

# Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.  
Vol. XIV. No. 40.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, October 6, 1869.

WHOLE SERIES.  
Vol. XXXIII. No. 40.

## Poetry.

### THE BRINK OF THE RIVER.

I have been to the brink of the river,  
The cold, dark river of Death;  
And still in the valley I shiver,  
Where my child yielded up his breath.  
Chill, chill was the touch of the billow  
As it closed o'er my darling's head,  
Then left him asleep on his pillow—  
My beautiful, beautiful dead!

Oh! dark was the day when the token  
Was sent from the palace on high,  
That the sweet silver cord must be broken,  
And the pitcher all shattered must lie.  
Oh! that midnight was starless and dreary  
When our child had to fight the last foe—  
At length, of the conflict weary,  
Love loosed him, and sobbed: "Let him go!"

"Great Father, receive the sweet spirit  
That is bursting its fetters of clay!"  
He slept—he has gone to inherit  
The crown and the kingdom of day.  
That smile, like an infant's ecstacy  
From danger to mother's own breast,  
Told the moment the angels were taking  
Our weary one home to his rest.

We pressed to the edge of the river,  
And caught but one vanishing gleam,  
As he entered the portals of ever  
That open'd the bright city to him.  
And still on the borders we linger,  
And gaze up the pathway he trod:  
We hear not the voice of the singer,  
But we know him at home with his God.

And silently still though I wander  
Mid wrecks that are left by the tide,  
Repeating the fearful surrender  
Of the life that with Christ must abide;  
I hear a soft whisper of pardon,  
And promise of wiping all tears;  
A meeting, beyond this dark Jordan,  
To last through unchangeable years.

Green, green are the pastures, though lowly,  
Where the mourners are led by their Guide;  
And the ground wet with tears should be holy,  
Where we fit a while must abide.  
Oh! green be the fruits from such sowing  
Of patience, of faith, and of love!  
Thrice precious this season for growing  
More meet for the kingdom above!

## Religious.

### DAN TAYLOR, A BAPTIST MINISTER OF THE LAST CENTURY.

In the year 1764 a young man, about five-and-twenty, rather under the average size of men, strongly built, and with a frame that exhausting labour in a mine had rather more firmly knit than wasted, took an active part in digging out from a quarry blocks of stone which were intended to be used in the erection of a new place of worship. He had already drawn out the plan for the building itself, and now vigorously helped to re-produce that plan on the steep side of a romantic valley. All worked with a will, inspired by the example of the man who was at once preacher, architect of his own chapel, and mason. The new edifice was at length completed; when, to crown his other efforts to hasten on the work, he carried, on his own stalwart shoulders, from the old meeting-place to the new, the pulpit in which he was henceforth to labour. This was the man who is justly entitled to be called the father and founder of the New Connexion of General Baptists—Dan Taylor, of Wadsworth, in Yorkshire. He had once been a member of the Wesleyan Society; but having been led to adopt different views on the subject of infant baptism through reading Dr. Wall's defence of it, he had sought acquaintance with some Baptists in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, and having been baptized in the river Idle, near Gamston, he went on to Boston, and shortly after returned to Birchcliffe with Rev. W. Thompson, a minister of the Old General Baptists, by whom Dan Taylor and his friends appear to have been formed into a Baptist church. The place of worship which he had done so much to build was cumbered with a debt, which pressed heavily on the handful of people at Birchcliffe, and Dan Taylor set

off in quest of funds. The man who had the year before walked a hundred and twenty miles in the depth of winter in search of Baptists, and had contentedly slept one night during that journey under a hay-rick, was just the man to carry his point, whatever it might be. He travelled toward the Midland Counties, and got as far as Loughborough. Here he learnt that there were people in Leicestershire holding similar views to his own, and that Barton-in-the-Beans, near Market Bosworth, was their original centre. He still further gathered, from the friends he made during his stay in Leicestershire, that the Barton church, which originally consisted of seven members—John Whyatt, John Aldridge, William Adeock, Stephen Dixon, William Kendrick, Mrs. Kendrick, and David Taylor (the last a pious servant of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon)—had grown in twenty years so large as to need subdivision, and that five distinct and independent churches had sprung from the apparently small beginning.

