

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. III. No. 17.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 1858.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXII. No. 17.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

LINES.

"Father, Son, and Spirit."

Thy children have sweet thoughts of thee;
Their Friend, Protector, Father in the skies;
Whose care for thy redeemed ones never dies;
Whose love above their comprehension lies;
Eternal; infinite.

They have sustaining hopes through him,
Who sits upon his Mediatorial throne,
And in their hearts the seeds of truth hath sown.
Speed on thy work, blest Lamb: approve thine own,
And fit them for the skies.

They oft in rapt communion muse
On that divine, mysterious, spirit birth
Which sanctifies and seals, and saves from earth;
And hallow what were once the hosts of mirth,
To fellowship with heaven.

They hope ere long to reach their home,
Where Father, Saviour, Sanctifier dwell;
And clad in robes of glory, wondering tell
His grace, "who doeth all things well;"
And sing unceasing praise.

When our victorious Lord shall come,
And from the vaulted heavens the trump shall sound,
And o'er earth's wide expanse aloud resound:
May each who reads, and she who writes, be found
Secure in conquering grace.

Onslow.

Selections.

How the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon became a Baptist.

AS RELATED BY HIMSELF.

About the close of the year 1853, the Editor of the *Baptist Reporter* received from the Rev. C. H. SPURGEON the following communication, which is here given just as it appeared in the December issue of that publication:—

"CONFESSIONS OF A CONVERT."

To the Editor of the *Baptist Reporter*:

DEAR SIS,—I am a Baptist, not by education, but by conviction. Coming out from an ancient Independent family, I am a convert from sprinkling with water to baptism in water; and with your permission I will, like a certain anonymous writer, publish my "confessions."

I will not say a word of what I heard of Baptists in my childhood, for I do not think my parents meant me to believe that Baptists were bad people; but I certainly did think so, and I cannot help thinking that somewhere or other I must have heard some calumnies against them, or else how should I have had the opinion?

I remember seeing a baby sprinkled with less than an hour of its death; and I seem to hear even now the comforts which certain parties gave to the bereaved parent—"What a mercy it was baptized! what a consolation it must be!" This was in an independent family, and the words were spoken by an Independent minister.

I knew an instance of an aged minister of the same persuasion, who baptized a little boy although the father was averse to it. The child was running about in the hall of the minister's house, and the mother looking on. He was caught up, and the pious man exclaimed, "Come along, Mrs. S., the poor child shall not live like a heathen any longer." So the conjuration was performed, and the little boy was put into the paedobaptist covenant. He was not only suffered to come, but forced to come; and doubtless went on his way rejoicing to think it was over.

I was, at fourteen, sent to a Church-of-England School, where we had three clergymen who by turns came to teach us their religion. But, somehow or other, the young gents did not seem to get on much, for when one of them was asked by the

clergyman how many sacraments there were, he said "seven," and when that was denied, he said, "Oh, Sir, there is one that they take at the altar." Upon which I could not help saying, "that's hanging I should think;" which suggestion made even the reverend gentlemen smile, although, of course, I was bidden not to be so rude as to interrupt again. I am sure that many of the sons of the gentry in this large establishment were more ignorant of Scripture than the boys in some of our Ragged Schools.

One of the clergy was, I believe, a good man; and it is to him I owe that ray of light which sufficed to shew me believers' baptism. I was usually at the head of the class, and when the catechism was to be repeated, something like the following conversation took place:

Clergyman. What is your name?

Scholar. S—, Sir.

C. No, no; what is your name?

S. Charles S—, Sir.

C. Now you should not behave so, for you know I only want your Christian name.

S. If you please, Sir, I am afraid I haven't got one.

C. Why how is that?

S. Because I do not think I am a Christian.

C. What are you then? a heathen?

S. No, Sir; but we may not be heathens, and yet be without the grace of God, and so not be truly Christians.

C. Well, well, never mind; what is your first name?

S. Charles.

C. Who gave you that name?

S. I am sure I don't know, Sir; I know no godfathers ever did anything for me, for I never had any. Likely enough my mother and father did.

