

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

CHRISTIAN CULTURE.

BY AN ANXIOUS PASTOR.

All who have recently decided for Christ and are beginning to walk in the ways of God, though they may be advanced in years, are properly spoken of as babes in grace. Men and women who have had much experience in things of the world, and persons of education, when they are newly regenerated are as little children in the divine life; and the humble teachable disposition of a child is a great evidence of a work of grace in the heart. These features are included in the Scripture portrait of the child of God; and any who do not bear this likeness are excluded from all interest in heavenly blessings. "Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

1. Conversion, however, usually takes place in persons who are young in years, so that this paper treats principally of those who are starting in their earthly course as well as in the heavenly race—of young people who are busily occupied in forming plans, contracting alliances, and preparing themselves for positions in this world; while at the same time they feel the pressure of the divine hand, realize the power of the divine life, and are convinced of a world to come, compared with which this world is a vapour which appeareth for a little time and then vanishes away. Such are the persons who are committed to the care of the under shepherds of the flock by the Great Head of the Church.

The subjects of divine grace bring with them into the visible church much of the variety of disposition, ability and circumstance, which we see in the world around.

In disposition we find many who are naturally affectionate and peaceful, persons of tenderness and forbearance, and let us not be surprised if God should send us individuals of different dispositions too. Let us not talk as though some strange thing had happened to us, if, in the ingathering of precious souls, there should come into our fellowship men of hard and selfish feelings, of warped and twisted tempers. In mixing with the world we have to encounter such a combination of evil forces that it is difficult for the best of us to keep our tempers straight—so much of selfishness that we must needs struggle to be generous in our whole deportment. If God has given us spirit of forbearance and love it will be our duty to exercise it by receiving with open arms any who may seek our fellowship and are willing to submit to the ordinances of the church, believing that the society of those whose hearts are subdued by the love of Christ, is the best remedy for the afflictions of fallen humanity. Perhaps there is something in the peculiar disposition of every one, which the Lord hath need of in his church. Even the crooked sticks of the forest are not rejected by the woodman; they are rather sought for, that they may be hewn into shape to occupy the most important parts of the comely ship. Many of the stones of the spiritual building were at first rough blocks, but polished after the similitude of a palace and laid upon the foundation, they constitute a part of the edifice in which the Heavenly King loves to dwell.

There is a variety of mental culture and capacity in those recently converted. It is difficult for the learned to stoop and the ignorant to rise so that they may sit side by side in the school of Christ; and yet it will be found that the former as well as the latter need training for the christian course; and both alike feel they are as little children when they commence to walk in the heavenly road.

Young Christians are surrounded by a variety of circumstances. Some come from the scenes of poverty and affliction, others from the homes of ease and affluence. Many are led into the church by the fostering influences of family piety, and large numbers are called out from the surroundings of carelessness and sin. We welcome the prodigal on his return from the far distance to which a wretched course of sin has led him; as well as Timothy who comes to us with his mind richly furnished with scripture truth taught by a pious mother and grandmother.

As these new converts, one after another, are introduced to the church, she may hear her Lord addressing her in language similar to that of Pharaoh's daughter to

the mother of Moses, "Take this child away and nurse it for me and I will give thee thy wages."

2. The diversity to which we have referred must convince the most superficial observer that Christian edification and training is a solemn necessity. To write a history of professing churches when such training has been neglected would be a reproduction of Ezekiel's roll which was written within and without with lamentation and mourning and woe. If the members of our churches do not keep step with each other in the heavenly way. If they do not labour with each other, sympathize with each other, and, in a word, love one another; these individuals will stand isolated from the rest, till they fall from want of mutual support; or else parties will be formed of persons of the same disposition only to contend with others, and animosities and disunion without end will be the consequence. Then the weak will not be supported by the strong. Dark minds will not be illuminated. Inquirers will not be directed, and wanderers will not be restored. Then there will be no union for the purpose of church discipline. No association for glorious enterprises in the spread of the truth. Ministers will not be supported at home, and missionaries will not be sent abroad.

Every young christian should be taught how to carry the diligence, perseverance, and enthusiasm of his earthly course into the service of God; and, on the other hand, how to apply bible principles and hallowing influences of religion, to every sentiment of his heart, to every word of his tongue, and to every act of his hand. This is at once a work so glorious that it is worthy of an angel's heart, and so difficult that it may fill an angel's hands. The Word of God enforces this spiritual training; the happiness of the church depends upon it, and the honour of God will be promoted by it.

