

The Unstable Reubens.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

The eldest son of the patriarch Jacob has a prodigiously large family of descendants. "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel," was the verdict passed by the dying father upon the son who with all his good impulses was fatally lacking in moral stamina. Water is proverbially unstable—tipping to and fro with every motion of the vessel that contains it; but Jacob refers here to boiling water which foams up and effervesces from the heat, and is therefore a fit illustration of all lack of self-restraint and fixity of purpose. There was no hope for poor Reuben unless he had a radical change of heart, for the want of steadfastness, both mental and moral, is fatal to all success in life.

No pathway to excellence of any kind is an easy one. There are hills of difficulty to be climbed and boulders to be shoved out of the way, and temptations to turn to the right or left out of "air-line." The number of young men often possessed of good parts—who are wrecked through sheer instability—passes all computation. They are always starting and never finishing; they are every thing by turns and nothing long. They have never learned Lincoln's secret of "pegging away." Oh, how much of human effort is utterly wasted; how many precious lives have ended in failure from this single vice of instability! How many bright intellects have been cursed by it into utter barrenness! How many good projects it has brought to naught, and what a vast amount of time, talent, energy, and precious opportunity have been trifled away only to end in mortification and disgrace! When the old, godly minded father of Burns was on his dying bed, he turned to his children and said, "There is one of you that I feel greatly troubled about." "Do you mean me, father?" enquired the brilliant young Reuben whose heart was a boiling pot of unrestrained passions. "Yes, Robbie, I mean you," sadly replied the dying man. It has been too common to speak of Scotland's gifted genius as if he were only the victim of adverse circumstances, whereas his whole life was a conflict between the voice of conscience and the claims of wayward passions that nearly always carried the day. Burns had no moral stamina. The tragic story of his sad life—if it were fully and honestly written, with all his own bitter confessions—would be one of the most painful, and yet profitable narratives to be put into the hands of every young man in the land.

Instability is often regarded as an unfortunate mental weakness—a mere foible or constitutional infirmity. But it is really a vice. It is often the besetting sin that makes utter wreck of all hope of excellence, and is fatal to character. When I see a young man setting out in life with no fixed habits, no steadfastness of purpose, drifting from one place to another, chasing after novelties and ready to throw away everything that he has gained in pursuit of the next near phantom, I fear that there is at bottom a moral unsoundness that will end in ruin. If instability be a "constitutional weakness," then it must be resisted as much as a naturally violent temper or an hereditary appetite for strong drink, or an inborn lust of libidinousness. Whatever destroys all hope of honorable usefulness is more than a fault or a misfortune; it is a sin to be prayed against and fought against without compromise or cessation. Conquer it or you are lost!

Are there no Reubens in the church? I do not refer to such flagrant cases of moral instability as send some professors of religion into drunkenness and others into knavery and others into disgraceful lecheries. Brother A—is no such reprobate as that; but his piety is quite too periodical and spasmodic; one day he is up to boiling point, and another day he is down to freezing. During the "week of prayer," or when an evangelist comes along to hold special meetings he sings more loudly and prays more fervently than any of the brethren; but when the tides ebb, he goes out with the tide. Brother B—is very fertile in the suggestions of new schemes of benevolence, and while the novelty lasts, he works fiercely. The next new device pushes aside the old one, and Brother B's transient enthusiasm soon dries away. This type of church members are like the brooks swelled by midsummer showers. "What time they wax warm they vanish; when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place." It is this sort of fitful, spasmodic religion that often makes church contributions such an uncertain quantity. Instead of being the steady stream fed by systematic benevolence, they are dependent on the spasmodic influence of an eloquent sermon or a church bazaar. Some church members are only flourishing during the heavy rains of a revival season. The rest of the year they are brown and barren. If pastors get sick of such periodical professors, how weary the Master must be with them! But the joy of every pastor is that evergreen Christian, who, when the community is as dry spiritually as summer dust, keeps his heart fresh and his prayers fervent and his purse open and his daily life as beautiful as an orange tree in full bearing.

