

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
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WHOLE SERIES.
VOL. XXV....No. 1.

Poetry.

The Love of God.

TWO SONNETS.

I.

Love Thee! O Thou, the world's eternal Sire!
Whose place is the vast infinity.
Time, space, height, depth, O God! are full of Thee.
And sun-eyed seraphs tremble and admire.
Love Thee! but Thou art girt with vengeful fire,
And mountains quake, and banded nations flee,
And terror shakes the wide unfathom'd sea,
When the heavens rock with Thy tempestuous ire.
O Thou, too vast for thought to comprehend,
That wast ere time, shalt be when time is o'er;
Ages and worlds begin, grow old, and end,
Systems and suns Thy changeless throne before,
Commence and close their cycles: lost, I bend
To earth my prostrate soul, and shudder and adore.

II.

Love Thee! oh, clad in human lowliness,
In whom each heart its mortal kindred knows;
Our flesh, our form, our tears, our pains, our woes,
A fellow-wanderer o'er earth's wilderness!
Love Thee! whose every word but breathes to
bless.
Through Thee, from long seal'd lips glad language
flows,
The blind their eyes, that laugh with light, un-
close,
And babes, unchild, Thy garment's hem caress.
I see Thee, doom'd by bitterest pangs to die,
Up the sad hill with willing footsteps move,
With scourge, and taunt, and wanton agony,
While the cross nods in hideous gloom above,
Though all, e'en there, be radiant Deity;
Speechless I gaze, and my whole soul is love.

REV. H. MILMAN.

Selections.

New Year's Chimes.

Each season of the year is fraught with peculiar music. The spring-time's soft, delicate voice—the slow distant echo of summer—autumn, with its hazy light, its falling leaf—all claim a mystic response of the immortal spirit; and winter now with its icy arms is giving us its coquettish embrace—occasionally breathing o'er mountain and wood, waters and plains, a beautiful silver veil, while all the country, around is ringing with the merry notes of winter's song.

The glad "harvest home" had but blended with the loud Hosannas of Thanksgiving, when the chanting of the Christmas hymn mingled in a knell for the dying year—

The fall of a hoary head
Upon the lap of Time—
The old year's fleeting breath
Lost in the distant chime
Of midnight bells.

For a moment the drowsy mind vibrates to the clear sound—then unconscious with half slumber, is roused at early dawn with the mingling cry of "Happy New Year!"

The mind may sagely reason of "passing away," and the heart ask a tear for the memory of a day, but no leisure is gained; social intercourse and joyous greetings keep step with the first impassioned round of the New Year.

The last echo of the church-bells are faintly heard in the distance—the rapid tread of many feet and busy voices have ceased in the vestibule, and along the broad aisle,—heart to heart—voice joins voice in harmony with the organ's grand melody in the New Year's anthem.

Thoughts for the New Year.

Human life is the cradle of immortality in which we are rocked for the ages to come.

Our moments have a moral impression and meaning, and are like types dipped in indelible ink with which we are printed in Dailies, which are issued in Eternity, and there preserved for our future reading. With what a thrill of interest shall we peruse that wonderful volume! Happy the man who can read his life-thoughts with joy.

Time is a fragment of eternal duration, broken off at each end and measured into years, months and days by God's grand time-piece—the Solar System.

This world on which we live is the fly-wheel, where with speed we accumulate power for the world to come. And herein the less governs the greater—Time commands Eternity, for our life is made up of fractions indefinitely small, of interests infinitely large. What we are here, we shall be hereafter.

LAST YEAR DEAD?—We cannot go back through all its yesterdays and resume its departed hours, and take into the consciousness again its buried moments. And yet all its impressions and growths are living within us—we feed daily upon its life garnered in our souls, as our bodies do upon its harvests.

Last Year is not dead.

The Wiles of the Adversary.

There is an ancient proverb which avers that "the devil is old and therefore knows many things." We are quite inclined to concede the truth of the saying. If there is one thing which the arch enemy is more thoroughly acquainted with than another it is probably human nature. A pretty extensive range of practice has familiarized him with the precise proportions of truth which he must mingle with falsehood in any given locality, so that it shall be "sweet in the mouth," and only "bitter" when it is swallowed and its poison has become diffused through the system.

