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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.
Heart Reasonings.

Shall I ask to die?
Ask to lay off this cumbrous clay,
That my earth-worn spirit may soar away
To the peaceful realms on high?
A sad voice whispers—
Where are the stars for thy heavenly crown?
And where thy laurels,
That thou shouldst lay thine armour down?
Toil on, for thy work is not half done—
Strive on, for the battle is not half won.
But why ask to die?
Because my heart is weary with care,
And the burdens of life are hard to bear—
And thorns in the pathway lie.
A sweet voice whispers—
Think of the burdens thy Saviour bore
When he walked with men:
Of his weary feet all worn and sore—
Each pang of thy heart his eye can see,
Oh trust in Him for he loveth thee!
Can I ask to die
When so many souls enquire the way
From the land of night to the realms of day?
Shall I make them no reply?
A Saviour whispers—
I died to redeem those souls from sin,
And I love them all—
Go forth and gather the wanderers in.
I have cleansed thy heart from its guilt
and shame:
Go tell the power of Immanuel's name.

I ask not to die;
Thou' off my heart is weary with care,
And the cross assigned me is hard to bear,
Still Jesus is ever nigh:
And gently whispers—
Faint not dear one, tho' the work seem small
Which thou hast to do—
The precious seed which thou lettest fall
Shall all be watered with heavenly rain,
And yield thee treasures of golden grain.
G. L. F.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.
Church Polity.

THE STATE OF THE FLOCK.

No. VI.

Among the "Proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out," were some pithy sayings on industrial matters, with a view to the work of the shepherd and the farmer. Illustrations drawn from these subjects are frequently employed in the Scriptures, being mainly derived from the occupations of the people. Thus Paul exhorted the Elders of the church at Ephesus to "take heed to themselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, to feed the Church of God. His predecessors in the apostleship had taught both "publicly" in the temple, where the crowds resorted, and in private houses; and he followed their example. Timothy, too, was charged by him to "preach the Word; to be instant in season, out of season."

The pastor has a threefold work before him: 1. The flock, requiring to be fed and trained to labor. Some pastors in England devote one of the Lord's day services especially to the benefit of the church, partly for instructions in the truths of the gospel, and partly for discipline of the persons in holy duty. 2. The unconverted—that they may be brought to Christ. 3. General religious effort, in which all pastors must take some share.

Probably, the most difficult branch of the labour is the visiting department. We mean by this, not the acceptance of invitations to parties, but religious intercourse with families. How can a pastor "know the state of his flock" without such intercourse? But it is not always attainable. The head of the family is almost always away from home. Merchants in large towns are scarcely ever accessible. They cannot be approached in their counting-houses and stores, and after the business of the day is over they have very little time to give to a minister's visit. This led the late Mr. Cecil to say, "London is very peculiar as a ministerial walk; almost every thing a minister can do, is by the pulpit or the press." The same remark may be made respecting all cities and large towns. Country districts are much more favorably situa-

ted, although the people are less conscious of the value of a minister's time than they ought to be. It is sometimes forgotten that in the existing state of society ministers must provide for their own self-culture much more thoroughly than they were used to do forty years ago.

The duty of visiting the members cannot be neglected without detriment to the church. And visiting cannot properly be performed in the *How d'ye do sort of way*. Every family should be conferred with—and every member of the family, that the state of the Church may be accurately known.

Now and then we hear a minister complain that he has not the gift of religious conversation. But is not every man bound to cultivate the gifts and qualification, in which he is deficient? And would he not succeed, if he were to make an earnest effort?

It is useless to prescribe modes of duty, characters and circumstances being so different. Some men have strange idiosyncrasies, and you know not where to class them. But every pastor is bound to know "the state of his flock." He may choose his own method of doing it.

John Giles was a remarkable example of diligence in this department of pastoral business. He was pastor of the Baptist Church at Eyethorne in Kent. He died in 1827. That funeral was a wonderfully weeping time. It was as if every one had lost a friend.

