

Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
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WHOLE SERIES
Vol. XXXIII. No. 48.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"GOD IS OUR SUN AND SHIELD."

My heart is cold and dark,
Burdened with care and sin,
Clouds lower o'er the past,
And doubts and fears come in;
Shrinking beneath His awful frown,
I lay my weary burden down,
While o'er the soul's dark night
Of doubt and fears and sin,
From the bright Sun of Righteousness,
The new-born day breaks in,—
How sweet the day of dawning grace!
How bright the shining of His face!

The night of earth is long,
Sin fraught and danger rife;
When will the day draw near
Of never-ending life?
When will our Sun of Gladness rise
Sight of the blest eternal days;
Hope of our longing hearts,
Trust of our waiting faith,
The blessed shield of our defence,
And conqueror of death!
Shine in unclouded splendor here,
And fit us for thy glory there.
Riverbank, October, 1869

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

WHAT WE NEED.

No. 2.

TO THE BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NOVA SCOTIA.

Dear Brethren,—

Would a great and gracious revival of religion visit all our congregations. O how much we need the Master's presence, in our prayer, and conference, and social meetings! If the mother of Sisera looked out at the window, and cried through the lattice, because her son's triumph seemed delayed, saying—Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?—if such were the natural breathings of impatience of a worldly heart for the trophies of worldly conquest, how much more anxiously, should the children of light be gazing into the darkness that surrounds them, listening for the approaches of him who is "mighty to save;" and in the language of this heathen mother of Jabin's captain be saying, Why is the chariot of salvation so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of my Lord's chariot?

For the divisions of Reuben, there were great thoughts of heart that day. So sang Deborah the prophetess, and Barak the son of Abinoam. Zebulon was there, and Naphtali was there. But Gilead abode beyond Jordan, and Dan remained in his ships. Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his ports. But God delivered his people by the hands of a few on that occasion, as he did many a time before, and hath done many a time since, when his children cry earnestly unto him.

But some who read this may be ready to say, O yes, but our meetings have become so languid, so cold! So few attend! A stormy evening, a matter of private business, a concert over the way, a social gathering at a neighbour's house, the danger of losing a customer seems to be enough to keep one and another away and the prayer meeting is thinly attended; the Conference not much better and we are all but in despair of ever again seeing the cause revived in our Church. Well, brother, sister, this is to be lamented, and there is nothing wrong perhaps in saying to such, and of such, as sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam in that day—Why abodest thou among the sheepfolds to hear the bleating of the flocks? Nor for the divisions of such Reubens that there should be great scorplings of heart. But the best of it all was that he gave the victory that day to his select few, without the aid of Reuben or Gilead, or Dan, or Asher,—just as he can and will give the victory to those who feel oppressed with the burden of sin and Satan's rule and cry mightily unto the

Lord. That I say was the best of it. But then there was another side to the picture. Perhaps the bitterest course recorded in all the Bible was that pronounced upon the laggards, the cowards, the slothful, the penurious, the covetous the unfaithful, who came not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

Not that the Lord's cause was at all imperilled by their absence. Nothing of the kind. It was not Zebulon nor was it Naphtali nor the root out of Ephraim, nor Benjamin nor the governors, that came down out of Machir, it was the Almighty himself and his own right hand that got the victory. "As the divine record has it, "So God subdued on that day Jabin the King of Canaan before the children of Israel."

Now what I want, reader, to convince you of, by this reference to that great deliverance, wrought at the foot of mount Tabor; what I desire my brethren and sisters that you should believe, is, that the few, led by a weak woman, as we are apt to say, with God on her side, can put to flight all the powers of darkness, all the armies of the aliens. Even though they command "nine hundred chariots of iron," led by such a Captain as Sisera was, whose mother was surrounded with her wise ladies, echoing fulsome flattery in her ears in praise of his prowess. O for a Jael in every one of our Churches to put her hand to the nail, and and her right hand to the workman's hammer, and with the hammer to smite the modern Siseras, to smite off their heads.

I remember an incident related to me not long since on excellent authority, where a Church had held a series of religious meetings, and all seemed dull and dark and the entire membership seemed disheartened, and would have given up the matter, but for one sister, who persisted; and by her perseverance and influence persuaded the church to continue to wage war against the powers of darkness, and keep the field; when behold a divine and heavenly influence at length descended, and many a Deborah and many a Barak sang praises and glorified God for a remarkable religious revival in that Church on the occasion.

The Psalmist long after remembering Jabin's discomfiture re-set the event to music, and recited it in song once more. Speaking of the enemies of God and of religion he says: "Do unto them, as unto the Midianites, as to Sisera, as to Jabin at the brook Kishon which perished at Endor."

When Herod, willing to please the Jews, slew James the brother of John and seized Peter and thrust him into prison, with a relief guard of soldiers to watch as well, intending to make sure work of it, "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him." Thus the early disciples did their work. It was the fact of ceaseless prayer, that is recorded as the moving principle that moved the Almighty arm to break the chains, and open the prison doors and set the Apostle free, unable to gratify his blood-thirsty propensity in murdering this servant of God, he then commanded that his keepers should be put to death.

Before we go to our prayer-meetings, on the way thither, let us always breathe forth our earnest prayers for the influences of the Spirit, that we may have heavenly sessions, with Christ "sit under his shadow with great delight and find his fruit sweet to our taste." If you have not been accustomed to do this heretofore, my brother, my sister, fail not henceforth to offer a snort fervent prayer to God, before you set out for the place of prayer, that the Master's presence may consecrate the place, and the heart of every worshipper. And then tenderly, lovingly, and in the simplest plainest homeliest form of speech, devoutly draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. There is no peradventure about this. And if you draw nigh to God and he draws nigh to you, can you doubt but that being so nigh, he will, confer a blessing? Why has he thus drawn near, but for to bless?

