

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. VIII....No. 47.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1863.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXVII....No. 47.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Coming home to die."

The following lines are a true and sad story. The news came to his mother that her son (who for fourteen years had been absent from home, seeking his fortune in a distant land,) was coming home to die—but, ere reaching the shore, his spirit left its weary frame, to join the ransomed above.

Coming home, coming home! was the joyous cry,
The ship is rapidly nearing the shore,
And we'll never, never be parted more,
Yet O God! I breathe a heavy sigh,
For they tell me now, my only boy,
Is coming home to die.

From a toilsome fruitless search for gold,
Hunting the earth these weary years—
Forgetting his mother's and sisters' tears
And they calmly say he's going now,
(For the stamp of death is on his brow,
To the land where none grow old.

In agony I hear him try—
While all, save one, are fast asleep,
And not a sound but the surging deep—
To utter a feeble broken prayer—
"O spare my life, in pity spare:
For I must go home to die."

He is coming now, I hear his tread
'Tis strange! I cannot quell my fears—
So distant and solemn the sound appears.
One could almost fancy that now and then,
You heard instead the tramp of men
Bearing home the dead.

"In sight of home," they heard him cry.
"O tell my mother and sisters dear,
God does hear and answer prayer.
His grace he's given, tho' I cannot see
My home and mother dear to me.
I am not afraid to die."

Elderly, Nov. 1863.

Select Sermon.

A Sermon.

BY JOSEPH PARKER, D. D.

Of Cavendish Chapel, Manchester.

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus: These things saith He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I know thy works, and thy labours, and thy patience, &c.—Rev. ii. 1-7.

[CONCLUDED.]

Look at the declension spoken of. First: This declension is described as having begun in the heart. Christ does not charge the saints at Ephesus with having changed their doctrinal views; but, placing His finger on the heart, He says, "There is a change here." You know the enthusiasm of "first love." Love is blind to difficulties. She bounds up the steep with elasticity and joy. She cannot be deterred from her purposes by any representation. Tell her of the river, and she answers, "I can swim;" remind her of awful precipices, the guardian walls of capacious and terrific sepulchres, and, spreading her golden pinions, she replies, with laughter, "I can fly;" tell her of burning deserts, on which no palm-tree throws its shade, through which no river rolls, and her courage bursts into uncontrollable enthusiasm as she recounts the story of her past endurance. She burns up every excuse. She calls every land her home. "The range of the mountains is her pasture." "She rejoiceth in her strength; she goeth to meet the armed men; she mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted, neither turneth she back from the sword." A right royal force is this "first love." If any work is to be done in the church—if any difficulties are to be surmounted—if any icebergs are to be dissolved—if any cape, where savage seas revel in ungovernable madness, is to be rounded, send out men and women in whose hearts this "first love" burns and sings, and their brows will be girt with garlands of conquest. Our business then is to watch our heart-fires. When the temperature of our love lowers, there is cause for terror. It is instructive to mark the many and insidious influences by which the gush and swell of affection are modified. Take the case of an admirer of his

minister, and mark how the stream of love subsides. In the first instance, such an admirer thought that his teacher would ever play the harp of comfort or busy himself with abstract doctrines; but he finds that he has miscalculated—that his minister is master of many styles—that his pulpit is now a green hill, down which silvery streams roll, and in their rolling bid the traveller drink and be glad—and that anon his pulpit is an Etna, whose sides shake with surging billows of fire, and whence issue devouring flames; he finds that his minister can not only sing the sweet soft songs of love and hope, but can command a sarcasm before which vice grows pale and staggers with amazement, that he has carried a sword which has cloven many a vaunting toe. In course of time the admirer cannot bear this. The minister is dealing too faithfully with his conscience. The man knows that he has broken both the tables of the law, and now that he is being smitten with the avenging stones, he derides the minister who was once his idol, and his fickle love is turned into another channel. Long ago a drum-headed lad said to me, "Your sermons make my head ache;" but he has never looked at me with a smile since I asked him whether that was the blame of my sermons or of his own head. Or take the case of one who has been distinguished for much service in the cause of God, and see how the fires pale. He becomes prosperous in business. His oblations on the altar of mammon are costlier than ever. He toils in the service of self until his energies are nearly exhausted, and then his class in the school is neglected; the grass grows on his tract district; his nature has become so perverted that he almost longs for an occasion of offence, that he may retire from the duties of the religious life. Could you have heard him in the hour of his new-born joy, when he first placed his foot in God's kingdom, you could not have thought that ever he had been reduced to so low a moral temperature. What holy vows escaped him! How rich he was in promise! He was like a fruit tree in the sunny spring-time, perfectly white with ten thousand blossoms, and passers-by prophesied that every branch would be laden with luscious fruit. But look at him now; turn the leaves over, and with eager eyes search for fruit, and say is the promise of spring redeemed in autumn? Innumerable influences are continually in operation, which would cool the ardour of our first enthusiasm for Christ. Satan plies us with a thousand treacherous arts; the world allures us with a thousand transitory charms; our inborn depravity reveals itself in a thousand varying manifestations; pride and selfishness, ambition and luxury, appeal to us in a thousand voices, and beckon us with a thousand hands. Lot men of rich, deep, manifold experience tell me how difficult it is to nourish and maintain our pristine love for Jesus, and how essential it is to fight our battles on our knees if we would keep our treasured love safe from the grasp of the arch-plunderer of the universe.

