

Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

A CHRISTMAS SONG.

Kindle the fires, bring the lights, make the home
Gladsome and gay with the strong lamps of love,
Come from the distances where you may roam,
Keep Christmas and sing as the angels above.

For ye have more need for whom Jesus came down,
And lay in his weakness in Bethlehem's stall,
Upropping his honour, forgetting his crown,
The Saviour of sinners, the friend of us all.

Sing aloud in your joy, and remember the song,
On that star-lighted night was of good will and peace,
And ever with grateful emotions prolong
The Anthem proclaiming to captives release.

Oh, ring out the bells; but your songs shall be
Sweet;
He loved you, redeemed you, and makes you to sing,
For the time of your sorrows is short and is fleet,
And your song shall be finished at home with the King.

Say, O woe and complainings, "farewell for a day;"
And, O joy, "white-winged stranger, oh come to my breast,"
And the Saviour shall bless you and brighten your way,
And ever from Christmas shall fill you with rest.

Religious.

Feeding the Children.

BY SILAS FARMER.

Are we as teachers really feeding the children committed to our care?
With what, when, and how should they be fed?

Are there any analogies between the process of obtaining and supplying nutriment for the body and the rightly caring for the wants of the soul?

The object of eating is to sustain life, gain strength, and promote growth.

If we would do the children good we must provide appropriate food, and supply it at the proper time, in an acceptable manner.

The Bible contains food equally suitable for all.

It is God's great spiritual refectory, where each may with safety and delight find refreshing food.

When you provide a spiritual repast for the children, let the meal be largely made up of "substantials," with only enough "fixings," to garnish the otherwise well-set table.

Of course you will need some "relishes," in the shape of stories, similes, and illustrations of various kinds, but do not have so many condiments in the shape of smart, or far-fetched sayings as to destroy or cover up the taste of the food itself.

There should be variety in what is offered to them; no one wants the same kind of diet every day in the year.

We should serve up biography, parable, precept, history, and geography, together with allusions to various matters of Bible record.

Set before them figs of Olivet, olives of Judea, and grapes of Eschol, and let the spikenard and myrrh of love and sympathy perfume the very atmosphere.

Do not give them tough subjects any more than you would "tough beef." "Pass by" all such questions as "foreordination" and "the nature of angels."

There must be "milk" for the "babes" of the infant class, and "strong meat" for the elder and Bible-class scholars.

Beware of having too many bones. If you are in the habit of "preparing a skeleton" do not parade it before the class. Have your matter well arranged, and do not bring on the food in a careless or slovenly manner.

Endeavor should be constantly made to provide that which will strengthen and develop.

Instead of feeding the children the highest aim of some teachers seems to be to "keep them quiet."

No one should be forced to eat. We must tempt the children with what we offer them, and the "copulation" of the meal should always find them wishing there was more of it. Strange coos do not add to the attractions

of a meal: what we eat at home, or what is prepared by our friends, is the better relished.

Therefore, if possible, teachers should always be present themselves and not trust to a "supply."

The taste of food depends largely upon the manner in which it is prepared; a beef steak fried is entirely different from a beef steak broiled, and the same kind of truths will have a different relish according as the analytical, topical, or various illustrative methods are used in preparing them.

Every thing should be "well done."—Don't "serve up" any "half-cooked thoughts" or "stale" illustrations.

To be late at meal time is always an annoyance, and cold dinners never digest very well. Always insist on promptness, do not be late yourself or allow your scholars to be tardy.

Learn how to preside at the table with cheerful dignity.

"Let your speech be always with grace seasoned with salt."

Whatever else you leave undone do not fail to "ask a blessing" on what you are to offer and they are to partake of.

Study the art of carving, so that you may "rightly divide the word of life, giving to each a portion in due season."

Teaching is an art; and they who would be very successful in understanding and teaching the truth must study the anatomy of the word, and of the mind also, and then they will be better able to do their work.

Do not be always carving, but, having provided the meal, serve a portion to each as soon as possible; otherwise they will be restless and inattentive.

