

# Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

### ANNIVERSARY SONG.

Ah no, I am not perfect,  
But would be pressing on,  
In hope of yet arriving  
Complete before the throne.

To view unveiled and worship  
The King in beauty there;  
And with His thousand thousands  
The weight of glory bear.

But how may fallen mortal,  
By sin depraved, undone,  
Approach the palace portal  
Where reigns the Holy One?

I see a Fount, o'erflowing,  
With sin-atonng blood,  
Expand into an ocean  
As infinite as God.

And all the guilt of sinners,  
Cast on its healing wave,  
Can neither foul nor fill it;  
'Tis infinite to save.

That precious gracious bathing  
Shall perfect even me,  
Before the Holy, Holy,  
Upon the jasper sea.

Here I receive, believing,  
The pledge of bliss above—  
God manifest in Jesus  
Is love, Infinite Love.

## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

### FROM THE WORLD TO CHRIST AND HEAVEN.

There comes a time when, turning away from our former life of sin, and looking toward the Cross from "whence floweth the healing the nations," a new song is put into our mouths, sight is given to the blind, and forsaking all things else we follow the Lamb who has died thus to redeem us.

Truly our Lord is merciful and gracious. Poor, sinful, needy, very wretched, we bowed beneath His displeasure, very far off, and altogether strangers to His love and favor.

And lo! our mighty King dies to redeem us and "bring us home to God." He receives us, and before the world we call ourselves His soldiers, and set our faces Zionward. We profess to love and serve the Lord Christ. We acknowledge that in His gracious service there is to be found exceeding joy and great reward even in this world, "and in the world to come an hundred fold" greater. We desire to follow our Master humbly, trusting that daily and hourly, before men and angels we may carry the Cross as good pilgrims.

And so King Jesus leads us on secure and safe from every danger through His grace.

He hears us when we cry unto Him.—We fall often, we grieve the Lord of Life by daily sins, yet through His grace are we still forgiven, and through Him are we "more than conquerors."

And we pray, "Oh Lord, that Thou would'st open the windows of heaven, and pour us out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it! Oh, that Thou would'st turn the hearts of the children of men as Thou turnest the rivers of water!"

And our prayer goes up unto Him who has freed us from the power of sin. Have we faith to believe that the answer will come, and with abundant blessing? Do we wait for it, even as they who watch for the morning? Yea, and the time draweth near.—"Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." He hath said, "Ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

Let us thank God and take courage. For though we "sow in tears," yet shall we "reap in joy." Oh enemy of our Lord hear the voice from heaven this day calling unto you and saying, "Look unto me and be ye saved." Turn even now from your

sinning and come with us; come, for our Lord will yet receive you, and with His gracious favor lead you into everlasting life. For the glories and honors of this world pass away, and its happiness is but a dream; but the glory of the City of our King may not be told to mortal ears, and within its wondrous portals "joy and gladness shall be upon every head, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

"Oh, life below, how brief, how poor and sad,  
One heavy sigh.  
Oh, life above, how long, how fair and glad!  
An endless joy.  
Oh, to be done with daily dying here!  
Oh, to begin the living in yon sphere!"

### DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.

BY J. A. SPURGEON.

(Concluded.)

#### CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

All persons anxious to join our church are requested to apply personally upon any Wednesday evening, between six and nine o'clock, to the elders, two or more of whom attend in rotation every week for the purpose of seeing enquirers. When satisfied, the case is entered by the elder in one of a set of books provided for the purpose, and a card is given bearing a corresponding number to the page of the book in which particulars of the candidate's experience are recorded. Once a month, or oftener when required, the junior pastor appoints a day to see the persons thus approved of by the elders. If the pastor is satisfied, he nominates an elder or church member as visitor, and at the next church meeting asks the church to send him to enquire as to the character and repute of the candidate. If the visitor be satisfied he requests the candidate to attend with him at the following or next convenient church-meeting, to come before the church and reply to such questions as may be put from the chair, mainly with a view to elicit expressions of his trust in the Lord Jesus, and hope of salvation through his blood, and any such facts of his spiritual history as may convince the church of the genuineness of the case. We have found this a means of grace and a rich blessing. None need apprehend that modesty is outraged, or timidity appalled by the test thus applied.—We have never yet found it tend to keep members out of our midst, while we have found it of service in detecting a mistake or satisfying a doubt previously entertained. We deny that it keeps away any worth having. Surely if their Christianity cannot stand before a body of believers, and speak amongst loving sympathising hearts, it is as well to ask if it be the cross-bearing public confessing faith of the Bible? This is no matter of flesh and blood, but of faith and grace, and we should be sorry to give place to the weakness and shrinking of the flesh, so as to insult the omnipotence of grace, by deeming it unable to endure so much as the telling in the gates of Zion what great things God has done for the soul. Of course, the system may be, and has been, abused, but we decline to recognise any argument drawn from the abuse of what we use lawfully. It need not be an offence to any, and it will be an immense blessing to that church which watches for souls, and rejoices over one repentant sinner more than over ninety and nine which need no repentance. After the statement before the church, the candidate withdraws, the visitor gives in his report, and the vote of the church is taken; when the candidate has professed his faith by immersion, which is administered by the junior pastor after a week-day service, he is received by the pastor at the first monthly communion, when the right hand of fellowship is given to him in the name of the church, and his name is entered on the roll of members. A communion card is furnished, divided by perforation into twelve numbered parts, one of which is to be delivered every month at the communion, which is held every Lord's day; the tickets are checked upon the register,

and thus show the attendance of each member at the communion. If a member is absent more than three months without known cause, the elder in whose district he resides is requested to visit him, and send in a report on a printed form which is given him; or if the residence be distant, a letter is written, a record of such visit or letter being retained. When a case for discipline presents itself, it is brought before the elders, who appoint one of their number to visit and report; if the matter demands action beyond caution and advice, we lay it before the church, and recommend the course of procedure to be adopted, whether censure or excommunication.

In dealing with such as are members of other churches, we have been by sad experience compelled to exercise more caution than at first seemed needful. The plan we adopt is to have the person seen by an elder, who enters particulars in the transfer book. If there appears to be any difficulty an interview is arranged with one of the pastors, who investigates the case on its own merits, as alas! he has discovered that membership with some churches is not always a guarantee even of morality. Some churches retain a name upon their books for years after the person has ceased to commune; and frequently when he has passed away from all knowledge of or connection with the church, it will nevertheless grant a transfer as if all were satisfactory. We record this with mingled shame and sorrow. When the individual has thus given evidence of fitness, so far as we can judge, a dismissal is applied for in the usual way on a form prepared—the reply is laid before the church, any information necessary is added, and the vote of the church is taken.

When, in the order of God's providence, any of our number are removed from us, and are not able to attend, a certificate is given for three, six, or twelve months, which must then be renewed, and a report of the reason for renewal given, or the membership will lapse, unless in special cases. We much prefer commending our brethren to the fellowship of other churches, where they may be of service, than to have them linger out a merely nominal connection with us. We have thus sent from us 166 in the course of last year, we hope to the strengthening of the churches and the spread of the truth.

On receipt of application from any church for a transfer, the letter is read to the church, with the detailed account from our books, giving a brief but complete history of the case, when and how received, the attendance of the person while a member with us, and reasons for seeking removal. The church is then advised to authorize the usual letter of dismission to be sent.

In all our business the aim is to have everything done openly and above-board, so that no one may complain of the existence of a clique, or the suppression of the true state of affairs. We occasionally ask the unquestioning confidence of the church in its officers, in cases delicate and undesirable to be published, but otherwise we consult the church in everything, and report progress as often as possible in all matters still pending and unsettled. Nothing, we are persuaded, is so sure to create suspicion and destroy confidence as attempts at secret diplomacy, or mere official action.

