

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

OUR EARLY YEARS.

Our early years,—how bright they seem,
As memory bears us back
To gaze upon the stars that gleam
On childhood's rainbow track;
Our spirits burdened by the gloom,
Of life's maturer cares,
Would fain recal the light and bloom
That blessed our early years.

It may be we had trials then
Shading life's sunny part,
But sorrow has no iron pen
To grave on childhood's heart;
Hardly had sorrow touched the brow,
Ere sunshine dried our tears,
Would that our griefs could vanish now
As in our early years!

Then innocence and Truth were ours,
Bright blessed angel pair—
No thorn amid the clustered flowers
That bloomed so fresh and fair!
But now our earth-soiled spirits sink
Beneath our gathering fears,
Life hath no blossom round its brink
As in our early years.

Now disappointment from the heart
Its cloud will not remove,
We bend beneath neglect's cold dart,
Or unrequited love.

We pine when sadly from beneath
The knell hope ever bears,
Once more to wear affection's wreath
As in our early years.

The young heart's fresh unsoiled leaves
Which open'd like a rose,
Now wear that taint that error leaves
Where'er its current flows.

Our very souls are darkened by
The soil which passion wears,
No marvel that we sadly sigh
For life's pure early years.

Our early years—their memory steals
Across life's later track
And thus the saddened spirit feels
It may not call them back.

Their light is changed for darkness now,
Their smiles for bitter tears,
And life again may never know
The bliss of early years.

MAUDE.
Lawrencetown, Halifax Co.,
Dec. 20, 1864.

Religious.

THE ELOQUENCE OF SILENCE.

The tongue is not omnipotent. Language has its limits. Speech is mighty, but speechlessness is often mightier. What power, for example, is there in death? It calls forth feelings which we never experienced before; it arouses thoughts which otherwise had never been born. As we stand by the couch on which the motionless body lies, our whole being is hallowed by the dread presence. The closed eyes, the cold brow, the helpless hands, the lifeless lips; oh, what sanctity there is in all! The finer susceptibilities of our nature are touched, and we cannot but be reverent. Let the man of coarse mind and bad heart go along into the dim chamber which contains, for a little longer, the remains of a friend or relative, and if this does not subdue his callous soul, what will? Yet death, the great monitor and tranquillizer, is silent; there is no speech nor language.

The most intense emotions seldom express themselves verbally. Words are too weak for them. Rapt devotion, deep joy, and profound grief are still. The loftiest mountain-heights of religion are quiet. When the spirit is fullest of thankfulness, it is dumb. Aspiration courts silence. Praise is silent before thee, O God, in Zion. There was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour, perhaps because the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem felt too much to speak.

The debt of gratitude is not the best remembered where the lips pour forth their voluble and fluent tide of warm acknowledgment.

Prayer has its decalogue and well-set chant. To say or sing; but prayer can offer up a purer tribute to the mighty God.

Who rules the thunder and restrains the wave,
Than ever cloistered walls responded to.
Let the proud orator assert the power
That language holds; but the soul, prouder still,
Shall keep an eloquence all her own,
That mocks the tongued interpreter.

The eloquence of silence! Perhaps there never was a time when we had more need to remind ourselves of this! Ours is an age of talk. The troublesome member is a hard-worked member. Speech is the popular faculty. The advice given to children, about being "seen and not heard," might with propriety sometimes be offered to children of larger growth. We are not quiet enough. "Be quiet," "Hush," "Hold your tongue," are admonitions needed now. As a well-known essayist says, "The demand is for vocables, still vocables." This being the case, it may be well to indicate some of the seasons and circumstances which render silence appropriate, and therefore salutary.

