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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

I.

October.

THE DAWN OF THE YEAR.

'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.'—Ex 12[2].

SOME of you may have visited an old farm; possibly you have lived at one. Among the things you saw there, you will remember a strange looking machine in the cornyard. It was like a merry-go-round in a fair. If you were lucky enough to be at the farm in late autumn, you would have seen a horse yoked to this machine and being driven round and round in a circle, making the great thing move while it went. Now, it is not the machine I want you to think of, but the horse. It had to plod on patiently over the same round for hours, kept going all the time by the man beside it with the whip.

You boys and girls are inclined to think of school life as being something like this—a dull dreary affair, one continual round of work that never seems to stop. You forget that although in a sense your work goes round in a circle, it is a circle not in the least like that of the farmyard wheel. The whip need not be there at all, and there is a break after every round. After each break you start afresh, and if you have been working you find yourselves on a slightly higher level.

You have just had your break. It may have meant a holiday at the seaside or in the country. I know of some brave and patient little people who were at home all the time, waiting, sometimes even longing, for the wheel to start again.

Is there not something about October that makes us feel we are off on the new round—the sharp air, the frost on the grass, the grey mornings? It is the beginning of our year. For the big boys and girls that may mean a great deal; perhaps an entrance to the University or a chance to do better there. One October many years ago, a very clever lad tried a University bursary competition. He did not take a high place, but it entitled him to a small bursary. 'I felt I did not deserve one at all,' he wrote to his sister, 'but now I am working like a Hollander.'

The new start may mean going into business. The other day I met a boy who had just left the Sunday School. 'I'm a chemist now,' he said, 'I'll be an apprentice till I'm nearly eighteen; that's *old*.' He had an idea of rising in the world, for he went on to say, 'I may enlist after that, or if the war's over, I'll try to make money enough to build a house for my mother.'

Some of you will have joined the Latin class for the first time. A knowledge of Latin opens a door to wonderful secrets. And the Greek class—there are great books written in Greek; the very greatest of these is our New Testament. The younger boys and girls have nearly all got new books: even the very wee ones can show their new primers. Ever upwards you boys and girls go, as October comes round—October, the dawn of the year.

'This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.' These were the words of the Lord that came to the Israelites through Moses. It meant the beginning of their freedom from bondage. They would be feeling very solemn; their boys and girls would be almost afraid to ask questions, but you may feel sure they were eager to know what the new life was to be like.

The setting out is always hopeful. The most wearisome part of a journey is not the end but the middle—January, February, March—tramp, tramp, tramp, the brave boys and girls will keep up their courage then; they will set a stout heart to the long level road.

October will come again. Ever ascending, you will one day come to a place from which you can look down and say, 'I remember the reading-book that really set me to work, I got it one October morning.' Better still, from the heights you may one day be able to look through a glass and see something of the glory that is in store for those who have hungered for the hilltop of goodness. Jesus Himself said that those are blessed who hunger and thirst after righteousness. If you begin to do that to-day, 'this month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.'

II.

Smoke.

'Smoke out of the chimney.' Hos 13[3].

That is a thing that nobody likes. Many people like smoke out of a pipe, but nobody likes smoke out of the chimney—especially when it is in the wrong place and comes down the chimney instead of going up. Smoke is dirty and disagreeable and harmful. It covers our tables and chairs and cushions with specks of soot, and it makes us cough and choke.

1. I think smoke is one of the lesser worries of life, and so I am going to take it to-day as a picture of the little frets and bothers and disagreeable things that come our way. Well, you know, these are the things that come to us every day. We are in a hurry to get to school; we pull off a button or break a boot-lace; we have to wait till the button is sewed on or the lace replaced; and so we are late for school. Then the teacher scolds and we have to stay after hours or write an imposition. Or perhaps our trouble takes another form. A tooth aches, or we cut our finger, or we lose some little thing we value, or a school friend is offended and won't speak to us. There are dozens of these little annoyances that are apt to come to us any day.

The question is—What are we to do about them?

(1) Well, when your chimney smokes, what do you do?—You send for the sweep. Of course you make sure first that your chimney is properly built, because some chimneys have a twist in them or are too low or have a loose brick inside, and no amount of sweeping will prevent their smoking. But when you have made sure that your chimney is properly built, the next thing you do is to see that it is kept clean.

