

Christian Messenger.

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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

"HOW OLD ART THOU?"

Count not the days that have idly flown,
The years that were vainly spent;
Nor speak of the hours thou must blush to own
When thy spirit stands before the throne
To account for the talents lent.

But number the hours redeemed from sin,
The moments employed for heaven;
Oh! few and evil thy days have been,
Thy life, a toilsome but worthless scene,
For a nobler purpose given.

Will the shade go back on thy dial-plate?
Will thy sun stand still on his way?
Both hasten on; and thy spirit's fate
Rests on the point of life's little date:
Then live while 'tis called to-day.

Life's waning hours, like the sybils page,
As they lessen, in value rise;
Oh! rouse thee and live! nor deem man's age
Stands in the length of his pilgrimage,
But in days that are truly wise.

Religious.

A NIGHT AT THE HOSPICE OF ST. BERNARD.

I have a most vivid recollection of reading in my childhood about the monastery on the Great St. Bernard Pass. The perils of travellers, the heroism and kindness of the monks, and the sagacity of their dogs, excited in me the deepest interest. Perhaps, indeed, in those early days this interest centred in the dogs rather than in their masters. Since then one of my cherished dreams has been that of visiting the monastery, seeing with my own eyes the perilous way over the pass, mingling with the monks in their lonely dwelling, and even making acquaintance with the dogs whose predecessors were the object of my juvenile admiration. I resolved that my first tour in Switzerland should embrace the realisation of my dream.

It was, therefore, with no common pleasure that I took the train from Sion to Martigny (the starting-point from the Swiss side of the pass) on a fine Sunday morning in July. Sion is a cathedral city, wholly Catholic, without any Protestant worship. Martigny is Catholic too, but during the tourist season an English chaplain officiates twice every Sunday in one of the hotels, so I took "a Sabbath day's journey"—about an hour—that I might have the opportunity of attending religious worship in my own tongue. We had full service in the afternoon. Evening prayer, sermon, and collection. The clergyman wore his surplice in true clerical fashion. The congregation numbered ten persons, seven ladies and three gentlemen, all three being English Congregational ministers. The service was held in the saloon of the hotel.

About seven o'clock next morning we three persons left Martigny together to visit the Hospice. The distance is about thirty miles. A tolerably clear road has been constructed for the greater part of the ascent. We took a mule carriage as far as it could go, intending to return by it on the following day. The road at first lies along the right bank of the Dranse, which it afterwards crosses several times, and soon begins to ascend. Many villages, most of them poor and dirty, stud the valley. We stopped for a short time at Orsières, and then went on to St. Pierre, where we halted for refreshment. This is a wretched village of antiquity and of some celebrity. The little inn that supplied us with coarse bread and sour wine, and almost rancid cheese and butter, boasts of having entertained the first Napoleon when he led his army across the pass into Italy. There is a small church that dates from the eleventh century, and in front of the inn is a stone column that was erected in honour of the younger Constantine, throwing one's thoughts back to the days when the Roman Empire was hastening to its fall. We had a long and provoking delay here, as our driver disappeared until it suited his own convenience,

and, of course, we could not proceed without him. This is no uncommon trick with his class.

We reached the Cantine de Proz about four o'clock, and prepared for the two hours' stiff walking that lay between this point and the end of our journey. A rough path leads over a barren, stony plain for a short distance, and then strikes in amongst rocks and precipices, and even snow fields, of various extent. Tall poles, like telegraph-posts, stand along the side of the mountain, that travellers may know the way in winter when the whole region is one unbroken snow-field. We did not come within sight of the hospice until we were close to it, when after toiling up a steep rocky path we rounded a projecting corner and saw it just before us. It was a welcome sight. Some of the guide-books speak rather disparagingly of the scenery along this route. It is not equal in grandeur to several of the Alpine passes. It is far exceeded by the Splügen, the St. Gothard, the Simplon, and others, but it has attractions of its own. There is a peculiar wildness in some parts of it, and after passing St. Pierre a fine view of the snowy summit of Mount Volan is obtained. In any other country but Switzerland, where there is a perfect plethora of magnificence, it would be considered magnificent.

