

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

Prayers that are not pleasant to hear.

The following rather homely lines, from the pen of a contributor to one of the New York religious weeklies, contain some valuable hints. We fear that the kind of prayers referred to, are as unwelcome to the ear of heaven as to that of the writer:

"I do not like to hear him pray,
On bended knee about an hour,
For grace to spend aright each day,
Who knows his neighbor has no flour.

I'd rather see him go to mill,
And buy his luckless neighbor bread,
And see his children eat their fill,
And laugh beneath their humble shed.

I do not like to hear him pray,—
'Let blessings on the widow be'—
Who never seeks her home to say,
'It want o'rtakes you come to me.'

I hate the prayer so loud and long,
That's uttered for the orphans' weal,
By him who sees them crushed by wrong,
And only with the lips can feel.

I do not like to hear her pray,
With jeweled ears and silken dress,
Whose washer-woman toils all day
And then is asked to work for less.

Such pious shavers I despise;
With toldehands and air demure,
They lift to heaven their holy eyes,
Then steal the earnings of the poor.

I do not like such soulless prayers:
If wrong, I hope to be forgiven;
No angel-wing them upward bears,
They're lost a million miles from heaven."

Religious.

SURELY HEARD.

The fact that God responds to the requests of His children for small as well as great favors and blessings, was illustrated by Dr. Scudder, in remarks made by him at the late anniversary of the Fulton Street prayer meeting:

God hears us not only in great things, but in what are called 'little things,' in every day trials and hourly difficulties. Four years ago I went back to India by the overland route through Egypt. When on the Mediterranean coast, I learned that the passengers must stop at Cairo, and must put up at the hotel there. I had a large family, eight in all, and had made no pecuniary provision for this. We took the cars at Alexandria, and as we whirled on toward Cairo, I felt my position keenly. I did not wish to ask any one to lend me money. I shrank from the act. Yet what could I do. A hotel bill for eight persons is a serious matter at any time, but especially so when you search every pocket and find nothing. I sat in the cars and prayed. Again and again I asked the Lord to pity me, and to help me without humiliating me. The cars stopped. I marched into a great hotel with my long retinue, as calmly as if a thousand dollars were sweetly reposing in some corner of my pocket book, but inwardly I was very dismal. I ordered rooms and entered them, and then I said to my wife, "As we have no money, I must now go out and see if I can borrow." I walked down a long hall, but before I had half traversed it, a gentleman came up to me. I said nothing to him, but he stopped me and said:

"Dr. Scudder, on the Mediterranean did I not hear you say something about not having anticipated hotel expenses at Cairo?"

Then he took out his pocket book, and opening it, said, "Help yourself." I quietly thanked him, promised to repay him in due time, and taking as many gold pieces as I needed, returned to my room, and said to my wife, "My dear, the Lord has sent the money. All the morning, in the cars, I was praying for it, and it has come without my asking it of any, but of Him who is ever our Friend."

She replied, "I too was praying in the cars all the morning for the same."
There we had been sitting together, each

offering the same petition without the other knowing it. "Did not God answer our prayer? If the angel Gabriel had come down bodily out of the sky, and had given me a handful of sovereigns, or had gone up to the hotel-keeper and commanded him, at his peril, not to charge me any thing, it would not have been a more-real answer to our prayer, and what could we say but this: "We love the Lord, because He hath heard our voice and our supplications."

THE RELIGIOUS NEWSPAPER.

The importance of the religious newspaper as an institution can scarcely be over estimated. Occupying a higher and more tranquil sphere of journalism than that of the secular press, its influence is by no means to be forgotten in our estimate of the social forces. Though unobtrusive in its utterances when compared with the clamorous voices of the political newspaper, its tones, nevertheless, fall upon calmer hearts, and sink deeper into the convictions and life of society. As a medium for the communication of religious intelligence—as an educator, refining and elevating—as a fireside preacher, quickening the intellect, expanding the heart, and bearing spiritual treasures to myriads of homes, the religious newspaper wields an influence with which society can ill dispense, and one that no other moral force can so adequately supply.

Like, however, every other enterprise undertaken, for the general good, the religious newspaper is too often overshadowed by mere clamorous positioners for public favor. Religious reading will never be "popular reading," and the discussion of the great themes of death and eternity will continue to be distasteful to those whose thoughts and hopes are confined to the frivolities of the hour.