Now that is exactly what we must do with our little troubles and worries. Those that can be prevented or cured it is our business to prevent or cure, and a great many of them can be dealt with in this way. If you rise a few minutes earlier in the morning you will probably not pull off buttons or break laces, and supposing you do, you will have time to put them right. If your tooth aches, visit the dentist. If you lose your possessions, put them away more carefully in future. If one of your friends cuts you, speak to him and find out the reason. It is probably a little misunderstanding which can quite easily be cleared up. At any rate, give him the chance of explaining. Friends are far too precious to be lost over a silly trifle. If you only take a little trouble about your troubles it is wonderful how many of them disappear.

(2) Learn to consume your own smoke. What does that mean? Well, you know when smoke comes out at the top of a chimney it looks like a black or grey cloud, but when it gets a little bit away it seems to disperse or vanish away. Now it does not really disappear altogether. Some of it goes off in gases which mix with the atmosphere, the rest comes down in soot specks or hangs in the air and causes a fog. So in some large towns where there are many tall factory chimneys, they have a plan whereby each chimney burns its own smoke.

And so I am going to say to you—burn your own smoke, and that just means—bear your own little troubles. Don't always be bothering other people with them and asking for sympathy and help. You will make yourself a nuisance, and nobody will want to know you. If things are not just as you would like them, then make the best of them as they are, but don't worry others about every little quarrel you have, and every little bump you give your head, and every little difficulty you meet.

There was once a little girl of four whose mother had met with a bicycle accident and was badly bruised. She asked her mother if she had been hurt, and when mother replied, 'Yes, dear, dreadfully,' Violet said, 'Well, Mummy, when you don't *fink* of what you don't like, it seems to go away. That's what I find.'

Try that plan instead of complaining. Try not to think of the things you don't like. It is wonderful how many of them will seem to go away.

2. But it is not only things that are a trouble, people can be a nuisance too. There are some boys and girls who are a trouble to everybody. They always seem to be getting into somebody's black books, and they are just like smoke out of the chimney—a bother to everybody.

Well, if there are any boys and girls like that here, I want to remind them of the proverb which says that there is no smoke without fire. Smoke

is not a good thing in itself, but it is a sign of something good, for when we see smoke we know that somewhere there is a spark of fire; and a fire is a good friend, who warms us, and cheers us, and cooks our food.

And there is good in the 'smoky' people too. Somewhere underneath that black disagreeable exterior there is a fire burning. The only mistake they are making is that they are burning in the wrong way. For smoke is really wasted fuel, and scientists tell us that if we knew how to burn a fire properly there would be no smoke.

Nothing is really 'good for nothing.' You may be constantly getting into scrapes, and people may treat you as if you were no good. But God knows better. He knows that you have the making of something fine in you, and if you will let Him take you in hand, then out of the smoke He can make a beautiful, glowing fire.

III.

Seals.

'Clay under the seal.'—Job 38^{14}.

Have you ever played at making seals? It is a fascinating game. All you require is a lighted candle, a stick of sealing-wax, a piece of paper, and the loan of a die or a signet-ring from father or mother. Hold the sealing-wax in the candle-flame until it is soft enough to drop on the paper. When you have dropped the spot of wax, take your die or signet and stamp it quickly, evenly, and firmly in the hot wax. Keep it there for a minute, then raise it gently, and you will find that the motto or crest or initials on your die will be imprinted on the wax. You may not make a very neat job the first time you try it, or even the third time, or perhaps the thirtieth—the wax may look black and smoked, the impression may be faint at one part, or the drop of wax may not have been the right shape, and a piece of the seal may be awanting. It is all a case of practice, and practice makes perfection. Go on trying if mother does not object to your using a lighted candle, and father does not grudge the wax.

If they do, I'll tell you of an easier, cheaper, and safer way to make seals which requires neither wax, nor candle, nor paper—only the die or signet and your own willing hand. Press the die for a short time on the back of your hand. When you raise it you will find the device stamped perfectly on your flesh. Of course it will fade in a few minutes, but, since it costs nothing, you can do it over and over again, till you grow tired of the game.

Most of the seals we are accustomed to see are made of wax, but seals have been and still are made of other materials—of metal, for instance. In the Middle Ages the Popes used to attach leaden seals called *bullae* (from the Latin word *bulla* meaning a circular ornament) to their decrees, and that is how we read in history books of Papal 'bulls.'

Sometimes, but rarely, the seals were made of gold. When a Pope wanted to confer a title on a monarch he sealed the document with a golden seal. When one of the Popes gave our own King Henry the Eighth the title of 'Defender of the Faith,' he sealed the paper with a golden seal, and you can see that very seal to-day if you look for it in the British Museum.

