

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

NOT NOW.

Not now, my child—a little more rough tossing,
A little longer on the billows' foam,
A few more journeyings in the desert darkness
And then the sunshine of thy Father's home!

Not now, for I have wanderers in the distance,
And thou must call them in with patient love;
Not now, for I have sheep upon the mountains,
And thou must follow them where'er they rove.

Not now, for I have loved ones sad and weary;
Wilt thou not cheer them with a kindly smile?
Sick ones who need thee in their lonely sorrow;
Wilt thou not tend them yet a little while?

Not now, for wounded hearts are sorely bleeding,
And thou must teach those widowed hearts to sing;
Not now, orphan tears are thickly falling;
They must be gathered 'neath some sheltering wing.

Not now, for many a hungry one is pining;
Thy willing hand must be outstretched and free;
Thy Father hears the mighty cry of anguish,
And gives His answering messages to thee.

Not now for dungeon walls look stern and gloomy,
And prisoner's sighs sound strangely on the breeze,
Man's prisoners, but thy Saviour's noble freemen—
Hast thou no ministry of love for these?

Not now, for hell's eternal gulf is yawning,
And souls are perishing in helpless sin;
Jerusalem's bright gates are standing open—
Go to the banished ones and fetch them in!

Go with the name of Jesus to the dying,
And speak that Name in all its living power;
Why should thy faltering heart grow chill and
weary?
Canst thou not watch with Me one little hour?

One little hour! and then the glorious crowning;
The golden harp-strings and the victor's palm;
One little hour! and then the Hallelujah!
Eternity's long, deep thanksgiving psalm!

Religious.

The Working Classes and Religious Observances.

In our last we noticed very briefly the interesting meeting lately held in London, for the purpose of ascertaining the causes which lead the working-men generally to absent themselves from public worship. After giving a summary of the first session it occurred to us that a more extended account would be acceptable to our readers. We have therefore thought it better to copy from the *Freeman* what the several speakers said at the subsequent session:—

On reassembling, Mr. Sanders, who described himself as an ex-savenger, said the "drowsiness" of some of the preachers was one principal reason why the working classes kept away from places of worship. (Laughter and "Hear, hear.") He advocated more simple preaching, this was an age of sensationalism, and men's attention should be captivated. He strongly disliked pew-rents, and wished they were all abolished.

Mr. Glazier, a working man, thought that working men wanted preachers who could sympathize with them in their trials and difficulties. He looked upon Mr. Murphy as his ideal minister—a man who could sympathize with them in their noblest aspirations.

Mr. Edmund Beales, said he had made some sacrifices for the political and social rights of his fellow-countrymen, but he would make ten thousand more sacrifices, and sacrifice ten hundred lives, if he had them, in order to make them all perfect Christians, because he knew if they were these Christians, there would be no longer any question about their political and social rights. (Hear, hear.)—They would have these rights to-morrow.—They could not be denied to them. (Hear, hear.) The question of politics and the clergy was a most serious one. There was no doubt that many of the working class were alienated in a great measure from the Church by the circumstances of their considering that but too many of the clergy were connected with the ruling powers of the State who were leagued against the working classes of the country. (Hear, hear.) Many of the clergy were keen political partisans, and he thought it was wholly inconsistent for them to discharge the duties of magistrates. (Cheers.) In that capacity they had frequently to give

judgments utterly at variance, as it appeared to him, with their character and position as ministers of the Gospel. (Hear, hear.) They sometimes condemned children to hard labor for the most trivial offences. (Hear, hear.) But whatever grievances the working classes had against the clergy, let them not forget that there were hundreds he might say thousands of the clergy whose whole lives had been spent in doing good amongst the poor—(cheers)—relieving their distress, and contributing not only to their spiritual happiness, but to their worldly and temporal happiness. (Hear, hear.) Let the working classes not forget these facts. He should be glad if they could come to some practical conclusion at the end of this conference. As far as he could gather from his knowledge of the working classes, the real and great difficulty was that they had not sufficient and satisfactory means to themselves of attending our religious ordinances—(cheers)—that both churches and chapels are of such a nature as to have the effect, more or less, of excluding the working classes from them. (Hear, hear.) Whether it was the system of pews, or whether it was any other system, or whether it was due to the class distinctions drawn between them, there was the fact that one of the great reasons for the working men not attending our churches as they would otherwise do was because they did not feel themselves at ease and comfort there. (Hear, hear.) How was this to be met? Probably they were aware that there was at this moment a movement going on in the Church of England for the express purpose of freeing churches, and doing away with pews altogether. This was one method of dealing with the matter, and as far as he knew the only way of dealing with it. (Hear, hear.) They would not have the working men attending their churches unless they could place within their reach more than they did now the means of attending those ordinances. (Hear, hear.) This was the real question, and if they could by the appointment of a committee, or by any resolutions, or by further consideration amongst themselves meet that difficulty, they would do an inestimable amount of good. (Cheers.)

