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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE SNOW STORM.

BY J. H. S.

What pen can do it justice? What hand of Art, though trained and lead by Nature's loving Eye, e'er drew a scene like this! None but the

Master hand of the great Artist. Beauty, Sublimity, grandeur, all unite, and so Combined! Poor imitative man with all His pomp of pride is prostrate here; and can But own his inability to cope With Nature in her designs. No sound Disturbs; the very quietude of earth And air contains a charm that fills the soul With awe, calls forth anobis from out the deep Recesses of the heart a silent praise To Him, the Author of its joy. Earapt I gaze; the pleasing prospect deceives as I muse. Against the muffled sky, fainter The forest rears its dark back-ground, until Wood, mountain-side and plain, all bleed in one

Vast, trackless, mingling wild. 'Tis a scene I Love. To me, 'tis full of poetry and Song—song sweeter far than mortal sing.

Let

Slaves of state with feverish ambition Chase their phantom, tame; the miser worships At his shrine of gold; the jaded fool still Follows fashion through her brainless maze, Till death's dark closing portals shut them in; I envy not their joy. I only ask An understanding heart, that I may trace Through Nature's boundless realm its Father's hand

Where never-dying pleasures ever flow.

—Riverdale, Digby Co., Jan. 28th, 1874.

Religious.

THE LIVING CHRIST:

OR, CHRIST'S PRESENT WORK AN ANSWER TO MODERN DOUBT. BY JOHN CLIFFORD, M. A., LL. D., &c. SO. PREACHED AT THE AUTUMNAL SESSION OF THE BAPTIST UNION, AT NOTTINGHAM, OCTOBER 13TH, 1873.

(Concluded)

"The man answered and said unto them: Why herein is a marvelous thing that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes."—J. H. S.

In the four gospels Christ Jesus appears as the centre of an inner and an outer circle of disciples; and also of a nearer and remoter circle of beneficiaries stretching beyond His chosen servants and friends. He is the source of a singularly rich and complete manhood; blending in harmonious proportions, indomitable courage, and strong sympathy, unconsumable devotion and tearful compassion, admantine uprightness and graceful gentleness, sublime magnanimity, and child-like humility. In a word, Christ is making the purest, noblest and best men on the earth.

No land has reared more men of marked moral power than our own, more men "who make for righteousness," and who being themselves saturated with truth and goodness, diffuse the like wherever they go; and notwithstanding all our faults, no country has in modern times given Christianity so fair and thorough a trial. Our chief distinction is the number of men amongst us pervaded with parity who will not take a bribe, whose eyes flash out contempt of all meanness, "who stand four square to all the winds that blow," and who are patterns of transparent and real goodness.

Enter the pillared hall of the nation's biography and mark the statues erected there within the last few years! See the good Dean Alford, his robe of fleckless white, his heart of fearless courage, his teeming activity that never knows repose, his spirit touched to finest issues by the grace of Christ. And near him stands our own honoured Noel with a grace of manner unexcelled, a deep-toned spirituality lighting up his face that forces us to think at once of his Master, a conscience sensitive as the apple of the eye, a perfect Christian gentleman, a lover of all good men, and a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. And next

