

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XI. No. 17.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 1866.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXX. No. 17.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

A brief Abstract of a Funeral Sermon.

BY REV. THOMAS WILSON.

In reference to the death of Mr. George M. Burton, of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, who died of small-pox, in Sloughton, March 19, 1866.

The recent instance of sudden death, by a dreaded and dangerous disease, of a young man away from home, and kindred, and country,—a stranger, and yet among friends,—gives peculiar point and force to the admonition of Christ, recorded in the gospel of Mark xiii. 33: "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is."

This urgent injunction of Christ had primary reference to the downfall of the Jewish nation, and the destruction of their famous capital. It was designed to put his disciples on their guard against those dangers to which they would then be exposed. It was in view of those imminent perils which hung over the doomed city and people, that he uttered this impressive warning. The admonition was applicable not only to those who heard it, but to all who would be involved in the impending calamity.

On the same principle, we may make a still further application of the premonitory precept to ourselves; for it applies, with equal directness, to our need of being prepared for the event of our death, which will certainly come to each one of us, but the time of whose coming is to us so utterly unknown. For it the approach of temporal calamities rendered such a warning needful from the lips of the Saviour, surely the advent of spiritual perils would require all the greater need of being guarded against, inasmuch as the interests of the soul are more important than those of the body, and eternity than time. We need not hesitate, therefore, to look upon ourselves as comprehended in the wide scope of our Saviour's exhortation:—"Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is."

In view at once of the certainty, and yet of the uncertainty of that "event which happeneth alike to all;"—known and positive as to the fact of its coming, but unknown and indefinite as to the time when it will come,—it cannot be amiss for us to consider the necessity of watchfulness, not merely against bodily diseases, but against spiritual dangers, in order that we may be prepared for the approach of "the last enemy, which is death."

We "know not when the time is;" and therefore it is fitting that we should "take heed" to the divine injunction, to "watch and pray." This prescribes both the duty and the spirit in which it should be done.

1. What, then, is meant by the duty of spiritual watchfulness? This may be resolved into several particulars.

(1.) The mind must be awake. And in order to this, there must be intellectual life. The man must think,—think in earnest,—think with vigor, think coherently. But even this is not enough. The mind may be awake in this sense, and yet dreaming in another. It may act, and still the world in which it acts may not be the present, actual world, but a visionary one. It must therefore think seasonably also, and upon proper objects. It must turn its attention to matters of personal and pressing concern. That which pertains to our own duty,—which has a practical bearing upon our character and conduct,—must be made an object of constant concern and direct thought.

(2.) But the conscience, as well as the intellect, must be awake. The moral, not less than the intellectual, faculties must be exercised. There must be the perception, not only of what is true, but of what is right. A power of distinguishing not merely between the true and false, but also between the right and wrong, must be brought into play; and that not only in the abstract but in the concrete,—not merely in reference to matters in general but in regard to ourselves. If the conscience is asleep, no alertness of the intellect can make up for the deficiency. We are but "walking in a vain show."

(3.) But in addition to all this, the heart must be awake. There must be the lively

ness of the affections, no less than of the conscience and the intellect. We must not only know and feel bound, but feel disposed to do the will of God. He must see the coincidence of what is right and true, with what is pleasant to a renewed heart to God.

When all these conditions are complied with,—when the mind, the conscience, and the heart all act, and act in harmony;—when a man thinks earnestly, on proper objects and to a practical purpose;—when he feels his obligations, and sincerely desires to fulfil them;—then indeed he may be said, in the highest spiritual sense, to be awake.

2. This spiritual watchfulness implies, also, that one is "on guard" against danger to his soul. Every man is bound to keep "watch and ward" over the citadel of his own heart. The order given by "the Captain of our salvation" is, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." If a dereliction of this duty were not liable to be punished in consequence of any positive enactment that was broken, it would still be punished by the loss incurred,—the total loss of that which can never be supplied: "for what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and yet lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

There must not only be a wakefulness in reference to spiritual matters,—a wakefulness of the mind, and conscience, and heart,—but also the active exercise of spiritual vigilance. The recollection of the solemn trust that is placed in every one's keeping, must be a constant stimulus to the performance of duty. It should lead to circumspection. Every point should be guarded. The whole horizon should be closely scanned. Ever on the alert, no crafty surprise, no noiseless approach, should overtake him. Vigilant as the sentinel on the outpost of an encampment near the enemy, he should be on his guard on every side, and at all times. The danger is complex, and the duty is correspondingly compounded.

