

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

From the New York Observer.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

BY REV. HENRY M. GROUT, D. D.

MARCH 23.—Christian Diligence.—2 Tues. 3:1-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Be not weary in well doing.—2 Thes. 3:13.

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was probably written not long after the First, and from Corinth, in the same place.

The occasion of it seems to have been some intelligence which had reached the Apostle of certain disorderly things which were on the increase among them. These were not new. The Apostle had taken note of them in his First Epistle. The disorders had their origin in part in an expectation they had somehow come to entertain, that the Day of the Lord was close upon them. This had made them restless in feeling, and led a part of their number to neglect their common avocations, to surrender to idleness and its always attendant evils.

The main purpose of the Epistle was to correct these erroneous impressions and to counteract these evil tendencies. It is largely made up of consolations, instruction and admonitions. Of the admonitions some of the most important are found in this, the third chapter. We have here:

1. An intimation of the value of intercessory prayer.—Paul begins by asking his Thessalonian brethren to pray for him, self and his fellow-workers (v. 1); and soon goes on to utter his own prayer for them (v. 5).

Two things, very near to his heart, were that the gospel might be glorified in many conversions, and that those converted might be sustained in love to God and Christ-like patience. To secure these he was unwearied in labors; but, because the Lord is faithful, he had great confidence in prayer. He would have the prayers of all around. His "Brethren, pray for us," was not a heartless, formal request.

2. A lesson respecting church discipline.—When Paul was at Thessalonica he was "gentle" in his ways, "even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thes. 2:7). But here he assumes a different manner: "Now we command you." There must needs be sternness sometimes. Three tending evils must be met with vigor. It may never be our duty to command; but it may often be our duty to take a firm stand, to speak plainly, and to act with decision.

That concern which the Apostle speaks is the disorderly walk of certain of the Thessalonian Christians. There were some who did not, as good soldiers, keep in the Christian line. They broke from the ranks. They failed to walk after the tradition, or instructions he had given them, and that, notwithstanding his previous exhortations (1 Thes. 4:11, 12).

What shall a church do in such a case of persistent inobedience? Paul says, "Warn the unruly" (1 Thes. 5:14). But what if this is ineffectual? "Withdraw yourselves!" We should give no countenance to the wrong-doing; if the case is so serious as to require it we must separate the offender from the church, as unfit to represent the gospel. But further on, we are reminded that all this is to be in no harsh spirit, but in a fraternal way, and with a purpose, if possible, to bring the offender back (v. 15).

3. An example of Christian diligence.—The special form of disorder, just now rife in the church at Thessalonica, was that of idleness. Looking for the near coming of Christ, some neglected their usual callings, "working not at all" (v. 11).

It is likely that Paul had anticipated some of this; for, referring back to the time when he first preached to them, he reminds them of the example he then set them; an example of self-support by painful labor. He "ate no man's bread for naught, but wrought with labor and travail night and day" (v. 8). To see the force of this allusion, note that his diligence at that time was not required of him. He had the power, or right, to look to them for support. The laborer in spiritual things is worthy of his hire; as the Master himself had taught (Matt. 10:9). But, for their sakes he chose to surrender his right. By that example he shows to us, as he did to them, how the gospel regards industry. It puts honor upon it.

To earn one's bread by some form of labor is Christian. Of the nobility of manual labor, and of its compatibility with the highest mental and moral and spiritual worth we have a demonstration in the example, not of Paul only, but of the Carpenter's Son also.

4. Stern law for the idle.—Rightly to read the tenth verse one must take care to put the emphasis on the right word. It is not said that, if, for any such reason as that by age or bodily weakness or mental defect, or the impossibility for a time of finding ought to do, one does not work, neither should he eat. The

emphasis is on would or will. "If any will not work."

But if this is generous toward such as would gladly earn their own bread, it is stern toward those who will not. The divine law is that in the sweat of his face man shall eat bread. In his present state this is a beneficent law. Man is better and happier for it. And it is a law which the constitution of things measurably compels men to keep. He who, by theft or fraud, or gambling, hopes to evade it, sooner or later finds that he has made a mistake. Often such men come to want; or find that theirs are, after all, the hardest of toils; or that their bread is not sweet to their taste, and nourishing to their life.

