

Sunday Reading.

For the Christian Messenger. An Album Verse.

BY REV. J. CLARK.

I wish thee love, the purest, best, The love of Christ within thy breast; I wish thee pleasures that will last When life, and death, and time are past; I wish thee wealth, true wealth of soul,— Wealth far beyond the world's control; I wish thee friends, but chiefly one, Man's greatest Friend, God's sinless Son; Cleave, cleave to Him, and thou shalt stand Among the blest at God's right hand.

The Golden Gate of Childhood.

Among Life's melodies to which we listen, What one so sweet As the soft ripple of the childish laughter,— The pattering feet? Oh, happy days of childhood, with their sunshine Undimmed by care! Oh, little, trusting hearts, with fond illusions So real, so fair! But toward the gate the steps are ever tending, Nearer they go; Wide on its hinges swings the fairy fretwork, Noiseless and slow. And out on Life's broad highway troop the children, Strong in their youth, Bravely they start on their long journey, seeking Love, honor, truth. Onward they go, yet oft they turn and, wistful, Lingeringly wait To catch bright glimpses through the gold-barred portals Of that closed gate. The gentle hand that shut it fast forever, They cannot see; But a low voice through their young souls, deep thrilling, Speaks lovingly: "Peace! Keep thy child-heart strong and true and tender, Whate'er thy fate; So shall the years bring glimpses of thy childhood Through the closed gate. "Glimpses that are foretokenings and revealings Of the bright door Of a new youth, perpetual and immortal, Closing no more." —God Cheer.

The Nearest Star.

It does not follow that the brightest star is the nearest. If all stars were the same size, and shone with equal light, then we might ascertain their distance by their shining. But it is not so. There is evidently immense variety in the brilliancy and size, as well as in the distances, of stars. One star differs from another star in glory. So far as modern astronomy has been able to ascertain, a star in a Southern constellation, which is not always visible in our sky, called Alpha Centauri, is the nearest to us. Sirius was formerly considered our next neighbor, but Alpha Centauri has been found to be about one fourth the distance. It is a double star. There are two globes, which appear to revolve round one another, one being a sixth part of the size of the other. Alpha Centauri is twenty millions of millions of miles away. Now the fastest rate of travelling known is a mile a minute. Suppose any one could travel one thousand times as fast, then it would take thirty-six thousand years' incessant flight, about seven times as long as the time calculated from the days of Adam until now, to reach the nearest star. The diameter of the large orb is twice that of our sun, although the two stars put together are supposed to be only one-third the mass of the sun. Enormous as the heat of the sun is, the heat of this star must be far greater. Everything there must be in a state of intensely bright gas. It is calculated to give out three times as much light as our sun. What may be the fierceness of this heat, which would not only melt diamonds, but instantly transform them into what might be called diamond steam, it is impossible to imagine. And there may be stars where the heat is inconceivably fiercer still. As we think about these mighty works of God, we may well and wisely recall some sublime Scripture teaching concerning our Heavenly Father. It is very remarkable that in several passages of Scripture where inspired writers refer to the grandeur of the

stars, they pass on to speak of the tenderness of God. Eliphaz asked, "Is not God in the height of the heaven, and behold the height of the stars, how high they are?" Then bids us "Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace," and tells us, "Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee. He shall save the humble person." The Psalmist, in a passage of exquisite beauty, says: "He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars, He calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power. His understanding is infinite." Can any conception of God be finer than this, that the same hand that rules the mighty stars will bind up a wounded spirit? When God, willing to confirm the faith of Abraham, said to him, "Fear not, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward," then He led him forth and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars." In that sublime chapter, the fortieth of Isaiah, God speaks to us by the prophet and says: "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created the things that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names, by the greatness of His might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth." And then, as though anticipating the notion that the magnificence of the starry sky might depress the soul with a feeling of being overlooked in its magnificence, he goes on to ask: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." So whenever we gaze on the sky, let it not be with unbelief, or with the idea that so great a God will not notice us, but rather with the thought that "the voice that rolls the stars along, speaks all the promises." And if there should come a sense of being overwhelmed with the magnificence, let us never forget Him who said, "I am the bright and the morning Star." Thus, looking at the stars, may we too hear a great voice from heaven saying, "Come up hither."

For the Christian Messenger. Incidents of Ministerial Life. A TALE AND SOMETHING MORE.