3. What, then, is the spirit with which we must thus be so watchful? It is in the spirit of prayer!

"Watch and pray," says the Saviour. This is the only talisman of spiritual safety. It is not the mere act of devotion, whether mental or vocal; but that prayerful frame of mind, which is ever ready for communion with God. It was Paul's direction to the brethren at Thessalonica, "Pray without ceasing;" and this he could say without extravagance, and to the full meaning of the letter.

It is that settled bent of the affections, which makes actual devotion not a rare experience, but the normal condition of the soul; that chosen and delightful frame of mind to which it naturally flies back whenever it escapes from any temporary pressure. This prayerful habit is repeatedly connected in the word of God with watchfulness, as in the text; and also where Christ bids the three disciples with Him in the garden, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

Thus it seems we must watch, that we may pray; and pray, that we may watch. If, then, we would watch to any good effect against our spiritual dangers, let us constantly breathe the atmosphere of genuine devotion. We shall thus, and thus only, be prepared for "the coming of Lord;" for He virtually comes to us, when He calls us by the angel of Death to come to Him. Then, "take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is."

As I had not the privilege of a personal acquaintance with the deceased, owing to the brief time he had been among us, I have gladly availed myself of a few facts concerning him, which have been kindly furnished by his intimate friend (Mr. James A. Lambert) who tended him so faithfully during his severe and fatal sickness.

Mr. George M. Burton, who died in this town on Monday, March 19th, was the sixth son of Rev. William Burton, a Baptist minister in Hantsport, Nova Scotia. He was born in Yarmouth, N. S., August 12, 1841.

From his earliest childhood, he manifested such an amiable disposition that he was beloved by all who knew him. At an early age, he was led to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour; and united with the Baptist Church in Truro, N. S. He was highly esteemed by his pastor and brethren there; and maintained an upright and

exemplary christian life. Wherever his lot has since been cast, he has always identified himself with those who loved the Saviour, and esteemed their society above all others.

In June, 1864, he removed from his native Province to Boston, where he united with the "Tremont Temple Baptist Church." Rev. J. D. Fulton, Pastor. He, also, became a member of the choir, and of the young man's Bible class, connected with that church. During his sojourn in Boston, his christian character was irreproachable. He never willingly neglected the ordinances of the Lord's house.

He removed from Boston to this place in February last, for the study of medicine with Dr. Swan; but after a short residence here, he was seized with "Confluent Small Pox;" and after a fortnight's intense suffering, his spirit took its departure to

"That undiscovered country, from whose bourne No traveller returns."

A short time before his death, he prayed earnestly and fervently for "acceptance with God the Father, through the merits of Jesus Christ, His dear Son and our Saviour." Thus passed away another from the scenes of time, to the realities of eternity. He has gone, we trust, through faith in the Redeemer, to join the number of the "blood-washed throng;" and to sing of redeeming love in the heavenly choir. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

He has left a large circle of friends and relatives to mourn the loss of a kind, generous, and esteemed friend. His early death, so untimely in human estimation, but in "the fullness of time" according to the Divine plan,—has made a sad vacancy in that earthly circle of friendship, which will not be filled till it is re-united in the Father's house above!

Suffer me, then, to address to you a word of warning. The Master may come suddenly and unexpectedly, to call you to an account of your stewardship. He, who has given you existence, who has entrusted to you talents, who has afforded you the means of improvement, and who has bid you "occupy till I come,"—may "come" "at an hour when ye think not of it!" Look to it, then, that you be found "ready."

It is an added pang to the sorrow which death occasions, to be called away from earth while away from home. No mother's gentle hand to perform its ministrations of love; no father's pleading voice heard in the familiar accents of prayer; no brotherly or sisterly affection wearying itself in vain efforts at relief. "A stranger in a strange place" is peculiarly alone. But there is one who "sticketh closer than a brother," and who has promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Trust then in Him; and let his words of warning gather increasing force from the remembrance of to-day: "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is."

For the Christian Messenger.

Letters on Revision.

LETTER II.—THE PARAGRAPH DIVISION.

