

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Plain Letters, on a Plain Subject,
to Plain Folks.

[No. 2.]

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."

From my previous letter it is conclusively shewn that he who is intent only on accumulating, is sowing to the flesh, and he who is intent on communicating is sowing to the Spirit. And when we remember that as the seed is, so must be the harvest, we cannot doubt the truth of the statement, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This truth will appear more obvious when we take a deeper and a wider view of the subject.

I we descend to the principles which underlie the acts of giving and receiving—the principles of benevolence and of covetousness, the relation between them is no longer that of comparison but of contrast. Were it not so often practically denied, it would not be necessary to assert that the difference is as great as that between light and darkness. No principles are more directly at war with each other in all their operations, than covetousness and benevolence. The former as an angel of light is bearing its subjects upwards to the realms of day, whilst the latter, like a loathsome fiend, is dragging its thousands down to the pit. The one is the friend while the other is the foe of happiness. In our temporal, and much more in our eternal interests we should be grateful to him who would point out to us the dangerous foe of our peace.

However unpleasant it may be to witness unrightly objects, it will not, I trust, be wholly unprofitable, to consider Covetousness as the great common enemy of man, and in consequence Benevolence, as our common friend. Who is it that causes the inner sunlight of his soul, to shine without, gilding the dark abodes of misery with his own celestial rays? It is the benevolent character. Standing between the bright Sun of righteousness and a benighted world, he does not intercept the light that falls upon him like some dark cloud; but like the pure atmosphere, he imbues the bright effulgence in transmitting it to others. Like the pure stream meandering through the landscape, carrying greenness and fertility and joy in its course, so the benevolent man marks his way through life. Like the grudging shores that hug the sluggish pool on every side, causing its waters to stagnate, to send forth its poisonous effluvia to all around, to destroy all life within itself, and finally to reduce it to a filthy quagmire, then to a dry and dusty bed; so covetousness, like Briarius with his hundred arms, or like the serpent with his slimy embrace, crushes and destroys the body, the soul, the usefulness and the happiness of its victim, wiping out even his memory from the earth. Why should the memory of the covetous man be cherished, since it could only be consigned to execration?

Selfishness, another name for Covetousness, is very different from true self-love. Self-love was originally implanted in the heart of man for a wise purpose, to enable him to seek his happiness in God. But in the fall this holy principle became demoralized. Instead of leading man to seek his happiness in the Creator it leads him to seek it in the creature. Instead of alluring him to seek his native home in the skies, it decoys him downward to the home of the "covetous man, who is an idolater." Instead of quickening his soul by that principle which is expansive in its operations, it represses every generous emotion. Instead of diffusing abroad in honor of the Giver of all good, it gathers everything to itself as a centre. It prompts us to worship self the vilest form of idolatry, instead of worshipping God. We cannot wonder that the decalogue prohibits covetousness, and lays it beneath the curse.

Consider then the ruinous effects of selfishness on the individual. It engenders in the soul a host of evil passions, as its fitting companions, some of which are apparently diverse in their nature, if they could not be traced to a common root—"the love of money." The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are the triune branches of Covetousness, the sacred trinity of the selfish man.

The love of money is often seen in a general spirit of worldliness. When this gains possession of the heart, every other claim, however noble, must yield. The claims of religion, in time and in eternity, in the body, in the soul, in the family, the church, and the world are alike disregarded. The individual is whirled round by the engrossing cares of life, self-imposed and needless, as in a mighty whirlpool by which he is drawn every moment nearer and nearer to the centre of the maelstrom, where he is continually

in danger of being suddenly swallowed up in the gulph of perdition. How many do we see in this dangerous state. They seem to think that the end of our being is to be discontented with our lot, to recede a few inches further from the place of poverty towards that of wealth. I speak not of those who are fitting in the giddy scenes of vanity and pleasure; but of those who equally vain plunge themselves in the ocean of worldly care, so that the soul and heaven and God are alike forgotten. Diligent in business, fervent in spirit, we imagine that the duty of serving the Lord may be omitted. But stop my brother, pause a moment. What satisfaction is there in all this turmoil? Nay, is it not fraught with guilt, and misery and ruin?

