

The Christian Messenger.

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Poetry.

BEST.

Says the *National Baptist*: "At this season of the year, when so many houses are made desolate by the removal of little ones to the arms of the Good Shepherd, these tender lines will bring rich comfort to sorrowing mothers."

Mother, I see you with your nursery light,
Leading your babies, all in white,
To their sweet rest;
Christ, the Good Shepherd, carries mine to-night,
And that is best!

I cannot help tears, when I see them twine
Their fingers in yours, and their bright curls
Shine
On your warm breast;
But the Savior's is purer than yours or mine,
He can love best!

You tremble each hour because your arms
Are weak; your heart is wrung with alarms,
Are sore oppressed;
My darlings are safe, out of reach of harms,
And that is best.

You know over yours may hang even now
Pain and disease, whose fulfilling slow
Naught can arrest;
Mine in God's garden run to and fro,
And that is best.

You know that of yours the feeblest one
And dearest, may live long years alone,
Unloved, unblest;
Mine are cherished of saints around God's throne,
And that is best.

You must dread for yours the crime that sears,
Dark guilt unwashed by repentant tears,
And unconfessed;
Mine entered spotless on eternal years,
Oh, how much the best!

But grief is selfish, and I cannot see
Always why I should so stricken be,
More than the rest;
But I know that as well as for them, for me
God did the best!

Religious.

A ROYAL MARRIAGE IN LENT.

The announcement that the marriage of the Princess Louise to the Marquis of Lorne would take place sometime in March produced quite a sensation in certain quarters of the ecclesiastical world. That the Head of the Church of England should thus sanction the desecration of "the holy season of Lent" appeared to be almost incredible, and if true, the sure precursor of national disaster. With characteristic disloyalty, Ritualistic newspapers rang the alarm bell and preached dissatisfaction. One journal expressed the hope that no bishop would be found so recreant to "the traditions of the elders" as to perform the ceremony. Mr. Gladstone was taken to task because he had not interposed to prevent so foul an outrage on the customs of the Catholic Church. Of course, the Duke of Argyll, always an object of abhorrence to High Church clergymen, was supposed to have planned this insult to Anglicanism, and to take a Presbyterian pleasure in piping at the time of the mourning of the faithful. But the Ritualists were not without consolation. Rumour assured them that "two noblemen, one of the highest rank, the other well known in political society, but neither holding official positions, having had it intimated to them that they would receive the Queen's commands to be present at the Lenten marriage of the Princess Louise, have asked her Majesty's gracious permission to be excused from attending the same, now that it is likely to be celebrated in Passion week." The heroism of these two nobles has been duly celebrated, and our contemporary anticipates from such a decided protest against Court luxury "a good and great moral effect." If these distinguished noblemen believe that marriages in Lent are a sin against God, we honour them for their manliness. They do but render unto God the things which they suppose are God's when they decline at the invitation of Caesar to partake of a festivity in the midst of

their fast. Yet another consolation was vouchsafed to our Anglican friends.

The *Observer*, generally well-informed, contained the statement that the marriage would not take place "as early as March." What a victory for Ritualism! The Duke of Argyll was defeated, the Head of the Church had resolved to bow to the traditions of the Romanists as interpreted by the Anglicans, and England and Scotland were to be taught the lesson that court fashion agreed with Ritualism on the question of what should not be done in the Lenten season. The joy in the camp of High Church priests was great. But it was premature. It is now authoritatively announced that the Royal marriage will take place on March the 21st. Her Majesty will not bow to the Popish prejudices of the most sectarian section of her subjects. Ritualists are not to dictate when the children of our Queen shall not marry or be given in marriage. In the midst of Lent the Marquis of Lorne will be made the happiest of men, and let us hope the Princess Louise will consider herself the most fortunate of brides. We do not rejoice in this because we would feast when others fast, and take our pleasure when our neighbours are doing penance. Our satisfaction at the final decision of the Court is based rather on our conviction of the thoroughly unscriptural and superstitious character of Lenten observances. It is high time that Protestants frowned down the foolish fashion of wearing the garb of mourning in the time of Lent, of drapping places of worship in black, of abstaining from ordinary occupations and accustomed amusements during the interval which connects Ash Wednesday with the eve of Easter Sunday. This artificial religion which seems to be prevailing in the Church of England is utterly inconsistent with a firm adherence to the simple faith of the gospel, and an honest espousal of the principles laid down by the Apostle Paul. Why should marriages be prohibited in Lent? Is marriage an unholy thing? But argument is unnecessary in the case of our readers, and useless in the case of Ritualists. Reason with these latter is silenced. Truth itself must not speak in the presence of tradition. Antiquity, by which is meant the second, third, and fourth centuries, is placed higher than the Apostles. Christ himself must stand by, looking on sorrowfully, we doubt not, while the Church promulgates her decrees, "forbidding to marry," in Lent. On every ground we are glad and gratified that her Majesty has resisted the attempt to induce the postponement of the Royal marriage. It is well the nation should know that we have a Protestant Queen—a Queen who is in alliance with Presbyterianism and has no sympathy with Popery. And therefore we put a genuine note of admiration at the close of the announcement of the Royal marriage in Lent!—*London (Baptist) Freeman.*

THE LAWS OF NATURE, THE LAWS OF GOD.

