

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.

A Hymn for Christmas-tide.

"Glory to God and peace on earth,"
The angels sang at Jesus' birth,
We mortals join the heavenly throng,
And loud repeat the Christmas song.

But who is He of lowly state?
(On whom both men and angels wait)
What is his name—what His abode,
Why sounds the cry "Glory to God"?

In swaddling clothes, wrapped closely round,
A Babe is in a manger found,
No room is there in Bethlehem's inn,
For one who bore the wide-world's sin.

Though of a humble virgin born,
Bearing in meekness, taunt and scorn,
O! Jesus in thyself I see,
The presence of the Deity!

Thou art my Lord, my Saviour thou,
Him to whose name, each knee shall bow,
Joyful we catch anew the strain,
"Glory to God—good-will to men."

Christmas, 1867.

Christmas is here.

Child of humanity, second I, in thee,
Wearied with vanity,
Dear must the dawn of this morning appear;
For the glad festival, joyful appear,
Happiest rest of all,
Comes to bring peace to thee—Christmas is here.

Peasant laborious,
Beautiful, glorious,
Sound the sweet chimes, as they fall on thine ear;
All who toil drearily,
Witness how cheerily,
Flies the good news around—"Christmas is here!"

Ye that from chalice
Quaffing in palaces,
Dream not of want, nor calamity fear,
Treat not disdainfully,
Those who so painfully,
Labor in penury—Christmas is here.

Christmas! what history
Equals thy mystery?
Angels to herald thee sang from the sphere:
Let us with gratitude
Own our bestitude,
Caroling joyfully—"Christmas is here."

Religious.

A Sunday with the Baptists in Paris.

It is Sunday morning in Paris. The earlier hours have been passed in our room in quiet. Thoughts of the calm, placid Lord's-days we have spent in our own land, come to us like gentle winds over a summer sea. God bless this day to our souls, is our prayer as we go out to attend the assembly of our Baptist brethren. We reach the street. We certainly must have mistaken the day. It must be Saturday and not Sunday. The streets are crowded. The shops are all open. The omnibuses for the Exposition are filled. The gardens of the Tuilleries swarm with people bent on pleasure. The little steamers on the river are covered with men, women and children. All Paris has turned out for a gala day. In front of the innumerable cafes all the chairs are occupied. Here goes a rollicking battalion of Zouaves, preceded by their fine band, to relieve guard at the Palace. We have to pass through the great bazaar of the Palais Royal, and never before have we seen such a jam of people making the tour of the shops. The workmen everywhere are at their places, as busy as on other days. No, we have not mistaken the day. This is the Roman Catholic Sunday. Paris, with one million eight hundred thousand people, has a population of less than a hundred thousand.

But making our way through these streams of men and women, we turn up a little narrow street, ascend two flights of steps, and enter a room some fifty feet by twenty, furnished with a small pulpit and many rows of plain chairs. A congregation of sixty to a hundred people is present. The church numbers about

eighty members most of them very poor.— They live in all the quarters of this vast city, and it is a long walk for most of them to come to this meeting. There, on that side, are three soldiers; they join most heartily in the singing, and pay strict attention to the sermon; they are faithful brethren. Off in the corner sit a gentleman and his wife.— "The bonds of Christ are manifest in the Palace"—that gentleman is an under-Secretary at the Tuilleries. Here is a face that tells of gentle blood and nurture, though marked with the lines of care. In the days of her worldly prosperity, God converted her through the preaching of the Nestor of the French Mission—brother Gretin. When God gave her Jesus, He took away her wealth that she "might find her all in Him." One of the younger pastors said to me, "I shall never be able to tell all I owe to that dear sister for instruction in the truth."

You have been in a Baptist meeting I believe. Well, go to our churches in Europe, and it is the same thing over again—only they speak French, or German, or Swedish, according to locality. In Paris this church was organized fifteen years ago, with four members. For a long time it met in such a room as we would not use to store wood. It is now comfortably placed. Brother Des, who was for ten years pastor, and faithfully served the church, is laid aside from pastoral duties by disease of the heart. Not willing to be a burden upon the funds of the Mission, he has taken a situation in a bank. Yet, though laid aside from continuous work, I shall not soon forget the simple, direct, excellent sermon I heard him preach. Brother Lepoids, the active pastor, is a man about fifty years of age. For twenty-three years he was pastor at Chauny. He is known as the friend of the poor—the constant visitor at the bed-side of the suffering. No one, in any quarter of Paris, sends for him in vain. Ask any one who knows him, and he will tell you that brother Lepoids loves Jesus, and loves to preach his word.

