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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

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Growing old!
Yes, the year is dying!
And we shall soon be lying
Beneath the mould.

We are sighing;
Like to children at their play,
Faster e'en to us than they,
So time is flying.

The toil and wear,
The many thoughts that press—
Upon us in our loneliness,
The secret carking care.

The burden borne
Of others faults we try to hide;
The sin of our own carnal pride,
A piercing thorn.

Our wasted time;
The moments that our Saviour bought,
We reckless lose without a thought—
Call'st this not crime?

We vowed to give
Our years to him who died to save;
When God in Christ our sins forgave,
To him to live.

Ah, passed years!
We find thy path, on looking back,
A quickly trod, yet weary track,
All stained with tears.

Hail opening year!
O'er which the shadows of the old now seem,
As childhood's tears, or youthful dream,
Quickly to disappear.

Then Power divine—
Striving thy purpose to fulfil,
Thro' coming years of good or ill,
Seeking to bear whate'er be tide,
All peace 'twill be if at thy side,
Keep Lord till thou hast purified,
This wayward heart of mine!

Religious.

Doing good in a prison.

A painter in Holland having omitted to answer a summons to be enrolled in the fire-brigade, was sentenced to pay a fine of five shillings or suffer a day's imprisonment. Being poor, he chose the latter, for his wife and children's sake, and proceeding to the jail gave himself up on the Saturday evening preceding the Sunday appointed by the magistrate for his incarceration.

He was placed in a room with ten or twelve others who were there for the same cause. They were a frivolous, jovial set. Some were laughing and joking, others were playing cards, and all were trying to be as merry as possible, though their merriment was of that kind which is as the "crackling of thorns under a pot."

The painter was uneasy. His pious heart was chilled by the ungodly atmosphere of the place. He shrunk from spending a Sabbath in such an evil company. He wished he had paid his five shillings, or could pay it now and go home. But such wishes were vain. He was a prisoner, and a prisoner he must remain until the close of the next day.

While brooding over these and kindred thoughts, the words "be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good," flashed into his mind. "I am alone, and they are twelve," said he; and then turning his thoughts into prayer, he added, "Lord, remember that I am alone, but they are many; remember, also, that they are blind and lost, and perhaps thou wilt pluck some of them out of the mouth of the lion. Help me, O Lord, to witness for thee."

Thus fortified by purpose and prayer, he drew his rude bench to the window, took out his pocket Bible, and began reading.

"Hallo! what have you there?" asked one of the men, slapping him on the shoulder.

"You see it is a book," replied the painter; "if you have no objection I will read a few pages to you."

"Are there nice stories in it?" rejoined the man.

"Plenty of stories, and nice too," replied the painter.

"Well, let us hear," cried the prisoner. "Hush, you men! Listen, this fellow will read a story."

The painter read the parable of the prodigal son. To his surprise he was not disturbed until he finished, when one of the men said: "I know that story very well. It is from the Bible." Other remarks followed, and as it was now too dark to read any more, the painter proposed to read more on the morrow. "Very well," replied several of the men, "it will help to shorten the day;" and then they all retired to an inner room to sleep.

The next morning when breakfast was ready the painter said: "Permit me, friends, to say a word. We have slept soundly. God has graciously protected us through the night. Meat and drink are prepared for us. It is his gift. Ought we not to thank him for these mercies? If you have no objection, let us thank God and seek his blessing."

Hearing no objection, he proceeded to offer a simple, cordial thanksgiving to God, and an earnest prayer for his blessing.

After breakfast one of the prisoners smiled and said: "You might be our minister to-day. You pray just like a parson."

"Yes, be our minister!" cried several voices. "Let us have a bit of a church this morning."

To this several assented. Five laughed, and going across the room, began playing cards. The painter read a passage of Scripture and then offered a solemn prayer, in which he did not fail to remember the card-players in the corner. After prayer he proposed singing, and at once began a favorite Dutch psalm, he sung to a well-known tune. The effect was powerful. One by one they joined in, until even the card-players dropped their cards, doffed their caps, stood up and sang with the rest. The jailer, hearing the unwonted sound, came to the door, and seeing them so devout and orderly, paused to listen, and then helped to swell the sacred chorus.

