

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Saviour visit thy plantation, Grant us Lord a gracious rain; All will come to desolation, Unless thou return again— Lord revive us, &c."

Thus we sing. Thus we pray. But what condition are our churches in for a visit from the blessed Saviour? Most of us when we expect a visit from a stranger or a friend, have some preparation, more or less, one would like to make. Then how about our hearts, our houses, homes, family altars, secret chamber? If we are sincere, in real earnest, and mean that the Saviour should actually make the churches a visit,

I am apt to think most who read these lines, would like that there should be some little preparation made to receive him.

Methodists if he took this church and that, at its bidding—unless they are very unlike the church with which I worship, on the first Lord's day morning, or the most favoured moon-lit evening, he would not find much over a third of the church members—of his professed disciples,—present, and probably two-thirds of those females.

"Grant us Lord a gracious rain." A gracious rain! Why how many fields are fenced, and ploughed, and sowed, and harrowed,—in a word—in a condition to be profited by a gracious rain? Those plantations, if the poet meant by the expression the churches—and no doubt he did—these plantations, according to my mind, are in any thing but a desirable condition for a visit from the great husbandman. The fences in many places are down. The gates are off the hinges, the bars are broken and lost—in many localities used up for firewood or for other purposes. It is all a common, The stranger could not tell where the wilderness ended, or where the plantation began. The hedgerows, once so nice, and trim, the paths so clean, the grand walks so lonely, the bowers so shady. O, how changed! Weeds, thistles, thorns, briars, abound. Foxes, and wolves and ravenous beasts prowling about portions of "the plantations," and their hideous noises often cause alarm among the most faithful of the Master's servants and husbandmen.

In other words, and dropping all metaphor, the discipline of too many of our Baptist churches in Nova Scotia has been so neglected of late, has fallen into such disrepute, into such a deplorable condition, that no visits from the Master, no divine influences, no revival seasons, can reasonably be expected, until the ancient landmarks are erected, until a thorough purgation takes place. I here it, I see it, it is, so far as I can gather information, a standing disgrace to our churches, many of them at least, that ministers, deacons, elders and members, who, in many respects ornament their professions, have not courage to deal with this crying evil, the laxity of discipline.

How can we expect revival influences to be showered down upon churches, guilty of every crime, every offence almost charged against the churches of Asia? It would be like encouragement to go on in sin, if gracious influences were bestowed while the churches held in fellowship and communion members, whom the world itself points at, in many instances, and justly, with derision and scorn.

No, no. No "gracious rains" ought to be expected until the plantations are righted up, and in a condition profitably to receive them. It appears to me that much of what the Apostle James addressed to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, "in his day, and left on record, has a marvellously apt illustration and application to the condition of our churches just now, and may be studied with great profit by every true hearted christian.

The season of the year is approaching, if not already arrived, when it is convenient to hold special meetings, and have special services, with a view of promoting the Saviour's cause, and endeavouring to win souls. But O, I entreat my brethren, before they enter upon any thing special in this way, before they invite anew the Saviour's visits to "the plantations," where they reside, or preside, to hasten and make such preparations, for His presence, as will ensure a welcome if He comes, and "Well done good and faithful servants," as the plaudit and result of his inspection of each particular "plantation."

But some of those who may require to be dealt with and unless repentant, excluded, are wealthy, some are in influential positions. These are the very ones, who deserve first of all to be disciplined. Their examples are ruinous. Their influence is

THE AGE OF RAILROADS AND THE TELEGRAPH gives rise to fast living, and increases the desire for making rapid fortunes—some wishing to outstrip, and other to be at least equal to their neighbors. In order to keep up the eager and unequal contest, the brain is taxed to its utmost power, while humanity is rendered an easy prey to disease. The heart, Liver, Stomach, Lungs, or Nervous System become afflicted, and sickness, in the form of Heart Disease, Jaundice, Dyspepsia, Bronchitis, Consumption, Paralysis, or Mania, is the result. The use of Fellows' Compound Syrup of Hypophosphites will enable the mind to sustain a greater strain unfettered by conflicting thoughts and unwearyed by continued study. It imparts power of concentration. What before seemed difficult of solution becomes comparatively easy, and the body is physically stronger under its use.

For the Christian Messenger.

