

Pastor and People.

SELF-WORSHIP.

The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God, Psa. xiv. 1.

It is the fashion now for wits to be
Without a God,
Except some force behind the things we see
Like heat, or light, or electricity,
And one is odd
Among these Oracles, who still believes
In any God who thinks, or loves, or grieves.

But there's a spirit, deep in the heart's core
Of reverence,
Which somehow will not bow down to adore
The mightiest force in nature; what is more,
I have a sense
Of being something greater far than those
Blind makers of the world which science knows.

Worship I must, but may not worship aught
Which I can bind,
And yoke to do me service, having caught
The secret of its power, with wonder fraught
But without mind,
And while I comprehend it, I must be
Higher than that which comprehends not me.

You do not need to worship? May be so,
I judge you not
Only, they say the dog that does not know
A master, like a savage wolf will grow
Fighting his lot,
And is a sorry brute, until he find
A mightier will than his, and nobler mind.

—W. Smith, D.D.

FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

THE QUIET RESTING-PLACE.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D.

Life here is a term of toil, a season of conflict, a warfaring that goes on without cessation till the call comes that puts a stop to it, and to the worker and the combatant gives release. Then "life's battle o'er" in the beautiful poetic language of the Shorter Catechism they "do rest in their graves till the resurrection." That envelops the idea of burial with a relieving pleasantness. That takes away from it much that is distasteful and repulsive to human nature. That reconciles us to the dire necessity. One of the most solemn seasons to every reflecting mind is the moment when the coffin containing the remains of a dear, loved one is being lowered into its long resting-place, and the words, "earth to earth, dust to dust," are being spoken over it. Then the strain upon one's faith is severe. Then the soul's strength is tried to its utmost. Then many bold professions are put to the proof. While the dear face and form lay yet within the home a sense of possession was ours, a sense of the sweet presence, a sense of a bond that kept us one—but now the cords of the heart are snapping—the face is hid, the form disappears, and the earth closes over and hides all. How hard it is then, just then, to lift the thoughts away from the body below to the spirit, the true self, above! Ah, our souls cleave to the dust. It was the face that looked upon us, those lips that spake to us, those hands that grasped ours, those feet that ran to meet us, that heart that beat with loving pulses and tender regard, that form that represented so much to us and made up so much of our little world. And now it is gone from us, never to be seen again here.

To sense there is irreparable loss. But faith takes hold of the Divine testimony and strengthens itself with it, and sees through it a time when there will be reunion, and fellowship and rejoicing. It seizes on these words: "Thy brother shall rise again," Jno. ii. 23. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," I. Cor. xv. 21, 22. The type of this is given in the resurrection of Jesus: "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept," I. Cor. xv. 20. Our Lord's rising illumines this whole region of perplexing thought as no words can. He shows us the meaning of the grave, He illustrates the resurrection, He expounds His own teaching. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him," I. Thess. iv. 13, 14. On these declarations Christian faith rests and builds. And these take in great part the sting out of death for the living. They bridge the period of silence and separation with a sweet hope and a glorious assurance. They bring satisfaction to the aching heart. They bind it up with the bands of Divine love and grace.

How different is the case of those who have no such revelation to build upon! On the slabs that cover the places of sepulture of heathen men and women in the Catacombs, the inscriptions utter fearful and terrible wails, such as might rend the very rocks. Listen! "Vale, vale, longum vale," Farewell, farewell, a long farewell! "Vale, vale æternum," Farewell, farewell forever. There is no hope there. "Infanti dulcissimo quem dii irati æterno somno dederunt." What a wail is that breaking from the heart over the ashes of a darling child! It is all agony, despairing agony—to a most delightful child whom the angry gods have given to eternal sleep! How true it is that Jesus Christ hath "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel!"