Second: This declension may be accompanied by an inveterate hatred of theological heresy. "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." The Nicolaitanes held corrupt doctrines, and indulged in corrupt practices, hence the Divine Head commends the Church at Ephesus for protesting against such depravity; the point, however, on which we remark is, that while the saints were thus earnest in repelling a false theology, their own love for Jesus and His service was waning. The head may be right while the heart is going in a wrong direction. I am indeed anxious that we should maintain a scriptural theology, that we should "hold fast the form of sound words," at the same time we must remember that a technical theology will never save the soul; and that a mere verbal creed will never protect and increase our love for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is right to denounce heresy. We are bound by our covenant with Jesus to resist the devil in what guise soever he may reveal himself. But beware, lest while you are hating the deeds of the Nicolaitanes your love is decreasing; it is not enough that you are able to put ten thousand heretics to flight, you must watch your love-fires, and continually supply them with the fuel of heaven.

Third: This declension evoked the most

solemn warnings and exhortations. "Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Observe the terrible consequences of heart alienation. These solemn words show (1) that the church in its collected capacity may incur the Divine displeasure. There may be good individuals in the fellowship, yet the community as a whole may be under the frown of Him who "walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." (2) That the church in its collective capacity must betake itself to repentance. This is evident when we remember that there is certain work properly denominated church-work. Take, for example, either home or foreign evangelisation; it is not my work solely as an individual to "go up and possess the land" of heathenism; but it is our work as a church to carry the light of heaven into "the dark places of the earth." It can only be done by individuals, in so far as they are atoms in a fabric, parts of a whole. If, therefore, we have neglected to enter the open door of opportunity, as a church, the cry of the angry Saviour is "Repent and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly." (3) That Jesus will unchurch every organisation that is unfaithful to His name; He threatens to "remove thy candlestick out of his place." Such language may well make us pause. Organisation is not spiritual brotherhood. Tell me not of gorgeous temples, of skillful arrangements, of complete machinery; I tell you that you may have all these in an unparalleled degree, and yet "Ishabod" may be written on your temple doors; What is your spiritual life? Is your ecclesiastical mechanism the expression of your love? Is every wheel revolving by the breath of your sympathy? Is your heart the great motive power? I would turn you in upon yourselves, and in the name of Jesus adjure you to judge your hearts. Do this now, not a moment is to be lost; you may lose your "candlestick," you may be unchurched, and your temple may become a pit for "the bitter and the owl to dwell in." My brethren, we must determine our condition in the light of these assurances. The eye of Jesus is marking every declension; and as our love declines, His anger burns. There is a limit to His forbearing meekness. Those that continue to offend Him shall assuredly "lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit;" and when He ariseth in His fury the earth shall stagger with amazement, and the sea shall retire from His presence. Oh, Church! hear the warning cry.

We must not part without a word of hope; Jesus concludes His letter with words which warrant us in affirming—

3. That the Head of the Church has the richest blessing in reserve for all who overcome their spiritual enemies. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Almost every word in this promise is an idea—

"Overcometh;" the word tells of battle and victory. There is intimation here of an enemy. There is a hell in this word,—and in it there is a devil. That your spiritual life is a fight you need not be reminded: every day you are in the battle-field,—you live by strife.

