

Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Judge not."

Could we but cherish loving thoughts
And wear a smile for those we meet,
Some hearts that close against us now
Would pour their treasures at our feet.

O let us ne'er be quick to judge,
Nor rashly throw the pointed dart,
Better to spare a hundred false,
Than rudely wound one honest heart.

The heart of man is like a fount,
'Tis hard to see its hidden springs,
What we condemn may often be
The mirage of external things.

We strive to scan a brother's heart,
And think we lay his motives bare,
But ne'er suspect the faults we blame,
May be or own reflected there.

S. S.

Kentville.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

Pen Sketches—No. 1.

AMBITIOUS PERSONS.

Dear Messenger,—

You no doubt like myself have been in the artist's studio, and among other things have seen more sketches—outlines to be filled up at some future period. Now I have by me in my study a few pen sketches which I thought might find a corner in your paper and your readers can fill up the outlines at their leisure. I begin with ambitious persons. "If you were an ambitious man," said one to a minister of talent and education, who was settled in a retired and obscure parish, "you would not stay in such a place as this." How do you know that I am not an ambitious man?" said the pastor, "You do not act like one." "I have my plan as well as others—the results may not appear as soon, perhaps." "Are you engaged in some great work?" "I am—but that work does not relate to literature or science. I am not ambitious perhaps in the ordinary sense of the term, I do not desire to occupy the high places of the earth, but I do desire to get near my Master's throne in Heaven. I care but little for popular applause, but I desire to secure the approbation of God. The salvation of souls is the work in which he is most interested, and to the successful prosecutor of which he has promised the largest rewards." Now there are many who are ambitious to gain a name, to be regarded as a person of importance—hence one will toil in his study for learning—another in business, and another in politics. These are ambitions small compared to those who are seeking to live near to God to enjoy his approving smile, and do good to their fellow men. Dear reader, are you thus ambitious—or are you seeking the evanescent smile of a gay world—if the latter, you will be disappointed.

JOHN.

For the Christian Messenger.

Works of Fiction.

My views of these, in general, have already been distinctly expressed, (C. M. Feb. 19th.) Aware of the diversity of opinions on this subject, I am not disposed to excite any contention, nor to cast any reflections on those who differ from me. In compliance, however, with the courteous request of "A Countryman," (C. M. March 11th.) I deem it proper to offer a few thoughts on the points to which he specially refers.

It is well known that many have attempted with some degree of plausibility, to justify slavery, the common use of intoxicating liquors, and carnal dancing, from the Scriptures; but a careful examination of the sacred Oracles evinces that they do in reality, give no countenance to these practices. In my opinion the case is similar with reference to works of fiction.

Undoubtedly the inspired writers occasion-

ally employed various figures of speech, as personification, metaphor, allegory, similitude and parable, for illustration; but which of them ever wrote a work of fiction? They did not "follow cunningly devised fables;" but one of them predicted that some would "turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned to fables," or fictions, (2 Pet. i. 16: 2 Tim. iv. 4.) The prophet Nathan, stated a fact allegorically, in order to make King David condemn himself; and to illustrate the heinousness of his crime, (2 Samuel, xii. 1-10.) The address of Jotham to the murderous Abimelech and his adherents was in some measure similar, (Judges ix. 5-20.) We have also allegories in Ps. lxxx. 8-14: Isa. v. 1-6: Ezek. xvii. 1-10: Gal. iv. 21-31, but these are altogether different from our modern works.

Many of the parables uttered by our Lord were literal facts, or relations of events of frequent occurrence in temporal things, introduced by Him to illustrate things of a spiritual nature. (See Matth. xiii. 3-8, 33, 47, 48: Jno. x. 1-6.) As all events that had ever transpired were known to Him, it can not be reasonably doubted that things which had actually taken place, of which we have no exact knowledge, were related by Him for the spiritual benefit of the people. Who for instance, can doubt that such cases had really occurred as those recorded in Matth. xiii. 44, 46; xxi. 28-30, and Luke xii. 6-9?—Indeed, it might be difficult to demonstrate that any of His parables were not of this character. Men whose system requires an evasion of the obvious import of Luke xvi. 19-31, allege that the conversation recorded between Abraham and the rich man could not have occurred. But how can we, in this corporeal state, determine what intercourse may or may not, be held between departed spirits?