3. The question arises here, how is the important work of training young christians to be accomplished?

Whatever verily there may be in the young members of our churches, they are all united by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and the love of Christ will be shed abroad in every heart. As the result of this, the tender plants of Christian graces will appear in their hearts and lives. As faith, hope, love, and zeal, and other characteristics of the true Christian are developed and exercised, he will be trained for the service of God in this world and for higher and nobler occupation and enjoyment throughout eternity.

It is supposed that the young christian will have gained knowledge of bible truths before his conversion. The truths thus acquired are called into life in regeneration even as the seed springs up in the ground under the genial influences of early summer. From this beginning, he should be led onward to a more extensive view and richer enjoyment of divine truth. The glorious doctrines of the bible must be unfolded so that the wondrous love of God, contained therein, may be revealed. This love will kindle a flame in the young believer's heart which will constitute the motive for every act of service.

The young convert must be directed to the pure and holy precepts of the bible and reminded of the divine admonition which saith "This is the way, walk ye in it." He must be led into the old paths, the good way of the patriarchs, prophets and apostles.

As an example for the young believer, we may hold up to his view the glowing pictures which the bible gives us of those who have walked with God; and we must not neglect to warn him of the sins and follies so faithfully pointed out in the lives of God's people, and of the terrible end of the hypocrite and apostate. Christ must be held up as the perfect model and we must not be satisfied until we can mark progress toward the measure of the stature of his fulness.

It will be vain to point to the bible examples of true piety, unless we ourselves are diligently copying them.

Members of churches as well as pastors, should "allure to brighter worlds and lead the way." They should become fostering parents to the young disciple. The older members of our churches stand in a most responsible position, inasmuch as the younger ones are too apt to follow their example, in its failings as well as in its virtues. The future life of the church will depend very much on the deportment of its present membership. The influences of our character are as lasting as the world, and often eternal in their consequences. Perhaps nothing will surprise us more, a

the judgment day, than to behold the good or evil, as the case may be, which our example will have wrought. Many who are dead yet speak; and soon we shall rest from our labours; but our works will follow us.

The ordinary means of grace are very efficient for the purpose of christian training. Foremost of these, we may place the preaching of the word in connection with the public services of the sanctuary. The true christian hails the return of the Sabbath with great delight. He is often weary with earth's labors, depressed with its trials, perplexed with its sins and alarmed with its dangers; and thus he goes to the house of God, when he meets others bearing similar burdens. Many young christians are there, disappointed, it may be, to find that the christian course is not so easy as they imagined. But the man of God is there, who during the week has been prayerfully preparing himself to meet the varied necessities of the people of his charge. Best of all, the Spirit of God is there to apply the word with power. As the truth is proclaimed, "that which was dark, in the minds of the people, is illumined, and that which was low is raised and supported." The loving hand is extended to help some young christian up a steep ascent of the hill difficulty; and another is warned of a danger to which he is exposed; while all are exhorted, encouraged, and assisted, to "lay aside every weight and the sins which do so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus."

The public preaching of the word should be seconded by the Bible Class. Those circumstances are to be deplored which prevent the older and younger members of our churches from meeting, once in the week, for the study of the word of God. Many obstacles to this duty are more imaginary than real, and the Bible is a neglected book. We acknowledge that the Scriptures are the revealed will of God, containing truths which alone can save and sanctify: we admit that the whole history of the world, past, present and future, will be but the record of the benign influences of the Bible, or of the calamities which have arisen from its need or neglect. The importance of the Book in this manner, forces itself on our consideration; and yet we spend more time with the newspaper which treats only of the trifles of today, than in perusing the pages of eternal truth.

Many young christians, however, often read the bible; but the question of Philip, "Understandest thou, what thou readest?" may be very appropriate in their case; and the Eunuch's reply will be often given, "How can I except some man should guide me?" Hence the need of the Bible Class. Heaven cannot smile upon a more lovely scene than that of a number of young people prayerfully searching the Scriptures; and earth cannot expect greater blessings than will be conferred by those whose minds are furnished with the treasures of wisdom which are found only in the word of God.