But worldliness is not the worst feature of covetousness. When this principle has gained possession of the heart, too often, alas! it causes a disregard for the golden rule of loving our neighbor as ourselves. Any one who has had the common experience of the heart knows how much more blessed it is to love than to hate, to bestow than to envy. Not only is the covetous man liable to view others with feelings of malice and revenge; but also to encroach upon their rights. In this case the bitter waters are not confined to the fountain of the heart where they originate; but they flow abroad with direful effects throughout society, and the world. Hence the rapacity of individuals and of nations is a bitter fruit of covetousness. But as benevolence reacts with all its blessed influence upon the soul, so rapacity does not confine its desolations to those against whom it directly operates; but it returns to him who is guilty of it, and plunges its daggers deeply into his own soul. To see the reflex influence of covetousness, we have only to contemplate its effects on Ahab from the time when he first looked with envy on the vineyard of Naboth, till the dogs licked up his blood in the street of Samaria.—1 Kings xxii. 38.

I need not stop to draw the contrast between heavenly-mindedness and the love of the world, nor between envy and benevolence. While it would require a pencil dipped in darker hues than earth can yield to paint these principles of selfishness; on the other hand, it would require colors of heavenly brilliancy to delineate the opposite principles in all their attractiveness. Neither can ever be fully known till the day of retribution. May it be ours to love, so as to experience the latter in our souls, and to give, so that others like us may be blessed, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Nova Scotia, Nov. 16, 1859.

CHARITY.

For the Christian Messenger.

Reminiscences of the Rev. Harris
Harding.

MR. EDITOR,

Many years have now rolled away since I was a small pale-faced boy of eight years old—placed by my kind mother under the hospitable roof of good old uncle Harding, to go to school in the vicinity to a very kind teacher by the name of Crawford. Those were halcyon days, and the retrospect comes sometimes rushing to my mind in all its vivid and pleasing colors. Yarmouth at that time was but a small village, and the country round had no beautiful cottages to greet the eye of the traveller. The land and scenery far and near gave no indication of the beauty and fertility which now meet the gaze of the tourist. From Digby to Yarmouth, you travelled over a rough corduroy road, lined, half the way, by a dense primeval forest of evergreen spruces or stunted birch and other hardwood trees. The dirty houses of Clare, with their clay and stick chimneys, gave no promise of future prosperity. The short blue jacket of the Acadian farmer and deep blue kirtle of Madame and black silk kerchief tied closely around the brow, told, at one glance, that no English blood flowed in their veins.

Many of you who glance over these lines will call to mind the fervent and pious manner in which Father Harding offered to his heavenly Master his pent up prayers. They came from a breast which knew no guile. His gentle and soothing manner, his Master's words as they came gushing from the soul, all showed that gospel truths were early implanted in his heart. That venerable benign look, with the frosty locks around his noble open brow, brought out every lineament of his well-portrayed countenance. He always had a smile for the poor as well as the more wealthy. When on his old horse, he was seen wending his way around some hill, or through some lonely valley, some pious poor man, with earnest gaze, would come out, and seize upon the reins, and press the good old man to partake of his cheerful hospitality,

have prayer-meeting at his lowly cottage, and impart the bread of life to the inmates of his dwelling. Why not record the sayings and doings of the pious good preacher of the gospel? Why let them sink in oblivion? Once in the balmy days of summer he came up from Yarmouth, on his way to Horton, and stopped at the valley. He loved to gaze on the scenery around, although at that time no Acacia trees cast their rosy flowers over our humble dwelling and no laburnums had thrown their golden chains around the place; but hill and valley were clothed in the richest verdure, and the lofty Lombardy poplar trees were pointing their cone-like tops to the azure vault above. How glad we all were to run out and grasp our dear old uncle by the hand and inquire after his family. My mother, on one occasion, began to apologize for our dark homespun bread, when he gave one of his heavenly glances, and said, in his mild pleasing way, "Oh! don't apologize; you know, sister, it is better than my Master ate, for he was satisfied with a little barley bread."

