

CONSIDER THE LILIES

HE cashier was alone. He drew a pencil and scratch pad from his pocket and figured rapidly. Yes, he could do it easily. Just a turn of the combination and the safe was open. His tip on certain stocks came from a man with inside knowledge, and to take the money from the bank would just be borrowing it. The stocks were scheduled to make a wild plunge upward within the next few days and then he could sell, replace the money he had taken from the safe before it was missed and have enough ahead to justify several of his intended moves toward social advancement. Why, it was all just the simplest thing in the world to accomplish! All the time he argued with himself he was not quite easy in his conscience, but his thought of the confidential position of the friend who had given him the tip made the outcome seem a certainty—an end that would surely justify the means. He pulled the blind, unlocked the safe, concealed the money he needed on his person, carefully covering his tracks. Then he locked the safe and quietly let himself into the balm April air.

It was past midnight when he stole slyly out of his home for a little walk, being unable to sleep. The moonlight held the world in its thrall, bathing the spring flowers in its silvery light, but the cashier was oblivious to its beauty as he wandered aimlessly down first one street and then another, until his attention was arrested by the sound of a glad hymn from a nearby church—the final choir rehearsal for Easter music. Scarcely realizing what he did the troubled man slipped into the vestibule of the big church, drawn by the lights, the music and the hunger for human companionship which gnawed his troubled heart. As he stood undecided what he should do the joyous anthem ended, the choir fled into the vestry room and the old sexton turned out all save the chancel lights. The cashier slipped quietly into the church and sank wearily into a seat, his eyes fixed on the lily-laden altar.

Easter lilies were everywhere. Great banks of them covered the altar, and from every nook and corner they gleamed white in the dim chancel lights. They were like a prayer—a mother's prayer for her children—pure, and clean, and white. Their delicate fragrance was pleasant to his senses, but above all else it was their whiteness which riveted his thought. He could not get away from it. Suddenly he buried his face in his hands to shut the lilies away from his sight, while he went over the argu-

a familiar ring which was not of the voice alone, nor yet of some long-forgotten reading. The words were borne in upon his senses now as in that long-ago year—year, when, as a little lad, he had sat in the living room of his home listening to his father's heartbroken confession to his mother that he had failed in business. It was Easter then as now. On the broad casement of the low French window stood a row of exquisite white lilies. His mother had turned from his stricken father to regard them, and over her face had come that tender, confident smile the little lad had so loved. "Consider the lilies," she had told the man, "they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." And his father had taken her into his arms with a great sob, while the little lad had looked on, understanding only that his mother had somehow helped his father over a great crisis.

And now in the crisis of his own life, when temptation had mastered him, he sat alone in a lily-laden church, and the voice of his mother bade him "consider the lilies." Whence had it come? From the heart of an Easter lily? Or had it come into the house of God with him with a ray of moonlight? Or, was the voice in his brain alone—born of memories? He could not tell, and it did not matter. When he had laid her away twenty years ago he had not laid away all the influence that had been hers all through his young life, her faith in him, her smile, nor the memory of a certain day when he had been graduated from college and had promised her that he would seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness through all the days that he should live. And he had kept his promise—until tonight, when the greed of gold became the dominating motive of his life; tonight, when the thirst for luxury had conquered him.

The cashier stood clutching the seat of the pew in front of him, his eyes fixed on the lily-banked altar. Then he squared his shoulders even as he had seen his father do in that long-ago year. And when the first soft flush of Easter day crept across the eastern sky the money was safe in the bank again. For the cashier kept faith with his mother.

Curious Rite of Palm Sunday. Independent of eggs, hares and buns, a number of curious rites attach themselves to Palm Sunday. In Lincolnshire, England, a churchwarden cracks a gad-whip three times during the reading of the first lesson and then seats himself with the congregation. He carries his whip up to the minister. Attached to it by four strips of wych sim is a purse containing 30 pieces of silver; this is waved over the minister's head, and the churchwarden then kneels before the minister until the lesson is finished.