Is there anything more antipodal to Roman Catholicism, in all its pomp and circumstance than a simple Baptist church? Did not Luther and Zwingli battle with the Baptists as greater heretics than even Roman Catholics? They, in the spirit of their times, delivered Baptists to the slaughter. They only argued with Romanists. Now I want you to mark that while in Germany and Sweden most of the Baptists have come out of the Protestant churches, in France with very few exceptions (not five per cent), our members are converts from the heart of Catholicism. They must renounce everything to be Baptists; and when they do become Baptists, they are strong in the faith.

God's seeds are oftenest mustard-seeds. Jonah's gourds, that spring up in a night, give shade one day, but wither away very soon—while the tree that slowly rises from that small seed gives foothold and rest to God's winged hymns. Look now at these Alpine torrents of European politics—nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom—every inch of those broad lands have been wet with human blood. Beneath the apparent exciting causes of so many of these wars lies the unsolved, to them yet insoluble, question of Church and State, which has drawn after it the wars and woes of centuries. The mustard-seed of a despised refugee Baptist church in Rhode Island sent forth a waving harvest of blessings in this land. The mustard-seeds of Baptist churches in Europe contain in the germ, the perfect solution of the vexed question of those mighty peoples.—*N. Y. Ez. and Chron.*

Timidity of Pastors.

A year since, two friends of a pastor were discussing the liberality of his people in providing for his comfort. "Why is it," said one, "that they are so much more generous toward their pastor than other churches, in proportion to their means?" "Because," said the other, "he has schooled them to such liberality toward the various benevolent causes of the day, that they have come to apply the same scale of giving to himself and his family." The answer was correct, and the principle is one of universal application.

Another pastor, at a meeting held in his own church and with many of his people present, gave a timid apology for having neglected an important collection in which other churches had joined. His people were indignant. "It is not true" said his leading men after the meeting. "It is not true that the money could not have been raised. Our pastor knows that he had but to ask for it, and it would have been cheerfully contributed. We never know of this matter, and are ashamed that such an impression of us should go abroad." The principle here involved is also of universal application.

Will it not be found to be true that one of the greatest obstacles to the beneficence of the churches is the timidity of pastors? Ministers are afraid to ask them to give. It is to be hoped that the instances are few in which a mercenary spirit lies at the bottom of this reluctance—a fear perhaps that less will be done for the support of the Gospel at home. More frequently it is mere timidity. The pastor does really do his people injustice.— He thinks they are miserly and parsimonious, when really their hearts are large and full of sympathy, and they are ready to give if only they know what they are giving for, and satisfied that their contributions will do good.— Now we believe that a minister too often underrates both the intelligence and the liberality of his people—he places too low an estimate upon their character, and makes them more selfish and sordid than they are. At least he underrates their capability of becoming generous and large-hearted under a proper training. And worse than all he actually misrepresents that Christianity which in its very nature breaks open the heart, hardened with selfishness, and expands it into all benevolent giving and doing, and which at its outlet not only taught its disciples to contribute regularly every week, but in many cases led them to share "all things in common."

That great truth of the Gospel that "It is better to give than to receive," is nowhere more signally verified than in the history of pastors and churches. The people who are taught to give liberally to all the great benevolent objects of the Church, will invariably show a corresponding enlargement in every other respect. They will rise to a more intelligent type of piety, and enjoy a broader horizon of interest and sympathy towards Christ's whole Kingdom. They will be more earnest and more united in all home efforts. Church debts will be paid, and timely improvements made in all the conveniences of worship. The Sabbath-school will keep pace with the quickened spirit of the times, the pastor will be more generously supported, more deeply rooted in the affections of his people, more highly respected, and therefore influential for good in the entire community in which he lives. On the other hand who has ever known an instance in which a shrinking and timid policy has not more and more belittled the whole spirit of a congregation: narrowed its sympathies, dwarfed all its energies, out short its self-development—in a word, shrunken and withered up the church and pastor together. The process may be gradual and slow, but it is sure.

