

Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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WHOLE SERIES
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Poetry.

1 COR. 1: 18.

I saw the cross of Jesus,
When burden'd with my sin;
I sought the cross of Jesus
To give me peace within:
I brought my sin to Jesus;
He cleansed it in His blood;
And in the cross of Jesus
I found my peace with God.

I love the cross of Jesus;
It tells me what I am,
A vile and guilty creature,
Saved only through the Lamb:
No righteousness, no merit,
No beauty can I plead;
Yet in the cross I glory,
My title there I read.

I clasp the cross of Jesus
In every trying hour,
My sure and certain refuge,
My never failing tower.
In every fear and conflict,
I more than conqueror am:
Living I'm safe, or dying,
Through Christ the risen Lamb.

Sweet is the cross of Jesus!
There let my weary heart
Still rest in perfect peace,
Till life itself depart.
And then in strains of glory
I'll sing thy wondrous power,
Where sin can never enter,
And death is known no more.

F. WHITFIELD.

Religious.

DEBATEABLE GROUND.

Cheerful as the month of May is my temperament. Mirth and happiness are as sweet to me as the perfume of roses, or the ripple of the cooling brooks in the heat of harvest. I would as soon rob the year of its summer, and the heavens of the sun, as young people of their merriment, or old people of their joys. But I am a plain man, loving consistency, and therefore some persons' ways of mind considerably puzzle me, and make me think very queer thoughts when I adorn my brow with my considering cap. The young lambs overflow with spirits, and are abundantly frolicsome and lively in their play, and yet I never saw them eat carrion for a treat, or howl like tigers for a change: their enjoyments are always like their nature, and they never imitate wolves or lions in order to enjoy themselves. Let a horse loose, and it gallops and tears round the meadow, and rolls on its back, and throws up its legs into the air; but still it acts like a horse, and does not for pleasure try to fly like a bird, or climb a tree like a squirrel. How is it, then, that certain people, who call themselves Christians, the moment they set about enjoying themselves, throw off their supposed spiritual nature, and act like worldlings in order to be happy? Other creatures, even in their freest sports, are like themselves, but these beings in their pleasure-seeking are as unlike what they profess to be as owls are unlike birds of Paradise! Why is this? Are there no joys in true religion, that church-members must go to the world for pleasure?—Are we to be saved by Christ, but made happy by the devil? Is Dame Godliness so grim a school-mistress that we must needs get a holiday to sin in? Are we never full of mirth till we are empty of grace? Do we find our highest delights in pleasing our lowest faculties?

What I mean is plainly and bluntly this: I don't comprehend why so many professors go for recreation to hear silly sing-songs, and to see the veriest trifling. I don't say they go to the theatre, but they go where the theatre practically comes to them. They take their families to places which give them a taste for plays and frivolities, and they do this without any pricks of conscience. An opera at Covent Garden they condemn, but a drama at the Crystal Palace they quite approve of. Not yet will they visit the Casino or the Coal-hole, but if some one would christen one of such haunts with a decent name, they would be happy to

patronise it. No, no; they would not visit a burlesque in a common playhouse, but minstrels who rattle out some very doubtful songs, are quite to their mind. The silly ballads of the hour, which would disgrace the mental powers of an idiot, have been listened to most approvingly by some who profess to love the songs of Zion; the tomfooleries of senseless performers have been able to attract some of our would-be Christians: while the vapid nonsense vented at penny readings has had its admirers and defenders. Well, I can only say it is what I don't understand, and never shall.—Heirs of heaven, and "partakers of the divine nature," I am well assured, have tastes which questionable amusements will never gratify; they have eaten angels' food, and are not able to come down to husks again. Pleasure is the object pursued, and if pleasure be found in such places, then the finder ought at once to forego all pretensions to piety. The nostril that can be gratified by the reek of dunghills, knows nothing of true fragrance. To genuine Christians the painted joys of earth are too vapid, too childish, too mean, to give them a moment's satisfaction. The believer in Jesus is too manly in the highest sense to be amused with such baby toys. Besides, true mirth and solid joy abound on all hands in safer places; not only are the sublimer joys of worship, communion, and of doing good, our chosen heritage, but to us the ample fields of knowledge, the broader realms of nature, the marvels of art, and the enchantments of music, all yield recreations as healthful as they are harmless.—To us no avenues of true pleasure are closed.—Christianity is not cynical. The shams, the fancies, the mimics of mirth, with which folly surrounds her minions, these are denied us, and the denial is to true hearts no denial, for they would not have them if they might. I say again, to me it is a wonder that so many retain the Christian name, and yet find solace in those poisonous pastures which border on the plains of vice, and are the purlieus of hell. A word to the wise will be enough: to the foolish many would be vain.

