

# 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.

### "Pray for those thou lovest."

"Pray for those thou lovest; thou wilt never have any comfort of his friendship for whom thou dost not pray."

Yes, pray for those thou lovest, thou mayest vainly, idly seek  
The force of fervid tenderness, by feeble words to speak.

Go kneel before thy Father's throne, and, meekly, humbly, there  
Ask blessings for the loved one, in the silent hour of prayer.

Yes, pray for those thou lovest, tho' uncounted wealth were thine,—  
The treasures of the boundless deep, the riches of the mine.

Thou couldst not to thy cherished friend so dear a gift impart.  
As the earnest benediction of a deeply-loving heart.

Seek not the worldling's friendship, it will drop and wane ere long,  
In the cold and heartless glitter of the pleasure-loving throng.

But seek a friend, who, when thy prayer for him shall murmured be,  
Breathes forth, in answering sympathy, a fervent prayer for thee.

And should thy flowing path of life become a path of pain,  
A friendship formed in bonds like these thy spirit shall sustain.

Years may not dim, nor change invade, nor poverty impair,  
The love that grew and flourished at the holy time of prayer.

Mrs. Abby.

## Religious.

### The Pulpit.

BY DR. ROBERT FURGUSON.

Whatever may be said of the power of the press, the pulpit has a prior claim. Long before the art of printing was known, the pulpit had an empire which none could dispute; nor is that empire ever likely to be wrested from it. The world's greatest benefactor came as the world's great Teacher. He came not only full of grace, but full of truth; not only the fulness and the perfection of all goodness, but the complement and the embodiment of all revelation. He was the light which lighteth every man; and to Him humanity is indebted for her life and liberty, and all the blessings of a riper civilisation. Nor this only. He knew that humanity could not exist without education; and hence He ordained teaching as one of the permanent institutions of the new economy. He sent forth His immediate followers to teach the nations; and, but for this provision, these nations must have sunk deeper and deeper into barbarism and fiercer brutality. Christianity was the only regenerating influence in the world. Even in Greece, which was the centre of the world's enlightenment, and in Rome, which was the centre of the world's power, it took the precedence of every other system, and achieved some of its mightiest triumphs. Everywhere it revealed itself in light, and life, and progress; and from that day to this its lessons have been accompanied by a power and a demonstration which have resulted in the most marvellous changes—physical, intellectual, and moral. Of this the England of the nineteenth century is the proof. We have reached our present proud position through the influence of a life-giving Christianity; and we can fall from the high ground on which we now stand only by letting go our hold of that truth which has made us "the first flower of the earth, and the first gem of the sea."

We have no sympathy with those who would either deprecate or depreciate the liberty of the Press. In some instances, it may be neither so vital nor so healthy as we could desire; it may sometimes pander to the lower tastes and the baser passions of our fallen nature; it may here and there put itself in antagonism with the Christian faith, and take the side of scepticism and irreligion; but these are the exceptions. The tone of our daily and periodical press, in reference to revealed religion, is wonderfully modified and improved. Its empire has grown with the education of the people and the progress of society; and it now treats of many subjects,

both social and religious, which were before confined almost exclusively to the pulpit. It has become one of the great educational institutions of the age; and its influence is felt in every rank and class of the community.—It can make its voice to be heard and heeded on all questions affecting the interests either of our own country or of the universal family of man. It can enter the sacred domain of morals and religion, and speak with a distinctness and an emphasis which challenge the attention of the most listless and unreflecting. We go a step farther, and willingly concede that the press has done much to improve and to elevate the pulpit; but there is no reason why the man of the pulpit should be one whit behind the man of the press. The preacher of the age should be at least abreast with the writer of the age. It is high time that the character of the Sacred Desk should be redeemed from all contempt, and that God's chief speakers in this world should express themselves in no half-finished articulation. There is depth enough and breadth enough in the discoveries of the Christian Revelation to claim the application of the loftiest intellect, and to kindle the most fervid eloquence. The press can never supersede the pulpit or take its place. However near the one may approach the other, the pulpit will stand first and pre-eminent among the institutions of earth, and occupy a sphere peculiarly and for ever its own.

