

## The Two Rests.

BY REV. ALEXANDER McLAREN, D.D.

"Soul . . . take thine ease," Luke 12:19.  
 "I will give you rest . . . ye shall find rest unto  
 your souls," Matt. 11:28, 29.

The first of these clauses is what the rich fool said to his soul; the second and third are what Jesus said to the laboring and heavy laden—that is, to all the world. Now, I do not like taking snippets of the Bible for my texts, but I have done so now, for the sake of bringing out the remarkable verbal connection between these three sayings. The word rendered in the first of them, "Take thine ease," is the same as is employed by Christ in the second, which is there translated, "I will give rest." Of course, the third of them contains again the same expression "rest." We should see the connection more clearly. If we read "Soul . . . take thy rest," or, "rest thyself!" and then we should understand that, by bringing them together, we set face to face the two ways of attaining repose—the rich fool's which is the current way of the world, and Christ's, which is the only way that reaches the goal.

There is a further remark to be made. Our Lord's repetition of the promise of rest, in the second and third of our clauses, is profoundly significant. He distinguishes two acts of ours, "coming" to him, and "taking his yoke upon us." They are connected, but they are not the same. He also distinguishes two kinds of rest, consequent respectively upon these two acts; and they are not the same, as is hinted by the variation in the form of the promise which, in the one case, is "I will give," and in the other, "ye shall find." It would appear as if there were a distinction intended, the nature of which may appear presently, but in the meantime I simply draw attention to the fact of the separation here in our Lord's words, which leads us up to the consideration that in these three fragments we have three points brought before us; the vain search after rest; the rest of coming to Christ; and the rest of taking Christ's yoke. Now, let us look at these three things successively.

## WE HAVE THE VAIN SEARCH AFTER REST.

Our Lord takes as a specimen a man who had been successful in the prevailing industry of his times. He picks out a prosperous agriculturist, for that was the chief industry of Palestine in his day. Perhaps, if he had been in Manchester, his specimen would have been rather different. Can you not fancy him saying, "There was a certain prosperous Lancashire manufacturer, or merchant, who had made a fortune in his business, and he said to himself, 'What shall I do now? I will draw my capital out of my concern, and I will invest it in sound securities. I will build myself a pleasant house in some country place; and there, for the rest of my days, I will enjoy competence and leisure.'"

That is perfectly right. I suppose that all of us hard working people know the attraction of the prospect of a little leisure before we go home. This man was not called by God a "fool" because he planned to get some leisure, and to enjoy the fruits of his toil; before he went out of the world, but for far deeper reasons. Let us see what these reasons were that convicted him of a vain search and of the folly of it.

First, he looked in the wrong place for rest. What a preposterous contradiction in terms his words are! "Soul . . . take thy rest." How? "Eat, drink and be merry." If he had said, "Body, or stomach, take thy rest; eat and drink," it would have been all right. But he coupled together the grossest forms of physical satisfaction and the ethereal self, as if there were any kind of connection between a full meal and a restful spirit. He forgot the heterogeneity between all material things and the immaterial spirit. He forgot that the food of the soul is love, beauty, truth, goodness; and he tried to put it off, and satisfy it with vitals and drink. And so he was a fool.

That is the grossest form of his mistake. There are higher forms, more refined and exquisite, and less amenable to the charge of misunderstanding altogether what a man wants; but as I shall have to show you presently, all these, if they are not directed towards God, come under the same category of mistaking the wants of the spirit, and seeking to satisfy it with the husks out of the swine's trough. Yet that is the sort of thing that hundreds of us recognize as the real, solid substantial good of life, and that we are toiling all our days to try and secure for ourselves, forgetting altogether what is the true food of the spirit.

Brother, to seek rest of soul in anything external and material is, if I might so say, the same kind of mistake as to try to feed a butterfly on roast beef, the same kind of mistake as to fancy that you will make the electric light, in its little globe, burn the brighter if you drench it with heavy, rancid oil. The appetite that needs to be satisfied before a soul is at rest is something nobler, diviner than can ever be stilled by any accumulation of external things. And so this man that said, "Soul . . . rest . . . eat and drink," was a double-dyed fool.

