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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Darker Hours.

When the darker hours of existence come,
Sighs the soul for the rest of its far-off home;
And, worn with the storm-bearing changes of time,
It longs for a fairer, more peaceful clime;
Where the heart is freed from its load of fears,
And the longing eye is undimmed by tears.

And as through the rifted clouds we see
The azure depths of immensity;
The promise of mercy to faith hath given,
To catch, through the darkness, glimpses of heaven;
Of that region of beauty where falseth no blight,
Where the presence of God maketh all things bright.

From surge to surge the frail bark is tossed,
And the mariner feareth his way is lost;
Low whispered hopes cheer his soul once more,
In the laden breeze from his native shore;
Whispering of rest under quiet skies,
Where no dangers threaten or tempests arise.

It cheereth his weary and care-worn breast
With the blessed pledge of unbroken rest;
Where the stricken ones shall forget their woe,
And the tears of sorrow shall cease to flow;
And all that injure or that annoy,
Shall be barred forever that realm of joy.

There the day beam of gladness shall never fade,
Nor the heart grow sick at the hope delayed;
Nor Spring-time glories pass away
For weeded Autumn with tresses grey;
Nor one by one be life's glories laid
In the dreary depths of the realm of shade.

And oh! when earth's beauties shall fade away,
May they fade as the stars at the coming day;
Growing ever more dim as the blessed light
Of heaven shall dawn on the raptured sight;
Till the shades which have haunted life's weary dream,
Be forever lost in its peaceful beam.

D. W. E.

Religious.

Progress of Baptist Principles in Australia.

In a late number we gave a brief notice of the baptism of the Rev. W. B. Landells an eminent congregational Minister, for many years a minister in Sheffield, England, now of Melbourne, Australia. We then intimated that we had a fuller account from *The Australian Evangelist*. The interest which many of our friends have felt in Australia, and the spread of truth, as understood by Baptists, in that distant land, has induced us to copy the whole of the article referred to, in our present issue. A perusal of this article may be beneficial to many. We may here find how our Pedobaptist friends look at the views we hold, and may discover the mental process through which many of them may be passing. We know not but many Pedobaptists around us may be investigating the subject, who are quite as likely as Mr. L. was a short time since, to make known practically the result of their enquiries. We may also here find some suggestions as to what course we should pursue in our intercourse with such enquirers.

BAPTISM OF THE REV. W. B. LANDELLS, OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.—On Monday evening, 15th April, a very interesting service was held in Collins-street Baptist Chapel, Melbourne. On the previous Lord's day it had been intimated that the well-known and much esteemed pastor of the Congregational Church, Oxford-street, Collingwood, Mr. W. B. Landells, had been led, after earnest and prayerful examination of the 'Baptismal Question,' to abandon Pedobaptist views, and to adopt the views held by the Baptist denomination, and that he would be baptized on the following evening. This announcement excited much interest, and at the usual hour of service on Monday evening, the large chapel was densely crowded by an earnest and solemn congregation. Mr. New, pastor of Albert-street Church, conducted the devotional services, and read the account of our Lord's baptism, as recorded by the Evangelist Matthew, and the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Mr. Landells then delivered a most appropriate address, after which Mr. Taylor, pastor of the Collins-street Church, engaged in prayer, and, having referred to Christ's commission, and the

practice of the Apostolic labourers, immersed Mrs. Landells and her second son, formerly a member of Oxford-street Church. Mr. Landells himself was then baptized. After singing the doxology, the large and attentive congregation was dismissed with the Apostolic benediction. We hope the proceedings of the evening will deepen the spirit of inquiry after truth, and lead many to 'put on Christ' in the ordinance of his own appointment. The following is the address delivered by our beloved brother and fellow-labourer:—

"My Christian friends,—Having engaged to deliver, in the course of the week, two lectures on the great question of Christian Baptism, I shall confine myself for the present to a few brief and simple remarks respecting the position I occupy in relation to this sacred ordinance.

"It is impossible for me to express, in adequate phrase, the feelings I cherish on this occasion. One, which to myself at least, and those connected with me in the observance of this ordinance, is deeply solemn, but which, notwithstanding the peculiarity of the circumstances I am placed in, yields to me the highest satisfaction.

"The position I occupy to night in connection with this service, is associated with the strongest conviction that I am right—that the decision at which I have arrived, and the corresponding course on which I enter, are in accordance with the revealed will of Christ. Of this, irrespective of all consequences, I am most thoroughly persuaded—I know not what may be my future course of action—I have not even sought to know, nay, more, I have most rigidly excluded from the range of my consideration, the future, that whilst investigating the important subject which has long and anxiously engaged my attention, I might not be influenced by any improper motives. My present position, therefore, is the simple result of yielding myself up to the convictions of the truth. Long and anxiously, as I have just observed, has the baptismal question occupied my attention, and now, when I have brought it to a satisfactory issue, it seems strange, even to myself, as doubtless it does to you, how it is that I have not reached such a conclusion before. A few remarks upon this point may not be deemed unsuitable to the present service, whilst they will to some extent explain the various causes which operate upon the human mind in counteracting the influence of the truth.