Rev. Edward White, the secretary of the conference, addressed the meeting, and observed that the reason why the Wesleyan ministers succeeded in gaining the affections of the working classes was, because their social habits were more in conformity with the habits of artisans. Next to the spiritual objections which had been urged against them, he believed the greatest reason why working men kept aloof from them was class exclusion.—When they had taken away the political exclusion which existed at the present day, they would have taken away the principal barrier which kept the working classes from church worship. (Cheers.) He considered that this hateful class feeling was growing worse and worse instead of better, and as long as it existed, there would be a lack of sympathy between the clergy and working men. He complimented Mr. Potter upon his suggestion to hold a special service for working men in all their churches and chapels on a special day.

Rev. G. M. McCree said the objections raised to religious institutions ought in the first place, to be intelligent. It was a serious thing for a man to adopt objections without thoroughly understanding them, and ascertaining whether they were true or false. He thought it was the custom to take what was against religion very much for granted.—Again, we ought to make sure that our objections were honest. When a man who objected to go to a place of worship was found to be intelligent, conscientious, and high-minded in his own life, his objection was worth listening to; but if he was a profane man or intemperate, or adulterous, we ought to look under the objection at the man himself, and ask whether it was not his vice, and not his conscientious objection, which kept him from the house of the Lord. No doubt there were cases of conscientious objection, but in thousands and tens of thousands of cases it was something else which actuated these men. Further, it ought to be noticed whether the objection was a fair one. If a person said he did not go to a place of worship because he could not get a comfortable seat, he might be asked, "Do you always get a comfortable seat in a public-house?" (Laughter.) "Do you always get a comfortable seat at a theatre? Do

you always get a comfortable seat in a third-class carriage on a Sunday night in coming from Brighton?" (Roars of laughter.) Yet in the house of God, they wanted to sit upon velvet and fine cushions. Was it a fair objection to make? If a man said "I do not go to the house of the Lord because I do not find that you ministers are remarkably scientific men," he might be asked if he was a remarkably scientific man himself. (Hear, hear.) Many persons seemed to think that the statements of scientific men were to be taken exactly as perfect truth, but where was the science of fifty years ago, or even of ten years ago? Scientific theories which were put in antagonism to the Divine Word when he was a lad were now admitted even by sceptical lecturers and by their very propounders to have been baseless and false. Some of the geologists had, however, been Christian men. Who was Dr. Pye Smith, or Hugh Miller, or Dr. Hitchcock? The most thoughtful, the broadest-minded, the sublimest men in connection with science were those who believed in the divine origin of Christianity. He had been amazed to hear a working man say that he and his fellow-workmen could find no difference between a converted workman and any other. Let that person read Methodist biographies, or the life of such a man as Richard Weaver, and he would find there was indeed a change; but there was such a thing as hypocrisy, and pretended conversion, and then, of course, it could not be expected that there would be any real sanctification of life.

The Rev. Mr. Whitmore, a Presbyterian minister of Millwall, advocated going among the people, and asking them to come to the house of God. In that way he had filled in a few weeks his chapel which had before been almost empty.

Mr. Hooker, house-painter, spoke of the isolation which existed among not only the clergy but also among the deacons of churches from the working men. He thought the connection between Church and State was a great objection with working men. He regarded the Bench of Bishops as a political refuge, and believed that bishops were of no use whatever. (Great laughter, and "hear, hear.") A city missionary often did more good, and was the means of saving more souls than the whole Bench of Bishops. The system of selling livings was most abominable, and he knew a case of a most notoriously profligate young man, who was now dead, but who, a few years ago, was tried as to his sanity in Westminster, and who had a gilt in his hands in Norfolk. Therefore, the Church of England sank into contempt with the working men of this country. (Cheers.)