The duty of the christian, is therefore, plain. He has a duty to perform in extending its circulation, and in widening the influence of the religious newspaper. He can no more excuse himself from this duty than from any other. If he is a pastor, he may recommend it to his people. If he is a lay member he can urge its claims wherever an opportunity occurs. When will our churches awake to the importance of a more general and decided effort in behalf of the religious newspaper?

"UNDOING."

The *Watchman & Reflector* gives a thrilling sketch from a hospital diary. The subject was a soldier wasting away with the Chickahominy fever, described as "one of nature's best make, handsome, powerful in frame, with a great, glowing eye, that told of intense passion, had a lip that told of indomitable purpose." There he lay, "thoughtful and unconfiding," refusing sympathy or other aid than the surgeons gave. Again and again the narrator tried to win upon him, by such offices as are grateful to the sick, but was respectfully repulsed. At last:

I was not satisfied with my effort. After a few hours I was again by the bed of the thoughtful man.

"I believe I have written nothing for you. Shall I not write to your friends, since you are unable?"

"I have no one to write to."

"No one? no mother living?"

"No."

As I stood, the eyes grew softer and deeper; there was a swelling about the face and neck, a slight movement of the lip. Would he speak?—confide?

I waited—then the old question, "Can I do anything for you?"

"Can you undo?" What an utterance! Confession—remorse—agony.

"None can undo; not God himself—but it is left for us to do."

"What would you?"

"Undo!" with vehemence.

"Each one of us would undo something, had not God in his wisdom forbidden it. But you are doing, even now; you are repenting."

"What's that? What good will that do?"

"It may lead to faith and pardon."

"Pardon! I would not pardon myself if I could. I don't deserve it." The lips were firm, the eye clear, the muscles no longer swollen.

"None of us deserve pardon. It is God's free gift for the sake of His Son."

"I don't want it, deserving what I do."

It was clear that no ordinary counsels or consolations could reach this man's heart. The fountain being opened, he went on to tell the story of the life that had planted this remediless, pitiless remorse in his soul. Among other confessions, "Let me tell you," said he, "what I did. There was a boy in my tent, a mother's son that used to pray. I loved the boy, and yet I swore in his ears till he stopped praying and learned to swear. I saw him shot down in battle by my side, with one of the oaths he learned from me upon his lips. He went with it to God." So he went on with the terrible tale—stolid almost—unhoping quite. Not even that word of salvation, "the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin," could touch his heart or engage his trust. What a lesson! what a question: "Can you undo?"

NOT A GREAT SINNER.

It was a bright, breezy afternoon in the early part of September, when the hospital nurse came to my quarters with a message from one of the patients who wished to see me immediately. Taking the number of the ward, I promised to attend to the request, and as soon as I could leave other duties, I hastened to the dyingman, for such I found him. As I entered the ward, the brightness and beauty without were in striking contrast with the scene within. Outside, the flowers were blooming in the carefully tended garden; beds of mignonette were breathing a delicious perfume on the air; the showy gladiolus displayed its blood-red flowers; while in the midst of the broad circle, the jet of the fountain shot up with a frolicsome leap into the glad sunbeam, its waters making tinkling music as they fell back into the basin, and then dripped in a hundred tiny streams from its snowy edge. All there was joyous life and beauty, and the groups of convalescent soldiers sauntering through the grounds or lounging on the encircling corridor, were in keeping with the scene. Within the ward, all was silent and sombre. The patients who were able to leave their beds had gone forth into the cheerful brightness of the outer air, leaving in the ward only those too ill to share in their enjoyment. Amongst these I found the one who desired to see me. He was a man of some thirty years of age, with a pleasant countenance, and evidently had not been addicted to the grosser vices of the camp. As I took my seat at his bedside, with a kind word of salutation, he grasped my hand, at the same time expressing his satisfaction that I had come so promptly.

"I feel that I am not rightly prepared to die," he said, raising himself in his bed, "and I wanted to talk with you."

His answers to my subsequent inquiries informed me that he was not a Christian; that he never had given any serious attention to religion, and although an attendant on the services of Christianity, he had never sought its blessings. "But," he added, "I have not been a great sinner."

