

# The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.  
Vol. XXII., No. 16.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, April 18, 1877.

WHOLE SERIES.  
Vol. XII., No. 16.

## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.  
The Resting Place.

"Come unto me . . . I will give you rest."

Dear Father in Heaven, look down upon me,  
The world is all dark, but I'm trusting in thee;

I bring thee a burden of sorrow and sin,  
Forgive me, and make me more holy within.  
O gather me close to thy kind, loving breast,  
I've come to thee Father, for pardon and rest.

I've knelt at thy mercy-throne often before,  
My sins to confess, and thy grace to implore;  
But still thou hast never once turned me away,

Nor to my heart's pleadings and longings  
said "Nay."  
Now gather me close to thy kind, loving breast,

I find nowhere else such sweet comfort and rest.

I know I'm a wayward and wandering child,  
Often by Satan allured and beguiled;  
But when I have grieved thee, my soul is cast down,

I cannot be happy while under thy frown.  
O gather me close to thy kind, loving breast,  
Thou knowest how much I am longing for rest.

I deserve to be driven away from thy side,  
But this is my plea—"The Saviour has died,"  
Thou wilt not refuse what I ask for his sake,  
Nor suffer a heart that is contrite to break.

O gather me close to thy kind, loving breast,  
'Tis the refuge I seek when my spirit wants rest.

Thou art my Supporter, my Guide, and my Friend,  
I know thou wilt carry me safe to the end;  
A song of thanksgiving my spirit would raise,  
For the mercy that ever has followed my days.

O gather me close to thy kind, loving breast,  
I've many dear friends, but thee I love best.

If thou art my Father, and I am thy child,  
The conflicts of life may be ever so wild;  
I still shall be safe in thy heavenly care,  
Protected from danger, delivered from fear.

O gather me close to thy kind, loving breast,  
'Tis the place for a child that is weary, to rest.

And when thou shalt call me to yield up  
my breath,  
And pass through "the valley and shadow  
of death";

O grant that my hope may be steadfast and clear,  
Disturbed by no shadow of sorrow or fear.

Then gather me close to thy kind, loving breast,  
And let me enjoy there the sweetness of rest.

How glad I shall be when I reach the bright shore,  
Where I never can wander away from thee  
more;

I'll feast on thy love in that beautiful place,  
And gaze with delight on the smiles of thy face.

Thou wilt gather me then to thy kind,  
loving breast,  
And make me to know the full meaning of rest.

HARRIET COLE.

Milton, Queens Co.

## Religious.

Coin—Current and Lost.

"What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it?"

"What, indeed; and yet ye murmur against Me because I am come to seek and save the lost! Have these lost men and women whom I teach none of God's image, nor traces of His super-scription?"

Defaced, indeed, out of currency perhaps, yet real metal, precious beyond the thought of man, all the more objects of solicitude because lost.

The Church of Christ has heard the truth over and over, yet how often is it forgot by us, as much as it was by our brethren of Salem church, in a town within the Scottish border. It was a respectable church, very respectable and very small, getting smaller every year, and yet it was amidst a teeming population. The minister, and deacons, and members, had long ago given up all hope of reaching the masses, as they called them; so year in, year out, the reverend gentleman preached such edifying sermons, and the prayer-meeting was so select that one would

have thought the Church of Jesus was a garden enclosed.

Had some of the unwashed come into the family pew of certain members, there would have been quite a flutter of uncomfot; and yet Jesus came to save the lost. At heart, also, there was an honest yearning for their salvation among the members of Salem church, only matters had got into a certain order; and even fresh air may give us the cold, if it comes into our comfortable close room. The lost were around, drinking, swearing, blaspheming, rioting in all evil, and yet the church, as a church, made no effort to save them; had even lost faith in its possibility. No wonder their sin found them out, the congregation became smaller year by year, poorer also, less intelligent, the minister perfunctory, the members dead on their feet. "O Lord, revive Thy cause," had been prayed by Deacon Black for the last quarter of a century. "The cause" seemed quite comfortable in its grave clothes. Had some one said to the worthy deacon that one way of reviving a cause, was to act a Christlike part toward the lost, he would probably have assented, for the deacon was a good man; but when it came to asking "Sooty Jim," the sweep who lived opposite to the church, to come in and sit in his own seat, to hear the Gospel, that was quite another matter. Had some one hinted that Jesus would have gone as gladly into the aforesaid sweep's house, as into the worthy deacon's, there would have been a scene, for some deacons have a temper. So it came to pass that the "cause" faded away, while wickedness flourished. About this time, however, the worthy deacon's daughter, Florence, came under conviction of sin, and was soundly converted. Her baptism was the only one of that year, but it was an event of some note, for Florence joined the church with all her heart and soul. One day she was coming down to church, leaning on her father's arm, for she was a cripple, when they saw one of the saddest sights on earth, a woman intoxicated, who had fallen down into the gutter. Deacon Black took the causeway, saying, "What's the police about?" but his daughter *hirpled* towards the fallen one, and tried to lift her. Great was the deacon's wonder. Then he said, "dear me, Florie, come away and leave that creature alone." Florence obeyed a higher voice than even her father's and said, with tears in her eyes, "do get up," at the same time wiping the woman's face with her own handkerchief. The religious people who were going to the church, looked on in wonder, and then passed by. After a little came the worthy minister of Salem church, with his neatly written manuscript sermon on the text, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in." He noticed deacon Black and was gracious; but when he saw Florence Black, tugging away at a poor drunkard, he was a little shocked, but being upon the whole a good little man, he said, "It is no use, Miss Black. A person who has once become a drunkard, never can be reformed." He then passed into the vestry. A little crowd gathered; Deacon Black was terribly annoyed, and went his way into the church, to stand at the plate. Florence did her best to revive the fallen one, but the policeman came, and the drunkard was carried into the prison.

