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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.  
Teachings of a Thunder-storm.

Great Ruler of worlds and of heaven,  
How wondrous are all thy ways!  
Most awful art Thou and almighty;  
The earth is replete with thy praise.

The works of thy hands sing thy glory,  
Confessing thy mercy and might;  
The creatures are voiceful at midday,  
And cease not to worship at night.

The murmuring brooks and the moun-  
tains,  
The forest, the fruit-yielding plain,  
The grasses which grow in the meadow,  
The flowers, the sunshine and rain,

Are voiceful and full of confessions  
Of Him who their maker has been;  
All praising with eloquent language  
The love of the mighty Unseen.

Thy creatures speak also of judgements;  
And though Thou art might in love,  
There are warnings of anger awaiting  
The deeds which thine eyes disapprove.

In the manifold voices of nature  
Are some that speak loud of thy wrath,  
And of storms which will punish the  
rebels  
Who willfully stray from thy path.

The storm-wind, thy breath of displea-  
sure,  
Of anger the world would remind;  
Grim terror is hurried before it,  
It leaves devastation behind.

The sounds of thy thunder-bolts crashing  
The timid and weakly affright;  
They seem like a voiced condemnation,  
A warning from Infinite Might:—

A warning to fear the Almighty,  
And meekly his precepts obey,  
And now make the great preparation  
To dwell in all-glorious day.

But when in its path of destruction  
The storm-wind is hurrying fast,  
And the voice of the threatening thunder  
Increases the gloom of the blast,

'Tis then that the fountains are opened,  
And God seems to pour out his tears,  
And weep o'er the sins of the people  
Till the cloud of his wrath disappears.

Thus judgement and mercy are blended,  
And all through the ages have been;  
God tenderly loveth the sinner;  
However he hateth the sin.

Then sing of his love, ye blest mortals,  
Ye subjects of infinite care,  
Vie with nature in hymning his praises,  
Let melody gladden the air.

Praise the mercy that warneth the sinner,  
The love that forgiveth the sin,  
The mercy that seeketh the wanderer  
From dangerous pathways to win.

Let glad songs be heard in the mansions  
Where dwelleth the Father of love,  
And the music of your adoration  
Join that of the ransomed above.

SYMONDS.  
Worcester Academy, Mass., Nov. 15, 1877

## Religious.

(From the "Canadian Baptist.")

Can our Associations be improved?

One of the most practical and sug-  
gestive papers read before the recent  
Conference was the one by Rev. A. H.  
Munro, of Montreal, entitled, "In what  
way can our Associations be improved?"  
The time for discussing the subject was  
too short: indeed this was a defect at-  
tendant on all the exercises of the  
Conference. Had there been fewer  
topics introduced, and longer time for  
real conference, the results would have  
been more beneficial. We append a  
condensation of Brother Munro's paper,  
in the hope that some of the radical  
reforms which it suggests will, at least,  
lead to profitable discussion, and eventu-  
ally to practical improvement.

In his opening remarks Mr. Munro  
referred to institutions that have out-  
lived their usefulness, saying that the  
best course to be followed with them  
was to preserve that which was valu-  
able, and to improve rather than destroy  
that which is defective. This remark  
he considered peculiarly applicable to