The verse, too, is a declaration respecting our duty to the lazy about us; the able-bodied tramps from house to house, or the wasteful poor who are content to live upon charity. It is a fair question if the gospel does not forbid the support of them at our own, or public or church expense. Ill-advised charity is no kindness. To encourage dependence is to inflict an injury. And yet we are to take care that our withholding has not another and only selfish motive.

5. A sharp word for busybodies.—Two things were reported concerning those who had broken out of the Christian ranks at Thessalonica: first, they were idle; and secondly, they were "busybodies." A busybody is a meddler in other people's affairs. This is a fault which naturally goes with idleness. People who have little work of their own to do, or who neglect that which they have, are commonly meddlers in the affairs of others, free with counsel and criticism, tattlers and scandal-mongers from house to house. The Apostle's cure for meddlesomeness is quiet work; the spirit of independence which would eat one's own bread and not another's.

6. A comprehensive rule for all.—Many interpretations have been given of the exhortation to be unwearied in well-doing. It may mean, "after all, do not deny yourself the good of giving, though others are all deserving." But the more general sense is perhaps the true: "Be not weary of any and every form of well-doing appointed you; make it a Christian principle to earn your own bread, whatever others do; and to discharge every duty Providence or the divine word or Spirit may lay upon you. Never give over."

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

1. It was intended that working and praying should go together; neither alone will procure the full blessing.

2. Not to find some way of testifying against a brother's disorderly walk is to be in a measure responsible for the harm it does; we can always give at least the testimony of a better life.

3. There is something bracing in the example of good and faithful men. Much of the Bible teaching is by example. It is a kind of teaching particularly suited to the young, and which few or none ever outgrow.

4. The minister has a right to a good support from the church and congregation over which God has set him.

5. The men who seek to get bread or wealth without honest work, or without giving a fair equivalent for what they get, violate the divine order; what they get will not enrich or satisfy; somehow it will prove a curse.

6. The man or woman who gives nothing toward the support of the worship he attends, eats others' bread, and not his own. And rarely does such bread feed the soul.

7. When Christ shall come is not revealed; it is our business to watch and pray and work up to the day and hour of his appearing.

Making Cremation Esthetic.

It is not a disagreeable journey on which we now propose to take our readers. It is to visit the final disposition of a friend's remains in the ideal crematory of the future. Our friend had died and through the usual announcements we learn that the last rites will be performed in the columbarium at a given hour. Repairing thither at the appointed time, we passed through a grove of stately trees, the soothing murmurs of whose rustling leaves bring peace and quiet into the hearts of those who mourn and gather to pay the last tribute. Within the grove stands a massive building of gray masonry, whose architecture shows no striving after ornamental effect, and whose solid proportions give a sense of eternal permanency. A few small windows in the frieze which crowns the walls do not destroy this effect, and their plain stained glass clashes in no wise with the harmony of color between the sky, the trees and the gray stone of the temple of rest. About the Doric pillars of its portico green vines twine fondly, as though they, too, would do their share in robbing death of all its hideousness.

To this place loving hands have borne the body of our friend. No coffin lends its horror to the journey from this earthly home to here, where eternal sleep awaits him. A Flower-strewn bier gives poetic carriage from this shore and

final journey. Entering the broad portal, the soft deep notes of an organ charm the ear. The eye takes in a most imposing sight. The entire interior of the building is one impressive room, with walls, floor, ceiling, all of white and spotless marble. The view is not a dazzling one, for the light is subdued and comes in varied color through the windows at the top. On either side of the chamber stand a few memorial statues—real works of art—each one of them keeping alive the memory of some one who in his life was either good or great. Many of the marble slabs in the sides and floor of the temple bear in plain, sunken letters a name and two dates. Behind or beneath them are niches containing urns, where rest the pure white ashes of the beloved dead.

On a simple dais in the middle of the room lies the body of our beloved friend. The hour has come, and about it are gathering those who knew and loved him while he lived. The scene, the surroundings, the subdued music of the organ, the absence of everything to jar upon the taste or senses, brings on a mood of solemn contemplation. No thought of physical corruption jars upon our memories of the dead. The opening words of the speaker are said, a hidden choir harmoniously chants of hope and life, and now the end has come. With the words "ashes to ashes," a white pall is thrown over the dais, and we looked upon our friend for the last time. The dais noiselessly sinks from sight, a short hour is spent in listening to a funeral oration, or in contemplation, until the dais, still covered with the pall, rises from below. The pall removed, we see upon the dais an urn—provided beforehand, and containing the ashes of our friend. This is now sealed into one of the niches, and the ceremony is over.

