

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.
The Day is given for Toil.

The day is not for mirth, but toil,
Our life is not a care-free song;
He lives who works; and earth's best
Is won by souls pure, patient, strong.

Toil, then, till fades day's last faint ray;
Bear burdens; battles fight and win;
The upward is the golden way,
The crown succeeds the struggle's din.

Who toils shall rest; who rests shall
reign
Where glory shines resplendent, pure,
Where joy shall ne'er be mixed with
pain,
Where peace shall evermore endure.
O. C. S. WALLACE.

Lead On.

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling
gloom,
Lead thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from
home;
Lead thou me on.
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for
me.

I was not ever thus, nor asked that thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path, but
now
Lead thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will. Remember not
past years.

So long thy power has blessed me, sure
it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent,
till
The night is gone,
And with the dawn those angel faces
smile,
That I have loved long since, and lost
awhile.
NEWMAN.

Religious.

Sweep away the Cobwebs.

A cobweb is a small festoon which is the drapery of neglected places. It was once of service, being the work and enjoyment of some creature long since passed away. It frequently hangs over windows, and if allowed to remain after its craftsman has departed, it collects dust and obscures the light. It is harmless enough otherwise. Yet it is considered by all good housekeepers to be a symptom and symbol of untidiness, which ought to be remorselessly swept away. Are there not some moral cobwebs in some of our chapels? Some tapestries outspun by persons of a past age which remain gathering dust and darkening light? Let us enquire. The subject may be divided into three heads. Let us consider (1) the cobwebs of the aisle; (2) those of the pulpit; and (3) those of the pew.

First, then, we shall consider the cobwebs of the aisle. The prosperity of a congregation is greatly dependent on the way strangers are treated, and the enjoyment of the worship, too. Few things are more detrimental to the calm and pleasure of the service than a fussy or a negligent or a bungling treatment of visitors. Persons who have charge of this duty ought to give it serious study. It is very disagreeable to every right-minded person to see strangers standing neglected at the door, or to see them conducted noisily along the aisle disturbing the attention of all whom they are led past. Or to see them smirked at and made a fuss over as though their patronage of the service was greatly valued. Matters have improved in this respect of recent years, but in many places there is room for advance. At a certain church, which need not be mentioned, the place has been mapped out. A number of young gentlemen have engaged to take a division. In a polite way, they endeavor to make each stranger feel at home. He is

shown to a seat with an air that shows he is welcome, and yet without any appearance that shows he is, conferring a great favour by his visit. A hymn-book is quietly handed, and, in some cases, a tune book too. A kind word of farewell is sometimes said on parting. All movements are made as noiselessly as possible. The aim is to accommodate without disturbing, to be polite without cringing, to serve without loss of dignity, and, especially, that each one present "may attend upon the Lord without distraction."

Secondly, we pass on to notice the cobwebs of the pulpit. In not a few of our chapels there are certain little negligences in this part of the sanctuary which may be looked after with advantage. It is not nice to see an untidy cushion or a torn Bible. There is a whiff of disregard in these that is not helpful in devotion. Then sometimes the demeanour of the occupant might be susceptible of improvement. Formerly the progress to the pulpit from the vestry was full of dignity. First a fore-runner with all gravity brought the grand, gold-edged, immense pulpit Bible, and laid it with due solemnity on the cushion. Then with slow step, begowned and bebibbed, the minister mounted the pulpit stairs, the verger following to close the door. All that cobweb has been swept away, but has not another taken its place? The sight of a minister ascending the pulpit as though it were a solemn place, and he had a burden, was not without its power. In the reaction from the pompous we may find another extreme. No true servant of the Lord can feel indifference on entering a pulpit, and if he affect it he is as guilty of hypocrisy as he may imagine some of his fathers were in their stately ways. It does not look well to see the preacher take his seat with an air of semi-carelessness. It does not look well to see him during the singing looking out a hymn, turning over the leaves of the Bible, or consulting a manuscript. The whole aspect should be that of one who has thoroughly thought out his work, arranged all that has to be done, and is seeking to set the example and convey the influence of a prepared, a devout, and a hallowed spirit.

Thirdly, and there are cobwebs of the pew. The first we may notice is that excessively dusty, ugly one of coming late. It is in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of each thousand a habit, nothing more nor less. Very ugly and venomous must have been the spider who spun this. It is indeed a hypocrite's hope, feeble as a spider's web, that God will accept service marked by this failing. It has been permitted to disfigure our worship for long, and ought to be swept away. We speak not of certain cases, which every minister understands and knows to be unavoidable, but of the defenceless practice of some low-souled people who see little harm in forming the habit of taking no trouble to be in time. Then some disturb the solemnity of all around them by turning over the leaves of books. And others look at their watches. These symptoms of inattention in the short services of the present day are difficult of excuse. A Scotch minister was asked if he was not very much exhausted after preaching three hours. "Oh, no," he replied, "but it would have done you good to see how worried the people were." With such a ministry weariness might be well excused, but not improprieties of behaviour. There are many others that might well employ the service of a good strong broom. Amongst them may be mentioned that on one occasion a gentleman, professing to be a Christian, was observed putting on his overcoat during the time the benediction was being pronounced; and on another occasion a mother, who wished to bring up her children piously, was positively seen handing the little ones their gloves during the singing of the last verse of the closing hymn.

