety is much affected by ag-d parsons and other venerable by-gones to their parishioners and dependants, old uncles to their nephews and nieces, and so on. The three-fingered sort adds another increment of favour, condescension having almost vanished but not quite. Much, however, depends on the vitality of the touch. If alive and conscious, it may be almost friendly. If flabby, do not trust to it. Talking of flabby hand-shaking seems slightly contradictory, for no possible shake, not to say shock, can come out of such a salute. In its perfection the flabby sort consists of all four fingers laid flatly together, and held forth with about the same amount of significance as the paw of a rabbit or the fin of a sea-dog. The correct way of meeting this variety is by accepting it in precisely the same style. Two flat four-fingered fins thus meeting each other must be thrilling in the extreme. But when the flat sort is moreover clammy, it is the very abyss of cold-blooded formality absolutely insulting, not to say sickening, in its very touch.—Social Notes.

EDUCATION OF GIRLS.

Nothing is more painful, to one who knows what mothers may do for their children, or wives for their husbands, than to see the idleness of young women who are not compelled to work for a living, and to find how empty headed they are. This may seem a small matter in itself, but the moment a woman is married she has to learn how to be interesting in her home to her husband, and, as soon as she is a mother the training of her children is the foremost duty of the hour. In these two spheres of life which are essentially the goal of woman's existence everything depends upon what the wife and mother brings to her several positions, everything for her own, her husband's and her children's happiness. Women are perpetually losing their husbands—because they rely upon evanescent personal charms to uphold affection, but the surest way to provide against the decay of the early enthusiasm of married life is to cultivate those mental and moral qualities which make women always charming and attractive.

Nothing is surer to do this, aside from personal manners, than the improvement of one's mind, the growth of literary tastes, the interest in what imports new and wholesome attractions

into one's home. It may be the microscope, or French or German translation, or botany, or English literature, or history or music, but, whatever it is, the stimulus of knowing something thoroughly is worth immensely more than the knowledge itself, because it gives one the power to know more and enjoy more. These studies even in themselves, are refining, but, pursued in the genial atmosphere of home, they are more than simply refining; they are agencies by which the spirit of the home is chastened, made moral, even made religious. Religion in one's home is best when it is least insisted upon, when its life is the unconscious poetry of the household, when it seems to be the natural culmination of the amenities of life; and religion and culture go together in the well-ordered life of every woman. But it is when the wife becomes a mother, when the religion and culture find a congenial sphere for development within the sanctities of home, when among children and among friends and among neighbors the tone is always uplifting and inspiring, that literary culture and the genial development of a woman's mind and heart seem to make life sweetest and best. Fortunate is the boy or the girl who has such a home. It is from such quarters, be they the log-cabin or the house with brown stone front, that men and women go forth with the idea that conquers the world. Every leading person has had a start somewhere, and usually it is traced to one of these mothers whose native or acquired culture has been imparted to her bright children. Here is the true importance of literature at home. It pays for itself hundreds of times over in its influence upon parents, and in the early direction it gives to their children.

A GREAT CHANGE.

At a revival meeting in Montreal not long since, a rumeller related his experience. He said: "I was a wholesale and retail liquor seller. I scoffed at revivals, hated evangelists, but out of curiosity attended the meeting in St. James Street Church, where the Spirit of God brought home the truth to me. I then realized my lost condition, and after a struggle of a few days I accepted Christ. I then rolled my barrels of whiskey, gin, and rum into the streets and knocked the heads in." Next night his friends were with him, holding a prayer-meeting until one o'clock in the morning in the very room where for years gambling and carousing had often aroused the attention of the police. The singing attracted the attention of these city officials, and they came up the stairs and bolted into the room, expecting to arrest a lot of drunken gamblers; but to their surprise they found a few Christians singing praises to Him who had redeemed them with His own blood. That man is now leading a Christian life.

Our Young Folks

HIDING SIN.

Mother was very rigid in her views in regard to the observance of the Sabbath. The older I get the nearer I think she was right about it. She thought God's "Sunday law" was a specific enactment made once for every age, race, and nation of the world. Being a widow she was the head of her family, and considered herself responsible for the due observance of the day on her premises, even by the stranger that chanced to be within her gates. Her children knew the commandment, every word of it, and knew how mother applied it to all the duties of life. Nothing in the way of work or pleasure was done on Sunday that could possibly be done any other day in the week. It was absolutely a day of rest in her house, and as far as in her lay it was an holy day to the Lord.

One Sunday afternoon, when I was about twelve years old, I walked out for a stroll in the woods. It was in the month of June; the trees were in their glory of green, and every feathered songster was as merry as laughter itself. I had not gone far before I fell in with two neighbor-boys, both just about my age. Mother did not think they were good boys, particularly in reference to the observance of the Sabbath. We strolled along together, chatting by the way, just as boys are wont to do. Pretty soon we came to the creek, and unfortunately struck it just at the "big hole" where the boys of the neighborhood were in the habit of going in bathing. Instantly my two comrades said:

"Let's go in bathing."