"I may then observe, 1st: that *temperament* has a great deal to do with arresting the progress of conviction in respect to this question.

"And what individual is not under the controlling power of temperament? Has not every man his peculiar disposition, which in a variety of ways imparts its complexion to his thoughts and feelings, his plans and course of action. Some persons are impulsive, hasty, impetuous, and, in consequence, fickle and changeable. They reach a result, and enter upon a corresponding course of action with all imaginable promptitude, controlled, however, by those variations of feelings and procedure which such a temperament usually produces. Whilst others are phlegmatic, cold, slow in receiving impressions, and, in securing improvement. Such are very closely allied with the stereotyped, from whose conceptions and energies neither the world nor the Church can receive much improvement.

"As it regards my own natural temperament, there can be no doubt that it is made up of a great warmth of feeling, blended with a considerable portion of the cautious and the reflective. A disposition of the composite order, if, indeed, there be any other—one which secures for me a lively and intense interest in every subject of research which may engage my attention, associated with the tendency to bring it under the most rigid examination. And it is only by a slow and a frequently-repeated course of investigation that I arrive at the ultimate conclusion. When, however, such a point has been once reached, the process has never to be renewed.

"It has been thus with the examination of the subject of baptism. This question has again and again passed in review before me, but without producing that amount of conviction which would have warranted me to loose my hold of long cherished opinions, and to embrace the directly opposite views of the question. There has often been much in the consideration of the subject to shake my confidence, and thus to agitate my mind, but it has not been sufficient to satisfy my conscience that it was my duty to renounce my former belief and to take up a new position. For I hold this sentiment to be just and right, that nothing can warrant an individual sustaining an important responsible official position in receding from that position without the fullest conviction that the one he occupies is, on the ground of truth and right untenable. To such a conclusion I have by a slow and gradual process of enlightenment and conviction reached. But it is on this account the more satisfactory to my mind. For whilst the process has been going on, the amount of evidence has accumulated to such a degree that had I not at last fully and cordially yielded myself up to its practical sug-

gestions, I should have been doing violence to my conscience and my heart.

"But I would observe, 2ndly—That the influence of *prejudice* has, in my own case, had a great deal to do in retarding the satisfactory settlement of the question.

"I have a very distinct recollection of the shock which my first religious impressions sustained by the cold and repulsive spirit in which I was treated by some Baptist relatives. At a very early period of my life I was brought under the gracious influence of the truth. I had just entered upon my sixteenth year when this great event took place. Prompted by the new feelings which I experienced, I longed for Christian fellowship. I had but one like-minded with myself, with whom I was wont to take sweet counsel and to go to the house of God in company; one who is now, after the lapse of many years sustaining an honourable position in the world of business, whilst he is equally distinguished for the possession of a matured and elevated piety. With the exception of his companionship I was, religiously considered, alone. I had no relative nor friend who was like-minded with myself.

"About this time I received an invitation from some Baptist relatives, living at a distance from my native place, to spend a few weeks with them. I knew them to be pious people, and I therefore expected to enjoy in their religious society all that my heart could wish. Judge then of my disappointment, and, I may add, the revulsion of feeling I experienced, when, instead of receiving that encouragement from them which my immature state of mind so much needed, I was treated to endless lectures about the anise, and mint, and cummin of their religious peculiarities, instead of mercy and judgement, and the weightier matters of faith and salvation. The spirit of censoriousness which they breathed, and the dogmatic rigidity of sentiment they displayed; the endless discussions about the doctrines and practices of their own peculiar society, in which they indulged, and the thundering anathemas which they hurled against every other sect of religionists, filled my youthful mind with terror, and caused me to turn away from such a community with a feeling bordering upon detestation.

"Had they only in a loving spirit explained to me the principles which they maintained with such asperity, and many of which where in themselves right, I should doubtless have yielded up my heart to the genial influence, and perhaps have entered then into the position which, for the first time in my religious history, I occupy this evening.

"The painful impressions produced by such a display of harsh and bitter Christianity I have never lost. Whenever I have turned my attention to the consideration of the baptismal question, the feelings then awaken have ever mingled their influence, and tended very much to ward off the power of conviction.

"A deep and enduring prejudice against the whole of the baptismal doctrine and discipline was thus created, which nothing but the cumulative force of the truth could master and destroy. I have been thus minute in the details of my early religious history, for the purpose of unfolding the most common source of the widespread spirit of prejudice which exists against the baptismal question, amongst the various sections of the Christian Church; and not among the least of the denominations—are the Independents.