Other classes might be referred to. There are cobwebs of the vestry. Loud talking therein just before or after service is not pleasant to hear.

There are cobwebs of the porch—people standing thereat, and, by careless talking, robbing the hearers of the influence of the sermon. Then there are cobwebs of the organ-loft and of the harmonium-pew. Alas, alas, often very glutinous and dirty, and very difficult to remove without doing mischief.

In a certain quarter of London there is a noted old tavern which goes by the name of "The cobwebs." The ceiling is festooned with the growth of many years, and the windows darkened thereby. It is popular in consequence of this, for it is remarkable by what eccentricities notoriety may be attained by preachers and landlords. There is something Bohemian and attractive in the prolonged neglect. Yet at the last Brewster Sessions the magistrate declined to renew the licence without a promise being given that they should be cleared away. The authority that shall clear our places of worship from dusty, untidy cobwebs has, we fear, yet to be appointed.—*London Freeman.*

Answers to Prayer.

Sometimes God, for wise reasons, may not answer our prayers at the time they are offered; He may defer an answer for weeks or months; but He is all this time drawing us out to make our supplications with greater ardor, and more humility, and stronger faith. It is in love and mercy to us that He keeps us waiting. It is that our desire for an answer may become more intense and our perseverance more inflexible, and that the answer when it comes may exceed our expectations. While the blessing is being withheld, it is becoming more vast. While the mercies and favors are kept back, the store of them is increasing. While the heavenly rain is forbidden to descend, it is only preparing to come in more copious showers.

The sweetest and most blessed manifestations of the divine presence are bestowed on those who are most importunate and persevering in their requests at the throne of grace. By continued and fervent prayer, by long and earnest talking with God, a condition of mind is obtained that is well pleasing to God, so that He can bestow the blessing that is sought in perfect consistency with the administration of His government. To bestow a peculiarly great and rich blessing on one whose heart was not in a fit state to receive it, would be unwise—would be contrary to the laws of His spiritual kingdom. Before God can wisely bestow extraordinary benefits, the heart must be set on their attainment, the desires after them must become intensified, and the purpose must be fully formed never to rest until they are obtained; and this state of mind can only be secured by prayers of uncommon fervor and perseverance. The soul must be full of burning earnestness, and the flame of prayer must ascend continually to heaven.

Get into close connection with the living fountain—the fountain of life in Christ—and then you may be the means of conveying streams of the water of life to others. If full of love yourself, you will kindle love in others. If full of light, you will communicate light. If full of the Holy Spirit and of power, other hearts will be divinely influenced.—*From "Pulpit Earnestness."*

God's Knowledge.

God knows me better than I myself. He knows my gifts and powers, my failings and my weaknesses. So I desire to be led; to follow him; and I am quite sure that he has enabled me to do a great deal more in ways that seem to me almost a waste in life, in advancing his kingdom, than I could have done in any other way. I am sure of that. Intellectually, I am weak; in scholarship, nothing; in a thousand things, a baby. He knows this, and so he has led me and greatly blessed me who am nobody, to be of some use to my church and fellow-men. How kind, how good, how compassionate art thou, O God!

O my father, keep me humble! Help me to have respect toward my fellow-men, to recognize these several gifts as from thee. Deliver me from the sins of malice, envy, or jealousy, and give me hearty joy in my brother's good, in his gifts and talents; and may I be truly glad in his superiority to myself, if God be glorified. Root out all weak vanity and devilish pride, all that is abhorrent to the mind of Christ. God hear my prayer. Grant me the wondrous joy of humility, which is seeing thee as all in all.—*Norman McLeod.*

Married People would be Happier.

If home trials were never told to neighbours.

If they kissed and made up after every quarrel.

If household expenses were proportioned to receipts.

If they tried to be as agreeable as in courtship days.

If each would try to be a support and comfort to the other.

If each remembered the other was a human being, not an angel.

If women were as kind to their husbands as they were to their lovers.

If fuel and provisions were laid in during the high tide of summer work.

If both parties remembered they married for worse as well as for better.

If men were as thoughtful for their wives as they were for their sweethearts.

If there were fewer silk and velvet street costumes, and more plain, tidy house-dresses.

Luthardt's Apologetical Discourses on the Fundamental Truths of Christianity.

