

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

WHO ARE THESE?

Many, very many have joined the white robes through that the lonely prisoner of Patmos saw in the prison of "Scenes Celestial." Great as it was then, "which no man could number," far greater is that multitude now "of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues who stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

But in the silent hour, when the heart is made sad by sudden bereavement, and mourns the absence of loved ones gone from our embrace, the question has a deeper meaning than usual. The sorrowing heart in silence and tears looks away beyond the blue arch, far beyond those shining orbs of which the sainted Doddridge says,—

"Ye stars are but the shining dust Of my divine abode, The pavements of those Heavenly courts, Where I shall reign with God."

and loves to meditate on the joys of that better land—the home of "Spirits bright." And as faith, aided by the "Apocalyptic vision," views the pearly gates, the golden streets, the crystal sea, and the ever-verdant foliage of trees that stand eternal; and whilst music of "Harpstrings touched by angel fingers," deep, melodiously deep, and harmonious as the distant murmur of many waters seems to come from shining ones who of that City are the "Angel wardens," and songs of highest praise from a throng of white-robed ones who stand nearer than they, the enraptured heart with eagerness repeats the question of long ago: "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And to the anxious heart, with consoling power, comes the answer of the Elder, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

"Brighter than angels, lo! they shine; And sweeter far their notes divine, Tell me their origin and say Their kindred what, and who are they?"

"These are the saints, beloved of God—Who washed their robes in Jesus blood, Near the throne than cherubs they stand Exalted now at the Father's hand."

But again we ask, "Who are these?" We know that we can claim them as kindred, for the saints on earth and those on high but one communion make. Yet let faith pierce the veil that intervenes, and hides that land from ours, and we shall find that all in that immortal throng are not strangers. No, we shall see there the loved of other days, even those for whom we mourn—our loved ones gone before. Changed they may be, but 'tis from beauty to beauty, from death to life, from life to immortality. Yes, bereaved, and mourning ones, look up—far beyond the Ethereal Arch, for there, among the happy spirits of those from earth released, who have escaped from earth trials and cares, stands the loved one whose absence you mourn—whose place in the family circle is vacant. And hark? the voice whose tones you loved, and whose music you so sadly miss, joins in the joyous chorus of the redeemed, whose robes have been washed and made white, and who therefore are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. Joyous thought, comforting assurance! Many are there with whom we can claim a familiar acquaintance. Parent, child, sister, brother, friend, for,—

"There are the lost! whom we loved on this earth.

With whose memories our bosoms yet glow; Their relics we gave to the place of the dead, But their glorified spirits before us have fled To the Land which no mortal may know."

The casket of clay, the frail tenement, which contained for a time the immortal part, has, with tender care, mid sadness and tears, been laid to its silent repose in the quiet valley. And though the song of the birds will be heard among the branches, the sighs of summer will stir the green leaves, the wild winds of Autumn, and the cold storms of Winter will moan a sad requiem through the leafless boughs, the dew-drops of Spring, and tears of loving ones will fall alike unheeded on the opening flowers—trail mementoes of sorrowing hearts—futile tributes of regret—yet calm and undisturbed will be the repose of the sleeping dust, even until the resurrection morn.

"Sweet the hope amid our sadness— They're not lost but gone before."

