

Sunday Reading.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND BAPTIST ASSOCIATION in Annual Session assembled, to the Membership of the Churches of which it is composed, greeting:

Dear Brethren,— Having assembled ourselves in Association at North River, and heard the Letters you have severally addressed to us with the record of your experience during the past year—in accordance with our usual practice, we send you this our Annual epistle in recognition of the relation existing between us, as the assembled delegates and the churches we represent.

There are many subjects to which we might very appropriately invite your attention at the present time, there is however one that seems specially to call for attention by the responsibilities we have assumed as a people, and the vast importance of the interests in connection with the kingdom of Christ on earth which our Churches are united in sustaining.

OUR FELLOWSHIP

may then be regarded as the subject of this letter, and we may endeavour to shew (1). In what it consists, and (2). What it is intended to accomplish. This may lead us to consider how far it is realized, and how it may be rendered more efficient for the purposes intended by our Divine Master.

1. What is embraced in the fellowship of a Christian Church? When our Lord in his personal and material presence left this world on Mount Olivet, he gave a commission to his disciples, saying, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

We have in the Acts of the Apostles a record of the doings of those to whom Christ gave this charge, and we learn that on the results of the preaching of the gospel at Pentecost being seen, after the baptism of the thousands who believed, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer."

This is the brief record of how the believers of that early day understood the apostles' doctrine or teaching, in reference to the course of conduct required of them, in carrying out what our Lord meant by the 'all things they were to observe.'

Our translated scriptures do not give us the full meaning of the original in some of its terms employed. The translators chose the nearest they could find, but there are shades of meaning which it would require more than one word to include all that was taught by the word written in the original of the sacred writings. This is one of those cases, and various opinions have been set forth as to what the "fellowship" here spoken of embraced, whether it was simply the recognition of each other as fellow-disciples, trusting in one Lord and Master and partaking together of the memorial Supper, or whether it had reference to any more definite and specific course of conduct. The most generally received view appears to be that they all contributed to one common fund for the support of those who had need and for the purposes of their work in endeavouring to spread the faith of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This would also seem to harmonize with the injunction of the Apostle on another occasion, "on the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him that there be no gatherings when I come." It is evident that this view of a common fund was fully appreciated and applied to meet the special necessity of the large number of converts at the Pentecostal season. And whilst we do not suppose that they had an absolute community of goods, nor do we find that that is necessary to the full development of Christian life and the highest exhibition of Christian benevolence, we do believe that Christians are living below their privilege unless they regularly do something in aid of the various institutions established for the purpose of carrying out the injunction of our Lord; each one of them intimately connected and necessary to the preaching of the gospel to all the nations.

This being established, it is evident that as the privileges and blessings of the gospel are free to all who hear the Divine message, there are none so young or so poor that they may not have some participation in carrying out the Saviour's injunction. If it is proved that where there is no effort employed in this direction, there is no true "fellowship," it becomes a matter of great in-

terest that the churches should seek to reduce such guilty indifference to its minimum, and use such means as are possible to induce all to contribute for Home Missions, Foreign Missions, and such Educational Institutions as are adapted to prepare men for this work, and so fulfil the injunction of their Lord and Saviour. "Preach the gospel to every creature."

We are glad to learn Brethren of your readiness and diligence in the sustentation of a gospel ministry among you; and your earnest efforts to bring up the young in your families and around you in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to some extent to aid in every good word and work, and if this could only be made the universal practice, it would be an approach to Apostolic Christianity, when "every one" was required to be ready to lay by in store for the benevolent work which the Apostle then had in hand. He had learned and was teaching the disciples that it was more blessed to give than to receive, and by his readiness to undertake the difficult and dangerous mission of love to the poor saints at Jerusalem whose minister had been killed with the sword, and who had themselves endured the spoiling of their goods, shewed that he was willing to make a large contribution towards this benevolent object. So is it with our brethren who labor in mission work. The Home Missionary needs our sympathy and prayers as well as what is necessary to sustain life—food and clothing—while going forth to work for us. Our Foreign Missionaries too take their lives in their hands, and in an uncongenial climate, are liable to a thousand dangers and inconveniences of which we can form but a very inadequate idea. So with the teachers in our College and Academies—men of, at least, no larger attainments, receive much higher remuneration for a smaller amount of labor performed in inferior institutions to those we have the honor to own.

These are all doing good work, and are worthy of all honor as our agents in the service of our Lord and Master. Our Convention Scheme, so called, provides a means of aiding all these objects in due proportion.

Brethren you have done well in the past, when, in face of strong opposition, you have upheld our peculiar and distinguishing principles and practices. Your efforts have been crowned with large success, even in the judgment of those who are not in agreement with us, until the observance of the practice of the rite of Infant Baptism, so called, which has no authority or foundation in Holy Scripture, has become a rare thing among many of the more intelligent Bible readers of other communions. It should now be your aim to make all of your members—even the youngest—staunch and firm advocates of the principles we cherish, and thus make their "fellowship" so true and hearty that they will be more and more forward in participating in sustaining all the great works undertaken by the body of which they are integral members.

