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The shepherd heart asserts itself. Out to night and danger he goes. The sheep is found and the joy is proportionate to the strength of the shepherd's attachment, the perils of the search and the value of the sheep. So each sinner and publican is still one of the favored flock, only astray, imperiled. To search, find and restore such a one is a divine work, in which angels would find engage—in the consummation of which they are at least permitted to rejoice.

See the progression. It is from the inanimate to the animate—from the inanimate to the human. A son in a noble and wealthy family, chafing under parental restraint, or having exhausted local means of dissipation and sighing for fresh fields of voluptuous conquest, inconsiderately requests an antemortem division of the estate. The indulgent father makes it. Perhaps he has no recourse; parental authority is at an end. The son's heart is callous to the appeal of love; sin has incited him. The guileless youth, the father's pride and joy, has grown the gruff, defiant rebel. The amenities of home are insufferable.

In the shortest time possible the infuriated youth tracked the sparkling gems and golden bars, his patrimony in portable form, easily convertible into coin of any country, in the pockets of a money-belt, and, strapping it about his person, he went abroad—perhaps without even a ceremonious farewell.

He wasted his substance. He tossed it in the air (literally) as the farmer does the wheat when he will separate it from the chaff. He lived dissolutely. He was insalvable (literally) while his infatuation lasted. The coincident of the devoured (literally) patrimony and the universal and extreme famine puts a pathetic touch to sorry plight of the dissolute spendthrift. He was left behind (literally) behind in the race. He never, in spite of his infuriated effort and extravagance, so much as reached the glittering goal of his wanton ambition. The gay, reveling party that kept him company while his means held out, swept past him thanklessly and disdainfully when his once plethoric purse was at last empty. He awoke as from a dream—alone! penniless!

With the pertinacity of despair he glued (literally) himself to a foreign land-owner, whom in his prosperity he would have dubbed a "gentle dog"—with whom he would have no intercourse, much less receive a favor from him. In his despair he cleaves to the foreigner so tenaciously that he cannot be shaken off. A superlatively disgusting and degrading task is given him—of fensive to all the senses, repugnant to all the ideas of ceremonial cleanliness instilled in his mind from boyhood. So sharp were the pangs of hunger that he kept coveting the swine their feed—the loathsome pods he threw down before them. What humiliation, sorrow, despair are compressed in the five words "No man gave unto him!" At last the hypnotic spell of sin is broken. Self-consciousness, self-control are regained. Memory paints the ancestral home. The flows blessings brighter. What abundance, comfort, care there extends to the most abject menial! The veriest scullion has such a superabundance that he can pose as a benefactor before the tramp.

"I will!" What a battle-royal has preceded and made possible those talismanic words! Fear, shame, pride have been met and conquered. "I have sinned" is the correlate of "I will arise." Confession absolute and frank, without apology or plea in abatement, shall be made. The penalty

Democratic Watchman.

Bellefonte Pa., May 6, 1904.

PLEASANT FIELDS OF HOLY WRIT

Save for my daily range Among the pleasant fields of Holy Writ, I might despair —Tennyson

THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSON.

Second Quarter. Lesson VII. Luke XV. 11-24
Sunday, May, 15th, 1904.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

The parable of the Prodigal Son was one of three spoken in answer to the Pharisaical murmuring against Jesus' familiarity with publicans and sinners. With consummate power they set forth the Savior's acknowledged mission in which he and all heaven delighted; namely, the recovery of the lost.

If a woman loses a coin, part of her dowry, does she despise it because it is lost, because maybe it is trampled in the mire somewhere, or is corroded by exposure? Not a bit of it! On the contrary, her heart is set upon recovery. She lights her hand-lamp and thrusts it into every recess, and as a last resort, she sweeps the floor, and passes the litter through her hands. When the coin is found her delight bears some proportion to the intrinsic value of the coin and to the length and arduousness of the search. So the apostate sons of Abraham are still dear to God; the publicans, too, who unpatritically make merchandise out of Israel's servitude and fallen state.

It is the sorry plight, the dangerous predicament of the lost sheep, which touches the faithful shepherd's heart to pity. It is difficult for us to appreciate the strong bond which maintains between the keeper and his flock. In this instance the true shepherd, who is no mere hireling, sees in imagination his dear lost sheep on the mountain, out by stones, lacerated by thorns, until its snowy fleece is dyed in its own blood. Its piteous bleating haunts his very dreams.

and consequences of apostasy, disinherited, servitude instead of sonship, shall be assumed without a syllable of complaint.

It is done. But how different the sequel from that which the prodigal anticipated! He is met long before he can reach the door where he expected to make his confession and prefer this noblest request. The father's compassion, how admirable! Kiss of reconciliation, how sweet! The first robe, richly dyed and embroidered, is cast about the bare and sunburnt shoulders. The signet of rank is placed upon the wan finger. Bare feet, mark of servitude, are shod with the sandals of a free man. Now follows the joyous banquet.

The murmuring Pharisees cannot but see themselves portrayed in the elder son, with his ill-formed, ill-natured protest. The true Messiah has come to heal the sick, raise the dead, find the lost. Will the hale, the unstrayed, those who do not need his kindly offices, begrudge them to their brother, whose plight is so pitiable and desperate? The climax is reached, the plea unanswerable.

THE TEACHER'S LANTERN

The primary use of the parable of the Prodigal Son must not be lost sight of in its evangelical and modern applications. By it Jesus sought to justify his kindly and familiar hearing toward publicans and sinners, at which the Pharisees and scribes were so outraged. He showed the veriest renegade of Israel as still the object of Divine compassion, his restoration possible—a thing He earnestly sought.

In its universal, gospel application this "pearl of parables" pictures sin as a revolt against a beneficent Heavenly Father, whose law is right and just and good.

Here is mirrored the freedom of the will. The son has his own way. He is not let or hindered, except by the pleadings of love and its faithful warnings.

The folly of sin has no more startling exemplification. True as startling; drawn to life! How swift the "desensus Averno!" How soon the fool and his money are parted! How irrevocable the last estate! Remediless! In the mire with swine!

Who shall ever number the sinners to whom this parable has been the "open sesame" to a new life? Blessed be the day in which it was spoken! "I will arise!" "Father, I have sinned!" The Heavenly Father meets the returning prodigal in the way.

"Lost!" "Dead!" Here is no minifying of the prodigal's fallen state. Lost to God; lost to heaven; dead in trespasses and sins!

The far country is not a matter of geography. It is expressive of estrangement, of alienation from God.

The prodigal's theology was bad, though it showed well the strength of his compunction. It would be impossible for him to ever be his father's hired servant. He is son or nothing.

"Sinned heaven-high and in thy sight. Here the penitent is strictly orthodox. The turpitude of sin consists in this, that it is done against God. Judah's penitent king knew this when he cried, "Against Thee, There only, have I sinned!" With this

truth Joseph armed himself when he cried, "How can I commit this sin against my God?"

Solomon is the example for all time of the unsatisfying nature of sin. He drank every cup of joy, but heard his dying protestation of the inadequacy of the sensuous world to satisfy an immortal: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

Flames Damage Union Station:

Pennsylvania Railroad Company Sustains a Loss at Harrisburg. Valuable Records Burned.

HARRISBURG, April 30.—The Pennsylvania railroad union station was damaged by fire to the extent of \$75,000 to \$100,000 tonight. All the records of the company, including highly valuable blue prints, are included in the loss.

Traffic was delayed about three hours. The train despatchers' office was destroyed and to facilitate traffic temporary offices were established at North street, this city, a branch intersection.

The fire is supposed to have originated from crossed electric wires in an elevator shaft on the third floor.

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