

Devotional Service.

By Rev. T. J. PARK, M.A.

OCTOBER 19.—"SELF-MASTERY."

1 Cor. 9: 27; Gal. 5: 16-26.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Oct. 13. "Be ye therefore sober" . . . 1 Pet. 4: 1-7
Tues., Oct. 14. Provision for the mind . . . Rom. 13: 11-14
Wed., Oct. 15. "The great invitation" . . . Eph. 3: 15-21
Thurs., Oct. 16. "At the last" . . . Prov. 23: 29-35
Fri., Oct. 17. Drunkenness and rage . . . Prov. 23: 15-21
Sat., Oct. 18. Recovered as stubble . . . Nah. 1: 2-10

Instead of a connected exposition of this week's topic, the writer intends to give selected thoughts from various sources.

ATHLETICS AND RELIGION.

The Isthmian games were one of the most ancient glories of Greece. They were celebrated every second year, and were the greatest of national gatherings. Scarcely any greater distinction could be earned by a Greek citizen than a victory in these games. The prize was a garland of Grecian pine, but the victor was welcomed to his native city with all the honors of a victorious general. The walls of his native town were thrown down that he might pass in as a conqueror, and his statue was set up by his fellow-citizens.

The discipline of the athletes for these games lasted ten months preceding the contest. It is thus described: "Thou must be orderly; living on spare food; abstain from confections; make a point of exercising at the appointed time in heat and in cold; nor drink cold water or wine at hazard; in a word, give thyself up to thy training master as to a physician, and then enter on the contest."

All this severe training and discipline was practised for chance, not for a certainty. Even if the prize was won, it secured the recipient only a transitory fame, a withering crown, a short-lived honor. But for every man it is possible to win an incorruptible crown, that which shall always be to him a joy as thrilling and a distinction as honorable as at the moment he receives it. This is worthy of the determined and sustained effort of a lifetime.

FROM MANY MINDS.

We master self by the power of the renewed soul. The forces and passions of body and mind can only be controlled by the spirit of man renewed after the image of him that created him. "Dead in trespasses and in sins," self-mastery is impossible. "Alive into righteousness" is the commencement of self-control.

"We rise by the things that are under our feet.

By what we have mastered of good or gain, By the pride deposited and the passion slain, And the vanquished ills that we hourly meet."

"The first and best of victories," says Plato, "is for a man to conquer himself; to be conquered by himself is, of all things, the most shameful and vile."

"Self-control is at the root of all the virtues. Let a man yield to his impulses and passions and from that moment he gives up his moral freedom."

"Teach self-denial, and make its practice pleasurable," says Sir Walter Scott, "and you create for the world a destiny more sublime than ever issued from the brain of the wildest dreamer."

"Here lies a soldier whom all must applaud, Who fought many battles at home and abroad; But the hottest engagement he ever was in.

Was the conquest of self in the battle of sin."

Are our eyes set on the "incorruptible crown," or are we like the man with the muck-rake in Bunyan's immortal page, grubbing in the dust and dirt, so that like him we can look no way but downward? Do we believe that goodness, the building up of a true Christlike character, and all of present and future blessedness which that carries along with it, are the supreme things for which, if need be, a man should sacrifice all else that he has? If so, let us act as if we did believe it.

If the true end of life is to be attained, it must be kept before us by a distinct effort of the mind. "I so run," said Paul, "as not uncertainly," as if he had said, "Here am I and there is the goal," and I take the straightest, and therefore the shortest, path to it." He knew for what he was living, and he lived for it. Without the clear purposed goal, life will likely end in failure. It is not enough for a man to resolve vaguely that he will try to do what is right. He must nail up his decision never to be torn down. "I will make money if I can; I will get the learning if I can; but whatever else I do, or do not do, I will at least in all things obey Christ and do the will of God." Life is a sea wherein a thousand cross-currents run, and if you do not fix a strong hand on the helm, and a steady eye on the pole-star, your little craft will go to pieces on the rocks.

It is not enough to keep the goal in view. To reach it there must be effort intense and prolonged, up to the very edge of our powers of endurance. Go to the racer and learn of him; watch him who obtains the prize, and so run that ye may attain. Is not that the gospel of common sense? If it is worth while to take pains to win a race, is it not worth the same effort, and more, to work out our own salvation?