After the singing the jailer stepped inside, locked the door, and sitting beside the painter, remained while that faithful follower of his Lord proceeded to offer remarks on the Scripture he had previously read, and to exhort them to come to Christ.

The painter's words made a deep impression. No more cards appeared that day. After dinner he held another service, which was interrupted by the jailer's coming in to inform the painter that he had spoken to the magistrates about him, and had received orders to release him.

With a good conscience and a joyful spirit the painter hastened home. The entire results of that day's labor the painter will not know until the day of reward; but he did learn shortly after that one of his fellow prisoners, at least, was led to embrace Christ by his faithful and timely-spoken words.

I give this fact to my Christian reader as an illustration of the manner in which they who are wise to win souls will turn even the most unpromising circumstances of life into opportunities to work for Christ. If that good painter could stand up amid twelve of his Master's enemies in a prison, and win at least one of them over to the right, what may not the reader accomplish in his wider and more hopeful sphere if he will but set his heart upon it?

The Lord's Prayer.

To express great and noble thoughts in simple and easy language, is a high excellence of literary style. In this, as in other respects, the literature of the Bible is unequalled.

The Lord's Prayer is an admirable illustration of this. As given in Matthew, it consists of sixty-six words, forty-eight of which are words of one syllable; and of the others, there are few which a child cannot pronounce and understand. There are many persons who probably cannot remember the time when they were puzzled with the meaning of any of its words.

Equally simple, natural and easy, is the structure and arrangement of its phrases and sentences. Let any person write down the words in which he asks for any blessing, or in which he hears another ask for it, and compare it with the corresponding portion in this prayer,

and he will soon be sensible of the difference. Try to put the petition, "Thy kingdom come," or "Give us this day our daily bread," into a form more simple or intelligible. Can you do it? There is no learned scholar, no accomplished writer, or eloquent speaker, who may not find improvement in studying the style of this prayer.

If it be desirable that we be able to express our desires simply and truly, when we come before Him who regards not the sound of our words, but only their honest meaning, let us study this prayer.

Buddhism in the United States.

The Chinese are having a great time in their Temple, in Sacramento Street, just now. Evidently the festival is of a religious character, though whether the proceeds are to be devoted to cancelling a mortgage on their church, or to sending out pagan missionaries to win over Christian believers to Buddhism, is something more than inquisitiveness itself has been able to ascertain. The first thing which strikes the visitor on entering the vestibule of this sanctuary is a most ancient and fish-like smell, and if he approaches the altar he will discover that the breath of the gods smells strangely of stale salmon.

The first object of Chinese adoration that meets the eye is a high and hilarious god, standing some seven feet or eight feet in his stockings, and flourishing a cigar in his left hand, like a Montgomery Street swell. The attitude of this idol is not very graceful, while his legs widely spread apart, and the air with which he embraces against the wall, suggest that he is under the influence of the stimulant. Altogether, he has a jovial look about him, amusing to behold, and the effect is heightened by two horns with serrated edges which spout from behind his ears. Passing on and ascending a narrow and fishy staircase, we find a balcony, gay with flags and lanterns, and illuminated with scrolls written in sinuous character probably pregnant with the wisdom of the immortal Kung-fu-se, whom the Latins name Confucius. Here the sound of music is loud—reckless disciples play crashing anvil choruses upon immense gongs, while milder-mannered musicians keep up a rattling accompaniment on kettle-drums, banded with a symphony of shrill notes from the lips of of cracked flutes. The gods endure it marvelously well, however, and so does the temple, though a much less noise brought down the walls of Jericho. In the temple the gods and worshippers are so numerous that one calls them no longer John, but legion. You stumble over a little god on the floor, or precipitate your head into the stomach of a big one braced against the altar. The big ones number two. In height they are Anaks, each standing a good eight feet above the level of the floor, without counting in a slight wrinkle in the back, which would give them a few inches more were it ironed out. Each has one foot perched on a supposititious rock, while the other rests on a paper tiger. One holds a golden apple in his hand, plucked from none knows what Hesperides; the other grasps a golden wreath. They are spangled like Harlequin, and bearded and moustached like bogus barons. A chronic lassitude rests on all their features. Before them is spread either a late breakfast or an early lunch, but they seemed in no hurry to attack it. Undoubtedly they feel safe in the assurance that no one else will eat it.