CONVENTION SERMON,

PREACHED BY REV. E. A. CRAWLEY, D. D. At the Baptist Convention held at St. Stephen, N. B., 1872; and published by request of the Convention.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive."—ACTS XX. 35.

[Concluded.]

The cases strike us as the more remarkable, because they contrast strongly with man's natural avarice, and are so contrary to the disposition shown by the Jews at some other periods; as, for instance, in the time of Malachi, who, in the name of Jehovah, addressed the Jews of his day with the indignant rebuke, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee?" To which God replies, "Ye have robbed me in tithes and offerings." The noble spirit of giving that had burst forth in the days of the tabernacle and of the first temple, had long passed away, and now the narrow minded Jews grudged even to render to God the appointed offerings of every day. But time flowed on, and with it came those wondrous changes of men's ordinary dispositions and lives, that under the teaching of John the Baptist, and still more under that of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, shewed the power of a new dispensation. A sense of the blessedness of giving revived in Zaccheus we see it, mingled with a sense of the justice of restitution, "Behold, Lord," says he, "the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore to him four fold." But the most remarkable case, perhaps, is that utter disregard of property, which, at first, possessed the church of Jerusalem, when, together with themselves, they seem to have devoted their all to God, without reserve, for his service in the support of his church and people. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." They, doubtless, felt then how much more blessed it is to give than to receive; and the records of those cases remain as standing memorials of that truth; as well as to shew that there is a mighty power in the truth, that only requires that men's hearts shall rightly receive it in order to reach at once the highest standard of giving, and with it the greatest nearness to God, and the largest amount of self-sacrificing, devoted benevolence of which the heart of man is, perhaps, capable in our present state.

Such cases as these, in which the arm of mammon for the time was broken and his power crushed, must startle people who reflect in this world of mammon-worshippers. Such large-hearted giving, such utter abandonment, even, of all rights of property, in the rich luxury of yielding all to God, seem to fall on our gold-hunters like the thunderbolt, so absolutely variant is it from the constant deep current of the feelings of the worldly man. Still there is another giving of which there are even more instances than of these cases of cheerful offering of large pecuniary gifts, instances which are even greater evidences of the power over the heart of the Divine beneficence, and of the principle our text teaches, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." I allude to those many cases in which men, under the power of the truth upon them, have given, not only their money, but themselves to God; and that by no partial surrender, but by a life-long dedication of all they have and all they are.

In a modified sense, indeed, every Christian does this, must do it to be a Christian, but innumerable have been the instances of those who have done it with so complete, so absolute a renunciation of themselves, as to compel in all who met them the conviction that they were men of another sphere, men whom nothing could so fitly describe, not merely in regard to what they ought to be, but what they are, as the words, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." How plain it is that Paul was such a man. From the day that the voice of Jesus arrested him all the ties of earth were loosened, old prejudices gone, the implacable enemy changed into the devoted, untiring advocate of the cause of him whom he once had persecuted with chains and death. Paul reserved nothing,

name, property, distinction, ease, all were sacrificed without a murmur or a regret. No occasional generosity in giving of our worldly substance can possibly equal so absolute a surrender of oneself as this. Many more men of similar spirit have lived and passed to heaven, who, from the peculiarity of their circumstances, have left on earth no permanent record of their lives, but whose names will shine brightly in the world of infinite rewards. But coming to later times, and looking at that long array of eminent Christians who have led the way in modern missions, braving the unbelief and tender expostulations of friends, the sneer of the world, the loss of the thousand comforts of a civilized home, the appalling dangers of their mission field, how impossible it is to refuse to them the meed of praise and admiration that belongs to men who truly give themselves away to God. It may be admitted that the enthusiasm, or, if you will, the romance, that unavoidably attends a subject like that of modern missions, having in it so many elements that address the soul's deepest emotions, may have led us too readily to look on all missionaries as martyrs; there may be no doubt, also, that every portion of the mission field may not be equally trying, and that many circumstances that have arisen since the commencement of the missionary enterprise may have tended to mitigate, to a considerable extent, its more burthen-some features, but such admissions, however amply made within the bounds of truth, have no power whatever to lessen the grandeur of the self-devotion made by such men as Schwartz, Henry Martyn, or Judson.

