

Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Get slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Religious.

PERSONAL PURITY.

The necessity of personal purity to high attainment in the divine life is one of the marked requirements of the religion of Christ. And it is no mere outward purity, no whitening of the sepulchre, leaving "dead men's bones" within, that is thus demanded. It is such a cleansing of the heart that, from a foul spring of evil thoughts and desires, it shall be transformed into a fountain yielding the pure, sweet waters of holiness.

This idea of personal purity runs, like a golden thread, through the whole teaching of the Bible. It finds the most intense expression in that marvellous summary of Christian duty, the Sermon on the Mount, and in all the discourses of our Saviour is set forth as the high mark which his followers should seek after as for a priceless jewel.

The propriety of the requirement of the gospel is too evident to need argument. Every man knows, from his experience, how quickly, when once admitted into the heart, evil thoughts multiply and wax strong, increasing "unto more ungodliness, and how easily, unless speedily checked, they get full possession of the soul. Hence the necessity of heart-purity is readily allowed. It is only when the strict rule of Christ is to be applied, as a living principle, to the government of the heart, and its exponent, the tongue, that we find a practical reluctance to accept the full force and meaning of it. Alas! how rare a jewel is the absolute purity in thought, words and action which the Bible enjoins, and which shone forth with such luster in the character of our Divine Exemplar, among the professed followers of the Holy One!

Paul expressed to Timothy, in one of those short, sharp sentences into which he sometimes condensed a volume, the duty of the Christian in respect to this "purity of personal purity." "Keep thyself pure," he writes. The admonition sets forth, in three words, the mark upon which every Christian should fix his eyes, and, in full reliance upon the Divine Arm, should seek in all sincerity of heart to attain. It involves the resolute shutting of the heart against the first approaches of impurity, the closing of the lips from speaking guile, the guiding of the eye from looking upon evil with desire.

One of Diogenes' characters is represented as perpetually uneasy lest something might be said or done that should "bring a blush to the cheek of the young person," his daughter. The idea is humorously expressed, but the sentence embodies a thought worthy to be embalmed in the heart of every disciple of Jesus—that no act should be done, no word pass the lips, that could offend the purest nature; or, to give it a higher turn, that one would not wish to say or do in the visible presence of the Master himself. Christian men sometimes forget, in their eagerness to tell, or to hear, a "good story," which has its point in some impure suggestion, that the tale is told into another ear than that which listens in visible form, and that the loving heart of Jesus is grieved at the thoughtless words of his disciple.

"Keep thyself pure." Let the admonition become the rule of life throughout the church of Christ, and how vastly higher would be the tone of Christian experience, and, in consequence, how much greater the success of the gospel! For in the personal character of its members consists the power of the church to overcome the powers of darkness. Let Christians remember this when tempted to mar, by impure words or deeds, the "temple of God," lest by their evil-doing they retard the work of grace, and bring shame upon the profession whereunto they have been called.—*Ex.*

FATE OF A BRAHMIN COLLEGE.

Such facts as are contained in the following extract most emphatically illustrate the power of the religion of Christ, and the

ultimate weakness of every other system. Before our Gospel every other gospel must sooner or later give way:

Eighteen months ago I was at Madura. I had often passed a beautiful building with finely polished granite pillars. There was a story connected with it. About eight hundred years ago there emanated from its threshold a power that changed the creed of southern India. It was the rise of South India Pantheism. From that college had gone forth, year by year, scholars able and powerful, who had penetrated as far North as the Ganges, and, changed the thoughts of about 30,000,000 of people. You would not wonder at me looking at that temple with reverence. Eighteen months ago finding the door open I walked in. On the walls were portraits of the predecessors of the present head of the college. I spoke to the Brahmin, and pointing to a little representation on a pillar, of a lady with a crown upon her head and a sceptre in her hand, I asked who it was. He replied that it was Queen Victoria, the Empress of Hindustan. I turned to another figure in a well known posture, with the arm folded, and in a cocked hat. The Brahmin said he could not remember who it was, and called a little boy, who said it was Julius Caesar, and then remembered that it was Napoleon Bonaparte. Another statue was pointed out a representation of Alexander the Great.