On opening the octavo Revised New Testament, published by the American Bible Union, our eyes are greeted with a handsome and attractive page, made up of a large, clear type, and beautiful, white paper, which, by contrast, sets out the print with great distinctness. But we notice, as an improvement over the ordinary mode of printing the Scriptures,

The division into paragraphs.

The common division of the Bible into chapters, was made by Cardinal Hugo, about the middle of the thirteenth century; and of the Old Testament into verses, by the Jewish Rabbi Nathan, about the middle of the fifteenth century; both of them to facilitate reference by a Concordance. The New Testament was first printed in verses by Robert Stephens, a learned French printer, in the middle of the sixteenth century.

This division into chapters is very convenient for reading and reference; but it is not always judiciously made. See Jno. 7: 53 and 8: 12; 1 Cor. 10: 53 and 11: 1; 18: 1; 14: 1. Phil. 3: 21 and 4: 1. Col. 3: 21 and 4: 1. In these instances the connection is intimate, and does not justify so

radical a separation as that of chapters in the ordinary printed form.

And the breaking up of the Bible into fragments by printing it in separate verses, and thus disuniting what is closely connected in sense, diminishes the force of a passage as a whole, and, in some minds at least, is adapted to produce confusion and misapprehension. Often, when correctly punctuated, verses are found separated by only a comma; as Mat. 26: 3 and 4, 6 and 7, 14 and 15, 60 and 61, 67 and 68; five instances in one chapter; and seven may be found in the next chapter. (See Revised N. T.) And sometimes they are torn asunder where there is no pause at all; as Ps. 96: 12 and 13; 98: 8 and 9.

In the Revised Testament, these evils are avoided by a careful and judicious division into paragraphs, according to the sense. And the desired advantages for reading and reference are secured, by indicating the chapter with the usual Roman capitals at its commencement and at the top of each right-hand page; and the verses, by placing its number at the beginning of each verse, in small figures, in the upper part of the printed line at the point required.

By this arrangement, and a careful and thorough revision of the text, the Bible is made plain even to "the way-faring man." And, without reproving look or voice, it seems to invite us to give our attention as we read; that we may understand what God our Saviour is speaking to us, and may hide his word prayerfully in our hearts, and be led forth with joy in his ways.

AQUINAS.

Voltaire and his Secretary.

Voltaire, when on his estate of Ferney, was fond of assuming the air of nobility, and displayed a most philosophical hatred of peacocks. One of the poor fellows was caught and brought before him. Voltaire determined to try him in the form of law, and took his seat as judge, directing his secretary to act as counsel for the prisoner. The advocate made a long speech in his favor, and suddenly stopped short. "Why do you hesitate?" asked Voltaire. "I wish to read a passage from a volume in your library." He procured the book, and kept turning over the leaves for some time, without saying a word. Voltaire became impatient, and asked him what book he was looking at. "It is your Philosophical Dictionary," was the answer. "Well, I have been looking for the word 'humanity,' and see you have omitted it." Voltaire thought the argument so forcible, that the culprit was set free at once.

SUNDAY IN THE STREET and in the Back Yard.—One Sabbath day a lady called to her little boy, who was tossing marbles on the sidewalk, to come into the house. "Don't you know you should not be out there, my son?" said she. "Go into the back yard, if you want to play marbles; it is Sunday." "I will," answered the little boy; "but ain't it Sunday in the back yard, mother?"

THE RELIGION OF AMERICAN PRESIDENTS. Of the deceased Presidents of the United States, Washington, Madison, Monroe, Harrison, Tyler, and Taylor were Episcopalians; Jefferson, John Adams, and John Quincy Adams were Unitarians; Jackson, Polk, and Lincoln were Presbyterians; Van Buren was of the Dutch Reformed Church. The surviving Presidents are Fillmore, a Unitarian; Pierce, a Trinitarian Congregationalist; Buchanan, an Episcopalian; and the present chief magistrate, Johnson, who is a Presbyterian.

CURIOUS CALCULATION.—The following estimate (founded upon the last United States census) has been made of the probable amount which it costs the individual members of the different churches in this country to sustain them. A Baptist or Methodist, \$10; a Presbyterian, \$7; a Congregationalist, \$10; a Roman Catholic, \$14; an Episcopalian, \$18; a Reformed Dutch, \$25; a Unitarian, \$23. It is remarkable that the words in all European languages which express forgiveness or pardon, all imply free gift. ABOLITION.