

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XVII., No. 7.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, February 14, 1872.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXXVI., No. 7.

Poetry.

ARE ALL THE CHILDREN IN?

BY MRS. S. T. PERRY.

The darkness falls, the wind is high,
Dense black clouds fill the Western sky;
The storm will soon begin.
The thunders roll, the lightnings fla h,
I hear the great round raindrops dash—
Are all the children in?

They're coming softly to my side;
Their forms within my arms I hide—
No other arms as sure.
The storm may rage with fury wild,
With trusting faith each little child
With mother feels secure.

But future days are drawing near,
They'll go from this warm shelter here
Out in the world's wild din.
The rain will fall, the cold winds blow;
I'll sit alone and long to know,
Are all the children in?

Will they have shelters then secure,
Where hearts are waiting, strong and sure,
And love is true when tried?
Or will they find a broken reed,
When a rength of heart they so much need
To help them brave the tide?

God knows it all; His will is best:
I'll shield them now, and leave the rest
In His most righteous hand.
Sometimes souls He loves are riven
By tempests wild, and thus are driven
Nearer the better land.

If He should call me home before
The children go, on that bright shore,
Afar from care and sin,
I know that I shall watch and wait
Till He, the Keeper of the Gate,
Lets all the children in.

Religious.

THE CHURCH AT EDEN.

BY A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE
NEW YORK METHODIST.

June 15th.—Three months at Eden, and long and weary months they have been. Little did I know the trials which awaited me when I sang so heartily the long-metre doxology at the close of the Central Conference, shook hands with my brethren, and hastened to my new field of labor. Eden! there was music in the word. How bright was the picture Hope painted, how cheerful the song which she sung!

Well do I recall the eventful Saturday night when I reached the railroad-station, in the midst of a furious storm of snow, hail, and rain, combined in most disagreeable proportions. There was no friendly voice to welcome me, so I inquired where the nearest farmer lived.

"Only half a mile distant," said the sleepy ticket agent; "a straight road, and you cannot lose your way."

I found the house, and gently knocked at the door. The effect of the knock was startling. Instantly a choir of dogs raised their voices and barked with astonishing rapidity all along the musical scale, from deep-toned bass to screaming tenor; then a gruff voice crying, "Down, Towzer, Juno, Prince, and Jip; down! down! keep quiet!" then the door opened, and a tall, thin, dark-faced, oddly-dressed man stood in the door-way, shading his eyes to get a view of the new-comer.

It was my first view of Brother Croaker—almost a pity it was not my last.

"The new minister," I said, explanatory.

"Oh! you be. I was told to meet you, but thought you would not wait till the last train. Why, it must be nearly nine o'clock. Come in, and take a seat by the fire."

Then he slowly filled his pipe, encircled his head in a cloud of smoke, and suddenly ejaculated:

"Do you smoke?"

"No, indeed," I responded.

"Pity you do not," he drawled, "for you will need all the comfort which a good pipe can give you."

I looked surprised, and he began to explain.

"The people of Eden are a peculiar people."
"And zealous of good works," I added, to help out the quotation.

"No, indeed," he said, with a voice and countenance which showed a strange kind of gloomy satisfaction. "The fact is, the church has run down, and we may as well close the church-doors. (A groan.) We cannot pay the preacher, for we are poor. (Another groan.) I know that I feel poor. (A groan.) And spiritually, the church is cold and dead. The membership is divided, and are always talking against each other. I would say nothing about our troubles, but you are the new minister, and you ought to know everything about the people here. I hate to speak against any person; but it is my duty to let you know the exact state of the church."

O Brother Croaker! what a reception to give the new minister!

Church affairs are in a sad state, though not as sad as was represented. Religion has not altogether died out, though the flame is small and somewhat flickering. There is temporal prosperity among the people, though they know not the meaning of the word "liberality." Still, this is a difficult field of labor. Church service is held on Sundays only when the weather is clear. Class-meetings are dead, and the prayer-meeting is dying. The congregation is small, and apparently indifferent to every sermon which has been preached, save one, a sermon on the sin of slander.

