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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"The harvest truly is plenteous but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the lord of the harvest that he will send forth more labourers into his harvest."—Matthew ix. 37 & 38.

God sends his servants forth
To spread his word abroad,
They go from South to North,
Obedient to their God.

They sound the gospel call
From West unto the East,
"Come Sinners, one, and all
Unto the gospel feast."

All bitter scoffs and jests
Afflictions and distress
Are but the gospel tests
That give the cause success.

All that of sin remains
Root out from off the soil,
The "strong man" bind in chains,
His goods cast out and spoil.

Crime the great monster stalks
Abroad throughout the globe,
Sin unimpeded walks
In bright concealing robe.

Sin's monarch to dethrone,
Dark em ire to overthrow
To make the Saviour known
God's servants fearless go.

Salvation to procure
For Adam's fallen race,
They shrink not to endure
Hardships in every place.

In the field waste and bare
The roots of sin are grown,
And in each scattered tare
Are seeds of sorrow sown.

They pluck each bitter root
Each seed of endless woe
Frown out the ground, that fruit
May to God's glory grow.

O Lord they humbly pray
Let naught our labours foil,
Send servants more that they
May in thy vineyard toil.

Geo. C. Hutchison.

Religious.

DIVISIONS IN CHURCHES.

"In union is strength," is a common saying among men, and as true as it is common. And the converse of this is also true, when applied to any association of men that ought to be united. Weakness in all such cases results from divisions. And nowhere is this more frequently illustrated than in churches. We do not now allude to divisions among Christians into different denominations and sects, but to divisions among those of the same faith and who have a membership in the same church. Here, where we ought to find the sincerest love, the warmest sympathy, the clearest and holiest union, we often find alienations, discord and divisions. Notwithstanding the many inspired exhortations to be of the same mind, to the exercise of brotherly love, patience, forbearance, long suffering, and forgiveness, the instances are common and numerous where churches are divided, and weakened by their divisions. The members may continue their connection with the same church, but they are not in cordial and hearty fellowship with each other. Consequently they do not have the combined strength of the whole body, in any of the important work belonging to a church. They are united in support of the ministry, or at least of the same ministry. A man that would be satisfactory as a minister to some would not be satisfactory to others. He may be disliked by these, not on account of any fault or failing of his own, but because he happens to be liked by those. And so in regard to any course of action which the church ought to adopt. There is division of counsels and division of interests, discipline is not properly maintained, the church languishes, and Christ is wounded in the house of his friends, or at least of his professed friends. The history of many churches is saddened by

this fact, and though once strong and flourishing, they are now feeble and languishing, because of their divisions, and some of them have lost their name and visibility for this reason. Their want of union and combined effort has caused their extinction. And what is peculiar about such divisions is that the different parties believe themselves to be conscientiously and religiously right. They are sorry that the church is not united, they wish a reconciliation could be effected they tell us: but in conversation with them, you will find that "reconciliation" in this as in some other "reconciliation" means the conformity of all the others to their own views. Says a late writer, "I have observed often that those who bemoan divisions in a church are those who make them," and he might have added, are most active and influential in perpetuating them. Such see the sad state into which the church is brought by its divisions, but they do not see that they more than others are the cause of it. They would take the mote out of their brother's eye while a beam is in their own. And such is human nature, and such it has been through all the ages. But a Christian is supposed to be controlled not by nature but by grace. And when grace reigns, there will be union in that church to the extent of that grace. The apostle regarded such divisions in the churches as the product of the flesh, and to be studiously avoided. To the Romans he says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences." Mark them; ascertain who they are, what the reasons of their conduct, and hold them responsible. To the Corinthians he wrote more at length. He was deeply interested in the church at Corinth, had himself been the means of its establishment. But after he left, the report reached him that there were divisions in the church. So from the old city of Ephesus he wrote them a letter. In that letter he said, "I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it." He was not quite ready to believe all that he heard, but a part of it was undoubtedly true. And he regarded the cause of the divisions as proof that nature had triumphed over grace. "For," said he, "while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" The inference was fairly drawn from the premises. And then how soundly he reasoned with them upon the subject, showing the wrong of indulging such things, and the obligation to lay aside all personal feelings, and labor to be united as one man. And he not only reasoned, but entreated them to do this. These are his words. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same judgement." Is there no force in such language as addressed to members of churches at the present day?

A COSY VESTRY.

