

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, January 28, 1874.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXXVIII., No. 4.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XIX., No. 4.

Poetry.

IN HIS VINEYARD.

There is never a way so narrow or short
But the Master's work is there;
There is something to do for His dear sake,
Or something to calmly bear.

There are trials to meet with Christian faith,
And duties with Christian grace;
And there's Christian sweetness to every one,
To be given in every place.

Their working days are never so hard
Who find in Christ a stay;
And days of darkness are days of light
When Jesus leads the way.

And the waiting days of those who hope
Are days of quietness,
And the praying days of those who trust
Are days of perfect peace.

There are flowers down in the valley low,
And over the mountain side,
Which never were praised by a human voice,
Nor by human eyes descried;

Yet as sweet as the breath of the royal rose
Is the perfume they exhale;
And why they bloom, and where they bloom,
The good Lord knoweth well.

A. L. Wyman.

LIGHT.

BY F. W. BOURDILLON.

The night has a thousand eyes,
And the day but one,
Yet the light of the bright world dies
With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one,
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.

Spectator.

Religious.

THE LIVING CHRIST:

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

"The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes."—John. ix. 30.

No reader of this graphic story is surprised at the indignant astonishment with which this healed man, consciously enjoying the benefit of Christ's work, repels the heedless contempt cast upon the character of his gracious and beneficent Physician. Nothing was more likely than his scorn: nothing more natural than his flashing anger. A victim of chronic blindness through all his years, he had been cut off till now from thousands of the most serene and thrilling pleasures of existence. After a childhood spent in puzzling darkness, he passed into a youth of perplexing and thickening gloom; and when manhood's years came upon him they were clouded by the deprivation of one of man's noblest gifts and the absence of one of his most useful instruments; but lo! just as he is settling into fixed hopelessness, unexpectedly, swiftly, without any surgical operation, and by more than earthly magic, he is made to see the world of nature and of man. How could he do anything else than count it a superlatively incredible thing that those whom he had been taught to regard as the wisest thinkers and shrewdest observers of the land should try to trace to any other than a divine fountain the stream which had washed the darkening film from his long closed eyes? Marvel indeed it was that a man born blind, and blind through so many years, should ever come to see; but greater marvel still, that when he actually stood with open and delighted gaze before men pretending to sense and discernment, they should betray such a lively distrust of undeniable facts, and so keen a suspicion of the conclusions to which those facts unmistakably pointed.—"Herein is a marvellous thing that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes."

That man, my brethren, uttering his bewilderment, is not wholly unlike some of us gazing in our wonder on the modern critics of Christianity and rejectors of the Lord Jesus Christ. No sooner did we feel and know that we had passed out of the depressing darkness of sin and loss and wrong, into the marvellous light of pardon and true holiness, than we were filled with amazement that all men did not confess and adore the wonderful person who had so surprisingly enriched us. Nor has our astonishment ceased with enlarging experience and widening knowledge. Enjoying a sweet reconciliation to God, our Father, by Christ His Son; receiving in our present lives "strong consolations" and joy-filling powers; encouraged to cherish hopes of a future blessedness of being, that whether true or false, profoundly cheer us and elevate and purify our aims; and assured beyond doubt that all this blessing is wholly and exclusively due to Christ, we are more than ever astonished that any men should deny His power and grace, and even unwittingly pour discredit on Him who is the source and cause of the living change. We do not condemn; we mourn. We do not denounce; but we do say it is unaccountably strange that the Lord Jesus should be doing amongst men to-day such marvellous works as we know He is, and men of proved ability and honesty of purpose should find no better occupation than disparaging His work and rejecting His claims. If a thousand men, looking straight at the sun in mid-day should declare it was mid-night, we should not be more astonished,—"Herein is a marvellous thing that ye know not whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes."

But is this surprise of ours justifiable? Is Christ Jesus so evidently at work in modern society as to warrant our astonishment and vindicate our indignation? Are there any facts within hand-reach, as plainly and as easily verifiable as the fact of the healing of this blind man? Have we any worthy materials to offer to the sharpened judgment, acute observation, and scientific methods of these objectors to the Christianity of the Gospels? Have we anything beside authority and tradition on which to stand?