A reference to Howard may, to some, seem too hackneyed, but that were an injurious position; to such a topic Howard's name belongs, coupled with the affection and the reverence attached to the holiest and dearest of household words. His was a life-devotion to the afflicted, because Christ has commended them to the sympathies of his people. He gave his fortune, he gave himself away to God in Christ, that he might meliorate the condition of the suffering. No gift was ever more absolute, none ever shone with a brighter lustre of lowly self-renunciation in the giver.

An unthinking mind in recurring to these instances of the power of the principle—the blessedness of giving—as inspired by a sense of the infinite worthiness of the Great Giver, may admit, possibly, that it has produced great results, and still doubt whether those results, however beneficent in themselves, rewarded those who caused them. Fastening his eye chiefly on the losses, the sacrifices, the labors, that attended the performance of the acts of beneficence, at least in some instances, he sees no further than this, his thoughts have no power to penetrate the interior of a mind animated with the noblest sentiments in the universe, and to apprehend the blessedness that must needs attend a spirit stirred by heaven's noblest emotion. But what truth is surer than this, that the happiness of man is always as the excellence and rank of the principle that moves him. The seat of happiness is the soul; and despite the idolatry that continues to be paid to show, wealth, appetite, all the cabinets of all the universities in the world hold not more illustrations of physical facts, than the world constantly presents proof and instances of the great moral fact, that all the supposed means of happiness—wealth, station, luxury, appetite,—may be present, and the heart of the possessor be miserable! But where is the instance of one possessing and obeying a high moral or religious motive, who has not found a corresponding deep and joyous, perhaps lofty, sense of blessedness, that the presence or the absence of outward advantages has had no power to affect. Howard, in the blessed consciousness of carrying relief to a suffering patient in the plague-hospital at Cherson, suffered no dread or pain in the

personal danger to which he exposed himself. The Moravian brethren, on the inhospitable shores of Greenland became entirely willing to make them their permanent abode, so soon as the poor natives began to melt and weep at the story of the Cross.

So necessary is the connection between well-doing and inner, joyous emotion, that it is true in a certain sense, that virtue becomes thus its own reward; of no form of virtue is this more true than that of beneficence. Let any one, from a real feeling of kindness merely, do good to others, and the soul is immediately conscious of a purer joy than flows from any other source. What dignity has sometimes clothed even the abject by the power of a true heroic kindness. When Norfolk in Virginia, a year or two before the war, was desolated by pestilence, and many a physician, and even teacher of religion, had either died or fled, who dared despise the poor lost women who rose suddenly to their true womanhood by devoting themselves unbidden, and unheeding danger, as nurses to the sick, who otherwise must have died without a hand to soothe their misery? May the God who saved Rahab open to these poor outcasts the gates of heaven!

But if true kindness wakes in the soul so noble a sentiment, how much higher and purer the joy when inspired by the love of God! That must be unquestionably the highest and the purest of all joys. The joy of love in giving is the highest joy of God; for God is love; and when the giving flows from love to God, prompted by a view of His infinite beneficence, there can be no joy on earth or in heaven higher or purer than this.

Blind are we, and slow learners in the mysteries of godliness, or surely many more of those mysteries would stand revealed to our view. What a book of hidden wonders is ever open before us in the Providence and Grace of God, and hidden through our blindness; and yet, with what breadth and clearness revealing God's beneficence, boundless as Himself. The world! the Bible! the universe! all we see and know of God's working around us; what are these but one vast act of love—God revealed to us in giving? Here is Deity. Here is Heaven, and around us, everywhere, all nature, all creation, warbles in universal strains of wondrous music. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is so with God Himself; what else, then, can it be with His creatures? And why, on earth, as islands of wretchedness in a glorious sea of love—sterile rocks, parched and arid, in a boundless plain of fertility and beauty—are there poor that we might feed, sick that we might relieve, wretched that we might counsel; and, oh my brethren! so many, many ignorant that by giving, if not going; aiding others, if not preaching, we might instruct in the way of life, and so save from an endless death? We often commune with our ignorance and our wonder when this question occurs; I do not know whether any soul on earth has yet fully understood the power and mighty meaning of the revelation that the poor, the wretched, the ignorant themselves are constantly and plainly making. "We are here," they cry, "that you may help us, pity us, instruct us, save us, and so learn by acts of kindness, the only way you can learn on earth, that it is more blessed to give than to receive; that this is to be Godlike; this only that can fully fit you for the highest presence and fellowship of heaven, that world of holy, pure and disinterested benediction."

