

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Plain Letters, on a plain subject,
to plain folks.

[No. 12.]

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

"Look not every man on his own things: but every man also on the things of others."

One of the poets illustrates benevolence by the phenomenon of a stone thrown into the glassy surface of a pool. Wave after wave succeeds each other, until the whole surface of the water is covered with concentric circles moving always from the centre. So divine love in the soul ever goes out seeking for objects of compassion. Self is denied. The good of others is sought.

In appropriating money even to religious objects, we must examine the nature of the action before we can call it a benevolent one. According to Webster, Benevolence is derived from the two Latin words "bene," well, and "volens," wishing. His first definition of the word is, "a disposition to do good," and his third is, "good done." Hence it is both the disposition and the act. Benevolence is simply "well doing." But we may bestow a favor without intending it, and even when we meant to do an injury. Hence a good act to be benevolent must come from a benevolent heart. We may spend money on religious objects from no higher motive than selfishness, or at best of common honesty, without a spark of benevolence. Paying towards the worship of God in our own vicinity, unless we do more than a fair proportion, is not charity, but self-interest. Our lands would be covered with the shadow of death, our homes dens of iniquity, our atmosphere pestilence walking at noonday, were it not for the pure light of the gospel shining around. It is impossible to return an equivalent for this unspeakable gift. Paying the salary of our minister is at least no more benevolence than paying any other servant. But many are slower to pay the former than the latter—slower to recognise their obligations to him who labours for their eternal good, than to him who labours for their temporal advantage*. This savors more of infidelity than of Christianity. Paul says, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing that we shall reap your carnal things?" Some take care to feed their oxen, but starve their minister. "Doth God care for oxen?" "For our sakes, no doubt this is written."—1 Cor. ix. 11. Gal. vi. 6.

The payment of a pastor does not rise to the dignity of benevolence; it is simple justice, yea more, it is self-interest. So also to build a house of worship for ourselves, or a parsonage for the minister near us, may be accounted for from the same principle, for it greatly enhances the value of our own property, and hence all these things may arise from keen business calculation and worldly wisdom. But to give towards a parsonage or a zayat for Brother Crawley in Burmah, or to support a missionary abroad, is benevolence. To pay the teacher of our children is a business transaction, in which we receive at least a thousandfold for our money. But to give for the female schools taught by Mrs. Wade, in Maulmain, or Mrs. Crawley in Henthada, is benevolence. Acadia College, standing with open arms to confer its blessings on all and each of the Baptist denominations, combines in its support both self-interest and charity. No one who regards either his own advantage or that of his denomination can feel indifferent to its prosperity. His feelings and his interest will be not merely in his heart but also in his pocket. Impelled by a sense of public and private good he will seek to establish and make it "a thing of joy forever."

Even were we sure that the object will "never do me any good," the fact that it will benefit others is enough to establish its claim. And no one can doubt the genuineness of this claim nor the superiority of the motive, since giving is more blessed than receiving. But who will say that his own interest is not involved in that of his own denomination? If such can be found let him be exhibited as a novelty among the christian species.

Although benevolence "seeketh not her own" interest, yet she has her peculiar rewards. A benevolent spirit is the highest condition of happiness, and it has treasures laid up in the promises of God. May we heartily embrace that promise, and cling to that hope, which shall be as an anchor to our souls, sure and steadfast.

Yours in the prospect of life,
CHARITY.

Nova Scotia, April 28th, 1860.

* Father Manning used to say, "Gospel debts are the last debts paid."
The Millennium, I fear,
Is not very near.

For the Christian Messenger.

Revivals.

(Concluded.)

Our friend who has sent us the following, and the letter headed "Revivals" in our issue of May 2nd, intimated, at the time of forwarding that article, that he would continue the extract from the *Missionary Magazine* of 1832.

We waited some time, hoping to get the remainder before commencing its publication. As it did not arrive, we preferred giving our readers what we then had, without committing ourselves to the publication of anything beyond, which we had not seen. He should have sent on the whole, so that we might judge of its suitability as to length, &c., for our pages.