Would that the pulpit of England were what it might be! We know that the instances are neither few nor rare in which it is filled by men whose utterance is instinct with life and power, and who feel that they have to deal with the most dread realities which can engage human thought; but still there are too many exceptions. There are those who convert the pulpit into the professor's chair, from which they read an elaborate essay, from which are most studiously excluded all the distinctive truths of the Christian faith; and there are others who make it a platform on which they may take their stand and expatiate at pleasure on every conceivable subject except that of Christ and Him crucified as the world's great High Priest and only sacrifice for sin; there are some who turn it into an arena, in which they may exhibit a kind of ecclesiastical gladiatorialship in combating every one who differs from them, or refuses to pronounce the Shibboleth of their party; and there are others who lower it to a sort of political hustings, on which they seem more at home among the things which are seen and temporal than among the things which are not seen and which are eternal; more familiar with the imperfections of human government, the character of social grievances, and the extent of civil disabilities, than with those provisions of redeeming mercy which are the only remedy for the evils which exist in the world; there are some who enter it as they would enter a studio, in which they may dilate on the beauties of art, or discourse on the aesthetics of religious worship; and there are others who regard it as a stage, on which they may play the mountebank, and win for themselves the applause of the vulgar and the uneducated by their wretched and pitiful antics. We would be the last to tie up the modern preacher to the old-sermon method, with its stereotyped pharology of the seventeenth century; but still we protest against the pulpit being alienated from its original design, and the teaching on the Sabbath being reduced to what is little better than the leaders in our daily journals, or the heterogeneous material of our periodical literature. To convert the service of the sanctuary into what is sensational and amusing, is to frustrate the very end of Christian worship; and to devote the pulpit to anything but the most enlightened exposition of God's truth in its immediate application to men's consciences in the every-day walks and business of life, is to lose sight of the very purpose for which the ministry was ordained, and the institution of preaching was originally founded. We may object to ritualism and to priestism as things alien to the office of the Christian teacher; but not less alien are those arts and devices to which many who lay claim to that office now resort to draw men after them, as if mere numbers were evidence of success, or success were the seal of God to their work. The world's great Teacher did not cry, nor

lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. Wherever there is noise there is much that is human and earthly; but God speaks in the still small voice. All His operations correspond with the eternal quiet of His own nature. As in the constitution of things He has ordained that the mightiest forces are the most gentle, so it is in the economy of redemption. If the revelation of His love in the person and mediation of Christ does not woo and win the heart of man, there is no other influence, either real or imaginary, which can insure this result.

We are told that while the press of New York is inferior to that of London the pulpit there has a higher standard; that all sections of the church aim at settling their first and most eminent men in that metropolis; that "there is no place in the world in which high steeples and fine music count for so little in comparison with the preacher's eloquence;" and yet very much of this pulpit eloquence is devoted to such topics as the Civil War, the Atlantic Cable, Negro Suffrage, Sanitary Improvements, the Darwinian theory, and other correlative subjects. Not only is the pulpit reduced to the level of the platform, but the platform, by dealing freely with religious subjects, is destined, according to some prophetic spirits, to supersede all pulpits which will not become popular platforms. This we do not believe; and we trust that the day is far distant when the pulpit of England will sink down to the level of a mere platform.—It has taken eighteen hundred long years to find out that the Christian pulpit is a failure, less than a quarter of a century has brought out the fact that the lecture-system loses in popular favour as it becomes religious, and has now but little hold of the public mind. Nothing would be more easy of proof than just as the preacher allows himself to sink into the lecturer, and the lecturer assumes the functions of the preacher, both lose in effect and in influence; and certain is it that the people will never accept the utterances of the platform for the high enunciations of the pulpit, nor the lessons of the sanctuary for the miscellaneous speech of the lecture-room. Let the progress of the race be what it may in civilisation and intelligence, in physical and moral science, neither the Church nor the world will ever be in a position to dispense with the office of the Christian teacher. Every man may have his ministry, but he belongs to an order, whose institution is Divine, and whose existence is coeval with time. Not only is he called to move in the highest sphere of life and truth, but he has to deal with realities which have no parallel. As a preacher, his model is Christ; his theme reconciliation, through the blood of atonement; his aim the salvation of the soul; his end the glory of God. He has truths to proclaim, and principles to enunciate, and lessons to enforce, whose issues run into the eternities and affect the final destinies of those to whom he speaks.

