

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. III. No. 45.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1863.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXVII. No. 45.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Tell my children 'I am ready.'"

Dying words of Mrs. Freeman.

Tell my children I am ready,
Now my heavenly Master calls,
And upon my ears the message
Like the sweetest music falls.

Ah! how welcome are the tidings,
God's own chariot waits for me;
Soon, above the shadows rising,
I the light of heaven shall see.

See the Saviour, my Redeemer,
On the Father's radiant throne.
While before him angel-harpers
Fill the air with mellow tone.

All my labor past forever;
Life's long battle fought and won;
Just beyond the narrow river,
Jesus waits to say, "Well done."

Calm I enter death's dark valley
Lightened by a heavenly gleam;
No dark shadows fall upon me,
No chill mist o'erhangs the stream.

Death! for me thou hast no terrors;
In my Saviour's arms I lie.
Farewell, earth, with all thy sorrows;
'Tis a pleasant thing to die.

On a bright autumnal morning,
Just as sunlight's golden beam
Field and forest was adorning,
Passed the Christian o'er the stream.

Tearful eyes saw not the glory;
Ear heard not the music swell,
Yet we trust the promise holy
With the righteous, 'It is well.'

Canning Oct. 13, 1863.

Religious.

Study.

FOR MINISTERS.

He can never preach well who has nothing to say. The all-important thing for a messenger is a message. Of all the ways of preaching God's word, the worst is the purely extemporaneous—where a man arises to speak in God's name without any solid material, and without any studious preparation. A thousand-fold better were it to read every word of an instructive discourse, in the most plain and unadorned manner, than to vapour in airy nothings, with suavity of manner, fluency of utterance, and outward grace of elocution. It is this which has become the opprobrium of extempore preachers; and it must be admitted that the danger is imminent. As all men dislike labour in itself considered, the majority will perform any task in the easiest way which is acceptable. And as most hearers unfortunately judge more by external than internal qualities, they will be, for a certain time, satisfied with this ready but superficial preaching. The resulting fact is, that in numberless instances, the extemporaneous preacher neglects his preparation. If he has begun this slovenly way while still young, and before he has laid up stores of knowledge, he will in nine cases out of ten, be a shallow rambling sermonizer as long as he lives. Immense gymnastic action and fearful vociferation will probably be brought in to eke out the want of theology, as a garrison destitute of ball, will be likely to make unusual pother with blank cartridge.

Omitting, for the moment, the unfaithfulness of such a ministry, the man who thus errs will find the evil consequences rebound upon himself. It is only for a time the most injudicious or partial congregation can be held by indigested and unsubstantial matter, however gracefully delivered. They may not trace it to the right cause, but they are wearied, if not disgusted. The minister, having rung all the changes on his very small peal of bells, has nothing for it but to repeat the old chimes.

Another inevitable result of unstudied preaching is the habit of wandering or seat-tering. Nothing but laborious discipline, uninterrupted through life, can enable a man to stick logically to his line of argument. Dis-

cerning hearers know better than the preacher, why, after stating his point, he constantly plays about it like a boat in an eddy, which moves but makes no progress. "Skeletons," as they are ludicrously called, however good, do not prevent this evil, unless they be afterwards thought out to their remotest articulations. The idle, but voluble speaker, will flutter about his first heap, and flutter about his second, but will mark no ratiocinative connection, and effect no fruitful deduction. Evidently he who is continually pouring out, and but scantily pouring in, must soon be at the empty bottom.

Ministerial study is a *sine qua non* of success. It is absurdly useless to talk of methods of preaching, where there is no method of preparation. Ministerial study is twofold—special and general. By *special study*, I mean that preparation for a given sermon, which is analogous to the lawyer's preparation of his case. If faithful and thorough this may lead to high accomplishment; but, as in the instance of *case lawyers*, it may be carried too far, and if exclusively followed must be come narrowing. The man who grows old with no studies but those which terminate upon the several demands of the pulpit, becomes a mannerist, falls into monotony of thought, and ends stiffly, drily, and wearisomely. At the same time, he wants that enlargement and enriching of mind derived from wide excursions into collateral studies, of which all the world recognises the fruits in such preachers as Owen, Mason, Chalmers, and Hall. Yet even this inferior way of study into which busy and overtasked men are prone to slide, is infinitely better than the way of idleness, oscillancy, and indecent haste. For thus the student who begins betimes, manages to pick up a great deal more than is necessary for his special task. In premeditating one sermon, he often finds hints for three more. By tunnelling into the rock of a single passage, he comes upon gems of illustration, nuggets of doctrine, and cool springs of experience, all which go into the general stock. Yet no wise student will restrict himself to the lubrication asked by next Sabbath's sermon.