Ask any master of his craft the secret of his success—a Stevenson, a Paderewski, a Ruskin—and they will give you one answer: they have had to toil to reach the ecstasies and delights and exultations of their work. And yet in religion we quit as if sleeping would accomplish us as much as toiling. Not so. Like the racer that receives the prize, we must run if we would attain. We must "exercise ourselves unto godliness"—we must be gymnasts with a view to holiness. We must "strive" if we would enter in at the straight gate. It is the law of the Lord of the contest, and no man is crowned "except he have contended lawfully."

TO GOAD THE CONSCIENCE.

There will be drunkenness so long as there is the drunken spirit. Conquer that, and you will have conquered the saloon.

Intemperance is any excessive use of anything—whether it be books, or dress, or play, or work, or ambition, or wine. Any of strong drink as a beverage is an intemperate use, just as any use of strychnine as a beverage would be intemperate.

If you are intemperate in anything, be it good, you are training yourself to be intemperate in anything, however evil.

If we walk by the Spirit, we shall fly by the Spirit. Religion in the common affairs will introduce religion into the uncommon.

Constant companionship with Jesus is the only safeguard against the subtle temptations of intemperance.

Walk with the Spirit and you will come to walk by the Spirit. Comradeship is power.

Intemperance, which is a yielding to one's lower nature, is only to be met by the exaltation of one's higher nature.

If you note in yourself a tendency to miserliness, give away your money with freedom till it becomes easy to give.

If you tend toward gluttony, eat for

a time even less than you need, that you may learn self-control.

If you recognize a danger of spending too much time and thought on play, devote yourself solely to work until you can trust yourself to play wisely.

There is nothing which tempts you to intemperance which is not better for you to abandon entirely until you can use it without falling into intemperance.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

This is a temperance meeting. Centre attention upon the thought that absence of self-mastery in any respect is intemperance. The reading of great biographies, activity in unselfish labors, constant meditation upon the Scriptures, and instant prayer, are all means of self-mastery. Make this service informal, and call on each member to suggest one way of winning in our warfare against weakness. Make good use of the striking thoughts selected in the above exposition. Clip them out and pass them among the members to be read.

OCTOBER 26.—"TREATING A GRA-CIOUS INVITATION LIGHTLY."

Matt. 22: 1-10.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Oct. 23. Another feast . . . Luke 14: 16-24
Tues., Oct. 24. The feast in heaven . . . Rev. 19: 1-6
Wed., Oct. 25. The great invitation . . . Rev. 22: 13-17
Thurs., Oct. 26. Wisdom's invitation . . . Prov. 9: 1-6
Fri., Oct. 27. Christ's invitation . . . Matt. 11: 28-30
Sat., Oct. 28. The invitation accepted . . . Ps. 65: 1-4

TRUE RELIGION.

The parable lays special stress on the marriage, and the feast is incidental to the marriage union. The wedding festivities in the East, unlike our own, are often protracted for several days, sometimes for an entire week, and even longer, conveying the idea not of momentary, but of continuous, joy—emblematic surely of the joy of the Lord.

1. The Marriage illustrates the union between Christ and his people. It is the highest ideal of love and friendship. It expresses intimate fellowship with God, the mutual delight in one another, protecting care on the one hand and perfect trust on the other, unity of purpose, character, hope, and the abiding for ever in one perfect home. All this, beautiful as it is, belongs to the union of Christ with his followers. You will find Bible proof for it in the following passages: Isa. 61: 10; 62: 5; Hos. 2: 19; Matt. 9: 15; John 3: 29; Eph. 5: 31, 32.

2. The Feast.—The feast which celebrates the marriage expresses the abundance, the joyousness, the variety, "the feast of reason and flow of soul," found in the religious life. What a false idea many have of Christian experience! It is prosy, solemn, depressing—lacking life, exhilaration, and enjoyment, they say. That is because it is looked at from the outside, and not as experienced. Exquisite cathedral windows looked at from without have no beauty, but looked at from within, are entrancing works of art in form, color, and conception. So with religious life—it must be seen from the inside, not as experienced before its charms can be appreciated. That life is not all "grinding at the mill," not all a time of toil and sacrifice, but also of spiritual refreshments, of joys unspeakable, of abiding satisfaction, of peace deeper and of exhilaration higher than any other life possible to man.

THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE BRIDE.

Jesus Christ represents the bridegroom. He loves the bride, his Church. His spouse, her, makes her his own, he is constantly with her, and takes her to his home to abide in unspeakable love and joy forever. He is the soul's ideal, and never disappoints. He has, in the highest