A brother, in describing the pleasant condition and the encouraging prospects of a church, says: "We have with a strenuous effort finished a cosy vestry, with a small kitchen and conveniences for our social gatherings. The vestry is well lighted, comfortable, and attractive, and already its good influence is very perceptible. How much we have lost for the want of it." We doubt not others have had the same experience—have suffered the want and learned the advantages of a good vestry. Besides there are a good many churches now which are going through the same process: they are learning, or have already learned, the disadvantages of having no comfortable place for their social meetings, and other gatherings of a social character, but have not acquired the knowledge of the real advantage such accommodations would give them.

It is of no use to contend that if persons have true religion they can have a

good meeting anywhere, whether the place is comfortable and inviting or not; you might just as well inquire why a Christian cannot be happy and serve God in a cold, inconvenient home? On this principle a large amount now expended might be saved. But this is not the way Christians generally do; they must have their dwellings convenient, comfortable and attractive; and where they fail to serve their wants or please the eye, they tear down, alter, build over, often consulting their taste more than their purse. Without passing censure for this, we would ask, why not work by the same rule in providing places for religious purposes? Why is it not as proper and necessary that they should be convenient and pleasing to the eye as our own dwellings. Must these be made comfortable attractive, painted, richly papered and adorned, and the house of prayer lay waste and neglected?

But more to the point—those churches that have no vestry must suffer great embarrassments; if they hold their social meetings in their church edifice, it is large, difficult to make comfortably warm in cold weather, and a dozen or two persons are almost lost in it. The very appearance is forbidding, the atmosphere is chilling, and it is hard cultivating the social religious element, and much of the profit of what otherwise might have been a good meeting is lost. How different would the same number of persons feel themselves and appear to each other if convened in a neat, cosy room, warm and well lighted; the members, instead of being scattered one here and another there, would come together, social feelings would be awakened, and all the outward surroundings contributing to comfort and pleasure; the heart would become more susceptible to devout emotions, and the expression of the hour would be sustained with more promptness, spirituality and profit. There is much more depending on the outward circumstances connected with our social religious meetings than many seem to realize.

Then, too, every church needs a place where they can meet for social intercourse, which extends their acquaintance, cultivates social feelings, increases an interest in each other and for the general cause, and strengthens their hands for their labor.

It is our earnest desire that those churches which are destitute of these conveniences, so essential to their comfort and prosperity, would consider the subject, and put forth immediate efforts to secure a 'cosy vestry.'

LIGHTS AND SHADES IN JAPAN.

We referred in our last to some of the recent eventful changes in Japan that are marking the wonderful progress of that empire in the new line upon which it has so auspiciously entered. Every mail brings new evidence that the old order of things has passed away, and the last month has added significant proofs that the government is in earnest in its efforts to bring their nation abreast of the enlightened sentiment of the age.

The announcement has been made that the young Mikado and his ministers have determined that the people shall henceforth have a voice in public affairs. They are to be allowed to elect a Parliament, consisting of 600 members, to be divided into two houses—a most important step towards self-government—that will give the people the power of supervising the action of their rulers, and of preventing the tyrannical rule of irresponsible despots. The government has also issued a decree prohibiting by severe penalties, the sale of young girls for purposes of prostitution, a custom that has long been tolerated, though so repugnant to every idea of propriety and virtue.

There is reason to fear that the report which announced that the government had proclaimed religious toleration and equality, is incorrect and premature. The missionaries who are most intimate with the plans of the authorities, are the least sanguine that any

radical change is to be decreed in reference to Christianity. Treaty protection to the native Christians has not been ordained; and while there has been no renewal of persecution, it has been noted that the young men who have been brought under religious impressions have been removed from the influence of the missionaries, promoted to official stations, and placed in positions where they would be exposed to powerful temptations.

Missionaries of Christ, however, are at work, and their numbers are increasing. The Bible is to be translated, and a spirit of Christian union is prevailing. Silently but surely the heaven is spreading, and we cannot but hope and believe, that the evidences of material advancement are but the precursors of a thorough reform, that shall displace the teachings of their effete superstition, by substituting the elevating and heart-renewing principles of the pure faith revealed in the Word of God.—*Am. Messenger.*

SIN, A DECEPTION.

BY REV. O. P. EACHES.

Sin is a great falsehood. From the first it has made promises only to break them. Adam was to be lifted up among the gods, but he became a lost man. The deceptive power of sin is seen in this,—it deceives men as to its nature. If sin can hide itself in the fog, or deceive as to its meaning, its work is done.

