

• The Quiet Hour •

The Rich Fool.*

BY JOHN COWAN, D.D.

Again a sordid soul asks Jesus for judicial decision, and he gets a picture that makes his ears tingle and his covetous heart tremble. We can dismiss the question and take up the

WARNING AGAINST COVETOUSNESS.—Why such a warning? Because an abundance of the things coveted does not enrich life. A man may own sky-scraping buildings and yet his life may be pitifully low and mean. He may have full barns, but empty soul. Notice the abundance of this rich fool: lands, buildings, fruits, goods. Notice his aspirations. To benefit his community? No. To be a blessing to his country? No. To enlarge his mind? No. To help neighbors? No. To leave a blessing to posterity? No. To tickle his nerves; to concentrate the product of all his acres into his own maw. He was as earthy as the earth worm in his own fields. The one lived to eat crude dirt; the other to eat the sublimated products of dirt.

WHY COVETOUSNESS IS FOOLISH.—The man was not a fool because he was rich. He might have been a beggar who dreamed covetously of full barns a full stomach as the acme of happiness and his rank as a fool would not have been lowered one whit. But it took a man who got the things he coveted to teach us unmistakably the lesson that they are nothing in the presence of the soul's eternity. To the poor covetous man it always seems as though he would be sure not to make a fool of himself if riches were given him.

Covetousness of worldly things exclusively is foolish, because, as the finale shows, it is one-eyed, and sees only this very small part of life here, but is blind to the greater part. It is like a man carrying a pewter spoon from a burning house and leaving a gold watch behind. To be worldly-wise is to be eternally-foolish. What would have been the wise thing for this rich glutton? Socialism? Who knows? Philanthropy? Yes. A recognition of his fruits as God-given? Surely; and of his responsibility for the best use of them. "Rich toward God" meant helping the poor, meant using his means to cultivate his mind, meant enlarging his life. You notice the emphasis is put on "life." "Life" is the thing, not "barns and goods." In the vocabulary of the wise "life is more than meat," the manhood is more than clothes. The full life, not the full barn; the rounded powers, not the rotund abdomen; largeness of soul, not breadth of acres; immortal greatness not porcine littleness—that is the message of the Master.

Explanatory Notes.

Divide the inheritance (v. 13). Jewish usage gave the oldest son a double share of the estate, and the remainder was equally divided among the others. As comparatively little of the property was in money, there was often occasion for difficulty over the proper division.—*Man* (v. 14). An address implying rebuke.—*ALL covetousness* (v. 15). Covetousness of every form.—*A certain rich man* (v. 16). Attention has been called to the resemblance between this man and Nabal (1 Sam. 25)—*fool* (v. 20). Four different with a similar meaning are used in the New Testament, and this is one of the stronger ones.—*Rich toward God* (v. 21). Rich in

*Lesson, Sept. 16, Luke 12:13-23. GOLDEN TEXT.—What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?—Mark 8:36.

things that God approves.—*The life is more than food* (v. 23). Therefore God's giving the greater is a pledge that the lesser will not be lacking.

"Beside the Still Waters."

What a blessed privilege it is to linger beside the "still waters" in the rough, wild journey of life. It is the sweet resting-place where we sit at the Master's feet and look into his holy face. It is then that we forget the long journey over the lonely mountain and through the dim valley. What do we care about the shadows through which we have passed, or the dangers that meet us on our way? We are safe here. The din of the great world around us comes so faintly to our ears that we do not mind it. It almost seems like far-away music while we linger in the valley of blessing. Here the wild tempest cannot come. Here is the peace which is as deep as the ocean, as high as the heavens. Here is the rest that makes us strong to go on again when the Master says, "Go in peace."

Beside the still waters. O how still and placid! Not a single rough wave upon them. Not even one white sail was ever wrecked upon their placid depths. Eternal calm silvers them over with its brightness. The white moonlight glorifies them by night, and the sun when the fair day lingers. No storm-cloud ever mirrored its dark shadow in their depths.