Emerging From the Dark. Life, beautiful, beckoning, encouraging, dances in merriment as the spring breezes blow. It has found loveliness, and fragrance as well, in the grim black ground. It needed the dark, cold winter to rest in. The cold has not killed the warming, fertilizing ministering power of soil. On the contrary, the winter has been one of its good agents. It has not despoiled the earth, only rested it for coming benefactions, and new labors.

Easter. "She, supposing him to be the gardener—" Dead to our Christ and our hearts cry "Where?" We would peer in the tomb behind thee. Ah! Not there! But as of old in the open air. Out in the garden, Lord, we find thee.—Mary Eleanor Roberts, in Lippincott's.

Symbols of the Easter Time



Lilies sound His praises at the Easter-tide, Who from highest glory came to earth and died. Lo! a-dying, quite defying Satan's mighty power, Bands a-bursting, our Redeemer rises in His hour. Can a pulsing, freshening lily show aught else beside Happy, joyous welcome at the Easter-tide.

MISS THE VISION OF THE VALLEY

Too Many Are Late in Seeing the Way Out From Darkness to the Light That Is Triumphant.

A CAMPING party from the East stepped from a belated train late one August afternoon at the station of a bleak little frontier town at the edge of the Black Hills, and looked anxiously at the shadows already lying long across the one street. "Well, here's one day lost," grumbled a member of the party. "It will be night before everything is loaded and ready, and we can't start off in the dark."

"Why not?" asked the guide. "Couldn't find the way." "I know the way," returned the guide simply. "We'll start at eight." Night was swallowing the last drops of daylight when eight o'clock came, and apprehension was lined into every face as the party climbed into the wagon and plunged into the dark maw of the canyon, which opened abruptly into the town. The road hugged the canyon wall on one side; on the other rushed a noisy little mountain brook, its chatter softening gradually into a quiet murmur as the canyon road wound up the hillside, leaving it far behind in the depths below.

Dense darkness separated the travelers each from each. Stones dislodged by the scrambling hoofs of the horses slid down into the canyon, measuring the narrow margin between safety and destruction. Hand gripped hand, and breath came short. "It's like the valley of the shadow of death!" a voice shuddered out into the darkness. The guide, directing his team in front, sensed an unspoken fear. "Just look up," he called hearteningly over his shoulder. A wedge of brilliant star-strewn sky seemed swung into the abyss, forcing the canyon walls apart and stretching a luminous canopy from crag to crag. The radiance transformed the valley, to the uplook, into a vision of glory. Up and up wound the road, nearer and nearer to that ever-widening arch of star-shot brightness, till the travelers at last stood safe upon the shining hillcrest, the dark hours of trembling bewilderment over and joy beyond. They looked back silently, as far as the starlight revealed it, over the road up which they had come. "I wouldn't have missed it for the world," one of the party finally broke the spell. "It would have been a tragedy to lose an experience like that."

Easter Morning



INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Acting Director of Sunday School Course, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.)

LESSON FOR APRIL 4

SAUL REJECTED BY THE LORD.

LESSON TEXT—1 Samuel 15:19-23. GOLDEN TEXT—Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.—1 Samuel 15:22.

Jonathan's victory (ch. 14) brought with it a sinning on the part of the hungry, harassed Israelites in that they ate of the spoils "with the blood" (14:31, 32; Lev. 3:17, 7:26). In the emergency Saul erected "the first altar that he built unto the Lord" (ch. 14:35), a rather dilatory act on the part of a God-anointed king. Saul had resorted to the subterfuge of commanding the people "to roll a great stone," i. e., cut the throats of the animals of which they had eaten that they might bleed, and thus be an evidence that the animals had died before being eaten. This the people did, fearing Saul, but having no scruples in transgressing God's command. These same people rescued Jonathan from the foolish yow of Saul, for it was his faith and valor that had chiefly brought about the victory.