In this manner, if space permitted, we might speak of the Prayer Meeting, the Conference and the Lord's Supper, together with other institutions of the church, all of which are admirably adapted for christian training and culture.

4. All we have been writing on this subject implies diligent labor for Christ. Our dear young brethren and sisters should labor to furnish their minds with a knowledge of the great principles of our denomination, and of its history from the days of John the Baptist. They should read such books as will inform them on the duties of christianity; at the same time praying that the Divine Spirit may lead them forth in the practice of what they know. The Sabbath School, Societies to assist in Foreign Missions, &c., the distribution of religious literature, the collection of means for the support of the ministry, visiting the sick, and a number of other enterprises that may be mentioned, afford occupation for the young disciple; and according to his ability, he should be encouraged to take part in these necessary labors and do them well. From the need of such workers the wheels of the gospel chariot often drag heavily, while many a professor is drooping and dying though want of the health and vigour which earnest labours for Christ alone can produce. Our young friends must not be permitted to stand idle in the marketplace. Every one who has made himself acquainted with the matter, knows that idleness is a hotbed of all that is evil in the world. It is not less so in the Church. It is as true of a professor of religion as of a man of the world, that,

whenever idleness becomes a habit, he is for ever ruined. "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come upon thee as one that travels and thy want as an armed man."

If there is to be the branching out, the blossom, and fruit-bearing, which characterises the young professor as a tree of God's own planting; then we must urge the necessity of a secret cleaving to Christ in a spirit of private prayer and devotion. When there is any thing wrong at the root of a tree we all know what takes place in its branches. It often happens that, when the young convert has made a profession of religion and taken part in public service, secret prayer is neglected. This is the cause of the stumbling, falling, and turning aside that so often grieves us after a season of revival.

In conclusion, the happy result of christian culture are best given in the words of Sacred Scripture:—"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." (Ps. xii. 12, 13.) "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither: and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Ps. 1-3.) "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon." (Hos. xiv. 5, 6) "For as the earth bringeth forth his bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all nations." (Is. lxi. 11.)

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TOO LATE—OR BROKEN VOWS.

Last night a rev. gentleman from the States gave an illustration at our prayer-meeting which will long be remembered by those present.

He said, "I was once in a prayer-meeting, not a large one. After urging all to speak who knew and felt the love of God, my attention and sympathy was aroused by one whose locks were grey, sitting unmoved after all the others had stood up to testify of God's great love to them. I said, 'my dear friend, don't you feel and know God's love.' He slowly arose and said, 'no sir.' I am here to-night I hardly know why, something seems to compel me to attend prayer-meeting, but it is not because my heart is warmed with Jesus' love. Dear friends, I can, I will tell you why; 30 years ago one night during a terrific storm, when 'hope had fled the deck' and 'the mast gone by the board,' I vowed, God sparing me from such an awful death, my life, my all to him I would give. My life was spared. On the morrow my vow came vividly to mind, but I calmly resolved to delay it 12 months, and then fulfil; 12 months flew like the wind, and still I was to do it. Again my mind was stirred, my fault was remembered and God's spirit urged my vow. I again said, 'not now, but in ten years time it shall be fulfilled, mercy still brooked delay, till in due course that time was gone, my vow still broken and unheeded; and now during 20 years I feel like one left alone—love to God never stirs my heart, full well I know it is too late. His words burned and well-nigh crushed our spirits, we urged him not to say so, but try even now to obtain mercy. I asked him to go home with me, I longed to intercede with God in his behalf. He steadfastly refused, and went out into the darkness.

As I turned away on the evening breeze these words were borne, 'I have broken my vow, and now it is too late.' Thus he departed I know not whither. And now in my own words, as far as memory serves, this now awful warning is written to stir and warn others not to boast of to-morrow.

J. F. A.

BAPTISMS AND CHURCH ORGANIZATION IN MORRISBURG, ONTARIO.—A correspondent writes the Baptist:—It was my privilege to baptize four believers on Lord's day, May 16th, and four more on May 30th—these with seven baptized in April making 15 persons baptized this spring. There are ten more Baptists here, most of them but lately come to the place. There were only three Baptists in the place last fall. After due consideration of late, it was determined to organize a church without delay. Accordingly, after the evening service yesterday, Lord's day June 6th, a Regular Baptist Church, of twenty-five members, was formed in this place, on the basis of the New Hampshire Articles.

