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Poetry.

Mrs. Churchill sends us the following beautiful stanzas with an accompanying note, a sentence from which will be ample explanation of her doing so, and of our reasons for giving them to our readers:—

Boston, Oct., 12th, 1881.

My Dear Mr. Selden,—

The enclosed lines were sent to me by a friend on hearing of the death of our darling Willie; and thinking some other sorrowing mother might be glad to have them, I send them to the *Messenger*. "Thou touched us lightly, O God! in our grief; But how rough is Thy touch in our prosperous hours! All was bright, but Thou camest, so dreadful and brief, Like a thunderbolt falling in gardens of flowers."

"My children! my children! they clustered around me, Like a rampart which sorrow could never break through. Each change in their beautiful lives only bound me In a spell of delight which no care could undo."

"Thou hast taken the fairest; he was fairest to me; Thou hast taken the fairest; 'tis always the way; Thou hast taken the dearest; was he dearest to Thee? Thou art welcome, thrice welcome:—yet woe is the day."

"I murmur not, Father! my will is with Thee; I knew at the first that my darling was Thine; Hadst Thou taken him earlier, O Father! but see, Thou hadst left him so long that I dreamed he was mine."

"Thou hast honored my child by the speed of Thy choice, Thou hast crowned him with glory, o'erwhelmed him with mirth; He sings up in heaven with his sweet-sounding voice, While I, his dear mother, am weeping on earth."

"Yet oh for that voice which is thrilling thro' heaven, One moment my ears with its music to slake! Oh no! not for worlds would I have him re given, Yet I long to have back what I would not re take."

"I grudge him, and grudge him not! Father, Thou knowest The foolish confusion of innocent sorrow. It is thus in thy husbandry, Saviour! Thou sowest The grief of to-day, for the grace of to-morrow."

"Oh forgive me, dear Saviour! on heaven's bright shore Should I still in my child find a separate joy? While I lie in the light of Thy face evermore, May I think Heaven brighter because of my boy?"

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

"The State of Religion in our Churches."

For thirty years we have had annual reports on this subject in our denominational records. For the valuable information gathered up in these papers we are indebted to our venerable Dr. Cramp. These are some of the fruits of his advice and labors. These reports give four items of our work as indicative of the piety of our churches, viz: the number baptized; the number of houses of worship built; the number of ministers ordained; and the number of churches organized. To this is added the total membership, with the net gains of the year.

As valuable as these statistics are, they but imperfectly show the real spiritual condition of our people. It is not quite possible for us in any tabula-

ted form to fully describe this condition. The most perfect ceremonials do not unerringly indicate spiritual life. Our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Nor can it be fully expressed in the language of secular life. There is much—and it may be the best—of religion that is not noticed, appreciated, or reported in our churches. The record of the saints is on high. This life is hid with Christ. But the light shineth. By their fruits they are known. God's work in them, and by them, appears unto His servants, and His glory unto their children. So I suppose the best we can do in making a record of this grand characteristic of the Baptists is to put in as concise form as possible a full description of all the spiritual fruit discernable. These will give a fair exhibit of our progress or failures, and be very useful to us as encouragements or admonitions. Would it not be well at this stage of history to have embodied in our annual report on this subject, in addition to our usual statistics, a tabulated statement of our financial operations? We are now attempting to perfect and consolidate this branch of our service,—to cultivate this grace in our churches. If we succeed in this we must perfect our records in this line. With well-kept accounts of receipts and expenditures in our several congregations the whole money transactions can be readily and correctly gathered up. By this it will be seen that, as it is in every good work in which Baptists are engaged, we depend entirely on the decisions and practices of our churches for success. From what I know of the financial methods of our churches, I am quite sure that it will not be possible to gather reliable information on this matter at once. We now need reform in this direction. And we will soon have this if our pastors and deacons will it. Our cash operations as well as our baptisms may tell of the Holy Spirit's power in our churches. It did this at Pentecost. The one transaction is surely as worthy of record as the other. It appears that many of our churches do not think so. The one item is carefully reported, the other is not. The support of our ministry is as much a spiritual exercise as is the ordination of our pastors.

Our contributions to missions are as indicative of spiritual life in our churches as is the consecration of some of our members to missionary work. The support of educational institutions is only continued as a spiritual service to God. When it ceases to be this it will cease altogether. These several religious industries of our churches are worthy of a permanent record. A history of our denomination must be very imperfect in the absence of detailed statements of our financing. The history of a church is nearly worthless when its money transactions, so descriptive as these are of holy consecration and self-denying service to the Master, are not found therein. In the benevolent acts of individuals we have the most reliable data of their piety. A well-kept record will, therefore, lay a good foundation for a permanent church fellowship; and afford honest material for obituaries. It will preserve the remembrance of the departed ones fresh and fragrant for the light and delight of coming generations.

