

that is, to offer prayer of every kind, and in every form, and at every proper season. Family prayer must, therefore, be included in this injunction.

The apostle Peter exhorts husbands and wives to live together in the discharge of the duties of conjugal affection and Christian obedience, that "their prayers be not hindered;" that nothing may occur to indispose them to social or family devotion.

The Dull Axe.

Eccles., 10: "If the iron be blunt, and he not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength; but wisdom is profitable to direct."

The text presents to the wood-cutter the alternative, either to spend time in sharpening his axe, or expend his strength using a dull one. Which shall he do? Wisdom is profitable to direct.

A young man has seriously and prayerfully considered the subject of becoming a preacher of the gospel. He has the requisite of first importance—piety. He has a well-balanced mind, capable of high improvement. He enjoys good health. He has an ardent desire for the work,

based on compassion for dying souls, and a willingness to devote all his powers in honoring his divine Master in their salvation. He feels as Paul did, when he said, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." So far the way seems clear for entering upon a course of study preparatory to his great work. But obstacle number one interposes. He has not the pecuniary means.

But this vanishes before his indomitable energy, his manifest purity of purpose and trust in Providence. Obstacle number two: he is exceedingly diffident; too timid, peradventure, ever to look an intelligent congregation in the face. So much the better. This may induce self-distrust, and a firmer confidence in God. It will be apt to make him, a better preacher—more impassioned and impressive. Obstacle number three relates not so much to entering upon the work, as to the thoroughness of the preparation. He has seen more than twenty summers; his early education has been limited, and a thorough classical and theological course will add eight or ten years to his life. May he not take a shorter cut to the pulpit? Ought he not—for the question becomes one of duty, as connected with his greatest usefulness in life—ought he not enter upon his work with a dull axe, rather than spend so much time in sharpening it? Let us answer that question by a little of that wisdom which is profitable to direct.

The wood-cutter, by spending one-third more time in putting his axe in complete order, cuts three cords of wood in a day instead of two, and eighteen in a week instead of twelve; as much in two months as with his dull axe he would have corded in three; as much in twenty years as he would have accomplished in thirty; so that he has actually gained, not only in the amount of work done, but gained in time, and gained immensely in physical strength and comfort. In forty years he has done the work of two generations, and goes to his rest famous, according as he has lifted up axes upon the thick trees.

REMARK.—He is a dull student, and will make a dull preacher, who does not learn a practical lesson from the wood-cutter.—*N. Y. Evangelist.*

Reward for Labor.

Many worldly people imagine that the Christian life is made up only of crosses and sacrifices, which are borne with patience in expectation of future reward. They cannot comprehend how the good man is satisfied from himself, and finds an unending fountain of happiness in the consciousness of God's approval. Mr. Bixby, of the Maulmain mission writes:

"Our work is hard, taxing both body and mind. What the reward will be, we do not know. But one thing we do know. If we receive no other reward than what is given to us daily, there is no other service upon earth that pays so well. In all the pursuits of this world, even in my choicest childish amusements, I have never found such exquisite pleasure, as in preaching Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, to these perishing idolaters. It is a work perfectly congenial to my feelings, and satisfying to my craving soul; and with such sweet contentment and that 'favor which is life,' how can I be unhappy?"

"Go, then earthly fame and treasure,
Come, disaster, scorn and pain,
In Christ's service pain is pleasure,
With his favor, loss is gain."

How to receive your Pastor.

When your minister calls to make you a friendly visit, receive him without ceremony. His time is precious, and he cannot well afford to wait for you to dress, perform your toilet, and put things to rights. He calls to see you, not your fine cloths. And do not weary him with your apologies. He would much prefer to hear you speak of your moral concerns.

And if you invite him to sit at your table, give him precisely such food as your family would have if he were not visiting you. And improve your time while he is with you, in conversation upon such subjects as tend to increase your knowledge and your happiness. Preachers are men, and they know that people have their affairs to see to; and if your minister is a man of common sense, and finds that you put yourself out on his account, he will not be likely to come again, lest by so doing he should put you to some inconvenience. Be kind enough to see him as you are, when he calls, and he will like you all the better for it.

Use of the Pen by Ministers.