Do not discourage by giving them too much at a time; better that they should have but little at first, and be led to desire and ask for more.

Is your class thin? Do the children fail to flock into the feast you have provided? Then do as the Master has commanded, and as so many connected with mission-school work are doing, "go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in."

All may engage in this work, and every one may do something.

"If among the older people
You may not be apt to teach,
'Feed my lambs,' said Christ my Shepherd;
Place the food within their reach.
And it may be that the children
You have led with trembling hand
Will be found among your jewels
When you reach that better land."

—Sunday School Journal.

The Ignored Ordinance.

It appears to be taken for granted by many persons,—without so much as an inquiry for the grounds of their opinion,—that the only New Testament ordinance of any moment or value is the Lord's Supper. The Supper, it is assumed, is the symbol of Christian union, the pledge of Christian love, the one universal and only sign of fellowship in a common hope and devotion to the same Saviour and Lord. Hence, to secure an "open communion" of all who profess and call themselves evangelical Christians, and of all who are willing to join with these, is affirmed to be the only aim worthy of those who wish to promote Christian unity. On the other hand it is said, or seemed to be said, that Baptism may be treated in a very different manner. It may be performed after one mode or another, or it may be omitted altogether, and such indifference or delinquency must not be made a hindrance to full Christian fellowship, nor be allowed to suggest any want of loyalty to Christ.

God forbid that we should utter a word which can intimate a defective regard for the Lord's Supper. It was established by our Lord himself and is of perpetual obligation. He first partook of it with his disciples about him, in full view of his cross and of all it was to purchase, and by its constant repetition the succession of his disciples is thus publicly and unanimously to declare his death until he comes. Our dependence upon him for life, and the infinite fulness of life in him for us; our trust in his love, and the abounding richness in which his love, comes to us unasked and undeserved; our oneness with him and with all who are joined to him;—this is in part the meaning and the precious-

ness of our sacred feast. But we cannot forget that Baptism stands beside it, equal in importance and divine dignity, equal in significance and value, and equal in the authority and perpetuity of its binding force upon all Christ's disciples. The two ordinances are inseparable among the duties and privileges of the church. They are as closely interwoven as the warp and woof of our Saviour's seamless robe, and are as little capable of exaltation, the one above the other, as are the several offices which he sustains towards the people.

Baptism is presented in Scripture as an unavoidable requisition upon all who believe in Jesus Christ, and as a high privilege which love to Christ will not permit to avoid. It is the symbol of their regeneration, and of their entrance into an abiding fellowship with the sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory of their Lord. If there be any Christian duty to be performed without questioning, or any Christian privilege to be enjoyed without modification, it is the believer's Baptism into Christ's death. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

It is not permitted us to change the nature or relations of Christian ordinances, any more than of other Christian doctrines, for the ordinances are doctrines,—of the very essence and life of Christianity. That one ordinance should be seized upon, and urged as the exclusive test of love to Christ and his disciples while the other is spoken of as an irksome burden that may be safely evaded as ignored, indicates a strange confusion of ideas and motives. Love to Christ is measured by loyalty to him, and that love must come under suspicion which is willing to put asunder what Christ has joined together, or to put dishonor upon that which Christ has personally honored and made of perpetual obligation.

If Baptism is not obligatory as a prerequisite to the Lord's Supper, it cannot be said to be obligatory at all. If a person may go once to Supper before Baptism, he may go frequently. And if he may habitually exercise the prerogatives and privileges of Christian communion, esteeming himself and being recognized by others as a disciple of Christ, when as yet he has never complied with the profession of discipleship which Christ commands, it cannot be otherwise than that such profession should soon seem to be of little significance and of little value. But we will not now enter upon this discussion. We only wish to remind our brethren that we must not admit one of Christ's prescriptions and ordinances to an honor and excellence from which the other is excluded. Neither can it be ignored or modified, but both must be fully obeyed, enjoyed, and commanded.—National Baptist.

The Palm Tree Christian.

