

Sunday Reading.

For the Christian Messenger. We have the following given as a child's first attempt at poetry.

Sowing and Reaping.

They say this is the day of toil, Beneath earth's sultry noon, This is the day of service true— But resting cometh soon.

But first must come the toil, Sowing perchance in tears, Toiling in sorrow care and pain, Throughout the weary years.

And can we ever truly say, Spend and be spent, would we Ever the Master's rule obey, Working while it is day?

'Tis but a fleeting life we have, A few short years at most, When we shall lay our bodies down, And mingle with the dust.

And if our aim through life has been, To scatter precious seeds, If we have ever tried to help, Our fellow creatures needs,

Glorious will be the happy change, When from our labours free, We shall mount on eagle wings, Our Saviour's face to see.

With Him we shall forever live, Secure from toil—at home, Blest with the joys that He will give, To those who "overcome."

Then weary sower murmur not, But, trusting in thy Lord, Be faithful unto death, and sure Will be thy great reward.

"I dreads de process."

BY GEO. F. FENECOST, D. D.

Coming from Chicago, a while ago, I chanced to be in a palace-car, in which there were few passengers besides myself. The colored porter was a very clever body, and I had frequent chats with him. He was fairly well informed and I gathered from several things that he was, on principle and in practice a moralist. So one time, during conversation, I said:

"Johnson, are you a Christian?" "No sar!" he replied. "I ha'nt no Christian; but I b'ieves in it."

"Then," said I, "if you believe in it, why don't you become one?"

"Oh, Sar! I gwine to be a Christian some time. I done fully made up my mind to dat long go," said he.

"But when?" I enquired.

"Oh! some time 'fore I die. I ain't one dese yer careless pussons dot don't think 'bout dem things. I don't let no day go ober my head 'bout thinking 'bout it; and I often tells de Lord dat I know I'se a great sinner, and that in his own good time I 'spects him to convart me. I don't want you to so me down for a careless, worldly-minded pusson; for I ain't dat. When I'se at home I allers go to church, and sometimes to de praah meetens; 'tho' I'se willin' to 'low I don't like praah meetens as well as de preachin' ones. Cause why? When dem Christian people gits goin' in dare praah—specially my old mudder—she jes' gits to taskin' to de Lord just 's if he was right dar by her, and it makes me feel dat I was jus' nowhar; kinder out in de cole like. Now, I don't never hab no such feelin' when I goes to preachin' meetins. De preachin' makes me feel dat I was not jes' all right; but it makes me 'termine dat I'se gwine to git right, and dat kind 'er evens it up and I feels better. An' I means it, Boss. I'se gwine to git right. I fully 'termined on dat."

"Well, Johnson," I replied to this somewhat detailed account of his church experience, "how long since you made up your mind to get right?"

"Oh! hits nose two years since, one night in one dese yer revival meetens, a feeling came over me dat I was a mighty big sinner and ef I didn't men' my ways I was gwine to lose my soul; and I resolved right dar and den to change."

"Well, said I, 'did you change then?'"

"Well, I knocked off lots o' my ole ways dat I use to have; quit swabrin and give up knocking 'bout wid dese yer fellers that go browsin' round nights into policy shops and bar rooms, and udder was places dan dem even."

"Well! You say you have changed your ways for the last two years. Have you got right, yet?"

"Oh, no sar! I hain't got what my old mudder got, yet?"

"What do you mean by that?" "Why, I means what you call gitten a change; dat is, gitten borned agin."

"Then you don't think mending your ways is quite enough to make you a Christian?"

"Oh, no sar! I know better'n dat. I knows dat doing better ain't de same thing as bein' convarted; and my ole mudder tole me ever since I been a child dat I had to be borned agin. Dat's what makes her so famous like wid de Lord. You see, when you git borned agin den you's de Lord's chile, and you don't hatt'er stan, off and pray like a sinner dats beggin' for suthin' dat he ain't got no right ter, but you just cum right up to him, like you was gwine to ax your mudder for suthin, and he gives it to you. Boss I ain't one dese yer ignorant pussons. I been well raised. No man never had better raisin' dan I had; 'cause sence I been big 'nuff to walk, my mudder done drilled dese things into me. And many time I learn her a prayin' to de Lord to give me a new heart. Dat what she calls bein' borned agin sometimes."