At all events, Christ's parables were only comparisons, or brief illustrations, to which our modern works of fiction bear no real similarity.

A few thoughts may now be suggested in reply to the request of my opinion relative to "the character of a large portion of Sabbath school books."

Undoubtedly important truth has, in some instances, been advantageously communicated in the form of dialogue, allegory or fable.—It is, therefore, no easy matter to lay down an unexceptionable rule, or to mark distinctly the line of demarcation, with reference to the extent to which such a style of writing is admissible. I do not, however, hesitate to express my deliberate and settled opinion, that the free use of fiction in connection with the Sabbath School is a serious injury to that excellent institution.

Where unhappily exercises of a theatrical nature are introduced at the examination of schools, in meetings at temperance organizations, or other moral institutions, a desire to attend the theatre is naturally engendered, and youths are very liable to be led thither to their ruin. In like manner the perusal of fiction in Sabbath school books imbues the youthful mind with a passion for such reading in general, without regard to its morality, creates a morbid sentimentalism, and produces a disrelish for solid, instructive, and useful works, and consequently does much harm.

It is evidently of great importance to the welfare of children to have both their physical and their mental taste preserved from vitiating influences. They should be furnished with a supply of wholesome nourishment for the body and the mind; and every thing deleterious to either should be carefully kept from them. What multitudes have been ruined through the early use of intoxicating drinks, tobacco, &c.! Can it be doubted that very many have also been ultimately plunged into misery by perusing works of fiction, *alias falsehood*, in their youthful days?

As free access can now be had to an abundant supply of valuable works of truth, that are interesting, instructive, and safe, there can be no plausible pretext for subjecting the young to the dangerous influence of fictitious works. I would not propose a legal prohibition of these, but would affectionately entreat all parents, guardians, and superintendents of Sabbath Schools, to discontinue the use of them.

C. TUPPER.

Aylesford, March 30, 1868.

Notes from our Prayer Meeting.

Did you ever think how many flowers God wastes? Sometimes in the spring, walking alone in the woods I have come suddenly upon some timid blushing beauty of a trailing arbutus, or some lovely cluster of white violets, or one of those radiantly beautiful columbines has nodded to me from its solitary perch on the rocks and I have felt sad. I wanted so that all the denizens of the dirty city alleys who never see flowers growing fresh from God's hand, and all the folks whose business keeps them shut up within four walls, and the unfortunates who spend their summers in the man-made country life of fashionable watering places, too busy in dressing themselves to notice how much more beautifully God dresses the flowers, should be there and see them too;—and then to think how many flowers there are that nobody ever sees.

Something like this I have felt at some of our little prayer meetings—little necessarily, for the church itself is small. It seems really a pity that so many things that give light and comfort to those that bear them should be lost to the world because instead of being spoken by Beecher or Spurgeon or somebody who has his sermons printed, they are dropped in the ordinary course of a country prayer meeting, their authors never dreaming that they would go beyond the circle of a dozen or twenty persons present: I have noted down a few of these, and wish I had noted more.

TRIALS.

"When I first became a soldier I remember there was nothing I dreaded so much as passing inspection. I would look at my gun and my equipments, look closely to see that all was right, but after all, when the inspector came, I fairly trembled for fear something would be out of order. But after the inspection was over, ah! that was another thing.—Then I felt better, safe, sure. And I think these trials God sends us are his way of making us pass inspection. How we dread them! How we tremble when we see them approaching! But when they have tested us, tried us, and are over, how glad we are!"

A WORD FOR YOUNG MEMBERS.

"I should really be glad to have our young members take more part in the meetings.—You think you have little to say, or the older ones can talk better, perhaps. But now I think like this: In a family the father and mother and older brothers and sisters talk, and they talk well, but when the little baby that is only just beginning to speak says a word, how they all stop to listen. Why, the wisest words that father or mother could say are not so interesting as the first lisping of the little one that can hardly talk at all, and so we older ones feel towards you, young converts."

WORKING TOGETHER.

