

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.

STANZAS.

"Lord Jesus receive my spirit!"
"Come Lord Jesus!"

The day grows darker—
Mine eyes are dim,
And faint and weary
Is every limb.
The cold damp gathers
Around my brow;
Oh come Lord Jesus
Be near me now!

Though flesh doth falter,
Though sense decline:
Oh Saviour Jesus
Am I not thine?
Am I not thine—
Blood bought by thee?
For thou my Saviour
Hast died for me!

Oh friend most precious!
Oh Saviour dear!
I feel thy presence—
I see thee near;
So near, so precious,
So strong to save
That I can triumph,
E'en o'er the grave!

Oh come Lord Jesus—
Still nearer come!
Oh come Lord Jesus
And lead me home;
Unto that home
Prepared by thee,
What time thou gavest
Thy life for me.

Farewell forever
Thou vale of tears!
Farewell forever
Ye doubts and fears!
At last! at last!
I see the goal—
Oh come Lord Jesus
Receive my soul!

F. B.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM.

THE INTRODUCTORY SERMON PREACHED
BEFORE THE CENTRAL ASSOCIATION AT
BERWICK, JUNE 21ST., 1858.

BY PROFESSOR A. W. SAWYER, A. M.

[Published by special request.]

"And His rest shall be glorious."—Isaiah xi. 10.

(Concluded.)

We might continue speaking of the characteristics which contribute to the perfected church's loveliness. But we now revert to a remark previously made, that the blending of loveliness and majesty makes the highest glory, and proceed to enquire if there is anything grand and majestic in the Christian character. And here, no doubt, you will think of the Christian's faith. You might refer to the discoverer of the New World setting out on his dark and perilous voyage, derided by pretending wise men, dismissed without sympathy by most of the noble, dependent almost solely on his own judgment and energy, yet "on faith in an opinion," resolving to meet the danger and make the trial confident of success, and ask if grandeur and majesty are not seen in such conduct. Or you might allude to the project now being attempted, in comparison with which the exploits of fabled demigods become but nursery tales,—the project of stretching a nerve from Continent to Continent, on which thought may be transmitted almost at its own speed, and ask if there be not something truly grand in a faith in Nature's laws and human power that can attempt such results. We all admit that there is a grandeur in faith as thus exhibited. But if we consider the Christian's faith, even these instances of faith become insignificant.—When he comes to enter the Christian life, he feels that he is in God's hands, that he was made for obedience, but that he has become the servant of sin. He knows sin's power over him: he sees demons around him enticing him to Hell; he sees the world where hope never enters because sin never leaves it: he knows that he stands in slippery places, and his steps almost take hold on

death: every effort in his own strength sinks him lower: all human power cannot rescue him. He lifts up his eyes and sees God afar off, holy, pure, a burning fire, and he trembles. He looks again, and sees Christ at the right of God; he hears the words: *No man can come to the Father but by me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* He that believeth the Son hath life. He commits his soul to that Saviour and that God. A strange power is imparted to him. A strange light shines upon him. He begins to strive against the enemies of his soul, and conquers. Unseen angels hold up his steps that he may not fall. His sin leaves him. The graces of the Spirit appear in his life; and he who just now was an heir of hell, has been transformed and been brought near to Heaven. This is the victory of his faith.

The chief Accuser of men will meet him and charge him with unfaithfulness, and seek to torment him by the recollection of past sin. Mere human strength would soon fail. Hell may begin to rejoice in hope of its victim. But the Christian nothing dismayed, says that Christ nailed those crimes to his cross, and calls on me to believe that his blood has power to cleanse from all sin. He believes it, and Satan cannot disturb the peace that possesses his soul.

He believes in an eternal God and in his own eternal existence. This belief causes him to tread the earth like a being above it. The great events in this world's history, that made men from time to time stand still in amazement, are to him but the hour-strokes in a short day. The eager striving for place and contending for wealth among men, are to him like children's plays and children's quarrels. Eternity is in his view. Eternity has given a character to his plans. The grandeur of Eternity has been imparted to man's short life.

