

SUNDAY READING.

A CHILDS SERMON.

"YOU WON'T be going out to-night, will you John?" inquired a pale faced wife as her husband arose from the supper table.

"I must go," he said, "for they will expect me."

"But you will not be long?"

"I don't know; that depends—but you need not sit up burning candle for nothing, as you did last night."

"Very well, John. Say good-night to father, Ally, dear."

The child put up her mouth for a kiss. "Good-night dearie," she whispered, as he stooped to receive her caress; "come as quick as you can."

He was gone. Mrs. Ross washed up the cups and dishes, and put them, with Ally's help into the cupboard. Then she sat down to mend her husband's waistcoat. They were dull that night, and with reason; yet the child laid her head on her mother's knee, with a sense of rest and calm that seldom came to her in her father's presence. Soon she began to sing the little hymns which the children of her school had learned. Then kneeling to pray beside her mother's chair she began to say, "Bless dear father to-night, and bring him home safe, and help me to be a good child to him and mother—"

As these words rose to Heaven the door was opened by John Ross himself. Unperceived, he now waited in the shadow to hear the rest. It was not much, if measured by the number of its words—simply a similar prayer for other relatives, and that all-comprehensive one which Christ taught his disciples; but there was a beauty in the scene, a touching pathos in the voice, and above all a reality in the petition which compelled John Ross to bow his head and worship. Nor even when the last Amen was uttered, could he persuade himself to come forward and disturb them; for Ally began to talk about him, saying, "I do hope he will come before I go to sleep. Don't you mother?"

"Yes, darling; though I cannot expect it," said her mother.

The child waited a little while, and then said, "Is it far?"

Mrs. Ross had been sitting with her eyes fixed on the fire, thinking perhaps, of her blithe girlhood and earlier married life. She started now, asking, "Is what far?"

"The Welcome Home," where father goes every evening; don't you know?"

"Did she know? Ah, too well, too well! It required some effort to answer calmly, "Half a mile."

"And why does he never take us there?"

"It is not a place for little girls, dear child."

"Do people work there, then?"

"Work Oh, no."

"What do they do, mother?"

"They talk, Ally, and—and smoke."

"And I suppose," said Ally, gravely, "I suppose they kneel down, too?"

"What made you think so?"

"Because, when I stay awake till father comes home, I notice that he does not kneel down here; and so I think he must have said his prayers at 'The Welcome Home.'"

There was no answer; and in a few minutes Ally's little feet went pattering into an inner room, where after being snugly tucked up by her mother, she lay awake, listening for the step which was too often so long in coming.

Meanwhile the father sitting alone beside the hearth, mused over the little sermon which his child had, all unconsciously been preaching.

He would never forget that sermon while he lived; for it had awakened hopes and fears that had been sleeping within his breast for a long season. Ah, how many years had gone by, since he, John Ross, knelt down! and how long had he found his chief pleasure in a "home" in which prayer was never made, and in which he had wasted, night after night, the time and money which belonged of right to wife and child! Dear little Ally! could any society be more refreshing than this, when, the day's work is over the father rests beside his own dear hearth? Could any face gleam more brightly, could any smile be more sweet, than that which thou dost turn upon the beloved one in whom thou trusted? Impossible.

And the mother was she not worthy of his devotion? could she not listen while he read and explained to her how great events were transpiring on the solemn stage of time?

"I have been strangely blind," he began to say within himself that night; "but now I think I see. The dear child's words have opened my eyes.—Thank God for that!"

Truly, John Ross had small reason to trust himself!

In whom, then, could he trust? or where seek power to act rightly towards self, wife and child? Must he not, if he would be firm and strong, look upward? In other words must he not from that hour begin to "kneel down?"

Nearly a year has gone by, and still John Ross spends his evenings at home. The paleness has left his wife's face, and little Ally is making wonderful progress in arithmetic. If you could look in upon them to-night, you would see them all

lively in making a child's scrap-book; and you would hear a sound of ringing laughter, and a manly voice making funny speeches, and the mother's pretended chiding as the mirth delays the progress of the "work," and you would know at once that they were happy.

Happy they are; for the peace of God which passes all understanding dwells with them in their home, and being united to each other and to God, they fear no evil.

The Three Mellon Seeds.

IN August, 1899, three young gentlemen were dining at Crookford's, in London. It was getting late. They had sat long over their wine, and were boisterous in their mirth as they discussed the merits of a water-melon just set before them. In the midst of their talk a stranger—an elderly man, wearing a gray surtout closely buttoned up to the throat, and a shabby hat—entered the room, and seating himself at the end of an unoccupied table, ordered a mutton chop and a glass of ale. There was nothing sufficiently peculiar about him to attract observation. He might have been taken for a country magistrate or a county attorney. The expression of his countenance was serious, his manners were quiet, and his bearing that of gentle breeding.