Rev. Timothy Alethes was born a minister as much as any other man, poet, or painter, was born, what he afterwards followed. It was well that in early life young Timothy made up his mind to be something; he was not brought into the world with a silver spoon in his mouth, as if he were to be fed all his days in idleness. Some are of opinion that marriages are made in heaven; however that may be it is quite certain that the qualifications and calls of the Christian ministry are from God. Mr. Alethes, senior, acted on this principle. He was desirous of giving his son a good general education, but to do anything like apprenticing him to pastoral work, without divine sanction, was his last thought. Still little Tim, as they called him, would hold meeting and preach, even at four years of age; if others would not join, he took considerable satisfaction in an audience of chairs and tables, alone in the parlor. The child's incoherent prattle, to empty seats, was significant. Alas, that similar performances should so often take place in graver circumstances. It must not be thought that Tim's predilection for the pastorate was a mere child's freak. He was a close observer of all that was said, for or against, Mr. Stabilis, the minister of the village; and, very early he began to inquire into the ways and means of pastoral work, while the remarks he made were those of a lad far above his years. Taking a text, he would preach along the way when going on errands, and sometimes retire into solitude, for the same purpose. On one or two occasions, he came to grief, being surprised in his retreat by his school-fellows, he was accused of lunacy. It was the

custom, at home on Sabbath, for one of the family to read aloud. Nothing pleased Timothy better than to read a sermon, when his imagination would place him in a pulpit, and widen the domestic circle into a church, well filled with attentive hearers. Many were surprised at the precocious boy; but his mother kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Rev. J. Stabilis, who lived opposite to Mr. Alethes, in the same street, was a very laborious man. For many years he continued to preach three times every Sabbath, in the same house besides attending the Sunday School. He conducted two prayer meetings in the village, and preached once or twice every week in neighboring places. Sound and solid in theology, he was also most pathetic in appeals to the heart. As the result, he had good congregations. God's people were edified; and time after time, enquirers, led in the light of divine truth to Jesus, were baptized and added to the church. This good man, for a long time, may almost be said to have been "passing rich on forty pounds a year," until he was obliged to open a school to help in supporting his family. Most of his people were poor in pocket, and some others labored under considerable poverty of soul; but Mr. Stabilis took what they brought him, and drew his consolation from the fact that by his efforts the poor have the Gospel preached unto them. As religious impressions which lead to conversion are often produced in early life, so with regard to the preparation of God's servants for their life work. Mr. Alethes was deacon of the church, and his pastor was constantly before the notice of his son. Timothy's earliest impressions were connected with the sanctity of the Christian ministry. Children usually believe what they hear, and take things to be what they appear. With sweet simplicity they take for granted that the man who stands in the pulpit to teach people the way to heaven must needs himself be perfect. What a pity that the ideal which a child conceives of a minister should ever be defaced, either by the conduct of the man himself, or by the tongue of detraction! It cannot be said, exactly, how far young Alethes improved his opportunities of observation, but it is quite certain that when the time came to give himself to the Lord's work his eyes were fully opened. He was rising into manhood when the pastor left the village, and took a sharp interest in all that was said and done during the vexed and protracted period of ministerial probation. It must not be supposed, however, that his view of ministerial life was all gloomy. There were pleasing circumstances connected with Mr. Stabilis' labors, and young Tim knew more about some of these than the pastor himself. For instance, he had heard his father pray for the pastor at least seven hundred times every year, and the accents of those petitions vibrated in his heart ever afterward. They were expressed with a pathos which rendered them ever new, and supported by constant and devoted labor on the part of both parents. It was by the help of several such persons as these that the pastor continued to labor, with gifts and graces which qualified him for a far better position. Notwithstanding the apparent humiliation arising from the poverty, meanness and oversight of many of the people Timothy saw that the pastorate was a post of honor. Mr. Stabilis was dignified in manner, even to a fault, though he was not generally thought proud. He was considerate and kind to all who were striving to fulfil their obligations to him; and the poor of his flock ever found him friendly and obliging. He did not make much ado about the few who shirked their obligation to him. There was enough said about them in the community. It was well known that they were the most sensitive, exacting and captious of the congregation, and the very compliments of these people were regarded as an excuse for their neglect. They said the pastor did not visit enough; but who in the village did not know that he was working far too hard already, to maintain an independent and respectable position? Besides this, the fact was not overlooked, but people who slight their pastor are

ill at ease when he is in their house. It was well understood by minister and people that pleasant and profitable pastoral visits depend on mutual obligations promptly and regularly fulfilled. Timothy's high opinion of his father's pastor was not more the result of his own observation than the testimony of all thoughtful persons who watched his devoted labors. Mr. Stabilis felt that he was suffering financial deprivations in private, and he was sensitive to the least exposure of his affairs. He did not know how highly he was esteemed. Timothy, on the other hand, carried the idea from his boyhood into the sphere of his own public life, that, of all done or not done, to a minister necessary to be told, "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be made known." When eventually Mr. Stabilis surprised his people by tendering his resignation, they did not fully realize the troubles that were coming upon them. There was no hope that he would reconsider the matter; he was too wise a man to submit his resignation without intending to leave. He knew that one of the suken rocks of the pastoral career lay thereabout, on which several fine ships had become total wrecks. Nearly all would have retained him. Only a small number were apathetic in the matter. By his disinterestedness and benevolence, the pastor had made his labors so cheap that some jumped at the conclusion that there was plenty of such commodity in the market, and they did not discover their delusion until they sought a man to fill his place. (To be continued.)