NATHANIEL PLAINSPRECH.

Sword and Trowel.

WHERE ARE HIS EARS!

A musical amateur of eminence, who had often observed the Rev. W. B. Cadogan's inattention to his performances, said to him one day, "Come, I am determined to make you feel the power of music, pay particular attention to this piece." It was accordingly played. "Well, what do you say now?" "Why, just what I said before." "What can you hear this and not be charmed? Well, I am quite surprised at your insensibility! Where are your ears?" "Bear with me, my lord," replied Mr. Cadogan, "since I too have had my surprise; I have often from the pulpit set before you the most striking and affecting truths; I have found notes that might have awaked the dead; I have said, Surely he will feel now; but you never seemed charmed with my music, though infinitely more interesting than yours. I too have been ready to say with astonishment, Where are his ears?"

Dear reader, if that earnest preacher of the gospel of Jesus were among us in these days, would not his surprise be something on a level with what it was then? Does it not strike you that he would find as much indifference to the word of truth now as in those days? And you may feel disposed to ask the question, Why is it that men are so indifferent to the gospel? The most feasible, the most truthful answer which could be given to such a question being, Because the natural enmity and blindness of unrenewed man is yet unchanged, and that until men are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, they have no desire, no longing after the knowledge of eternal things. "Ye must be born again," applies to every man in his natural state. The sinner must be "created a new man in Christ Jesus." For, "like the deaf adder, which stoppeth her ears," ungodly men have no inclination to hear those proclamations of grace and mercy which all are commanded to obey, for now God commandeth men

everywhere to repent! If some rich man were to send out messengers into the streets and alleys of this great city, to make known that all who were poor and needy should receive certain benefits by calling at the house in which he lived, we may be well sure he would have applicants enough; and if some poor, wretched man, should still refuse to partake of the bounty enjoyed by others, they would say of him, What can he be thinking about still to be in that pitiable condition? Unconverted reader, how strange the infatuation which keeps you off Christ! "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." These are the words of Jesus; and what he says he means. His words are not those from which you may deduct fifty or more per cent., as the world often says of those who only live to serve it. His word is truth. Listen to the voice of Jesus, believe in the atonement which he has made, and thou shalt be saved.—Ed.

"SELAH."

We distinctly remember, though more than forty years have gone by, the evident pleasure which a village preacher felt, in reading to us, as part of "the lesson of the day," the 4th verse of the 84th Psalm, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah."—We were not a little puzzled in trying to make out how people could be "still" while they were engaged in the act of praise, not knowing then that the Hebrew word means continually, and that in that sense the translators employed the word "still." But the climax of wonder was produced by the word "Selah" at the end of the verse; especially as the preacher gave little heed to punctuation, and made the strange term, in effect, one of the names of the "God of Jacob." Just as John Foster tells us, that he, in his youthful days, was fascinated (*ignotum pro magifico*) by the sound of the word "chalcodony," so over our childish imagination this strange word "Selah" exercised a similar power. Time passed, college days came, and well do we remember the joy with which we uttered,—"I have found it,"—as we read an apparently satisfactory solution of the word in some Hebrew grammar, belonging to the college library. But, alas! our pleasure was but short-lived, for our rabbi refused to indorse the explanation, with the not very encouraging assurance that he "would willingly walk ten miles to discover the real meaning of the word." The good man died without taking the walk, and doubtless without discovering the exact meaning of the term. But as the word is familiar to all readers of the Psalms, we should like to pen a few lines concerning it, though the result of our remarks can only be a condensation of the conjectures of learned men upon the point, we ourselves not daring to decide, where "doctors disagree."