The close of his last referred to the dangers of allowing the imagination and passions to assume dominion in the work of conversion, and affirming that in cases of revivals of religion where they do, that "they make a religion of bad proportions if not altogether delusive." We feel it necessary to make this brief introductory remark for the purpose of connecting the following with what has preceded it, from the same source.

"All this is known to the educated in our country; and if any of them have adopted measures calculated to give undue preponderance to imagination and passion, it has been for the most part to answer other purposes of religious policy. Much has been done of late to lead awakened sinners to *commit themselves*, in order to get them over that indecision and fear of man which have kept them back, and to render it impossible for them to return with consistency. For this purpose they are called upon to request public prayers by rising, to come out into the aisle in token of their determination to be for God, to take particular seats, called, in bad English, anxious seats, to come forward and kneel in order to be prayed for, and in very many instances to *PROMISE* to give themselves to religion at once. For much the same purpose converts are called upon to take particular seats, and thus virtually to make a profession in a day, and are hurried into the church in a few weeks. These measures, while they are intended to commit the actors, are meant also to awaken the attention of others, and to serve as a means of general impression. I would not make a man an offender for a word; but when these measures are reduced to a system and constantly repeated,—when, instead of the former dignity of a christian assembly, it is daily thrown into a rambling state by these well-meant manoeuvres,—it becomes a solemn question whether they do not give a disproportionate action to imagination and passion, and lead to a reliance on other means than truth and prayer, and on other power than that of God. I have seen enough to convince me that sinners are very apt to place a self-righteous dependence on this act of commitment. "I have taken one step, and now I hope God will do something for me," is language which I have heard more than once. Against any *promises*, expressed or implied, I utterly protest. If they are promises to do anything short of real submission, they will bring up a feeling that more the sinner is not bound to do; if they are promises to submit, they are made in the sinner's own strength, and are presumptuous. The will, which forms resolutions and utters promises, cannot control the heart. Sinners are bound to love God at once, but they are not bound to promise beforehand to do it, and rely on their own will to change their heart. This is self-dependence. They are bound to go forth to their work at once, but they are not bound to go alone; it is their privilege and duty to cast themselves instantly on the Holy Spirit and not to take a single step in their own strength. In these extorted promises there is another evil,—the substitution of human authority for the divine. Is it right for Christians to urge upon sinners the obligation of immediate submission, and they cannot enforce this too much by the authority of God; but to stand over them and say, "Come, now promise; promise this moment; do promise, for you *must* promise," is overpowering them with human authority, and putting it in the room of the divine.

Sometimes these new measures are plainly intended to work on the imagination and passions. When, in addition to all the rest, a whole assembly are called to kneel, what is this but a measure intended merely for effect? No new truth is thereby conveyed to the mind. Truth has to do with reason and conscience but these tactics with imagination and passion first, and afterwards with a stupid reliance on forms, as the whole history of the church attests. Is there no danger that we may again "be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ?" The frequent repetition of these imposing ceremonies will destroy their effect, and leave us with forms instead of feelings. It was in this way that the primitive church sunk into all the dead formalities of the church of Rome. The ceremonies were first adopted because they were thought to be impressive. In time they ceased to impress, and then the magnificent and gilded body of worship was accepted for the soul. This is the certain course of fallen nature. It is dangerous to work in human inventions upon the forms of our worship. He who made and united the body and soul, best knows what forms are adapted to our nature. The more simple they are, the less they draw the mind off from God and truth.

God forbid that I should speak against protracted meetings, I only speak against their

abuse. In this imperfect world, it is impossible that such a stimulating institution should not be abused. It is so much easier to enter into the excitements of a protracted meeting than to "tug at the oar of prayer" in secret, or even to exercise a holy heart; it is so much easier to move the people by these impassioned forms than to bring down the Holy Spirit by the struggles of faith; that there is the utmost danger that these meetings will be put in the room of secret prayer and of the Holy Spirit, and even of personal religion. When I see them relied on to produce revivals without previous prayer, and a boast made that Christians were stupid when they began; when I see a revival of ten days produce its hundred converts, and the people, who were stupid before, relapse into the same stupidity at the end of the protracted meeting, I cannot but say, how different are these from the revivals of the last forty years, which were preceded by long agonies of desire and prayer, and which transmitted their spirit to many succeeding months.