In the diary of Matthew Henry we find these references to the death and burial of his children. We need not say that they are charming expressions of Christian faith. "After the

funeral," he thus writes, "I have been this day doing a work that I never did, burying a child, a sad day's work; but my good friend Mr. Lawrence preached very seasonably and excellently at the lecture in the afternoon from Psalms xxxix. 9. 'I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it'; my friends testify their kindness by their presence; here is now a pretty little garment, laid up in the wardrobe of the grave, to be worn again at the resurrection; blessed be God for the hope of this." This was his first child. Of his third he writes: "We resigned the soul of the child to Him who gave it; and if the little ones have their angels, doubted not of their ministration in death. We have hopes, through grace, that it is well with the child; little children in heaven we look upon as the *via lactea*, the individuals scarce discernible, but altogether beautifying the heavens. We spent the day in sorrow for our affliction, our friends sympathizing with us; one day committing the immortal soul to God, this day committing the dust to the dust of the earth as it was. I am in death often, Lord teach me how to die daily. I endeavoured when the child was put into the grave to act faith upon the Doctrine of the Resurrection, believing in Him who quickeneth the dead." Is not that inspiring? Beautiful, blessed, invigorating faith in Christ's word!

When Crawford Tait, the son of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was so godly and so full of the highest promise as a minister of the everlasting Gospel, was buried on June 4th, 1878, in the sweet churchyard of Addington, amid a crowd of those who loved him, clergy, relations, school and college friends, and humble dependents and parishioners; after the solemn sentences of the officiating clergyman, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and the singing of the hymn, "Brother, thou art gone before us," and the slow, unwilling dispersion, his mother stood for one moment alone when the burial was over, and said in a low but intensely earnest and thrilling voice, heard only, it is believed, by one young relative, "I believe in the resurrection of the dead." What a relief was that to her breaking heart! The lovely and loveable son was torn away from an intense and jealous affection, and this was the only consolation.

When Miss Marsh finished the last chapter of her father's instructive and inspiring life, in which she tells us how "devout men" from among the recent converts at Beddington, and some from the earlier work of the grace of God at Beckenham, carried him to his burial, she writes: "Farewell, my father, until the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised." "Until," not forever. There is a meeting again to part no more. Oh, the bitterness of the parting, oh the blessedness of the meeting again. There is a Resurrection of the dead. The body that has been buried shall rise changed, yet recognizable. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." This change, we are apprised, shall take place under the putting forth of Christ's power on His coming. "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself." To the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus all things are possible. He raises the waving fields of golden grain out of the small seeds scattered on the broad acres in the spring-time; He covers the earth with forests of oak and cedar, that grow from little acorns and little larger cones and these are only samples of His wonder-working in the vegetable world; and when we go further back and learn that he made everything of nothing by a word, we can have no room in our minds for doubt in regard to the resurrection of the body.

We love the old Biblical practice of burial, and we abhor the heathen practice of burning. One of the main objections we have to burial at sea is that there is no spot marked where the body lies. No spot that can be visited and where the heart can pour out its loving remembrances and sacred thoughts. This, in addition to the horrible process of burning the body, is a strong argument against cremation, with us, at least.

The scene painted for us in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, of Abraham's purchase of Macpelah of the children of Seth as a burying-place for Sarah, is full of beauty and tenderness. It thrills us as we read it. Abraham must purchase it as a possession. That spot is going to contain something more precious to him than gold, and something more potent over the hearts of his people than even their title to that very country. The burial plot was the central point of their world. To that their hearts' love ever and anon reverted. It held them like an anchor. Jacob in Egypt made Joseph swear that he would not bury him in Egypt, "But," said Jacob, "I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying-place." Joseph, too, took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." How finely is this brought into the record in Hebrews xi. 22: "By faith Joseph when he died made mention of the departing of the Children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones." Palestine was home to Israel because the burial plot was there. That was the corner stone of the fabric, as a home resulting from the promise that had yet to be made, may we say, won; won by a faith in God which would shine forever in its glory.

One of our most pleasant, mournful privileges is to visit the graves of our kindred. What a satisfaction it is to stand by them and recall all that they were; the good only remembered! How many solemn lessons come to us! How many quickening and inspiring thoughts! How short time seems! How important our action and influence become! We have but "a little while" to work and pray and love down here.

Two voices come to us as we stand there thinking of our dear ones who shall rise again; one is from earth, coming out of the hallowed mound, "Therefore, my beloved brethren be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," I. Cor. xv. 58. The other is from heaven, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me; to give every man according as his work shall be," Rev. xxii. 12.