(Translated from the German by Prof. D. M. Welton.)

SIXTH DISCOURSE.

Religion.

Religion is an immediate fact of the inner life. Schleiermacher performed the important act of bringing the irreligious generation of his day to a consciousness again of this. Indeed, before all reflection, before all religious thought and action religion is already there, in the innermost being of man. It is the hearth of the inner fire, it has its place in the central part of his nature. We cannot pick out a single spiritual faculty and designate this as the seat of religion. It is at home where all the particular faculties of the spiritual or psychical life join in immediate unity. It is a matter of knowledge: for to know God and Christ is eternal life. John xvii. 3. And naturally enough: for whatever is an affair of our inner life and of our highest interest, must also be a matter of our knowledge. Still religion is not a subject of knowledge only; for then it would consist simply of precepts which we know and not of a life which we live. Knowledge is not sufficient to make a man pious, nor is orthodoxy sufficient to make him a believer. Religion is an affair of the will, for it must be a moral matter, and a desire to do the will of God. Jesus designates as the way to the truth. John vii. 17. And hereby everything obtains only its true worth to us by the signification it also bears for the life of our will. But religion is not simply a willing and doing; it is also a matter of feeling, for it is the felicity (Gal. iv. 15), it is the joy of man, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Rom. xiv. 17. But it is also not this alone: it is knowing and willing and feeling together, and because it is an affair of the innermost man, the ground of his personal life, we may designate this last the disposition, or with scripture, the heart. For scripture makes the heart the seat of religion, the source of the religious life: the word must penetrate the heart, Acts ii. 37, the heart must be opened to the word, Acts xvi. 14, the heart is the organ of faith, Rom. x. 10. This life of the inner man that we name religion, can assume a different

shape with different persons; with the majority it takes the shape of knowledge, or will, or feeling: but under all forms it is ever still the one essence of religion that is manifest, if it be only genuine and true.

But this religion, this affair of the inner life—what is it? Of what does it consist?

We must say: its first form is faith; all religion is faith. For faith is a phenomenon of the inner life, in which my whole inner being, my feeling, knowledge and will centre in the object of my faith. Scripture characterizes faith as a firm assurance of that which is hoped for, a conviction of that which is not seen. Heb. xi. 1. That is: faith is not simply a supposition or simple opinion, but an unwavering assurance, and indeed of something not sensuous. Faith ever turns its eye to the invisible. For what one sees is not an object of faith but of sight. But the invisible which one believes, he not merely assumes and supposes that it is true, but is most positively certain of it. This certainly however is not something arbitrary or imaginary, but something inwardly grounded. All faith rests upon such confirmation. Not indeed upon intellectual demonstration, but upon an immediate inner conviction, in which I directly perceive the object in question and get an ineffable impression of it. This inner knowledge and experience is the foundation of all true faith. If I believe in the love or friendship of a man, so that I am certain of the same in spite of all the talk of men, or in spite even of contradictory appearances—do I not believe therein because I have received an immediate inner impression thereof, which has wrought in me this immediate and unwavering certainty? Upon this inner experience and conviction my faith rests. So is it also with religious faith. For the supersensuous and invisible which is the object of my religious faith, is also a reality, as really as the love or friendship of a man, so that I can be inwardly touched by it and can immediately experience and know it and its effect. What has become inwardly so immediately my own, I can justify indeed in the way of intelligent reflection, and this might suffice; but in the first place faith rests not upon such vindication and argument, but it is immediately an affair of the inner life.

In this inner affair feeling, knowing, and willing coincide. For as in respect of human love or friendship I feel in the first place, that is, inwardly perceive and am sensible in my soul that another loves me, so religious faith is also such an immediate inner perception and sensibility of the eternal and of God himself, and thus a feeling. But with this feeling is joined at the same time an immediate perceiving and knowing. Concerning the matter which is the object of my faith, much can be hidden from me and unknown; but its essential inner nature becomes immediately known and acknowledged while I am inwardly moved by it and inwardly perceive it. And this is a knowledge characterized by the firmest conviction and certainty, because it rests upon the testimony of experience. What however I receive in the way of such knowledge and certainty, that do I make at the same time an affair of my will. For it is an act of my will that I inwardly join myself with that which is believed in the unity of the inner life. Faith is an act of liberty. Faith is on the one side somewhat involuntary: whoever believes cannot do otherwise than believe, he is as it were inwardly constrained, he is overcome, so that he must believe; and still again believing is an act and his own act. For as Fichte says faith is the determination of the will not to question knowledge. Faith rests not upon a demonstration which compels me to an admission so that I am obliged to believe, as is the case with mathematical propositions; but faith rests upon moral conviction, so that I must be willing to believe. And whoever is not willing to believe can never be brought to faith. God has concerned