It did each one good to hear his neighbor publicly rebuked for his "easily besetting sin." The financial condition of the church is, if possible, still worse. Still there would be hope for brighter days if it were not for the incessant quarrelling-going on. There was first a dispute about the introduction of an organ in the church. That was settled. Then there was trouble from mutual jealousies on the part of the two leading sinners—singers I mean—in the choir. That was settled. Then one member brought a law-suit against another, and had to be expelled. Then there was a great disturbance caused by something said by somebody, though no one could tell exactly what was said, or who said it. And now comes the greatest trouble of all. Two brethren charge each other with deception in a trade of horses, and the members, as usual, have taken sides and are divided on the merits of the question, if it has any. Oh! what is to be done?

"Trade back again," I suggested.

"Impossible," was the reply, "for one of the horses died last night."

Enough of this. When one begins to tell of his trials, he is apt to make a long story. Patience, patience!

The power of prayer alone is left. Nine months more, and then, Conference; and with it the prospect of a change. A glorious institution is the Methodist itinerancy; may no ruthless hands assail it. One thing is nearly certain: if I can, in the language of anxious church committees, "get the ear of the Bishop," this is what I shall whisper in it: "Do not send me back to Eden."

January 15th.—The Lord be praised! We are in the midst of a gracious revival of religion. Think of it—a revival at Eden! The long drought is at an end, and showers of divine influence are falling on this parched and barren soil. Who could have prophesied this last June! "This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes." It would take a long time to go into the history of this revival; but never was a work begun in which the hand of God was so signally manifested. This revival is another illustration of the triumphant power of prayer on the part of a faithful few.

"I cannot attend the meetings," said Sister F., "because of age and infirmities; but every day I pray that God may bless this church. And he will do it, never fear."

Would that the church had more such members!

Then I found that others were praying with unusual earnestness, that a

spirit of activity was beginning to be felt, that there was unusual attention given to the preaching of the Gospel.

Somehow what was said seemed to take hold. At last there was one person under conviction of sin, one whom I least expected would be; and then another, and another, and another!

And now, how easy to work! how quickly does the harvest follow the sowing of the seed! My heart joins with the angels in the chorus among the hills of Bethlehem, when the birth of the Saviour was announced: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

What a scene that was last night! If there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, how much more joy over the score of sinners who kneeled around the altar in prayer! How the congregation did sing, and how the brethren did pray, and how the shout of victory ran round, and how the tide of devotion rose higher and higher, until it seemed to bear all before it! Hallelujah!

Three months to Conference; and when it meets, this is what I want to whisper in the Bishop's ear:

"Send me back to Eden!"

THE PRODIGAL RESTORED.

Some years ago, sojourning at a much frequented English watering-place, I met with an earnest Christian tradesman of the town. Although his occupation was not in selling books, yet he had, in a prominent place in his shop window, an assortment of Bibles, with an illuminated card containing this announcement, "Luther's sword sold here!" With one of these "swords" that Christian soldier, Mr. Carr, fought and won the following battle:

A band of young men, with hands and faces blackened, and dressed in very grotesque costumes, arranged themselves before this gentleman's door one day for an exhibition of their peculiar performances. These people used to be called "Ethiopian Serenaders!" After they had sung some comic melodies, with the peculiar gesture and grimaces of the party, a tall and interesting young man, who had the look of one who was beneath his proper station, stepped up to the door, tambourine in hand, to ask for dropping pennies of the people. Mr. Carr, taking one of the Bibles out of the window, addressed the youth:

"See here, young man I will give you a shilling, and this book besides, if you will read a portion of it to your comrades there, in the hearing of the by-standers."

"Here's a shilling for an easy job!" he chuckled out to his mates. "I'm going to give you a public reading."

Mr. Carr opened at the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, and pointing to the eleventh verse, requested the young man to commence reading at that verse.

"Now, Jem, speak up!" said one of the party, "and earn your shilling like a man."

And Jem took the book and read: "And he said, A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living."

There was something in the voice of the reader as well as in the strangeness of the circumstances, that lulled all to silence; while an air of seriousness took possession of the youth, and still further commanded the rapt attention of the crowd.

He read on:

"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country; and there wasted his substance in riotous living."

"That's thee, Jem!" ejaculated one of his comrades. "It's just like what you told me of yourself and father."

The reader continued:

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want."

"Why, that's thee again, Jem?" said the voice—"go on!"

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him."

"That's like us all!" said the voice, once more interrupting; "we are all beggars, and might be better than we are! Go on! let's hear what came of it?"

And the young man went on, and as he read his voice trembled:

"And when he came to himself he said: How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father."