"My Baptist friends have been generally too harsh and dogmatic in their advocacy of this great truth. Perceiving the paramount importance of the ordinance as I now do, they think that every one else must see it in the same important light, and hence when they find that the subject is treated with indifference, they are frequently led to give utterance to their convictions with an acerbity of spirit which the truth does not require. The consequence of which is, the inquirer is repelled and the opponents of the doctrine are more firmly strengthened in their position of antagonism to this great question. I am sure of this, that if we want to conquer the manifold hostilities of the human heart, through the power of the truth, it must be when that truth is expounded and defended in the spirit of love, when all its beauty and attractiveness glow forth in our Christian character, and are blended with our Christian course.

"But I would observe, 3rdly, that *position* has also lent its influence in delaying the settlement of this question.

"The history of religious belief in the human heart, both in its origin and growth, is a deeply interesting subject. That history is composed of such multifarious materials, embodies such varied and important truths, has to come into contact with so many interesting questions, is oftentimes opposed to our most deeply cherished feelings, and has not unfrequently to struggle with educational training, family associations, strong prejudices, and worldly connections; that if such a history in its progressive development did not undergo various modifications in its texture and form, it would be something exceedingly surprising. It sometimes happens, however, that upon a variety of religious questions, nothing

arises in connection with that history to challenge their truthfulness or even to create a suspicion of their scriptural character. The individual having been brought up under the influence of certain religious principles, and nothing having arisen in the course of his investigations to cast a doubt upon their correctness, such principles continue to command the assent of his understanding, and the favourable regard of his heart. It is only when such sentiments come into vigorous collision with those of an opposite character, that the attention is awakened, and the religious position of the individual becomes the subject of reflection and inquiry.

"But even then there is experienced little desire to alter the positive form of belief or to invest it with new characteristics. For when doubt and suspicion have been awakened in the mind, the process frequently instituted, is not to enquire into the genuineness of the foundations of truth, but taking these for granted, it has been for the most part to strengthen by additional outworks the already existing superstructure, and thus to give it a more imposing, and *apparently*, a more durable character.

"Now, this in its individual aspects has been very much the history of the Baptismal question. Such has been its history in my own case. Taking for granted from the very commencement of my religious course that infant baptism was in accordance with the Word of God, it was a long time before I was prompted to inquire into its scriptural character. Having in early life become intensely prejudiced against the question of baptism, as I have before remarked, I had no inclination to enter upon its investigation. It was not until I had entered upon the duties of the Christian ministry that it came under special consideration. And then it was not for the purpose of questioning its truthfulness, but in order to furnish afresh the weapons of attack and defence, and by renewed readings upon the subject to increase my skillfulness in their use. The soundness of my position I never questioned. I might have grown dissatisfied with one theory of infant baptism and become enamoured of another, as I did, in fact, reject the covenant theory which Dr. Wardlaw advocated, and embraced that of the catechumens upon which Dr. Halley has so ably written. But at the same time, I never thought that the subject of infant baptism itself was unscriptural and unsound. In short, it was not until I came to this colony, and after having lost the Baptist portion of the church and congregation, that I began to look at the question in lights in which I never contemplated it before. But especially I determined to subject the whole question to the most rigid examination from the circumstance that there was a growing number of parents, who, whilst they did not submit to the ordinance of adult baptism themselves, refused at the same time to have their children baptized. A sort of Negative Theology class men upon this point, who appeared to have found a half-way house between the two opposing systems, where they expected their consciences would give them no further trouble about the matter. The feeling of dissatisfaction with such a state of things continually increasing within me, I determined, as I have just said, to have the whole subject laid bare and examined. Into this examination I entered about twelve months ago, and since then I have pursued it through all its ramifications. The Scriptures I have closely and prayerfully examined. Every theory of baptism I have keenly scrutinised. From all sources I have sought information; every human authority upon the question to which I could gain access I have consulted, and the final issue of this long-sustained and prayerfully-conducted examination is this, that the position which I have hitherto occupied is false—not in accordance with the Word of God, and opposed to the authority of the Great Head of the Church.

"I would again observe, 4thly, that the spirit of *indifference* to the Baptismal Institute has also had its influence in excluding sound views upon this question.

"Amongst the Independents there is little importance attached to this ordinance, at least amongst that portion which has adopted Dr. Halley's theory of the institute. When the administration of the ordinance is confined to the children of believing parents, then there is at least an external importance attached to the rite, which does not exist when every one who likes may have the ordinance administered to their children. And this is Dr. Halley's theory. He has in the advocacy of his views reduced the qualifications of parents who bring their children to the baptismal font, to the lowest rudimentary form, if indeed they may be designated qualification. And the consequence is, that the rite thus administered is recognised as being entirely destitute of religious value. From such a view of the ordinance the spirit generated is that of indifference. It is of no consequence. I do not see the use of it. Where is its importance? are expressions frequently uttered respecting it. Hence, with this feeling of indifference to infant baptism arises the corresponding prejudicial feeling in some minds, that the Baptists attach far too much importance to their views of this sacred ordinance, and in the minds