By *general study* I mean the preparation which a liberal mind is perpetually making, by reading, and thinking, over and above the sermonizing, and without any direct reference to preaching. Such studies do indeed pour in their contributions to every future discourse with a continually increasing tide; but this is not seen at once, nor is this the proximate aim. No man can make full use of his talent, who does not all his life pursue a high track of generous reading, and inquiry.—Dr. J. W. Alexander.

A Christian Denomination should have its own Educational Institutions of a high order.

A christian body, which deems its views and practices so binding as to warrant a separation from other sects, needs not only theological schools for the special training of its ministry, but also more strictly literary seminaries of a high order in which shall be provided the means of the very highest mental culture.

It should have such institutions as a way of fulfilling its obligation to the general cause of christian education, or education on a christian basis and pervaded by christian elements. Education is a handmaid of religion. An intelligent christian is the best christian, provided he have grace equally with others. Hence the duty of the churches to promote intelligence among themselves and in society generally. But sanctified learning, learning on christian principles, learning involving the least error, whether secular or religious, is best of all for any person, and especially for the religious man. A christian education, therefore, a religious denomination is bound to promote with its best available strength. But speaking of a christian education; is every so-called christian education alike? Every christian, if he be such, has certain positions, views of christianity, which ally him with one denomination more than with another. There are no entirely undenominational christians. At least we have never met one, and we hardly expect to in this life. Christianity inevitably takes, in many respects, a denominational form. For a denomi-

nation to sacrifice its denominationalism is the same thing to it as sacrificing a portion of its christianity. Therefore if a sect would promote the purest form of christian education, it must do so to some extent in its own denominational way, for only so will it avoid the responsibility of teaching error. Provided its separate existence as a sect is justifiable, it is doing the most for true education, by promoting it under its own best banner.

Again, a denomination is itself educated and elevated by promoting most directly the cause of learning, within its own province. Let it bring into existence and cherish a noble educational establishment, and it is disciplined and ennobled by the very effort and interest. Sympathy with refined culture and vigorous training is necessarily enlivened. For, the enterprise is near at home, and under the immediate fostering care of the denomination. The members of the body feel that in a peculiar sense the institution is theirs. And while deep sympathies are enlisted, activity is more earnest, and thus the more beneficial in its reflex influence. The life forces of the membership are developed in relation to an enterprise in hand. The common mind is liberalized by the very idea of promoting liberal education, and the christian church is enlarged in its views by the very conception of a christian educational scheme for which it shall be responsible. Besides, the consciousness of having part in the enterprise cultivates that self-respect and calls out that respect from others which are favorable to the peculiar mission of a christian denomination.

Leading institutions of learning in a denomination, moreover, wonderfully promotive of its unity and social well-being. The churches are therein performing a common work, which practically unites them. And ministers and members meeting together on the anniversary occasions, and otherwise counselling together on their common institutions, improve their social relations and mutual literary tastes, and find a kind of home, and act and feel in a measure as one family. There is a feast of reason and a flow of soul. In this connection we are led to say that a denomination which does not have its own respectable seminaries of learning, going elsewhere to find literary advantages, will in process of time go elsewhere for its literary associations and its more refined society. Instead of developing social life, and a refined circle, within itself, it becomes dependent on external privileges and the most intelligent of its members become appendages of circles of society, and social powers, created in other religious connections. But having our own highest literary advantages, we retain our best minds and influences with ourselves, where they of right ought to be, and build up beneath the banner of the denomination a social fabric, such as we shall be satisfied in being joined to, and such as will serve to bind the rising generation to the associations and religion of their fathers.—Evanjel.

Dr. Payson—a reminiscence.