But it must be a willing offering. It was "when the people willingly offered them-

selves" that the prophetess sang "Hear O ye Kings—give ear O ye princes, I even I will sing unto the Lord, I will sing praises to the Lord God of Israel.

Join all the churches, all the members, old and young, male and female, let us all unitedly, humbly, unceasingly, lovingly ask the God of Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam, the God of our fathers, the God of the Baptists, for an immediate blessing, a great blessing, an unexampled blessing upon our congregations this coming winter. Let us begin, if we have not begun already, begin at once and pray "without ceasing." And may God hear and bless, as he hears and blesses those he most loves, hear and bless and save the souls of thousands that are perishing in this land and, all for the dear Redeemer's sake—Amen.

A FELLOW SERVANT.

21 Nov.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND PRAYER MEETING.

BY G. ROGERS.

There are many in every congregation who never attend prayer-meetings. We need not wonder at this, as such attendance could only spring from a consciousness of the value of prayer, which they have not experienced, and would amount to a profession of godliness which they are not prepared to make. Many shrink from thus bringing themselves into special observation, and from exposing themselves to what they may consider to be the proselyting influences of any particular people. To attend the preaching of the word is a mark of respectability; to attend a prayer-meeting is a profession of real piety. Nor are prayer-meetings for the men of the world so much as for men of God. They may learn much from them, but they are not in harmony with them. We do not feel therefore that we could reprove hearers only for not being stately present on such occasions. The qualifications for their profit and enjoyment are first to be sought from a higher source. Let them learn first to pray for themselves, and then for others; first by themselves, and then with others.

We say not of any that they should not attend prayer-meetings; we have to deal with the enquiry—who should? For this we go back to what may be regarded as the first prayer-meeting in the Christian church, and the model of all that should follow. The first thing which the first Christians did, after they had seen Jesus taken up from them into heaven, was to hold a prayer meeting. "They went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication; with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." The eleven apostles were all there: of this special notice is taken. Each one is mentioned by name. The twelfth had gone to his own place. If the apostles, who held the highest office in the church, attended a prayer-meeting; if it was the first service in which they engaged after the ascension of their Lord; if they had no sooner entered the upper room than, instead of proposing one of their number to preach to them, or talking with each other upon what they had seen and heard, they said, Let us pray! and continued with one accord in prayer and supplication; surely prayer-meetings should not be viewed by us as the least important of all religious services; surely Christian ministers ought not to regard them as having the least claim upon their attendance and surely no one, however eminent in the church or the world, should deem it below his rank to be present at them. Many look into a place of worship, and say, "Oh, it is only a prayer-meeting!" What would they have said if all the apostles were there? There they were, when on earth; and there, if they could return, they would be again. For many ministers of Christ's gospel to meet together for prayer is truly

apostolic; and for each pastor to be present at the prayer-meetings of his own people, is essential both to their profit and invigoration and his own.

Who should attend prayer-meetings? The first reply of the Scripture we have quoted is—ministers themselves. The next reply is—women. "With the women." These are the women of whom the same writer speaks in a former book, when in relation to the crucifixion he says, "the women that followed him from Galilee stood afar-off, beholding these things," and soon after "the women also which came with him from Galilee, followed after and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid, and they returned and prepared spices and ointments;" and again, after his resurrection, "it was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles." Of these we now read, in continuation of the same narrative, of the attendants at the prayer-meeting immediately after the ascension, "with the women." The women that followed Jesus from Galilee, that had stood by his cross, that had witnessed his ascension, were not likely to be absent from the prayer-meeting. There were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women. Other women have continued to attend prayer-meetings from that time until now; they usually form the majority on these occasions. Why is this? Is it because they have more leisure? They are usually held at a time when men are supposed to be more at liberty than women. Is it because they have more need? They who have passed the day amidst the toil and turmoil of business, have surely as much need of the prayer-meetings as those who have spent it in the quietude of their own homes. Some, for "with the women" read "with their wives." For the wives of ministers to attend prayer-meetings is, without doubt, apostolic. It is a good example to the wives of their hearers, and enables them with a better grace to urge this duty upon them.

No one is exempt from this duty; this we gather from the next clause, "and Mary the mother Jesus." * * * * *

In an earthly sense, the mother of Jesus was the most honoured of women, and of the whole human race. As such she was regarded by the apostles and earlier disciples of Jesus; in the church, however, no superior position is assigned her but she takes equal rank with the rest. "With the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus." Considering the honour paid in the east to mothers of persons of distinction, as when Solomon caused a seat to be set for his mother on the right hand of the throne, it would not have been surprising if the apostles and the first disciples should have looked with some religious veneration upon the mother of their Lord, and yet immediately after the ascension, when her honour must have appeared in its greatest height, no other mention is made of her than as an attendant at a prayer-meeting with the rest. As of the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, so of the first prayer-meeting of the Christian church it is said, "The mother of Jesus was there." Are there those who deem their worldly or ecclesiastical honours too lofty for them to be seen at a prayer-meeting? The mother of Jesus was there. Are there those who attend the preaching of the word and are present on all public occasions where outward distinctions are recognised, but neglect prayer-meetings? The mother of Jesus was there. Are there those who think they do not need to have the Saviour kept in their remembrance and their devotion kept alive by a prayer-meeting? The mother of Jesus was there. Are there any who are kept from them by affliction and trouble? It was soon after she had witnessed the unparalleled agony of her Son, and a sword had pierced through her own soul also, that the mother of Jesus was there. Do any omit to attend religious services soon after their bereavement, and deem it more righteous, because it is more customary to remain at home? Let them remember that at the prayer-meeting held by the apostles