American and British Railway.

A STRIKING CONTRAST PRESENTED BY THE EXPERIENCE OF A SOUTH TRAVELER.

(From the Scotsman, Edinburgh, Jan. 13.)

SIR.—Circumstances of friendship called me suddenly in October last to the Northwest of America. The summer came by telegram on a Thursday. On Friday I secured, by the same means, a berth in the celebrated steamer Alaska, which left Liverpool next forenoon; and in seven days one hour from Queenstown I landed at New York. It was a fine Sunday morning, and having like all the rest of the passengers, "checked" my baggage to the hotel I intended to go to, a friend and myself walked up town. After booking our names and reading some letters and having a look at the papers, we proceeded to our apartments, where we found the baggage awaiting us. The cost of "checking"—which in my case amounted to fifty cents (or 2s.) for three pieces—was afterwards included in the hotel bill.

Two days later I left for the West by the limited express of the Pennsylvania Central Railroad. My ticket, which I had secured the day before at one of the railway offices in Broadway, not far from the hotel, cost \$20 to Chicago, with \$10 extra for the use of sleeping and dining cars; and my baggage, it need scarcely be said, was checked from the hotel in New York to Chicago, and charged for in the bill as usual. The distance by this road is a little under 1000 miles, which was done in twenty-five hours, and thirty minutes and the cost was less than for a corresponding distance at home. But in the manner of traveling the difference is overwhelming in favor of America. The car by which I journeyed was built of mahogany inlaid with graceful floral decorations, and furnished in the most sumptuous manner. Heated by concealed steam pipes, a comfortable temperature was maintained night and day, and although snow streaked the Alleghenies, and smaller streams were covered with ice, nobody among the passengers seemed to think rugs, &c., a necessary portion of their traveling impedimenta. Our hideous lead footwear were conspicuous by their absence. At either end of the car were spacious lavatories and relative conveniences—one for ladies, the other for gentlemen, equipped with soap, clean towels, brushes, combs, &c., and a filter with fresh drinking water. From the time of leaving New York till arrival at Chicago, no passenger need leave the cars. Attached to the sleeping is a dining car, equally sumptuously fitted and also a smoking car, both of which are specially reserved for those who pay the extra \$10, and which, therefore, in reality constitute first-class accommodation. In the dining car, at \$1 each, one can have three meals daily, from a bill of fare that erred only in its profuse abundance and variety of well-cooked food. The use of stimulants seems to be falling into discredit among the better class of Americans, for neither on this occasion nor afterwards did any wine, beer, or spirits appear on the tables, nor did I ever hear them asked for. Afterwards, those who felt disposed that way retired to the smoking car;

but the sleeping car contained a small, neatly fitted up cabinet, where such as sought private conversation over a cigar might rest.

In short, the new first-class American cars exceed by far in elegance, convenience, and comfort the rare Pullmans seen on this line, and I venture to say no European monarch travels by rail so sumptuously as our republican cousins.

At dawn I saw from my comfortable bed, in which everything was scrupulously fresh and clean, that we were gliding, with scarce any vibration, over the prairies of Illinois; and on reaching Chicago I checked my baggage to the Grand Pacific, whither I was carried by one of the hotel omnibuses, and where I found it shortly afterwards. Subsequently, in traveling through the State of Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota, for considerable distance by team, I had frequent occasions to "check" my heavy baggage by rail to various points in advance on my route, and never in a single instance did I experience any difficulty in procuring delivery of it on the production of my "checks."

On my return at the end of November, and having to use for rugs, &c., and in the comfortable cars, I checked all my baggage, save a dressing bag, from a station not far from the Manitoba frontier, straight through to New York. On my arrival there three days afterwards, instead of "checking" my baggage to the hotel where I intended to put up, I "checked" it to the dock of the steamer by which I was to sail the following morning, and there, on driving from the hotel, I found it awaiting me at the shore end of the gangway as I was about to embark—never having once seen or troubled myself about it since. I left Lockfield, 2000 miles away, and having changed cars and lines of road twice—at St. Paul and Chicago.

