

FIVE-MINUTE'S SERMON.

Fifth Sunday After Epiphany.

RESISTING THE DEVIL.

"An enemy hath done this." (Matt. xiii. 28.) To day's Gospel is explained by our Lord Himself a little further on in answer to a question of His disciples. He tells us that by the good seed in the parable are meant "the children of the kingdom"—i. e., good, faithful, practical Christians; that the wicked are the cockle appearing in the field of the Church.

There are some who trouble themselves about the question why God should ever have permitted evil to exist at all; perhaps they will even go so far on that account as to impugn the wisdom of God. Why, they ask, since God is almighty, should He have permitted evil to exist when He could have prevented it, especially since the result of it all is the loss to so many of His creatures of the end for which they were created?

Now, while to-day's Gospel suggests this problem—a problem that has troubled man's mind for ages—the same Gospel suggests also the solution: not, indeed, that it gives a complete answer to every question we may ask, but the solution of the problem so far as its practical bearing on the difficulties in our own daily life and work is concerned. And why should we seek to fathom the depths of the eternal counsels of the Creator, asking why He does not root up the cockle in His creation? We know, and it is enough for us to know, that there is an Almighty, All-wise, All-good All-loving God, and, on the other hand, the fact of the existence of evil is evident to us.

Whether the reasons we can give for this fact are satisfactory to us or not, the fact itself remains as it is. The enemy has sown his bad seed, and the mixture of good and evil is there and stares us in the face, wherever we go and whithersoever we turn.

Whether we understand the reasons for this or not, of this one thing we may, in any case, be sure, that for everything God does or permits He has His own sufficient reason. It is blind folly for us to seek with our puny minds to penetrate too deeply into the mysterious side of God's providence. Let us, then, be content with the explanation of our Lord, that the cockle is allowed to remain for the good of the wheat. It is through combat with the powers of evil that we are made strong and perfect.

History tells us of a great general who was informed by his aide de camp that a certain regiment directed to take possession of a hill could gain no foot of ground, owing to the tremendous fire of the enemy's artillery planted on top of it. But the chief of command, knowing what his soldiers could do, coldly turned his back on the messenger with the words: "Forward, then; let them first take the battery." And the record further tells us that this was done, not without great loss on the part of the attacking force, yet it done it was at last.

And so shall it be with the battle we have to fight, if we will but remember that our trials and difficulties, however great they may seem to us, are only such as thousands before us have suffered and surmounted. We have first to take the battery. The battery, the enemy's works against us is our passions. If we overcome our evil inclinations the victory is ours. "He only earns his freedom and existence who daily conquers them anew." The conflict with evil may be under discourteous conditions, but there is never any reason to despair. The steady progress of good and righteousness proves that the struggle is not made in vain. Remember, therefore, the words of St. Bernard: "That which tires the combatant crowns the conqueror."

How to Benefit a Drinking Man.

There is only one way to do it—take away the drink. It will not benefit him to give him money, for he will spend it for strong drink. The more money he has the more liquor he can buy. Money helps him downward. Give money to help him upward. Give money to his family and he has so much more to pay to the saloon. Even give them bread and clothing and he has less of these articles to purchase, and consequently more money with which to buy whisky. Give him work and his wages go to the saloon. Give him a good position in a shop or store and he barter's it for rum. Give him personal confidence and he betrays it. Give him time and he wastes it. Give him friends and he goes back on them. Give him credit and he abuses it. Give him a holiday and he uses it for revelry and shame. Give him eight hours instead of ten for a day's labor and he has two hours more for debauch in the saloon. But give him total abstinence and he is saved. This will benefit him and this alone. It will benefit his family, too. Just in proportion as it benefits him will his family be benefited. They thrive as he thrives; both rise together. Abstinence lifts them all into a higher and nobler life, as indignation crowds them into degradation and woe.—Sacred Heart Review.

Suffered with Neuralgia.

Wardville, Ont., Jan. 9, 1897. "I had neuralgia of the stomach and all through my system. I procured a bottle of Hood's Sarsaparilla and a bottle of Hood's Pills and these medicines did me more good than anything else I have ever taken. I heartily recommend them to all."—Festive Winger.

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OUR BOYS AND GIRLS.

The disobedient child is the twig which is growing up tall and strong into the tree, which can never be bent to obey the law of God or man.

The New Year's Gerdon.

