

EASTER SERMONETTE.

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Revel. I. 17-18: "Fear not, I am the First and the Last. I am He, that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore.—Amen."

We believe, that on Easter morning a man, who had died a few days ago, became alive again, not to die again, like Lazarus and others, but to live for evermore. Indeed, something unheard-of in the history of mankind. Billions of men had died; the might of the mightiest and the wisdom of the wisest had to yield to the power of the king of terror, Death. In his embrace the giant was as powerless as the babe in the cradle. Jesus the only one, who remained victor in the battle with death. Rising from His tomb, He says: "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore."

If we really believe what we profess, without any "ifs" and "buts"—what follows from it?

I. Nothing less, than that this Jesus must verily and truly be to us "The First and the Last." All other human names and magnitudes must fade away before Him, as the stars before the rising sun. He has first claim upon our interest, nay, upon our enthusiasm, our passionate admiration, our unconditional discipleship.

"Christianus sum"—"I am a Christian" — that was the watchword by which the early Christians recognized each other, with which they faced death in the bloody arena; neither promised freedom or threatening martyrdom could stifle the ardor of their profession: "I am a Christian." No wonder! There is nothing stronger nor higher nor more perfect and divine than He, who as the only one has broken the otherwise uninterrupted dominion of death. Every one, who is really filled with the consciousness: The most powerful and most sublime is Jesus, because even death and devil must bow to Him, must needs recognize Him as the First and the Last, His Saviour, his Lord, his God, must know and seek only the one thing needful, to win Jesus and proudly to profess: "I am a Christian."

Brethren, is there something of this holy pride, of this burning zeal in our soul? and does our so-called Christian life prove it? Alas, if we really believed, what we pretend to believe, our life would look very dif-

ferently. A little conventional piety, which is satisfied with paying this Jesus an occasional ceremonial reverence, is incompatible with a full, living Easter faith. Is He the First and the Last, the one, that liveth for evermore, then serve Him, serve Him with a passionate, exclusive love and quit for ever the service of all other gods besides Him; then lend your heart and hands and lips, to help, that this only great and glorious Jesus be known and adored as the conqueror of death and the Saviour of sinners to the ends of the earth.

II. But the sweetest fruit of a living faith in the Risen Lord is a fearless heart and a fearless life. "Fear not," is His command, and if He lives in me by faith, my answer must be: "No, my Lord, I fear not."

I fear not the worrying cares of this world.

Like tormenting demons they beset and vex rich and poor alike and countless miserable lives are due to their gnawing teeth. There is no effective remedy but living faith in a living Saviour. If Jesus has definitely overcome death and thereby lifted the most oppressing of all cares, He has truly the right to call out to those who are His own: "Fear not!" A Christian who pretends to believe in a Risen Lord and yet allows himself to be scared by every spectre of care, makes a mockery of his faith.

I fear not the sorrows and trials of this life.

Surely, they can approach us in terrific, almost satanic form and shape and number, and far be it from us to judge him, who is vanquished by them. But Jesus surely included the whole army of sorrows, that ever may besiege a poor human soul, when he said: "Fear not." He, who emerged as victor from the battle with the thousand sorrows of death, and to whom I belong—should He lack power and will to help me, when in my sorrows I cling to Him? He will command: "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further," and they must obey.

I fear not men and their ill-will and evil designs.

They have cursed Christ and killed Him—but could they harm Him? Alas, they only helped to make Him the Lord and Saviour of the world. He, who forced death into His servitude, is much more able to frustrate and bring to nought every evil counsel and purpose of men; and though He may send His own like sheep