I asked how it was these figures were there, and the Brahmin said:

"You see times are changed, and unless I had these little things, people would not come into the building."

I said, "Have you got no disciples?"

"No, sir."

"Is there," I asked, "anybody but you in this vast building?"

"Yes," he said, "there is my cook." So it has come to that—the building which had dictated a creed to 30,000,000 of people was left in the possession of a few bits of plaster of Paris, a priest, and the cook who prepared his meals.

THE UNHOLY DESIRE OF DRESS.

You wish to dress your wife better than your circumstances will allow. She wants to have you. She is a woman of spirits as it is said, and she does not mean to be a drudge. "Why should our neighbors," she says to her husband, "dress any better than we? They are made of the same flesh and blood that we are. See how they come out! I don't think that a man of much spirit would let his wife and children go to church dressed as you let us go. Look at these children. You would think that they had just come out of some slop-house. If I had married as I might have married, we should have had different times, —I and my children!"

How many men are stung to the quick by such remarks of their wives! Oftentimes their moral sense revolts at first, and they feel indignation; but "continual dropping wears a stone," and by and by the man is dressed a little better than he can afford, and his wife and children are dressed better than he can afford, and somebody must pay for the extravagance. I do not say that they are tempted to steal; but I do say that they grind. They mean somehow to get it out of the milliner, out of the dressmaker, out of the merchant. They intend to make one hand wash the other somehow, and they go into petty meannesses to bring it about. And this desire to dress better than they can afford is taking out the very stamina of their religious life. Unimportant as it seems, ostentatious vanity in dress has ruined many a family, and damned many a soul!—*Henry Ward Beecher.*

THE WONDERS OF PRAYER.

Abraham's servant prays—Rebekah appears. Jacob wrestles and prays, and prevails with Christ.—Esau's mind is wonderfully turned from the revengeful purpose he had harbored for twenty years. Moses

prays—Amalek is discomfited. Joshua prays—Achan is discovered. Hannah prays—Samuel is born. David prays—Ahitophel hangs himself. Asa prays—a victory is gained. Jehoshaphat cries to God—God turns away his foes. Isaiah and Hezekiah pray—185,000 Assyrians are dead in twelve hours. Daniel prays—the lions are muzzled—Daniel prays—seventy weeks are revealed. Mordecai and Esther fast—Haman is hanged on his own gallows in three days. Ezra prays at Ahava—God answers. Nehemiah darts a prayer—the king's heart is softened in a minute. Elijah prays—rain descends apace. Elisha prays—a child's soul comes back; for prayer reaches eternity. The Church prays ardently—Peter is delivered by an angel.—*Rev. J. Ryland.*

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE'S LETTER

ADDRESSED TO AN AMERICAN.

LONDON, Sep. 12.

TO LEMUEL MOSS:

My Dear Sir—I could not do what you asked me to do in your kind letter of July 12, viz:—Give you information about my own life: though, if I could it would be to show how a woman of ordinary ability has been led by God—by strange and accustomed paths—to do in His service what He did in hers. And if I could tell you all, you would see how God has done all, and I nothing. I have worked hard—very hard—that is all, and I have never refused God any thing; though being naturally a very shy person, most of my life has been distasteful to me. I have no peculiar gifts. And I can honestly assure any young lady, if she will but try to walk, she will soon be able to run the "appointed course." But then she must first learn to walk, and so, when she runs, she must run with patience. (Most people don't even try to walk.)

1st. But I would also say to all young ladies—quantify yourself for it, as a man does for his work. Don't you think you can undertake it otherwise? No one should attempt to teach the Greek language, until he is master of the language, and this he can only become by hard study. And,

2d. If you are called to man's work do not exact a woman's privileges of inaccuracy, of weakness. Submit yourself to the rules of business as men do, by which alone you can make God's business succeed; for He has never said that He will give His blessing to inefficiency, to sketching, and unfinished work.

