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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SIMILE.*

As when upon the western prairies wide
The grass of giant growth to tinder dried,
Catching the spark by careless traveller
thrown,
At first burns feebly, but by breezes blown,
Blazes more fiercely, and still gathering
force,
Rousing the whirlwind in its onward
course,
Pours o'er the plain a rolling sea of flame!—
To spread the honors of the Saviour's
name!
And Island after Island owned His sway
And cast their senseless gods of wood and
stone away.

*Referring to long and inauspicious
labors of the Missionaries among the
"Isles of the South," before any ap-
pearance of good was seen, and the subsequent
unprecedented spread of the gospel in those
regions, especially under the energetic and
apostolic labors of the lamented Williams,
who fell at his post! murdered in the Is-
land of Erromanga.

R. S. T.

Religious.

The following article, which we
clip from a cotemporary, is so lucid and
forcible as an answer to the philosophi-
cal objection to special answers to
prayer that we transfer it to our
columns, and commend it to the care-
ful perusal of all classes of our readers.

ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

BY HENRY A. NELSON, D. D.

A friend calls my attention to the
following passage in a work of Miss
Muloch:

"The doctrine of 'Answers to Prayer,'
literal and material, always ap-
peared to me egregious folly or conceited
profanity. Is the great Ruler of the
universe to stop its machinery for me?
Is the wise evolution of certain events
from certain causes, continuing un-
erringly its mysterious round, by which
all things come alike to all, and for the
final good of all to be upset in its
workings for my individual benefit?
No; I would not, I dare not, believe
such a thing. But I do believe in the
Eternal Spirit's influence upon our
spirits in momentous crises, and in a
very distinct and solemn way, often
remembered for years."

Has Miss Muloch given the true
view of this universe? or of its Author
and Governor? or of His relations to
us? I think not. I cannot accept
this quotation as a correct statement of
the doctrine of providence and of prayer.
What she in turn rejects, is not what
any one holds, so far as I know.

Suppose the skilful maker of a loco-
motive to be in it, guiding and govern-
ing it. Suppose you should see him
by the pressure of his hand upon its
springs or levers increasing or di-
minishing its speed, and now and then
stopping it. Is this free action of his
hand, in and upon its machinery, modi-
fying the results which its forces and
adjustments would naturally work out,
a violation of its laws, or a disparage-
ment of their excellence?

If you observe that he passes some
stations at full speed, and halts at others,
according as a signal is or is not raised,
intimating intelligibly to him, the desire
of passengers to be taken up, is this
unworthy of him? Does it abate from
your admiration of the wisdom with
which he made, and now runs his
machine?

Of course he will not consent that
his machine shall "be upset in its
workings, for my individual benefit";
but perhaps he made it with such skill
and foresight, that he can accommodate
its running to my need, as I signal it to
him, without "upsetting" it, or throw-
ing it off the track.

If he foreknew precisely my need,

and had it in view, before he built the
engine or laid the track, and so has no
need of my signal, yet thinks it best
for me to be required to give the signal,
in order to get the accommodation or
benefit, may be not have that rule, and
act upon it?

You see large quantities of ice formed
every Winter. You believe (I presume)
that this is a natural result of physical
laws and forces, as old as creation,
You can take a small quantity of that
water into your laboratory in July, and
make such an adjustment of natural
laws and forces as to congeal it. With
better and larger apparatus, you could
do the same on a much larger scale.
God surely can make such an adjust-
ment of physical forces, without alter-
ing any physical law, as to raise many
barrels of that water far up into the
air, congeal it and drop it destructively
upon corn and cattle. Is it certain that
He does not do this by an intervention
as special as yours in your laboratory,
yet no more choosing to annul or sub-
vert His own natural laws than you are
able to subvert them?

You may interpose, as above, at the
request of your friend. Suppose you
were sagacious enough to foresee, a year
beforehand, that he would make such a
request, and you should purchase or
make apparatus with reference to it,
would he be less ready to acknowledge
your politeness in complying with his
request? Would it seem, or would it
be, a less real compliance.