The following very conclusive course of argument is a portion of an excellent article in the *Presbyterian*, entitled "Naturalism vs. Piety":—

Apart from all argument, metaphysical or popular, we may be reasonably confident that natural law, or the framework of natural sequences, whatever may be its appearance of universality, or uniformity, or immobility, is a perfectly flexible instrument under its Maker's hands—one which God can freely use for the accomplishment of his purposes, without violence being done to its character, and without any impairing of its efficiency.

The second consideration, of a more positive sort, is that, however, upon which we would more particularly insist. It is this: That notwithstanding the wide extent of natural law, and the uniformity of its operations, human free agency finds full scope for its appropriate exercise. Man goes amidst these laws; they employ them for their

own purposes; they act, by means of them according to their relations one to another, fulfilling their loves and their hates in deeds of good and evil.

We can only hint at the development of this argument.

Law is said to be fixed, and the chains of natural sequences indissoluble. Well, the law of gravity brings all heavy bodies to the earth, and would keep us to the earth's surface. Yet we construct a balloon, and by means of it mount into the upper air. The law of inertia would keep us forever chained to the spot in which we are found. Yet we construct a locomotive engine, and by means of it overcome the force of inertia, flying upon the railway at forty miles an hour. The winds blow according to fixed laws. Yet we spread our sails, catch and detain the winds, and are wafted from one shore of the ocean to the other. A person falls sick. Health and disease are matters of fixed law. How shall the sick be healed without destroying the invariable sequence of cause and effect? Yet the physician steps in, prescribes suitable remedies, and the sick person is healed. A child makes request of his father for bread or water. How can the father meet this request without invading the sacred and inviolable domain of natural law? How can he move a step toward the end? Yet every father is able to respond to a thousand requests of his every child, and every true father regards the limitation of his power, which at any time prevents the fulfilment of a reasonable request, as an affliction incident to an imperfect human condition.

The more thorough our acquaintance with the laws of nature the more fully can we reduce them to our will. By intelligence we learn to command the agencies of nature, as the rider his horse, as the general his army. We play with these agencies as we please. We combine one with another; we use one to offset and neutralize another; we multiply their offices and ministrations endlessly. Yet all the while the uniformity of nature's operations continue. The sequence of natural causes and effects remains unbroken. No miracle is at any time wrought.

At this is the case while we ourselves, so far as our bodies are concerned, are involved in nature, are a part of nature, and subject to the operation of natural law. Emancipated from this condition—existing as free spirits—it would seem that our power, operating upon and by means of natural law, would be yet more full and unobstructed.

The argument may now be very briefly stated. If we can thus go amidst the laws of nature, accomplishing our pleasure, how is it possible that God himself, the author of nature, who understands thoroughly the powers of nature, who is lifted above and exists independently of nature—how is it possible that he should not find all natural agencies infinitely flexible to his will?

If, without a miracle, we compel the wind to do us service, why may not the stormy wind much more fulfil his word? If we catch the lightnings and teach them to do our errands, how much more may he make the flaming fire his ministers? If by our skill we can often arrest the progress of disease, what in any case shall baffle the skill of the Great Physician? If we can respond to the wishes of our children, how much more shall our Father who is heaven give good things to them that ask him?

While God is above nature in the sense just hinted at—of being independent of nature—we may think that the whole framework of nature is penetrated by his living presence. The laws of nature do not exclude our agency; they cannot exclude His. The framework of nature is not a wall of solid, massive stone standing between God and us, preventing all communication; it is rather an elastic pillow resting on the bosom of God, reposing our heads upon which we feel the distinct throbbings of his heart of love.

Spare moments are the gold-dust of time.

THE NINETEENTH CHAPTER OF LEVITICUS.

The Divine Legislator begins with enjoining holiness to his people. He then explains in what it consists: "Reverence thy mother and thy father. Observe the Sabbath day. Do not worship any deities besides God. Leave part of thy wealth, thy harvest, thy oil and wine, to the poor and the stranger. Do not steal, nor lie, nor deal falsely, nor swear falsely, nor defraud the rich, nor withhold his dues from the poor. Do not curse the deaf, nor hurt the blind. Dispense justice to all. Do not spare the low, nor respect the highborn. Be no tale-bearer, nor an indifferent spectator of wrong. Indulge in no secret hatred or revenge, but frankly expostulate with thy fellow. Love thy neighbor as thyself. Vex not the stranger, but treat him as one of thine own; love him as thyself, for strangers you were in Egypt. I am the Eternal—this means 'Ye shall be holy.'" What marvellous strokes of divine legislation! 3500 years have passed over these statutes. Have they lost anything of their deep truth—their genuine, intrinsic value? Has any modern legislator, moralist or philanthropist, added to it or detracted therefrom anything?