Southern Baptist Convention.

We gave some notes of the Southern Baptist Convention in our last and promised something more this week. The sermon by Dr. L. Burrows, of Augusta, Ga., from Phil. iii. 10. "That I may know him," was closed by the following very graphic word picture of THE DAY OF THE RESURRECTION. "The day of the resurrection will be a reproduction of the day of the nativity. There will be a converging together of them who desire to look upon the King. The company of the wise men will be increased to the numberless multitude of them that are wise indeed, and who shine forth as the sun for beauty. Not the stable of the God-man will be the object of their quest, but the throne of the Man-God. He will be again "the desire of all nations." Every eye will be strained to catch a glimpse of him that was pierced. They come up from their graves, rising out of the sea, gathering from the four corners of the earth—diverse in nation, diverse in culture, diverse in language, diverse in ages of development—yet unified by one common desire, one common hope. They re-echo the question of the inquiring Greeks: "We would see Jesus!" In a myriad tongues breaks that one heart-born query: "Where is he?"—the fathers and the martyrs—the missionaries and their redeemed flocks—European, Asiatic, American, African and the dwellers in the sea-isles—streaming toward the one common centre of Hope and Life—with the last lingering look of earth depicted in their anxiety of gaze—searching for the Babe of the Manger, the Teacher of the hillside, the Sacrifice of Calvary. And they draw nearer; the splendor of the throne flashes upon their countenances; the strains of the welcoming chorus rise to a mighty climax: "There he is! that is he! that is the brow that was crowned with thorns! that is the side that was pierced through and through! those are feet that grew weary with searching for me! that is the smile that kissed my dull heart unto life—I see him—I know him—there he is! there he is!" Nor is that all; to know him is to be known by him! I see him greet them as they crowd around him. That is his mother, that is the woman that washed his feet, there are Joanna and Susanna that prepared bread for him, there is "the woman who wove the seamless garment, the fishermen who followed him, the man that gave him a sepulchre, the child that crept up to him to kiss him, they who toiled for him, who suffered for him, who preached and taught for him. His hands stretched forth in welcome, "Oh I know you! I know you, true yokefellow, I have been with you many an hour when you have preached my gospel to unwilling ears. I know you, feeder of my lambs, I have been beside you many a time when you were teaching my name to infant lips. I know you, brave conqueror; I have been with you in many a battle with tempta-

tion. I know you, child of suffering; I have been beside your bed of pain, and heard your songs in the night. Yes, I know you—and you too—and you. Come ye blessed of my Father, come home." And they follow him wheresoever he goeth!" The Convention made a new departure in the mode of conducting its business which is described as follows: "After some little discussion, the Convention by an overwhelming vote decided to adopt an order of business and dispense with the multitudinous committees which have been for many years the bane of the Convention." It was pleasant to see how the old hard feeling between North and South has been overcome, and that although the Northern and Southern brethren have their separate organizations for benevolent objects, yet that they work in harmony. On Friday morning the Convention was engaged in the reception of the delegates from the Northern Societies. By special invitation Rev. Dr. M. B. Anderson of Rochester University, addressed the Convention and said he was glad to meet and greet friends and brethren of other days, to form new acquaintances, and to look upon this Convention in which he felt so deep an interest. Baptists North and South have differed as to interpretations of the Constitution of the United States, and questions growing out of it, but they have always agreed on the grand old constitution of the church, and were one as Baptists and as members of the household of faith. He thanked God for what this Convention has done in the past, and he believed that the Southern people are alive to the great issues that are upon them, and seeking to meet them as best they can. He thought that brethren North and South could agree to stand on the same platform, and to urge that Christian education and Christian truth must solve the problem of the hour. He keenly appreciated the difficulties with which Southern brethren had to contend, but the simple truth of the gospel would overcome them. He rejoiced that the old-time feeling was coming back, and hoped for an early dawn of the day when men of the North and men of the South will be of one mind, and see with one eye that God lives and rules—that his gospel is the hope of the country and of the world and that with united hearts and hands we shall seek to give it to all. He eloquently presented a hopeful view of the future of our country with God's blessing on the efforts of evangelical Christians, and made a profound impression on the Convention. The messengers present were the following: From the Missionary Union, Dr. Edward Bright, Rev. D. Downie, of India, and R. O. Fuller, Esq., of Boston. From the Home Mission Society: J. L. Howard, Esq., J. B. Thomas, A. G. Lawson, S. S. Lamson. From the American Baptist Publication Society: Dr. Griffith, E. K. Ellyson, J. B. Thomas, Geo. Callahan, J. L. Howard. These messengers were invited forward, and were given the hand of fellowship by President Mell. Dr. J. B. Thomas then addressed the Convention. He had heard for many a long year of the dignity and grace with which this body has been presided over. He had long known of the most excellent managers and teachers of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. You swing a long pendulum from Waco, Texas, to Baltimore, Md., and when you come so near us, we grasp the opportunity and come to be with you. He came not in his own name, but in the name of the Home Mission Board, and he felt that he was coming to his cradle again, where he was rocked in his earlier thoughts and sentiments. The particular matters that have been thus far discussed have been of especial interest to us. We are now more thoroughly interested in the question pertaining to the negro. The question is not where they are coming from, but where they are going to, and what they have to do with us. The colored people are with us because they are with you. We are aware of the difficulties that beset you and affect us. The difficulty is one that neither you nor we have created. Their elevation has come from education and Christian teaching at the hands of the white people. These brethren whom we represent feel disposed to consult you constantly, to work with you and help you in the working out of this great question. We see that it cannot be solved in an instant. We come to bring you the kindly and courteous congratulations and feelings we entertain toward you. As to the Chinese question, he recognized the difficulties of this question. Yet it may be settled in time. All the climatic conditions of the western coast are Asiatic, and indicate that the Chinese may acquire that germ of light which, with power and penetration, is to light

