

Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PREFERENCES.

I'd rather be a child of God,
Unhonored and unknown,
Than rule with an imperial rod,
Or fill a Monarch's throne.

I'd rather be an humble heir
Of everlasting joys,
Than a possessor of life's fair,
Yet false and fading toys.

I'd rather be esteemed a fool,
And sit at Jesus' feet;
Than in the highest earthly school
Obtain the highest seat.

I'd rather win one wandering sheep
Back to the Shepherd's fold,
Than in the fields of fortune reap
An universe of gold.

I'd rather live to leave the name
Of Jesus better known,
Than on the proudest roll of fame
To have inscribed my own.

The paths of glory here are trod
By heroes, peers, and kings;
I'd rather humbly walk with God
Till Christ His glory brings.

TIMOTHY HARLEY

St. John, N. B., May, 19th, 1870.

Religious.

FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

Nothing is better fitted to confirm our reliance on the authenticity of the Sacred Scriptures, than a knowledge of the present condition of eastern countries, and of the cities which have been the subjects of prophecy. The following from Porter's "Giant cities of Bashan" shews that our Lord's prophecies respecting the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, have been very literally fulfilled:—

Before the morning sun overtopped the hills of Bashan, I was in the saddle. A ride of three miles westward along the shore brought me to the ruins of a large town. It was encompassed by such a dense jungle of thorns, thistles, and rank weeds, that I had to employ some shepherds to open a passage for me. Clambering to the top of a shattered wall I was able to overlook the whole site. What a scene of desolation was that! Not a house, not a wall, not a solitary pillar remains standing. Broken columns, hewn stones, sculptured slabs of marble, and great shapeless heaps of rubbish, half concealed by thorns and briars, alone served to mark the site of a great and rich city. The Arabian does not pitch his tent there; not a sound fell upon my ear as I stood amid those ruins, save a gentle murmur of each wave, as it broke upon the pebbly beach, and the mournful sighing of the Summer breeze through sun-scorched branches; yet it is the place where Chorazin once stood. Chorazin heard, but rejected the words of mercy from the lips of its Lord, and he pronounced its doom, "Woe unto thee Chorazin!" [Matt. xi. 21.]

After riding some three miles further along the lake, I reached a little retired bay, with a pebbly strand, just such a place as fishermen would delight to draw up their boats and spread out their nets upon. Here were numerous fountains, several old tanks and aqueducts, great heaps of rubbish, and fields of ruin. Two Arab tents were pitched a little way up on the hill-side, but I saw no other trace there of human habitation or human life; and yet that is the site of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter, James and John. Upon this strand Jesus called His first disciples. Like Chorazin, this city heard and rejected His words, and like Chorazin, it has been left desolate. "Woe be unto thee Bethsaida!"

A few minutes more, and I reached the brow of a bluff promontory which dips

into the bosom of the lake. Before me now opened the fertile plain of Gennesaret. At my feet, beneath the western brow of the cliff, a little fountain burst from a rocky basin. A fig-tree spreads its branches over it, and gives it a name, Ain-et-Tin, "the fountain of the fig." Beside it are some massive foundations, scarcely distinguishable amid the rank weeds; and away beyond it, almost covered with thickets of thorns, briars, and gigantic thistles, I saw large heaps of ruin and rubbish. These are now all that mark the site of Capernaum. Christ's words are fulfilled: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell." [Matt. xi. 23.]

WHY JOIN A CHURCH?

The question is often asked sincerely as well as in scorn or in scepticism. Now and then one who is called to meet opposition in confessing Christ publicly, or who shrinks from the criticism which a church member must encounter in an unfriendly world, is tempted to think that he can do as well out of the church as in it, especially as many in it are no credit to the cause. Is this so?

The first thing that strikes a thoughtful mind on hearing such an assertion is, What a mistake Christ made, then in establishing the Church! Did he understand the necessities of his people and of the world? If the Church was seen by Christ to be a necessity, and if even the objector whom we quote would shrink from the idea of abolishing it, why is the duty of maintaining its existence more imperative on others than on him? Can any pious soul think that it would be the better for itself and for the world, if all should conclude it to be unnecessary to unite with the church, and should let it perish from among the institutions of society?