Is Miss Muloch sure that God may
not apply His invisible apparatus to the
surface of a lake when devout people
ask Him to, for their parched fields;
and because they ask Him, may pro-
duce a shower of rain, by as special an
intervention as you would make in
dipping up water to sprinkle on a
flower-bed, and with just as little "up-
setting" or disturbance of the machin-
ery of nature in one case as in the
other?

My friend says that she been trou-
bled and unable to sleep well since Miss
Muloch's mistaken view came into her
mind. I do not wonder. Doubtless
she has felt as if she were on a train of
cars on an endless track, and the engi-
neer after starting the locomotive, had
stepped off, leaving it to run according to
its unalterable law. Let her know that
is a nightmare illusion. The engineer is
in his seat. His hand is on the machine,
and his mind is in it. That slender
cord too weak to resist, or even to check
any motion of the engine, does reach
the engineer, and he will heed the pull
which your feeble hand gives it. He
will not stop the engine. But he is
running it not with indifference to your
destiny, or even to your desires. There
is a wide and sufficient margin within
which he can and will modify its
movement, at the pull of that cord.
He may send back a brakeman even to
your seat, with secret messages for your
ear, or on errands of considerate atten-
tion to your wants.

Miss Muloch avows her "belief in
the Eternal Spirit's influence upon our
spirits, in momentous crises, and in a
very distinct and solemn way, often
remembered for years."

She is right in this, and she will duly
consider all that is involved in this. I
believe she will see that the same
Eternal Spirit has equal power and
liberty in the material universe, among
the laws and forces which He instituted
and upholds, and in which He per-
petually and wisely works, works in-
deed in a very orderly manner, which
we are able to learn and adapt our-
selves to, but sometimes, "in momentous
crises," and in conformity with our
prayers influencing the ordinary natural
forces into special results, "in a very
distinct and solemn way" sometimes in
a very kind way, "often remembered
for years"—yes, for a life-time.—*Evangelist.*

The following 'scrap' forwarded to
us by a friend, will very appropriately
come in here.

"A very ingenious man, (Mr. John
Bacon, the statuary), used to compare
the rashness of our judging of the
divine conduct in our present state of

imperfection to the folly of a man who
would judge of a roomfull of complica-
ted machinery, by looking through the
key-hole."

GARMENTS OF VENGEANCE.

We are too atheistic in looking at
national calamities. We see man rather
than God. We fasten our eyes on the
lower series of causes and effects and
ignore Him whose will is the mightiest
of all causes. We fall back on our
sympathies more than on our sense of
justice. Or if we please ourselves, as
with a well-wrought drama, with that
poetic justice which at length brings to
the dust some high-seated transgressor
whose life has seemed a proof that
there was no such thing as justice on
earth, yet we fail to recognize as we
ought the direct, full, unalterable moral
accountability of all nations and each
individual to a personal God of infinite
right and truth, and whose great pro-
vidences are mainly judgments, judge-
ments in decision as well as in penalty.
We need to correct this. We our-
selves sin by this practical atheism, and
necessitate judgments which shall com-
pel us habitually to feel that "Jehovah
is God in the midst of the land."

We may sympathize with the French
of to-day, for we cannot help sympa-
thizing with suffering. But sympathy
must not be allowed to blind us. We
may see only the ambition of Napoleon,
or the counterplotings of Bismarck,
and we may accept the fall of the one
and anticipate the turn of the other.
But we may be sure there was a deeper
and more universal cause for such
calamities as have fallen on this gay
people. An axe is hewing at the
trunk of the green bay tree; but God's
arm wields it. "It is through the wrath
of the Lord of Hosts that the land is
darkened and the people have become
as fuel of the fire." Jewish history is
a revelation of God, only because it
has been divinely recorded. Could
a seer pen the history of France, it
would equally reveal Him. When of
old Jehovah "put on garments of
vengeance" and went forth in fury to
His "strange work," it was because,
among His own people, judgment was
turned away backward, and justice stood
afar off, and truth was fallen in the
street, and equity could not enter.
When God puts on garments of ven-
geance to-day, it is because He has the
same strange work to do. Already the
cry begins to go up from amidst the
strokes, "We grope for the wall like
the blind, and we grope as if we had
no eyes; we stumble at noon-day as
in the night; we are in desolate places
as dead men. We look for judgment
but there is none: for salvation, but it
is far from us. For our transgressions
are multiplied before thee, and our sins
testify against us; in transgressing, and
lying against the Lord, and departing
away from our God, speaking oppres-
sion and revolt, conceiving and uttering
from the heart words of falsehood."