John Giles was not an eloquent man. His voice was soft and silvery, and "rippled like a rivulet," as James Montgomery said of one of the hymn writers of his day. His bald head, covered with white powder, as was the fashion of bald men fifty years ago, gave him quite a venerable appearance. There was a gentle persuasiveness in his manner, which had a winning, soothing effect. As a *parlor-preacher*, he was pre-eminent. No one could escape him; he engaged the attention of every one in the room by his appropriate remarks. He would even go into the kitchen, and the barns and stables, (it is a farming country,) and speak to the servants on the concerns of their souls. God blessed him abundantly. He was the instrument of very many conversions, especially among the young.

J. M. CRAMP.

May 28, 1879.

For the Christian Messenger.
True Blessedness.

BY REV. W. H. RICHMAN.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." Matt. v. 6.

There is a wide difference between the opinion of the world and the doctrine of Jesus. The world says, "Blessed are the merry." Jesus says, "Blessed are the mourners." The world esteems as happy, the rich and noble. Jesus pronounces his benediction upon the poor in spirit. The world says, "Blessed are ye when all men extol and flatter you." Jesus says, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you." "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness's sake." The world says, "Blessed are they whose eyes stand out with fatness, who have more than heart can wish." Jesus says, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Hunger and thirst are here used as a figurative expression of earnest desire. What desire can be more intense than that which is prompted by hunger and thirst? What will man not do; what has he not done to gratify appetite? For this Esau sold his birthright, and for the same purpose many a man has sacrificed his all. This intense desire after righteousness is not natural. It is natural for man to desire happiness and to adopt whatever means he imagines will conduce most directly to the attainment of that result. It is natural to desire escape from Hell and entrance into Heaven. It is natural to desire some kind of religion, hence all the heathen are very religious in their way. But to covet righteous-

ness for its own sake, that is, to aspire to be like God in purity and holiness, is contrary to the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. Such hunger and thirst are the work of the Holy Ghost. But what is righteousness? Why, complete conformity to the law of God. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just and good." Such a righteousness every human being requires in order to acceptance with God, and such a righteousness thousands are vainly striving to obtain. Ignorant of God's righteousness they go about to establish their own righteousness. But alas, when weighed in the scales of the sanctuary, they will be found wanting. When sinners are brought to see themselves and understand the Gospel, they with one consent are constrained to confess with Isaiah, Ch. lxiv. 6, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. . . . and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away." Nothing short of perfection can satisfy the claims of justice, or stand the scrutiny of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, Hab. i. 13. How then shall mortal man be just with God? Where shall he obtain that fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints? Rev. xix. 8. The wedding garment which alone entitles him to sit at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Matt. xxii. Thanks be to God, those robes have been wrought by our Divine Lord. Thus saith the "faithful and true witness, I counsel thee to buy of me . . . white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Rev. iii. 18. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16. They are exalted in a righteousness not their own, imputed to them from him whose name is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jer. xxiii. 6. Well may the believer exultingly exclaim with Isaiah, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." Isa. lxi. 10. Jesus himself is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. To hunger and thirst after righteousness then in a Gospel sense is to hunger and thirst after Christ. He is the bread which came down from Heaven, of which if a man eat he shall live forever, and he says if any man thirst let him come unto me and drink, Jer. vi. vii. Let hungry and thirsty souls come then to the inexhaustible supply. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfieth not. Hearken diligently unto me and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Isa. lv. 2.

hand," and every one was to shout the battle cry, so has Christ put the gospel trumpet in the hand of his followers every one of them, and they must let it be heard, every one should—*must*, according to his ability blow," and let "the gladly solemn sound" of a Saviour for the guilty and condemned be heard on the right hand and on the left. At the same time let the Watchword be, "The sword of the Lord and his church." One sword, even the "Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God," and when resting on the promises of God, she thus goes forth in the strength of God, and for the glory of God, to win the world for God, many will be the slain of mount Zion; and as surely as the Midianites were overcome by Gideon and his followers, so surely will the world be overcome by the power of the truth as made known by the Church through the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit.