Every member of the church should be a contributing member. There is no such thing as nominal membership in the Church of Christ. Each believer is baptized on a personal profession of faith, and the personally bearing of testimony for Him and promoting His cause is a privilege not to be despised or given up by any of his followers. As each one values the sacrifice by our Lord for his salvation so will he seek to deny himself and all mere personal gratification where it comes in competition with His claims, that he may be able to do his share, though it be ever so small or ever so large, in support of a gospel ministry and the benevolent institutions of the body, so that at last he may receive the—"Well done good and faithful servant, thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

An Open Heart.

The biography of the ancient Lydia of Scripture is very brief, yet full of interest, and of much value. We see her an industrious, self-supporting woman; a keeper of the Sabbath, and a lover of the place "where prayer was wont to be made;" a friend in need to the persecuted apostles, generously opening the doors of her house to them where she bravely encountered the insane fury of the goddess city by thus sheltering the obnoxious preachers; and promptly offering herself and household for gospel baptism. There we lose sight of her. But not before we have discovered the secret of all her goodness, viz., that "the Lord had opened her heart to attend unto the things spoken of Paul." This was the

key that unlocked all the treasures of her piety.

Not very long since, I took occasion to ask a young lady, in the way of correspondence, a few mild questions concerning her religious condition. And in her reply she speaks as follows; I quote her exact words. She says: "I think that for nearly a year past I have had entirely different feelings in my heart from what I had before."

Please notice that she says "heart," not mind. In our minds we have thoughts; in our hearts we have feelings. Her mere thoughts or sentiments were undoubtedly the same that they had been for years, or even from the cradle, as she had been religiously brought up. But these new feelings that she mentions were only about a year old.

Then she adds, "Before this time, whenever any one has mentioned the subject to me, I have felt very rebellious, and it has been very unpleasant to me." See, only about a year ago she felt very "rebellious" at God's claims upon her. That rebellion was in her "heart," and was what held the door against her Maker and Redeemer. The mention of the subject of religion was "unpleasant" to her. She does not say unreasonable. Hence, again, see that the trouble was in her "heart," not her intellect.

Then, proceeding, she says, "I think I have none of this feeling now, and that I have a sincere desire to be a Christian." The old rebellion, that held the door, gone, there was in its place "a sincere desire to be a Christian." But "sincere desires" are just what open, or else close, the heart's door to piety. Not a mere trivial, superficial, light, transient desire, but a "sincere" solid, true, reliable one, is what swings this door on its hinges for the welcoming of the Redeemer.

Then the young lady goes on still further to say, "I think my heart is now open, for I know what that is. I have always had that closed feeling before, as though I did not want to listen to anything about becoming a Christian."

And probably without a thought of the narrative of "Lydia," she appears before us with the very ideas and the very language of that early convert. Her heart, formerly so closed, was now open to the claims of the gospel. So very simple and childlike, yet how very natural and expressive are her words.

And now, should I write her another letter, asking if she opened her heart entirely by herself, without help from above, I should expect an answer to the intent that she utterly disclaimed the credit of this new state of her heart, and saying that if God had left her all alone to herself, her hard and wicked heart would never have opened its doors to its truth, and that that "closed" feeling that she used to have would have continued to this day. And then, if I should still further ask her to turn to and read the account of Lydia's conversion, I should expect almost to hear her exclaim, "Why, that is exactly my case!" Eighteen hundred years apart, and yet the two cases "exactly alike."

And after a few more years have gone and passing away, as she must, she may possibly meet, somewhere on the heavenly plains, that other one; and so meeting, she would be very likely to grasp her by the hand, and say to her, "Is this Lydia? I read of you years ago down in the world, and with great interest, how that the Lord opened your heart. And our cases are exactly alike; for the Lord opened my heart, too; else I had not been here."

And then these two ransomed ones may pass onward, singing, with the myriads of others like them, the endless song of "Moses and the Lamb." Reader, will you ever sing that song? That will depend upon your heart, whether it is an open or a closed heart to Him who stands there knocking, with all the blessings of eternal life in his hands.—American Messenger.

The Salvation Army was to celebrate its seventeenth anniversary on July 3rd, at the Alexandra Palace, near London, which will witness the unusual sight of Salvation services all over the grounds instead of the usual amusements. At the drinking bars no intoxicating liquor will be sold. The prices of admission will be the same as usual.

The Mother's Letters.

They were lying on the table—four snowy-white messengers—letters to absent children. The twilight had just begun to deepen, and the mother sat alone. 'I am afraid I have broken some beautiful reverie,' I said, as she arose from her chair to give me a kindly welcome.