the present circumstances of their As-  
sociations. The lecturer then instanced  
an Association consisting of 64 dele-  
gates, whose expenses amounted in the  
aggregate to \$752. The whole amount  
raised in collections was \$41.88—and  
the brethren were joyful. Each dele-  
gate's time and board cost \$11.75, and  
the amount raised was less than 65c.  
per delegate. But it might be said that  
the intellectual and spiritual benefits  
arising from the meeting of the Asso-  
ciation compensated for this loss. The  
intellectual advantages required defini-  
tion, and the spiritual ones that culmi-  
nated in the enthusiasm and liberality  
demonstrated by a collection of \$4.05  
for ministerial education are of a  
doubtful nature. Such associations  
substitute talk and "resolutions" for  
Christian work by Christian men, alive  
to their opportunities and wise and  
zealous to use them. To effect the  
change so desirable three things were  
necessary: 1. To eliminate from them  
every unnecessary feature and accom-  
paniment, so that they may economise  
time and means, and be simple and at-  
tractive. 2. To give to them definite,  
limited, and important practical objects  
to accomplish. 3. To obtain for them  
efficient support in men and means.  
One great hindrance to efficiency is  
ponderous machinery, and these Asso-  
ciations were oppressed in this respect.  
All that any Association needs for the  
performance of its appropriate business  
are two officers and one committee.  
Among the things to be eliminated are  
the "Letters from the Churches," and  
the "Circular Letter." The facts in  
these former compared with the plati-  
tudes are in about the same proportion  
as was Falstaff's bread to his sack. It  
is assumed in regard to the Circular  
Letter that it will attract too little at-  
tention by its publication to do harm; such,  
however, has not always been the case.  
Another thing that ought to be separa-  
ted from Associations is the raising of  
money by collections or contributions  
during the meetings, as this mode of  
obtaining funds is the worst that could  
be resorted to, causing, as it does, many  
of the best men to stay away from  
them. In reference to the second  
necessary change, he said that if the  
question were asked, What is the pre-  
cise nature of the objects for which the  
Association exists, the answer would have  
to be shaped more by the imagination  
of him that made it than any facts  
that could be named in proof that their  
annual gatherings have definite aims.  
The possible subjects that might be  
chosen for discussion at such annual  
gatherings may thus be classified:—1.  
Those that belong to the individual, as  
personal faith, culture, and work. 2.  
Those that belong to the family, family  
religion, the duties of parents, and  
home training of children. 3. Those  
which belong to the Church, as the  
organization and management of Sun-  
day Schools, prayer meetings, "Doras"  
meetings, raising of funds, &c. 4. Those  
that belong to the denomination, as  
ministerial education, home missions,  
foreign missions, &c. 5. Those that  
belong to the general interests of society,  
as education, temperance, social  
amusements, &c. Those that can be best  
omitted are the first and fifth clauses. The  
purposes which an Association should  
should contemplate in connection with  
remaining subjects are:—1. To awaken  
and sustain interest respecting them.  
2. To collect and diffuse information  
concerning them. 3. To promote the  
earnest practical application of right  
principles regarding them. The char-  
acter and proceeding of such an associa-  
tion may be easily imagined. The  
most suitable time of meeting would be  
on Tuesday or Wednesday, with the  
afternoon for the first session. Mr.  
Munro then proceeded to elaborate his  
scheme by detailing the duties of the  
Chairman, Secretary, and Committee  
of Management. In conclusion, he said,  
that if Associations were thus organized,  
they would cease to linger in doubtful  
existence, and would soon win for them-  
selves respect and support, because they  
would be much more efficient in pro-  
moting the health, union, zeal, and  
liberality of the churches.

## The Power of Caste.

There is another element in the Hin-  
doo religion which cannot be ignored,  
and which gives it a tremendous power  
for good or evil. It is *caste*. Every  
Hindoo child is born in a certain caste,  
out of which he cannot escape. When  
I landed at Bombay I observed that  
every native had upon his forehead a  
mark freshly made, as if with a stroke  
of the finger, which indicated the God  
he worshipped or the caste to which he  
belonged. Of these there are four prin-  
ciple ones—the Priest, or Brahmin  
caste, which issued out of the mouth  
of Brahma; the Warrior caste, which  
sprung from his arms and breast; the  
Merchant caste, from his thighs; and  
the Shoodras, or servile caste, which  
crawled out from between his feet; be-  
side the Pariahs, who are below all  
caste. These divisions are absolute  
and unchangeable. To say that they  
are maintained by the force of ancient  
custom is not enough: they are fixed as  
by a law of nature. The strata of so-  
ciety are as immovable as the strata  
of the rock-ribbed hills. No one can stir  
out of his place. If he is up, he stays  
up by no virtue of his own; and if he  
is down, he stays down, beyond any  
power of man to deliver him. Upon  
these sub-strata this power of caste  
rests with crushing weight. It holds  
them down as with the force of gravi-  
tation, as if the Himalayas were rolled  
upon them to press them to the earth.  
So terrible is this power of caste,  
that if one violate it in any way, he is  
put under the ban of a social ostracism,  
which is almost worse than death. He  
becomes literally an outcast. His near-  
est kindred disown him, and drive him  
from their door. If one becomes a  
Christian his family regard him as dead,  
and perform funeral rights for him, as  
if they were committing his body to the  
tomb. These facts should be re-  
membered when wonder is expressed  
that more Hindoos are not converted.  
They have to go through the fires of  
martyrdom, and it is not strange if few  
should be found whose courage is equal  
to such a sacrifice.