"You know how the beavers build. They don't try to loosen great logs and float them down the stream, but each one takes a little stick and carries it in his mouth, and puts it in its place until a dam is built across the stream. And can't we do as much that towards building up the glorious house of God? Can we not each bring one with us to the next prayer meeting? Can we not speak to some one who is not a Christian? And can we not work together? Let us try."

I might add indefinitely to these notes, still gleaned only from the remarks of private members, but I may as well stop here.

Is it not a good plan to ask ourselves, when we return from prayer meeting, "What have I gained this time?" Religion, like every other kind of business, is very much helped by keeping accounts.—*National Baptist.*

Cold Beds.

Cold beds, in cold rooms, in the winter, or damp spring time, are very injurious to health and have been known to destroy life. When a minister comes to see you, therefore, either build up a good warm fire for him in your spare room, or else give him your bed and occupy that room yourselves. We consider it appropriate under the heading of "Minis-

terial and Church life" to enjoin it upon church members to let preachers of the gospel live, as long as possible. "Thou shalt not kill" is a command still binding! The writer of this has more than once been compelled to sleep in vest, coat, and pants, in order to keep warm. And he begins to have a little grain of feeling on the subject!

A GOLDEN THOUGHT.—Nature will be reported. All things are engaged in writing their own history. The plant and the pebble go attended by their own shadows. The rock leaves its scratches on the mountain side, the river its bed in the soil, the animal leaves its bones in the stratum, the fern and the leaf their modest epitaph in the coal. The falling drop makes its sepulchre in the sand or stone not a footstep in the snow or along the ground, put prints in characters more or less lasting a map of its march; every act of man inscribes itself in the memories of his fellows and on his own face. The air is full of sounds—the sky of tokens; the ground is all memoranda, signatures, and every object is covered over with hints which speak to the intelligent.

IS POVERTY A DISGRACE?—Poverty is no disgrace unless brought upon us by our own faults. To spend the time of youth in what is called agreeable leisure, which is only another name for culpable idleness, is tempting Providence. "Six days shalt thou labor" is one of the ten commandments, and is just as binding upon rich and poor, young and old, as that other one of the ten, "Thou shalt not steal!" We can violate neither of these without ultimately suffering for it. God generally overtakes with calamities the one who passes any considerable number of the years of health without being remuneratively employed.

HOW TO RETRENCH.—If the times are hard rich Christians should retrench.—

1st. In household expenditures, such as equipage, and the number of servants.

2d. In personal expenditures, such as dress, sumptuous living, and the like.

3d. In every thing else that can be thought of, (except in needful supplies for the family) sooner than to withdraw from helping forward the cause of Home and Foreign missions. Do not starve the missionaries.—They are your brethren. Your Father and theirs is looking down upon you, to see how, as a steward, you use His money.

RESULT OF EARLY TRAINING.—Some anecdotes are apocryphal; but the following comes from a source too reliable to be questioned:

A learned Professor of Hebrew who is a converted Jew, was requested to ask a blessing at dinner. It was at a family gathering and the chief article of the feast was a fine roasted pig. The blessing sought was in about these words: "O Lord, if thou canst bless under the new dispensation what thou didst curse under the old, be pleased to bless this little pig!"

"I AM JUST WHERE YOU LEFT ME."—The Rev. Newman Hall relates an interesting incident of his father John Vine Hall, concerning the modest character of his Christian joy. It was in connection with the Rev. Rowland Hill. He says: "On the second visit of this eminent preacher, my father, in reply to an inquiry after his welfare, said: 'I am just where you left me.' 'What!' said Mr. Hill, 'got no farther?' 'No,' said my father, 'not a step.' 'Where was it then?' inquired Mr. Hill. 'Rejoicing with trembling,' was the reply. 'Be sure and stop there,' eagerly responded the venerable evangelist; 'don't try to go a step beyond.'"

THE PULPIT IN GERMANY.—The German pulpit could scarcely have less influence than it has. Those who visit the services are rarely affected, save for the moment; and the vast majority of the population never enter a church, save possibly at the principal festivals, three or four times a year. Personally, too, the clergy have little or no influence in any direction, save as far as their official position gives them power.—*English Independent.*