When we arrived at the hospice we were ushered by a servant into the hall, and in a few moments, in answer to the bell, one of the monks appeared—an intelligent, gentlemanly man, who gave us a cordial welcome. He asked whence we came, if we would like to have refreshment at once (supper would be in an hour at seven o'clock,) and if we would like to have separate bedrooms, or prefer to be together. When we expressed our preference, he showed us along the corridor to a room with three beds and arrangements complete for three visitors. We sallied forth without delay to make as much as possible of the time before supper. We found a great difference between the temperature of the mountain and that of the valley from which we had ascended, and were glad to put on extra clothing. The hospice stand 8,200 feet above the level of the sea on the summit of the pass to which it gives its name. So manifestly is it the summit, that when you go a few steps on either side from the door you begin at once to descend. It is a large, stone building, several storeys high, constructed with a view to strength, for it is exposed in winter to some of the most fearful storms that sweep through the mountains. It is capable of accommodating three or four hundred persons. The monks number only twelve or fifteen, but they have several servants. A smaller building stands close by, intended as a place of refuge in case of fire. This precaution is not unnecessary, for twice in the course of its history the hospice has been burned down. The first visit which tourists in general pay is to the Morgue, or dead-house, a small stone hut, in two divisions, standing at one end of the monastery. Here are seen through a large iron-grated window the remains of those who have at various times perished in crossing the pass, and who have never been claimed by friends. On these rocky heights there is no earth in which they could be interred, and in the excessive cold and rarity of the atmosphere, their flesh wastes away without effusive decomposition. For several years no fresh occupant has been placed in this Mountain Golgotha. The floor was strewn with the bleached bones of men and women; a few forms were still erect or crouching against the walls. It was a sad and a ghastly sight, but the saddest of all was, the bending form of a mother with outstretched arms from which the form of her child had fallen. As we looked into the charnel-house, and then looked around on the dreary waste that encompassed it, and tried to picture to ourselves what a winter theirs must be, we could not but feel the deepest admiration for the men who consecrate the strength and flower of their manhood to the saving of human life in that perilous and inhospitable region. After a short ramble along the mountain side towards Italy, and by the lake that lies near the hospice, we returned amidst the gathering shadows of

evening, in time for supper. Was it the materials which composed that supper? was it the cookery? or was it the fierceness of our appetites, owing to the air and exercise? I can scarcely tell, but that supper seemed the most delicious and enjoyable I ever sat down to. How excellent the dishes were! How admirable the wine! Surely, they were no common viands! And what justice we did to them. That meal must for ever be a bright spot in one's gastronomic experience. The monk who received us sat at the head of the table, but the rest of the fraternity did not appear. A blazing fire of wood threw a cheerful warmth over the salle-à-manger, and conversation amongst the guests—some twenty ladies and gentlemen—flowed freely, our host doing the honours as one "to the manner born." After supper we gathered round the fire. Conversation again, and music—one or two young ladies singing at the piano. At nine o'clock we dispersed to our several apartments. As I retired, I could scarcely believe that I was under that hospitable roof; the reality seemed quite as dream-like as the dreams I had cherished in my childhood.

Next morning the chapel bell rang out early, about five o'clock, for mass. I rose, so also did my companions, and attended the service. The chapel is a small one, with but little decoration, containing a high-altar, and three side altars. Conspicuous on the walls is a full-length portrait of St. Bernard, the founder of the hospice. There is also a marble monument in a recess, erected by Napoleon to the memory of General Dessaix, who fell at Marengo. Only a few of visitors to the hospice, and those chiefly the poor, were present at the mass. The monks were all there, in their stalls. It was the only opportunity I had of seeing them together. One of the younger men was the celebrant, another read the lessons, and a third presided at the organ. Indeed, they were nearly all young men; none of them, I should think, exceeded forty, and already they showed signs that the climate was telling on their health and frame. It was very touching to listen to their voices as they chanted the service of their Church, to look on their pale faces, some of them bearing traces of suffering, and to think of the lonely life they lead in the midst of the everlasting snows. In the middle of July the cold was intense; what must it be in the depth of winter! And yet morning after morning all round the year these men meet and worship God, keeping the fire kindled upon His altar in the only way they know, and with their worship they combine a service to humanity that involves sacrifice and risk of which we can form no adequate idea. Are they not treading so far in the footsteps of Him who came "to save men's lives"? Let him who will pronounce condemnation upon them as being false and superstitious—I dare not.