Against this oppression there is no  
power of resistance, no lifting up from  
beneath to throw it off. One would  
suppose that the people themselves  
would revolt at this servitude, that every  
manly instinct would rise up in rebel-  
lion against such a degradation. But  
so ingrained is it in the very life of the  
people, that they cannot cast it out any  
more than they can cast out a poison in  
their blood. Indeed, they seem to  
glory in it. The lower castes crouch  
and bow down that others may pass  
over them. A Brahmin in Calcutta,  
who had become a Christian, told me  
that the people had often asked him to  
wash his feet in the water of the street,  
that they might drink it!

Caste is a cold and cruel thing which  
hardens the hearts against natural com-  
passion. I know it is said that high  
caste is only an aristocracy of birth, and  
that as such, it fosters a certain nobility  
of feeling, and also a mutual friend-  
liness between those who belong to the  
same order. A caste is only a larger  
family, and in it there is the same  
feeling—a mixture of pride and of  
affection, which binds the family to-  
gether. Perhaps it may nurture to  
some extent a kind of clannishness, but  
it does this at the sacrifice of the broader  
and nobler sentiment of humanity. It  
hardens the heart into coldness and  
cruelty against all without the sacred  
pale. The Brahmin feels nothing for  
the sufferings of the Pariah, who is of  
another order of being as truly as if he  
were one of the lower animals. Thus  
the feeling of caste extinguishes the  
sentiment of human brotherhood.—*Evangelist.*

## Are Ants Civilized?

The October number of the *Quarterly Journal of Science* contains an article  
on "Our Six-footed Rivals," the  
ants, which may well cause us to believe  
that we are not the only rational and  
civilized beings on this globe.  
Let us suppose that we are suddenly

informed, on good authority, that there  
existed a race of beings who lived in  
domed habitations, aggregated together  
so as to form vast and populous cities,  
that they exercised jurisdiction over  
the adjoining territory, laid out regular  
roads, executed tunnels underneath the  
beds of rivers, stationed guards at the  
entrance of their towns, carefully re-  
moved any offensive matter, maintained  
a rural police, organized extensive hunt-  
ing expeditions, at times even waged  
war upon neighboring communities,  
took prisoners and reduced them to a  
state of slavery; that they not merely  
stored up provisions with due care, but  
that they kept cattle and even cultivated  
the soil and gathered in the harvest.  
We should unquestionably regard these  
creatures as human beings who had  
made no small progress in civilization,  
and should ascribe their actions to reason.  
Among the *hymenoptera* the lead is  
undoubtedly taken by the ants, which,  
like man, have a brain much more  
highly developed than that of the neigh-  
boring inferior groups. Perhaps the  
most elevated of the formicidæ family  
is the agricultural ant of western Texas.  
This species is, save man, the only  
creature which does not depend for its  
sustenance on the products of the chase  
or the spontaneous fruits of the earth.  
A colony of these ants will clear a  
tract of ground, some four feet in width,  
around their city, and remove all plants,  
stone and rubbish. A species of minute  
grain, resembling rice, is sown there-  
in and the field is carefully tended, kept  
free from weeds, and guarded against  
marauding insects. When mature, the  
crop is reaped, and the seeds dried and  
carried into the nest. If this is done  
near a larger city the latter regard it  
as an intrusion, and a fierce warfare re-  
sults, which ends in the total destruc-  
tion of one or the other side. The  
queens are treated with great attention  
and installed in royal apartments.  
The ant government is communistic.  
In a fornicary there is no trace of private  
property; the territory, the buildings,  
the stores, the booty, exist equally for  
the benefit of all. The family among  
them scarcely exists. Rarely is the  
union of the male and female extended  
beyond the actual intercourse all pro-  
vision for the future young devolving upon  
the latter alone, the former being  
speedily killed, as he is no longer of any  
use. The females are the larger,  
stronger, and more long lived. The  
workers and fighters are sexless; to  
them belongs the real government of  
the ant-hill, and they provide for its en-  
largement, well being, and defence.  
Ants are sometimes very stupid in  
regard to small things, but in many in-  
stances they display remarkable sagacity.  
Mr. Belt, in his "Naturalist in Nicaragua,"  
tells of a column of ants who were  
crossing a watercourse by a small branch  
not thicker than a goose quill. They  
widened this natural bridge to three  
times its width by a number  
of ants clinging to it and to each  
other on each side, over which the col-  
umn passed four feet deep, thus affect-  
ing a great saving of time. Again, the  
*eciton legionis*, when attacking the hill  
of another species, digs mines and passes  
the pellets of earth from ant to  
ant until placed outside to prevent it  
rolling back into the hole. Their  
errors and stupidity are not more con-  
spicuous, however, than among the  
human beings.  
These tiny creatures have a language  
by which they can impart to each other  
information of a very definite character,  
and not merely general signals, such  
as those of alarm. It has been found  
that ants fetched by a messenger seem,  
when they arrive at the spot, to have  
some knowledge of the task which is  
awaiting them. Their principal organs  
of speech are doubtless the antennæ;  
with these, when seeking to communi-  
cate intelligence, they touch each other  
in a variety of ways. There is a possi-  
bility that they may have a language of  
odors, for the various scents, given off  
by them are easily perceptible. Under  
the influence of anger it becomes very  
intense. In battles how, save by scent,  
can they distinguish friend from foe?