When the Church really awakes to a sense of duty to herself, to the world, and to her King, then will she soon "go forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Sol. Song vi. 4. Then may the beginning of the end be hoped for. The time for which "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Rom. viii. 22. It has been well said that "A revival of religion in the Church itself, accompanied with an enlarged outpouring of the Holy Spirit's power and grace, must be regarded as the chief means of introducing the latter-day glory." There is every reason to believe that the time is coming when there will be such manifestations of the Spirit's power through preaching and other means of spreading the truth, as the Church has not yet dreamed of. Indeed it must be so, otherwise how is prophecy to be fulfilled? "The Scripture cannot be broken." God, through Isaiah (lxvi. 8), asks, "Shall a nation be born at once?" and then significantly adds, "For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." May we not infer from this, that when the Church travails for souls not simply in her collective capacity, or by holding special meetings, but by each and every Christian in their individual capacity, holding special and continued communion with God through Jesus Christ, and possessing the spirit of Christ,—yearning for souls, and satisfied with nothing short of their salvation, making use of every opportunity that comes, and seeking opportunities when they do not come, to win men to the Saviour, when that state of things arrives, then it may be hoped that a nation shall be born at once.

One thing is clear, and it is this: that the chills and fevers that are so observable in the Church must give place to a more ruddy, robust, vigorous, spiritual healthiness. The pulse must beat more regularly. We must breathe purer air, and drink purer water than we are accustomed to drink, even that which the fountain of Life supplies; and have a stronger appetite for that bread which came down from Heaven.

Ebb and flow may do for the tides, but they should not do for the Church. Summer and winter may do in the natural world, but they should not do for the Church. Yet such is the frailty of our frame, and the powers of evil so strong that we find
"It is hard to work for God,
To rise and take our part
Upon this battle-field of earth,
And not sometimes lose heart.

All masters good; good seems to change
To ill with greatest ease:
And, worst of all, the good with good
Is at cross purposes.
It is not so, but so it looks;
And we lose courage then;
And doubts will come if God hath kept
His promises to men.
But right is right: since God is God;
And right the day must win;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.
With the certainty of the fulfilment
of God's promises and Christ's ultimate
victory: with the prospect of the glory

and blessedness of the latter day, the like of which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man" to conceive as yet: with Calvary behind us, and the Millennium and Christ's appearing before us, we have everything possible to encourage us. We know that "the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." Zech. xiv. 9. In that day no doubt men will be distinguished for superior knowledge and holiness, and far clearer and more comprehensive views of Divine truth, through the enlarged outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In that bright time that is to be, the clash of opposing creeds will be heard no more. The last controversy will have run its course, and whatever of evil there may be in it will be dead and buried, and whatever of good there is will remain. "Thy watchman shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." "Whether the privileged people of that time will worship the Father in the same modes and forms, and shall present that visible uniformity with which men have hitherto vainly sought to invest her, may perhaps be doubted; but in that day there will be such a union of affections, and interests, and aims, as shall completely subordinate every difference; the differences, if they exist, will be greatly narrowed, all will love as brethren, and exult only in their common relation to their Lord, and to each other." Thus speaks Jefferson (Millenium, p. 74); and the beauty of the prospect leads one to say,

Haste happy day,
Speed on thy way,
And usher in
The blissful day.

Isa. lii. 8. "And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." Isa. xxxii. 3, 4. Nor will the bliss of the latter day be transient or fleeting; but continued and uninterrupted during the reign of Christ, for "Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." Isa. lx. 20. Then Jesus "shall reign in Mount Zion before his ancients gloriously." Isa. xxiv. 23.

We profess to believe that such a blessed time is to come, and that it will precede Christ's coming in his glory: we profess also to believe that it is to be brought about by the means now at work, but how far do our actions correspond with our belief? We profess to believe that the whole world lieth in wickedness: is under condemnation: exposed to the wrath of God:—where is the corresponding pity and effort to save men from the wrath of God? We profess to believe that the wicked will suffer everlasting punishment: how far do our efforts correspond with that belief? If our view of this matter were judged of by what we actually say and do to save our fellow men, would not those who judged us conclude that we do not believe it? We profess to believe that the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one" that believeth, and that "this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached for a witness to all the world," before the end come, and that this gospel must be made known to men before they can be brought to know Christ:—how far do the profession of our lips, and the practice of our lives correspond? Where is the proof that we do thus believe?

The answer is partly found in the miserably small pittance so reluctantly doled out to Home and Foreign Missions, and other agencies that exist for the evangelization of the world, and the repeated and reiterated cries from various quarters for help carry on Christian work. For secretaries of Missionary and kindred societies to name their requirements ought to be enough to call forth a ready and liberal response from every Christian, whom God has blessed with wealth, and from