Hay, at one time, was very dear and scarce in Yarmouth, and my uncle had never a very large supply, some infamous vile thief stole nearly all his hay. When his people were told of this, they soon replenished his loss: "One man said to him, 'Mr. Harding, wouldn't you like to know the thief who has robbed you?'" "No, no," was the answer; "I might have an ugly feeling towards him."

One hot day, his horse being rather lazy, my uncle rested a few moments to give him some water at a silent stream, the animal lay down to take a comfortable bathe, and remained some time in that position. Looking calmly on, the good man said, "Are you not a pretty animal to lie in this pool?" and waited patiently till the horse stood up, and proceeded on his way.

I rode through the town of Yarmouth, in October last, and gazed upon the monument erected to the memory of Mr. Harding. On the Sabbath I listened to the several Baptist ministers, who addressed the large assemblies in the churches in eloquent and touching strains. I felt how happy such a people should be, blessed with such Pastors. Their most fervent thanksgiving should ever be offered up to our Heavenly Father, for the many blessings conferred on them. Truly thankful I felt to those good and pious people for erecting such a monument over the remains of one so dear. His words and looks are stamped on my memory, and through all the different phases of life and the flight of time will never be forgotten or effaced. Let each one of us follow in the steps of good old Father Harding, let us cherish his memory, —let us ponder over his heavenly words, and be ready, as he was, when our gracious Lord and Master shall call! Let our lamps be trimmed and burning!

Acacia Valley, Nov. 9th, 1859.

For the Christian Messenger.

Obituary Notices.

DEACON STEPHEN TAYLOR, OF WILMOT, N. S.

The subject of this memoir was born in the Town of Digby, N. S., in 1795. His parents came to this country in the time of the American Revolution, leaving behind them their property, and sacrificing all their earthly possessions rather than take up arms against British rule.—Being in humble circumstances, but anxious to do what they could for their children, they apprenticed their son Stephen to a blacksmith in the town of Digby. His master proved to be a very intemperate man, and when under the influence of liquor was exceedingly violent. Frequently in the dead hour of the night he would hurl his wife and family into the streets; and so terrible were his imprecations that young Taylor oftentimes feared that the judgments of God would descend and consume them.

Strange to say that it was under such circumstances that the mind of the lad became deeply impressed with the concerns of his soul, and while the master was uttering fearful oaths and curses, the servant was upon his knees in his bedchamber, crying to God for mercy.

His care for his parents.—Having fulfilled with all fidelity the conditions of his apprenticeship, he entered upon the business of life for himself, and as a truly faithful son, one of his first acts was to make provision for his aged parents, who were incapable, through the infirmities of age, of providing for themselves. He went up to Wilmot, purchased a tract of land upon credit, built a small house, put his father and mother in it, and made them comfortable during the rest of their life. Thus early in his career did young Taylor exhibit that noble spirit of generosity which distinguished his future course.

His Domestic Relations.—These were developed under circumstances altogether peculiar. He was married six times. His first wife was the daughter of Deacon Morton, of precious memory. His second and third were sisters, daughters of Mrs. Wood, of Cornwallis. His fourth was Miss Lavinia Morse, daughter of the late Mr. Obadiah Morse, of Nictaux. His fifth,

Mrs. Armstrong, widow of the late Mr. Armstrong, of Wolfville; and his sixth wife was Miss Fanny Gable, daughter of the late Mr. John Gable, of New Brunswick. By his first he had one son and two daughters, who are still alive; by his fourth he had one son and one daughter. The latter died in childhood, but the son lived to be the stay of his declining years. By the last Mrs. Taylor he had one daughter.

These remarkable changes were to him and others a strange chapter in his history; but amidst them all he invariably recognized an overruling Providence, and bowed in humble submission to his righteous decree.