"Well Johnson, if, as you say, all your trying to do better, and all your leaving off of your old sins and your going to meetings is not sufficient to make you a Christian without being born again, why do you keep it up?"

"Oh! you see, I means to get borned agin some time, as I tole you. I done made up my mind to dat; and, while I know dese yer good works, as dey calls 'em, ain't goin' to save me, I jis think maybe dey kinder keep me long 'till I does get convarted. Dats hit."

"Well, Johnson, with all your good intentions and all your good works, which you admit will not save you, suppose you should die; for instance, get 'smashed up' on the train some time before you 'get born agin.' What do you think would become of you?"

"I done thought about dat, too; and sometimes when de khars go rackin' 'round dese yer curves so dat you 'most think nothin' can keep 'em on de track, den I think I'll not let 'nother trip go by without goin' to meetin' and just give up and get convarted." But then, you knows how it is, Boss; when you's in danger, den you think you'll ten' to things right away, and den when you gets out de danger you jes' grow kbareless like. Leastwise, dats me."

"Now, look here, Johnson. You seem to have pretty clear ideas about the necessity of being born again and what it is to be a Christian, and you say you have fully made up your mind to be a Christian, and you say that, if you should die as you are, you would be lost. Why don't you become a Christian now?"

Then, with a look on his sible face as much as to say, "I have never confessed before the real reason for my delay, but guess I will just out with it," he paused a moment and finally said:

"Well now boss, I'se been talkin' pretty free wid you, mor'n I ever done befo'; so I specs I might just as well tell you fust as las'. De only reason I don't become a Christian right now—I mean as soon as I git home again—is dat I dreads de process."

"You dread de process! Why what do you mean by that?"

"Oh!" said he, with a knowing shake of the head, "hits no small matter to git borned agin. It's a hard road to trabel to git into the Kingdom, and, much's I'd like to be in, I tell you I dread de startin' and dreads de travellin'."

"But," said I, "I don't understand. There is no 'process' in becoming a Christian. I wish you would tell me what it is that you dread."

"Well, fust of all, you got to get convicted; and dat makes you very uneasy in your min' and feel like you the wust sinner in the world, and dat you gwine right straight to Hell, and dat you oughter go dar, and dat, if the Lord sarve you right, you will go dar. Now I hain't no doubt dat's true; but, Boss, dey's got to be a mighty big change in my feelin' 'fore I can be reconciled to dat. Den, how you gwine to know when you got convicted enough? Now, Boss, dat's what I mean when I says dat I dread de process."

Wishing to draw him out still further I asked him: "Well, after you have been sufficiently convicted, what is the next step?"

"Well, den, arter you got convicted

den you got to 'pent of you' sins what you got convicted for; and, from all I can see and heab, dat's a wusser 'sperience than de conviction. Boss, I 'specs 'pentence is just awful."

"What makes you think so?" "Why, hits jis this way in my mind. Ef you got to git convicted so deep dat you can say honest dat you feel as tho' you deserve to go to Hell and you oughter, why you have to 'pent awful hard and deep to get rid of dem sins. So how's anybody to know how long dey ought to 'pent and ef dey done 'pented deep 'nuff for de Lord to 'cept dem? Dats what's bodderin' me. Ef I could jest git convicted, and den 'pent and git done wid it, I wouldn't dread it so much. But I seed some folks going whole weeks under conviction and 'pentence 'fore dey get de evidence dat dey was shore nuff convarted. I learn my old mudder say she more'n a whole year under conviction and 'pentence 'fore de light broke in on her min'."

"Well, I said, 'is that all?'"

"Well," he said, "I 'low dat's the wust on it. But I'se kinder confused 'bout 'sperience in de converson. 'Cause how's anybody to get de joy and de happiness when dey is so busy wid conviction and 'pentence? Dats what I like to know."