This remarkable word occurs only in the poetical books of the Old Testament. It is found three times in the writings of Habakkuk, and more than seventy times in the Book of Psalms. "In sixteen Psalms it is found once, in fifteen twice, in seven three times, and in one four times." Among the many opinions which have been put forth concerning the meaning of the word, there are, perhaps, four which deserve notice.

1. Some commentators consider it to be a musical term. In support of that view, it is noticeable that most of the Psalms which contain the word Selah, have also the words, "to the Chief Musician," or some other terms, which are admitted to be technical phrases connected with ancient Hebrew music. In support of this interpretation, the word *diapsalma* is referred to, which occurs in the Septuagint,—a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, as far back as 300 years before the birth of Christ. That word *diapsalma* is the rendering in the Septuagint of the word Selah; and as the former term probably signifies "a change of melody," it seems to point to the fact that the latter word means something connected with music. But candour compels us to add, that learned men are not agreed as to the exact meaning of this word, *diapsalma*; Chrysostom, Augustine, and Jerome, three

very learned men among the ancients, holding different views, in which diversity of opinion modern scholars follow them. The word Selah, therefore, may be "a musical term," but a jury of experts would not join in a verdict to that effect.

2. Some learned men, strange to say, take the word Selah to mean *always, ever*, or some such term. The ancient rabbins gave it that meaning; so did an ancient Greek translator of the Old Testament; and St. Jerome interprets it to mean "*semper*," that is "always," or "for ever," and says that it occurs to remind the readers of the Psalms, that "the word of the Lord endureth for ever." Concerning this second interpretation of the term, we are warranted in saying that it has less probability on its side than the former one, which, as we have said, makes it some term in music.

3. Others, again, translate the word Selah by the terms *rest, pause, or cessation*, and consider that it was used to express the feeling of the Psalmist when he was conscious that the Spirit of Inspiration was ceasing to work within him. We are aware that this is a difficult subject to speak upon; for we may fully admit the fact of inspiration without being able to explain the modes of its operation. But we may reasonably suppose that the men who were inspired were conscious of an *afflatus*—and of a consequent intensity and elevation of mind and soul, of which they were not conscious except when "the Spirit of the Lord came upon them." The Apostle Paul, for example, in writing to the Corinthians, refers to these two states of soul; for while, as a rule, he evidently felt himself "inspired," yet at a certain time he says (1 Cor. vii. 25), "I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." As St. Paul was conscious of this temporary suspension of the inspiring influence, the Psalmist David may have felt the same; and hence it is that some have supposed that the Royal Poet uses the word Selah to express this pause, or brief suspension of the influence of the Divine Spirit, who specially prepared him for, and assisted him in the composition of those beautiful poems, which have proved a comfort and a joy to myriads in every age of the Church, and will continue to perform that kind office until all things are "fulfilled which are written in Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms," concerning Christ Jesus and his great salvation.

4. "Others regard it, not as a proper word, but as an abbreviation containing the initial or most important letters in several words; such abbreviation being very common among the modern Jews and Arabians." A familiar illustration would be the word *gig*: *G* standing for God; *i* for is; and *g* for good—"God is good." Another specimen of this kind of composition was employed by the early Christians who spoke Greek, who took the first letters of the words, *Iesus Christus, Theou Uios, Soter* ("Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour"), and made them into *ICHTHUS*, the Greek word for fish, which word, or the likeness of a fish, became a pass-word or a kind of Freemason's sign among the early Christians, by which they could secretly recognize each other as the disciples of Christ, in spite of the vigilance of their persecutors. Some have supposed that the word Selah belongs to this class of composite words; but the difficulty is in deciding what Hebrew words the term represents.—One learned man suggests three Hebrew words, which mean, "Singer, repeat the stave;" another suggests words which mean, "A change of voice;" while another Hebraist thinks that Selah is made up of words which mean, "Praise Jehovah." But the misfortune for this fourth interpretation of the word is, that even if learned men were agreed (which they are not) as the words which have been taken to make up Selah, they would then have to prove (which they cannot) that the ancient Hebrews were familiar with this mode of abbreviation.—Truly, "the doctors do disagree;" and the following is the advice they give us:—"If any further information be sought on this hopeless subject, it may be found in the treatises contained in 'Ugolini,' vol. xxii.;