As he was eating his chop and sipping his ale, apparently unconscious of the rather boisterous merriment of his neighbors, a melon-seed struck his right ear.—Raising his eyes, and seeing that the seed had been purposely though sportively snapped, and that no apology was made for the petty impertinence, he picked up the seed, and wrapping it in paper put into his pocket. Resuming his repast, a second seed shortly struck him on the right elbow. This was followed by a shout of laughter. With scarcely a change of the grave expression of his face, the stranger stooped, picked up the seed, and carefully deposited it with the first. A third followed, with some derisive word, as it sped from the half-drunk young blood, which, striking the stranger on the breast of his coat, was also picked up and put with the first two, when rising, walking calmly toward the offender, and unbuttoning his coat, he laid his card on the table. He had on an undress military suit. His card showed his rank.—Of course, there was no room for retreat. A lieutenant colonel in the British army requires no certificate of gentle blood.—No words passed, the young gentleman offered his own card in exchange, the officer returned to his meal, and the young men, somewhat sobered, shortly withdrew.

The next morning a note arrived at the aggressor's residence, conveying a challenge in form, and one of the melon seeds. The truth then flashed upon the challenged party, that his unwarrantable frolic was likely to be a somewhat serious affair. The code, however, admitted only duel or disgrace. Accepting the challenge, naming pistols as weapons, and gaining by toss the first shot, the young man fired and missed his opponent. The officer leveled his pistol in return, and sent the ball through the flap of the offender's ear—the place the first melon-seed, snapped the previous evening, had actually hit.

A month passed. Nothing more had been heard from the Colonel. He had satisfaction for an insult which however unprovoked, was thoughtless, and which it was hoped he had forgiven. Not so. Another note, presented by the same friend, conveying in courteous phrase a second challenge, with another of those accursed melon-seeds, arrived with the Colonel's apology on the score of ill-health for not sending it before. They met again. This time the fire was simultaneous. The aggressor's shot failed. The Colonel, on the contrary, shattered with his ball the right elbow of his antagonist.

This was terrible. The romance of exquisite skill was turned into a drama of slaughter. The third melon seed was to come, and it was that which aimed at the breast of the unoffending stranger, had struck, amid cheers of derisive laughter, directly above his heart. What instructor ever taught good behavior like this? The note arrived at last. It contained the melon-seed, but no challenge.

"And what, sir," asked the young man of the messenger, "am I to understand by this?"

"You will understand sir, that my friend forgives you. He is dead!"

As a young woman was walking along one evening, a man looked at her and followed her. The young woman said, "Why do you follow me?" He answered, "Because I have fallen in love with you." The woman said, "Why are you in love with me? My sister is much handsomer; she is coming after me; go and make love to her. The man turned back and saw a woman with an ugly face. Being greatly displeased, he turned to the first woman and said; "Why did you tell me a falsehood?" The woman answered, "Neither did you speak the truth; for if you were really in love with me, why did you leave me to look up my sister?"

An Indignant Landlord.

A SHORT time ago one of our citizens, who loves his jokes as well as folks generally do, had occasion to visit one of the small towns in the interior, and knowing that he would have considerable walking over muddy roads, he took with him a pair of long rubber boots.

He arrived at his destination about nine o'clock in the evening, and found upon inquiry that the only tavern in the place was half a mile from the station. No conveyance was to be had, and the road was muddy in the extreme. Congratulating himself on having his long boots, he set off, and found the mud in some places so deep that his boots were barely long enough. He reached the hotel at last, looking rather soiled about the feet. After supper he inquired the charge for the lodging.

"We usually charge," said the landlord, who also had some fun in his composition, "two shillings; but if a man goes to bed with such boots as them on (pointing to his customer's feet) we charge him four shillings."

"A very good idea, I should think," returned the traveler.

After an hour's conversation, the landlord showed him to his room, and they parted for the night, mutually pleased with each other.

The next morning our friend arose late, and inquiring for the landlord, learned that he had gone from home to attend some business. After breakfast he handed eight shillings to the landlord's wife, saying:

"There is four shillings for my supper and breakfast, and four shillings for my lodging."

"Two shillings is all we charge for lodging," said the landlady.

"Yes," returned the stranger, "under ordinary circumstances; but in this case four is not too much."

The stranger departed, and the landlady was deep in conjecture as to what could be the circumstance which required a man to pay a double price for his lodging. When her husband returned he asked:

"Has the man who slept in the front room come down yet?"

"Yes," answered the wife, "and he has gone away. He paid four shillings for his lodging, and said, under the circumstance, it was right."

The landlord rushed up stairs. His wife followed to learn the meaning of such strange proceedings, and found her husband with the bed clothes turned down, and her best bed looking more fit to plant potatoes in, than it did for any human being to sleep in.

"You saw the man when he came here last night?"

"Yes."

"You saw his boots, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well," said the landlord, "the scamp slept in 'em."

A few days after, the traveler, on his return home, put up at the same tavern. Neither himself nor the landlord said anything about the boots, which were in about the same condition as on the previous occasion, but the landlady looked daggers at him and eyed the boots with much anxiety. About ten o'clock he said he would retire.

"And, by the way, landlord," he said, with a merry twinkling in his eye, "what do you usually charge for lodging?"

"We charge," answered the landlord, with a tremendous emphasis, "two shillings and we don't allow folks to sleep in bed with their boots on."