C. Now you should not set the boys a laughing. Of course I do not wish you to say the usual answer.

He seemed always to have a respect for me, and gave me the "Christian Year," in calf, as a reward for my great proficiency in religious knowledge.

Proceeding with the Catechism, he suddenly turned to me and said: S—, you were never properly baptized.

S. Oh yes, Sir, I was; my grandfather baptized me in the little parlour, and he is a minister, so I know he did it right.

C. Ah, but you had neither faith nor repentance, and therefore ought not to receive baptism.

S. How do you know that; does not the Prayer-Book say faith and repentance are necessary before baptism? and this is so scriptural a doctrine that no one ought to deny it. [Here he went on to shew that all the persons spoken of in the Bible as being baptized were believers; which, of course, was an easy task.] Now, I shall give you till next week to find out whether the Bible does not declare faith and repentance to be necessary qualifications before baptism.

I felt sure enough of victory; for I thought that a ceremony my grandfather and father both practiced in their ministry must be right—but I could not find it—I was beaten—and made up my mind as to the course I would take.

C. Well, Charles, what do you think now?

S. Why, Sir, I think you are right; but then it applies to you as well as to me.

C. I wanted to shew you this; for this is the reason why we appoint sponsors.—It is true that without faith I had no more right than you to holy baptism; but the promise of my sponsors was accepted by the church as an equivalent. You have no doubt seen your father, when he has no money, give a note of hand for it; and this is regarded as payment, because, as an honest man, we have every reason to expect he will pay it. Now sponsors are generally good people, and in charity we accept their promise on behalf of the child. As the child cannot at the time have faith, we accept the bond that he will; which promise he fulfils at confirmation, when he takes the bonds into his own hands.

S. Well, Sir, I think it is a very bad note of hand.

C. I have no time to argue that but I believe it to be good. I will only ask you this—Which seems to have the most regard to Scripture; I as a churchman, or your grandfather as a dissenter? He baptizes in the very teeth of Scripture; and I do not, in my opinion, do so, for I require a promise, which I look upon as the equivalent of repentance and faith, to be rendered in future years.

S. Really, Sir, I think you are most like right; but since it seems to be the truth that only believers should be baptized, I think you are both wrong, though you seem to treat the Bible with the most politeness.

C. Well, then, you confess you were not properly baptized; and yet you would think it your duty, if in your power, to join with us and have sponsors to promise on your behalf?

S. Oh no! I have been baptized once before I ought; I will wait next time till I am fit for it.

C. (Smiling.) Ah, you are wrong; but I like to see you keep to the word of God; seek from him a new heart and divine direction, and you will see one truth after another, and very probably there will be a great change in those opinions which now seem so deeply rooted in you.

I resolved from that moment that if ever divine grace should work a change in me I would be baptized, since, as I afterwards told my friend the clergyman, "I never ought to be blamed for improper baptism, since I had nothing to do with it; the error, if any, rested with my parents."

I have, I hope, felt the power of Jesus' love; and by the means of a good Baptist minister I was set right as to the mode and was baptized in the river at I—

I am only nineteen, and have been for two years minister of a Baptist church, whose baptisms you have had of late to report.

I have a brother younger still, who has come out and has passed through the same ordinance.

We were charged with making too much of baptism, and were told that we ought to wait and sit down at the Lord's table in hopes that our views might yet change.—But we do not make too much of baptism; I count it as but dross if men trust in it—mere stubble to be consumed. Christ is all in all! Nothing bring I in my hands, Away with 'putting into the covenant,' 'regenerating,' 'christening,' and all this popish merit-mongering! Let us have baptism in its place within the church; but not as a merely useful ordinance for all, or indeed, as to merit, for any. As to which has the best of the point, the man in the gown, or the sprinkler in plain black, I think I might illustrate their relative position by a fable.

"A certain king had a window in his palace, which being broken, caused him much inconvenience. Having in his services two glaziers, he commanded them to repair said window; the one flatly refused to obey his majesty, and the other hung a cobweb over it. Whereupon the monarch confined one for six months, and the other for half a dozen."