The Christian, also, is called to mark the departure from the world of loved friends. To the eye of sense—and we are almost compelled to add, to the eye of reason,—the end of this life is the end of all conscious existence. But the Christian is called to believe the words of Christ: *I am the resurrection and the life; the hour cometh when all that are in their graves shall come forth.* He believes this word: and in the hour when life is most dark, and sad despair and recklessness are striving for mastery in the natural heart, the Christian rises above all this conflict, sees light even in the darkness, and firm in the confidence that a day is coming that will contain in itself both the spring-time and the harvest, he leaves in the "God's-acre" the body which had been the temple of an immortal spirit, assured that it is planted in the likeness of the Saviour's death, it will be raised in the likeness of his resurrection. Think of that realm of darkness that lies beyond the closed portals of the grave and you can judge of the grandeur of that faith which has life springing from it.

The Christian is taught that this is not his continuing place, and encouraged to seek "a city which hath foundations" and is eternal, he believes in the Word of God, and in a world where all are given to the things that are seen and mocking the man concerned about things unseen and eternal, he endures as if seeing the things invisible; and with his eye on his faith and his purpose fixed presses on, undiverted and without distraction, singing on his way—

"Though in a mortal body pent
Mid arid wastes I roam,
I nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

And when he comes to the hour in which the great mystery of death is to be solved, when even wise men tremble and the bold must fear, he walks on confident that when the darkness shall have closed around him, he will find his Father's hand taking hold of him and guiding him to the realms of eternal light and joy. You may talk of the grandeur of human life in connection with fame, but you will scarcely find another such instance of sublimity in the conduct of man as is exhibited by the dying Christian.

We do not affirm that all these present relations will be so continued in the time

brought to view in the text, that the description which has been given will be applicable in all respects. So far as natural laws may be modified, so far as the great Accuser may be in any degree restrained, it would seem there should be a modification of the description of the Christian's faith. But we must consider that faith as we can view it. And we may be assured that the spirit that can give such grandeur to Christ's kingdom in its present imperfect state, will not lose her sublimity in the more perfect state of that kingdom. An awful majesty must belong to a world inhabited by men possessing such faith and hopes.

It was also stated that another quality belonged to an object which we would designate glorious, namely excellence or choiceness. We have not judgments acute enough to measure this excellence by its intrinsic value; but we may form some idea of the intrinsic excellence by the cost at which this glory was bestowed on man. And here you have already anticipated me. You have seen that all this is the result of the humiliation, suffering, obedience, and death of Christ. The Lord of Glory, the Creator of man, the upholder of all things, condescended to appear in the form of man to inaugurate this kingdom. His griefs and blood were the price of its glory. He did not undertake all this to accomplish some result of small value. Having heard that Christ has suffered and done so much for his kingdom, even if we could see no beauty or glory in it, we should believe that such a kingdom would yet be made glorious, that it would not be unworthy of the dignity of its king. And although we see so much glory in it, yet we must believe that its full glory we cannot see. Our vision is not clear enough to discover it. We are yet too gross to appreciate it. But Christ is still caring for his kingdom. All the events of history are preparing for it. Those grand crises which fill us with wonder and awe, are only heralds of this great kingdom. And surely its glory will not be eclipsed by the antecedent events. "John was a burning and a shining light;" but his honor was almost lost in the honor of him whom he came to introduce. The kingdoms of this world may be called glorious now; but they are only sent to prepare the way, and their glory shall not be mentioned in connection with the glory of the kingdom which will follow.