When charity is dead, debts also remain unpaid, needed improvements will pass in neglect, salaries will be paid only with difficulty or not at all, and ere many months or years the pulpit will be written vacant, and a despairing minister will be left to the sole occupation of writing letters of inquiry for a place.

Study of Theology at Niagara Falls.

The long journey was bisected going and returning by a halt at the Falls. It was not to get theology—but theology I did get. I doubt if there is just such another "chair" for bold, outspoken theology as is Niagara. It has no salary for it, I know; nor any Assembly's or Board of Trustees' commission, or certificate of election to the business.— Nevertheless, profounder, loftier, more distinct theology, I've not heard in many a day. Some of it is well worth telling over. It should be said at the outset, that 'tis the sternest bluntest Calvinism; not a whine or whisper of Arminianism in it. Sit down on this rock by the Prospect Tower, and gaze and listen before that amazing green lip of unbroken

flood, millions of gallons each minute leaping into the cup of rock one hundred and fifty-eight feet below; a line 2,300 feet alone will measure the length from the tower to the Canada shore. The Power there! Can it be computed? A power, too, acting every instant! A live power. Every ten feet square would turn a million spindles! The looms of the nation could be driven by the waters between the head and the foot of Goat Island. Each instant an intelligent volition acts on the every atom of water; touches it with its measure of power; keeps the atom distinct; unites its form; masses the million myriads on their flight into harmonious unity; and has done this for days, for years, for centuries. Has the Maker of these Falls power, boundless power; eternal power, or not? Look into that spray, fine as dust of diamonds; into that pearly fleck refining into mist; into the white-green, just as the volume breaks on the rock's curve, and keep in mind all the time that each particle occupies a thought, and as a purse holds a coin, that it holds a piece of power its own; and not another's. Now answer the question.

But it is Supreme, Independent Power.— Who can do anything with it! Perfectly useless! The water-power there could earn at ordinary rates a millions of dollars, maybe five millions of dollars every day. It is scarcely made to turn a grist-mill. Total waste! Can God afford it? He does afford it. He has made the gigantic Dynamic just vocal with, "Touch me if you dare!" My Creator would have money-getting man to understand that for His own glory and use this most magnificent concord of powers is made and reserved. (So not a water-wheel can thrust its servile buckets into that boundless water-power, and live!)

Let it stone, industrious, speculating man. The Maker can afford that power for Himself, and so enormous is it, that you touch it but at your peril. Ponder this power! O to feel it all to be as a breath of love toward your soul, through Jesus Christ, by whom, and for whom, all things were made.—*Evangelist.*

"The Beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord."

It was not a soft and languid wishing for the good of her neighbors that occupied the leisure of this Christian lady. Nor was it merely such work as she could do with tender hands, in a drawing room, and thus contribute to the stock of a benevolent bazaar. She did not embroider a costly piece of silk, and then arrange a lottery, as the means of squeezing the mussy from frivolous or covetous hands, in behalf of a good cause. She did the thing herself. She went to the needy place, and laid herself alongside the needy people, and pressed with all the might of a strong faith, and all the gentleness of a lovely character, to tear the lost from their sins, and win them over to the Saviour. The word tells us as much. It is well translated "laboured."— It indicates effort that inflicts pain and entails weariness. It indicates, indeed, the severest toil, the toil which makes subsequent rest needful and sweet. The task was rough though the hands that plied it were tender.

Ladies need not be afraid; work to which the love of Christ impels you will never mar the delicacy of true feminine refinement. I could name some things much in vogue at present which do rub too roughly the tender bloom of newly ripened womanly beauty; but personal contact with the poor, the ragged, the rude, even the wicked of her race, when she seeks them as Christ did, in order to save, will throw a halo of the graces of art and nature, at once enhancing their beauty and securing their permanence. Christianity—the Christianity that flows from an inner life in Christ—is at once the best style of manly courage, and the best style of feminine attractiveness.

I think I see this beloved Persis marching through the lanes of the city, with the children casting themselves in her way, right and left, to catch a glimpse of her eye, or a touch of her hand. When the eye saw her then it blessed her. She certainly was not effeminate who toiled hard amid a degraded heathen population, and toiled all alone; she was certainly not effeminate, but she was feminine. She was strong minded, for she accomplished