What is sin? The liberal thinkers say it is an element of progress. As the infant spells out lessons from stumbles and falls, so sinning is a spiritual gymnastic process for begetting holiness. The materialist sees in it a perverted physical organization, a wrong shape of the skull. The remedy is physiology and right training. The pantheist sees in sin only good a little spoiled in the making. It is the dark side of good. Dr. Holmes, in a late *Atlantic Monthly*, tells us that men need only culture to be saints. Ruffianism, in the easy, free-thinking way of popular thought, is saintship in a very low degree.

But in all this there is no guilt; the soul does not stand measured by a holy law. If sin be a misfortune, it needs God's pity, not his punishment. If sin reside in the body there ought to be a hospital for lost souls, not a prison house. Heathenism knows far more about sin as a violation of God's law than modern scientific thinking. The vital questions of to-day are, What is the nature of man? and What is the nature of Jesus? If these are settled aright, religious thinking will adjust itself to them. They are the two root ideas of theology.

If there is no guilt, there is need of no atonement. If there is no depravity there can be no regeneration. If men are not lost, there can be no salvation. If the Bible view of sin be only a scare-crow to frighten people, all the terms of redemption are hollow nothings. The blood, the atonement, salvation, everlasting life, lose all their meaning.

What does God say of sin? It is rebellion, a hated thing. It is summed up in saying; sin is guilt. It may not be felt, for sin tells men it is not guilt, but it is there in the soul. As guilt, it needs atonement and pardon. As guilt, it brings down the wrath of God. Terrible words does sin bring into our language,—the wrath of God. Sin is a nature. When men sin it is not from any power of moral contagion such as spiritual typhoid fever. Each of all isolated facts of sin, lies a nature of sin out of which they come.

The preaching of the gospel is to bring men first to know themselves, then to know Jesus. The law-work must lay a foundation on which to lift up the cross. A ministry of power must be a ministry of the Holy Spirit. The spirit alone will bring men to themselves; to know their sins, and confess their sins. For any correct system of theology, for the salvation of any soul, for a successful ministry, sin

must not only be acknowledged by the head but felt in the heart.

Haldane, the Scottish Baptist, went to Geneva where D'Aubigne was studying theology, but not knowing the Saviour. Haldane explained the Scripture doctrine of depravity to him. D'Aubigne said "I now see this doctrine in the Scriptures." "That is not enough," said Haldane, "do you see it in your own heart?" This pointed remark opened his heart and brought him to Jesus. Sin felt, will lead to Jesus accepted.

NOTHING LEAVES US AS IT FOUND US.

If a sheet of paper on which a key has been laid be exposed for some minutes to the sunshine, and then instantaneously viewed in the dark, the key being removed, a fading spectre of the key will be visible. Let this paper be put aside for many months, where nothing can disturb it and then in darkness be laid on a plate of hot metal, the key will again appear. This is equally true of our minds. Every man we meet, every book we read, every picture we see, every word or tone we hear, leaves its image on the brain. These traces though invisible, never fade, but in the intense light of cerebral excitement start into prominence, just as the specter image of the key started into sight on the application of heat. It is thus with all the influences to which we are subjected.

"FRESH AIR AS A MEANS OF GRACE."

The New York *Methodist* gives a very sensible article under the above title. We copy the closing paragraphs as containing instruction that may be beneficial to Baptists as well as Methodists:—"Many a good sermon has been spoiled for want of fresh air during its delivery. The preacher has felt heavy and the people drowsy; the one, perhaps, blaming his flock for listlessness, and the other finding fault with the minister for being uninteresting; while all the time the fault was in the foul air. Who has not noticed the deadening effects of bad air in a prayer meeting, when held, as such meetings often are, in the basement of a church—a room usually built with height of ceiling absurdly low in proportion to its size? In such a place, full of people, the air becomes vitiated in a few minutes, and every breath inhaled after that is poison. We have no doubt that many ministers have broken down in health and gone to premature graves by reason of preaching and prying, night after night, for weeks at a time, in badly ventilated rooms. Architects, building committees, trustees, and sextons ought to have some one to remind them perpetually that fresh air is a vital necessity in churches. Better do without almost anything else than this. A living gospel ought never to be preached in a dead atmosphere. Give us plenty of pure air, and the preachers will preach better, the brethren will pray better, the people will sing better, all our meetings will be better attended, and followed by better consequences. Give each one of us our forty cubic inches of fresh air for inspiration, and for every minute of the service the eighteen pints to which we are each justly entitled, according to the doctors, and we shall complain less of languor, head-aches, poor preaching, and dull meetings, and be less in danger of backsliding; for we devoutly believe that fresh air is a means of grace."

The best way to prove the clearness of our mind, is by showing its faults; as when a stream discovers the dirt at the bottom, it convulses us of the transparency and purity of the water.

It is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.