

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

### To my Pastor.

Respectfully addressed to him on his recovery from a severe attack of illness.

We, to our heavenly Friend above,  
The God of wisdom power and love,  
Our thankful tribute pay;  
And songs of gratitude ascend,  
To him who spared our faithful friend,  
To teach the heavenward way.

While many servants of the Lord  
Called home to their divine reward,  
In heaven's blest mansions dwell,  
Thou, from the bed where sickness chained,  
Thy mortal frame diseased and pained,  
Art raised again to tell:—

The story of Immanuel's love;  
That brought him from his throne above;  
To die for rebel man.  
May many hear the gospel call;  
While from thy lips the tidings fall;  
Of full salvation's plan.

Yes, he who called thee to this field,  
Thy Friend, Protector, Strength and Shield  
Has gems for thee to win.  
Thy arduous trial is not yet done,  
Nor harvest-sheaves all gathered home;  
From scenes of mirth and sin.

When e'er thy heart ascends in prayer,  
Or voice the truths of God declare,  
May streams of grace descend,  
Until our church shall wake and rise,  
On wings of faith above the skies;  
And on Christ's love depend.

And when thy Saviour calls thee home,  
To bow before the great white throne;  
And sing unceasing praise,  
May many sparkling gems of light,  
Shine in thy crown of glory bright,  
Through everlasting days.

Onslow, Sept. 9th, 1858.

## Religious.

### On Amusements.—A Sermon.

BY THE REV. J. BIGWOOD.

"Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it."—Prov. xxv. 16.

ARE amusements lawful for Christians? If so, what amusements? and to what extent? These are questions that claim our careful and candid consideration. In the present day, the pursuits of the church and of the world appear so nearly one, and the love of amusements has become so nearly universal, that every disciple of Christ is bound fairly to consider what course he ought to pursue in regard to them.

It may be presumed that innocent pleasures are not displeasing to God, and that Christians may consistently share in them to a certain extent. Disinclination for social delights is a disease, not a virtue; and asceticism is the foe to piety as well as enjoyment. All nature teems with proofs of the benevolence of God, and his delight in the happiness of his creatures. He made our senses to be the inlets of enjoyment, and then clothed the earth with beauty, and filled the air with music. "He caused the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man." True piety is not blind to the beauties of nature, not insensible to the sweets of life. It finds pleasure in those innocent recreations which call into united exercise the intellect, reason, and affections; whilst it avoids those which excite the passions without engaging the mind and the soul.

Many Christians, however, condemn all recreation as a waste of time which belongs to God, and as therefore sinful. Those who, by the severe self-discipline of natural aptitude, are able to devote all their time and energies directly to spiritual things deserve all honour. The man who can live every moment in direct communion with God, is pre-eminently a happy man. Such an one was the Son of Man. We should fix our eye and our heart on him, and, as closely as possible, tread his footsteps;

great will then be our happiness and reward.

But to those who take this position, and condemn every innocent relaxation, I say, Be consistent. Let your whole life accord therewith. Do not, for instance, condemn all amusements, and spend your time in inactivity, in unmeaning employments, or in idle and worse than idle gossip. Do not condemn amusements, and devote all your energies to the business of this life, and the pursuit of wealth. If you do, you are far less Christlike than him who labours for the glory of God and the good of man, though he occasionally spends an hour in recreation. Be consistent; sleep only to restore vigour; eat only to sustain life; labour only to obtain what is essential to an honest livelihood; eschew ornaments and elegancies; your time, your wealth, your energies, your all, devote to God; and remember, that "having done all, you are an unprofitable servant;" and beware, too, lest whilst you "strain at a gnat, you swallow a camel."