We do not deny, that in the evolutions which time is disclosing, that in our own national, political, and social affairs, as well as in what is going on in the wider theatre of the world at large, the preacher may find not a little which he can weave into his discourse, and produce in the pulpit on Sunday with advantage and profit; but, if things secular are to take the place of things sacred, if things temporal are to shut out things eternal, if the chapter of accidents is to be made the text-book of the teacher and the lesson-book of the people, in reference to the Christian volume, if the Bible is to be treated as an antiquated and obsolete production, then the pulpit of England will soon cease to be what the pulpit of England has ever been since the Reformation—the mightiest power in the land to affect the mind and the heart, the intelligence and the virtue of her children. It those who profess to be the advance teachers of the age can give us a single moral truth the germ of which is not to be found in a far more perfect form in the Christian Testament, then I, for one, am prepared to give up the Bible as a revelation from God. The verities of our Christian faith rise with such sublimity and expand into such magnitude as to baffle the intellect and challenge the eloquence of angels. These pure and lofty spirits are looking into those things which have been revealed to us by the Spirit—still learning by the Church on earth the manifold wis-

dom of God. Has the human mind outstripped the angelic? Are we in advance of seraphic intelligence and knowledge? If humanity has in it the seeds of an endless development, the Bible has in it the elements of exhaustless truth. Nor must it be forgotten that the Bible has not divorced Nature, nor Science, nor Philosophy. It owns them all as intimately related the one to the other, and the whole to itself; but it refuses to give them the same empire with itself, and denies that they have the same relation to our fallen nature in its present recovery and its future destiny. It follows, to borrow the words of the far-famed Neander, that the root of our faith "is to be found not in science, not in demonstration, but in the humble and self-denying submission of our spirits. Our scientific views may be defective in many points, our knowledge itself may be fragmentary, but our religious interests will find all that is necessary to attach them to Christ, as the ground of salvation and the archetype of holiness."

### Brotherhood.

The incompleteness with which the ideal of church fellowship is realized is one of the worst of our evils. The theory itself sketches out the grandest vision of a society bound together by bonds uniting in themselves the strongest principles of association that have ever banded man, while escaping the evils of each, and surpassing the excellences of all. Deeper than oneness of opinion—deeper than similarity of purpose, but containing that—closer than friendship, but with all its warmth—more secure than kinship, but with all its familiarity—grander than nationality, but with all its power, this bond of perfectness, which is not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, nor of blood, but of God, and rests neither upon the arbitrariness of personal predilection, nor upon the accidents of local or temporary relations, but upon the eternal divine fact of Christ's love to us, and sees in each seen brother a shadow of the fairest picture that ever hung before the imagination of weary quarrelling men. The practice, what of it? Looking around us on all sections of God's church, we see these not only in a state of armed neutrality as regards each other, but internally a woful falling off from the picture, to say the least of it. We do not wish to forget the facts on the other side. The Gospel would be no Gospel, were there not some. But making thankful allowance for them all, it remains too sadly true that the communion of Christian men within the limits of their own bodies, is not consciously the closest and sacredest form of association which they possess, and does not yield in general the fruits which should come from it. The state of almost all our principal denominations too fully confirms this.

Our present business is not, however, with the public acts of churches, so much as with their private mutual intercourse. It is not only active hostility, but passive indifference which sins against this sacred bond. Is our church fellowship, say within the limits of one congregation, a reality, or a form and a name? Do we feel anything like the closeness of hold and certainty of sympathy in one another which should mark us? Do we even all know one another? Is it not largely felt by us that other relations are more real and fruitful than this? Dr. Chalmers once said in answer to his wife's surprise that he sat one evening nearly silent in the company of a long-absent and longed-for friend, "There's a great deal, my dear, in *justa position*." So seem many of us to think in regard to this matter; and hence we fill our pews on Sunday, and sit together at the communion table; but as soon as we get outside the chapel door, we fall under the power of other principles of association than those of the church, and find our true brethren, whom we sympathize with, and work beside, and think after, somewhere else. The contrast between the theory and the practice is only too obvious.

The evil effects of this imperfect realization of Christian brotherhood run through our whole spiritual life, and weaken our whole testimony for Christ. On Christian men themselves the disastrous consequences can scarcely be enumerated, and certainly not