Many excellent preachers and successful pastors confine themselves almost exclusively to their own field of labor. Diligent preparation for the pulpit, and an intelligent and faithful care of the flock, exhausts their conception of personal responsibility. They overlook one of the readiest and most extensive means of influence, by the use of the pen. Pithy and pungent articles in religious journals, written in some leisure hour of deep religious feeling, may perhaps accomplish more good than a whole year's pastorate. Religious treatises, the matured fruit of years of earnest Christian thought and experience, may save and guide thousands of sinners, after the hand that wrote them has fallen to dust. Are not many of our pastors concealing a talent in a napkin, which ought to be employed in the Master's service? In reading the interesting narrative of the Jubilee in connection with John Angell James' fifty years of labor, we were impressed with the vast amount of good accomplished by his pen. One of the speakers on that occasion remarked as follows:

"I believe that he who chooses his instruments where he will, made use of the pen of Mr. James for the promotion of his own glory, and that that dear and honoured servant of Christ stands before us as one of the trio—for I hold that there are but three, who have been more signally honoured than all the rest; Baxter, the author of the 'Saint's Rest'; Doddridge, the author of the 'Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul'; and then comes James' 'Anxious Inquirer.' (Hear, hear.) These three men have been blessed of God to confer advantages upon the Church such as no other three men were ever permitted to do. And to the man whom God has thus honoured, I am anxious to offer a feeble tribute of my gratitude and love."

"Home."

There is something in that little word Home which lifts the heart into the throat, and ever excites intense emotion in the British soldier on service. Let, for instance, but the bugle of a light regiment play "Home, sweet home," in the evening about tattoo time, and you will, here in the Crimea, perceive an uneasiness creep into every chatting circle; and then silence will ensue, and many a head will be turned aside from the watch-fire to listen to that air, which, perhaps, more than any other, conjures up in the mind's eye of all of us the comforts of Old England.—*Letter from the Camp.*

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Extempore versus Written Sermons.

CHANGES are not always improvements, they do however occur frequently, both in things natural and spiritual, as well in the church as in the world; many changes are for the better, many for the worse, others there are about which a variety of opinions exist, some pronouncing them innovations, others hail them as improvements, whilst others grieve over them as injurious. One among the many changes in the Baptist denomination, ranking with the last description, is, written pulpit discourses or sermons. The evil (if it be an evil) happily exists to but a small extent in Nova Scotia among our Churches, but as innovations once introduced are hard to remove, it will be well to look to the matter before it takes root too deeply: I have travelled extensively through the United States and mingled freely with the Churches, and have found that the prevalence of written discourses destroyed in some measure the earnest, importunate appeals so characteristic of dissenting pulpit addresses, and too frequently they are degenerated into elaborately polished essays, much more suited for a lecture at a Mechanics' Institute, or before a literary society, than for the sacred desk. It has become so common now in the neighbouring Union to read the sermon from the pulpit, that to question its propriety would be to subject one to the sneer of contempt or to stamp his character with an ignorance of useful progress; and still those in most cases who had the largest and most flourishing Churches, were those who left their manuscripts at home. Dr. Cone, Dr. Welsh, and others at the head of their denominations, belonged to the old school, and the success of their extempore performances may be witnessed in the largeness of their Churches and the benign influence scattered around them. I would be far from unchristianizing a brother for using a manuscript in the pulpit, as I know many valuable servants of God have done this all their lives, and were very useful; but as a general thing, where the system prevails preaching degenerates into lifeless formality, and soon descends from the pulpit to the pews, till the Church in all its movements proceeds with systematic regularity, devoid of life or healthy action. Happily the genius of our dissenting congregations, and particularly the Baptists, are not favourable to written discourses. Trained under the Hardings, Mannings, Dimocks, Chipmans, Ansleys, &c., whose powerful voices, piercing eyes, ready utterance, and deep earnestness characterised all their pulpit labours, they are not prepared to make allowance for those who have had the advantage of training which belonged not to the age of our departed ministers, and cannot divest themselves of the prejudice they feel against innovations contrary to what has been the course for the last half century. Our old ministers did not go into the pulpit unprepared, they habitually studied their discourses. One venerable servant of God, just departed, justly celebrated for his pulpit labours, I heard often remark that he seldom slept any on Saturday night, but on his pillar arranged his discourse for the Sabbath.