Here I stoped him and told him as simply as I could and as kindly that he was all wrong in his notions; that there was no process about it, that there was conviction and repentance, but these were states of mind that did not depend on emotional agony, but upon the testimony contained in God's word; that the word of God fully and entirely set forth our simple condition and our danger. If we believed that to be true, and honestly took our places before God as guilty sinners, that was conviction. In other words, I tried to explain to him that conviction was the full persuasion of the mind that God's word concerning sin and sinners was true. That the deep agony and painful processes he had described were rather the result of flesh or carnal mind struggling with itself. And so of repentance. It was just changing one's mind with reference to sin and God; taking God's side against one's self and God's thoughts instead of our own, which must and would lead, without the dreadful process he so dreaded to abandonment of the old life which they now saw to be wrong and hateful in God's sight. And so of faith. I told him it was taking God at his word concerning Jesus and his work. Saying yes to the Gospel and cordially accepting it. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, etc. "Do you believe that?"

"Yes," he died for sinners?" "Yes."

"For you?" "Yes," he bore their sins in his own body on the tree?" "Yes."

"Your sins?" "Yes," he offers you, as a free gift, eternal life, which is in Christ?" "Yes," do you want it?"

"Yes," Will you take it from God on his word that it is for you, just as you would take a gift from any human being on their word?" "Yes," And henceforth trust him as your Saviour and obey him as your Lord?" "Yes," Well, I told him that was faith, and just when he would give up his processes and stop looking at these old flesh struggles and deal with God on his word, just so soon would he be a Christian.

I fear he did not quite see it all, but he said it was a new way of putting it; and that he would think about it; but that was not the way his 'ole mudder was convarted, and he knew she was right. I fear that there are thousands of others who, to a certain extent accept God's word against themselves and would desire and do desire to be Christians; but they 'dread de process.' The truth is that Jesus underwent all the dreadfulness of the process of human redemption, that eternal life might come to us with the whole train of unspeakable blessings that go with it, a gift; something to be received, and not achieved. The work of the Holy Spirit, in conviction and regeneration, is not necessarily with tumult and confusion. It is through the Word, persuading us of its truth and leading us to believe, trust God in Christ for our salvation. These things are written that 'Ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that ye might have life through his name.' (Jno. xx, 31.)—N. Y. Independent.

God in the Church.

There is no truth which men find so difficult to accept as God revealed in themselves. Christ asked no question which has received so many different answers as, "Whom say ye that I am?"

Every possible theory of His personality and life has been advanced and finally discarded. The mythical theory of Strauss falls to pieces by its own weight of improbability, and is abandoned; Renan's exquisite fancy and charming literary skill cannot conceal the hopeless inadequacy of his treatment of this marvellous character. The men who looked upon the face of Christ and listened to those words in which, even to their untrained spiritual sense, eternal truths uttered themselves, were not less sceptical than the doubters of our time. A revelation of God in the flesh seemed incredible to them even under the supernal glow of that transcendent life and the spell of a teaching which, even while they rejected, they declared was such as never man spoke before.

The same difficulty meets the Christian Church in every age; men will not see God in human tabernacles. They will recognise Him shrined in the temple of nature: they will not bow to Him throned in humanity; and yet this thought of God is not utterly foreign to human thought; on the contrary, it is found in almost every great religion.

"There is but one temple in the world, and that is the body of man; nothing is holier than this high form," says Novalis and, measuring the gifts, the powers, and the possibilities of humanity against all its environment of earth, and sky, and mighty flow of unseen force, what is so august and worthy the indwelling of the Divine Spirit as the soul of man, as the great company of faithful people in all the generations! Paul had his faults and his limitations; but, setting the incalculable results of his strenuous life beside the stainless beauty of the Parthenon, the noblest of all temples built with hands, does not fluted column and carved architrave, and faultless statue shrink into insignificance?