up that people in Asia. As to the Indian—here in this country the white man, the black and the red man are precipitated together, and of these elements a new man is to be made. To us as a people the way is open to go to the simple hearted folks and draw them with words of love, to bear with them, to be patient with them. May God help us to discharge the responsibility devolving upon us all as Baptists of America. Dr. Bright was the next speaker, and said he was glad to be there. He was also glad of this first opportunity to look into the faces of the more than 600 delegates of this great Southern Convention. It was worth coming to Baltimore to see a Baptist missionary organization made up wholly of delegates, and to observe the earnestness and enthusiasm with which they spoke and acted. The meeting of last evening was remarkable for the reach and completeness of its statistics in the matter of church-edifice building, as was the eloquent earnestness with which it set forth the pressing duty of Southern Baptists to place a house of worship in the hands of every Baptist church. The South had vast resources in its fields, and mountains and rivers, and nothing at the North had been heard of with more surprise than the Expositions which had been given of the rapidity with which these resources were being developed. No man could predict the future of the South in its wealth, intelligence and philanthropy. All the resources of a splendid future were in the hands of its people. He gave the Southern Convention his warmest congratulations that it was made up of delegates, and not of life members, and that its discussions were from the floor and not in a succession of set platform orations. He had long been in the habit of thinking that nowhere in the world is there so good a model of genuine Baptist principles, illustrated in practical denominational life, as in the South; and nobody could ask a better proof of it than is to be found in the character, construction and methods of this Convention. The speaker was warmly interested in the manifold enterprises of the Convention, but as he was here to represent the Foreign Missionary Union, he might be expected to refer to what this Convention is doing in like fields. The danger is that a people with such a field to cultivate at home would feel that they might be excused for doing comparatively little in foreign missions. Baptists are sometimes in danger of placing so much emphasis on the last part of the memorable commission of Jesus Christ, as somewhat to underestimate their obligations to obey the great missionary duty proclaimed in that same commission. We must literally obey our Lord in baptism, and we cannot too strongly insist upon this as the universal duty of Christian men and women. But no amount of orthodoxy with respect to this ordinance can excuse us from giving the strongest possible emphasis to the command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." As Baptists we must be sound in the faith, in every doctrine which God has given us to believe. But we cannot be so sound in all these as not imperatively to need the elevating, broadening and warming influence of that missionary spirit which makes the world its field. It was to the foreign missionary work of the Apostolic churches that we owe the marvellous revelations of those truths of God to be found in the Epistles of Paul. He was himself a foreign missionary, and those great letters of his were written to foreign mission churches. The debt we Christians of this generation owe to foreign missions is beyond computation, and the speaker verily believed that the money we contribute to carry forward this work is so far from diminishing our contributions to home objects that it increases them on every hand. The Christian man who has a heart large enough to take in the world as the field of Christian endeavor, will always be the largest and most unwavering contributor to home evangelizing work. Let us therefore take heed that no divorce comes between an orthodox creed and a missionary sympathy that shall be as wide as our Lord's commission. It was especially gratifying to see by the increasing foreign missionary receipts that no such divorce is thought of by the Baptists of the South. Warmly thanking the brethren for the genuine courtesy with which he had been welcomed, he gave to the Convention his heartiest God speed. Many of the Convention crowded forward to take him by the hand, and, says the report, if his coming among us has been as pleasant to him as it has been to us, then he has had a good time. The destitution among Southern whites was taken up, and spoken to by Dr. Burrows. He endorsed all that had