I entered my solemn protest. It was Sunday, and mother did not allow that. They plied me with arguments and entreaties, but I did not yield to them. Something inside of me said, "You had better go home." Something else said "Stay." They began to ridicule me and laugh at me. Ridicule is a terrible weapon, and there are few boys who can stand before a laugh. There were symptoms of a fearful collapse in my moral principles. I felt it coming on, and ought to have run, but thought I could stand. The boys called me a "Pharisee." That did not hurt

much, for I did not know what a Pharisee was. They then called me a "Methodist" with a sneer. I was a Methodist, and I was proud of it, but I did not like the sneer in connection with that name. It riled me a little. The boys then said, "You are a coward, tied to your mother's apron-string." I did not mind the "apron-string" part of this taunt, but that word "coward" stung me in my soul. There is something in the word repulsive to human sensibility. I did not see then as I see now, how real cowardly it was to sacrifice my principles and my conscience in order to maintain my reputation for courage with a couple of notoriously bad boys, who would despise me afterward for the sacrifice of my moral boyhood on so slight a provocation. So, to show the boys that I was not a coward, I pulled off my clothes and waded into the stream. The boys could swim, I could not. They wanted to teach me how, but I declined their help. The fact is, I was doing wrong and I knew it, and I was afraid they would let me drown, and I did not want to go before God that Sunday afternoon conscious of guilt as I was. I mounted a log lying in the edge of the stream and was floating about in the water on it, and had begun to enjoy the sport, when lo! a water-moccasin, about three feet long, popped up on the end of the log and began to lick out his tongue at me. The thought came, where from or how I did not know then, that God had sent that snake to bite me and kill me for my sin. I rolled off the log into water ten feet deep, and would have drowned but for the assistance of my associates. When I got to the bank I put on my clothes and struck a "bee-line" for home, determined to confess my sin to mother as soon as I got into the house. It was a mile and a quarter home, and before I got half way something began to whisper, "I wouldn't tell my mother—it will grieve her unnecessarily—you had better keep this to yourself—the boys promised not to tell on you." But my hair was wet and mother would see that. A lie or two was suggested by which I could deceive mother and hide my sin. It is strange how one sin calls for another, and that for still another, until in our efforts to hide our sin we are covered all over with sins. I stopped a hundred yards from the house, sat down in the sunshine, pulled off my hat, and began to dry my hair. I used my fingers instead of a comb. After all I thought my hair would betray me. After I got home I kept on my hat until mother made me pull it off, and then my heart jumped into my throat and almost choked me. I don't think mother ever gazed at me so intently before in her life. It seemed to me then that she looked down into the bottom of my soul. That ugly bump on my conscience seemed awfully big and black just then. Night came, but I had no heart to pray, as was my custom. The effort to pray seemed profane. The words choked me. I could not sleep. I could not rest, could not even lie still, but tossed and rolled from side to side. I asked God to forgive me again and again, but every time I did so, something said, "Confess this sin to your mother." I would have done, and did do, every thing but this for peace, but no peace came. I knew where the difficulty was—God had showed it to me, but I would not yield. I wanted God to help me hide my sin from mother; but God wanted me to confess it to her. I desired darkness, but God loved light. This guilty fight continued one week—and what a week it was! I was intensely miserable, but tried to be uncommonly cheerful. The shame of the thing made me despise myself. O the duplicity of the depraved human heart, even in small children! "Who can know it?" I tried to sing, but they were all sad songs. The joyous, merry, rapturous songs found no voice in my soul. There is hardly a better index to the state of the soul than the songs that people sing. Mother seemed to be sad all the week, too. There was not that tenderness, gentleness and sweetness in her tone and manner that was generally there, or I thought so. "The eyes are" said to be "the windows of the soul." If this be true, then to a guilty soul all things may look guilty, while to a soul at peace with God all things may seem to smile.

The next Sunday before I started to class-meeting I took mother into a side-room and made a clean breast of the whole matter. O how sad she looked while I was telling her about my sin. The tears rained down on my head as I knelt at her knee and laid my soul open, and every tear seemed to drop scalding hot upon my heart. When I got through with my confession I said, "Mother, will you forgive me?" She said not a word, but that smile told the story, and she folded me to her heart. It was enough, mother and God forgave me at the same instant, and our three hearts seemed to beat in unison. A boy who has sinned against his mother and gotten forgiveness knows something of the raptures of a new-born soul. One sin destroys peace and separates between hearts that otherwise would be one. Unbosom yourself if you want to be happy. Do not hide sin in thine heart. God bless the boys.—Nashville Advocate.

SUNDAY LESSON

JACOB AT TIME—B. 77 (or 57) ac Dr. Kennis PLACE—miles north named Bet cause of the

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