him may come George Hughes, a village squire, brave, manly, and God-fearing; and hard by, the form of Walter Powell, at once a thorough business man and a thorough Christian, with a high standard of principle in the one and of devotion in the other; and Thomas Guthrie of tenderest compassion, weeping over a city's sorrows; and Thomas Wright Matthews, brave as a lion, gentle as a woman, gifted in many ways but most in the perception and enjoyment of the love of God in Christ. A few pages further bring us to F. D. Maurice, as remarkable for his humility as for his thorough love of truth, and enthusiastic devotion to the eternal Son of God; and by his side that ceaseless worker and beautiful spirit James Hamilton; and beyond, the massive Chalmers, of whom John Macintosh, himself of royal lineage, said "I cannot conceive of a wiser, greater, or better man. Every part of his character was colossal: he had the heart of 20 men, the head of 20, and the energy of a hundred." Who are these men, and whence came they, and all their illustrious brethren? Who is at once the type and spring of their excellence, the source of all their nobility of character? Who are they? Why these are they who have already taken the crown of their manhood, and bowing in lowliest humility before the Holy One, have cast it at his feet, crying "Thou art worthy to receive honour and glory and dominion for ever and ever." These are they who have left behind them a great company of men who, taking Christ as the ideal man, are now living so as to prove that the highest types of Christian excellence are attainable, and whose acts, if they could be told out in their bare reality as they are known, would prove that all the saints are not dead, that all goodness is not historic; and yet all these, to a man, feel nothing so powerfully and profoundly as that they owe any goodness they have to Him who is the fulness of grace and truth, and out of whose fulness they have received, and grace for grace.

And will any one say the spirit of self-denial is ceasing from amongst us, and enthusiastic devotion to the welfare of souls is on the wane? On the wane! Indeed, in no respect is this fifth gospel more exactly parallel with the first, which tells how He bare all our infirmities and carried our sicknesses. Never were so many men moved with compassion as now. It is the spirit of the time, affecting alike theology and laws, institutions and individuals. Never did the flame of zeal burn brighter, or enthusiasm lead to greater hazard for the love of God and souls. In no age had the Saviour so many missionaries ready to risk their lives for His gospel, so many soldiers prepared to die in fighting His battles. Christ is inspiring the self-sacrificing work of the age, and originating and sustaining the most beneficent operations for the good of those for whom He died. Never was this done on a larger scale, never with more heartiness of consecration, never with more thoroughness of allegiance to the authority of the Lord Jesus.

What have our ears heard and our eyes seen within the last few months? A man belonging to a great brewing family, the prospective head of a most prosperous business, with the most brilliant future opening before him, is brought into contact with Christ, sees Him, feels His power, is made alive to Him and His claims, and forthwith gives up his share of the lucrative trade and devotes himself to evangelistic work in the east end of London. Paul's sacrifice was not more clear and complete than his, and this has taken place not 13 centuries ago, but in the year of grace, 1873. And what shall we more say, for the times would fail us to tell of the delivery of God's message to Low London, day by day by poor Bible women, of Mary Lyon and Fidelia Fiske, and Agnes E. Jones, of the Countess of Stolberg and her hospital, George Muller and his orphan asylum, of Edward Denison,

Thomas Wright, Duncan Matheson, and a host of others who by faith in the Lord Jesus have wrought out a blessed ministry of love to men, exhausted themselves in acts of self-denial and labours of compassion, and whose works shine like a river of stars athwart the heavens of the Church. Tell me, that if these men and women had had no faith in the living Christ they would have breathed that spirit and wrought in that Christly way! I do not, I cannot believe it possible.

Amongst the unique services Christ is rendering to men now, we may not omit to mention the fact that He is making faith in God a blessed and joy-giving reality, and trust in His fatherly care more easy, real, and living. Science puts God further and further from His material universe, saying, "Here's law; where's God?" Christ brings Him closer and closer to the heart of man. Science exhibits us as wrapt in the garment of iron necessity. Christ reveals our lot as one girdled by divine love. Nature is so measurelessly big, so incessantly active, and law so ubiquitous, that God is as a shadow escaping in the infinite darkness; but Christ shows us the Father. Faraday, the greatest and most successful investigator of Nature in modern times, a perfect master of scientific enquiry, was asked by Cardinal Wiseman whether, "in his deepest conviction, he believed all the Church of Christ, the holy Catholic and Apostolical Church, was shut up in the little sect in which he bore rule;" and the good man answered, in a way which exposed the deep springs of his own beautiful humility and nobleness of spirit, "Oh no, but I do believe Christ is with us." Few men knew more of the resources of sceptical opinion and argument than Isaac Taylor, and he says, "If now the question be put to me whether my Christian faith enables me to rid myself of that burden of far-reaching care and trouble which I share with the thoughtful of all ages, my reply is this—in truth I have not found the means of ridding myself of this burden, but in the gospels I have found Him in communion with whom I am learning how to bear it, and thus I hope to bear it to the end, still retaining my faith and trust in God as supremely good and wise, 'A just God and a Saviour.'"