Ranged round the wall, in convenient sentry boxes, stand little gods, with splay feet. These are the common "Josses" of the concern. One of them is habited like a Christian martyr, and has the dolorous look of one condemned to be burnt. The apprehension seems not entirely groundless, as a number of torches are lighted close to his feet.

The worshippers in the purlieus of the temple are not very devout. They loaf around, and take all sorts of liberties with the gods, even to the occasional stealing of tom-cod from their breakfast table. There are dowagers, with headdresses which tower up in crinigerous Babels, and damsels with eyes more clam-shell than almond-shell shaped. There are male Chinamen having the look of chimpanzees, and others dandified enough in appearance to stand as lay figures in barbers' windows. Altogether the picture is a motley

one, and well worth seeing but curious visitors should be vaccinated before entering the synagogue, and carry smelling salts with them. Were there time in this connection to indulge in speculation and inquiry concerning this curious people who have moved their temples and gods into our midst and sat down amongst us, but of whom we really know so little, there were ample food for it. How long will they maintain their idolatrous worship in the full blaze of the light which a Christian community sheds? Will these Thors finally be broken with their own hammers? or will this people go on chanting barbarous hymns through their noses and beating tom-toms to the honor of their tom-tom-gods to the end of another century?—*San Francisco Bulletin.*

A good Soldier.

In one of our exchanges we find the following description of "a good soldier" of Jesus Christ:—

1. *He is heart and soul, with mind and body, devoted to the cause of his Captain.* He judges that since he was dead in trespasses and sins, and has been made alive by the grace of his Saviour, he should henceforth live wholly and entirely for the salvation of his fellow-sinners and the honor of his Lord, and Saviour. For him "to live is Christ." He "glories in the Cross," and in that only. He delights in the way of truth, and longs to have others walk with him in that way. Having made no reserve for the world or self, he gives himself wholly, for time and for eternity, to the service and guardianship of his Almighty King and Keeper.

2. *He cheerfully submits to wholesome discipline.* Such discipline must be acquired in the closet, in prayerful study of the Bible, which is the christian's manual of instruction; in the social prayer-meeting, where is cultivated "the goodly fellowship of the saints," the *esprit du corps* so essential in the spiritual warfare; and in the Church where all are required to be defenders of the faith and fellow-helpers of the truth.

3. *In enduring hardness.* War proffers no ease. It invites rather to rugged toils, and heavy burdens, and sharp, deadly conflicts. Therefore, a good soldier of Jesus Christ welcomes toil. When most exposed to hardships and dangers, he joys even in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, because the love of God is shed abroad in his soul.

4. *He is careful to have on all his armor.* He knows that the very best has been provided for him, and that without it, if exposed to the fiery darts of the enemy, he is sure to be captured or slain.

5. *He is not only willing, but eager, to meet the enemy.* The christian cannot act in defence only of his position and cause; he must needs advance, make careful approaches, and invest with proper force all the various fortifications of iniquity. His business is to assail them, and compel a surrender to the rightful rule and sovereign. This sort of warfare may be carried on in many ways; it admits and welcomes every intellectual, moral, and spiritual implement suited to the nature of the conflict; and they only can be accounted good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ who are ready to exert all their powers in the holy war against Satan and his usurped authority over the human race.

6. *He does not weary of the service.* Others may fall away, or tire, or desert; but the good soldier of the Cross delights in the service he has entered, and fights the good fight of faith with increasing confidence and courage. Every sin overcome, every evil abolished, every successful inroad made into the territory of wickedness, and every trophy gained, serve to heighten his zeal, and inflame his love for the cause which he lives to sustain and promote. He is neither appalled by perils, nor disheartened through the treachery of false brethren, nor cast down by disappointments, nor dismayed by occasional reverses; but fights on, knowing that he can do all things possible, through Christ strengthening him.

AS A FATHER, when the way is rugged and difficult, gives his child his arm to hold by; so does God reach forth his almighty power for his saints to exercise their faith upon.