First, we remark that in visiting the afflicted and the poor, silence is often exceedingly useful. Some people appear to imagine that philanthropy is a synonym for garrulity. Their theory is that you cannot do good without a certain, often a considerable, amount of talk. They would think it futile to go to a miserable cottage on an errand of relief, if they did not "offer consolation," as they call it, by entering upon a long conversation. It is a great blunder. We feel sure that anyone who has been observant will admit this. A few intelligent and sympathetic interferences may, of course, be very serviceable, albeit the main service you can do is to hold your peace. Let your protegee talk; you may rely upon it that he wants to do so. You cannot gratify an invalid more than by sitting and listening to him. If you have but patience enough to attend as he details his manifold aches and pains, his innumerable symptoms and nostrums; if you will only be sufficiently forbearing to keep from shuffling about in your chair (as if you had heard enough) while he recapitulates the divers doctors he has consulted, the limited diet to which he is doomed, and the shockingly bad nights he endures, you will be a welcome visitor. The knowledge of this fact may be a dreadful slight upon our powers of eloquence; but fact it is, in nine cases out of ten. Men, not less than steam-engines, must have safety-valves, or the propriety of society would assuredly be scandalized by divers mental and social explosions. The poor old fellow that lies in his meagre, miserable garret, day after day, has hardly anyone to whom he can speak. The family is down stairs, or at the mill, or in the field at work. Well, he thinks and thinks, he feels and feels, until he can hardly bear himself. He wants some one to whom he can tell it all. You go with your little basket of provisions, or small gift of money, and then he has the opportunity for which he has been longing. He can unboom himself now. That is exactly what he wanted. It is a veritable godsend to him. We dare pledge our word that he will have a good night after it. Therefore people who excuse themselves from benevolent visitation on the ground that they are "poor talkers," as they phrase it, are quite beside the mark. The shuffling apology is a wonderful and unfortunate blunder. "No talker," are you? All the better. That is one of the cardinal qualifications of usefulness. You are the very person for visiting the afflicted. You are, indeed. If you are so talker you can at least be talked to, and that is a prime requisite for the form of philanthropy in question. Off with you, then, to the sick man or the bedridden woman. Your silence will do almost as much good as your money.

Surely nothing is more grateful to the bereaved than silence, and nothing less so than much attempt at consolation. When the dreadful blow has been struck, it leaves us for a time, stunned. We cannot bear, neither understand, the comfort which well-meaning but indiscreet persons often offer. Do not tax our forbearance by dealing out stale bits of advice which are as old as sorrow is. While the shadow of the solemn, mysterious destroyer broods over the dwelling, it is best to be mute. A friend of yours, we will suppose has lost a near relative. You went to see him. Your heart yearned to show its sympathy. Good! It is well for you that it should; it were ill for you did it not. Notwithstanding, be sure and take heed how you manifest your regret. Be quiet. A glance of the eye, a momentary but earnest grasp of the hand, will be better than hours of talk. Content yourself therewith. Bildad and the others who went to see poor Job in his great affliction said some foolish things, but they did not say one wise one. They sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great.

To change the subject. Are these pages being read by one who is slandered? We would venture to remind him also that there is scope for silence in his case. It is the noblest, and often the most effectual antidote to calumny. Be still when men seek to rob you of your good name. Keep quiet when Backbite, that mischievous member of a large and mischievous family, assails you. This is hard to do, we know. Very difficult is it to keep the floodgates of reticence locked when the pressure of anger's waters is upon them. Never mind; do it. All good things are hard, this among them; but remember that it is a very good thing. Resolve that you will not retaliate upon your enemy, nor spend your time in elaborate refutations of each idle tale he has manufactured. Live the libel down. It requires time, certainly; so does the growth of an oak. To use a homely illustration. Sometimes, when we are walking peaceably through the streets, we pass a door at which a little dog sits. As we go past, we think he looks disposed to be disagreeable, and so it proves. No sooner have we moved on than he follows us, disturbing the whole neighbourhood by his abominable barking. What do we do?—turn round and defy him? By no means. We take no notice. "Dogs that bark don't bite." He soon finds out it is wrong work even to bark when no one resents it. Do so, my good sir, with that miserable cur—slander. Out it bounces upon your heels with its wretched and contemptible bow-wow. Let it bark; go straight forward on the path of rectitude, and it will speedily get tired of following one who takes no notice of it. Yes! After all, there is some retribution in the world; justice has not altogether forsaken it. Her naked sword makes itself felt, and never with more severity than on the head of the calumniator. It will be so with your adversaries if you will only bide your time. Do not forget who it was that was "led as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth." Copy his example, and the day is coming when you will be vindicated.