Dupanloop, bishop of Orleans, in
searching out remote causes of the
present disasters, finds them in the ruined
moral character of the nation. He
says, "We have almost entirely ceased
to speak the truth," and again: "We
have especially ceased to practise virtue;
virtue has been banished from almost all
ranks."

A distinguished French officer has
said, "We are a nation of liars." M.
Pilatte, one of the most eloquent preach-
ers of France, says:

"Our principles and our manners have
been corrupted. We have absolved, glori-
fied and crowned perjury. We have re-
garded as mere prejudices conscience and
truth. We have made light of whatever
is pure and sacred among men. Woman,
marriage and its holy duties, all the
domestic virtues, have been for us subjects
for ridicule. Our theatre and our literature
have become schools of immorality. By
the frivolity of our character, by our long
resignation to servitude, by the lowness of
our tastes, by our shameful fashions, by
our obscene songs, we have dishonored our
times and scandalized the world. In all
the ranks of our society vice has flourished,
exposing without shame before the eyes of
all that which it is not permitted even to
mention. Then thy wrath has kindled,

and upon this Sodom and this Gomorrah
which we have become, thou hast rained
down fire and brimstone. Thou art just,
O Lord, and our guilt has merited this
chastisement."

It is Popery which has thus demor-
alized the nation. Its tendency, always
and everywhere, is not only to weaken
conscience as a guiding and restraining
power, but utterly to kill it out. It
substitutes superstition for religion and
reacts constantly into infidelity. It
crowds a man into the place of God,
and a woman into the place of Christ.
It shuts up the Bible from the people.
It corrupts directly by compelling
women to confess their secret thoughts
and feelings to licentious priests. It
purposely leaves the masses in igno-
rance; and the education which it gives
is such as only binds them more secure-
ly to an unreasoning and fanatical faith.
It has thus demoralized every nation
without exception which it has managed
to subject to its sway.

God grant that France may come forth
from its baptism of blood, an earnest
seeker after God, and truth, and right-
eousness, and may hereafter lead the
nations in what is pure, and beautiful,
and good, as it has heretofore led them
in irreligion, frivolity and vice.—
W. & R.

THE FURROW IN THE STONE.

"A Spanish boy having long tried
in vain to master his task, and driven
to despair by the severity of his
teacher, ran away from his father's
home. Tired with wandering, and
full of anxious thoughts, he sat down
to rest by the margin of a well, when
his eye was caught by the deep furrow
in the stone. He asked a girl who
was drawing water to explain it, and
she told him that it had been worn by
the constant attrition of the rope. The
poor boy, who was already full of
remorse for what he had done, recog-
nized in the reply a Divine intimation.
'If,' he thought, 'by daily use the
soft rope could thus penetrate the hard
stone, surely a long perseverance
could overcome the dullness of my
brain.' He returned to his father's
house; he laboured with redoubled
earnestness, and he lived to be the
great St. Isidore of Spain." *Lecky's
European Morals, iii. 217.*

Alban Butler says that he compiled
many useful works, in which he takes
in the whole circle of the sciences, and
discovers a most extensive reading,
and a general acquaintance with the
ancient writers, both sacred and pro-
fane." *Lives of the Saint, April 4.*

Neander observes that "he embrac-
ed within his knowledge all that in
his own age was to be obtained from
scientific culture." *History of the
Church, iii. 151.*

Mariana, a Spanish historian (died
A. D. 1624) states that in his time the
stone with the "furrow" in it was
preserved as a relic. An instructive
relic, too, which is more than can be
said of many articles of the kind.