"The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree." One of the most prominent features of the palm tree is usefulness. A certain traveller informs us that the natives of the palm-tree regions celebrate either in prose or verse, the three hundred and sixty uses to which the trunk, the branches or long leaf stalks, the leaves, fibres, and fruit of the palm tree are skillfully applied. So likewise, Christian reader, if you would be like the palm-tree in usefulness and leaves—all—to the service of your Master. If you are safe, planted on the Rock of Ages, have you been the means of helping some other perishing struggling one to the same place of safety? Have you stretched down the arm of prayer, liberality, advice and influence, to help up some other one on that same rock of safety? Of two Christians, the one intensely endeavouring to save others, the other on his knees "thanking God for his own escape"—the former, in our opinion, is the sublimer sight, and comes nearer the fulfilling of God's will. The one is but the expression of gratitude: the other is the embodiment of gratitude itself in effort.

Flourishing and useful as the palm-tree.—Take away some professing Christians, and you would miss them, so far as their usefulness is concerned? Who has sat under their shade, and been refreshed? Who has partaken of their food and been strengthened?—Who has been gladdened by their freshness and beauty? Who has been piloted by them

to the well-springs of living water in the arid desert of life. Who has from sight of them, and contact with them thanked God and taken courage? Where is their fruit, their good fruit, in the sight of God or man? If at this hour God was to cut them down as cumberers of the ground, we fear that, as they would look upon a wasted and barren life, and as eternity and the judgment would loom up before them, their bitter, unavailing cry would be "Leaves—nothing but leaves!"

"And shall we meet the Master so,
Bearing our withered leaves?
The Saviour looks for perfect fruit—
We stand before him humbled, mute,
Waiting the word he breathes,
'Nothing but leaves.'"

Let not this be the melancholy cry of your life. If a Christian at all, be like the palm-tree, beautiful and useful upon the earth; and then you shall wave it in triumph, as the emblem of victory in heaven.—Independent.

Topics for discussion at the Christian Convention.

1. How can the Christian activities of the entire membership of any particular church be best organized and developed?
2. Why do so many Churches fail to reach the poor?
3. The right relation between the Churches and Voluntary Christian Associations.
4. How to make the week-day meetings of the Churches effective for spiritual purposes.
5. Woman's work in the Church.
6. How can the influence of Christian homes be increased?
7. By what means can the homes of the poor be improved?
8. Who should engage in lay preaching, and how?
9. How and by whom can open-air services be held most profitably?
10. The organization and work of City Missions.
11. How can the people in rural districts be reached by Gospel influences?
12. What is the work of Young Men's Christian Associations?
13. How can better observance of the Sabbath be secured?
14. How can the personal and social study of God's Word be made more general?
15. The best method of conducting Sabbath Schools.
16. How is an unconverted person to be approached?
17. By what means can we reach those who do not come to our Churches?

Spasmodic Piety.

A quaint writer compares a certain class of professors of religion to "sheet-iron stoves heated by shavings." When there is a little reviving in the Church, they all at once flame up and become exceedingly warm and zealous. They are ready to chide the pastor and elders for their coldness and want of activity. But, alas! the shavings are soon burned out, and then the heat goes down as it went up. They are never seen in the prayer-room, or more spiritual meetings of the Church again, until there is another excitement. If such people had not souls of their own to be saved, they would not be worth taking into the Church. They encumber it, though they may themselves receive benefit from a connection with it.

ADVANTAGES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.—I am fully satisfied that there is a peculiar presence of God in his public ordinances; that the devotion of good men does mutually inflame and kindle one another; that there is a holy awe and reverence seizes the mind of good men when they draw near to God in public worship; finally, that if the offices of our liturgy do not affect our hearts, it is because they are very much indisposed and very poorly qualified for the true and spiritual worship of God.—Lucas.

Lot's wife looked back and God never gave her leave to look forward again. Backslider look out!

What a folly it is to dread the thought of throwing away life at once, and yet have no regard to throwing it away piecemeal.