The Church has made its mistakes and committed its sins, and the Christian should be the last to underestimate or extenuate them; but where else has the fruit of the Spirit ripened so steadily? Webster said that he found one evidence of the Divine origin of the Christian religion in the fact that it had outlived written sermons. More deeply and seriously it may be said that a crown of glory evidence of the Divine Commission and work of the Church is found in the fact that it has moved steadily on in spite of the sluggishness and blindness of men; that it has survived continual mistakes and shortcomings, and that out of the ashes of repented sins it has blossomed in ever-recurring seasons of fruitfulness. The God of human thought would reveal Himself in some miraculous appearance outside human experience and above human limitations—a revelation distinct and apart from all human life, and touching it only with a sense of wonder and awe. The God higher than all human conceptions appears in the very dawn of history, discovering Himself to undeveloped men in a language which they could understand, and continuing that disclosure to this very hour in a speech that has steadily deepened in meaning and risen in spiritual expression. He is not apart from men, but in and with them; He shines not more clearly in His sublime heavens than in the troubled life of His children. He works not more divinely in the hidden depths of the universe than in human history and with human co-operation. To the reverent mind, open to the highest revelation, God is nowhere so unspeakably beautiful, so wholly Divine, as in His fellowship with men; and this is what gives the church its sanctity. In all its history the human weakness and the Divine Spirit have wrought together; follies and failures have been overruled by that omnipotent power which can harness even the wrath of man to the chariot of praise.—Freeman.

Richard Baxter thought the doctrine of baptismal regeneration "as likely a means to make men Anabaptists, as most know. . . . I have known too many of my special friends that have either turned Anabaptists, or been much staggered, by occasion of this doctrine of baptismal regeneration. . . . I was once in doubt of infant baptism myself."

The Baptist heaven has kept working until now the vast majority of Evangelical Christians believe in the salvation of all who die in infancy. Many Presbyterians, chiefly under the guidance of Lyman Beecher and Charles Hodge, now agree with Baptists in this particular. Professor Prentiss closes his article with the following wish, in which we heartily join: "Let us hope that as the Kingdom of God comes nearer and nearer, and its heavenly light whether shining through the ever-living Word, in the inspired Scriptures, or in believing souls, is more fully comprehended, such a theology [one that shall vindicate the ways of Providence towards the little children, as well as towards the full-grown men and women] may yet bless the world. Certainly a great step towards it will have been taken when the doctrine that countless millions of the race who die in infancy, instead of being annihilated or lost, are for ever with the Lord, shall become the common faith of the Church, and at the same time all the theological consequences of the doctrine shall be recognised and assigned their rightful place in the system of Christian truth."

As the doctrine of the salvation of all infants shall become generally accepted, and the doctrine of baptismal regeneration generally rejected, the ceremony of infant sprinkling, thenceforth meaningless, will gradually fall into desuetude. Baptist principles have advanced far more rapidly than Baptist membership. We believe that during the next fifty years the power of these principles will become still more manifest.—Canadian Baptist.

Ministers' Wives.

Perhaps moved by Mrs. Spurgeon's statement that ministers are not only often very poorly paid, but that in some instances their stipends are several quarters overdue, "A Ministers' wife," in the columns of the Freeman, in a rich vein of humor, suggests the founding of a kind of training college for ministers' wives. "With due attention to the requirements of the case," she writes, "such an institution might answer two or three useful ends besides the great one of preparing young women for duties and responsibilities which are neither few nor small. The advantages of the college should be re-

stricted to young women who are engaged to be married to theological students, and who are not likely to have any private means of adding to their husbands' incomes. The house chosen must be, if possible, a fine characteristic specimen of the jerry-builders art; with the usual complement of ill-fitting doors and windows, thin walls, and smoky chimneys; and the usual absence of all convenience in the way of store-room, box-room, lavatory, etc. The furniture should be chosen with a view rather to cheapness than durability. Any servants employed must be thoroughly inefficient; and the washing must be done on the premises without extra help. Each student should have a certain number of children of various ages, from twelve months upwards, under her care. These children could be supplied from some of the many over-populated ministers' houses among us; and, with the usual housework, they would furnish the necessary occupation and discipline for the students. The professorships would be undertaken gratis, and with equal zeal and efficiency by the deacons' wives, well-to-do childless widows, and energetic spinsters of our churches."—Christian World.

Cheerfulness.

BY R. W. DALE, M. A.

There is a tradition that our Lord, though He often wept, never smiled. I should like to know on what that tradition rests. I know that instead of affecting a rigorous and austere life, He was found at the tables of all sorts of men, so that His enemies called Him a glutton and a wine-bibber; and instead of discouraging the harmless festivities of life, He turned water into wine, that the rejoicings at the marriage of His friend might not be abruptly closed.