Has Rousseau or Kant, St. Paul or Hus, Luther or Swedenborg, added any new principle to practical morality? This is the greatest of miracles—the greatest proof of the Mosaic truth. Like an antique gem in a golden ring, incased in a costly casket, preserved by a pious owner, even so shines forth from the sacred Scriptures the glorious nineteenth chapter of Leviticus, with the golden rule—"Love thy neighbor as thyself."

A ROMANIST TRIBUTE TO THE PROTESTANT BIBLE.

Dr. NEWMAN, the Roman Catholic convert, gives in what follows a just idea of what is the stronghold of Protestantism:

"Who will not say that the uncommon beauty and marvellous English of the Protestant Bible is not one of the great strongholds of heresy in this country? It lives on the ear like a music that can never be forgotten—like the sound of church-bells which the convert hardly knows how he can forego. Its felicities often seem to be almost things rather than mere words. It is part of the national mind, and the anchor of national seriousness. The memory of the dead passes into it. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses. The power of all the griefs and trials of man is hidden in its words. It is the representative of his best moments, and all that has been about him of soft, and gentle, and pure, and penitent, and good, speaks to him forever out of his English Bible. It is his sacred thing, which doubt has never dimmed and controversy never soiled. In the length and breadth of the land there is not a Protestant with one spark of religiousness about him whose spiritual biography is not in his Saxon Bible."

SAFETY OF DR. LIVINGSTONE.

Sir R. Murchison writes to the *London Times*, of the 24th ult., as follows:—I heartily rejoice to announce to the public that I have this morning received a letter from Dr. Kirk, at Zanzibar, dated the 8th of December, 1870, which has relieved me of all anxiety respecting the fate of my illustrious friend Livingstone. Dr. Kirk had just received a letter from the great Arab Sheik Said, of Unyamwebe, dated 16 Rabaa of Ahbar, which being translated, is to this effect:—"After compliments, your honoured letter has reached, and your friend has understood it. The people (that is, of a caravan sent from Zanzibar) arrived in good health and are going on to Ujiji to our friend the Doctor. The news of him is that he has not yet returned from Manimo

(?) (the Arabic word is spelt in three different ways), but we expect him soon, and probably he and the people with supplies will reach Ujiji at the same time." Dr. Kirk adds—"At all events, on his arrival at Ujiji from his western journey, he will have goods for his present wants. The new gang of men with fresh goods has set out, and the road being free, we may hope they will reach quickly and safely." We now learn for the first time that Livingstone had made an extensive journey to the west of Lake Tanganyika, and this accounts for the long-continued absence of all information respecting him. Any letters that Livingstone may have written and confided to jealous Arabs have probably either been destroyed by them or lost with some of the caravans that perished on the journey to the coast during the cholera epidemic.

Several Jewish periodicals are published in England. Long controversies occur in them as to the jots and tittles of the law, and the most minute points of discipline and management of their several institutions. Until lately there was remarkable silence as to the grand questions which separate the Jew from the Christian in cardinal matters of faith. Recently, however, there appeared in one paper a systematic attack upon Christianity, not more remarkable for its weakness than for its bitter reviling ridicule.

A pearl wedding (seventieth anniversary) was celebrated recently at Bergen, N. J. The "groom" is ninety-one, and the "bride" eighty-seven. They have fifty-nine living descendants, but the happy old couple enjoyed this anniversary with as much zeal as their youngest guest, dancing with their great-grandchildren.

BEGGARS are choosers, it seems, in these days. A Connecticut beggar recently called at a clergyman's house, and the lady gave him a coat slightly threadbare, and minus a single button. The applicant for charity passed it back, exclaiming, with offended dignity, "Madam, I want a coat that I should not be ashamed to wear in the daytime." His would-be benefactress gazed at him in amazement, and then retired to repair the garment for the use of her own husband.

Only a few days before his death Dean Alford revised the proof sheets of his recent Advent Sermons (including the one preached before the Queen) which will be issued immediately in a small volume by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, entitled—"Truth and Trust: Lessons of the War."

LONDON papers mention it as a specially commendable piece of good manners that most of the members of the new School Board sit uncovered while the board is in session, out of deference to the lady members.

THE YEAR'S BALANCE-SHEET.

So many calls,	So many mercies.
So many wants,	So many gifts.
So many poor,	So many rich.
So many Societies,	So much need of them.
So much to do,	So little done.
So many to be helped,	So few to do it.
So much asked,	So little given.
So much talked about,	So little listened to.
So much preaching,	So little practice.

A GENTLEMAN attending Spurgeon's weekly prayer-meeting writes that, the evening being wet, there were only fifteen hundred persons present.

It was a wise negro who, in speaking of the happiness of married people, said, "Dat 'ar 'pende altogether on how dey 'joy deyselfes."

He who receives a good turn should never forget it; he who does one should never remember it.

Many persons have quickness to discover their faults who have not energy enough to eradicate them.