The peculiarities of our church polity demand a most perfect system of finances. Our strength lies in our fellowship. Imperfect financing impairs our confidence in our partners. It chills our good feeling and checks our benevolence.

The financial reports of our Associations and Conventions do not flatter us. They fail to give due credit to our benevolence; and so they stint rather than stimulate our giving. Do we not need an agency in our churches that will properly systematize our money transactions? Our churches need to be cultured rather than to be canvassed. Our plans for increasing our funds should contemplate the introduction and establishment of a sound and sensible system of accounts in all our congregations, rather than a mendicant's trot

from door to door for the means of carrying on our religious work. Wise and extensive sowing must precede abundant reaping. It is true in this connection as in any other that what, by our various agencies, we sow, we shall reap. In arising to meet this necessity of our times, pastors and deacons will find legitimate and pleasant employment.—They, too, will be the first to reap the rich harvest of their labor. Every church record should be so complete and permanent that the contributions of each member to every work in which the church is engaged, from the day of their baptism to the date of their exclusion or death, will be found therein. And our churches ought to see to it that all blanks in this record are properly recognized, and that the breach of fellowship they indicate be speedily mended. All disbursements, together with contributions from members of our congregations, ought also to appear.

A careful investigation will undoubtedly reveal the fact that our churches who have most nearly approached the standard of benevolence set for them by the Convention Scheme are the churches whose financial operations are most systematic, whose pastors are the best supported, and whose fellowship is the most happy. Such a fact is very suggestive, and is worth looking up.—Would not the insertion of a condensed financial statement in the report of the state of religion in our churches move us in the right direction, and give to the world an additional proof of our spiritual life? In the appointment of this Committee at our last Convention the personnel thereof was entirely changed. I write this to call the attention of all our churches to this appointment, and to ask, on behalf of this Committee, for their cooperation.

J. H. SAUNDERS.

Digby, Nov. 21, 1881.

Cured by means of a child's prayer.

At one of Mr. Hammond's meetings in California, Elkanah Beard, who was for many years a missionary, told the following story about a little girl in the city of Benares, in Hindostan. He said that he knew the father and mother of the child, and he knew every word to be true, and he believed God answered the little girl's prayer. In that city lay a mother sick. For months she had not left her bed, and all that she looked forward to was a slow death. Her little daughter was eight years old. She loved her mother, and was almost broken-hearted. She took the New Testament and read the promises of answer to prayer. Going to her mother she said:

"Mother, dear, can't Jesus make you well?"

"Yes, my child; but it is not His will."

"Mother, why not? Have you ever asked him to heal you?"

"Oh, no, my child; but—"

"Mother, you pray to God, I know."

"Yes, darling."

"What kind of prayers, mamma?"

"O my child, I am in such agony I cannot talk to you of it; go and play."

She drooped her head sadly and went out beneath a tree in her father's garden, for her father was a postal official in that large city, and had a home with beautiful surroundings. She sat there and thought and prayed. Suddenly she returned to the bedside of her mother, and kneeling, said:

"Mamma, I am going to try Jesus, anyhow. He says, 'Ask.' Yes, and I am going to ask him. Now, mamma, pray with me. O Jesus, dear good Jesus, I've no happy days now, since mamma is sick these three months. She is so sick she can't talk to her little girl. O Jesus, she is so sick. O God, make my poor mamma to get well. O God, you can, you will. Mamma loves you, her little girl loves you."

Suddenly she sprang to her feet, and clapping her hands, cried, "He will, mamma, he will, he will."

That self-same time the lady rose

from her bed, who had not moved her limbs for months—arose and went about her household duties healed and praising God. Her husband met her at the door that day, and, overwhelmed with the event, went down on his knees and prayed God to make him worthy of the great blessing that had fallen on his house, while the little girl stood by him, her face radiant with holy joy, exclaiming, "Oh, papa, Jesus did it."—*Bible Echo*.

God's light on dark clouds.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

To-day as I sit in my lonely room, this passage of God's Word flies in like a white dove through the window: "And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds; but the wind passeth and cleanseth (or clearth) them." To my weak vision dimmed with tears, the cloud is exceeding dark, but through it stream some rays from the infinite love that fills the Throne with an exceeding and eternal brightness of glory. By-and-by we may get above and behind that cloud into the overwhelming light. We shall not need comfort then; we want it now. And for our present consolation God lets through the clouds some clear, strong, distinct rays of love and gladness.