His Religious profession.—As we have already stated, in early life he became the subject of deep religious impression—was thoroughly convinced of his utter helplessness and ruin by sin—of the absolute necessity of a change of heart, and of his entire dependence upon Christ for salvation, yet many years passed before he was able by faith to claim a personal interest in the great work of redeeming love. These were years of doubt, perplexity and anxious concern; but ultimately he was led to bow in full submission to the claims of the cross, and to yield himself, body, soul, and spirit, as a living sacrifice to the Redeemer of sinners. He was then enabled to make a good profession of his faith before many witnesses.—About 51 years ago he was baptized by the late Rev. Thomas H. Chipman, and united to the church of Nictaux, then under his pastoral care.

Chosen to the Deacon's office.—In the year 1829 the church became very much enlarged under the influence of a most extensive religious revival, and it became necessary to increase the number of deacons. The constancy and integrity of Mr. Taylor's character naturally pointed him out as a suitable person for the office, and he was therefore unanimously chosen to fill it. In this important position he continued until summoned to a higher sphere in the spirit world. It may be truly said of him that he "used the office of a deacon well, and thereby purchased to himself a good degree and great boldness in the faith."—See 1st Tim. iii. 13. He was to his minister what Aaron was to Moses, ready in the hour of conflict to "hold up his hands," and in the season of discouragement to speak to him words of comfort and of hope.

His steadiness in religious life.—With him religion was not a fitful dream, but a solemn reality, an abiding principle, a permanent good. None rejoiced more than Deacon Taylor in the progress of religious revival, and none more constant at their post in seasons of declension. His religion was not simply a matter of faith and of feeling, but of conscience and of duty, and designed not for revival times simply, but for all time. His motto was: diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Whatever might be the hurry of business, when the hour came for private or family devotion, for Prayer or Conference Meetings, or for the more public duties of the sanctuary, his language to all worldly engagements was, "Tarry ye here while I go yonder and worship."

In his religious sentiments he was naturally Conservative. He adopted the idea that "extremes were dangerous," in religion as well as in other matters; and hence he preferred a middle path. The fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith were rich sources of consolation to him; but he regarded them as really useful to him only in proportion as they exerted a sanctifying influence over his heart and life; so that while he rejoiced with Paul in the doctrine of a free and full justification alone by faith in the righteousness of Christ, he could say with James, "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

His integrity.—His word was regarded by him as sacred as his bond. Prevarication or double dealing he most cordially despised. Frank and honest himself, he felt that others ought to be so too, and any manifestation of a contrary spirit was sure to meet his most decided disapprobation. Truth to him was more precious than rubies. The Bible he read with much care, and when its sublime verities were attacked in his presence he was not slow to defend them with clearness and force.

His hospitality.—He possessed naturally a generous disposition. This was manifest in his readiness to sustain the financial interests of the church of which he was a member, and to contribute, according to his ability, to the benevolent objects of the denomination; but in no place did it shine with so much lustre as in his own dwelling. The friend or the stranger who approached his habitation was sure to meet with a cordial reception; and he had the peculiar faculty of making all persons, sharing his hospitality, feel themselves perfectly at home. The visits of Ministers and other intelligent friends were to him rich sources of social and spiritual delight and profit.—Though not favoured with early educational advantages, he had so enriched his mind by reading and by the study of men and things, that he was quite prepared to converse with interest and intelligence on all the general topics of the day. His guests, therefore, while they shared the good things of his table, could not fail to profit by the suggestive style of his conversation.

His church membership.—This extended over 51 years, and during that protracted period he was never known to introduce personal difficulties into the Church. He acted upon the principle that it was better to suffer wrong than do wrong. If at any time a brother member injured him in person or estate, he endured it patiently rather than trouble the Church with a mere personal matter. In every thing that appertained to Zion's progress he took a lively interest. When the Church prospered he was joyful; when she was in adversity he mourned.