After a lapse of several months a for-  
mer companion will be received kindly  
into the nest, but a stranger is killed.  
More wonderful than their intelli-  
gence is their organization. If separ-  
ate they would be helpless, and prob-  
ably soon become extinct. Mr. Belt  
observed a marching column of *ecitons*  
in the primeval forests of Nicaragua.  
A dense body of ants, four yards wide,  
moved rapidly in one direction, exam-  
ining every cranny and fallen leaf. At  
intervals larger and lighter colored in-  
dividuals would often stop and run a lit-  
tle backward, apparently giving orders.  
On the flanks and in advance of the  
main body, smaller columns would push  
out, which pursued the co-craches,  
grasshoppers, and spiders in the neigh-  
borhood. A grasshopper seeking to  
escape would often leap into the midst  
of the ants. After a few ineffectual  
jumps with ants clinging to its body, it  
would soon be torn to pieces. Spiders  
and bugs which climbed to the tops of  
trees were followed and shared a like  
fate. In Nicaragua the vegetarian  
ants eat up trees and off the leaves; to  
use as a manure, in which grows a minute  
species of fungus on which they feed.  
They evince a mutual sympathy  
and helpfulness, which to an equal ex-  
tent can be traced in man alone. Mr.  
Belt placed a little stone on one to se-  
cure it. The next ant that approached  
ran back in an agitated manner and  
communicated the intelligence to others.  
They rushed to the rescue: some bit  
at the stone, and tried to move it, others  
sized the prisoner by the leg and  
pulled. They persevered until they got  
the captive free.  
In Australia they have been known  
to bury their dead with some degree of  
formality. The Texan ant removes  
any offensive matter placed near its city  
and carries it away. Ants who refuse  
to work are put to death. Prisoners  
are brought in by a fellow citizen, hand-  
ed over in a very rough manner to the  
guards, who carry off the offenders into  
the underground passages.  
The slave-making propensity and the  
reliance upon slaves occur in several  
species, but not to the same degree.  
The *polyergus rufescens* is absolutely  
dependent on its slaves, and would rather  
die than work. *Formica sanguinea*,  
on the other hand, has much fewer  
slaves, being itself capable of working  
as fighting. No less variation may be  
traced in the habits of the cattle-keeping  
ants. Of the honey-secreting *aphides*  
and *cocci* that serve them as milk kiné,  
some have large herds, whilst others  
have none at all, and if they encounter  
an *aphis* straightway kill and eat it.  
There *aphides* are extremely destruc-  
tive to fruits and trees, as they live  
by sucking the sap. The ants watch  
them with wonderful care, and defend  
them from all enemies.  
Instances of sagacity and design  
might be easily multiplied. Careful  
observation has shown that the ants are  
evolving as fast as their short terms of  
life will permit them. They are be-  
coming more wise and more civilized  
yearly. Every century marks an ad-  
vance. Who knows but that perhaps  
in the dim future they may assert rights  
which human beings shall be bound to  
respect?  
The Revision Companies of the Old  
and New Testaments have now com-  
pleted the first revision as far as Hosea,  
and the seventeenth chapter of the Acts  
in their second revision.  
In the island of the Bermuda the gov-  
ernment gives annually toward the sup-  
port of each Episcopal rector and to  
the ministers of the Presbyterian de-  
nominations \$700, and to each Metho-  
dist preacher \$500. Other denomina-  
tions get nothing.  
An interesting relic of the Rev. John  
Keble is announced for publication by  
Mr. Elliot Stock—a facsimile reproduc-  
tion of the MS. of the original draft of  
the "Christian Year," in the author's  
handwriting. The volume is dated 1822,  
and is entitled "MSS. Verses, chiefly  
on Sacred Subjects." It contains the  
original casts of thirty-one of the now  
well-known poems.