They say we have not. They tell us Christianity is dead, effete, and out of date; that it has long since passed its meridian, and has seen its best days. That it is still here, they admit. It lingers; but like a limb smitten with paralysis, dangles at the side of a living and progressive society, clothed in ancient and elegant drapery, but utterly useless, since it is no longer an instrument of wide sweep and resistless power, moving at the bid of an intelligent Will. The world is leaving it behind as an anterior and antiquated stage of thought and action, just as the mature man puts aside the childish things of his early years. "Christianity," cries one of the leaders of this school of thought, "Christianity has been tried and failed: to-day that failure is too patent." It holds its place not by what it is, but by what it was; not by what it can do now, but by what it did centuries ago; not by any living service it is able to render suffering and struggling men to-day, but by what it gave to our predecessors ages since. The old well is here, and the water is in it; but the water is dead and useless, and the well had better be covered up lest any one should stumble in and perish. The machinery of Christianity is about us; but it is not worked, or if worked it gives no products of any marketable value. It has been superseded by other and better apparatus; but it stands in the factory of the world because the owner has plenty of capital and too much regard for the machine that produced the capital to take it down and sell it for old iron. In short, Christianity is dead; and would be buried out of sight, only that a few mistaken or selfish men robe it in the garments of the living, and by sheer strength of incontinent affirmation, manage to get credulous

outsiders to declare that it has some life in it after all: or, in the terribly lively and mournful summary of a philosopher, now deceased a few years—Our Christ is a dead Christ; all our saints are dead men; our miracles were wrought ages long gone by; our theology is a dead science, and we are doomed to look back for all our inspiration.

Now is that a fair statement of all the facts of the case? Does that describe things as they really are? Is it approximately even a true account of the condition of Christianity in our own country and over the wide earth? I am eager to admit that there is much apparent if not real ground for the painful indictment that Christianity is a failure, and may pass away from amongst existing agencies. Vicissitude is stamped on all earthly things; and if it does not mark the Gospel of Christ, there must be strong reason for its absence. Dynasties rooted deep in centuries of strength pass away like the leaves of autumn; if the rule of Christ does not submit to this law, it must be because it is founded on a higher and more enduring statute. Besides, the progress of the kingdom is dishearteningly slow. Christian men fall far short of the divine ideal of their Lord. His "counsels of perfection" are wofully disregarded by many of His followers. His principles receive but a partial and inadequate application. The so-called Christian world in too many cases shows a good deal of the "world," and not much of the "Christian." Society wears the name and mocks the authority of the Eternal King. A love of ease, and impatience of trouble, disinclination to self-sacrifice and devotion, begotten of our increasing material wealth, penetrate and enfeeble the Church. The chariot of the King is clogged and hindered, by the spreading branches of superstition, thrown in honour of the Monarch Himself, across His path, but not less really blocking His way. We know it, we grieve over it, and we sigh and pray for a baptism in the Holy Ghost, so that we may have a fuller and richer life.

But when the largest admissions of partial degeneracy and feebleness have been frankly made, the question still returns upon us, is Christ so thoroughly dead as these men say? Is Christ Jesus merely a beautiful reminiscence, a grand significant historic figure filling the halls of the storied past with His benign presence, but wholly absent from us to-day? Does death still hold Him in its icy and relentless grip? If it be so, my brethren, then there is no Gospel for men at all. A Gospel that is all history and nothing else is no Gospel whatever to living and suffering men. To point agonising and rest-seeking souls to a long line of illustrious achievements running through eighteen centuries, like a ray of brilliant light, illuminating all it touches; and meanwhile to minister no present help and sympathy is worse than offering shipwrecked sailors a painted ship, or frost-bitten and hungry travellers a painted fire and feast. What avails the triumph over ancient paganism if we are to be defeated in every fight with sin and vice! The overthrow of heathen sensuality in the Roman empire! what is it more than a splendid theme for school-boy declamation on a prize day, and as tantalising as it is splendid if we are doomed to be swallowed up by the sensuality that beats its desolating waves around us! To have cast out the barbarities of 2000 years, to have trampled underfoot the hoary superstitions and follies of centuries, to have routed the foe with incredible loss in a hundred fights; what boots it if we who wield the sword to-day have no real and invisible Captain surely leading us to victory, and the hero of those past triumphs has lost his power and is incapable of doing anything for you and me, for our nation and race! My only child is dying of a fever. Every known resource has been employed without success. I appeal to you for help and you tell me of a physician who wrought marvellous cures two centuries ago, but who died without either revealing his

secret or leaving a successor. A house is on fire, the goods are being destroyed, life is imperilled, and in your ardent sympathy you forward to the frightened inmates a report of the way in which Captain Shaw put out the great fire in Tooley-street, with an excursus of your own on how fires were extinguished in old Rome. Here are evils fearful and dense, care, and sorrow, and sin, the noiseless but intense warfare is being waged now, and you have no other cheer for the wearied soldiers than that they are without a leader and an inspiration, and must perforce fight their foes in their own strength and bear their burdens as best they can. A gospel that is merely a history is no more a real Gospel for men such as we are, than the monument in King William street is the present ruler of England.

