

A Sermon by Dr. Joseph Parker.

My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of mine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: that they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words.—Prov. vii. 1-5.

The father gathers himself together as for a final effort to rescue his son from the temptations and perils of life. The appeal really begins with the twenty-fourth verse of the preceding chapter. By a description the most vivid and graphic ever drawn by human genius, the young man is warned of a vital danger. The only security of the "son" is to keep the commandment of the father, and to make his law as the apple of the eye. The father exhorts the son to bind the paternal commandments upon his fingers. It appears that the thong of the phylactery for the left arm was wound seven times round the middle finger. This represents the idea of trusting to other than merely human power, and being well prepared against the day of danger. It was not enough in the judgment of the father that the young man should be warned against evil, the wise father proceeds to fill up the very mind and soul of the child with wise words and useful occupations. "Say unto wisdom, 'Thou art my sister, and call understanding the kinswoman.'" Thus the negative and positive are happily combined in the school of Scriptural teaching. The greatest danger of all is a vacant mind, and a heart that has no supreme affection and law is exposed to the seductions of sense. Our only security is in high and useful employment. We ought to be able to say with Nehemiah to every tempter and to every enemy, "I am doing a great work, and cannot come down." The enemy is always on the alert, and, as represented by the figure of the text, night is as day, and day is as night; every form of blandishment and eloquence is pressed into the unholy service, and the demon-possessed heart is resolute upon the accomplishment of one object. The process which is described vividly represents the reality of life. First, we are accustomed to the sight of evil; secondly, we become enamoured of it; thirdly, we are prepared to listen, to its voice; fourthly, we are entitled to look upon its charms and then suddenly, if after such a course there can be any sudden action, we lose our foothold and destroy our own soul. No man can take fire into his bosom without his clothes being burned, nor can a man walk upon hot coals without his feet being scorched. The pain immediately follows the pleasure. The drop from earth to hell is instantaneous. Awful, indeed, is the position of tempted lives. That which is revolting is hidden, and that only which is beautiful and fascinating is allowed to be seen. The bed decked with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt, may be spoken of with artistic appreciation, and taste itself may delight in the perfume of myrrh, aloes and cinnamon; but gates of pearl may open upon perdition, and at the end of the flowery way may be found the very gulf of hell. Pitiful is the picture of the man who is allured by mighty temptations. "He goeth as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." It is a blind irrationalism which attempts to ignore all the machinery of hell which is working on the very surface of the earth. We may draw down the blind, and exclude the light, but the mighty engine is working to the destruction of all that is noble in youth, beautiful in manners, and hopeful in progress. The wiser piety will go out and confront the evil, exposing its subtle policy and its cruel design, and speaking about it with the holy audacity which can utter even corrupt words without being corrupted by their pollution.

"Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." (Vers. 24-27.)

In the twenty-seventh verse there is an energetic expression full of mournful suggestion, "Her house is the way to hell." Observe, it is not the place itself, but the way to it! In this case, what is the difference between the way and the destination? Verily, the one is as the other, so much so, that he that has entered the way may reckon upon it as a fatal certainty that he will accomplish the journey and be plunged into "the chamber of death." No man means to go the whole length. A man's will is not

destroyed in an instant; it is taken from him, as it were, little by little, and almost imperceptibly; he imagines that he is as strong as ever, and says that he will go out and shake himself as at other times, not knowing that the spirit of might has gone from him. Is there any object on earth more pathetic than that of a man who has lost his power of resistance to evil, and is dragged on an unresisting victim whithersoever the spirit of perdition may desire to take him? Like the young man in the parable, he is taken to the fire and to the water, and the infernal spirit does what he pleases with the victim. It is true that the young man can plead the power of fascination: all that music and color, and blandishment, and flatter can do has been done; the cloven foot has been most successfully concealed; the speech has been all garden and paradise and sweetness and joy; the word hell or perdition has not been so much as mentioned. The young man might have been on the way to heaven, so flowery was the path and so many birds sang brightly in the blue air as he passed along as upon wings rather than upon feet. How could such a path lead to aught less than a home beautiful as summer and blessed as heaven! This is what is meant by seduction; leading a man out of himself and from himself onward and onward by carefully graded processes until fascination has accomplished its work and bound the consenting soul in eternal bondage. Sometimes indeed men have awakened to the reality of their condition, and with heartrending cries have appealed for help. Then it has been found to be too late. Are there any words in the speech of man so solemn and so awful as the words "too late" when addressed to the soul that feels the extremity of pain? Whilst we have no right to dilate upon this possible aspect of human experience merely for the sake of mocking human agony and despair, we are entitled to dwell upon it in the hope that the tempted and imperilled souls of the very gray be alarmed and excited to consideration. That there is a hell no man of experience can deny,—a hell here! a hell of remorse, self-reproach, appalling memory, hopelessness—a despair compared with which all darkness is as mid-day. How difficult to forewarn men with any success! The exhorter himself has been overwhelmed, the teacher victimized, the saintliest soul is conscious of a ministry not divine. Still, on every hand the word of exhortation and persuasion must be spoken, and the prayer of entreaty must be breathed with eagerness and passion if haply one soul may be rescued from the way to hell and the chambers of death.