But not to multiply testimonies of this kind it is certain that Christ is rendering signal service to some students of nature and philosophy, saving them from blank Atheism, and inspiring them with a warm and living trust in God. Moreover, it will be found that Christ is the only sufficient bulwark against the scepticism of our day. He alone will be able to hold us firmly amidst materialistic buffeting and surging doubts. The Incarnation is the stronghold of Theism. Faith in God in the modern world depends altogether on "believing in Jesus." "Lord to whom shall we go?" is the humanity after all its hard and bitter lessons in science and history, in the order of the one and the disorder of the other, "thou only hast the words of eternal life."

Nor is this all. The wide range and world-grasping scope of the Redeemer's present works are as marvellous as their character, in individual instances, is unique. Never did so many hear the Teacher's voice. In more than two hundred languages the Saviour cries, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." All nations desire him, and are rapidly coming within the saving and providential purposes of the all-governing Prince of the kings of the earth. Young India is turning its eyes to the Lord. Japan has opened its doors to British civilization, and it cannot bar them against the entrance of Christ, for He is the very life of our civilization. Spain has set out a free course for the sanctifying truth, and close to the ears of the old and obstructive Pope of Rome a Baptist is sounding the Gospel abroad.

No Christ amongst us! Christian-

ity a lingering superstition dead or dying, is it? Then we should like to know what is alive. No Christ! Speak ye blood-stained cliffs of Madagascar, and tell, the inspirer of the heroic devotion that dared death itself for human good! Rise up, ye isles of the Southern Pacific, and sound the praises of those brave spirits who have crowned apostolic fidelity with a martyr's sacrifice! Come forth, ye Esquimaux; and witness for the loving missionaries who plucked you as brands from the burning fire of a most ruinous idolatry! No Christ, whose voice is it then repeating His words in Persia and Thibet; in the streets of Jerusalem and Nazareth; in the farthest North and sunny South? Whose messengers are these 3500 Hindoos that go preaching in the plains of India of unsearchable riches? Are they Buddha's or Christ's, Brahmas or the Nazarene's? No Christ; who then has stamped out the devil-worship of the people of Tinnevely, and struck a blow at Hindoo caste, from which it never can recover to re-assert its tyrannous spell over the millions of Hindostan?

Why, there is nothing more marvellous under Heaven than the thing Christ is doing now. The materials for a fifth gospel, as rich in pathos, as fascinating in simple and natural beauty, as spiritual and refining in its power, are about us, if we were but inspired by the Spirit of God to group the doings of our Lord about the story of His Adorable being. The canon of inspiration is not closed for want of facts, but because enough is written to induce men to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing they may have life through His name. Christ still goes about doing good, only with a wider parish than Jerusalem, and more messengers than the twelve and the seventies. He first commissioned to act in His name and wield His power. At this very time He makes millions to rejoice with His gladdening presence.

And now, brethren, I ask whether in the face of this collection of mere samples of the facts connected with the Christianity of our day we do any wrong to truth in proclaiming that the living Christ is (1) the very heart of Christianity, the strength and support of every saint. (2) The centre and source of a living theology. (3) The guarantee for a permanent Christianity, and (4) the forcible and irresistible answer to the scepticism of this and every age? The more truly man or church can say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," the more palpable, striking, and marvellous are the witnesses to the Redeemer's presence and power.