From such a state of blank hopelessness concerning ourselves and our destiny it is very certain the Scriptures were meant to save us. The original documents of Christianity create and sustain an expectation of a work of Christ, as actual, present, and thorough going for every age as for those memorable years in which the Incarnate Word was seen amongst men full of grace and truth. They tell of Christ still at the heart of all human progress perfecting men by His discipline, soothing them in their sorrow, stirring and satisfying their purest aspirations, and persistently warring against all that is inhuman and godless. The Christ of the Cross is the Christ of the Resurrection. The same Jesus who weeps, and prays, and suffers in the Gethsemane blesses and commands on Olivet, and in words that embrace all times as well as all nations, describes the work His followers are to do, the sphere in which it is to be done and the inspiration and hope that will maintain them in doing it. Go and preach the gospel, and lo I am with you even unto the end of the world. He frankly told His disciples He was going to leave them. He as clearly said He should come again. Everywhere He speaks like one who has commenced a work He will not leave till it is finished, and laid the foundation of a kingdom that knows no end. The Christians of the first Church, with such teaching still ringing in their ears, clung with relentless tenacity to the fact that Christ was still alive. They believed it. They rejoiced in it. They lived upon and by it. They preached it, and died like exulting heroes, witnessing to the immense strength the fact had over them. All through the Acts of the Apostles it is the living as well as the risen Christ who speaks and leads; indeed, the book is avowedly written to continue the biography of that same Jesus, the beginning of whose words and words formed the subject of Luke's Gospel. And since those words never ceased, the book of the Acts has no finish. It could not have. It breaks off abruptly, because the facts of which it treats, the doings of the living Christ have been occurring from that day to this without interruption. It tells a fragment of the story of an endless life. It chronicles a few of the earlier facts of an interminable history. Paul's ardent Festus by affirming that Jesus Christ had not merely risen from the dead, but was still alive, alive then. Gone from their midst, yet he appears in the presence of God for them, sends the Comforter to them and pours into their hearts in a tide of love all the familiar tenderness, boundless compassion, and inspiring grace of His own divine nature. He has ascended to His Father, and to our Father, to His God and our God. He has left us, but only that He may complete from His throne in the Heavens the glorious work he commenced in His brief ministry in Galilee and Jerusalem. He is not visible to us, but He is as loving and as strong, as pitiful, and as good to day as He was to Peter and John, Martha and Mary in the yesterday of the Evangelical record. He was the same here, always the same, and He went up on high unchanged and un-

changeable. He is the King of all the Ages, the same yesterday and to day and for ever. If Christ be not living and His work not actual and present, then not only have we no Gospel, but we have no reliable Scripture.

These things, however, will be trifles light as air in the scales of the criticism of this scientific age. The urgent needs of men, and the birth of this larger and inspiring hope cannot count for much in a time which rigorously demands and will have verification. Huxley says "the man of science has learnt to believe in justification by verification." Exactly! and so has the Christian. We verify, indeed we are always verifying, according to that fundamental maxim which enjoins us to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good." It is no new thing to us to believe in justification by verification. Experience is always verifying truth, and it is because the verification is so broad and deep, and full, that we are so steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. There are other laboratories surely than those at the South Kensington Museum. Every verification is not made with the pestle and mortar, I suppose. Dots of animated jelly and invisible bits of protoplasmic substance are not the only verifiable phenomena, or else we must bar the doors to many wide and fruitful domains of thought and experience besides those opened to us in Christianity. The positive method is the Christian method—Does the chemist deal with facts in a free and independent way, unhampered with authority and tradition? So do we. Does the physicist bring different forces together and after various trials, produce by them a certain result? So do we. Are operations conducted for them in the workshop of Nature? So they are for us in the field of Human Nature. In fact every day we are dealing with facts as verifiable as any deduction of Science, as obviously real as any precipitate of the chemist. The present and actual work of the Lord Jesus, while affording us much that is beyond our comprehension, and that inspires our reverence and awe, yet supplies us with facts as real, as tangible, and as verifiable, as extensive, and as unique, as rich in their quality and as important in their relations as any that are offered to the acuteness and investigation of men. Christianity is not merely based on facts recorded in the four gospels, but Christ, who is Christianity alive, is this very day writing in Christ-like facts a fifth gospel before our very eyes and in our hearts.

(To be continued)

For the Christian Messenger.

FROM NEW SOUTH WALES.

—
SYDNEY, N. S. W., Nov. 1873.

Dear Brother Selden,—

Having previously intimated our intention to visit New Zealand I beg to say that we have just returned in the good ship Hero, and had a pleasant passage of five days going and six returning, distance from Sydney to Auckland, 1500 miles, but the pleasantest part of any sea voyage is the end of it. The ship being a fine iron propeller, was equal to any emergency, and every thing attended to for the comfort of the travelling public, like the P. & O. Company's boats. Eating and drinking being quite an institution, five times a day. Mrs. Hobbs and two children (our boy having gone previously to Philadelphia to a Medical College) came in for a share of sea-sickness, and many more did not put in an appearance at table until Sunday, which was a most magnificent day. The bell rang for worship, and the absentees showed themselves and forgot all the trouble in this direction.

Auckland is a pleasant city, quite romantic in its situation. In a radius of six miles are the extinct craters of 40 burning mountains, some not more than two miles from the city. The