Sometimes there are symptoms of this vice of Reubenness (if we may coin such a word) in the pulpit. It shows itself both in running after new devices and running after new places. In nothing does patient, persevering, persistent work tell more effectively than in the work of the ministry. No tree can bear fruit that is pulled up so often that it

never fairly takes root. The epitaph that has been inscribed over the fitful labors and frequent failures of more than one minister who ought to have been equal to better things, is, "Unstable as water, he did not excel."—Independent.

Getting On and Getting Up.

"How to get on" is the supreme question of the world. "How to get up" is the supreme question of religion. A young men's Bible-class has arranged for a course of lectures on practical business subjects. Some of the ablest business men of the country have signified their willingness to make addresses dealing with the matters with which they are familiar. "Banking," "The Dry Goods Business," "The Packing House Industry," "The Operation of Railroads," are among the subjects advertised in the attractive syllabus. It is believed by the promoters that this innovation will be a great success. We have no doubt of it. Lectures on business are certainly to be preferred to many of the frivolous and inane church entertainments that are in vogue. But at the same time, young men of to-day need to be told how to get up, even more than they need to be told how to get on. They need to be taught to seek goodness, not that they may get paying jobs, but that they may get goodness.

The model held up before the youth of the present day is too often the man who from boyhood saved his cents, changed them into dollars, and by exploiting social and legal conditions before legislation had made his methods illegal, became a multi-millionaire. Such a man is said to have got on. There is another question to be answered before we urge our children to copy his life, and that is, Has he got up? If the man sank while the monopolist rose, if character deteriorated while capital accumulated, the loss has been greater than the gain. For our part, if he cannot be both, we prefer to see a boy become an honest man than a rich man.

There are those who get up but do not get on. The world says of them that they have failed. But have they? It depends on one's definition of failure. Misfortunes have befallen them, but they have not grown bitter; temptations to abandon principles and get rich dishonorably have come to them, but they have chosen poverty to a tarnished name. Is that failure? It is success! They may have lost the whole world, but they have gained their souls.

Young men need to be reminded that there are worse things than a small income. Those who are poor in purse may be rich in faith, rich in character, rich in hope. A clerk need not be less than a man. He has but to choose. The man who has no money is poor, but the man who has nothing but money is a pauper.

We must place the highest standards of life before the young men of to-day. If they must be taught not to despise wealth, much more must they be taught not to despise honesty and honor. The highest ends of life are often served by those whom the world regards as failures; and on the other hand, those who are spoken of as successful men are often those over whose fate heaven sheds tears of pity. When Lot "pitched towards Sodom" he was looked upon as a successful man. He had selected the most fertile plain in all that region. Subsequent events showed that Abraham made the wiser choice when he turned towards the hill country.

With regard to him whose life forms the perfect model for our imitation we see how one can be rich without money. Born in a stable, living a life of marked privation, buried in a borrowed grave, he made the world richer by being in it. In him was exemplified the meaning of Paul's words, "Poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." It was not the ambition of Jesus to wring success from God's hand. He ascended by descending. It was by his cross that he was lifted up.—Christendom.

Satisfactory Testimony.

BY MRS. A. H. BRONSON.

In a New England town, bordering upon the sea, lived a family from Portugal. It is a known fact that those who have come from a seafaring town in the old country drift naturally to a similar location in the new one of their adoption, being thus able, in many cases to carry on the pursuits which had occupied them at home under better auspices.

The two boys of the family attended the public school, where their young minds eagerly drank in knowledge and broadened in many ways. After a time they began attending a Protestant place of worship, there being no regular service of their own faith in the town. Without special efforts being made to interest them in personal religion their hearts were opened to secure the simple gospel truths as presented by the pastor and Sunday-school teacher, and they became members of the church.