Potato Scab.

Some very interesting experiments have been conducted by Prof. J. C. Arthur of the New-York Experimental Station at Geneva on the cause of the trouble known as the scab in the potato. This has been believed to be due to fungus action, or to minute insects, the believers in neither being able, as Prof. Arthur suggests, to give any reason for the faith that is in them. The author reminds us that a potato may lie for days exposed to the full sun, and yet not shrink in the slightest degree. It will resist the most excruciating efforts to induce evaporation. He finds this to result from the impervious character of the thin skin covering the tuber. It is a delicate layer of cork. The cells composing it are flat, in seven or more layers, fitting together so closely as to leave no space between, and without a trace of the starchy matter so abundant in the great mass of the potato tuber. It is the destruction of these cells that causes the scab. No trace of fungus growth appears through any of the destructive stages, nor is there any trace of insect depredation. Just what does bring about the destruction of the cells Prof. Arthur was not able to discover; but it is certainly neither of these influences that have been attributed to it. So far as his observations went, he found more scab in potatoes where stable manure had been employed as a fertilizer than elsewhere. This leads him to suppose that it is some chemical element combating the water-proof character of the cuticle that causes the trouble. Just as in other dermic wounds, the potato has the power of healing these by forming new skin under that which has been destroyed, by transforming the starch-bearing cells to these flat, corky ones. This can readily be shown by macerating a potato in water when the scab is pushed off, and the clear, smooth skin exposed beneath.

A contemporary starts the query: "Why do shoes squeak?" Probably for the same reason that opera singers do, because of the music in their soles.

A Reverie.

Twenty years with their lights and shades have passed and I am standing once more on the threshold of the old home. Yes, it is twenty long years since I was a little bare-foot boy tramping to school in happy innocence, and the scenes of childhood are fresh and bright in my memory as though it was but yesterday that the school bell called me for the first time.

But alas there is a depth of sadness in everything, and as I gaze around I miss the ringing laughter of youthful playmates, and fail to catch a glimpse of the loved ones whose forms have been laid in the silent churchyard that slopes so gently towards the sleeping valley. Where are the children who hand in hand trudged to school in the summer sunlight? Where are the friends of youth and early manhood? The shadows creep up from the waving cedars, and as the chill evening winds mourn dismally around me, they seem to whisper gone! Yes, gone. Like the fluttering autumn leaves that are now borne to my feet with a gentle murmur before being whirled with many grotesque gyrations down the sloping hill, they have been borne out upon the bosom of the great ocean of life; and I miss them all. The old house is deserted now, and the grass and weeds are growing over the path that was once so smooth and firm. I move out from the gloom that surrounds the weather-beaten structure, and stand where my eye can trace the distant line that marks the horizon. So far away that line of blue hills seemed to me once, that in fancy I could almost discern the steeples in some distant city; and could almost hear the chiming of church bells.

Hark! I hear the old school bell. It alone has remained untouched and unharmed, and its solemn clang brings back a flood of half-forgotten memories. What scenes that old bell has witnessed, and what stories its iron tongue could tell. But to me the stories are as plain as though written in letters of fire, and turning back page after page of the book of memory, I see again my early life—I and the old bell.

Ding Dong. It is summer morning, and the laughing sunlight gleams through the tangled leaves of the old maples, and sparkles on the flowers so ruthlessly crushed beneath our childish feet. My first day at school, and light as the wings of the chirping wren in the thicket by the bridge my heart bounds in joyful anticipation of the coming pleasures, which alas! were soon found to be less bright than my childish fancy had pictured. But time heals nearly all things; and peace settled calmly down in my youthful breast.

Ding Dong. Ten years have passed away, and I'm standing by the grave of a loved one. My school days are over now, and as I watch the growing mound, I realize how rebellious I have been, and how unworthy I am to face the storms of life alone, and the gentle words of the pastor "The Lord gave and the Lord taketh away," do not I fear, convey their true meaning to me. Oh Death! Oh bitter parting; how soon shall we cease to mourn on this earth, and when shall our tears be dried never again to flow.

Ding Dong. And the Angel of earth still goes on. The grass is waving over the grave of the old schoolmaster, and a little plot not far away from his marks the resting place of an old school-fellow.

Ding Dong, and the faces of old friends seem to rise up before me in the gathering dusk.