Tyndall says:—"It is the method of science when a phenomenon presents itself to the production of which several elements may contribute, to exclude them one by one so as to arrive at length at the truly effective cause. Heat, for example, is associated with a phenomenon, we exclude heat but the phenomenon remains; hence heat is not its cause. Magnetism is associated with a phenomenon, we exclude magnetism but the phenomenon remains, hence magnetism is not its cause." Adopting that method here, or availing ourselves of the facts which show its adoption, at what "truly effective cause do we arrive?" What is that one indispensable power without which these results would not exist? (1) It has been seen, again and again, that it is not within the province of a code of ethics, however pure and exalted to cleanse the springs of human action, and fire the strength of evil passions, and set with an enthusiasm of goodness. (2) Doctrinal systems alone, though faultless in logic, and beautiful in symmetry, have repeatedly proved their incapacity to stem corruption and swell the tide of virtue. (3) Ideas will not of themselves create character. (4) And even moral influences, centred in living and good men, lose their force to an unspeakable extent when those men are gone. The primary cause, the only "truly effective" agent

in the production of the facts before us is not to be found in the unique character of Christ's moral teaching, nor in the influence of His perfect example and sinless life, nor in His sacrificial death on Calvary alone and exclusively, but in these, in connexion with and because of that grand, crowning fact that stands out on every page of the Gospels in promise, and of the Acts and Epistles in historical detail, that though He was dead, He is now alive for evermore, and has the keys of death and the grave. He died for our sins; but He was raised again for our justification. "He, because He continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore He is able also to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Every precept derives its force from His present living authority and power. All His doctrines spring out of and are associated with His endless life.

And since Christ is a living Teacher our theology is not a dead science. The Incarnation and the Sacrifice of the eternal Word are the leading points in all Biblical Theology; and since the Word is unfolding Himself in and through all the generations of men, our theology cannot be a lifeless and unprogressive study. It must be instinct with His vitality, and progressive by reason of the new facts. He is constantly placing within its legitimate province. Christian thought cannot be bound in the fetters of any age. Christ moves on and enlarges and broadens the interpretation of His own work and life, by the ever fresh applications He is making of His power and grace, of His truth and example to the changing necessities and varying moods of successive ages. The permanent and fundamental facts of Christianity, like the facts of all sciences, are the same now as at the beginning, fixed and unalterable; but the theory, the exposition, of those facts grows through all ages. Sun, moon, and stars were not made by the inductive philosophy. The chemist is not a creator; his facts are, as old as the everlasting hills; his theories are but of yesterday, and some of them more evanescent than himself. The life-giving air does not come by analysis. "Man is the student and interpreter of nature." The Christian man is the student and interpreter of the Scriptures, and finds his facts concerning God, man's relations to God, the Fulness of the Incarnate Word, the object of the Saviour's mission, human duty and destiny, recorded therein. Creeds register thought, chronicle the progress of the Kingdom of God in one of its aspects, and show how Christ has touched the intellect of successive periods of time. They are not magic, they are not life, but the terms in which gifted minds have expressed their judgment of Christian life. Greater mistake, however, there is not than to suppose they will do the work of the Eternal Person, who is the centre and core of the Gospel. The Arab physicians are fabled to have had so much faith in their prescriptions, that, having written them out carefully on paper or parchment, and then washed off the ink into a cup of water, they gave the fluid to their patients, instead of the healing drugs to which their prescription referred; and because some physicians of the soul have supplied an unlimited quantity of skillfully worded creeds, diluted with an equal quantity of teaching, instead of saying, with Philip to Nathaniel, "Come and see Christ for yourself," our critics and censors have concluded that we have nothing but creed, and that the "prescription" is our whole and only possession. By no means. Christianity is a living thing, and living things grow; not only a letter, or it might perish, but a spirit and power, and must abide; and though not at the same rate, yet as really as science, does it increase its stores; old truths are more accurately adjusted and set to fuller harmonies; and new truths are deduced.

With such facts before us to day, we do not fear for the future of the