The advantages of written discourses are few, the disadvantages many. In point of correctness there may be something gained, but then the majority of any congregation are unlettered men, consequently do not appreciate this circumstance. In the loss of energy forbidden by being obliged to follow a written preparation, in the withdrawing of the eye from the listeners, and the inability to throw in thoughts—occurring at the moment—and which might break in upon the written connection, more than counterbalance anything gained by mere literary correctness of arrangement. The feelings of hearers interested in what interests the speaker, and unless his energies are thrown into his subject, and his emotion of soul betrayed by his depth of feelings, but little awakening will be felt in his congregation. It may be a bold assertion to remark, that it seems contrary to sound wisdom or common sense to offer to a congregation of intelligent people who are capable of reflecting on such matters, what would not be received in a court of law by a jury, on the floor of the assembly room, or from the actor on the stage,—there the speakers are liable to interruption, and frequently with an unthought of subject are expected to address captious hearers or listening jurors for hours; and, that their remarks may tell with effect, they throw all their energies into their words, and usually in proportion to their energy and zeal are they rewarded with success. Some years ago I remember we used in speaking of the Episcopal Clergymen, to say they read their discourses, then it was not called preaching; whether our Saviour included both written and extempore addresses in his commission to preach the Gospel, I leave for the learned to determine. But can we suppose for a moment, when Peter and the Apostles addressed the multitude on the day of Pentecost, they tied themselves down to a discourse prepared and written out some days previously; or do we imagine when Paul stood on Mar's hill amid the learned Athenians, that he treated them with a dissertation from manuscript: the idea is preposterous, and why should it not be equally so now. The same truths are to be delivered—Christ and him crucified; the same hearers—men dead in trespasses and sins; the same effects are desired

to follow the discourse—repentance of sin and faith in Christ Jesus. Consequently the same sort of preaching is requisite in our day; any other will fail, or be greatly limited in its results. We have young men training for usefulness as preachers of the Gospel. I rejoice that an opportunity so favourable is provided for that purpose in our own land, where I trust they will yield to the useful prejudice (if prejudice it may be called) of our denomination in this Province, and never venture before a congregation on the Sabbath with a lamp-soiled manuscript. Whether to have our pious young ministers educated to read their discourses, or to labour without education in an extempore manner is best, I leave your readers to decide; for myself I should prefer the latter, as feeling that such labours would be more in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel, and the feelings and wants of the people.

HINT.

For the Christian Messenger.

Extract of Letter from Cape Breton.

[Although the following was not written for publication, yet its perusal afforded us such unmixed gratification that we have ventured to insert it, so that our readers may share with us in the privilege of some acquaintance with our aged brother.]

MARGAREE, N. E., Jan. 9, 1856.

DEAR BROTHER SELDEN,

"It is, I am well aware, no compliment to an Editor to send him the name of a doubtful payer, altho' those I have sent you are not instantly prepared to pay, they will soon. I can safely bind myself responsible for the payment, otherwise I would not send them. I am, my dear brother, at your service. The prosperity of the C. Messenger is near to my heart. Its pages have often cheered and comforted my drooping spirit. The editorial address of the surviving editor, brother Nutting, at the close of the year, in the last paper, caused a sensitive thrilling emotion in my heart and soul. May God support him in his declining years, and when it is the good will of his Lord and Master to call him hence to face the swellings of Jordan, may the cheering presence of the God of love be felt by him and enable him to sing when going through the flood.

As a denomination, we owe a debt of love to the former conductors of the Christian Messenger. They fought our battles, they stood firm in the face of our enemies.

I am now, dear brother, an old man. Death has swept away the most of my dearest friends and relatives. But the removal of dear brother Ferguson inflicted the deepest wound I ever felt. I have been this long time looking for his memoir in the pages of the C. M. Are there none amongst the thousands in Israel to take upon them this service. Often he himself took up his active pen in the cause of the living and the dead.

I wish you, my dear friend, prosperity in your new undertaking. The brethren of our denomination by their efforts should support the Messenger, and do all they can to make it appear what it ought to be. Shame upon us, if we do not exert ourselves; we are fully able, if we are only willing; I shall, for one, do all I possibly can.

I remain,
Yours most sincerely,
MURDOCH ROSS.

For the Christian Messenger.

Obituary Notices.

Died at Upper Economy, on the 9th inst., Mrs. Mary Crowe, widow of the late Jas. Crowe, in the 76th year of her age. During the last fourteen years she has been a consistent and worthy member of the Baptist Church in Portapique. Our deceased sister was born in Bass River, Londonderry, in the year 1880. Of her early history the writer knows but little more than that she was the daughter of James Fulton, Esq., an old and respectable inhabitant of Bass River, was brought up in the Presbyterian faith, but never, as we can learn, made a public profession of religion till the summer of 1842, when it was the happy privilege of the writer to lead her and her husband, and several others, forward in the ordinance of baptism. Our departed sister possessed in an eminent degree that "meek and quiet spirit which in God's sight is of great price." She was not a woman of many words; but by her life and deportment proved to a demonstration the power and influence of true piety. She loved her Bible—she loved the children of God—she was a lover of the Gospel.