The far far West gives up a welcoming face Long, lank Henry M—, the amateur showman in the playground, who was always building castles in the air about the wonderful things he would do when he was a man—he waves his hand and disappears as suddenly as did his boyish dreams. Poor Henry, he did not carry out his bright plans for he holds a plough on the far off plains of Montana, and when his little children beg for pennies to see the clown in the traveling circus, he smiles, and pats the head of the youngest, and tells him not to think too much about clowns and circus rings.

And Will H—, the boy who was always climbing trees and building caves in the woods, and who was found one day in the top of the old beech that waved its fantastic arms over the school-house. His wandering disposition remained with him when he reached manhood, and he now sleeps beneath the troubled waters of the Atlantic.

And happy, frolicking Tom P—, who was always in mischief, and who loved sweet winsome Nellie Moore. Poor Tom, his bones bleach on the far off field of Atlanta, and the wild winds that sweep over the plain seem to bear with them the sad, sad tale. With his heart beating high with martial ardour, with the stirring notes of

the bugle in his ears and the flash of steel before his eyes he gave up that life which he so often risked for the sake of others.

And Nellie, sweet dainty Nellie. Poverty alas, came to her happy home, and she was forced to work for her daily bread in the great city of Washington. But her sweet disposition and her love for Tom kept her up through many trials and temptations. She was found one morning with her face pillowed on an old cap belonging to Tom, with a paper in her hand containing the news of the Battle of Atlanta, and an account of the death of Lieutenant Tom Powers.

Her pure face was as sweet as in the days when she wandered around the lanes and fields with him she loved, but the light had left her eyes for ever.

And thus they all come before me, and as I muse my eyes fill with tears, for I seem to hear their voices calling me. I can almost hear the click of the cricket bat, the murmur of merry voices and the sound of many feet.

Ding Dong, and the holidays are near. We are standing together and singing our favorite hymns, and the light is streaming through the windows lighting up the battered seats and shining like a crown on the old teacher's head.

Ding Dong, Ding Dong. I start suddenly, for I hear the sound of wheels, and here stands the old horse that is to take me to the nearest station, the same horse, I believe, that scampered as a colt a score of years ago, and as I pat his soft nose he turns his quick eyes upon me, as if he too recollects it all, as well as I. Then I wave a last adieu to the woods, the hills and the valleys and am off in the whirl and excitement of the world again.

But after all I visited the old friends, though they were not with me, and I trust that on the last Great Day we shall all stand hand in hand together and sing the hymns we used to sing long ago.

In the Winter Woods.

High-fung at noon, in chill and sombre state,
The naked woods uplift their nightly arms,
Silent and grim, to meet the evening hate
Which with the winter scourges waves and

And chills and nips and blows insatiate,
High-fung and grey, athwart the frozen lands
Wind-caverned, stark, the winter forest stands

Here I have wandered all a frosty day,
In fancy dream of sheeted ice and snow;
Great rafters of branches stretching mossed and

Ice-hidden pools and drifted snows below,
With formless winds that creep from far away,
Steal in and moan across the fading light,
While with great stride glooms in the lonely

The lofty maples shake their tops and sigh,
The snow-mossed beeches stir their beards and

Still clinging from the autumn long gone by,
And all the woodland dark the night receives,
Into its snowy-caverned sanctity,
The shadows darken, lower-slants the sun.

Bright beams the moon when scarce the day is
done.

With one red gleam the sun has vanished
Down

Over the icy forest's bearded rim,
Low crown the winds, blacker the shadows

Across the eerie twilight, far and dim,
Comes a faint gleam from out the twinkling

town,
Steals in the night, the grey wood bends and

Pale glims the moon in frosty reveries.

Keen grows the air from frosts that creep
near,

Night's icy hoists that all the grey wood thrill,
Far overhead the stars grow sharp and clear,
Ice-rendering sounds the tingling silence fill
From the far river cold in marshes drear.

Across white floors a shadowy phantom flows
From wind-swayed boughs, and smoke of drift-
ing snows.

Then back I turn me homeward, wading drifts
In eddied hollows, skirting icy pools;
Dreaming red hearthlogs through the frosty

rifts,
While o'er my path the moon throws icy gules
Where overhead the forest's gloom uplifts

Its shadowy bars against the clinging light,—
The awful silence of the arctic night.

WILLIAM WILFRED CAMPBELL.

A Mutual Feeling.

Algy (out gunning)—Aw, I wish you wouldn't get behind me that way when I shoot. It makes me nervous!

Cholly—Mebbe; but law, jove, it makes me more nervous yet to get anywhere else.

Do not let either discourse or action pass unobserved; attend to the sense and significance of the one, and to the tendency and design of the other.—[Marcus Aurelius.]

Politician (angrily)—"These newspapers tell abominable lies about me." Friend—"And yet they might do worse." Politician—"Do worse? What do you mean?" Friend—"They might tell the truth." Last among them, and the reigning kin) "was troubled" that was not unnatural and "all Jerusalem with him." That was the hard part of it.