THE LORD'S DAY A DAY OF OPPORTUNITY.

On the first Lord's day the world ever saw, which was also the greatest of them all, that on which our Lord rose from the dead, He came to the disciples assembled in the upper room, shewed Himself, His hands and His side to them, and said, "Peace be unto you." A week later He came to them again, displayed a second time the marks on His body that proved who He was, and what He had borne, and said to the unbelieving disciple Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands;" and from what was said and done then we can learn what this day is an opportunity of, even of gaining a fuller knowledge of Christ, of having our sinful doubts removed, and of getting a richer share of the spiritual blessings He died to procure for us. On this day we have a better opportunity than on other days of getting more of that knowledge of Him that is life eternal, for though He does not confine His favours to that day, yet it is found that it is that on which He is chiefly revealed to His waiting followers. In the words to us in His house, and in those we read in our homes, He shows us how worthy He is of our trust, and that we need not fear to leave the whole weight of our burdens, and griefs, and fears, on Him; that though heart and flesh fail us He will not, though friends deceive us He will not. We then get to know that He, and He alone is able to guide us through the dangers that lie before us, and how willing He is to do that; how that He will give us strength for duties, even the most trying, and enable us to succeed, where left to ourselves, we should be sure to fail; how there is a rich store of comfort in Him for the saddest and the darkest hours that brings light to us when we come into the night of sorrow; and how we have in him one who shall stand by us in the hour of death itself, and enable us, in looking on to it, to say, "I shall fear no evil, for Thou wilt be with me." We get to know on His day how all things needed for life and holiness are freely provided for us in Him, how all is ours since Christ is ours, the wisdom and knowledge of the Godhead, and all that these can bring; but, above all, we get to know His love, and what it can bestow. We are brought into His treasure house, and get a glimpse of the rich stores that are provided there to meet our needs in time and eternity, so that we need not fear any want shall ever come. For this reason the day of the Lord is looked forward to with pleasure by every true Christian heart, is valued when it is passing, and is regarded with gratitude when it is gone.

Shewing Himself, He at the same time gives us a glimpse of that life eternal to which he calls us; lifting us for a little above the things of the world "in holy contemplation, He lets us see what is "beyond the bounds of time and space." As the pilgrims in Bunyan's vision, when they came to Mount Clear, were permitted by the shepherds there to look through their telescope and see the land that was very far off, and when they saw it resting under the light that was full of glory, they were drawn to press on to it with new vigour. So, many have, by what was shown to them on this day, been led to begin the course heavenward, and they have begun to press on with zeal towards "the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls."

How oft have doubts been chased away that had distressed us greatly! If they were about the reality of things beyond, or about the work of religion in the heart and life, or about the possibility of our coming into the possession of eternal good, or about our actual interest in Christ now—as the birds and beasts of the night disappear before the rising sun, so have they often shrunk out of the view when the light of the Lord's day has shone on them.

How often has peace on that day visited the soul that was long tossed and troubled, and it was sure that He, who came over the waves of old, had come and visited it; that He who came to His disciples had come to it and said, "Peace be unto you," and with peace had given the beginning of "joy unspeakable and full of glory."—Rev. J. Parlane, M.A.

CONSIDER THE POOR.

It is very possible to be fairly faithful in much, and yet unfaithful in that which is least. We may have thought about our gold and silver, and yet may have been altogether thoughtless about our rubbish! Some have a habit of hoarding away old garments, "pieces," remnants, and odds and ends generally, under the idea that they "will come in useful some day;" very likely setting it up as a kind of mild virtue, backed by that noxious old saying, "Keep it by you seven years and you'll find a use for it." And so the shabby things get shabbier, and moth and dust doth corrupt, and the drawers and places get choked and crowded; and meanwhile all this that is sheer rubbish to you might be made useful, at once, to a degree beyond what you would guess, to some poor person.

It would be a nice variety for the clever fingers of a lady's maid to be set to work to uphold things; or some tidy woman may be found in almost every locality who knows how to contrive children's things out of what seems to you only fit for the rag-bag, either for her own little ones or those of her neighbours.