Such cases as those now adverted to are, however, the exception, not the rule. Man needs relaxation; both mind and body require rest; and it is better to find it in amusements than in listless inactivity. Man is endowed with certain tastes, and it cannot be supposed that God intended them to be entirely neglected, and they may be made to serve purposes at once pleasant and profitable. Further, Christians are associated with others in the relationship of life. Relatives and friends are necessarily brought into association with one another. Now what course should Christians pursue towards their unconverted relatives and associates? By what course are they most likely to benefit them and glorify God? Should they be austere ascetics, manifesting their Christianity by the avoidance of all relaxation; condemning all mirth, and recreation, and frowning on every pursuit, or pleasure not strictly or technically religious? Decidedly not. They would be much more likely to benefit their unconverted companions by mingling in their innocent amusements, and thus showing them that religion teaches us to be happy and make others happy; at the same time winning their confidence, and thus preparing the way for a word that may turn their thoughts to Christ. The indiscriminate condemnation of amusements by Christians has done much harm to the sinner, and hardened many a heart against God. Besides which, joyfulness is the Christian's special prerogative:—"Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God has accepted thy work."

I am not then prepared to condemn amusements of all kinds, and under all circumstances. But it must be admitted that amusements may present powerful temptations to evil; that when there is no evil in them *per se*, they may exert an evil influence; and that many amusements are in themselves evil, or are inseparable from evil. Now whenever this is the case it is clearly the duty of the Christian to abstain from them. Not, indeed, that all amusements that present temptations are to be avoided. If I avoid every engagement that does or may involve temptation, I know not what engagements I should not avoid. I must withdraw from the business of this world altogether; I had need become a hermit, and seek "a lodge in some vast wilderness." Whilst even there, Satan would intrude, or my own thoughts become tempters. To battle with temptation would be a nobler deed, and to struggle for the crown which is promised to him that overcometh. But if any amusement become to me a powerful temptation; if I find, for instance, that it excites unholy desires, tempts me to neglect duties, or brings me into too close an association with ungodly companions, then it is clearly my duty to avoid it. Christ taught his disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." If we ask God not to lead us into temptation, we are not to rush into it. If duty leads us into temptation we may go safely, trusting on the arm of God; but if inclination leads us there, we have no right to expect help. If, then, any amusement prove to me a powerful temptation,

to me that amusement is sin. I say, to me, not necessarily to another, for the same action may be safe for one and not for another, and may be right and wrong for the same person, under different circumstances. The wind that cuts to death the hot-house plant may brace the hardy shrub; and the same rays of the sun which cause one flower to wither may excite another into bloom. I must not judge then of others by myself, nor condemn in others everything I condemn in myself. An amusement apparently less harmless may, under certain circumstances, be injurious, and must then be avoided. For example, a Christian loves music; this love of music leads him frequently to the concert, and brings him into close association with companions devoid of religion. As a consequence the business of life is neglected, and which is of infinitely more importance, the worship of God and the welfare of his soul. The worldly atmosphere around him enfeebles the growth of piety, and induces indifference to, or a distaste for, religious pursuits. He finds that he must entirely crucify his musical taste, or sacrifice his spiritual welfare. His duty is plain. Jesus Christ supplies the rule: "If thy right eye offend thee (i.e. prove a stumbling-block), pluck it out, and cast it from thee—or thy hand, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." The music is not in itself sinful; it is not the concert that is wrong; but though the music or the concert be in themselves harmless, if they are to him injurious, make him neglect his duties, or prove a stumbling-block to his salvation,—then to him they are sin; and his duty is AT ONCE to crucify the taste and abstain from the gratification.

In this respect all forms of gambling are particularly objectionable. A gambling disposition cannot be too strongly deprecated, whether manifested in amusement or in business; and many of the speculations, "on Change" and elsewhere, are quite as sinful, and infinitely more dangerous, than games of chance.

[Conclusion next week.]