One truth that beams in through the vapors is this—God not only reigns, but he governs his world by a most beautiful law of compensations. He setteth one thing over against another. Faith loves to study the illustrations of this law, notes them in her diary, and rears her pillars of praise for every fresh discovery. I have noticed that the deaf often have an unusual quickness of eyesight; the blind are often gifted with an increased capacity for hearing, and sometimes when the eye is darkened and the ear is closed, the sense of touch becomes so exquisite that we are able to converse with the sufferer through that sense alone. This law explains why God puts so many of his people under a sharp regimen of hardship and burden-bearing in order that they may be sinewed into strength—why a Joseph must be shut into a prison in order that he may be trained for a palace, and the premiership of the kingdom. Outside of the Damascus Gate I saw the spot where Stephen was stoned into a cruel death; but that martyr blood was not only the "seed of the church," but the first germ of conviction in the heart of Saul of Tarsus. This law explains the reason why God often sweeps away a Christian's possessions in order that he may become rich in faith, and why he dashes many an one off the track of prosperity, where they were running at fifty miles the hour, in order that their pride might be crushed, and they might seek the safer track of humility and holy living. What a wondrous compensation our bereaved nation is receiving for the loss of him who was laid the other day in his tomb by the Lakeside! That cloud is already raining blessings; and richer showers may be yet to come. God's people are never so exalted as when they are brought low, never so enriched as when they are emptied, never so advanced as when they are set back by adversity, never so near the crown as when under the cross. One of the sweetest enjoyments of heaven will be to review our own experiences under this law of compensations, and to see how often affliction worked out for us the exceeding weight of glory.

There is a great want in all God's people who have never had the education of sharp trial. There are so many graces that can only be pricked into us by the puncture of suffering, and so many lessons that can only be learned through tears, that when God leaves a Christian without any trials, he really leaves him to a terrible danger. His heart unploughed by discipline, will be very apt to run to the tares of selfishness, and worldliness, and pride. In every musical instrument there are some keys that must be touched in order to evoke its fullest melodies;

God is a wonderful organist who knows just what heart-chord to strike. In the Black Forest of Germany a Baron built a castle with two lofty towers. From one tower to the other he stretched several wires, which in calm weather were motionless and silent. When the wind began to blow, the wires began to play like an Eolian harp in the window. As the wind rose into a fierce gale, the old Baron sat in his castle and heard his mighty hurricane-harp playing grandly over the battlements. So, while the weather is calm and the skies clear, a great many of the emotions of a Christian's heart are silent. As soon as the wind of adversity smites the chords, the heart begins to play; and when God sends a hurricane of terrible trial you will hear strains of submission and faith, and even of sublime confidence and holy exultation, which we never could have heard in the calm hours of prosperity. O brethren, let the winds smite us, if they only make the spices flow; let us not shrink from the deepest trial; at midnight we can only sing praises to God.

If we want to know what clouds of affliction mean and what they are sent for, we must not flee away from them in fright with closed ears and bandaged eyes. Fleeing from the cloud is fleeing from the divine love that is behind the cloud. In one of the German picture galleries is a painting called "Cloud-land," it hangs at the end of a long gallery, and at first sight it looks like a huge repulsive dapp of confused color, without form or comeliness. As you walk towards it the picture begins to take shape; it proves to be a mass of exquisite little cherub faces, like those at the head of the canvass in Raphael's "Madonna San Sisto." If you come close to the picture, you see only an innumerable company of little angels and cherubim! How often the soul that is frightened by trial sees nothing but a confused and repulsive mass of broken expectations and crushed hopes. But if that soul instead of fleeing away into unbelief and despair, would only draw up near to God, it would soon discover that the cloud was full of angels of mercy. In one cherub-face it would see "Whom I love I chasten." Another angel would say, "All things work together for good to them that love God." In still another sweet face the heavenly words are coming forth, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. Where I am there shall ye be also."

To-day my lonely room is vocal with such heavenly utterances. God's ways are not my ways, but they are infinitely better. The cloud is not so dense, but love-rays shine through. In time the revealing "winds shall clear" away the dark and dreadful mystery. Kind words of sympathy steal into the shadowed room of suffering. If Christ does not come in visible form to our Bethanys, he sends his faithful servants and handmaidens with words of warm, tender condolence. The fourteenth chapter of John never gleams with such a celestial brightness as when we read it under the cloud. No cloud can be big enough to shut out heaven if we keep the eye towards the Throne. And when we reach heaven and see the cloud from God's side, it will be blazing and beaming with the illuminations of his love. The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be our Shepherd, and shall guide us to the fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from our eyes.—*New York Evangelist*.

God has given a man two eyes; if he lose one, he hath another. But man hath only one soul; if he lose that, the loss can never be made up again.—*Chrysostom*.

As malarious air may endanger a good constitution, so bad companions endanger a good character.

This world belongs to the energetic.—*Emerson*.