What does this New Year hold for me, What is its largest life to be, What shall my eyes ere its waning see, As the morning succeeds the morrow? Shall peace or strife fill each passing day, Life's sky be sunlit or sober gray? Will flowers or thorns strew my future way? Does the New Year bring joy or sorrow? Ah! the New Year holds whatever I list; And my way will be dark with the shrouding mist. Or bright, by the golden sunshine kissed. Just as I choose to make it. We fill as we please all the years that run, Cloud them with rain or gold them with sun; Life's truest joy dwells in duty done. Its great burdens those who forsake it.—Rev. Arthur B. O'Neill, C. S. C.

The Gift of Appreciation.

There is, perhaps, no other natural gift that brings so much genuine pleasure to its possessor as does the sense of appreciation. It teaches us, or points out to our understanding, the beauties of Nature that are all about us, glids the commonplace, and emphasizes the joys of life and of living. Appealing to us through all our senses, the pleasures that it brings are ceaseless and unfulfilling. Seen through appreciative eyes the beauties of life overshadow and eclipse the homely, rough places. There is an attractive side to everything, and this an appreciative mind will see first, and longest remember.—February Ladies' Home Journal.

How a Fraud Was Set Right.

There is a story told of the Abbe Liszt, the great musician, which shows how good natured a man he was. A young pianist was "touring" through Germany, and drawing full houses by announcing herself as a pupil of Liszt's, which was not the truth. At one town she discovered, to her horror, that amongst the new arrivals was no less a person than Liszt himself. This was on the day before her concert. What to do she knew not. Her deceit would be found out, and she might be punished severely for her fraud. At last she made up her mind to see Liszt and confess her sin. Obtaining an introduction, she flung herself at the Abbe's feet and told him with tears how she had been led to gain a living by her gift of music; how she had failed until she decided to describe herself as his pupil, from which moment success had waited upon her.

"Well, well," said the old man, "dry your eyes and let us see what can be done. Just let me hear you play one of the pieces you are to play to-morrow night." And the girl played as well as she could in the circumstances, the master correcting her here and there, and giving her valuable hints as she played. And when it was all over, he said: "Now, my child, you have had a lesson, and you are a pupil of Liszt." Overwhelmed with gratitude, she knew not what to say, when Liszt asked if her program had been printed.

"Not yet," replied the pianist. "Then," added Liszt, "announce that you will be assisted by your master, and that the last piece will be played by the Abbe Liszt." There was forgiveness for you.

Watching a Philosopher.

When Sir Isaac Newton went to live in Leicester Place, his next-door neighbor was a widow lady, who was much puzzled by the little she observed of the philosopher. One of the fellows of the Royal Society of London called upon her one day, when, among other domestic news, she mentioned that some one had come to reside in the adjoining house, who she felt sure was a poor crazy gentleman.

"He diverts himself," she said, "in the oddest way imaginable. Every morning when the sun shines so brightly that we are obliged to draw the front of a tub of soap suds, and he occupies himself for hours, blowing soap bubbles through a common clay pipe, and intently watches them till they burst. He is doubtless now at his favorite amusement," she added. "Do come and look at him."

The gentleman smiled and then went upstairs, when, after looking through the window into the adjoining yard, he turned and said:

"My dear madam, the person whom you suppose to be a poor lunatic is no other than the great Sir Isaac Newton, studying the refraction of light upon thin plates, a phenomenon which is beautifully exhibited upon the surface of a common soap bubble."

This anecdote serves as an excellent moral not to ridicule what we do not understand, but gently and industriously to gather wisdom from every circumstance around us.

Dogs Keep Them Warm.

Thiers, an old town in the Auvergne, is famous for its steel knife industry. The town has retained much of its romantic medieval character. Its streets are narrow and crooked, and the manufacture of knives, the principal industry of the town, is not carried on in modern factories, but in ancient, small buildings along the little river Duroelle, which furnishes the power for the industrial township. Curious and unique, as everything else in Thiers, is the method of work of the people engaged in grinding the knives.

The grinders, men and women, lay stretched out on wooden planks, over which they sometimes throw sheepskins

to soften the boards. Head, shoulders and arms reach over the end of the board, and with their hands they hold unceasingly the rough steel blades upon the big grindstone which revolves beneath them by means of a powerful yet simple transmission. It is a very comical aspect to see these people at work, particularly because every one of the workmen has a small, long-haired dog, who serves as a sort of live stove. During the long winter in the mountains a body stretched out at full length suffers much from cold in these ill-protected mills, and since it is not possible for the workman to warm himself by a change of position or by moving his limbs, this peculiar expedient has been adopted in Thiers. The dogs are well trained to their office. One whistle of the master calls them up, and a single turn of the body indicates to them where they have to lie down to give new warmth to the body of their master.—Philadelphia Press.