### Arrest of Protestants in France.

The arrest of Protestants at Maubeuge (Nord) when they were assembled for divine worship, has been variously stated. A letter from the spot received in Paris, gives the following version of the affair:—"Great sensation has been occasioned at Maubeuge by the following disagreeable occurrence. Several Protestants had, it appears, sought and obtained permission to meet together for devotional purposes. Matters went on quietly enough until one day they were, if I am rightly informed, accused of proselytism. The Sub-Prefect, indignant at such a scandal, immediately ordered their arrest and committal to prison. Two hours afterwards, and when, I suppose, the nerves of the functionary in question had recovered from the shock they had received sufficiently to allow of the exercise of reason, he gave orders to set them at liberty. There, however, he had reckoned without his host, for his prisoners sturdily refused the proffered boon until permission should come from head-quarters for them to worship God, and even to make proselytes in such a manner as they might deem fit. The Sub-Prefect then ordered the gendarmes to turn them out; but here again he was baffled, for among their number there happened to be a *sous-intendant militaire* wearing the cross of the Legion of Honour, which, as you are aware, renders inviolable the person of the wearer, so far at least as gendarmes and police are concerned, until after the performance of certain legal formalities. This individual stood before his companions so as to cover them, and then dared the gendarmes to lay a finger on him. Meanwhile the news of the whole affair had spread like wildfire through the town, and a vast concourse was assembled in front of the prison. The Sub-Prefect, finding himself foiled at every point, then tried to arrange the matter *à l'amiable* by going personally, accompanied

by the Mayor and (unofficially) by the two colonels commanding the cavalry and infantry in the neighbourhood, to beg the prisoners to leave; but all was of no avail. They remained firm until they gained their point, for a despatch promptly arrived from Paris, granting the permission they requested, and ordering their instant release. On leaving the prison they received a veritable ovation at the hands of the townspeople, who, in immense numbers, were stationed in the neighbourhood of the prison. The general opinion is that the Sub-Prefect will be relieved of his duties. The authorities explain the arrest of the persons in question by saying that they were not only distributing Bibles (which they had a right to do) but they accompanied the Bibles with money. This might be only alms-giving, and perfectly innocent, but if done to a large extent, susceptible and over-zealous authorities fancied they discerned in it some political object."—*Freeman, Sept. 8th 1858.*

### The Year One Thousand.

Just as this century drew to a close, various circumstances concurred to produce a change in men's minds. It was a universally diffused belief, that the world would come to an end when a thousand years from the Saviour's birth were expired. The year 999 was therefore looked upon as the last which any one would see. And if ever signs of approaching dissolution were shown in heaven and earth, the people of this century might be pardoned for believing that they were made visible to them. Even the breaking up of morals and law, and the wide deluge of sin which overspread all lands, might be taken as a token that mankind were deemed unfit to occupy the earth any more. In addition to these appalling symptoms, famines were renewed from year to year in still increasing intensity, and brought plague and pestilence in their train. The land was left untilled, the house unrepaired, the right unvindicated; for who could take the useless trouble of ploughing, or quarrelling about property, when so few months were to put an end to all terrestrial interests? Yet even for the few remaining days the multitude must be fed. Robbers frequented every road, entered even into walled towns; and there was no authority left to protect the weak, or bring the wrong doer to punishment. Corn and cattle were at length exhausted; and in a great part of the Continent the most frightful extremities were endured; and when endurance could go no farther, the last desperate expedient was resorted to, and human flesh was commonly consumed. One man went so far as to expose it for sale in a populous market-town. The horror of this open confession of their needs was so great, that the man was burned, but more for the publicity of his conduct than for his inherent guilt. Despair gave a loose to all the passions. Nothing was sacred—nothing safe. Even when food might have been had, the vitiated taste made bravado of its depravation, and women and children were killed and roasted in the madness of the universal fear. Meanwhile the gentler natures were driven to the wildest excesses of fanaticism to find a retreat from the impending judgment. Kings and emperors begged at monastery doors to be admitted brethren of the Order, Henry of Germany and Robert of France were saints according to the notions of the time, and even now deserve the respect of mankind for the simplicity and benevolence of their characters. Henry the Emperor succeeded in being admitted as a monk, and swore obedience on the hands of the gentle abbot, who had failed in turning him from his purpose. "Sire," he said at last, "since you are under my orders, and have sworn to obey me, I command you to go forth and fulfil the duties of the state to which God has called you. Go forth, a monk of the Abbey of St. Vanne, but Emperor of the West." Robert of France, the son of Hugh Capet, placed himself, robed and crowned, among the choristers of St. Denis, and led the musicians in singing hymns, and psalms of his own composition. Lower men were satisfied