But the kind of seal of which our text speaks is much older than that given to Henry the Eighth. It is a seal made of neither metal nor wax, for the material on which it is stamped is clay. It was the kind of seal used by the Babylonians and Assyrians thousands of years ago. They took the moist clay and they stamped it with the die, and then they baked it hard in the oven or in the sun. There still exist some of these ancient clay seals with the marks where the string or strip of leather was fastened to them. And you may see too the very dies or stamps or *matrices*, as they are called, which made the impression. These early dies were not shaped like ours; they were often round like a roller, and as they rolled over the soft clay they left a figured impression behind.

Boys and girls, I think we are rather like that piece of clay. When we come into the world we are like the smooth soft mass without any marks on it, but as life rolls on it leaves, as the roller leaves on the clay, a lasting impression on us. But though we may be like the clay in some ways, we are unlike it in this, that we can choose the kind of impression or pattern that will be stamped on us. We can say whether it will be a good and beautiful impression that we shall bear, or whether it will be one both distorted and ugly. It all depends who holds the die. If we go to Christ and say to Him, 'Here is my life all before me, help me to make it good and beautiful; help me to make the very best of it; help me to stamp it truly and

well'; if we say that to Christ, He will take the die into His own hand, and He will stamp our life for us.

And what do you think the impression will be? Why, it will be just a portrait of Himself. In olden days the kings had on their royal seals their own portraits, and when they stamped anything with the royal seal every one knew it belonged to the king, for they saw his image there. So with Christ's seal. Others looking on us, and seeing the impression on our clay, will say, 'They too belong to Christ.'

Discerning the Body.

By the Rev. James Moffatt, D.D., D.Litt., Professor of Church History in the United Free Church College, Glasgow.

What does Paul mean by this elliptical phrase in his description of the Christian's relation to the Lord's Supper? The passage (1 Co 11^{20}) runs thus: 'For he who eats and drinks without a proper sense of the body (μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα), eats and drinks to his own condemnation.' It falls to be interpreted in the light of the preceding discussion upon the meaning of the Lord's Supper, and the variety of opinions with regard to $10^{16f.}$ $11^{17f.}$ is reflected in the variety of interpretations assigned to 11^{29}. The problem has been again opened by Professor Morgan in his recent original work on *The Religion and Theology of Paul* (p. 224). It is of vital importance for the understanding of Paul's attitude towards the sacrament; but, before referring to Professor Morgan's theory, we had better survey the rival interpretations of the phrase.

They fall into two groups, familiar to students of the Epistle and its criticism. (i.) The most obvious is, 'not discriminating between the body' of the Lord, as represented by the consecrated bread, and the ordinary bread at the church Supper. The greedy, selfish person who snatches at the food, till often none is left for others, acts ἀναξίως (v.^{27}); he fails to see that there is any real difference between the bread and wine of this Supper and the provisions at an ordinary meal. Such behaviour, as Paul has said, 'makes it impossible for you to eat the Lord's supper (κυριακὸν δεῖπνον) when you hold your gatherings' (v.^{20}). It is an act of irreverence, which renders the perpetrator guilty of sacrilege, in the ancient sense of the term, namely, guilty of violating a sacred order which avenges itself upon the offender. He has to answer for a sin against (ἔνοχος, v.^{27}) the body and the blood of the Lord, represented by the bread and wine; as he eats and drinks, in his profane, careless way, he involves himself in a condemnation or κρίμα (v.^{29}), which comes immediately into operation (v.^{30}).

This view seems to tally with the situation at Corinth. From Paul's language ($11^{17f.}$) we gather that the local church was in the habit of gathering for an evening love-feast or charity-supper, at which the Eucharist was also celebrated. This love-feast was the Christian equivalent for the supper of the guilds; it was not a 'sacrament' in the modern sense of the term, *i.e.* a gathering at which the eating is only a form, but a real supper[1] of the church, the food being provided by the wealthier members in the main. Only, at Corinth some were in the habit of hurrying to eat what they had brought, without waiting for the poor slaves or tradesmen who could not arrive till their day's task was done. This indecent behaviour was a disgrace to the church. It showed the cliques and sets within the church; it brought out invidious distinctions of social position, which were entirely out of keeping with the unity of the Church as the Lord's Body. Also, it left the late-comers with little or nothing to eat at all. Finally, it betrayed a gross disrespect for the religious aspect of the loaf and the cup. According to the interpretation under review, it is this last point which is pressed home by the apostle in v.^{29}. No one who had a proper sense of what the bread and the wine at the love-feast of the Lord meant, would behave so greedily that some of his fellow-members would have to go without any of the food, while

[1] 'Un vrai souper, où chacun mangeait selon sa faim, seulement avec une haute intention mystique' (Renan, *S. Paul*, p. 265).