Hitherto we have adverted to the advantages of our keeping silence towards our fellow-men. Too well, however, we cannot realize the fact that there are seasons when we should be silent towards God. When tribulation comes, we should hold our peace. Alas! how often we fail to do so! A great blow falls upon our possessions; a noble castle in the air vanishes; a much-loved enjoyment is removed; a dear companion of our cares and pleasures is removed; these or other sorrows fall to our lot, and we speak instead of being mute. We murmur; the heart rebels. Looking hastily at other of our fellows, this neighbour, that friend, or yon relative who we think has a happy immunity from such miseries, we say, "Why am not I as they are? For what reason are such troubles come upon me? Am I a social scapegoat at whose cost others are to be exempt from the trials I bear?" Thus do we speak when we ought to be silent. "Be still, and know that I am God." "I was dumb, I open'd not my mouth, because thou didst it." Oh, that we would repent us of such hasty complaints as an untrusting heart begets. The stroke is heavy, but it is needed. The wound smart, but it is inflicted that health may follow. He who takes, thereby gives; he bestows more than he removes. Losses are gains, tears do but precede hosannas.

"Be still and trust!
For His strokes are strokes of love,
Thou must for thy profit bear;
He by filial fear would move,
Trust thy Father's loving care—
Be still and trust!"

One other application of the subject, and we have done. It is an old, and a homely one. Perhaps, however, it is none the worse for that. About ourselves, our own doings,

our own exploits, we should learn the lesson of silence. At the commencement of our remarks we spoke of the present as a talkative age; it is also a boastful age. It deals largely in self-praise. It burns incense, not always the most fragrant, to Number One. Trumpet-blowing attaches itself to much of our almsgiving. We prefer doing our good deeds either in conspicuous places in the synagogues, or at the corner of streets; busy streets preferred. A certain large glass house, situate at Sydenham, is exceedingly characteristic of many people now a days. They are Crystal Palaces; you can see all their philanthropies through the manifold windows. The right hand considers itself decidedly injured if the left does not know what it doeth.

Surely it is well, in days of ostentation, to go back to the great moral and spiritual directory, and hear its teaching. "Neither hammer, nor sound of axe, nor other tool was heard," when the stateliest of temples was reared. "See thou tell no man," was the command which followed one of the most extraordinary deliverances from misery and sin. Let us obey that command, and tell no man when we essay to solace and support the destitute afflicted; tell no man when we make the keenly-felt sacrifice; tell no man when we take the guilty by the hand, that we may lead them to the Forgiving One. True benevolence seeks no herald. As it increases, genuine love grows in modesty.

"My name, and my place, and my tomb, all forgotten,
My brief race of time well and patiently run,
So let me pass away, peacefully, silently,
Only remembered by what I have done.

Yes; like the fragrance that wanders in freshness
When the flowers that it came from are closed
up and gone,
So would I be to this world's weary dwellers,
Only remembered by what I have done."

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

MISREPRESENTATIONS.

Dear Brother—

The Presbyterian Witness copies from the New York Observer a paragraph which is termed an "exposure of the work of the so-called Bible Union."

In the version of the New Testament recently issued by the American Bible Union the words relating to baptism are translated instead of being transferred, and hence we read of immersion, and of being immersed.

Our Lord said to James and John, as reported in Mark 10, 38, 39—"Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized?" and they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of, and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized."

"In the new version," says the Observer, "this is rendered as follows: 'are ye able to drink the cup that I drink, and endure the immersion which I endure?' and in the 39th verse, 'Ye shall drink the cup that I drink, and endure the immersion that I endure.' Here, then, we have a new meaning to the word *Baptizo*. To be baptized, in this place, means, to endure." And again—"They four times translate the word *Baptizo* as meaning to endure."

Now, that is not true. In order to avoid the not very elegant phrase, "to be baptized with," or, "to be immersed with," the Bible Union translators adopt the form—not, "to endure"—as the Observer disingenuously states—but "to endure immersion." At this phrase the New York Presbyterian is greatly scandalized.

But a Scotch Presbyterian has taken a similar course. Dr. George Campbell, a minister of the Church of Scotland, and some time Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen, whose excellent Translation of the Gospels, accompanied by learned Dissertations, was published in 1788, renders the same passage thus:—

"Can ye drink such a cup as I am to drink; and undergo an immersion like that