At this point he fairly broke down and could read no more. All were impressed and moved. The whole reality of the past rose up to view; and, in the clear story of the gospel, a ray of hope dawned upon him for his future. His father—his father's house—his mother, too; and the plenty and the love ever bestowed upon him there; and the hired servants all having enough; and then himself, his father's son; and his present state, his companionship, his habits, his sins, his poverty, his outcast condition, his questionable mode of living—all these came climbing into the citadel of his mind, and fairly overcame him.

That day, that scene, proved the turning point in that young prodigal's life. He sought the advice of the Christian friend who had thus providentially interposed for his deliverance. Communications were made to his parents, which resulted in a long-lost and dearly loved child returning to the familiar earthly home; and, still better, in his return to his heavenly Father.

THE DIVINE TRAGEDY.

We had a brief notice a week or two since of this latest of Longfellow's poems. We make another extract or two. His picture of Judas Iscariot does not adhere, in its details, very closely to the Scripture narrative:

JUDAS ISCARIOT.

Lost! lost! for ever lost! I have betrayed
The innocent blood! O God, if thou art love,
Why didst thou leave me naked to the tempter?

Why didst thou not commission thy swift lightning
To strike me dead? or why did I not perish
With those by Herod slain, the innocent children
Who went with playthings in their little hands
Into the darkness of the other world
As if to bed? Or wherefore was I born,
If thou in thy foreknowledge didst perceive

All that I am, and all that I must be?
I know I am not generous, am not gentle
Like other men; but I have tried to be,
And I have failed. I thought by following Him,
I should grow like him; but the unclean spirit
That from my childhood up hath tortured me,
Hath been too cunning and too strong for me.

Am I to blame for this? Am I to blame
Because I cannot love, and ne'er have known
The love of women or the love of children,
It is a curse and a fatality,
A mark, that hath been set upon my forehead,
That none shall slay me, for it were a mercy
That I were dead, or never had been born.

Too late! too late! I shall not see him more
Among the living. That sweet, patient face

Will never more rebuke me nor those lips

Repeat the words: One of you shall betray me!

It stung me into madness. How I loved,
Yet hated him! But in the other world!

I will be there before him, and will wait
Until he comes, and fall down on my knees
And kiss his feet, imploring pardon, pardon!

I heard him say: All sins shall be forgiven,
Except the sin against the Holy Ghost,
That shall not be forgiven in this world,
Nor in the world to come. Is that my sin?

Have I offended so there is no hope
Here, nor hereafter? That I soon shall know,
O God, have mercy! Christ have mercy on me!

(Throws himself headlong from the cliff.)

The representation of the visit of Nicodemus to our Lord at night is somewhat closer the Divine record:

NICODEMUS AT NIGHT.

NICODEMUS.

The streets are silent. The dark houses seem
Like sepulchres, in which the sleepers lie
Wrapped in their shrouds, and for the moment dead.

The lamps are all extinguished; only, only one
Burns steadily, and from the door its light
Lies like a shining gate across the street.

He waits for me. Ah! should this be at last
The long-expected Christ! I see him there
Sitting alone, deep buried in his thought,
As if the weight of all the world were resting
Upon him, and thus bowed him down.
O Rabbi
We know thou art a Teacher come from God,
For no man can perform the miracles
Thou dost perform, except the Lord be with him,
How can these things be?
He seems to speak of some vague realms
Of shadows,
Some unsubstantial kingdom of the air!
It is not this the Jews are waiting for,
Nor can this be the Christ, the Son of David,
Who shall deliver us!

CHRISTUS.

Art thou a master
Of Israel, and knowest not these things?
We speak that we do know, and testify
That we have seen, and ye will not receive
Our witness. If I tell you earthly things
And ye believe not, how shall ye believe
If I should tell you of things heavenly?
And no man hath ascended up to heaven,
But He alone, that first came down from heaven,
Even the Son of Man, which is in heaven!

NICODEMUS (aside.)

This is a dreamer of dreams; a visionary,
Whose brain is overtaken, until he deems
The unseen world to be a thing substantial,
And thus we live in an unreal vision!
And yet his presence fascinates and fills me
With wonder, and I feel myself exalted
Into a higher region, and become
Myself in part a dreamer of his dreams,
A seer of his visions!

It is not until we have passed through
The furnace that we are made to know
How much dross was in our composition.