He said this in an apologetic tone, as if he would encourage me to speak words of hope to him which I would not to one guilty of grosser vices; yet the assertion was the most discouraging he could have made. "Not a great sinner!" It fell on my ears like an announcement of his unfitness for Christ. I had come to him the messenger of a great salvation, gloriously adapted in its amplitude to great sinners, and he forestalled my message by the words which tell chillingly on my heart, "I am not a great sinner!"

But I passed his disclaimer by, not caring to inquire his meaning, and talked to him of the One "whose blood cleanseth from all sin," and of the great love which reaches down to the guiltiest; and as I talked he was moved to deepest feeling, and at length, impulsively, he began to cry to God for mercy, and I saw that in his heart he felt, what his words had disavowed, the greatness of his sins, for they shut out the hope from his soul.

Then, kneeling by his bedside, I prayed that the mercy which he needed might be granted. More than once I was interrupted by his exclamations, as, seizing on some position, his very soul plead wrestlingly with

God for pardon, and so the prayer went up to the mercy-seat twined with his agonized utterances. After again pointing him to Christ, I left, promising to call the following morning, thinking he might survive the night; but when the morning came his bed was empty, and his body awaited the service for the dead.

Since then his words have frequently recurred to me, "I am not a great sinner." He meant, perhaps, that he was not a blasphemer, a thief, or a liar, but he was one who during a life of thirty years had closed his heart against God's love, had rejected the pleading grace of Christ, and had chosen the world in preference to God. Is not this to be a great sinner?

Yet with a similar plea do thousands excuse a life of alienation from God, never thinking that the rejection of pardon by a guilty man is the height of presumptuous guilt. Let such know that in a dying hour, little sins grow into such mountainous proportions as to exclude the light from an expiring pillow, and require all the energies of a great salvation to remove their sting.

SUNSHINE.

A SCRAP FROM A MINISTER'S PORTFOLIO.

Nearly all animated nature loves the sunshine. Flowers open their petals to catch sunbeams. Birds delight to pour forth their songs in the sunshine. Butterflies flutter with painted wings in the sunshine. Insects, of all sizes, gyrate in the sunshine. Even grown-up people love the sunshine, for I have seen many cross over to the sunny side of the street when the heat has not been too intense. There is something so cheery, so pleasant, so animating in sunshine. There is another kind of sunshine that is loved, the sunshine from the countenance of men. There is sunshine in some houses, smiles upon the countenance of mother, and pleasant looks on the father's face. Children dislike clouds in the sky, because they are afraid that their outdoor sports will be spoiled, and children are uncomfortable under the angry looks of their father and the clouded brows of their mamma—it often hushes the music of home, and checks the innocent laughter of childhood. Let us carry sunshine everywhere—into the store, along the streets, into our homes, and let it be said of us, *How pleasant they are!* Don't let us wear a mask before friends and visitors—that is, be all smiles when they are present, then, when they leave, to drop the mask, and be cold and cheerless to those at home. Who needed the most sunshine? Those under your own care. Let children and partners, and even servants and beggars, get smiles—they cost nothing. Let smiles enwreath our countenances, and loving words fall from our tongues at proper times. Never smile at sin, but, with thoughtful countenance and earnest, pitying words, reprove it. Disperse the clouds of care, and remove the sadness from those who are subject to them, and do your best to be a light-bearer and burden-remover, and so bless your fellows.—*Can. Bap.*

CREDIT IN HEAVEN.

"Joems the Doorkeeper" is the name of a new sketch from the life by Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh, author of "Rab and his Friends." We have not yet seen it, but we find in the "Drawer" of Harper's Magazine an incident taken from it, that has a moral worth putting into a religious newspaper.

Joems was a doorkeeper at the United Presbyterian church in Broughton Place, Edinburgh. On one occasion, after a charity sermon, one of the congregation by accident put a crown-piece into the plate instead of a penny, and starting back at its white and precious face, asked to have it back. But Joems, who held the plate, said: "In once, in forever." "A weel, a weel," granted the unwilling giver, "I'll get credit for it in heaven." "Na, na," said Joems, "ye'll get credit only for the penny!"

Joems hit the nail on the head when he hit the stingy Scotchman. It is precious little "credit" that anybody will get in heaven; but it is well to bear in mind that God looks on the heart, and judges us by the motives that prompt our action. Doing good by accident,