But the glory of this kingdom will be still more evident, if it shall appear that there is a fitness between the kingdom and the character of the king. This is a spiritual kingdom. It is composed of spiritual subjects. The king's chosen abode is in the hearts of men. A material world, however gloriously arrayed, could not be so suitable a dwelling-place for this great king. It is a holy kingdom. Holiness shall be inscribed on the most common utensils of life. All its members shall be holy. Christ can reign in a world where sin dwells. He can restrain it: he can judge it. But a holy kingdom is his most fitting place. If this kingdom was glorious in its own merit, it would be, in some measure, suited to such a glorious king; but how much more suited is it to him, from the fact that it borrows all its glory from him. It diverts no thought from him. He is the sun whose light enlightens it. He is worthy that all blessing and glory should be inscribed to him. And this kingdom exists to show forth his glory. The more completely it shall do this, the more complete will be its glory. It is therefore a kingdom prepared and meet for the Eternal King.

Such is a feeble delineation of the glory of the kingdom which Christ is preparing for himself. Purity and benevolence, and humility and gentleness, will give its members loveliness in the eyes of all the good. Their exalted faith and hopes give a majesty to their character. The excellence of this character may be learnt from the price of the redemption, and from the care of God's Providence. And it is in every way a kingdom suited to the honour of the glorious king. *Break forth into joy, sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. Be ye glad and re-*

joice forever in that which I create, saith God; for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

We are naturally desirous to know when this consummation will be realized. If we compare our own times with the times of the prophets, we might almost say that the better and brighter condition of the church at the present day would justify the application to her of the glowing language of the prophet. Instead of a Jew who called on the name of God, his true worshippers are now numbered by tens of thousands. Instead of being in darkness in regard to God's purposes of grace, they have seen a wonderful unfolding of them. Instead of being limited to a small people, they are now found in almost every nation. But we believe there are prophecies yet to be fulfilled. *The heathen shall be given to the Son for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.* Every event is bringing on the consummation. Error may have many a triumph yet. The friends and the foes of Christ may have many a sharp conflict. Many a faithful servant may meet a martyr's end. But the promise is sure. The accomplishment is being continually evolved. We wait and pray and work till the end come.

And what a noble work, to be engaged in the establishment of such a kingdom!—All earthly honor is forgotten when this is considered. To work out by God's help an eminent Christian character is a nobler work than to amass untold wealth or emblazon one's name high on the scroll of fame. Yet every Christian who is faithful to his privileges and his trust, is engaged in this noble work. He is living a dignified life, however men may think of him. He is the true nobleman. We honor such. But not only does the Christian labor for his own holiness, that he may add to the Redeemer's glory; he seeks also for the holiness of others. To rescue his neighbors from sin and death, to make society around him intelligent, benevolent, noble, to extend these results till they shall fill the world, and the glory of God shine on all the earth,—this is the Christian's work. O, my brethren, if we saw the greatness of our calling, the magnitude of the results of faithful Christian labor, the majesty of the real Christian life, think you we should be so heartless, so easily discouraged, so discontented, so anxious for the honor that cometh from man? Surely not. It is because we have such imperfect views of the great glory of Christ's kingdom, and of our relations to it, that so little Christian manliness and strength and enterprise are seen in the Church. When such promises are given to us, when such an interest gathers about one redeemed soul, why should the desolate places around so long call in vain for men to come and till the soil? Why should the years pass by us, and so little effort for millions destitute of the knowledge of Christ be put forth? Surely we need to cry for the mercy of God, if while we profess the faith and acknowledge the hopes of the Christian, we are roused by these to no more public effort. The time for our work is passing. Let the idea of our responsibility take possession of us, and we should be new men. A divine strength would be given us. God, through such men, would work wonders. We might not live to see the glorious fulfilment of Gospel promise; but our work, however humble, would aid in its fulfilment. We are pleased at times in tracing the results of years of toil on the part of some eminent servant of God; but no effort put forth in humble dependence on him, fails. The success may not be what we expected. We may die without seeing any encouraging sign. But when the grass is green over our graves, the seed planted by us as we have gone forth at morning, noon, and evening, into the great field, will blossom to the praise of God. Nor let us suppose that even then we shall have no share in the blessedness of the success. Christ's people will all be interested in his kingdom. The tens of millions who go before will not forget the millions on the earth. We