'It was a sweet reverie,' she replied, 'but you came just at the right moment to prevent my casting a dark shadow over it. I have just finished writing to the children. You know my children are all away from the old home-nest now, and our companionship must consist entirely in letters. Life's drift has carried them away from me. When you came in I was just repeating to myself this verse of Jean Ingelow's:

'Thy mother's lot, my dear, She doth in naught accuse, Her lot to bear, to nurse, to rear, To love, and then to lose.'

'When you came in I was thinking over the nursing and the rearing time; all the sweet childish prattle was sounding in my ears, and the trusting, loving faces were once more looking into mine. The little ones were standing here around my chair. It was a very sweet picture, but I was just about to do battle with that Providence who had directed their steps so far away from the old picket-gate in front of the old homestead, when you came in.'

'I do not wonder that you sit in the shadow when that subject comes to your mind. It always seems wrong to me,' I said, 'that families who have lived together and loved the companionship of each other so well, should become separated and scattered, sometimes so far apart that they all meet together only once in years.'

'I was wondering to-day why the noise of the children should ever have disturbed me, why I had any nerves to be jarred when they were here, the lonely mother said. 'Herbert used to come in, as I often told him, like a mighty rushing wind; whistling, playing on the bones, or blowing a trumpet. The gate always swung together after him with such a slam that I used to call it the prelude. But Herbert would give me a hearty kiss when he came in with such a gusto that I used to say, 'Do, Herbert, be more quiet; but now if I could only hear the 'prelude,' that 'mighty rushing wind,' and feel that enthusiastic kiss, I would be the happiest woman in the world. I am oppressed with the stillness of this empty home.'

'The reason I came over here to-night was because I was so tired and nervous with the children's noise,' said I. 'I quite lost my patience with the little ones, and ran away from them for a quiet time.'

'I used to do that, too,' she replied 'but I have plenty of quiet now, and that disturbs me more than the noise. I wish I had children about me, for I believe for refined lives it is good to be brought forcibly into the atmosphere of children. Be patient, be forbearing; your life and theirs mingle together now. There will come a time when the children will have to live for themselves. Our experiences will not serve as beacon lights for them. They must sail their own craft, must learn how to tack and ship their own sails to the changing winds, and learn all about the times of the ebbing and the flowing of the tides of life. Rent cordage and torn sails, and sometimes with shattered deck they will come into harbour; but they must mend and tackle again as we have done before them. All that we can do is to commit them to the care of the guiding hand of Him who can whisper, when the most destructive storms gather about them, 'Peace, be still.'

'I didn't tell you,' she continued, 'how Herbert has been promoted.' She smiled as she said, 'It is the hardest thing in the world for the mother to realize the status of grown-up children. I had no idea he could fill the positions of trust that have been given him since he left home. To me he is yet only a boy. Three years have passed since I have seen him.

'Oh, my heart, my heart is sick awishing and awaiting. The lad took up his knapsack, he went, he went his way, And I looked on his coming as a prisoner through the grating. Looks and longs and wishes for the coming of the day.'

'When Mary was going to be married, I said to her, 'You are

nothing but a child yet.' She laughed heartily, and putting her arms around my neck, she said, 'One year older than you were, mother mine, when you were married.'

'And such a pattern housekeeper as she has made,' I exclaimed, 'such a discreet wife, such a loving mother! How could you have had any doubts about her capabilities?'

'The children are always boys and girls in the mother's heart,' she said. 'If I had not sealed Willie's letter I would read you what I have written him. His last letter to me was his love story, and he asked me what I think of the choice he has made. I have never seen the dear girl yet, but I hope he has made a judicious one. I cannot help thinking, though, of that eccentric clergyman in England, who, when solemnizing marriage, always took the ring and tossed it in the air before returning it to the bridegroom, pointing out that marriage is always more or less of a toss-up. Third persons in matters of the heart must be very cautious what they say and do. Goethe says, 'I have seen friends, brothers and sisters, lovers, and husbands and wives, whose relations to each other, through the accidental or intentional introduction of a third person, has been altogether changed, whose whole moral condition has been inverted by it.' I trust I shall always think about my sons' wives as did the good old mother on the coast of Lincolnshire,

'A sweeter woman ne'er drew breath Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.'

'The children will be very glad to get these letters from their good mother,' I said, as I took them in my hand to mail them on my way home.

As I stood with my hand on the doorknob, the lonely mother looked into my face with tearful eyes. 'Don't you pity the children—the motherless children—who are away from home, and who never have mother's letters coming to them every week to cheer and help them on their way?' she asked; 'and the mothers who never get any letters from the absent children? I firmly believe that for them

There must be a chink in the world above Where they listen for words from below.'