Again, he sought in the wrong way, because he sought only for enjoyment. Look at the absolute, self-enclosed character that comes out in his words: "My fruits, my goods, thou has goods laid up for many years." He

thought only about himself. And is there any rest of soul in a self-centered nature? No! If a man makes himself his aim he draws down upon himself, infallibly, all manner of unrests and disturbances and tumults. He gives the rein to whims and fancies and appetites; and these will tear him apart. The only way to find rest for the soul is for the soul to go out of itself, and cease to make itself its great object and aim. Hence the blessedness of all enthusiasms; hence the blessedness of the self-oblivious, self-immolating life that has no regard for personal pleasure, but only for duty and nobleness and truth. Rest of soul comes when we forget ourselves, and this man was swallowed up in himself. As some one says in a quaint way, "Like a hedgehog rolled up the wrong way, he tormented himself with his prickles." Whosoever will not serve God willingly has to serve himself, who is his worst tyrant and taskmaster.

Closely connected with that was the other mistake, that he sought for rest in pure indulgence. Idleness is not repose; it is tedium and discomfort, as many a man that gives up his life's work near the end of it, and goes into retirement, has found out. It is a commonplace that the people that leave their business in Manchester, and go away into the country, do not like it when they get there, and would fain be back on the exchange, and at their occupations. A man will never rest unless he is at work. And so to say, "Soul . . . rest thyself. Eat and drink," is a gross error.

Further, this man went wrong in his search for rest because he ignored altogether the frail tenure by which he held his goods. What a grim contrast that is between "goods laid up for many years" and "this night thy soul shall be required of thee!" There is no rest in learning of things that the touch of death's bony finger can burst like a bubble. There is no rest in mooring ourselves to what looks like solid land, and turns out in the morning to be a floating island that can be submerged when the water rises a little. But that is what many of us are doing—seeking for repose in that which is itself as restless as the cloud-wrack driven before the wind. "Whether there be tongues they shall fall; whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away." The grosser and the more refined and intellectual objects on which men rest, or would fain rest, alike will pass and perish. Like someone who in the night has thought himself to be surrounded by an impregnable fortress, and when morning comes finds that what he took for solid granite was fleeting vapor, and that he stands bare and undefended in the open, so all they who seek for rest beneath the stars will find at the last that the grim word "Thou fool!" is the only one that describes them.

## THE REST OF COMING TO CHRIST.

Our Lord himself has explained what he means by that merciful invitation "Come unto me, all ye that labor," when, in another place, he says, in two entirely parallel clauses, "He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." So, to come to Christ is, in plain English, to set our confidence, or our trust—or, to use a theological word, our faith, upon him. And, says Christ, "whosoever thou comest, I—I will give him rest."

Coming to Christ, we enter on the rest of faith. The very act of trust brings tranquility, even when the person or thing trusted in is human and creaturely, and therefore uncertain. For to roll the responsibility for myself, as it were, upon another, brings repose, and they who lean upon that strong arm do not need to fear though their own arm be very weak. The rest of faith, when we cease from having to take care of ourselves, when we can cast all the gnawing cares and anxieties that perturb us upon him, when we can say "Thou dost undertake for me, and I leave myself in thy hands," is tranquility deeper and more real than any other that the heart of man can conceive. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." Cast yourself upon Christ, and live in that atmosphere of calm confidence; and though the surface may be tossed by many a storm, the depths will be motionless and quiet, and there will be "peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation."

Coming to Christ we enter into the rest of possessing God. In him we are "heirs of God, being joint heirs with Christ." So great is the smallest man that nothing less or other than God will satisfy him. His clamant desires will never be stilled, his perturbed spirit never be at rest, until it "rests in the Lord, waiting patiently for him." Everything else is less than adequate to meet our needs. God by himself, and God only, is enough for us. He that cometh to Christ cometh to the Father.

Coming to Christ we enter into the rest of forgiveness and of conquered sin. That is the true disturbance of men's souls, far deeper than any agitation or perturbation that may come from external circumstances. It is our unlawful desires that shake us; it is our unlawful acts that disturb us, stirring conscience, which will speak or which will be ominously silent, and in either case, will disturb our true repose. As our great dramatist has it, "Macbeth has murdered sleep." There is no rest for the man whose conscience is stinging him, as, more or less, all consciences do that are not reconciled and quieted by Christ's great sacrifice. There is no rest for

such an one. He is like the troubled sea "that can not rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;" whilst they who come to Jesus are like some little tarn amongst the hills, surrounded by sheltering heights, that "hears not the loud winds when they call," and has no more movement than is enough to prevent stagnation, and its little ripples kiss the pure silver sand on the beach; and in their very motion there is rest.