Then in reply to the question, "Who

are these?" we can with hope and assurance say, Among them are those we have known, and loved, whose cares and sorrows we have shared. And as the heart beats with fond regrets and tender recollections, we repeat, "These spirits bright in realms of light, are friends that we have known." They are not all strangers, for among them—the white-robed throng—are some whose memory we cherish, and whose absence we mourn. Though, as beautifully expressed by IRVING, we stand by the grave of those we loved, and call up in long review the whole history of virtue and gentleness, and the many endearments lavished upon us—almost unheeded—in the daily intercourse of intimacy; and there dwell upon the tenderness—the solemn, awful tenderness—of the parting scene. The bed of death, with all its stifled griefs—its noiseless attendances—its mute, watchful assidues. The last testimonies of expiring love! The feeble, fluttering, thrilling—oh, how thrilling—pressure of the hand. The last fond look of the glazing eye, turning upon us, even from the threshold of existence;—yet from the remembrance of these, when the overwhelming burst of grief is calmed into the gentle tear of recollection, the sorrowing heart looks up, and beholding the joyous throng, remembers that our loved one is there. Then hushed be our sorrows, for the cold hand that we pressed in anguish, when, with fast-falling tears, we marked the feeble throb of the ceasing pulse, and the cold icyness that told us that our loved one was passing through the chilling stream, now waves the victor's palm and strikes the golden chords of "Harp Celestial" 'mid that joyous throng. The feet that oft were weary in life's rough pathway, now press the never-fading verdure of those Heavenly plains, where angels walk and seraphs are the wardens. The brow that grew so pale and cold under affection's touch, when the death-dews gathered fast, and from which we fondly smoothed the moistened locks, now glows with beauty and life immortal, and is pressed only by the unfading diadem, the "Crown of rejoicing." The voice whose faint, faltering accents, struggling in death to give one more assurance of affection we stooped to catch, and which whispered those words of hope and hopeful trust we so fondly cherish, now joins to swell the full chorus of redeeming love that re-echoes through Heaven's high domes. The eyes that spoke the thoughts which the lips could not express, and which we so tenderly, sadly closed, now behold those brighter glories, of the land that to us oft seems afar off, and see the King in His dream.

This is not a dream. 'Tis not fancied imagination: No, John the "Beloved" saw them—a great multitude, "Clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. . . . Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever." And the question concerning them was, "Who are these—these in Heaven?" And mark the reply, for that assures our faith. "These are they which came out of great tribulation—trials of earth—and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Thus, by faith, we behold among those arrayed in white, our loved ones gone before, and the hope of seeing them soon, cheers the sorrowing heart. Only "a few more prayers, a few more tears, it won't be long" and we too shall draw near to the dark river, and pass through its chilly waves. We shall meet our loved ones, gone to the better land, the Haven of eternal rest. Yes, we shall see the King in His beauty, and inhabit the mansions He has gone to prepare.

"There the winter of trouble is past; The storms of affliction are o'er, The struggle is ended at last, And sorrow and death are no more. Our brother that Haven hath gained, Out-flying the tempest and wind; His rest he hath sooner obtained, And left his companions behind."

Then let this answer be our comfort, and be it ours to obtain what our departed friends have obtained—pardon from sin, peace in believing, a refuge in Jesus, and a place among the white-robed throng—those spirits bright. Or, having obtained the first, be it ours to walk worthy of our high calling in Christ, so that when the silent messenger comes we may gladly the summons obey, and gain admittance to a participation of the joys of those, concerning whom we ask, "Who are these arrayed in white?" and of whom it is written, "And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes."

"Where at last, life's trials past, We'll meet on earth no more,— Whose feet have trod the path to God, Not lost but gone before."

MAL.

Mahone Bay, June, 1874.

For the Christian Messenger. TO SUPERINTENDENTS AND TEACHERS OF SABBATH-SCHOOLS.

Beloved Friends,—

As the work in which you are engaged is obviously one of great importance, doubtless you will attentively consider, and duly regard, any suggestions that may be offered with a design to promote the usefulness of your "labor of love." I beg, therefore, respectfully to call your attention to a Resolution passed at a meeting of the Sabbath School Convention of the Central Baptist Association of Nova Scotia, held in Canard, Cornwallis, October 15th, 1873. It is, of course, equally applicable to all the Sabbath Schools in these Maritime Provinces. Here it is,—

"Voted, That with the beginning of our Independent Foreign Mission, we recommend that all our Sabbath Schools, be instructed on the subject, and requested to commence working for it; and that each child [or pupil] be encouraged to give at least one cent a week towards its support either by collections each Sabbath, or by the formation of a Juvenile Missionary Society, or of a Mission Band in each school."

Should this recommendation be generally carried into effect, the Foreign Missionary cause—one of vast moment—will be greatly aided. The small sums thus contributed by numerous individuals, like the drops of rain, which severally and yet unitedly water and fructify the earth, would largely increase the funds, and materially assist in sustaining our beloved missionaries now in the field, and in sending forth and supporting others.

The information by this measure imparted to the young respecting the lamentable condition of the heathen, and of children in heathen lands, would furnish the scholars with useful instruction; and it may, by the divine blessing, tend to impress their minds with a grateful sense of their own peculiar privileges and obligations, and be the means of leading them to embrace and follow the Saviour, to the securing of their own everlasting happiness.