Self-Advancement.

It seems very strange that our young people care so little about advancing themselves when they see others eager, anxious, risking every obstacle to attain a higher plane than a medium. So many of our young people are content with the lot cast out to them. They are fairly well done for, and reason that it is best to let well enough alone. Well, in one light, that is sensible, but if we all acted on that plan what would become of the art, science and literature of the present century? Surely someone must tread on the unbroken paths. Then why not, instead of existing performing the duty allotted us, probably conscientiously, let us think of new ventures, let us pursue study. Our mind will be lighter when alive, and we will have no time to indulge in that indescribable feeling, which is known as the "blues." After the day's duties are over, an instructive book, a discussion on current affairs, political or otherwise, a few minutes to music, will serve to lighten and brighten our pathway of life, and to make use of the intellect God has given us.

It is hard to settle one's self to study after a day's toil, if all look upon it as a duty, but if we surround it with all the allurements of pleasure then how much easier it is and what rapid progress we make. Four or five young girls of my acquaintance have formed a reading club. They meet once a week at the home of one of the young ladies and their program includes writings from the different authors, interspersed with music, and, of course, talk. Each member, under penalty of a fine, must commit to memory a quotation from some standard writer each week. The idea is a splendid one, and has brought pleasure and profit to its supporters. "Life is too short" for such drudgery. Is it not worse drudgery to let the gifts God has given us be dormant till too late, and then we cannot conform ourselves to either pleasure or pain, but grumble and fret. If our education leans on in misfortune or sickness. There is a pleasure in a mind stored with knowledge; it has an abundance of resources.—Index.

"Kiss me, Father."

It is told of the late Mgr. d'Hulst that while he was watching at the bedside of an apprentice boy stricken with black smallpox the little sufferer said, "Kiss me, Father." The young priest bent forward and kissed the forehead, dark, swollen and covered with loathsome pustules.

Towards the close of his life, with the heavy duties of his ministry devolving upon him, Mgr. d'Hulst's favorite companions were the youths of the Institut Catholique, to whom he stood in the light of a father as well as of a rector. He loved them as Lacordaire loved the boys of the Sorbonne. The last confession he heard was that of one of these youths. It was on the day of All Souls. He had just said his last Mass, but had not yet left the church, when a fair haired youth came forward and asked him to hear his confession. Mgr. d'Hulst was then almost in a dying state. He staggered a few steps, and motioned to the youth to kneel beside him on the stones. The confession over, he was seen to lean forward and speak a few words to the penitent and then trace over his head a large sign of the cross. This was his last absolution. Three days later he was dead.

A Saint for the United States.

No saint as yet represents the United States on the calendar of those formally canonized by the Pope. But this void is soon to be filled. On the morning of December 15 the Sacred Congregation of Rites held a session in Rome, at which the introduction of the cause for the beatification of the servant of God, John Neponumee Neumann, fourth Bishop Philadelphia, Pa., was specifically discussed. It is nearly ten years since Archbishop Ryan made formal application at Rome for the consideration of the claims of his predecessor for canonization. The investigation has since progressed satisfactorily and so has the first stage of the judicial proceedings that will determine the case favorably or otherwise. The Pope alone can declare any one canonized, and this is done only after a long and extended series of investigations that conclusively prove his right to be numbered among the heroes of the first rank in the battle for salvation.

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CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN.

There are some men and some women in whose company we are always at our best. While with them we cannot think mean thoughts or speak ungenerous words. Their mere presence is elevation, purification, sanctity. All the best steps in our nature are drawn out by their interest, and pardonably so, when they go to a concert or any other form of entertainment with a young man who constantly makes mistakes in little things. The small rules and laws which must be observed on all social occasions are not to be frowned down; they are important, and a young fellow makes a great mistake when he considers them beneath him or unworthy of his attention.—Edward W. Bok in February Ladies' Home Journal.

Know the "Small Graces" of Life.

Young men should not get the idea that to know the "small graces of life" is useless or frivolous. What we call the "social graces" are very valuable to a young man. That is the great trouble with young fellows who are earnest: they are too earnest, and upon all occasions. They can have a high aim in life, a lofty purpose, and yet not close themselves up to all social pleasures or amenities. Girls feel uncomfortable, and pardonably so, when they go to a concert or any other form of entertainment with a young man who constantly makes mistakes in little things. The small rules and laws which must be observed on all social occasions are not to be frowned down; they are important, and a young fellow makes a great mistake when he considers them beneath him or unworthy of his attention.—Edward W. Bok in February Ladies' Home Journal.