The sermon in Salem Church did not go well that afternoon, for the worthy minister could not help looking at Florence Black. He asked himself if it would not be better to have his church filled with drunkards even, than to have it empty. That evening at the usual reading in his house, Deacon Black read the portion of scripture we began with, and winced. To ease his conscience he said to Florence the cripple, "That's a fine chapter." "Yes, father," she said, "and do you know, I was thinking that poor drunken woman whom we saw to-day, is of the very nature Jesus took on Him. He was made of a woman: and I think if he had been there he would not have

passed her by in disgust. Jesus seemed to think there was something good in the very worst. I heard of a great fiddler who played on one string, when the others were broken; and Jesus made wonderful music even on a bruised reed." "But, Florie, there is not a spark of good left in a drunken woman."

"Perhaps not, father, and yet it is very strange how kind a woman who drinks can be when she is sober. Her husband often says she would be the best of women but for that one failing. Since I became a cripple, father, I have often thought about these things, and you know some people when they want to kindle a fire which is almost out, blow so hard that they put it out altogether. Others I have seen going on their knees and blowing gently till the spark became a flame. I wonder if we had Christ's gentleness and goodness, if many a frail sinner would not be saved in the same way?" Deacon Black was silent—his daughter had never spoken so before. Then he remembered about the lost sheep and the good Shepherd going after it, thinking more about the one lost than the ninety-and-nine safe. Conscience quickened memory, and he remembered his first love, how he had been zealous for the Lord of Hosts, plunging into slums and closets, up garret stairs, and into many foul rooms to seek scholars. But now—

Not long after there was to be a deacon's meeting, and as funds were scarce it was expected there would be some hard words. Deacon Black, however, had been passing through conviction of sin, and so when they came together and reference was made to the congregation, no baptism, empty purse, some families leaving and other matters which no minister likes to hear about, anxiety was on all faces. Then out spoke the deacon and said: "It seems to me, brethren that the best way to free our church, is to fill ourselves with the spirit of Christ, go out to the poor and try to bring them in. A good work among us, will open the baptistry, and replenish the exchequer, and draw the people. At least so I read the Acts of the Apostles." There was a dead silence. No wonder; such words had not been heard before. No one knew it but her father, that Florence the cripple was speaking. For once the deacons' meeting was turned into a prayer meeting, where was earned a good degree, and great boldness in the faith. Their souls were baptised again into the love of Christ, and they rose to newness of life.

"Lost sheep" may be found, "lost coin" may be put into currency again; for saith not the Shepherd, "it is my sheep"? Says not the woman, "it is my coin"? Then to be lost does not change the worth of a soul in God's sight. To be lost is separation from Him.

This truth came back to the minister and deacons, with the force of a new revelation. It did not end in enthusiasm. There was the smoke and warmth of the incense; but there was also a fire. God's word burned within them, and so they went out to visit every house near. Strange to say, those next the church had never been visited. It is harder to do a far-off great thing, than the little piece of work which is placed next us. Welcome awaited them among the poor, for Christ's love had taught the visitors sympathy, adaptation, faith, self-sacrifice. Gradually some of the common people came into the church, not in a rush as the deacon hoped, but timidly, one by one. With them came, as cometh with the rising tide, the aroma of the deep, the scent and flavour of Him whose way is in the sea, and His footsteps in the great waters.—*Scottish Baptist Magazine.*

A man ought to forge an iron bolt that is to go into a railroad bridge, as if the eye of God was on him. "He that is faithful in the least is faithful also in much." He ought to manufacture furniture, cloth, or any fabric for human use and wear, as before the Allseeing Eye. He ought to make his steam boiler, his ship, his bridge, to stand the test of the eternal law.

For the Christian Messenger.

Our Denomination.

—

CHURCH POLITY.

Difference of opinion prevails among Christians respecting the government of the Christian Church. Some think that a complete rule has been laid down in the New Testament, and that the Churches have only to consult the Divine Book in order to ascertain the Master's will. Others judge that outlines only are given, the filling up being left to the discretion of the churches, as influenced by the changes which are constantly taking place.

The views of those who expect to find directions for all kinds of service and work, tully and minutely laid down, do not appear to be warranted by the facts. That fulness and uniformity would not accord with the spiritual aspects of the New Testament, and would require a much larger book than the present volume. The questions that would have to be answered are so numerous and complicated that folios like those of the middle ages would be needed to contain them, and new questions would be continually arising, calling for answers—new difficulties, asking for solution.