We must suppose that in instituting the Church, Christ had in view the highest good of His people. Nor is it difficult to see why he made this provision for their wants, or why the apostles, wherever they preached the Gospel, gathered the converts into churches.

The very act of joining a church has an important effect upon character and experience. It gives one decision, courage, firmness, joy and hope. The convert takes open position, breaks visibly from the world, and identifies himself with Christ. The step is upward in moral character; it rids him of hesitation and doubt, and fills his soul with holy boldness. Now he has crossed the border, is a professed saint, wears Christ's name, bears aloft his banner. He feels a new sense of responsibility, and is deepened in his purpose of holy living. On the one hand tempters are less likely to assail him, and on the other, he is less liable to be influenced by them; just as a pledged total abstinence man is less likely to be asked to drink intoxicating liquors, and, if asked, is more certain to refuse.

Then he gains fresh confidence from his association with spiritual brethren and sisters. In union we have interior as well as exterior strength. We are intensified in our convictions by companionship with others who share them. The public opinion of an unbelieving world is met by the counter public opinion of the Church. As a man misunderstood and maligned in the community gains heart, and finds comfort and hope, the moment he passes the threshold of his door, and comes within the atmosphere of love and faith in his family where none doubts him, so the tried and tempted saint finds solace and support in the fellowship of the Church as a Christian family. He meets sympathy, receives countenance, gets fresh stimulus, is revived in spirit, and steps out into the world again, full of peace and firm of purpose.

And then joining the Church brings him under those means of grace which the Saviour has instituted as perpetual auxiliaries to the divine life in the soul. Perhaps no one is fully aware how much he is indebted to outward influences and helps, which in a sense, surround and constrain him, as

the encircling hoops the barrel. Hence the sad falls of so many church members when they emigrate beyond churches. The worship of the sanctuary, the partaking of the ordinances, the hearing of the Gospel are as bread to the hungry and water to the thirsty. A man must have food, and drink, and pure air without, as well as healthful stomach, and heart, and lungs within. These two conditions of life are strong in mutual connection, weak and useless in separation. When Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, and said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," he had our spiritual good as well as his own memory in view. He proposed a special channel of grace, which no one can underrate and neglect, even ignorantly without serious damage and loss.

We never knew one to try the experiment of leading a Christian life outside of the Church with success; that is, in the ordinary circumstances which allow one the opportunity of thus confessing Christ. Such an experience is filled with doubt, often even to the abandonment of Christian hope, is weighed down with a sense of condemnation, is made lonely by want of full sympathy either with the Church or the world, loses fellowship with the Saviour, falls easily into sin, becomes timid and restrained, and is devoid of spiritual power over others. No one can behold such a life, and see in it the beauty, the joy, the comprehensiveness, the proportion, the attraction, the silent instruction which go with a consistent, hearty profession of faith in Christ, bravely and lovingly maintained before friend and foe.—*Advance.*

THE SABBATH.

"Welcome sweet day of rest!" No books to post, no orders to fill, no projects to think over, no politics to discuss—none of the thousand wearing, temper-trying, heart-worrying cares of the every day world, to-day. One day of quiet and tranquility—"emblem of eternal rest."

How sweetly comes the peace of the Sabbath morning after the toils and agitations of the week! Balmy as odors of orient spicy groves; gentle as the breath of sleeping infants, or the dying winds of evening; pure as the incense that rises before the throne of God comes the calm of holy morning—"day of all the week the best." It is the day of home—home hushed and quiet, home beautiful and full of comfort. To-day the father is at home and the mother with brow free from week-day cares, sits beside him; and the memories of Sabbaths in the by-gone time, when love made the day of repose time of joy, comes back in all its pleasantness. Father is at home and the little ones hang at his knee, telling their joys and troubles of the past week, and rejoicing that for a whole day he would be their company and lavish upon them, uninterrupted, his loving words and smiles.

