

READING THE SCRIPTURES.

By James M. Gray, D.D.

A great revival broke out among the people of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah when the public teachers "read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." (Neh. 8:8.)

Why not try this again? A serious weakness in our churches at the present time is making so little of the Holy Scriptures. Frequently the chapter is read in the public services while the worshippers are gathering and some of them even walking down the aisles; whereas, it should not be read until all are in their places and ready to hear what the Lord may have to say unto them. (Acts 10:33.) The place of greatest reverence and dignity in our public services should be given, not to the words of the preacher, but to the Word of God.

But the indistinctness of the reading is quite as often caused by the poor elocution of the preacher as by the noise and confusion of the gathering worshippers. There is not uncommonly any serious attempt made to give the sense of the passage in the reading of it; and as for expounding it, or causing the people to understand it as they proceed, how many ministers think of doing this, or count themselves competent for it? What a sensation it would cause in some of our staid and stately congregations should the minister pause in his reading to explain what he had read! But how it might awaken the sleepy hearers and provide something for them to think about. How it might attract the young and even the worldly-minded, for there is a strange fascination about the Living Word.

The writer's attitude towards Holy Writ and the character of his work as a Christian minister underwent a radical change after hearing a brother minister read the first chapter of the first epistle of Peter. It was a sermon, a commentary, an exposition all in one. It was as wine to the soul. O, that every occupant of the pulpit might be master of the art, and yet it is not art in the sense of artifice, but only as perceiving the mind of the Spirit in the text and expounding it in public utterance.

It might be a good thing if some who are interested in the subject, and have the means, should offer an annual prize, or a series of them, in our theological seminaries to the students best able to read a chapter of the Bible in such a way as to give its sense. A friend of the Moody Bible Institute has recently done this with excellent fruitage already. An hour spent in the homiletic class, listening to young men and women simply reading the Word, is a quickening experience to the soul and stimulates the spirit of worship. If the plan were tried in the seminaries it might result in producing not only a crop of good readers of the Scriptures, but expounders as well, and if there is anything needed to-day to bring about a general and healthy revival, it is the faithful and intelligent proclamation of that Word which is as a fire, "and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." (Jer. 23:29).—The Westminster Philadelphian.

"The everlasting arms." I think of that whenever rest is sweet. How the whole earth and the strength of it, that is, almightiness, is beneath every tired creature, to give it rest, holding us always. No thought of God is closer than that. No human tenderness of patience is greater than that which gathers in its arms a little child and holds it, heedless of weariness.—Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney.

SONG OF THANKFULNESS.

The bells were ringing a welcome
To the Father's house of prayer,
But slow were the steps of the people,
For all had a weight of care;
It greeted their eyes in the morning,
And stayed with them all the day,
So a shadow was on their faces,
And the Sabbath skies were gray.

Few sung a song of thanksgiving,
Few hearts were wholly at peace,
Some wanted the things which they had
not,
Some longed for trials to cease;
And many were discontented,
Or weary or perplexed
With the teachings of the daily life,
When the minister read his text.

"Forget not all his benefits,"
And a little flush of shame,
As we heard the ring of the well-known
words,
To some of our faces came;
But we had our thoughts and our cares
to mix
With the preacher's words, until
They worked their way to our restless
hearts,
And bade our hearts be still.

There were songs of praise from our
lips and hearts
As we left the house of prayer,
And some of us left our restlessness
And heaviest burdens there;
For we learned that the way to be truly
glad,
In darkness or light the same,
Is not to forget God's benefits,
And ever to bless his name.

—Marianne Farningham.

TOO LITTLE ALONE WITH GOD.

We are far too little alone with God, and this, I am persuaded, is one of the very saddest features in our modern Christian living. It is work, work, work—at the very best, some well-meant, Martha-like serving; but where, where are the more devoted Marys, who find the shortest, surest way to the heart of Jesus by ceasing very much from self-willed self-appointed toils and sitting humbly at His feet to let Him carry on His blessed work within ourselves? If the Mary-like method were carried out more it might abridge considerably the amount of work apparently accomplished, but it would incomparably enhance the quality. What though we should lose a hundredweight, and get instead of it only a pound—if the hundredweight lost were only lead, and the pound gotten were pure gold?

God is not looking for great men. He can use small men. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He ordains strength. He is not looking for many men; He can get along with a few. He once said that there were too many, but He never said that there were too few. But He does want men; He has taken man into partnership in His work, and does not seem disposed to work without him. When judgment is to be averted from Jerusalem, He tells the prophet: "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it."

The things that we strive for should be worthy of our striving.

No man will ever reach heaven with his face toward the past.

Take the world out of the heart, and it will leave more room for God.

As our conception of the truth of the Bible lowers, so does our conception of the responsibility of life.

Man is the climax of God's creation, and when man gets back to God it is the climax of the creature.

It is better to lie down with a twinge of rheumatism than with the pain of a guilty conscience.

ACQUAINTED WITH GOD.*

By Robert E. Speer.

Unless we know God, we are not alive. To be unacquainted with God is death. "This is eternal life," said Jesus, "to know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." The knowledge of God is the condition of life and is life. It is so because God alone is the living one. He is life. Not to know Him and to be related to Him is to be cut off from life.

We may know a great deal about God from the world. It declares His glory. We may justly argue from it that God is great and wise and impartial. But the knowledge of God which it gives is not large, and it would leave us in perplexity about many things. For there is hate in the world as well as love. It is full of cruelty. Even in the forests and the streams we meet tragedy and anguish everywhere. We might feel sure that the love is greater than the hate, but some would still be overwhelmed by the shadows. And even if the world does tell us much about God, there are many who have looked for God in His works and have not found Him.

But no one ever looked for Him in Christ in vain. Some have found more of Him than others have found there. Some have believed that He came to them there consciously as one friend comes to another, and others have only been sure that He was there, and that in Christ they saw God, but have had no ecstasies of knowledge of Him.

We do not need to understand all about God or to have comprehended all his character and ways in order to know him. We are acquainted with many people who are superior to us, and whose thoughts and work are on a plane above ours; but we are acquainted with them still, even if they are acquainted with a good deal beside us. And if we do not as yet see all of God's reasons and purposes, we know him just the same, and we can look forward to the joy of understanding all some day.

The fact that we do not see and hear God with our physical senses is often a knowledge of Him is unreal. But, after knowledge of Him is unreal. But, after all, we do not see or hear any thing. What we truly perceive is a relation between ourselves and some outside object. We "know nothing and can know nothing of our brother or of the table at which we are sitting, or of a loaf of bread, or of the moon, except how each of these affects our consciousness. We know each object in its relation to us, and we do not and cannot know it in itself." And so we know God. The knowledge is as real which we gain of him through his manifestations to us as the knowledge which comes through sight or sound.

Would we like to know God?

Are we willing to be separated from all that would separate us from God?

God, we may be sure, is striving to be known to us. "Not through Thy fault, O Holy One, we lose Thee."—Sunday School Times.

Cumberland Presbyterian: Judged by their efforts in its behalf, one would conclude that the only reason why some men think their own denomination greater and better than any other is because they themselves are among its members.

Philadelphia Westminster: Prayer is never a matter of dimensions. One may pray long and yet not pray at all.

Duty vitalized by love will open a spring that selfishness can not dry.

*Young people's topic, Sunday, Nov. 3, 1907. "Acquainted with God" (Job 22:21, 22). Consecration Meeting.