There is another difference, I fear, in many cases. In those revivals unwearied pains were taken to lay open the divine character in all its benevolence, holiness and justice, to present the divine government in all its righteousness and purity, in all its sovereignty and covenant faithfulness, in all its reasonableness and benignity and awful terror; to lay open the carnal heart, festering with evil passion, and the horrid nature of sin, with its infinite demerits; to explain the great provision of the atonement and the terms of acceptance with God; to bring out the mercy which melts in the Gospel and to press home the invitation; to show the reasonableness and sincerity of God in all his treatment of sinner, and the unreasonableness of their obstinacy in rejecting the Gospel. All these and many other topics furnished matter always new and always affecting to the conscience. It was all regarded as an exhibition of God, in his character, government and relations to men; and if we could make a clear manifestation of God, we felt a confidence in leaving the issue in the hands of that Spirit whose office work it is to take of the things of God and show them to men. But now I fear that in many instances there is so much reliance on these newly invented means of impression, that the truths of God are but very imperfectly brought out or even studied; dependence being placed on a few topics of exhortation, without the reasons which the truths of the universe furnish. The consequence must be that the people will be left in ignorance, with a high susceptibility of irregular excitement, and exactly fitted, should more sober habits return, to fill the ranks of the most extravagant sectaries,—the same that happened in New England some eighty years ago. From these excesses two special evils are sure to follow; one among the ignorant, the other among the learned and refined. That among the ignorant is gross, palpable disorder. It is impossible that the local scenes of the last six years should have been enacted, and that the events of the last year should have given currency so wide to some of them, without producing among the ignorant outbreaking disorder somewhere. These fruits, I hope, have not yet extensively appeared; but a late scene which has been described to me as "a perfect revel of fanaticism" may serve as an example. Among other excesses, when the awakened were called out into the aisle, some women found themselves converted, and in the midst of a crowded assembly, and with a loud voice, began to pray for their husbands. And this was taken, by men, hitherto deemed sober,—perhaps too sober,—as proof of the extraordinary descent of the Holy Spirit. Such disorders, and worse than these, will infallibly spread themselves all abroad, if ministers and distinguished members of the Church do not combine in earnest to check present measures. Human nature must cease to be human nature if this is not the result. The other evil referred to, is, that these excesses, (I speak not of the disorders,) prejudice men of learning and taste against revivals, and arm the influence of society against them. And thus while they throw discredit on the most precious of God's works and obscure his glory where it was chiefly to be shown, they lay stumbling blocks before the blind over which millions will fall into hell. Let the attention of the world be aroused by every hallowed means; let the imagination and passions be wrought upon as far as the most sweet and solemn and awful truths of God can move them; let every knee be pressed to the earth in prayer, and every authorized tongue be strained with entreaties to dying men; let the whole operation be as impressive and irresistible, as love and truth and eloquence can make it; but Oh! for the honour of Christ and his Spirit, and in pity to the cultivated millions of the human race, let revivals be conducted with order and taste, and shun every thing by which our brethren may be offended or made to fall."

Nictaux, May 5th, 1860. R.

We have no desire to interpose any remarks of our own by way of controverting the above, as we fully agree with much that it contains. We would, however, venture to suggest that the late "manifestations" in Ireland and many other places teach us that we must not set up any standard by which to judge of the way by which God works in saving souls. If we have reason to believe by the Word of God that the fruits of righteousness are indeed brought forth, we must conclude that they are the results of the good seed of the kingdom being scattered.

ERRATA.—In the article "Revivals," O. M. page 141, in line 17th, for "Marrata," read "Masste," also in line 39th, for "drawing from us," read "drawing comfort from us."