It has been remarked that soon after
Paul was converted he declared him-
self "unworthy to be called an apos-
tle." As time rolled on, and he grew
in grace, he cried out, "I am less
than the least of all saints." And just
before his martyrdom, when he had
reached the stature of a perfect man
in Christ, his exclamation was "I am
the chief of sinners."

A correspondent of the *Episcopal
Methodist*, in arguing for the style of the
former Methodist preachers says:—
"We confess to some liking for the
divisions of the old black preacher of
our youth—'Bredren,' said this old
slave of the South, 'I shall first ex-
plain de text; secondly, I shall argue
it; and thirdly, put on de rous ments.'"
The 'rousements' where the grand
characteristics of old Methodist preach-
ing.

Live within your means, if you would
have means within which to live.

For the Christian Messenger.
ONTARIO CORRESPONDENCE.

THE CHURCH AND CLERGY TAXATION
QUESTION. LOGIC VERSUS FEELING.
THE EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS.—
NORMAL SCHOOL VS. COUNTY CER-
TIFICATES. COMPULSORY ATTEND-
ANCE. THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DIFFI-
CULTIES, &c.

Some of the questions that are
"always turning up," or, at any rate,
that must turn up at some stage or
other, in the history of a people ambi-
tious of progress in the latter half of
the nineteenth Century, are just now
demanding settlement in Ontario.
First I may mention the Religious
Edifice and Clergy Taxation ques-
tion, which is just now the subject
of earnest discussion. By our admir-
able municipal system, it devolves
upon the law-making power of the
province, to say what classes of persons
and of property shall and shall not
pay taxes. In the present state of
the municipal law, both the persons
and property of Clergymen, and
manse, churches and other proper-
ties held or used for ecclesiastical
purposes, are exempt from local taxa-
tion. Of course the law makes no
exceptions or discriminations. The
same privilege which remits the dimes
in favour of the country meeting-house,
warns off the profane feet of the tax-
gatherer from the sacred precincts of
the lordly ecclesiastical mansion and
the gilded cathedral. A crusade
against the whole system and the
principle which underlies and supports
it, is now being waged. The all pow-
erful *Globe*—which, to its credit be it
spoken, is generally sound on ques-
tions of political economy and Church
and State—leads the van of the move-
ment. It would be amusing, were
there no deeper feelings involved, to
note the tactics adopted and the argu-
ments brought forward by the respec-
tive champions. On the one side,
those who seem to think the tottering
ark of God needs a little support from
the strong hand of the State, or that
the imposition of consecrating hands,
or the utterance of consecrating formu-
las, creates a holy perpetual bar against
all claims of Caesar, or who perhaps
do not take the trouble to think and
reason at all, but simply cling with
blind tenacity to a profitable custom,
or sacred tradition.—do these classes
unite in sounding notes of alarm, long
and loud, against the sacriligious
wretches who would lay impious hands
upon everything holy, and dare to ask
that the temple of God, or the abode
of His minister, should pay a profane
percentage of the wages of the vulgar
policeman, who protects the magnifi-
cent windows of the one from sacri-
lege, or the costly plate of the other
from burglary. To-day a good min-
ister came out with a strong plea in
favour of the meeting-house of the
poor christians, and demonstrates to
his own satisfaction that in view of all
the indirect services rendered by
Christianity to the State, a distinction
should be made between the *christian*
and the *infidel* in the matter of taxes.
How else can it be shewn that we live
in a christian state? When the inexor-
able *Globe* coolly points out to the
writer—who is a staunch enemy of all
unions of Church and State,—that his
arguments are precisely those of the
State-churchists, to-morrow another
minister frankly admits that the indis-
criminate taxationist has all the logic
on his side, but proceeds to argue
elaborately that we are not, and ought
not to be, guided wholly by logic in
such matters. Religion is so excellent
a thing that some deviations from the
straight line of justice between man
and man should be made in its favour.
Are we not a christian people? &c.,
&c. Thus the battle rages, a copy
in miniature of the struggle which
in so many parts of christendom, is
the necessary result of the attempt to
carry out broad and admitted prin-
ciples in the minutest details of law
and government. I shall try to advise you
of the issue in this case.

The attempted revision of the School