

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

Warfare and Victory.

What throng of kings and priests at God's right hand,
The pure, the meek, the holy and the tried,
Who with crowned heads and mitred foreheads stand,
For whom the gates of pearl have opened wide,

A little while ago, in this low vale,
Were struggling on, amid our varied cares;
Oft felt as though their hopes, must faint and fail;
While walking heavenward through a thousand snares.

But love for their Redeemer, nerved their arms;
Gave courage to their hearts in danger's hour;
Made unattractive earth's alluring charms;
And gave them trust in his Almighty power.

And now the rest is gained; and they—
On heights of glory sing the victory won;
From darkness they have passed to endless day;
Where toil and warfare are forever done.

There by their God arrayed, a phalanx vast,
More bright than sun and starry gems they shine;
Their doubts, and fears, and sorrows, all are o'er,
And they reflect the lineaments divine.

Soldiers of Jesus, manfully arise!
Though worn and weary, sore beset by foes:
Though courage wellnigh fails and comfort dies,
Your leader bids you follow where he goes.

O obey with sacred joy his high command;
His own blest hand hath armed you for the field.
Ye, with his breast-plate on, will safely stand;
Hope for your helmet, Faith your mighty shield.

And then the two-edged spirit sword is given;
With strength and skill to use it in the fight.
Thus furnished from the armoury of heaven,
Ye sure will conquer in your Saviour's might.

Unsheath your sword, ye soldiers of the cross,
And swiftly gather in unbroken lines;
The matchless blade you wield contains no dross:
By constant use it more resplendent shines.

Your conflicts o'er, then shall you freely bathe
In the pure river of eternal life;
And from the tree its crystal waters lave,
Pluck leaves, to heal the latest mark of strife.

Each humble conqueror then shall lowly come,
And lay his trophies at his Master's feet;
His cry shall be: thy sword the victory won;
Thy holy arm made every foe retreat.

His welcoming smile the humblest saint will show,
And heaven's new song they evermore shall sing;
The spotless vesture of the holy, wear
Within the palace of the King of Kings.

Prospect Hill, June, 1860.

1.

Select Sermon.

PARTING WORDS.

A FAREWELL DISCOURSE, PUBLISHED AT THE SPECIAL REQUEST OF A NUMBER OF CITIZENS OF MOUNT AUBURN, CINCINNATI. DELIVERED FEB. 26, 1860.

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"Finally, brethren, farewell."—2 Cor. xiii, 11.

WORDS OF PARTING have often a precious meaning in them. Such is the good old English household word good-bye, or God be with you. In its ordinary form, indeed, although generally, perhaps, the meaning of the word is entirely overlooked, it has a special power, because it is hallowed by the sacred associations of home, and of honest, earnest friendship, to the sincere and pure affections of which the hearty good-bye has so often given expression; but when we call to our minds what the word thus used really means beyond the expression merely of a hearty good will, we can not fail to perceive that it rises in dignity, by becoming the fitting utterance of the purest and sublimest wish that man can form for his fellow-man, however near to his heart in kindred or affection. For what so great and good a blessing can any one enjoy, as that God shall be with him; or what better for his friends, or more consolatory to himself, could he desire at parting with those he loves? But the word of parting in our text, farewell, implies all this, for no one can be truly said to fare well without the presence of God with him; a godless man is always a

miserable man; and the expression seems calculated to lead to the consideration of the wide field of blessings that constitute true welfare.

This word is, therefore, well adapted to its purpose, condensing, as it does, into one short utterance all that a truly friendly and affectionate heart longs for intensely for his friends; and which it struggles to utter at those moments that wake the soul to its strongest emotions. This text, then, "finally, brethren, farewell," may suitably suggest to us some thoughts adapted to our present circumstances, and which may enable us to gather from those separations of friends, which are, to a great extent, unavoidably incident to the present mutable state, what may tend to our spiritual improvement.

Partings of friends are painful; they are always dreaded, and yet I have no doubt they have their uses. Like every other evil, they, are, by the wisdom of God, so over-ruled as to produce good. It has often been remarked, that we never truly know the value of our blessings until we have been at least temporarily deprived of them—from sickness we learn the inestimable blessing of health; from the close confinement of a dungeon, the joy of air and liberty; from extreme thirst, the delight experienced from abundance of pure, refreshing water; and so, when parting comes, or after we are separated from our friends, we then first know, in all its worth, how large an item in our happiness it has been, that Providence has permitted us to dwell in their midst, and has blessed us with their friendship. And thus partings may be a necessary part of the divine goodness towards us, the design and frequent effect of which is to quicken our sensibility to the mercy which surrounds us with the blessing of kind neighbors, affectionate friends, and a Christian brotherhood.

