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DISCUSSION OF LIVING ISSUES, AND
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SERMONIC.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

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*And this is the record of John, etc.—John
i: 19-34.*

LAST SUNDAY we spoke of the darkest hours in the life of a servant of God as exemplified in the man brought before us by the Gospel of the day. It was John the Baptist in prison, enveloped, not externally only in the gloom of his cell, but inwardly also, in the dark clouds of troubled thoughts, of anxious care for the kingdom of God, of painful doubt regarding the Messianic mission of Him on whom he had set all his hopes.

How different are the outward circumstances and inner disposition in which on this occasion we find this remarkable man of God. Here he stands in the height of his power, amid the fire of his activity; in his soul burns the bright flame of inspired zeal for the cause of his Lord; from his mouth streams the joyous testimony to Him of whom the Spirit had revealed to him: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh

away the sin of the world!" On his brow glows the confident assurance: The kingdom of God is at hand; after me comes One mightier than I, who will gloriously complete, as Lord and Master, what I only prepare the way for, as His servant and forerunner.

These are the high, exultant hours of a servant of God, granted him in the midst of the trouble and toil of his calling, to recompense him for many a dreary hour of external opposition and inner conflict. These are the bright spots and lofty summits of life, as they are now and again vouchsafed, even today, to a servant of God, to a handmaid of the Lord, even if the place whereon we stand be far humbler, the sphere in which we act far narrower, and the trust over which we watch far smaller than that of this great forerunner of the Lord.

Let the Baptist then, whom we lately contemplated in his dark cell, be today in his blessed field of labor a stimulating example while we learn of him:

WHAT ARE THE JOYOUS HOURS IN THE LIFE
OF A TRUE SERVANT OF GOD?

They are:

1. When he can testify of Him of whom his heart is full.

*Translated from the German by Rev. Thos. Macadam, Strathroy, Canada.

[Many of the full sermons and condensations published in this MONTHLY are printed from the authors' manuscripts; others are specially reported for this publication. Great care is taken to make these reports correct. The condensations are carefully made under our editorial supervision. All the sermons of the "International Sunday-School Service" are written expressly for THE HOMILETIC MONTHLY.—ED.]

AROUND THE EDITOR'S TABLE.

Mental Kinks.

In an article in the July number, our pen, through that strange depravity which seems so provokingly common and knowing in inanimate objects, got the ancient cities of Athens and Rome queerly mixed. No doubt we have readers who were so charitably disposed as to believe that we were slyly attempting to illustrate certain of the principles of "higher criticism" as applied to the interpretation of history. If this were true, it was a case of what Prof. Carpenter, the eminent physiologist, calls "unconscious cerebration."

We make mention of this unimportant matter because it suggests a curious mental phenomenon. Who has not been annoyed and perplexed at times by the disposition of his tongue to mispronounce some most familiar word, or of his pen to misspell it? The strangest part of this freak of the mind is that when once the *lapsus stili* or *lapsus linguæ* has been made, the mind seems to develop, like the moth for the candle, a fatal fascination for it. Many of our readers will recall a case in point. Some years ago, a prominent orator was speaking of Washington in sentences that glowed with Fourth of July fervor. When, upon reaching the climax of his glowing eulogy, he wished to mention the name Washington, his tongue played him a trick and uttered the name Clay. The unfortunate speaker did not know until after he had finished his speech why the audience so inopportunately laughed. The singularity is in the sequel: for years afterward, whenever that orator had occasion in a public speech to utter Washington's name, that of Clay was sure to be ready at his tongue's end.

The present writer (and perhaps most of our readers will recall similar personal experiences) was the victim of a kindred experience. During the war, one Sabbath while preaching, he attempted to say Calvary; instead he uttered cavalry. He never had any trouble before with the word; but

never after, even to this day, in the pulpit, has he wholly escaped trouble when he had need of the word's service.

How Dr. Talmage Stopped Smoking.

—"No, sir, I do not smoke, nor use tobacco in any of its forms. I once was the slave of the cigar. It ended almost my work and my life. During the first few years I was in the ministry I felt that a cigar was a necessity to me. I could not study, read or write without one in my mouth. Never did a man give himself up more wholly to a debasing habit than did I."

"What was the effect upon your brain and nerves?"

"Most harmful in every way. I became a dyspeptic, a poor sleeper, and so nervous that the creak of the stair as I went up or down would cause me to start. It was killing me. I had smoked myself into eternity, long before this, had I kept on."

—"I stopped in this wise: When twenty-eight years of age I was called to a pulpit in a large city. I went to see and be seen. On Monday one of the prominent members of the church, who was engaged in the tobacco business, told me that if I would accept the charge he would supply me, free of cost, with all the cigars I wished to smoke. I thought this thing over, and, on the cars going home, I figured out the expense of the habit, and I thought over the harm it was doing me, and, through my example, the harm it was doing others; then I said, 'God helping me, I will never smoke another cigar,' and I haven't."

"Didn't the abrupt breaking off of the habit affect you seriously?"

"O yes; for some weeks I was in much distress, and went South to visit old friends. I wasn't able to preach; but by and by the effect wore off, and I became a new man. From that day to the present, a period of over twenty years, I have been kept out of my pulpit but twice on account of sickness."