THE PULPIT.

Idle Christians.

[Reported for The Press.]

A sermon upon the subject of "Idle Christians" was preached on last Sabbath evening, at the Church of the Nativity, (Episcopal,) Eleventh and Washington streets, by its recently elected rector, the Rev. Robert C. Matlack.

The following passage of Scripture was selected as the text for the occasion:

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it, not, to him it is sin." James iv. 17.

Properly the discourse which followed may be considered as one of a series of the same kind hitherto delivered, that Mr. Matlack has been engaged in for some weeks, and which we learn are still to be continued. In his opening he referred to his former discourses, in one of which he said he had spoken of the languishing of those in the Church, the inactivity of their members, also of the disinclination to activity, and the moral power that was thus lost, and for his present purpose he designed to take a rapid retrospect of the past, and apply its teachings to the present.

In the thirty-fourth year of the Christian era, one hundred and twenty souls had been assembled in an upper room at Jerusalem. Originally, this had been the first assembling together of that Church which now numbers as its members all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Time would, of course, not permit a full examination of the past; he should, therefore, be obliged to confine himself to periods of interest. One hundred and fifty years after the Pentecostal power rested in Tekoa, and the name of Jesus was universally adored," and others had borne testimony to the fact that in all the nations of Western Asia, and in Central Europe, there had been since even at this day who were found at the feet of Jesus.

He then came down to modern times, and noted the success of men of ordinary talent, but of extraordinary spirit, in the work of turning sinners from darkness unto light; we should find many cases to challenge our admiration. Passing by Luther, and coming down to a still more modern period, he might tell of a poor laborer who but a few years ago walked the streets of London, and by the merest accident strolled into a missionary prayer-meeting, where he heard of Jesus Christ, the friend of sinners. The story of this friend awakened within his heart a determination that he should find him. That friend was from that hour made manifest by finding the Saviour he had determined to seek. Not content with this great achievement for himself, he desired that others might find this Friend also. He determined at once to bear to the truth he had himself learned to the perishing of other lands, and so far as advance of the church upon this subject was by that he had great difficulty in convincing the missionary societies of that day that one with a mind as unqualified as his could accomplish any good. This man was none other than the zealous Johnson.

Another strikingly similar case we had in John Williams, the blacksmith, who had labored with so much efficiency in the islands of the sea. The short career of Howland Page, who had been instrumental in the conversion of a hundred souls, was also instanced to show the wonderful power for good of even the humblest, when rightly directed.

Corroborative cases were also given as having occurred in the speaker's own experience. He had seen a young girl, after her own conversion, preserve in prayer for the salvation of every member of her family had experienced the saving power. He might, he said, name a merchant, now in heaven, who formerly resided in this city, who found sufficient time, without neglecting his business, to visit prisons and almshouses, and instruct their unfortunate inmates; and it was through the efforts of this man that he had been made the instrument of converting seventy souls, twelve of whom engaged in the ministry. If then, such had been the success attending the labors of men of "one talent," what might the Master not reasonably expect of the more gifted? He knew there were those who possessed talents, but who did not know how to use them; they were willing to *do* the work, but they needed somebody to *cut it out* for them to do. In view of this, he would now cut out some work for the Church of the Nativity. The locality and region which more properly constituted the field of labor for their own church was the territory lying between Ridge road, Tenth, Broad, and Spring Garden streets. Within this limit, or parish, there were twenty thousand souls, among whom there were thousands who only waited for the hand of sympathy to bring them to an interest in the Gospel of salvation.

It is proper to state that those speaker here fully recognized the labors of the several churches of other denominations located within the above named bounds.

Knowing the work then that was to be done, it was the next duty of those he was addressing to put forth personal efforts to meet these wandering thousands at the Sunday-school, the Bible-class, and the Sunday-School. In order that their efforts might be effectual, due liberality should be evinced in the character of the instructions imparted. He meant, however, to reserve the subject of missionary work for a future discourse. Already he had preached before them a sermon on Prayer—that element which moved the Arm that moves the universe.

The distribution of time would next taken up as a Christian work to be done. Many, he knew, quailed under a reproach, yet this was just what every Christian should strive to overcome, as it was by this cowardly shrinking of the flesh that the performance of duty was delayed, strength wasted. But after all, the petty little sacrifices which we here in America were called upon to make were absolutely nothing compared with those sustained for us in times past. Our greatest sacrifices were not to be compared with the privations of missionaries in heathen lands, yet many of this duty, and the labors of the Lord were daily being rendered less hazardous by the spread of the Gospel. But no matter what the difficulties these labors might impose, they should hardly be mentioned, much less objected to, by those who profess to be the followers of Him who, though rich, for our sake became poor. Besides this, it was a part of the Christian experience that in proportion as the sacrifice was great, so was the happiness great which attended the doing. He that sowed sparingly must expect sparingly to reap. Nor, however, should we serve God by doing good to his creatures merely for the sake of obtaining a prize. The blacksmith did not use his arm to expand his muscles; but to make a living for himself, his wife and children, and yet with this blessing, he, without design, secured to himself a sturdy, healthy, manly frame.