I rejoice to have got clear of both, whilst yet I love and give the hand of fellowship to all who believe the doctrine, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

W— C. S.
N. B.—I am ready to give names for all the parties, should any of my old friends see this; but it will be better for themselves if they let me alone, as any tap on the vessel will only let more run out. The conversations are, as near as I can recollect, after five years have elapsed, as nearly correct as possible, and I have not, knowingly, altered a word.

Mr. Spurgeon began to preach at New Park Street Chapel, in the borough, in November, 1853; and since that time has baptized several hundreds of believers.

May the grace of God preserve him!

Flowers are the alphabet of angels, where-with they write on hills and plains mysterious truths.

Silence in Court.

BY THE REV A. MURSELL.

"Silence in Court!" How often is that silence the prelude to the wail of a broken heart, or to the cry of the orphaned child. The trial has lasted many weary hours—yesterday, and to day, has that grey head been bent forwards over the dock, to catch the answers of the witnesses; and, hour by hour, has the blood-shot eye been strained to scrutinize the faces of the jury as they sit within their pew. Grave men, with gowns and wigs, and pompous voices, have been talking glibly about the "prisoner at the bar;" and often has the ermined judge, upon the bench, yawned in uneasy restlessness. But there is one pale looker-on who has never yawned, and whose frightful, greedy interest has never once relaxed. Dry documents and parchments have been read in humdrum tones by the clerk, but still that bright dilated eye has never drooped, those dry and parted lips have never moved. Each word has been drunk in with greedy appetite. Sometimes it has been gulped like nectar down the burning throat of the thirsty traveller, at others it has been swallowed like forked fire, just in proportion as the evidence has told for or against her poor old father in the dock—for this is his daughter sitting amongst the crowd in the gallery. She wants no policeman with a wand to keep her quiet; her's is the deathlike agony of suspense, when even the heart is afraid to beat, and the quick returning breath disturbs with its own whispers. The judge has closed his summing up, and the jury have gone out, and all is clamour and buzz throughout the court. One fellow, sitting near the spell-bound girl, offers to lay heavy odds that the old chap will be transported; another roysteringly states it as his opinion that the old blade is no better than he should be, from which it is to be inferred, of course, that the gentleman who makes the remark is a great deal better than he need be, and has a superabundance of piety perfectly divine. Heartless and unfeeling jokes are cut by empty-headed and hollow-hearted spectators; and lank-jawed, lantern-faced barristers suck oranges and read the papers. Perhaps there is but one poor fluttering fevered heart in all that crowded court, that crowded court that is swollen almost to bursting; but God only knows the agony of suspense and anguish that is centered here in this poor girl's bosom. Hark! the door is opened, and the jury, one by one, come trooping into court. The foreman looks portentous and important; but his face gives no clue to what is on his lips. "Silence in Court!" "Gentlemen, are you all agreed upon your verdict?" "We are." "How say you, gentlemen, do you find the prisoner guilty, or not guilty?" "Guilty!" What! nothing more? No relenting plea for mercy, on the ground of poverty, or hunger, or the sore temptation? O, Mr. Foreman, if poverty or want will not plead as an excuse, for pity's sake look here at this wild face; it might surely plead for mercy! No. "Guilty" is the verdict, and nothing more. The judge has but a few words to say, and they finish up with the words "beyond the seas for the term of your natural life!" O, what a wail of deep despair bursts from the daughter's frantic lips as she sees the hoary hairs of her lost father vanish, like the setting sun of hopes for ever from her view! Farewell the glowing fireside of home, with all its little joys and sunbeams! Farewell the happy, happy hours when they shared the crust of poverty together! and when these raven tresses, and those silver locks, were intertwined together, as she pillowed her head upon her father's shoulder! Farewell the days and nights of honest toil, when all their hearts' desire was to hunger and thirst, and live and die together? This was the burden of that piercing cry that burst from her broken heart, as ruin and dishonour stared her in the face, left friendless, homeless in the cold and cruel world. "Silence in the Court! Take that woman out!" This little sketch—not far from nature, I fear—may help to pave the way for the spiritual use which in the rest