1. God's Sorrow, vv. 10-12. Samuel had first revealed God's purpose in making Saul king, and likewise first declared God's purpose to dispose of Saul (v. 10). Saul's actions (vv. 1-9) had stamped him as being no longer worthy of God's confidence. The word "repenteth," meaning "to sigh" (v. 11), denotes a change of feeling due to Saul's actions and not to any change in the character, purpose or desires of God. God was sorry that Saul had proved himself unworthy. A half-way obedience of God's command only heightened his guilt. "Whatever moral difficulties seem to lie, for a later age, in Saul's commission against Amalek, there were none such for him" (Vaughn). Man's repentance involves a change of mind and purpose. In Saul's case God repented, changed the instrument of his execution, because of the change of circumstances and relation. God is ever the same; it is man alone who changes. Saul had given Samuel cause for anger (v. 11 R. V.), but he did the wise thing in taking it to God in prayer. Arising early the next morning Samuel hastened to acquaint Saul with Jehovah's message. It is remarkable of how many of the great men of the Bible it is said that they rose early, Abraham, Gideon, Joshua, Job, Jacob, Moses, etc., not to forget our Lord Jesus.

II. Samuel's Rebuke, vv. 13-19. It must have been a striking scene when the aged Nazirite prophet faced the proud but recalcitrant king. A guilty conscience is often covered by a great show of piety (v. 13), but such acts cannot stifle the conviction of the heart nor deceive the righteous judge. Sin proclaims itself even as Samuel's sharp question brought conviction from the lips of Saul (v. 14; Prov. 28:13). Saul thought to deceive Samuel by using a falsehood (v. 15). The only safe course is to confess our sins (Ps. 32:15; 1 John 1:9). There is an interesting suggestion in the way Saul uses the impersonal "they" and "we" in verse 15, as if to lay the guilt of his acts upon others. It is easy for the sinner to blame others and seek to minimize his own guilt (Rom. 14:12). Verse 9 clearly indicated why Saul and the people had spared the best of the cattle. To use a part only for God and the rest for self in direct disobedience to God's rights or the rights of others is to incur his righteous wrath (v. 22, 23). Samuel did not tell Saul what he thought of him but simply and directly delivered words (v. 16 l. c.). Recalling Saul's beginnings as king of Israel, emphasizing God's mercy and grace, Samuel recounts God's command regarding the Amalekites. These are a type of the flesh and for such God has no mercy except that of Calvary (Gal. 5:24). Samuel effectively swept aside Saul's sophistry by his direct question (v. 19) which demanded a straightforward answer.

III. Saul's Self-Rejection, vv. 20-23. God set Saul aside because he had rejected the right and chose the wrong. Face to face with his sin Saul could not judge the issue. Samuel's "wherefore" (v. 19) must have aroused Saul's guilty conscience. It is a question which should reach every tempted soul. Samuel characterized Saul's sin as being due to stubbornness, rebellion, disobedience and a rejection of God (v. 19). Again Saul seeks to evade his responsibility (vv. 20, 21). Then Samuel speaks plainly (v. 22) comparing his sin of disobedience with witchcraft, stubbornness, iniquity and idolatry. Plainly he tells Saul, "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (v. 23).

Driven thus to a corner Saul made a confession of his guilt (v. 24) but spoiled it all by acknowledging that he had greater fear of the people than of God. His sorrow was that of the man who was caught in an act of transgression and not because of the sinfulness of his deed. God had forsaken Saul and therefore Samuel parts company with him also (vv. 25, 26). Saul's sending of Samuel's garment (vv. 27, 28) is used as a parable of the forthcoming rent kingdom. Samuel takes occasion to suggest that God, "the Strength of Israel," had won the recent victory and that God was not guilty of lying nor had he changed. Saul makes one more plea in which he acknowledged his departure from God by the words, "that I may worship the Lord thy God." There was a continuance of the outward form of worship before the elders and the people but both God and Samuel separated themselves from Saul; the cruel, bloody Agag is executed and Samuel retreats to Ramah to mourn over this fallen, prodigal king, and never to see him again.