## THE REST OF TAKING CHRIST'S YOKE.

That, as I said, is distinguished from the coming to him, and in the certain consequence of it, in all cases where the coming is real. By taking his yoke upon us is simply meant, I suppose, practical obedience. And the variation to which I have already referred in the form of the two promises indicates that this second kind of rest is what we may call the natural consequences of the conduct required. "Take my yoke upon you," and the outcome of that will be that ye shall find rest unto your souls.

By taking Christ's yoke upon us we enter on the rest of obedience. One of the main things that disturbs our hearts and shakes our lives is self-will—the ancient tyrant and despot that rules over men to their destruction. And whoever has denuded himself of that, and can say, "Not my will but thine, be done; I will take my orders from thee, not from this tyrannous self that is enthroned on thy throne in my heart," that man has found the secret of repose. The abnegation of self is the attainment of tranquility. Ask Christ Jesus to come up into the chariot, and take the reins into his hands, and your journey will be prosperous. "Try to guide it by yourself, and you will repeat the old legend of the ambitious youth that attempted to guide the coursers of the sun, and set everything on fire. Abandon self, enthrone Christ and you will have rest."

Again, in such taking of Christ's yoke upon us, we enter on the rest of Christ-likeness. The special virtues to which he refers are the two, "meek and lowly in heart;" and these are largely the secret of a reposeful heart. The man that carries his head high knocks it against a great many lintels which he who stoops escapes. The lightning strikes the oak, not the grass. If you should wish to be restless and irritated and irritable all your days, and to provide yourself with something that will always keep you uncomfortable, assert yourself, and be on the look-out for slights, and think yourself better than people estimate you, and be the opposite of meek and humble, and you will get trouble enough.

And if, on the other hand, in these particulars, and in others that I cannot now dwell upon, we shape ourselves after Christ's example, we shall know the rest of soul which he promised. He was the Prince of Peace. His manhood was unperturbed, because it was unstained and in unbroken fellowship with God. And if we come to him, and take his yoke upon us, he will lead us unto the same sanctuary where he dwells, and where there shall be no sound to disturb the tranquil repose. "We which have believed do enter into rest." Otherwise, our lives may be animated, brilliant, successful, but there will always be away in the background, like some caged tiger pacing up and down its den day and night, the sense of unrest, and it will never be effectually silenced until it is satisfied by coming to Christ, and taking his yoke upon us. Then we shall enter into repose in the measure of our faith and obedience. That repose will no more be broken by work than the royal rest of Christ himself; and it will be perfected when he welcomes us to the land where "beyond these voices there is peace," and where his servants "rest from their labors, and their works do follow them." May we all now enter into the rest of faith, and at last be lapped in the rest of heaven. —Christian Commonwealth.

## The Martyr's Monument.

BY REV. J. L. SCOTT, D. D.

One of the most interesting towns in all Scotland is that of Mauchline. It is a quaint little hamlet, with an accredited history of twelve hundred years. Villages are the windows through which one looks into the country. They are an abridged edition of the nation's life. Mauchline is Scotland in miniature. Like villages, it combines the past and the present. Here one sees the straw-thatched cottage unchanged from what it was a century ago, and here, too, is the fashionable residence of yesterday. I knew the village from its association with the poet Burns. Mauchline was the cradle of his genius. There his muse was born. A Scotch mile or two brings one to Mossgiel, famous in history and song. The little cabin has grown into a large house, but the farm remains much as it was. Here is the traditional field of the mouse and the daisy, and here, too, is the most magnificent scenery on which the eye of a poet ever rested. The old kirk stands in the centre of the village, surrounded by the graves of the dead. The present church was built but seventy years ago. The one it displaced, however, stood upon the same site six centuries and a half. This was the scene of the Holy Friar, one of the bitterest satires ever written.

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