It is, moreover, highly desirable, and very useful in different respects, to inculcate, and foster in youthful minds, a principle of benevolence: As a miserly spirit tends to render its possessors miserable, so a spirit of benevolence and beneficence imparts true pleasure to those in whom it dwells. This accords with our Lord's saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (See also Pro. xi. 24, 25) Those concerned in conducting Sabbath Schools will do well, therefore, to imbue, as far as possible, the minds of those under their care, with a principle so beneficial to all concerned. The young should be taught to regard it as a special privilege, and source of true joy, to be permitted to aid in communicating the blessing of the gospel to the perishing heathen, including their children, who may be thus rescued from the miseries of heathenism, and made the happy recipients of endless bliss.

In this case, as in others, the general rule, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," is undoubtedly applicable. It may therefore be reasonably anticipated, that those who have been accustomed from childhood to contribute for Foreign Missions, will continue this course in after life, and increase their contributions as their means increase. A solid basis will thus be laid for the permanence of this momentous work.

It may be objected to this scheme, that in some cases it will be difficult to carry the proposed measure into effect. It will, indeed, require the concurrence of parents, or guardians, with the efforts of the Superintendents and Teachers. But this, it may be reasonably hoped, will be easily obtained; since the measure can not fail to be serviceable to all parties. People in comfortable circumstances usually give their children some money, for special services performed, good behaviour, proficiency in learning, &c., as an incentive to diligence, and efforts to please the donors. It may be kindly suggested to the young—probably with good effect—that it would be unspeakably better to devote a portion of their money to aid the good work of the Foreign Mission, than to spend it in such gratifications as may be harmful to body or soul, or to both. Children whose parents are unable to furnish them with means, may be usefully employed by others to do what they can, to enable them to give for this noble object. By the means here suggested the young may be taught lessons of industry and frugality, as well as liberality, which will be highly conducive to their welfare, while it may be hoped that by the means proposed, precious souls, now in the

darkness and degradation of heathenism, will be brought into the light and blessedness of the gospel. Infinite good may then flow to generations yet unborn.

Your fellow laborer, CHARLES TUPPER. Aylesford, June 12, 1874.

TRI-PROVINCIAL HOME MISSIONARY UNION.

MR. EDITOR—In the preceding article I endeavoured to present briefly the advantages of union in Home Missions by our churches in the Maritime Provinces, and will now consider some of the more obvious and important objections that may be urged against such union. Every subject has two sides, and it is well, indeed necessary, to look carefully at both in order to arrive at a proper decision.

1. It may be alleged that small organizations existing in different counties, or parts of the province, can do its own Home Mission work as well, if not better than one large Convention for the three provinces.

It is neither my intention nor wish to speak in disparagement of existing local Home Missionary organizations, which have been by the blessing of God, the means of much spiritual good to many individuals and churches; the good thus done is cheerfully and thankfully acknowledged. But who does not desire to see much more accomplished in the Home Mission fields of these lower Provinces? Why should not more be attempted? Our resources have not been adequately employed, perhaps not much over a tithe of what we ought as a denomination has been contributed to this great work. The great difficulty of operating with a number of local missionary organizations in each province is their weakness, the want of means and resources, or the lack of influence and appliances to gather them up, to carry on the great work in hand; and from isolation, from want of concert and co-operation, each may largely fail to do its part in this great and noble enterprise. This method of prosecuting Home Missions seems not to have been marked with much efficiency; and we doubt it will be otherwise in our day: it has been tried and found defective and unsatisfactory.

But it may still be asked, cannot Home Missions be as successfully worked by each Province with one Board only, exclusively managing and cultivating its own field without any regard or care for others?

This looks better and promises well, but still it remains that small organizations are in general unable to accomplish good on a large and comprehensive scale, or to bear the stress and strain that continued labor in a great cause imposes. A large, well devised organization, combining the counsels, the membership, resources and influence of our churches and Associations in the three Provinces, if wisely managed and energetically worked would, with the blessing of God, accomplish incalculable good to us as a people, and be the means of salvation to multitudes. This is what we anticipate and hope. It is conceded of course that a small organization, if well and zealously worked, will accomplish more good in the kingdom of Christ than a large one worked without skill, energy, or spirituality. But spirit and piety being equal, or nearly so, the larger organization will have large advantage in respect to its whole management, resources and work, over a small and weak one. This, we think, is so obvious that none will dispute it. Common observation and common experience are in favor of the larger and more comprehensive organization.