For the Christian Messenger.

Home Mission Agency.

Mr. Editor,

Since my last letter, I have visited Upper Aylesford, Pleasant Valley, Long Point, Black Rock, Canard, Kentville, New Minas, Wolfville, and Gaspereaux, presenting the claims of the Home Mission, as far as practicable, both in public and in private. Owing to the exceeding scarcity of money in those localities, not as much has been done in collecting as could be desired; yet the brethren and sisters generally feel interested in the mission, and promise to do all they can to aid in the good work.

I visited Margaret's Bay the 29th ult. Spent the Sabbath and two following days there. Held meetings at Mason's Point, Hubley Settlement and Indian Harbor.

Under the direction of the Board, and at the request of the church at Jeddore, expressed through Brother S. Bell, I spent last Lord's-day at Jeddore. I preached once on each side of the harbour, baptized four persons and administered the Lord's Supper.

I expect to leave Halifax to-morrow to visit the following places: Stewiacke, Brookfield, Upper Stewiacke, Truro, Onslow, Londonderry, Cobequid Mountains, River Philip and Amherst. Hope the friends of Home Missions will be prepared to do all in their power to aid in this glorious work.

I would just remind our brethren and friends that the Anniversary of the Home Missionary Society is near at hand, when the Annual Report will be looked for, and it is highly desirable that all the materials from which that report is to be made up should be on hand, if possible, by the first of June. I would therefore suggest to our Missionaries who may have performed the labour assigned them, that they send in their reports as soon as convenient, and that they report with as much precision as possible, the No. of sermons preached—other meetings attended—baptisms—family visits—pages of tracts distributed—miles travelled, and that with their account they send a list of contributions with the names of the donors.

Allow me also to say to the officers of Auxiliary Societies that it is desirable for them to collect all they can and forward to the Treasurer John Whitman, Esq., Halifax, before the anniversary, taking care to send a list of the contributions, so that their names may accompany their donations in the report.

In conclusion, let me appeal to our churches generally that they come up to our help, and "to the help of the Lord against the mighty." We are heavily in arrears—we cannot pay our Missionaries who are now in the field. We have already been obliged to decline making appointments for want of funds, and we shall be obliged to say to some of those who are now labouring, you must labor at your own expense, or cease to tell the story of Calvary to the destitute. This, Brethren and Sisters, *must not be*. The machinery *must* be kept in motion. Souls are perishing! Time is flying! Eternity is hastening with its day of reckoning. O let us arouse from our slumbers and work while the day lasts.

Yours truly,

I. J. SKINNER.

Halifax, May 9th, 1860.

For the Christian Messenger.

Obituary Notices.

MRS. MARY KILCUP.

Died, at Kennebec River, Douglas, Hants County, April 10th, in the 87th year of her age, Mary, the beloved wife of Mr. William Kilcup, formerly of Windsor, N. S.

Mrs. K. experienced religion, it is believed, some years since, but only about nine or ten years ago was formally received into the Baptist Church, being baptized by the late Rev. E. Manning. She had generally enjoyed good health until last summer, or about nine or ten months ago, she appeared to sink under the weight of years, and was obliged to remain confined to her bed. But though wearisome days and nights were afforded her, she could adopt the language of the "man of Uz": "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come;" and of the Psalmist: "My flesh and my heart fainteth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." Patience and submission to God were remarkably exemplified throughout.—Not a murmur or word of complaint escaped her; all was calm, and joy, and peace." If she expressed a desire at all, it was like that of the Apostle—a "desire to depart and be with Christ;" which he regarded as not only better, but far better. She often seemed like one alone in the world,—one whose company had gone before, and she anxious to join them. And no doubt most of her own day and generation had preceded her to the spirit world, and some of those, at least, were waiting her arrival on the opposite shore of blest eternity.

The final moment, however, arrived when she must bid a short farewell to her husband, who—though remarkably smart for one of his years, being in his ninety-third year—will not stay