"I'm glad to hear it. Show me to my room," and the traveler went to bed.

A Singular Umbrella.

A MAN was killed up in Forrest county, last week, by jabbing himself in the eye with an umbrella! He was intoxicated, and had a queer idea that his umbrella was a telescope; so, while he was endeavoring to examine the solar system through it, he fell over and the umbrella killed him. There is only one physician in Forrest county and his learning is not extensive. When the coroner held the inquest the doctor said that the ferruginous termination of the umbrella was projected by the dexter hand of the corpse in the optic nerve in the cavity of the cerebellum, whence glancing transversely to the epiglottis, it pierced the pericardium and caused a catapasm of the larynx; and this producing asphyxia as a natural result, clotted blood poured into the tympanum, the left lobe of the brain became irritated and suppurated in particles, and a suppression of the vital force ensued!

When the jury heard this they boiled with indignation, and the foreman said that if it was true, it was one of the greatest outrages ever perpetrated against a citizen of a free country. He said no man had a right to sell an umbrella with one of those things on it, especially to a man who was afflicted with such horrible diseases. The relatives of the deceased have sued the doctor for libel. They say they know that the dead man never had a single one of these things with hard names anywhere in among his internal economy, and they want the report contradicted, because people will think they are hereditary and will refuse to marry into the family.

Sparking Expenses.

A law suit recently took place before Justice McCartney, the case in point being Chas. Ackley against Michael O'Heara. The action was brought for use of room, lights, fuel, meals, &c., while defendant was "sparking" his Lucinda at plaintiff's house. The prosecution showed that defendant was at his house from three to five nights in a week and usually stayed until four o'clock in the morning, and sometimes till after breakfast; that he burned his light and wood and used his room, and naturally concluded, we take it, that as he had the fun to be derived from "sparking" at such late hours he ought to pay for the privilege. The case was exceedingly amusing, and of course attracted a large crowd of the "sparking" fraternity, who were interested peculiarly in the result of the action brought, as it might set a precedent whereby they might be called on to "fork over" a liberal allowance for light and fuel, if for nothing else; and they felt materially relieved, no doubt, when the justice rendered his verdict of "no cause for action."

No-fee the Stump.

A former Kentucky Congressman went out riding with his sweetheart, and, in his own words: "We were nearing a small skirt of woods, the horses at their best speed. I had determined in my own mind that when we reached a particular spot I would 'pop the question,' and so I did; but, would you believe me, she said no. Just as the word escaped her lips, I purposely ran the sleigh over a stump. Out we went, she to cool her person in the snow, and I to counteract the damage she had given my affections. Her first words, after getting back in the sleigh, were; 'Excuse me, sir, I wished to tell you to notice the stump.' We often refer to the sleigh ride, but to this day she believes it was an accident.

Signs.

It is a good sign to see a man do an act of charity—a bad sign to hear him boast of it.

It's a good sign to see a man wipe the perspiration from his brow—bad to see him wipe his lips as he comes out of a tavern.

It's a good sign to see a man advertise in the papers—bad to see the sheriff advertise for him.

It's a good sign to see a woman dressed with taste and neatness—bad to see her husband sued for finery.

They have strange chambermaids at Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo. The one who waited on our room, and attended to all the duties of the calling, even to making of beds, was a French gentleman, dressed as if for a dinner-party, (white vest and dress coat,) and having the air of a refined and educated gentleman. It was really embarrassing to accept his services in such a capacity. One of the ladies, on arriving at the hotel, rang for the chambermaid. Supposing him to be the proprietor or his chief clerk, she again expressed her wish to have him call the chambermaid. He very politely replied, in the best English he could command, "Madame, I am she."

A confirmed old bachelor used the following argument against matrimony: "Muslin is a great promoter of laziness. If young men wish to accomplish anything of moment, either with head or hand, they must keep clear of the institution. A pair of sweet lips a small waist, a swelling chest, a pressure of two delicate hands, will do as much to unhinge a man as three fevers, the measles, a large sized whooping-cough, a pair of lockjaws several hydrophobias, and the doctor's bill." That fellow needs reconstruction badly.

A young lady in Wisconsin was standing on the verandah, with her lovers arm around her, enjoying a thunder storm, in perfect safety, the young man left her for a moment and she was struck by lightning. The young man is censured for leaving her unprotected. Since that occurrence, when a storm comes up, it is amusing to see the girls rush to the favorite lightning rods.

An exchange furnishes the following preventive against hydrophobia in dogs, which may be of use to some of our readers: "Hold the dog's head under water for three quarters of an hour, and he will never die of hydrophobia, even if bitten by a mad dog."

A western soldier, who had been through all the campaigns and shared in many of the fiercest battles of the war, writes from his home that "he never realized the horrors of war till he got home to Indiana, and found his gal married to a stay-at-home dry goods clerk."

A paper asks very innocently if it is any harm to sit in the laps of ages. It depends on the kind of ages selected. Those from seventeen to twenty-five are extra hazardous.

The young lady who burst into tears has been put together again, and is now wearing hoops to prevent a recurrence of the accident.

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441