A crafty connoisseur is he too in the matter of forms, and times, and places. In Rome, for example, he is decidedly in favor of burning Bibles, and forbidding the people to read them. In France he is not much opposed to the Book being read, but he smiles with the sneer of a Voltaire, at the thought of anybody's believing such "old wives' fables." In Germany he has a studious turn. He thinks the Book worthy of some credit, rather a fine old classic,—fabulous in part—truthful in part, but on the whole worthy of attention. In England and America he is a very liberal devil. He is desirous of nothing so much as not to be misunderstood on the subject of "Revelation." He protests that he loves the Bible,—its grave classical beauties impress him profoundly. Not even Socrates, Napoleon, Caesar, or Zoroaster, are more to be admired than Christ. "The Bible is a good book, a very good book, a venerable and profound book,—only the orthodox interpretation is wide of the mark, and there are many things in it that are not quite adapted to the time!"

"Religion," too, according to this same impartial authority, "is very good in its way;" but what is called piety it assures us is a "very stupid thing, in fact a mere matter of long prayers and faces, of church going and psalm singing, of prosy sermons, about the sin of pleasures and the holiness of heart aches. It suggests that after all 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' and that a sensible man had better look out for the pleasures of this life and run the risk of the next. One can stand it if one's neighbors can: To be sure a man needs some kind of religion, it makes no great difference what, so it be a liberal one. But it is this matter of taking the Bible as literally true and inspired, and then living such a cheerless, melancholy sort of life merely for the sake of something hereafter that nobody knows anything about—that is the special absurdity to which the devil is now-a-days so decidedly and conscientiously opposed!

It is impossible to deny that there is a mixture of seeming truth in this,—quite enough, indeed, to hide from many otherwise observant eyes the enormous falsehood which underlies it all. Undoubtedly certain happiness now is better than uncertain happiness hereafter. The actual world—the life that now is, is the one which most nearly concerns us. It is our duty to live up to the full measure of that life. The future life will come in due time with its own conditions of being. The present is our special sphere of activity. No man has a right to "put heaven's work in the place of earth's work." Nor have we any right to assert that the life of pleasure which Satan promises is not real pleasure. Every votary of the gay world knows better. It does no good to come to a man who spends his days and nights in fashionable frivolity and tell him, "My dear fellow you must give up all this because gayety furnishes no real enjoyment. You are laboring under a mistake. The pleasures of this life are unsubstantial. There is no real pleasure in them."

The man may be too polite to accuse you directly of falsehood. But he believes at the very least that you are a hypocrite. There is a pleasure in these things. He knows it. He has tried it. You might just as well dispute any other fact of his consciousness.

Now, the great fallacy which underlies all these arguments and "devices of the adversary" is, that religion promises happiness hereafter at the expense of happiness here. It is no such thing. It merely takes away certain forms of pleasure and replaces them by those which are better and more legitimate. A man might be very comfortable in a house on the side of an active volcano. But if a better mansion were offered him in a place of safety, he would certainly be very unwise not to accept the offer. So with the "pleasures of sin," they are real, but they are only "for a season." The beauty of true religion consists in the fact that it not only assures us of safety and happiness hereafter, but that it furnishes us with far more pleasure in this life than transgression can afford. The doctrines which Christ preached are not for tomorrow, but for to-day. They fit us not for heaven merely, but for this earth also. Religion not only promises to take us to heaven, but to fit us for it. If it displaces old joys; it brings in better ones to take their place.—*N. Y. Chronicle.*

Sabbath Shoes and Umbrellas.

WANTED.—A species of gum-shoes and umbrellas that will stand the Sunday rain, or Sunday mud of this latitude.

I know a preparation which I think will fully answer the purpose; and as no patent has ever been taken out, (the demand being very small,) every one is at liberty to try the experiment.—Place in common gum-shoes a soul thoroughly saturated with Divine love, and they will stand any mud that ever lay in the path of duty. An excellent umbrella may be prepared in the following manner:—Take for the stock a firm determination for the performance of duty; to this, and radiating from it on all sides, attach strong desires to do good. These must be braced, and kept in their proper place by many short, unyielding prayers, well secured by the rivets of faith. Over the whole spread a covering of grace, well oiled with self-denial. Instead of the last-named article, some use the spirit of impulse, which answers for a little while, but soon wears out.

This umbrella will not only stand rains, but during the heat of summer will answer equally well for a parasol. Those desirous of supplying themselves with these invaluable articles, would do well to make immediate application to Him "who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."