3d. It has happened to me more than once to be told by woman; (your country women,) "Yes, but you had personal freedom." Nothing can be further from the truth. I question whether God has ever brought any one through more difficulties and contradictions than I had. But I imagine those exist less in your country than among us, so I will say no more.

4th. But to all women I would say, look upon your work, whether it be an accustomed or unaccustomed work, as upon a trust confided to you. This will keep you alike from discouragement and from presumption, from idleness, and from overtaxing yourselves. Where God leads the way, He has bound Himself to help you to go the way.

I have been nine years confined a prisoner to my room from illness, and overwhelmed with business. (Had I more faith—more of the faith which I profess—I should not say "overwhelmed," for it is all business sent me by God. And I am really thankful to Him, though my sorrows have been deep and many, that He still makes me do His business.) This must be my excuse for not having answered your questions before.

Nothing, with the approval of my own judgment, has been made public, or I would send it. I have a strong objection to sending my own likeness for the same reason some of the most valuable works the world has ever seen we know not who is the

author of; we only know that God is the author of all. I do not urge this example upon others, but it is a deep-seated religious scruple in myself. I do not wish my name to remain, nor my likeness. That God alone should be remembered, I wish. If I could really give the lessons of my life to my country-women and yours, (indeed I faint look upon us as all one nation)—the lessons of my mistakes as well as of the rest—I would; but for this there is no time. I would only say, work—work in silence for years—it will not be time wasted. Perhaps in all your life it will be the time you will afterward find to have been best spent; and it is very certain that, without it, you will be no worker. You will not produce one "perfect work," but only a botch, in the service of God.

Pray, believe me, my dear sir, with great truth, ever your faithful servant,

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

P. S.—Have you read Baker's Sources of the Nile, where he says he was more like a donkey than an explorer? That is much my case, and, I believe, is that of all who have to do any unusual work. And I would especially guard young ladies from fancying themselves like lady supervisors, with their obsequious following of disciples, if they are to undertake any great work.

THE COMING CHRISTIAN.

Our Coming Christian here will not give three-fourths of his spare time, and of his money, to moral self-insurance societies, and only one-fourth of these to the Church of Christ. He will give all his time and all his money to the Church, and perform all his acts of mercy in the name of Christ, and not in the name of mere human organizations. He will proceed on the principle that within the wide scope of the Church there is room enough to prosecute every good work, and space enough in which to carry on every noble enterprise.

The Coming Christian will be greatly respected on account of his prayer, and, as a result of his prayer, he will be able to thank God in a few words for the blessing he enjoys in the present, and not ask for those things he already possesses. He will avoid running in a rut, and instead of always passing in at the same point, and emerging from the same point, he will vary his petitions according to the varying circumstances of life, and modify his language in harmony with the thoughts and feelings he expresses. His prayer will not be a mere humdrum, nor a lengthy drawing harangue, nor a lazy invocation. Nor will he reason with God in his prayer, and instruct the Lord in reference to what should be done. He will pray like a poor, humble, dependent man, and in very simple speech, and not rush in where angels fear to tread, as if about to storm the citadel of heaven.

As cleanliness is a cardinal virtue, as well as godliness, the Coming Christian will be a clean man, in respect to bodily purification. He will not nauseate his associates by filthy habits. He will offer up his body, not only a living, but a sweet-smelling sacrifice. He will not only offer the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, but he will come before the Lord with pure breath, and a cleanly-washed body. *He will use soap.* Soap will become an essential ingredient of domestic felicity. He will not spit his foul excretions on the carpet, and press the matter down with his foot. He will not patronize his nasal appendage too largely in company, nor blow a bluster with that trumpet, to the infinite disgust of decent people. He will go into a large field, and remain there till the great job of haughtiness and spitting is consummated. He will not make a handkerchief of the skirt of his coat, nor of the bottom of his pantaloon. When he goes on a visit to see his friends, it will not be necessary for the lady of the house to precede him with a spittoon, nor to succeed him with a mop. He will avoid to the extremes of being a dandy or a sloven. He will not carry with him a cosmetic and perfumery as a dead-