Mr. Guile, iron-founder, regretted that Mr. Murphy had become a pastor instead of working as an evangelist. He thought such men lost much of their influence when they did that. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. MacSweeney, a licensed hawker, said, never in the history of this country had such a scene occurred as that which had been witnessed at this conference to-day. The lion had been seen laying down with the lamb.—(Laughter.) The priest had made the people what they were, and the people had made the priests what they were, and they both met in solemn "confab" to decide what they were to do in the future. He expected great results from this conference, for it would go through the length and breadth of the land that the priests had neglected their spiritual duty to the working classes and if they did not begin to do that duty, the working classes would take the matter into their own hands. (Hear, hear.) He suggested why they should not have a conference in the West-end to know the reason why the coronetted peers did not attend our places of worship, for he believed they were as bad as working men. (Cheers.)

The Rev. F. D. Maurice did not anticipate any good results would come out of this meeting, unless each minister would take home to himself the wrongs which were most applicable to his own particular case, and determine to amend those wrongs in the future.

Henry Lee, Esq., said he had come from Manchester in accordance with an invitation which he had received. He stood midway, as he might call it, between the clergy and the people. He taught a class of married men in a Sunday-school, and had invited them to spend an afternoon in telling him something about the condition of their own class, and

what they knew of the objections which the working classes had to come to a place of worship. The first thing which struck them was the obstacle arising out of the habit of the working classes. It was a feeling amongst them that if a man attended a place of worship he made a profession of religion, and consequently if a man afterwards got drunk or did anything else that was wrong, he was taunted by his fellow-men as a hypocrite. He had striven to tell them that they only made a profession of religion when they joined the church as members, and that until then they were only hearers. Then there was amongst this class a great deal of betting. The associations of the public-house, too, were inconsistent with attendance at public worship. Besides these, was the habit of pleasure-seeking on Sunday. Without being a strict Sabbatarian, he would strongly recommend constant attendance at a place of worship, even if it were only for the regular habit into which it got a man, and the influence it exercised upon his children. The whole discussion hitherto seemed to have been about working men; but how about the women? Which parent was it who formed the mind of the children? It was the mother. The weak point in all our Christian organizations was not the working men, but the working women. The views of working men with respect to conversion were exceedingly cloudy. He believed that there was to be found amongst them a deep sense of justice, and, if appealed to in the right way, they would never be found wanting.

The discussion was continued by Mr. Marshall (a navy), Mr. Harris Cooper, who said he had lived ten years in his present house, and had never received a visit from a clergyman except when collecting Easter dues—(laughter)—Mr. Bawden, Rev. C. Neville, and Rev. H. Solly and others.

The proceedings did not terminate until between nine and ten o'clock, having lasted above six hours.

The Baptist Churches in London.

The London Baptist Association formed last year held its annual meeting recently at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. From the report read on that occasion, we have some very interesting and encouraging facts. Sixty-four churches in the metropolis and its suburbs, combined to form the Association. All churches agreeing on the subject of believers' baptism, provided only they held Evangelical sentiments, were eligible to unite, and, at the Quarterly meetings during the year thirteen other churches were admitted. The facts in the following extract, and the spirit it breathes indicates a healthy condition, from which much good may be anticipated in future years:

"It is cause for gratification to know that between the year 1851 and 1865 the increase of sittings founded by our own denomination was as large as sixty-one per cent, on those previously existing, that by the Independents being thirty per cent, and by the Wesleyans nineteen per cent. It is also cause for joy that this Association is doing something to supply places of worship in which the truth as it is in Jesus will be proclaimed. But while each new building thus provided becomes a centre from which saving truth is to radiate it is manifest that mere church or chapel building will not bring the great masses of our fellow-creatures under the influence of the Gospel. If there be any dormant energy in our churches that can be awakened and brought to bear on the myriads around us who are perishing in sin, it is high time that our utmost efforts were employed to obtain its development. There are nearly 20,000 members in our associated churches; making all due allowance for the disqualifications caused by age, infirmity, and other impediments to personal service, we might expect that in a high state of spiritual prosperity, one-fourth of this number would be engaged in active exertions to seek the conversion of sinners.—This would give us a missionary band of 5,000 devoted labourers, consecrated to the greatest, the holiest, the most useful of all Christian activities. But in order to the enjoyment of such a state of prosperity, our churches need