Neither of the theories mentioned above meets the case exactly. We must borrow somewhat from each. On the one hand, a Christian church must present some leading features necessary to its very existence. It must consist of persons making a credible profession of the gospel, and furnishing evidence of a regenerate state. Those persons must be accustomed to meet for worship and religious improvement, and to transact among themselves such general business of voluntary societies as may from time to time demand attention—particularly matters affecting the character and standing of individual members. Benevolent contributions for the poor and for other objects will also form part of the business and work of the church, as well as zealous efforts to spread divine truth and convert souls to God. These are necessary elements in every church. If either of them is wanting, the church is in an imperfect state, and lacks the main characteristics of the institution.

What are now known as "churches" were at first assemblies of believers, meeting in suitable places for worship and other religious purposes. There was but little organization. The seven men chosen to distribute the Church's bounty (Acts vi.) were the only officers known for some time, and their office was temporary. Government was a thing of slow growth, and began with very simple elements. Besides the apostles, who naturally and necessarily took the lead, there were "elders," probably after the example of the Jewish synagogues. We first hear of them at Jerusalem (Acts xi., 30.) Paul used a Greek word when in writing his epistle to the Philippians he addressed "the bishops and deacons," but Peter retained the old word. (1 Peter, v. 1.)

We are not able to show how these offices originated, nor what were their specific duties. The probability is that the elders or bishops taught and governed, and that the deacons rendered general help in various ways. Ages passed away before the complicated arrangements of modern times came into use.

There are many blanks in the narrative. The primitive Christians met on Lord's days. They prayed. They sang psalms and hymns. The Scriptures were read. The preacher preached. They celebrated the Lord's Supper. But how little do we know of the particulars! We are totally unacquainted with the order of the services. We do not know the course of procedure adopted in admitting members or in transacting church business. There is not a case of ordination to the pastoral office, detailing the exercises which were engaged in on the occasion.

I think we may learn one lesson from these blanks. The knowledge

that would have been communicated is not necessary. The work of the Lord may sometimes be performed in one way and sometimes in another, and the performance may be equally valid. Nevertheless, all church work should be done as nearly as possible in agreement with the principles, precepts, and precedents of the heavenly book. And so, if an express rule be lacking, and one of various modes of action appears better adapted than others to declare or illustrate Christian truth, that is the one to be chosen. In like manner we pass an unfavourable verdict on forms of religious profession which we regard as destitute of that adaptation. Thus, for instance, we reject Episcopalianism, because we look upon episcopacy as an unscriptural mode of Church government;—we reject Presbyterianism, because the "Session" supercedes the "Church";—we reject Wesleyan Methodism, because it is a religious aristocracy; besides which, in all these communities the rights of the people are ignored. The affairs of Christian churches were managed, in apostolic times, by the members of those churches. If in any so-called churches, in these days, the members of the churches take little or no part in their religious concerns, their right to be considered churches, in the New Testament sense, cannot be granted.

What then, is that "New Testament sense"? How is a Christian church to be formed? and when formed, how is it to be governed?

The mode of formation is nowhere prescribed. The believers in any locality becoming known to each other agree to unite for the purpose of serving Christ, under the authority of the great commission. That act of union is the formation of the church. No extraneous human authority is required. When others apply for membership they are received on furnishing satisfactory proof of their qualifications as believers in Christ. If they have not made profession of Christ in baptism, that step has to be first taken. All share equally in the advantages of the union, and all are under obligation to discharge the duties connected with it—particularly the duties of joint worship—of benevolence—of mutual watchfulness—and of efforts for the salvation of souls (See Gal. iii. 28.) "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." (1 Cor. xii. 7.) that is, the gifts and opportunities professed by every member are to be considered by him as held in trust for Christ, who has distributed to each "according to his several ability" (Mat. xxv. 15), and will require an account when "he cometh and reckoneth with them" (1b. v. 19.) If any of the members neglect the giving, or the labouring, or any other duties, they must be reminded, of their obligation, and be admonished to fulfil it. A total neglect is delinquency, and must subject the offender to discipline, according to the will of the church.

Suppose that a member forsakes the weekly assemblies of the church, deserts the table of the Lord, and is rarely found at meetings for prayer and religious fellowship. Not only is he personally a loser by his negligence—his piety must necessarily sink to a low ebb—but his conduct sets an evil example. He is "walking disorderly," and must be dealt with accordingly, placed under surveillance, or special "watch-care," and reported on from time to time till the evil is corrected, or the cause of offence removed by the expulsion of the offending party.

If in the conduct of any member there is a departure from morality, an indulgence of any of the "works of the flesh," mentioned in Gal. v., 19-21, the duty of the church is clear. Unless it be a case in which a man is "overtaken in a fault" (Gal. vi. 1.) which is amended as soon as discovered, or the effect of which is not regarded as serious enough to bring reproach on the Christian profession, admonition or reproof being substituted for severer measures, the apostolic rule must be enforced. 2 Thess. iii. 6.