"Eat;" the word tells of appetite. Desire is in this word, and desire satisfied. Our desire for more of God shall increase as the ages of our immortality expire, and yet increasing desire is but another way of saying increasing satisfaction.

"The tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Those words are old, they ring in my ears as familiar sounds, and such they are; for hardly can we overpass the first page of the Bible, until we read of "the tree of life also in the midst of the garden," and now that we come to the last pages again, we hear the rustling of its amaranthine leaves. It is but little we can say concerning such a tree: no worm is gnawing at its root, no serpent coils around its stem, no screech owl trembles upon it as the prophet of a coming winter, its every leaf is jewelled with purer dew than ever sparkled on the eyelids of the morning. A tree! 'Tis but another word for beauty, for beauty walks forth in ever varying manifestations. A tree! 'Tis but

another name for progress, for the circling sap bears through every fibre life and fruitfulness. Brethren, shall we assemble round the Cross. The Cross is at once our tree of life; nay, the Cross is but the earthly name of yonder tree in heaven, the Cross is that tree in dreary winter, shaken by savage storms, left of every leaf, the throne of all, conquering death; and yonder tree is but the cross in the genial summer of the better land, bursting into leaf, blushing into blossom, struggling into fruit, and I tell you that you can never stand beneath its branches until you have touched it in its old name—the Cross! the Cross! and having done so you shall by-and-by approach the eternal tree, and you shall eat its precious fruit and that fruit will be all the better for having been plucked and offered by your brother's hand.

The choice of a wife.

The Rev. B. Kurtz, D. D., L. L. D., recently made this the theme of a lecture to the graduating class of Theological Students in the Missionary Institute of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Selinsgrove, Pa. Dr. K. favoured early marriages, but not early engagements, for the following reasons:—

"In general I advocate early marriage, and might assign, if time permitted, many weighty reasons to sustain my opinion—but instead of this I shall only reply to the principal argument commonly urged against it, namely, that young men are too inexperienced and precipitate properly to estimate character and exercise sound judgement. There is some truth in this objection, but not enough to dislodge me from the position assumed. If men, as they grow older, generally become proportionably more competent to select wives, the objection would receive additional force. But is this the fact? Look at your old bachelors; do they, as a rule, select more judiciously than young men of from twenty one to twenty-five years of age? It is true, as we grow older we become suspicious, but suspicion operates rather to pervert than to improve our estimate of human character. I have known as many blunders to be committed by old bachelors—as by young men, and this is the more likely to be the case because on account of mercenary speculation they are more liable to be the objects of female art. The handsome young lady too frequently takes the ugly old bachelor not for love, but for convenience or for money. Hence, there are no matches more absurd than those sometimes made by this class of men, unless, indeed, it be those perpetrated occasionally by old widowers. The Germans have a proverb to the effect, that when God wants a fool he takes an old man's wife from him, because the old widower is so prone to act fanatically and foolishly, and make himself ridiculous when in search of a wife. Now, I readily grant, that there are many honorable exceptions in regard to the follies attributed both to bachelors and widowers; nevertheless, it does not strike me that age gives any peculiar knowledge where woman is concerned, or which is likely essentially to assist in choosing a wife.

"It appears to me, then, that the objection to early marriage, arising from want of experience and mature judgment, is not a valid one. If a man at twenty-one is deemed old enough to preach the Gospel, to practise medicine and law, to engage in mercantile pursuits, or any other business which also requires the exercise of prudence and judgment, why should he not have sense enough to choose a wife, if he will only properly exercise his sense?"

"But while I advocate early marriage, I am not in favour of early engagements. Such engagements open wide the mouth of busy gossips, and too often terminate in a jilt on the one side, or a breach of promise on the other. Besides, the student of divinity is constantly progressing in knowledge, developing his intellect and enriching it with learning, which is rarely the case with his betrothed. She is usually employed in domestic duties, and remains stationary in mental culture. Of course, his views are enlarging and his opinions rapidly changing, and the female that would win his affections when the engagement was made a year or two previously, while she was his equal in mental development, is by no means the one that would command his admira-