There may be a special need of this spur to our sensibility, from the commonness of this blessing. The commonness of the blessing of health, of pure air, and water, tends greatly to blunt our sense of the value to us of these every day mercies, and in like manner, the peace and prosperity we enjoy has multiplied so greatly around us the blessings of society, they have become so common and sure, so little subject to the rude and violent interruptions that occur where social order is imperfect, or disturbed by bad government, that we are apt to receive them as a right rather than as a gift—they become a matter of course, and we neither appreciate fully their value to us, nor the gratitude we owe to God on account of them. Partings under such circumstances become to us a wholesome moral stimulant, quickening our sensibility, and throwing the soul into a better condition to appreciate that wondrous hand that is just as near, and just as needful, in common as in uncommon blessings, and for whose kind provision we owe a deep debt of gratitude in one case as well as in the other.

Partings seem needful also as a means of impressing us with a sense of the shortness of our time here, and the certainty of a parting to come, which must finally separate us from all we have loved on earth. I believe this to be a lesson which, painful as it certainly is, is nevertheless of immense value to us. Sin, apparently, has occasioned so great a disturbance of our nature that nothing is harder for a man to realize than that this world is not his home; that, in comparison with the eternal future to which he hastens, the world, with all its joys or sorrows, dwindles to the very shortest span. He knows this—can not doubt it—and yet his moral disease is of such a nature, that, somehow, he can not feel it; the poor, wretched soul shivering on the narrow strand of life, and soon to launch on the ocean of an endless future, seeing before its eyes in some sort, the very preparations that are to transport it thither, still feels towards the dreams as realities—towards the realities as dreams—it listens, considers, and assents, as all the proofs that reality is only in the future pass before it, and then with all the energy of vigorous life, it clasps the present still; its home, its life-blood, its heart, is there. Now, this will never do. If it continue, it will ruin the highest, kindest design of mercy. Not only,

for the fulfillment of that design must heaven be won for us—that has been wonderfully accomplished by Him, who, in the moment of his triumph, though on the cross, cried, "it is finished;" but it is also necessary that we be trained for heaven; and if these worldly actualities shall so prevail as to eat into our souls a permanent lodgment, they will be found to have formed there an incurable canker; it must be cut out; and hence, one man, in mercy, loses his money; another his child; a third is disappointed in his prospects; and so, as a comparatively mild discipline, aiming at the same issue, partings occur on earth of those who have loved—partings, which are designed gently, but very firmly, to press the soul out of its clinging to this life; to give it, so to say, a different set, and to compel it to think of final partings and a home above the skies. I have no doubt that this discipline is of great importance, even to the impenitent, unbelieving world. It arrests, in some sort, its downward course. As it is, there is a fearful rush of human sensibilities, desires, hopes, beliefs, towards a condition that, if it were absolutely reached, would wholly wipe out all thought, all realizing sense of the future. Worldliness is ever falling, except as God's hand may check it, like gravitating bodies, towards a center of intensest worldliness—God's hand mercifully interposes the grand evidence of the error of worldliness, in losses and troubles, which all speak of another state of things, for worldliness would have none of these. Many an individual sufferer is indeed not permanently benefited by the interposition, but is not so intensely worldly as he would have been without it; his bad influence is shorn of some of its strength; and some soul, possibly, seeing the interposition of God's hand, which to the sufferer has effected no permanent good, and meditating on it, is aroused to a sense of its meaning—he sees the upper and brighter world above him, and commences seeking it.

But if the world at large is thus benefited, much more is the lesson valuable to the Christian, for he too needs it—his soul retains so much of its old nature, that but for discipline like that supplied by troubles, losses, partings, the world would resume its original influence, and destroy the soul, by giving it a permanent tending downwards, instead of upwards. Painful—often to agony—may be this discipline now—but, my brethren, be assured that hereafter nothing will awaken in you a livelier gratitude than God's merciful severity.