After a time their family was called upon by a priest of its own church, who was sent occasionally to look after these isolated members of the flock, and it was not strange that he was excited over the indifference with which the parents of these boys seemed to regard their defection from the "true church," and spoke in no measured terms of what he considered their "great wickedness,"

The old mother bore it awhile in silence and then in broken but vigorous English spoke her mind. "You no talk to about my sons; they good boys; they no lie, they no steal, they no swear, they no drink, they good to him (pointing to the father), they good to me, they no Catholic, but they good boys. You no say they are wicked for they are good."

We may add that these "boys" are now successful business men of the town and prominent "burden bearers" in the church to which they joined themselves in their youth. "By their fruits ye shall know them."—Standard.

Hour by Hour.

For years Striker Jones, a tall, powerful Scotchman, has held the position of "boss striker" at the steel works. Nearly all the men in his department were hard drinkers, and he was no exception to the rule.

But one day it was announced among the workmen that he had become religious; and, sure enough, when pressed to take a drink, he said: "I shall never take a drink wair, lads. Na drunkard can inhabit the kingdom of God."

A knowing one smiled, and said: "Wait a bit; wait a bit. Wait until the hot weather—until July. When he gets as dry as a gravel-pit, then he will give in. He can't help it."

But right through the hottest months he toiled, the sweat pouring in streams, yet he never seemed to be tempted to drink.

Finally, as I was taking the men's time one evening, I stopped and spoke to him.

"Stowe," said I, "you used to take considerable liquor. Don't you miss it?"

"Yes," said he, emphatically.

"How do you manage to keep away from it?"

"Weel, just this way. It is now ten o'clock, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Weel, to-day is the twentieth of the month. From seven till eight I asked the Lord would help me. He did so, an' I put down a dot on the calendar right near the twenty. From eight till nine he kep' me, an' I put down another dot. From nine to ten he's kep' me, and now I gie him the glory as I put down the third dot. Just as I mark these I pray: 'O Lord, help me: help me to fight it off for another hour!'—Sel.

Helpful Lives.

The world is all aglow with the light of blessed, helpful lives. We see them in our homes, in our streets, in all the ways of life. All who are easing the pain of other hearts, all who are leading wandering feet back into paths of safety, all who are trying to mend the fragments of some shattered soul, all who are lovingly, humbly trying to bring joy and peace to men—all are standing on the Mount of transfiguration, though they know it not, and round them shines the heavenly light, and from their faces beams the love of God. This is the highest of all. This is the climax of the procession of incarnation of the human into the divine, the transfiguration of man with the glory of the spirit. So it runs through the history of humanity—first the struggle with the earth, then the struggle with the animal instincts, then the struggle to bring in the kingdom of heaven. So it runs through the life of the individual man—first the conquest of physical forces, then the conquest of the demons of self, and then the victorious life going back to win the cause of those who have fought and been defeated.

This is the story of God's gift of himself to the world. This is the Gospel of the incarnation—God working through human minds and hearts to reveal his love and to bring heaven upon earth. It is no new Gospel. It tells you what you know already, that you are the children of the Most High, that you bear in your hearts the impress of His Spirit that you are the temple of the Holy One. And out of that solemn, awful truth let there arise the strong resolves that, since God is in you, you will make yourselves a fit dwelling place for all Godlike things—Christian Register.

The Completed Resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus was not complete when he was enabled to come out of the tomb. His ascension was only his resurrection continued. Those precious forty days upon the earth when they wondered was he spirit, or flesh and blood, was only the way station where he tarried to leave orders in his upward flight. It was simply a necessary delay in his home going, a brief interruption in his celestial journey for his disciples' good. Did God lift our loved out of the under world of death and restore them to our embrace again? We would ask no more, and pronounce him supremely good. O ye of little insight into life's enigma! The upper room of God's mansion is preferable in every way to the lower room of earth. He never elevates us best until we are lifted up into the nearer light of his face, lifted into the realization of the eternal day.—Rev. Robert MacDonald.