"Those prayers often excited wonder," says Prof. Shepard, in his recent article on Dr. Payson. There was a day in the autumn of 1817, forty-six years ago, which I shall never forget till I forget everything. There is probably here and there a gray-headed one among your readers, that remembers the same. Such I think will not be unwilling to have their thoughts recalled to it.

On that day I was one of the throng that filled Park street church to witness the ordination of Sceno E. Dwight as pastor of that church, and five foreign missionaries. The stationing of a watchman at that prominent point on the walls of Zion, would of itself have attracted a crowd; but the setting apart of five young men to the foreign missionary work lent additional attractions, as that enterprise had not then lost its freshness and novelty. That throng was very great. Composing the Council, and participating in the exercises, were some of the giants of that day, Spring, Worcester, Bates, Taylor, then just settled at New Haven, and Rev. Lyman Beecher of Litchfield; and some who were not giants, in stature at least, like Huntington, who yet helped to give a pleasing variety to the exercises.

The ordination of Dr. Dwight occupied the

forenoon. Mr. Beecher—he was not doctor then—held us for an hour and forty minutes with his celebrated sermon—"The Bible a Code of Laws," a performance he never excelled if he ever equaled after he was doctor; a sermon which, with its nine inferences, always reminded me of the *cat-o-nine tails*, with which he castigated the Unitarian portion of the audience, and nearly all Unitarianism was represented there on that day by its ministry. The other exercises were carried through in appropriate style, enlivened now and then by music from a powerful choir—not a pitiful quartet—under the lead of Duren, the most celebrated leader of that day.

In the afternoon there was no sermon, but the ordaining prayer, the charge and the right hand of fellowship, extended to those who were to go to the heathen, were solemn and appropriate; and the sight of the young men, who were thus laying themselves upon the altar, altogether served to raise and sustain an intensity of feeling. This service closed with the most spirited anthem of the day, in which GLAD TIDINGS—GLAD TIDINGS—GLAD TIDINGS—was the burden of the song.

But again the great congregation is seated and hushed to silence. The communion table is spread with the symbols of a Saviour's love. After a few introductory remarks by the moderator, Dr. Spring, a slight fragile form rose, and commenced the prayer of consecration. The question would intrude itself, Why is he brought in to fill that place, "a very humble son of man?" Surely there must be a filling off here. But the prayer proceeded, and soon strange thoughts and feelings began to rise. Who and what is this man that is leading us? and whither is he taking us? If I had assumed a devotional attitude, I must soon have lost it, for I could only gaze and wonder. The prayer was very long, the rigid critic would say altogether too long, and much of it inappropriate. But his soul had gone up to the third heavens, where our critical rules and usages are not enforced, and he had taken the soul of his brethren and sisters up with him, and they felt that they were indeed "awful near the throne," and they were in no haste to be let down.

At length the prayer was closed and several brethren gathered around the table to assist in breaking the bread, for there has a "multitude" to be fed, perhaps not quite five thousand. He soon left the breaking of bread to others, and commenced an address to the communicants—an address I cannot undertake to describe. No one could make it except the one that had offered that prayer. There was simply a change in the direction of his thoughts. He who had just been pouring out his heart to God, is now pouring it out to the assembly. There was a rapid, ceaseless flow, except that he was interrupted once by the moderator, that he might deliver the elements to the officiating deacons. Yet there was no offense against good taste, but every word was in the right place. If the people had been borne upward before, they were borne onward now toward the final gathering of the redeemed, when they shall enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb.

During the distribution of the cup, Mr. Beecher addressed the communicants, but it was a failure. We had listened to his sermon, and we had enjoyed it tremendously; but we did not want to hear him now. Our hearts had been attuned to a different key, and we did not want to have the key changed. Those delightful vibrations that were thrilling through us were disturbed by the touch of that rough hand.

But the elements are distributed, and they are all filled with temporal food, and all is still again. And again that slight fragile form rose, and without book in hand began, Let us unite in singing two stanzas of the 17th psalm in long metre, beginning:—

"This life's a dream—an empty show,
But that bright world to which I go,
Hath joys substantial and sincere,
When shall I leave, and find me there?
O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God;
And flesh and sin no more control
The sacred pleasures of my soul—

with the doxology.

The psalm and the doxology were sung by the united voices of the great congregation to the tune of Old Hundred, and that, said the