Brothers.

There is such a thing as a perfect young man; I know there is, for I know some; I see them every morning at Mass; and I thank our good God for it—for the privilege of seeing them. I thank Him almost as much for the young men as for the Mass, for the young men are a living, breathing human example of the efficacy of the Mass. How I love to look at them! What faces they have! One can read whole volumes of trials and struggles and victories in their faces; and the joy and peace of such victories. Yes, that is the best of all, the peace, the freedom from the agony of unrest which torments the pursuers of pleasure—the pleasures which wither almost with the possession. These young men have pleasures, I am certain, for I see nothing of sourness in their faces. They are happy, but they derive their pleasure rather from indulging themselves as little as possible than as much as is the common rule. I can see it in their faces; and the pleasure of a victory over a sally of temper and over a desire for having one's judgment sought after and followed, which can not be hid but comes out on the face and breaks out in the child like laugh, and the simplicity and straight forwardness and fearlessness of manner, which marks off these young men from the common crowd.

I see them and am encouraged on my own way, for example is the most powerful human agent. These young men are what we call Brothers; and I can't help thinking as I look at them how few Brothers there are and why such is the case. Why are there not more Brothers? And why are the ones we have, so little appreciated? For surely they are not valued at their real worth or people could not so easily criticize them. I hear them criticized with as much and sometimes more sharpness than the young men, who waste themselves and their substance on women and poker and beer and who are scarcely of more good than to give occupation to their mothers and sisters in cooking for them and darning their stockings.

"I won't send my boy to the Brothers' to be pumded around and abused; I'll send him to the free school," and so they do, some of them, send their precious sons to the schools, where the chief ambition of their teachers is to draw their salaries, and the crop of scorners increases apace and we wonder how it comes. I tell some of these people that if the Brothers are such barbarous people they should have them—the Brothers—arrested and fined and imprisoned.

It looks to me sometimes like jealousy or envy or of the Brothers—so evident superiority that prompts some of the ill-natured criticism. They will find fault with the Brothers, but will not take the pains to go and do something better themselves.

The Brothers, like the Holy Mass are a "hidden fountain, and many people pass by that way and see them not." But happy are the people who do see them because they the people must be more or less like the Brothers in order to see them as they are.

I would have more young men to be Brothers. And why don't you? Because they have to give up so much. After all what is it they give up? They give up their company and poker and their beer, but what of that? That sort of pleasure will grow tasteless after a time in spite of you; your gambling will drive you crazy, so you can't do anything else but gamble, and you will know it and deplore it, and will not be able to help it, in

other words it will make of you a miserable slave; and the pleasures of indiscriminate, lawless love will sicken and disgust you after a time; and your appetite for beer will run away from your ability to buy it, and then what will you do? Tramp? That profession is crowded, too, and you will be jostled and your feelings will be hurt, in it as anywhere else. Better try the good, old-fashioned profession of religion. It is not crowded and its pleasure increases with the indulgence, but will not sicken or disgust, nor devour your substance without adequate return; and it will set such a stamp of satisfaction on your face as that many will envy you and be the better for looking at you. And your troubles will be lessened; the cut of your clothes will be set and the style will not bother you; your occupation will be set and how to "kill time will not bother you; your associates will know how to take care of their own affairs and they will not bother you; and you will know how to manage your own business, which will occupy all your time and leave you no room or time to be fretting; and your good life will prepare you for death, and death will not bother you. And how can you be otherwise than happy? Does not such a long array of good things tempt you? Would not you give considerable to have your neighbors trained to let you alone altogether and not advise or criticize you at all? You can accomplish this result by learning to let them alone, according to the great Mystic of Kempis: "If thou canst let men alone, they will let thee alone to do whatever thou wilt." (Book I, chapter xxi of the "Imitation"). But there is a mystical meaning to that, which you will not be able to catch without help, and you can only get the necessary help by living the life that the Brothers live; by living it, mind you, and not by reading or dreaming about it or finding fault with those who are living a life you know nothing of. Moreover, the religious life will make you strong, with such strength that you will not be afraid to do what you know you should do, your comrades' opinion to the contrary notwithstanding.

Don't talk to me about a "vocation"; your vocation is to save your soul; and you can do it a deal more surely in religion than in your present way. May be you have a "call" if you could spare the time to listen to it.

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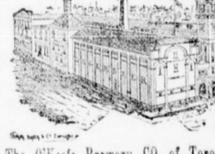
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