2. But still to such organization or union as that now proposed another objection may perhaps be urged with much confidence, to the effect that the Board of a large organization extending over the three Provinces may, in its plans, influences, acts and operations interfere with the independence of the churches. I confess that this objection has considerable weight in it, for either with or without design of interference, positions may be assumed or things done which may conflict, or (what is almost as bad or fatal) appear to conflict with our polity. Yet I think we are in no great danger from interference of the kind referred to. From the union of the three provinces as to Acadia College and Foreign Missions, now existing for many years, no invasion of church independence has arisen, or if made, it was without success. I see no reason to apprehend greater danger in the respect named from similar union in Home Missions. Perhaps my view on the subject may differ from that held by other brethren. I regard church independence as having its place and use, and as being

of much value and service within the limits assigned it; but it is capable of being misunderstood, strained, and abused; and it would, in my opinion, be a blind and false charity, as well as a want of independence of observation and judgment, to say or suppose that no such abuse has occurred among us. Perhaps on no point are we as a denomination so sensitive or jealous as in respect to interference with the independence of the churches. It is claimed that a church is complete in itself, is competent to do, and should do its own work without assistance from other churches. This is the theory; and it may be correct and well enough as such; but we want something more practical, more accordant with the actual condition and wants of churches as mutually related and dependent; something more in vital harmony with the idea and fact of our baptized brotherhood and unity of faith. Churches do need help, counsel and co-operation, and should not refuse or ignore them, because independence may have to abate a little of its exaltation. While referring to this subject now it is well for us to remember that church independence is not in itself piety, and is neither a test or indication of piety. Men without piety can laud and almost idolize independence, for they conceive it relieves them from obligation and accountability. And a church not remarkable for intelligence, energy, benevolence and spirituality can be very tenacious, perhaps boastful of its independence, while yet its spiritual power and influence keep on waning, and outside help is not sought, or declined, if offered. Independent and self-dependent men do not seem far apart, if, indeed, they are separate. But whatever may be said in support of church independence, it is well to remember that this independence has quite a limited range, and that it is dominated by higher, more vital or comprehensive truths; as each member of a church is intimately related to the whole, and is bound to act so as to promote its spiritual growth and prosperity, so the living membership of every such church is still more intimately related to that one body, of which Christ Jesus is the Lord and Saviour, and is bound to act in a way consistent with that great relationship, and consistent also with the relation and dependence existing between sisters, acknowledging the same doctrines, walking in the same way, and obeying the same Lord.

The God-given authority of the ministry is another truth or fact which seems within its proper sphere to limit that independence: "Obey them," says the Apostle, that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls as they that must give account," &c. (Heb. xiii. 17).

Responsibility of both churches and ministers to Christ is a vastly higher truth, and should never be lost sight of, but cherished and acted on daily. Spirituality, brotherly love, humility, loyalty to Christ and his cause are much higher truths, and are essential in a Christian, a minister, or a church; and without these independence is of little consequence to either, or only "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." It seems to me, therefore, that, in seeking by more intimate union and co-operation our own spiritual good and the evangelization of these Provinces, we can very well leave church independence to take care of itself, and need not trouble ourselves or brethren much with apprehensions from a union, the only design of which is to do each other all the good we can in prosecuting the great work of Missions within these Provinces; and thus together serve our common Lord and Saviour. Why should we be afraid to trust each other in prosecuting the same work for Christ? One more objection will be considered in my last article next week.

I am, dear Brethren, Yours in the Gospel, GEORGE ARMSTRONG. Sydney, C. B., June 10, 1874.

Religious Intelligence.

AYLESFORD, June 15, 1874.—Many of the readers of the Messenger will rejoice with us to hear of the continuation of the wonderful outpouring of God's Spirit in this place. Surely none but praying Christians would have believed a few months ago, that this Spring, one hundred and sixty-one, would have forsaken their former course, and united with God's people here. Truly this is a glorious day for Aylesford. Yesterday twenty-five more happy converts obeyed the Saviour's command—one bowed down with the age of