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IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

What the Church Folks Are Thinking About and Doing.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S TOPICS

THE MAN WHO SAW THROUGH THINGS.

The International Sunday school lesson for June 24 is "The Purpose of John's Gospel."—John 2:11-23.

(By William T. Ellis.) A few minutes ago I talked with a man of the type of those who see big things in a little way. He is essentially a pessimist. It is well that he is not a lawyer, for he would be one of the sort who have construed the law into a complexity of snares and subtleties and technical enactments chiefly useful for defeating essential justice. It is a relief to turn from the irritations of a small-minded man to the contemplation of one who had sweep and breadth of vision, and whose flashing eye penetrated to the heart of things and discovered what really matters. In literature and heraldry, this man's symbol is the far-visions eagle. For it is of the Apostle John, the Beloved Disciple, I write, whose message in its entirety is the theme for present study by the millions of the Sunday school.

Nobody has time nowadays for musty tomes dealing with outworn issues. This is the hour of the living present. We are all eager for light on our own troubled day. The world's quest is for a trial through the tangle of things. Everybody is open-eared to hear the man with the master word, who can tell us something about the ultimate meaning of this cataclysm which has overtaken mankind. Of books upon the super-fidelity of the situation we have more than enough. We crave a word of life, that will steady our nerves and guide our feet, and make us to see the end of it all.

That is just the sort of book this man John wrote. Millions of men and women, whose hearts have felt the personal touch of the war, are turning daily to this old volume for light and comfort. It helps them more than anything else. For John, the sturdy fisherman who shared with his brother the title, "sons of thunder," saw beyond the day's common round, beyond the averring of families and the abandonment of one's calling, beyond the breaking up of the old order and the old system of thinking, beyond suffering and shame and death itself, into the ultimate reality, where reigns the will of God and the now triumphant Christ. It is not to be forgotten that this biographer whose work we have been studying with such delight and profit was also the *Seer of Fatmos*, the revealer of the eternal mysteries, and the interpreter of the pre-existent word.

Learned savants have produced a mountain of commentaries upon this gospel of John. We do not turn to them today. Simply and naturally, meaning, we accept this great book and according to its most obvious meaning, we accept this great book as the perfect tribute of a real man, whose hand God guided, to the friend whom he had known and loved. Because John was closest to Jesus on earth, his biography enables us who live today to get close to the very heart of the Christ.

upon the fourth gospel—millions of persons turn first to it to find, in glowing, pulsing reality, the personality of the Savior. With consummate skill, John lets us into the very secret of the friend who is the soul's boon companion, and who understands us when all others walk aside from us in misunderstanding or ignorance. Somehow, John introduces us to the ever-living Christ who alone can feel with us and for us. He enters into the secret of the apartness and loneliness and craving of our hungry hearts.

"There is a mystery in human hearts, and though we be encircled by a host of those who love us well, and are beloved, to every one of us, from time to time, there comes a sense of utter loneliness. Our dearest friend is stranger to our joy, and cannot realize our bitterness. There is not one who really understands.

Not one to enter into all I feel! Such is the cry of each of us in time, we wander in—a solitary way.

"No matter what or where our lot may be; Each heart, mysterious even to itself, Must live its inner life in solitude. And would you know the reason why this is? It is because the Lord desires our love. In every heart he wishes to be first. He therefore keeps the secret key himself, To open all its chambers—and to bless With perfect sympathy and holy peace Each solitary soul who comes to him. So when we feel this loneliness it is The voice of Jesus saying, 'Come to me,' And every time we are 'not understood.' It is to call to us to come again; For Christ alone can satisfy the soul, And those who walk with him from day to day Can never have—a solitary way.

"And when beneath some heavy cross you faint, And say, 'I cannot bear this load You say the truth. Christ made it purposely So heavy that you must return to him. The bitter grief which 'no one understands,' Conveys a secret message from the King. Entreat you to come to him against The Man of Sorrows understands it well. In all points tempted he can feel with you. You cannot come too often or too near The Son of God is infinite in grace. His presence satisfies the longing soul, And those who walk with him from day to day Can never have—a solitary way." A Man Who Knew The Facts. Many books—a recent meaty little

one by Robert H. Speer being one of the best—have shown that the fourth gospel bears all the marks of an eyewitness record. The allusions to time, to places, to local usages, all testify to the intimacy of the writer with the actual scenes he describes. He was not only present wherever any other one of the friends of Jesus was—for John belonged to the inner circle of three—but he also had a spiritual understanding of the deeper significance of the words and deeds of the Master. Although the most spiritual of the four biographies of Jesus, this gospel never becomes so transcendently that it is incomprehensible. Mystical, it is true, yet it never is unreal and unearthly and vague. A very vivid personality is that which John portrays as Jesus; so that one poet, Mary Davis, exclaims of him:

"I am so glad he loved the common things. The drowsy chicks beneath their mother's wings.

"Tall lilies nodding at the folks that The handiwork of God among the grass.

"The sparrows and their brothers of the air, Content to look to heaven for food and care.

"He loved to stray by wood and singing hills, Companion of the stars and solemn hills.

"His friends he chose from men of low degree, Tillers of land and toilers of the sea.

"These things are written on the sacred page, A star to simple folks from age to age.