In answer as to whether these personal efforts were essentially necessary to salvation, the would say that he believed that every one who decisively loved Christ would ready Heaven; but by very much questioned whether any one could love Christ and at the same time neglect him by a manifest indifference, towards those for whom he died. The parable which told us of the laborer who received his penny for one hour's labor, the same as they who had borne the heat and burden of the day, was by some construed as an addition that *all* who were saved shared an equal reward in the world to come. This the speaker did not believe. He would rather interpret that parable as teaching that while in the body it is never too late to come to Christ and find acceptance—that is, the old as well as the young have salvation freely offered unto them; in other words, that the promises are as well to modern Gentiles as to the ancient Jews to whom they were given.

The Scriptures taught us that "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars, for ever and ever." Here was a clear intimation that in proportion to our labors would our reward be. In this matter of labor there was no possibility of retracing a life of past efforts; there was no repentance in the grave. Work, while it is called the day, for the night cometh when no man can work, was the Scriptures testimony.

In conclusion the world could not be destroyed if the thirty thousand children in our city, who have never yet been brought within reach of Sabbath-school instruction, and the poor degenerate bar, before which we must all sooner or later appear and answer the charges of neglected duty. There could be no reasonable plea offered in defence of this fatal delinquency. The plea of the man who had asked of the Saviour to be excused, that he should first bury his father, would, to human eyes, appear as certainly one of the most reasonable that could be given; but it was rejected. "Let the dead bury their dead, go thou and preach the kingdom of God;" was the response.

There was, then, no excuse that could exist for unperformed duty, if he had power to perform it, whether in a greater or less degree.

After repeating several lines of poetry, in which was strikingly set forth the spirit inculcated in this discourse, the speaker closed with the general exhortation to God, then, to love the Lord, and work in his vineyard.

The sermon was listened to throughout with evident interest by the large congregation in attendance. We learn, also, that the preaching of Mr. Matlack has for years proved most acceptable, and that great satisfaction is expressed by the people of his charge.

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In order to avoid all such deceptions, ALL ASK for Farina, but Wing's.

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We have just received a comprehensive and varied stock of this finely beautiful and delightful appendage to churches, vestibules, conservatories, and other buildings, where it is deemed necessary to exhibit, or to give a chaste and elegant appearance. Any color may be had, either plain or ornamental, elaborately or in relief.

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☞ Sales at Exchange.

Eleventh Sale, 6th October, on the premises.

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☞ Part of the handbills of the above sales now ready.

REAL ESTATE, STOCKS, &c.

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☞ Real Estate entered on our Private Sale Register, and advertised occasionally in our Public Sale Register, of which 1,000 copies are printed weekly, free of charge.

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☞ We have a large amount of Real Estate at Private Sale, including every description of City and country property. Printed Lists may be had at the auction store.

STOCKS, LOANS, PEWS, &c.

On Tuesday Evening,

October 5th, at 7 o'clock, at the Philadelphia Exchange, for account of whom it may concern—

10 shares Darby and Chester Plank Road Co.

Also, by order of Executors.

Pew No. 52 in the Clifton Street Presbyterian Church.

Also, for other's counts.

24 shares Mount Moriah Cemetery Company.

25 do. Preferred Stock Academy of Music.

2 do. Common Stock do

Also, furnished Pew, No. 78, middle aisle, St. Philips' Episcopal Church, (7th pew from chancel.)

Peremptory Sale.

Pew No. 61 in the Tenth Presbyterian Church, corner of Walnut and Twelfth streets (Rev. Dr. Boardman).

Lot No. 74, section 16, Mount Moriah Cemetery.

2 shares Arch street Theatre stock, with stockholders' season tickets.

TENTH FALL SALE—OCTOBER 5th.

Will include—

Executor's Peremptory Sale—Estate of O. Dedaker, deceased.

FOUR THREE-STORY BRICK DWELLINGS, OTTER street, east of Leopard street, Kensington.

FIVE THREE-STORY BRICK DWELLINGS, OTTER street, south of School street, Kensington.

Orphans' Court Sale—Estate of Randolph W. Evans, deceased.

DWELLING, FRAME DWELLING AND STABLE, and large LOT, about ¾ of an acre, Frankford turnpike and Waterloo street (late District of Richmond).

Orphans' Court Sale—Estate of John S. Jones, decd.

TWO THREE-STORY BRICK DWELLINGS, CROWN street, south of West street late Kensington.

Orphans' Court Peremptory Sale—Estate of Benjamin Ashburner, deceased.

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Stone residence and three large lots, northwest corner Till and Locust streets

Executors' Peremptory Sale—Estate of Jane Clark, deceased.

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