When details of cases under discipline are kept from the church, the fact is openly stated, and leave asked for the maintenance of public reticence; while any member is informed, that if dissatisfied, the pastor will give him the reasons why the elders have advised the removal of the offender, and their motive in not giving details of the sin. When it would be for the injury of good morals, or expose the pastor to a suit-at-law, the officers ask the confidence of the church, and request it to adopt their verdict in the case without hearing detailed information; this is cheerfully accorded in every case, and much evil thus averted.

All money matters are audited by unofficial brethren selected by the church, and the accounts read and books produced at the annual church meeting, when all the members endeavour to be present.

All minutes of church meetings, deacons'

and elders' courts, are entered, and confirmed at the following meeting. Unless notice is previously given, no business, as a rule, is entertained but what emanates from the chair, or is sent up from an elders' or deacons' session; though this custom is departed from if any manifest benefit is to be derived from so doing, and no one challenges the motion as irregular.

#### WORK.

The discipline of service is one element of highest importance. The best officers and the wisest mode of government will only result in feebleness and discord if the church sits still with folded hands. A lazy people must by a law of necessity, become a corrupt people. Purest water stagnating must putrify.

"Satan finds some mischief still,  
For idle hands to do."

It would lengthen out our paper, already too long, beyond all reasonable bounds, if we were to enter into details concerning the work at the Tabernacle. In general terms, we remark that our Sunday-school contains 1,077 children, under the tuition of 96 teachers; besides another band, in the almshouses, containing 180 children, with 20 teachers; a third at Manchester Hall and Richmond Street, with 320 children and 25 teachers; and many schools connected with rooms and preaching stations too numerous to be mentioned in this outline.

We have an elders' class for the children of the officers of the church; a young woman's Bible-class, containing from 500 to 600 members, conducted by Mrs. Bartlett; and two young men's catechumen classes, averaging upwards of 100 each. We have no means of judging the amount of work done by our members in ragged schools and Sunday-schools apart from our own place, but we know of more than a dozen schools which depend mainly, and some of them entirely upon our help.

Meetings for prayer are held every day in connection with the church in the morning at seven, and in the evening, generally, at half-past seven. Two prayer meetings are held every Sabbath, besides some dozens of others, held in the houses of friends, both in the week and on the Lord's-day. We are constantly hearing of these, and they are a source of great strength to the church. Railway porters, letter sorters, and others who cannot get to evening meetings, meet for prayer in the middle of the day. In several large houses of business, we have Bible-classes, etc. A number of our members have connected themselves with the Rescue Society, and have for some time visited the Homes regularly, and helped in this work with great success.

Our Evangelist's Society keeps in active operation the preaching of the gospel in the streets every Lord's-day, weather permitting, and in small rooms and preaching stations.

Our Tract Society, with 69 districts, has circulated 2,336 copies of sermons every week in the last year, which, when they have gone round the districts, are given away at the workhouses which are visited.

Two brethren are maintained in connection with Mr. Oncken's work on the Continent.

Our sisters are not wanting in their efforts to do good. We have our Dorcas, our Benevolent, our Working meetings, our Maternal Society, and our Mother's Meetings, all in full activity. Seventeen of our poor and aged sisters are maintained in our almshouses.

Nor are the young ones behind. We have a juvenile Sabbath-school Working Society, and prayer-meetings amongst the scholars. A special service for the young is held every Sunday at the almshouses at 6.30. A large Band of Hope is also doing a good work.

Our College, with its heavy responsibilities and innumerable outgrowths, and the growing care of the Orphanage, we cannot dilate upon. These are well known.

Our Colportage Society employs eight colporteurs, who have visited during the year 1868, 91,528 families, and regularly visit two hundred villages every month.

Some of our brethren work amongst the police, and visit the government stores;