'I found such a beautiful poem in the life of the Baroness Bunsen, which must have been for her words from the world above. The Baroness had lost by death her lovely daughter, Theodora, who had left a family of little helpless children, from whom her mother was caring. The mother often wondered whether her daughter knew about her family, and of her assiduous care of the little motherless ones. One day the Baroness was looking over some papers in Theodora's writing-desk, and she found these words written by her beloved daughter only a short time before she died:

'Do I forget? Oh, no, For memory's golden chain Still binds my heart to the hearts below, Till they meet to touch again.'

'Each link is strong and bright, And love's electric flame Flows freely down like a river of light, To the world from whence I came.'

'Be patient, tender, and loving. The nursing and the rearing time are the happiest portion of a mother's life,' she whispered, as she bade me good-by, and I went home to my well-filled nest, while she went back to sit alone in her empty one.—Interior.

The Christian at work, a Pædobaptist paper published at New York, says on the 11th inst.:—"Infant baptism practice does not show any better results as investigation is pursued." We have already recorded instances of no infant baptism in Pædobaptist churches in this city. Now comes Philadelphia, and in that city three Presbyterian churches, with an aggregate membership of 979, show not a single infant baptism in the year, and there are other churches that make a like showing."

CANON FARRAR, who preached in Westminster Abbey on Darwin, took this appropriate text: "And he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he also spake of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes."

The local corps of the Salvation Army attended a service on the 9th inst., conducted by the Bishop of Bedford, at St. Faith's, Stoke Newington. The members numbering about two hundred men and women, marched from their quarters in procession, a lady leading the van with a banner, on which was emblazoned the motto of the order, "Blood and fire."

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

History of an early revival in Cornwallis,

WITH MEMORIALS OF ONE OF THE CONVERTS, MRS. JOHN L. DUNHAM.

BY S. T. RAND.

In the month of August, 1823, an unusual and remarkable event transpired in what is now called Brooklyn Street, then designated Shadow Street in Cornwallis, N. S. Word had been circulated that a coloured man was to preach at one of the private houses. Of course there was quite a muster to see and hear so novel an event. Doubtless most of the congregation had gone out of curiosity, and many may have expected a treat in the way of fun and frolic. But if they went to laugh they went home, some of them at least, to pray. The writer of this, then a lad of thirteen years, did not go to the meeting, but others of the family did, and when they returned home their countenances betokened that something unusual had happened. What the text was, or what the sermon was about, I do not remember that any one seemed to know or care. But the coloured minister, a young man with a fine countenance, named Richard Preston, with credentials from "Father Burton," had supplemented his sermon with a solemn and impressive hymn. Snatches of the hymn and tune had been carried away by more than one. A brother of mine, a few years my senior, seemed able all next day, as we wrought in the wheatfield, cutting down the grain, to think of nothing save this hymn, and as he worked he continually sang and groaned:

"Don't you hear the trumpet sounding? Glory, Hallelujah! Don't you hear the trumpet sounding? Glory in your soul! Oh, a judgement day is coming! And your time is swiftly running, Are you ready for to go?"

That was the commencement of one of the most extensive revivals that ever swept over Cornwallis.

Mr. Preston was not the sole labourer in the field at the time. The countenances of the late Edward Manning, George Richardson, Ezekiah Hull, and John Hull, are remembered with their earnest stirring addresses in the pulpit—and that expression can be taken for the most part—now I come to think of it—only in a figurative sense, for the meetings were mostly held in those days in private houses: but in the "pulpit" and out of it, the earnest addresses of the men mentioned, and others, can be distinctly remembered. But very many who subsequently professed to be converted; referred to Mr. Preston, as the one used of God for their awakening. I have heard the late Bro. W. Chipman say, in referring to those times, that people were awakened to the importance of eternal things, not only by Mr. P.'s preaching and his singing, but also by the very sound of his voice, heard in the distance, as they approached the place of meeting, before a single word was understood. It sounded as though God were speaking; and He was.

Among the numerous persons young and old who were hopefully converted during this revival, was Mrs. John L. Dunham, who closed her earthly career at Lakeville, Cornwallis, May 4th, 1882, in the 76th year of her age. She was a relative of the writer's, and my foster-sister, for she was brought up with us, exactly as one of the family. She was sixteen years old at the time referred to, and well do I remember the change that came suddenly over her immediately after the meeting; just mentioned, where she, as well as my brother and others, had learned to sing to Mr. Preston's "Judgement-hymn." She said nothing to any one of what was passing in her mind, but her countenance day after day, week after week, and month after month, betrayed her emotions. The light-hearted girl, fond of frolic and fun, and the singing of songs, was staid and serious. We could not make her laugh, or jest, and in fact we did not try very often to do so. Our family was not a religious family. We had no family prayer, and religious conversation was among us up to that time a thing almost unknown, at least during my past brief history. But