After the service came breakfast. How grateful the hot delicious coffee was in that chilly place, for all around was thick fog and mist that threatened gradually to settle into heavy rain. After breakfast we paid a visit to the library and museum, of which is a small room devoted to pictures. Here we saw portraits of Queen Victoria, the late Prince Consort, and the Prince of Wales, and prints of the Crystal Palace and the International Exhibition. Then we bade farewell to our hospitable entertainers, and started on our way to Martigny again.

I shall only add that no charge is made at the hospice, but a box is placed in the chapel to receive free-will offerings from visitors. I fear that some persons avail themselves of the hospitality but make no return. Every one who travels for pleasure ought to feel bound to contribute a sum equal to what he would pay for similar accommodation at a reasonable hotel, so as not to encroach upon funds that are intended for the poor. I think it is Professor Forbes who tells of meeting a Scotchman at the hospice who at table showed himself to be a man of great vigour and of large capacity, and who was loud in praise of the hospitality of the monks, but told the Professor that he could not conscientiously drop a coin into the box, as thereby he

would be maintaining Popery. This is an example of adherence to principle so illustrious that I would scarcely venture to set before my readers for imitation. The standard is altogether too high for ordinary mortals. None but a Scotchman could reach it, and this worthy's name ought to be enrolled in the annals of his country, and handed down to an admiring posterity. *Christian World.*

VIATOR.

ARE MINISTERS HIRELINGS!

"Are you the man we've hired to preach for us?"

"No, sir, I am not."

"I beg pardon. Are you not the minister?"

"Yes, sir; I am pastor of the church here. But do you really think I have been hired to preach for you?"

"Why, yes, sir; I was at the meeting when the vote was taken to raise the money. Did you not come here expecting to receive a salary?"

"Certainly; and so does the governor of this state enter upon his duties expecting to receive a salary; but, would you say that he is hired to govern the State?"

"Not exactly."

"And the reason is exactly this: the governor is elected to fill a certain office, and when you speak of him you think more of his office than you do of his salary. You do not hire him to do what ever you may wish to set him at; but you elect him to an office, fixed beforehand and expressly defined by the Constitution, and when you fix a salary, that he may attend to his duties without embarrassment. The same is true of a pastor. You do not hire him to do a job of preaching for you. You elect him to an office ordained by Christ, and defined in the constitution of the Church, and then you fix a salary that he may give himself wholly to the duties of his office."

"Your theory appears very well; but what practical difference does it make?"

"Just this. When you hire a man, you expect him to do as you say. When you elect a man to an office, you expect him to do what the Constitution says."—*Baptist Tidings.*

THE SABBATH.

The streams of religion run deeper or shallower, as the banks of the Sabbath are kept up or neglected.—*Calcott.*

A preacher in Holland called the Sabbath "God's dyke shutting out an ocean of evils."

A preacher in Louisiana said, "Brethren, stop that crevasse in the Sabbath, or your plantations will be inundated with immorality."

"The more entirely," said McCheyne, "I give my Sabbaths to God, and half forget that I am not before the throne of the Lamb, with my harp of gold, the happier am I."

Give to the world one half of the Sunday, and you will find that religion has no strong hold of the other half.—*Sir Walter Scott.*

I feel as if God had, by giving the Sabbath, given fifty-two spring in the year.—*S. T. Coleridge.*

Where there is no Christian Sabbath, there is no Christian morality; and without this, free institutions cannot long be sustained.—*Justice McLean.*

SECTARIANISM.—There is a great deal of cant and nonsense talked about sectarianism. It is often imagined that if a man is fond of his church he is a sectarian. You might say a man is sectarian if he likes his own house and family better than any other in the same street. The man I call sectarian is the man who is not contented with the blessings of number one in the street, but who is always throwing stones or mud at number two; who is not content with his own wife and family, but who talks and gossips about another man's family. Give