The Disloyalty of Demas

By REV. WILLIAM WALLACE KETCHUM, Director of the Practical Work Course, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.

TEXT—Demas hath forsaken me.—II Tim. 4:10.

These are the words of an old man, languishing in a Roman prison. They are from the Apostle Paul to his beloved Timothy.



Circumstances are not so favorable with the apostle as they were during his first imprisonment at Rome. Then he dwelt in his own hired house, received all who came unto him and preached the gospel, no man forbidding him. Now prison walls confine him and prison chains restrain him.

There he sits in his narrow cell, chained to a Roman guard, writing a letter to Timothy: "Be not ashamed," he writes, "of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner." "Yea, Timothy, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." And, as the dampness of the cell causes him to shiver: "When thou comest bring the cloak I left at Troas, and the words of our text, 'Demas hath forsaken.'" The significance of this statement is realized, when seen in the light of the circumstances which called it forth. Demas, a Christian, a friend of Paul, with him during his first imprisonment at Rome, has abandoned the apostle. He stood by him when everything was favorable, but when imminent peril threatened Paul because of his loyalty to Christ, the contemptible coward fled for his life. He could not stand the test, and in this, was the forerunner of many Demases of today who profess to be loyal to Christ, receiving all the good things that come from him, and who shout aloud their hallelujahs and amens, but when the testing time comes lack the grit and grace to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." It is one thing to shout at a Fourth of July celebration; it is another thing to shoulder a gun and march to the front.

It is easy to shout "hallelujah" when everyone's saying "amen." It's another thing to stand by him when they curse him again and again.

You may have wondered why many who profess loyalty to Christ sadly fall him when the testing time comes. Paul acquaints Timothy with the reason; "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." That is it; the love of the world causes disloyalty to Christ. Jesus taught this when he said, "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." (Matt. 6:24). Does this mean, if we are to be loyal to Christ we must give up everything in the world? That depends upon what is meant by everything. Surely, anything that comes in between Christ and us must be given up. And if we are loyal to him we will surrender all, that he may in turn give us richly all things to enjoy." As those who love him and are wise, we will weigh the things of time in the balance of eternity, just as the gold hunter in the river bottom washes the dirt that he may find the pure metal, so we should carefully sift the things of the world that we may find the good and true. The builder of the world that we may find the good and true. The builder who rears the skyscraper tests every bit of material that goes into the structure; how much more important it is for us not to permit anything to enter our life that will weaken any part and cause us, when the stress and strain come, to be disloyal to Christ.

John Conton, walking on the railway, caught his foot in a "frog" where two tracks crossed. He laughed at first but when he tried to extricate his foot, he found himself held fast. He heard a locomotive coming around the curve and redoubled his efforts but without avail, and the merciless monster crushed him to death. One thing, only one, held John Conton, but it held him as securely as if he were bound to the track by a legion of soldiers. It may be just one thing, only one, that holds us from being loyal to Christ, and this one thing, as in the case of John Conton, may prove fatal.

Harry Moorehouse, the Irish evangelist, used to tell how one day he went with his younger brother to market. A huckstress had a thorn stick with which she kept the naughty boys away. John pleaded for the thorn stick and the huckstress interceded that he might have it. Finally he got the desire of his heart and down the street they went; John with his thorn stick, inflicting injury upon Harry and himself. As he could not be persuaded to give it up, a happy thought struck Harry. "John, don't you want a drum?" he asked. Of course he wanted a drum. It was purchased and suspended from his neck. The shopkeeper gave him the drum sticks, but he still clung to the thorn stick. With it in his hand, he tried to drum, but it didn't work. He changed it to the other hand, but that didn't work. Quickly turning to Harry he said, "Haise, Harry, you can have the thorn stick." That is what Doctor Chalmers called "The explosive power of a new affection." Let Christ in and the love of the world will be displaced. There is no death. What seems so is a transition.—Longfellow.

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