Ay, pure, sweet and holy is the day of rest in the family; but it is all too brief—transient as the outline of the silvery vapor that floats on the summer sky—for the rush and turmoil of the troubling world come back to-morrow. Let not that thought mar the gentle joy of this sweet day; remember, father, there is a "home" whose peace is never interrupted, whose joy is never broken, whose repose treads on to-morrow, and that a part of the privileges and happiness of to-day is to secure a place in that family whose circle is to secure a place in that family whose circle is united forever more, in our Father's house on high.—*Ex.*

HEAVEN A HOME.

You will always find that one's notions of heaven correspond to his own spiritual state. They are his idea of the supreme good. Examine that, and it will show you precisely your spiritual position—just as the traveller knows his latitude by looking at the north star and noting its distance above the horizon. What would you have, if your

most ardent desire was gratified, and your loftiest ideals were actualized? Suppose you stood at the fabled wishing-gate, what is the petition you would send up? What are the aspirations that go up from the profound within you? What sort of a world would you make for yourself, if you could have everything your own way, and embody around you your own best imaginations? Answer these questions honestly, and your idea of heaven is defined to you, and you will see whether it be carnal and selfish, or spiritual and pure.

Hence it is important that our idea of heaven shall correspond to the reality. It is our idea of the supremely good and fair, always shedding its lustrous beauty on our toilsome road, to cheer and gladden us along the climbing way.

Dismiss from your thought, at the beginning, the idea that all the departed saints are to be gathered into one assemblage for unceasing worship, and that you are to be merged in that vast multitude. Remember that all the past generations outnumber the thousand millions that are now upon the earth. What would you be in such a great mob of saints, hoarse with hallelujahs? Descend into your heart, and you will find there a deep and unquenchable instinct—one which belongs to the spiritual nature—which death, therefore, cannot quench, but which it rather sets free for a more unreserved enjoyment of its objects. It is the instinct of home. It is this which determines human loves and sympathies around special points and centres, and forbids even the notion of a formless multitude. It is this which will determine every soul to its special place by quick and unerring affinities, just as the matter of the vast and shapeless nebulae is determined around innumerable points of twinkling flame, till the whole becomes thickly studded with stars.

There is one grand motive, love and obedience to the Lord, which rules in all regenerated hearts; but it has a thousand modes and forms of manifestations, according to each one's mental and moral structure, special tastes, habitudes, and affection. It is so here; it will be so always. The instinct of home is simply the drawing together of souls most alike and congenious around their own special centre, that there the ruling love may have fullest gratification and nourishment, and from that centre radiate in most delightful exercise for the good of others. Two or more minds toned alike, and acting as one, from a common centre and for a common end, make up the idea of home. It is so now, it will be so always. Let the instinct of home be destroyed, and man would be utterly demoralized, or hopelessly insane. His life becomes aimless, and he wanders in spiritual vagabondism, he knows not whither or for what. It is his by eminent endowment and prerogative. Hence the peculiar and utter loathsomeness of those crimes which are committed against it—which either disturb the unity of home or soil its purity; for the lusts that tend to this destroy the very image of humanity, and break it in pieces under the hoofs of the most swinish pollution.

Our home is always where our affections are. We sigh and wander, we vibrate to and fro, till we rest in that special centre where our deepest loves are garnered up. Then the heart fills and brims over with its own happiness and spreads sweetness and fertility all around it. Very often, when the eyes are closing in death, and this world is shutting off the light from the departing soul, the last wish which is made audible is "to go home." The words break out sometimes through the cloud of delirium; but it is the soul's deepest and most central want, groping after its object, haply soon to find it as the clogs of earth clear away, and she springs up on the line of swift affection, as the bee with unerring precision shoots through the dusk of evening to her cell.

How admirable are the arrangements of Providence by which he gradually removes the home-centre from this world to the other, and so draws our affections toward the heavenly abodes! We start in life an unbroken company; brothers and sisters,