Among those whose poor dumb mouths, like Cassar's wounds, thus plead with us, none are more innumerable, none more eloquent, than those, who, to so great though not exculpatory extent, owe their ignorance to the misfortune of their birth. All around us are such men; those who are low, degraded, vicious, because the wheel of fortune, if we might so speak, in unsparring revolutions, has plunged them into that mine of corrupt associations, from which their feeble consciences, or their debased will, has had no power to raise them; they float on the canals and rivers of this great continent—they throng its sea-board—they people our prisons—lost, are they, by the drift of circumstances—by the tyranny of a bad society as much as by the badness of their hearts; in their circumstances you and I might have been as bad as they, or worse—in our circumstances they might have been better than we are.

But stretch your eyes across the deep blue sea, away to distant strands. Let Africa, China, Japan, Australia, Polynesia, lift up the veil that hides their millions from our eyes, and what sights court our

view! what ruthless bloodshed! what unnatural parricides! what loathsome idols, glaring on their infatuated worshippers! Domestic joys are almost unknown—honesty and truth are fled—and piety is self-torture or the immolation of children or parents. But what had these been if trained like you; had their mothers from their earliest years whispered to them of the love

of Jesus; had the meliorating influences of Christianity baptized all their associations! There is no hesitation as to the answer. Circumstances only have made them worse than we, if worse they are. Our circumstances might have made them far better than we are. But we, mark you, can control their circumstances. It is in the power of civilized and Christian countries to pour the light on their darkness, to give them the Gospel with its pure morals and its heavenly hopes and joys. Why then are these millions now on the earth stretching forth their hands to us in mute agony if it be not to constrain us to acknowledge that it is better to give than to receive—better to send to them the word of life than to roll in our carriages, to loll on our luxurious sofas, to tread our soft carpets, or to satiate our appetites at dainty banquets. Alas! the text with all its momentous truth is the reverse of much or most of the daily, hourly teaching of our practices, for that in language too plain to be mistaken insists upon it, that to receive is far more blessed than to give.

Oh for some check to this dangerous mistake,—this daring denial of heaven's highest truth. There is no check but in action. Our practise so fearfully denies our theory, simply because we have stood so long on theory alone, or theory in great force, but followed by most meagre doing. Let this or any other people arise to the determination of acting out the theory, and boldly live and do like men convinced, yes, swallowed up by the conviction, that giving is better than receiving, and the soul-destroying and daring impiety that reverses God's word, is, as to that people annihilated.

Brethren of this Convention, permit me to congratulate you that God has thus greatly honored you by calling you to the stand you occupy. I conceive you to be set for the establishment of the truth of my text, and your object, doubtless is action. Give! Give! Give! for God and for His cause, I take to be your motto, your honor and your life. It is a cry in which none but the greedy and selfish hears any sound but that of sweetest music. May it be inscribed on your banner, may it be your war cry in your onsets on all hurtful errors and habits that obstruct your progress. At this sound let hearts be open wide as well as purses, and in all your efforts may God the Saviour stand by to cheer you, and to make the people know how grand a truth inspires you in the words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." With how divine a wish your bosoms swell, when you say to say to them, May God inspire you too with this grand truth, may He enrich and bless you with this divine luxury of giving.

We should grieve if in these words we seemed to disparage any act of generosity, or to be blind to some noble gifts among us that are standing monuments of the liberality of the donors. But admitting, fully and cheerfully these marked exceptions, of which this place I learn, contains more than one example, the truth, nevertheless, ought not to be concealed, that a great reform is wanted on the earth, and that it must come ere the kingdom of God shall fully come, and that reform lies in the triumph of the text.

That glorious enlargement of the truth for which we hope, cannot commence with the incubus of covetousness pressing on the heart of the Church. That incubus must be thrown off—Mammon must be driven from our midst and giving largely to God, for education, for missions, abroad and at home, for all deeds of love and mercy, must become our joy and honor ere Christ our Redeemer can be enthroned upon the earth. What vice retards his coming more than that narrowness of heart that denies to God the Giver of all, those needful expenditures in His cause, which He has made to be plainly essential to any greatly increased measures of the divine giving itself, in the grace of salvation to millions of the heathen nations, and in that of the union, purity and perfectness of the church.

The purest joy is unspeakable—the most impressive prayer is silent, and the most solemn preacher at a funeral is the silent one whose lips are cold.