"And as the glowing words of love we scan, We feel his kinship to the heart of man."

The "Why" of a Great Book. Men who balk at the deity of Christ are coerced to repudiate the gospel of John. For it cannot at all be accepted, unless the reader is willing to receive his presentation of Jesus as the One altogether unique. The sublime figure who walks through John's pages is not merely a rare teacher, a noble idealist, a loving and unselfish helper of his fellowmen, and a supreme aspirant for the life that is divine. He is none of these things if he is not also what else John declares him to be; for his own claims are clear, strong, unequivocal and absolute. Jesus would have to be branded as an impostor, on the testimony of John, if he is not also what his biographer asserts, the very Messiah of Jehovah, the Savior of mankind.

SOLDIERS EXTRAORDINARY

By Hapsburg Lobe of the Vigilantes.

I saw all these fine warriors in one day, during a drive of twenty-five miles, and it made me glad to call myself a Tennessean; it made me proud of the people of this section of the Old Volunteer State. I have no doubt that the people of the other states are doing just as well, you understand; I'm telling you this in order that you may know that eastern Tennessee is trying hard to do her bit. Before I left town, I saw the parkway around the home of one of our best men in Irish potatoes. Yes, Irish potatoes instead of the usual green and prettily-bordered canna beds. More than that, there were Irish potatoes in the flower beds of that man's lawn. Also, he had had his back yard spaded up, and that, too, was filled with potatoes.

solite. Jesus would have to be branded as an impostor, on the testimony of John, if he is not also what his biographer asserts, the very Messiah of Jehovah, the Savior of mankind.

To set forth the Saviourhood of Jesus, and his divine mission as the Son of God, is the one overmastering purpose of this latest of the four gospels. The author leaves no room for doubt or surmise on this point. He himself tells why he wrote the book: "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Everything in the volume is but evidence and support of that general proposition.

Passionate lover of Jesus that he himself was, John aspired to introduce his dear Master to all who should read his book. He sought not only to convince their minds, but also to set their hearts aglow. So he has been, through the centuries, the best friend and aider of all who would live in the spirit; and experience the very love and life of Christ. Instead of passing here, as one is tempted to do, upon what this book has meant to the saints of nineteen centuries, let us merely recall the all-important truth that our own dazed and heart-bruised day needs above all else, to make explicable these world events which are overwhelming us, the message of a Christ, who is God; who was from the beginning and is to continue in increasing sovereignty to the end of time. His will is working out, at sore cost, as nations undertake to protect and perpetuate and increase the principles of Jesus on earth—righteousness, good will, brotherhood and liberty. As we come into Christ's kingdom may we come into close touch with the kingdom's Christ. Fellowship with him, and assurance that his will is being done, will sustain one throughout whatever experience the war may bring.

"My bark is wadded on the strand By breath divine, And on the helm there rests a hand Other than mine.

"One who was known in storms to sail I have on board, Above the roaring of the gale I have my Lord.

"He holds me when the billows smite; I shall not fall, If sharp, 'tis short; if long, 'tis light— He tempers all.

"Safe to the land! safe to the land! The entry of Jesus on earth— And then with him go hand in hand Far into bliss!"

therefore serving the Almighty and the American flag to the utmost of his ability. Man, woman, whoever you are that reads this, I say to you here that that old man is a patriot and a soldier extraordinary; and lesser men have worn a colonel's shoulder straps and been banqueted as conquering heroes. Down on his knees to hoe potatoes! It was finer, in this our time of desperation, with Hellfire stalking footloose over the world, than being down on his knees to pray.

Back in the hills, I saw an old granny-woman and her daughter and her daughter's two half-grown daughters all at work in a field that they had literally wrested from the mountain wilderness. On inquiry, I learned that the younger woman's husband was dead.

"We're a doin' all we can, shore," the granny-woman told me, "accuse the 'agin' to be war. I went through

w' one war, senny, and I know that men folks ain't do much good a fightin' on a empty stomach. Accuse the belly and the heart, senny, is closter skin than most o' folks know."

Amen and Amen, say I. And again, Amen! I've been in the trenches, and I've fought on an empty stomach, and I tell you I know.

A few miles further on, I saw the wife of a railroad section foreman cultivating a part of the railroad's right-of-way. And less than two miles from that point, I came upon a remarkably pretty fifteen-year-old girl plowing off furrows for corn. Now listen! She didn't have on Star-Spangled-Banner hostery, and she didn't have an American flag tied to her mule's head, and she didn't have a small metal edition of Old Glory pinned to her anywhere—but she was plowing for corn. Get me? She was a soldier in her trench, do-

ing her bit. Aye, nobly doing her bit.

"We'll need it," she told me. "The 'a gosh' to be war. It's all right to trust in the Lord," she went on quoting from the inscription on the monument to King's Mountain men "but it's also a good thing to keep the gunpowder dry."

"Trust in the Lord, and keep the powder dry—" is a good motto for any nation.

When I think of women doing that bit in times of war, I like to think of them as God's brigade. And God's brigade it certainly is. It is this that makes war so insufferable; for the shadow of the sword is always a cross, always a cross, and it always falls heaviest on the hearts of women.

Jesus Hannah, former well known big league twirler, has been dropped from the International league umpire staff.



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