"All these things are against me," cried poor old Jacob, "Joseph is not, and Benjamin is not, and my gray hairs are brought in sorrow to the grave." Yet that loss of his Joseph and his loved Benjamin proved, in the end, the saving of him and all his house from famine, and the restoration of the sorrowing patriarch to both his lost sons. With what admiring gratitude must the good old man have often looked back over the page of that past life, the days of which, as he testified before Pharaoh, seemed to him few and evil, and wondered at the wisdom and goodness which has so brought things about, that what at the time appeared to be the heaviest affliction, proved to be the means of preventing the very evil that he dreaded.

But partings, as one of the modes of awakening the kindlier emotions of the soul, tend also to quicken its general religious sensibilities. The heart of man is found to be a very hard substance whenever you would seek to make on it a religious impression. Oh! what disappointment one feels when, after the most earnest endeavors of this sort, there is discovered not the slightest appearance of feeling. Oh! what shall wake, we cry, any sensibility in this nether millstone? Now affliction, indeed, does not necessarily do this; and if the sorrow is heavy, there may, on the contrary, at first be running so strong a current, that it may seem vain to launch, on the river of thought, any topic that is not directly associated with the subject uppermost in the mind of the mourner—but there comes soon a more chastened feeling; the rush of passion is over, it is abated into the calm of a gentle melancholy, well suit-

ed to the introduction of religious truth. Seize then your opportunity; and often it will be found that the Spirit of God is there, using the means of this graver state of the soul as a preparation for the word, the good seed of the kingdom.

Of all these opportunities the Christian may take advantage for himself. He needs them all—for the Christian conflict is an interminable battle; and to him the parting with friends may be found to possess some special tendency to prepare his soul for the yet greater influence of truth upon his heart. To the tenderness which, in common with all in like circumstances, he will feel at a separation from friends he has loved, will be added the natural recurrence to that hand which only can protect the absent; to those truths that must be mutually their consolation and his; to that throne of divine grace and mercy, before which both may continue mutually to bow; and especially to that wondrous day of future meeting, which casts its joyous light over every cloud of present sorrow, to gild and soften it. Believe me, my brethren, it is of the mercies of God that our lives are so ordered, that not only a certain measure of application of important truth is compelled to be made by circumstances that draw it necessarily forth into actual use; but compelled, too, in conjunction with that softened state of heart, which makes it at once peculiarly impressive and peculiarly consolatory.

One of the thoughts just referred to as naturally suggested by the parting of friends, is in itself so full of mercy and comfort, and is so remarkably adapted to that circumstance, as to deserve some more especial mention. I refer to that presiding, expansive guardianship that spreads the shield of protection, the wing of kindly care, wide over the world; wherever there are bodies to protect and hearts to cherish. It is a sublime and wonderful truth, that seems to exalt and purify the soul, while it consoles and soothes it; and, however we may regard it as belonging necessarily to any just idea of Deity, and more especially of God reconciled in Christ, it seems to receive an extraordinary measure of that light and power which we call realizing, when the truth comes to us in the way of application to the case of friends whom we have greatly loved, and who now, scattered widely from our view, need, together with ourselves, the daily, hourly exercise over them of that care and mercy. We know, if we are Christ's that that kind and mighty wing overshadows ourselves; but we have equal assurance that Providence protects all, and that mercy and love are with our Christian friends wherever their lot may be, equally as with us; that assurance for ourselves is the one bright spot of our existence; but it is as bright for them; and thus the commingling of the three elements of affection, of separation, and of faith, gives to our conceptions of God the Father, in this respect, a magnificence, a breadth, and a tenderness, that is seldom, if ever, realized so strongly in any other way as in this. Blessed attribute of Jehovah's wondrous omnipresence! which can thus unite thyself with Fatherly love, and make of the entire world a home! throwing the intimate tenderness and joy of the fireside, sanctified by the dear names of father and mother, and mixed with the might of infinite sovereignty, over yon ship on the mountain wave—over that lone cabin in the deep forests of Australia, or of the distant West—and at the same time around each homestead whence the absent ones have wandered—making of them all at once a home, and a tower of safety everywhere.

But partings lead to thoughts of welfare, and breathe into our hearts earnest wishes for it for our friends—and they do this with that more favorable disposition of the mind, of which I have already spoken, that seems gently to incline us towards the truth; that tenderness that almost invites to honesty and earnestness. When our friends are still among us, making a part of the family circle—merged in the mass of things that press around, and form each one's little world—they make no change in our ordinary course of feeling. If that is the course of the unconverted worldly man, he probably would unhesitatingly wish for them no other than he