"No Devil in my Creed."

The speaker delivered himself as above with great vehemence. He uttered the disclaimer with an appearance of the most hearty contempt for those who had not yet arrived at so great a deliverance as his own. He had swung clear, at last, of so puerile a superstition. And so uncomfortable an item of the cargo having been pitched overboard, it was believed the rest of the voyage of life would be all the more prosperous.

I fell to musing on this man, and the gap in his creed, and I found—

1. That he had gone over a very important dividing line. He had left Moses and David behind him; and Job and each of the evangelists, and all of the apostles; for every one of these worthies so referred to Satan as to show that he was in *their* creed. They retained what this man dropped. They could not make the gap; but he could. He was on one side, and they on the other of the line. Having the same creed with those worthies, I thought,

2. That this man had done Satan a great service. It might seem uncivil to drop so distinguished a personage from one's creed, and utterly ignore him. But this negation of himself lies directly in the line of Satan's best achievements and surest success. It is a capital point gained, when a general can lead his opponent to believe his foe is no longer in the field. Such a deception gives a first-rate advantage. And Satan has not a snare so

dangerous, or more sure to give him a triumph, than to get men to drop him from their creeds. He can then make sure work of his victim. There will be no watching or guarding against an unsuspected enemy.

3. The man would drop Satan from his creed. But I do not see but he must drop some other things, if he does that. Down into the gap he has made, will necessarily go more than he has thought of. So many passages of the Bible, that a man might well stare, and wonder, as he stands beside the chasm. Satan tempted Eve; tempted Job and David; judas away the good seed of the Word; led Judas to betray Christ; tempted Ananias and Sapphira; is the accuser of the brethren; deceiveth the whole world; is to be resisted; will be hereafter punished, with all his angels and wicked men. All these Bible statements go to the bottom if the man make a gap in his creed large enough for Satan to go down through it. And the very process of disposing of all these Bible facts in this way, is a process by which many more Bible facts can be disposed of; and a process by which—can we doubt it?—the whole Book can be set aside, and can be regarded only as a bundle of fables.—*N. Y. Observer.*

Dying in debt to God.

In the month of October last, one of our female friends came to me to pay her monthly contribution, and presented me with four dollars. I knew she had a numerous young family, and a husband who had become unkind which led me to say, I feared she could not well spare so large a sum. She replied:

"I know I am behind in my contributions. I have just a little money to meet my present necessities, and I bring this. It will pay for me until the end of the year. My life is uncertain; I do not wish to die in debt to the church."

A few weeks after this she was laid on a bed of sickness, which very soon removed her from the church below, whose prosperity appeared to interest her, to the church above, whose bliss she now enjoys. My visits to her were few, for disease, as usual in this climate made quick dispatch; but they were the most delightful and refreshing I have ever been permitted to enjoy. The day before her decease, the last time I saw her, she said:

"O, what do I owe this dear Saviour, who purchased my soul by his death! O, that precious blood, that cleanseth from all sin! I was a vile sinner.—Jesus sought me, found me, saved me. His smile is peace, His hope is heaven! He calls me! I go! I shall see Him and be with Him! I shall praise Him forever! That will be good!"

It is impossible any description can convey an adequate idea of the heavenly joy of that Christian woman in view of death. I felt more of heaven at her bedside than I think I ever did before.—*Rev. J. Scott, Demerara.*

Angels in the House.

A correspondent of *The Independent* sends the following as a true incident:—"I know a man. He is not a Christian. His daily life is not in accordance even with principles of morality. He has three beautiful, well-behaved children. The other day he told me this incident of one of them; his little girl, three or four years old. Said he: 'Perhaps some people would think it sacrilege, but I don't; but for some time back I have been in the habit of reading the Bible, and of having prayers every night, before the children go to bed. I have done it because it has a good influence on the children, and because I hope it may have a good influence on myself. Last night I went to 'Lodge' (he is a Mason), and did not get home till after 11 o'clock. The children, of course, were all abed, and I supposed asleep. Before going to bed, I knelt down by my bed to pray, and had been there but a moment, when I heard Noble get up from her bed in the next room, and her little feet came pattering across the floor toward me. I kept perfectly still, and she came and knelt down beside me without saying a word. I did not notice her, and in a moment, speaking just above her breath, she said, 'Pa, pray loud.' I prayed. I kissed her, and she went back to bed; and I tell you, G—, I have