These five several centres were—(1) Barton, (2) Melbourne, (3) Kegworth, (4) Loughborough, (5) Kirkby Woodhouse. All this and much more, Dan Taylor learnt before his return to his chapel that clung like a nest on the hill side at Birchcliffe. He was the last man in the world to forget what he had learnt. The following year Dan Taylor was selected as the representative of the old General Baptist churches in Lincolnshire to the General Assembly in London. During the next four years, the divergence in doctrine between himself and the old General Baptists became more and more apparent, and he, with the Lincolnshire churches, whose delegate he had been, agreed to withdraw from them, and made overtures to the five churches in the Midland counties to join with them in the formation of a new religious organization. The overtures were cordially received, and a preliminary meeting was held in September, 1769, at Lincoln. The first annual meeting, or association, was held in London, early in June in the following year, and was called "The Assembly of Free-Grace General Baptists."  
—J. J. Goodby.

### A RITUALIST REHEARSAL.

A writer in the *Christian Witness* gives an interesting account of a Ritualist Rehearsal he witnessed in St. Peter's Church, London Docks, of which Mr. Lowder is the incumbent:—

On June 28th, happening to pass down Old Gravel-lane, my attention was arrested by a number of persons, gathered around the gates of St. Peter's. Priests in their long black robes, and Sisters of Mercy in their strange costume, were evidently engaged in a work which afforded them no ordinary excitement. Some were going in and some coming out of the church, the former bearing immense bunches of flowers. On inquiring of a person near, I was informed that the following day the anniversary of the Dedication Festival was to be observed, that immense preparations were being made to do honour to the occasion, that at least a waggon load of flowers had been taken into the church—this was probably a slight exaggeration—whether so or not, more were being carried in by the, for once, brisk and business-like sisters in black.

As the church is declared to be always open, I thought it would be no intrusion to enter. The scene outside was far exceeded by that within. A considerable number of persons were present, for the most part busily occupied in the preparations. The principal of the mission was standing near the font, engaged in conversation with two or three ladies, one of them in semi-religious costume. He himself was robed in black, some few young embryo priests, choristers, and sisters of mercy appeared in gowns of the same sombre hue, presenting quite a contrast to the brilliant flowers scattered in the richest profusion, to the arrangement of which the sisters were putting the finishing touches. The High Altar was one mass of flowers and candles; the screen separating the chancel from the nave was

similarly adorned, and wreaths were gracefully twined around the font. Everything indicated the approach of a ceremony, on which the genius of decoration had exhausted her powers. The vergers and some women were engaged in the more menial work of sweeping the aisles, and putting the freshest aspect on every part of the building.

A scene in the chancel attracted my attention, and though I had previously witnessed the skill and precision with which all the parts of ritualistic service are conducted, and knew that there must be some amount of practice or rehearsal, this scene came so unexpectedly as to excite astonishment. A number of boys, under the direction of what seemed to be an embryo priest—he was very young—were rehearsing the part which they had to take in the performance of the morrow. They were being drilled with the precision of a drill sergeant training raw recruits. Under the direction of their leader, they marched to and fro on the steps leading up to the altar, sometimes bowing, sometimes kneeling, when in these postures their attendant carefully surveyed them, putting a head straight here, and a body, a little too much out of the line, upright in another place; appearing to be deeply concerned to secure military exactness. Whether this extra drill was necessary to introduce an additional attraction to the ceremony of the following day or not, I cannot tell. There was to me something quite new. Each boy held in his hand what looked like a miniature fluted shaft or column, of porcelain, or paper, about three feet long and three inches diameter. The attendant spared no pains to get these held in the perpendicular, and in true line, as the boys knelt before the altar. More of this would perhaps have been witnessed, had not the attention of the principal been attracted to the presence of a stranger; he immediately walked up the south aisle towards the chancel; whether he spoke, or motioned, or did neither I cannot tell, but the young performers soon fled off into the sacristy, and the rehearsal was at an end.

These peculiar candle bearers I had not before seen used, but on the following day at the high celebration, in other words the high mass, at a certain part of the service, these boys, under the guidance of their attendant, walked from the sacristy to the steps of the altar, there they knelt with lighted candles on the top of their standards, which they held exact and motionless for a considerable time, they then fled out in the order in which they entered.