Now, mark the contrast. I arrive at Liverpool, give up my baggage to the Northwest Railway Company, without any voucher or check being interchanged, and proceed to Lime street by a suburban railway from the dock gates in evil-smelling carriages which my American fellow-travelers scornfully stigmatized as "burks," and into which we were locked like criminals. It was a wet, gloomy day, and after my pleasant American experience I felt like one who had "come down in the world." On afterwards applying for my baggage at Lime street station, I was not only obliged to produce my card as evidence of identity, but I had to go down into a deep dark cellar to point out the packages; and after all this unnecessary bother I had to pay more than at New York, where baggage was carried double the distance. But the charge is a mere secondary consideration. It is the restless anxiety and worry our system—or rather entire want of system needlessly impose on you from starting till arriving at your destination that is so provoking.

And it may not be inappropriate here to remark on the gratuitous force presented at the examination of passengers' baggage by the Custom House of officers. Seeing that cigars are dearer and infinitely worse in America than at home, and that no sane person would think of smuggling a bottle of "old Bourbon," what can be the object of exposing passengers to the humiliating ordeal of opening and turning over the contents of their portmanteaus in a windy dock warehouse, unless it be from sheerly stupid traditional custom; and to furnish employment to a set of seedy persons whose appearance and manners are not calculated to predispose the stranger in favor of the country that welcome him in this fashion. Of course nothing contraband was discovered on this occasion; and never as I was told by one of the dock officials, who evidently regarded the searchers as a questionable "lot." In a free-trade country, such as ours, this rigorous examination of baggage is a relic of barbarism; and the saving of the State from the abolition of these Custom House myriads would I am sure, far more than compensate for any possible loss to the revenue from the act of an occasional ill-conditioned passenger.

Nothing would more effectually serve to hasten the conversion of our American cousins to the doctrine and practice of free trade than to welcome them to British soil without having to undergo the forbidding ordeal they have at present to encounter on landing on their own shores.

I respectfully submit the suggestion to the consideration of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But the most remarkable contrast was reserved for my return to Scotland. Traveling down by a night train, I was half frozen with cold till arrival at Carlisle, where we were detained an hour and a half for the London train, and where the fire in the waiting room merely served to remind one how cold, and comfortless the place was. Sleep was out of the question, and I landed at the Princes' street station stiff and almost numb with cold. At the hotel

close by, I repaired my reduced morale with a hot bath and a good Scotch breakfast. But why should one be thus tortured with cold and rendered miserable in deference to an ancient "use and wont" that is now becoming obsolete among all civilized people? In America, detained, you do not warm your toes at the fire, but sit in a comfortably warmed room, and you finish a journey of a thousand miles as fresh and comfortable as when you started.

The climax of my home experiences was reached at the Waverly station, to which I drove from the hotel directing the cabman to drive as near the Fifth Avenue platform as possible; and the porter who came up to take charge of my baggage was told to take it to the Fifth train. Having no loose change in my pocket, I asked the cabman to wait till I got my ticket. On my return, about five minutes afterwards, neither cab nor porter was visible anywhere; and failing to find the latter on the platform or any sign of my baggage one of the officials and myself explored the station, as far as time would permit, but without success. Having written that I would be home by that train, and leaving the cab fare with the official already referred to I came away with out my baggage, which only reached me two days afterwards. Had this contretemps occurred when on my way to emdark at Liverpool for America, it would not only have occasioned serious inconvenience and delay, but possibly the forfeiture of my passage money.

It is quite unnecessary to describe the American check system, with which all the traveling world is now familiar. I first became acquainted with it as a boy thirty-five years ago, since when I have been three times in the country, and have had on each occasion the more to admire this simple and admirable system, which saves one from the worst worries traveling here.

Americans cannot understand how we quietly submit to travel in carriages in which we are half frozen in winter, which are very stuffy in summer, and in which murder and other outrages may be committed with impunity, while our baggage system they regard as simply of barbaric.

It is because I agree with my American friends that I have noted down these reflections, in the hope that they may contribute in however small degree to rouse our railway directors to a recognition of the disgracefully uncomfortable and inconvenient accommodation afforded by them to the traveling public. I am, &c. SCOTTS.

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