The ideal saint is not to be found in the New Testament;—I mean the saint with the pale countenance, the wasted form, the hands clasped in continual prayer, the lips closed in continual silence, the rough garment, the austerities, the self-inflicted chastisements, which are necessary to the popular conception of the character. Peter was not a man of that kind, nor Paul, nor John. It is said that James the Just lived a severe life, and that he knelt so constantly that his knees were like the knees of a camel; it may have been so, but tradition on such points is not very trustworthy; and, anyhow, no prophecy or epistle in the Old Testament or the New exhibits such a representation of the ideal Christian life for us to honour and imitate. The writer to whom I referred just now, as admiring 'holy melancholy,' appeals to John the Baptist as an example of severe saintly virtues; but it is enough to say that our Lord Himself not only spoke emphatically of the very great contrast between His own manner of life and John's, but said, 'the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.'

I have known some eminent saints—people who loved God with a great love, trusted him with a perfect faith, kept His commandments, and lived and moved and had their being in the light of the Divine presence—but they were not at all of the sort that artists delight to paint and poets to celebrate. They were not melancholy, ghastly, sorrow-stricken persons at all; they were brave and hopeful; they heartily enjoyed the pleasant things of life, and made light of its sorrows. Some of them had humour and wit, an eye that twinkled merrily, and a laugh that rang like a peal of bells. In health and strength they were the kind of people that take sunlight with them wherever they go; and in sickness they preserved an indomitable cheerfulness. I do not say that all very good people are always happy; but my impression is, that the very best people I have ever known, the people who have had least sin and selfishness in them, and most of the Spirit of God, instead of being characterized by a 'holy melancholy,' had 'a merry heart,' which Solomon says, 'doeth good like a medicine.'

The melancholy, wasted saint is not the true Protestant ideal of saintliness. Luther himself would never have done his gigantic work as a great popular reformer but for his physical robustness; and his habits were as far as possible from asceticism. The Puritans were, no doubt, inclined to sternness and severity; and Lord Macaulay says that they objected to bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators; but my impression is, that many of them were very far from being grim and gloomy. John Owen—who may be taken as a very fair example of the Independents of the Commonwealth—was as graceful and accomplished a gentleman; as polished, as courteous and as free from artificial and conventional restraints, as can well be imagined. When he was a student, he delighted in many exercises—in leaping, throwing the bar, bell-ringing, and similar amusements; he learnt to play the flute, the fashionable instrument for gentlemen in those days from the most celebrated performer of the time, who was also tutor to Charles I.;—and when Owen became Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, he made his old music-master professor of music in the university. He was a very different kind of person, even when he became Vice-Chancellor, from what those of us would imagine, who suppose that the saints who reigned under Cromwell were a mortified race of men. The historian of the

Infant Salvation.

If the salvation of unbaptized infants had always been believed in by Christians, we may safely say that infant baptism never would have been heard of. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration and of the absolute necessity of baptism to salvation was early developed, and when this view had become part of the Christian consciousness, the baptism of infants followed as a matter of course. In a very able and interesting article on "Infant Salvation," in the Presbyterian Review, Professor Prentiss traces the history of opinion on the subject, especially from the Reformation onward. Among the leading reformers, Zwingle, who at one time came very near to the Baptist position, avowed his belief in the salvation of all dying in infancy. Luther held firmly to the necessity of baptism, even in the case of infants. Calvin took an intermediate position, believing that not all even of baptized infants are saved, but only such of them as are elect.

From the beginning the Baptists took strong ground in opposition to the monstrous doctrine that all unbaptized infants are lost. Among the causes that brought about a change of sentiment among British Christians, Professor Prentiss regards the growth of Baptist sentiments as the most influential. He writes: "The Baptist movement in England during the second half of the seventeenth century was very determined and full of spiritual force. One of its popular leaders [He probably refers to John Tombes] was a man of extraordinary genius, as well as piety; whose writings, scattered broadcast, found their way into thousands of Paedobaptist families, and must have contributed not a little to mitigate the bitter prejudice against 'Anabaptists,' which had prevailed during the earlier part of the century. This movement was in effect an emphatic protest against the old theory of infant salvation as in any wise dependent upon baptism."

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