How we love to linger for just a little time! How brave we are when we start toward the western hills again! How gladly and willingly we take up the burden once more, and go out into the great weary world!

"Beside the still waters." Just a little touch of heaven, but enough to give us a hint of what awaits us when the journey is ended. We shall gain the greater "still waters" soon. Only a few more mountains to climb, only a few more rock wastes to pass through, then we shall rest beside the "still waters" eternally.—Christian Intelligencer.

"Neath the Shadow of Thy Wing.

BY CHARLOTTE RANEY.

When the shadows darkly gather
Round my pathway here below
And the floods of sore affliction
Threaten me to overflow;
Then, O Father, give me shelter
Neath the shadow of thy wing.

Let me learn the blessed lesson
That, behind the blackest sky
The sun of love is shining,
And the clouds must soon roll by,
May I know the sure, safe shelter
Neath the shadow of thy wing.
Resting sweetly in thy keeping,
Folded safely in thy love,
No evil can come near me,
No trials can me move,
When I creep into safe shelter
Neath the shadow of thy wing.

Pray without ceasing,—not in mere words, but in so living united to God, in your affections and thoughts, that your life shall be one long and continual prayer.—Saint Basil.

No experience makes one grow old so fast as struggling to keep down the voice of conscience. No one can do this without wasting the strength of his life.—Dunning.

A Large Prayer.—vi. A Chain of Consequences. No. 2.—With a Possible Break

Ephesians, III 14-21.

BY ANNA ROSS.

The first consequence of the granting of this large petition is, the abiding presence and companionship of Jesus Christ—"Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith." The natural and direct consequence of this companionship is, that the immeasurable love of our Divine companion shall more and more fully open up to us, till its breadth and length and depth and height shall be our ever-extending field of intellectual and experimental knowledge, and consequence No. 3 becomes our actual experience—"we are filled with the fulness of God."

Every word in this prayer is worth weighing, and every link in the chain is worth inspecting. If, in our own case, there is a flaw in any link of the chain, the succession shall be broken.

Just in front of consequence No. 2 is pointed out, in a phrase of six words, a possible failure in the succession. What damage and failure would have been prevented, all down the ages, if due attention all along had been paid to this note of warning, this one short phrase of six words.

Let us look at the phrase, and note its immense significance. "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." The very wording of the passage compels the inference that, if *not* rooted and grounded in love, we *shall not* be able to comprehend.

Is this the case? Is it true that one who has been strengthened with might by the very spirit of God, so that the abiding companionship of Jesus Christ has begun to fill his heart with joy and his life with sunshine, may fail entirely of the culminating consequences that ought to develop out of such blessed power and privilege? Is it true that he may after all prove *unable* to reach out into the higher lessons of the unsearchableness of the love of Christ, and so fall quite short of the overflowing fulness of God in his daily difficulties, and live a life of failure instead of victory? a life of actual blight instead of overshadowing blessing to all around?

That this is sorrowfully possible is proved by the history of the Ephesian church, for whose enlargement this prayer was first offered up. That the strengthening with might by His Spirit was given may be fairly deduced from Christ's commendation of them in Rev. III. That the indwelling companionship of Jesus Christ kindled their love into a flame that burned with a world-wide brightness, is made plain in the same passage, but the glorious consequences thus made possible to them they never attained. Just at this point they were lost, just where Paul struck the note of warning which they did not heed. Instead of reaching out to the illimitable stretches of the love of Christ, and fighting the good fight with an ever-increasing measure of the fulness of God, they left their first love and fell from their first works. They proved unable to comprehend the magnitude of the love of Christ, and their own cup waxed empty instead of overflowing on all around from a perennial supply of all the fulness of God.

Is not this danger point worthy of careful consideration lest we be like unto them?

Rooted and grounded in love, that ye may be able to comprehend. *Not* rooted and grounded in love, *unable* to comprehend.

Let us study the figure, and so reach up to the truth it contains. The activity of a