If subordinate performers need such careful drilling, what an amount of practice must the celebrant and his principal assistants undergo, before they can arrive at the perfection of motion, posture, and expression, so characteristic of extreme ritualism. Will it not be necessary to found a new professorship of motion and attitude to train priests in the reception of the old wives' fables, and the bodily exercise, which an inspired apostle has taught us to refuse, the one as "profane," and the other as "profiting little?"

Who, knowing anything of evangelical truth, could repress deep pity for lads, taught, at a susceptible period of life, to practise the forms of worship, as actors their part on a stage? Are not their notions of religion very likely to be limited to the outward ceremonial, to the oversight of the inward life?

It is but proper to say that no irreverence was manifested, but the fact that these boys were having their heads, and arms, and feet put right, standing and kneeling before an altar on which, according to ritualistic doctrine, there is the real presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine, every time the duly-authorized priest utters the mystic words, is sufficiently irreverent. Such is a sad, sad spectacle; to be grieved over if witnessed in a Roman Catholic Chapel, but to be viewed with mingled grief and indignation within the pale of the Established Church of England.

In a similar absorbing regard to the outward, communicants are taught and drilled for the reception of the "Holy Eucharist."

Father Lowder, in a tract just issued to his parishioners, says:—"If you have been a communicant for some time, long enough really to 'taste and see how gracious the Lord is' in this heavenly feast, and to test somewhat your steadfastness, do not be content with monthly communion; go on fortnightly, and weekly, adding festival and saints' days, and so advancing to twice or thrice a week, if the Holy Spirit give you the desire and spiritual appetite for so frequent enjoyment of your Lord's presence in your soul.

"In your preparation not only come to confession, but be careful in your daily prayers the week before to dress your souls; on the morning of your communion get up in time to say your prayers carefully before you come to church, and be in good time before the priest goes to the altar, that your thoughts may be fixed and your mind quiet before the service begins. When you enter the chancel and approach the altar to communicate, bend your knees, not merely your head, before Jesus present in His Blessed Sacrament; and do the same whenever you pass the priest holding Him in his hands, or leave the altar.

"If you have communicated do not leave the church directly after the service is over, but remain on your knees at least five minutes, ten if you can, that you may thank God for 'His unspeakable gift,' and converse with Jesus now present in your soul.

"Bring your children early to be confirmed, that they may be marked in their innocence with the Lord's seal, perfect in their Christian character, and admitted into the full privileges of their religious profession."

"Confession.—You have mostly been to confession either before confirmation, first communion, or at some time. I do not understand when a person once acknowledges the value and blessing of confession, the sacramental power of absolution, and the comfort of this ministry of reconciliation, that they can ever neglect it, or only use it infrequently. The great object of absolution is to make our peace with God, but that cannot be made once for all; it must be continually maintained, and our conscience kept void of offence by daily self-examination and frequent returns to the sacrament of penance."

These extracts need no comment. The next morning at early celebration, six a.m., three girls, very poor, might be seen undergoing preparation, probably for their first communion. A young and handsome sister in semi-religious dress had them under her care. Her attention to them was most exemplary. She had a task to keep up the appearance of reverence; the eye would wander, the head would turn round, and it was evidently hard work for uninterested girls to keep on their knees so long and preserve a devout attitude and expression, so contrary to the feelings which moved their young hearts.

They had example as well as direction in their assiduous instructor. The moment of the magical consecration, when it is affirmed that Christ is personally on the altar, or in the hands of the priest, the communicants bent very low; the sister, not satisfied with this, bent her forehead to the bricks of the floor, her body presented the aspect of an unshapely heap of black, beneath which, for some time, no one could have imagined moved a beating heart. Yet on carefully scanning the countenance afterward, no trace of devout thought or feeling appeared. Perhaps this is not to be regarded as a proof of their non-existence. There may be such training of the features as to set aside their natural expression for one of unnatural immobility. The example and the training seemed to have but little effect on the three girls, whose attention was particularly attracted to the stranger who seemed to be carefully noting all that was going forward. How much better if the hour had been given to a Bible lesson. Under a different system the sister, whose countenance indicated both mind and heart, might have been a careful and successful teacher of Biblical truth, instead of a trainer of knees, and heads, and eyes, as a suitable preparation for one of the most solemn ordinances of the Christian Church.