Religious Intelligence.

POPERY IN GERMANY AND SPAIN.—While Cardinal Manning declaims in speech and pastoral against the alleged infringement of the rights of conscience in Germany, the Papal Nuncio at Madrid has been demanding the establishment of what he calls "Catholic unity" in Spain. We know what that euphonious phrase really signifies. It means the exclusive privilege of the said Nuncio's Church to exercise the rights of public worship and of conscience in the country. If the demand were complied with, faithful preachers of the gospel, as our two young brethren from the Pastors' College, who are at present labouring in the Peninsula, would either be thrust out of the country or consigned to prison—to the torture and the stake, if the Papacy could have its will. We are glad to see that the Government of King Alfonso has wisely replied that it cannot concede the request, as it wishes Spaniards to enjoy freedom of worship. Prudence alone would have sufficed to dictate this answer. Whatever may be their private feeling in the matter the advisers of the King know that they dare not obey the behest of the Pope. Bad as is the state of affairs in Spain, they might be worse. One application of this latest item from Madrid cannot fail to be made by Englishmen. They are entitled to say to their recreant countryman, Dr. Manning, that his complaints against Germany, in themselves utterly unfounded, become doubly offensive in the presence of the attempt of his master to silence every Protestant preacher in Spain. Only a frontless priest could be capable of talking as he does in favour of liberty of conscience.—Freeman.

Mr. Moody lately addressed a letter to Christians in Great Britain, a singularly persuasive appeal, urging them to do more to win the unconverted. One paragraph in that letter is as follows: "After good men, it seems to me that we want good methods. Above all, we want new methods. Not at all, however, that the old methods are bad, but simply that they are old. The best old methods are, perhaps, as good as, or better than, any new ones; but they are old methods, and that is enough. The world has got tired of them. It will not have anything more to do with them—the worse for the world, perhaps, you say, but that cannot alter the fact. Men are crying out for novelty. Perhaps a better word would be 'variety.' Well, let them have variety. They want it; in everything else they get it; why not this? If we cannot win the people by old, plainly enough the only reasonable line of action is to try new means; and if the new bat does not succeed, let us try again; and if that does not do, let us go on trying till we find a bat that does."

SPIRITUALIZING.—Dr. Patton tells a very amusing story of a Baptist minister who was a great stickler for the "spiritualizing" method of interpreting the parables down to their smallest details. It was so edifying. A Presbyterian minister often discussed the question with him, taking the other view; but one day he professed to have been converted by the success attending the application of the principle. "I always knew you would see it," said the Baptist brother. "But tell me what passage opened your eyes." "Oh! it was the parable of the man who went to his neighbour for bread at midnight. The man was an anxious sinner, needing direction." "Certainly." "The neighbor was a Christian." "True." "The bread desired was saving truth." "Beyond question." "The bed in which he was found naturally represented the Church." "Surely." "And his children being with him in bed means infant baptism and membership." "Oh!" said the Baptist, whose faith in the spiritualizing principle began suddenly to fail, "I don't know about that."

MONTREAL.—We learn that the Rev. John Gordon, of Chicago, has accepted the call to the Olivet Baptist Church recently organized in Montreal. May the blessing of the Master rest largely upon pastor and people.—Canadian Baptist.

Pastor Booker, of Claremont, baptized three candidates on Sabbath 30th ult., the presence of a large congregation.

Pastor Dowling, of Uxbridge, baptized two persons on Sabbath evening the 30th ult., before a large audience.

ANDOVER, N. B.—Rev. G. F. Currie reports to the Visitor, June 10th. It may be pleasing to some of your readers to learn that our church in this place has recently been blessed with revival influences. On Sabbath-morning last four young people were baptized, and received into our fellowship. Others are expected.

ST. STEPHEN, N. B.—From the same source we have the following: "We learn that the Rev. J. W. Manning closes his labors with the St. Stephen church on the last Sabbath of this month and we presume has accepted the call extended to him by the North Baptist church of Halifax. We extremely regret the withdrawal of our brother from labor in this province, but trust that he will be eminently successful in winning souls to Christ in his new field. On Sunday, 6th inst., he received three into the fellowship of the Church. Two others were received on the first Sabbath in May, and there are others who will probably present themselves before long.