

Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." Isaiah xxvi: 3.

Chant. Abide with me.

Oh God! may way is dark! and troubles rise!
My friends all fall and foes assail—I see
No way to flee, until I lift my eyes
To Thee; but near art thou to hear my plea.

In Thee alone I trust, thy love I cherish:
Thy gracious arm shields from all harm—I know
Thou canst not leave my trusting soul to perish.
Tempest and flood come at thy nod—and go.

Thou wilt give grace and glory, all the cares
That press on me I take to thee—thy grace
Divinely flows and free; mercy prepares,
And matchless power in dangers hour displays.

No ill can touch him whom thine arms surround
Disease must fly, I cannot die—I stand
Firm and secure on faith's eternal ground,
Lowly but bold I firmly hold thy hand.

Then peace! my heart! though threatening storms
Impend,
And blackest night shuts from thy sight the sky;
Though heaven and earth may pass away—thy
Friend,

Even He whose will the storm can still, is nigh.

Then cast on him, my soul, even ALL thy cares!
He clothes and feeds, and all thy needs supplies,
He loves to hear thy praises and thy prayers;
He bids thee come to thy blest HOME—the SKIES.

S.

Meddie Cottage, July 9th.

Religious.

OUR PRAYER-MEETING MADE INTERESTING.

BY REV. JOHN TODD, D. D.

1. Let it live in your heart; think of it when in your business; when you read your Bible, and see if you do not light upon a beautiful text to carry there; when you read the religious paper, and see if you do not find some thought, or some anecdote, or some fact, which you can use in the meeting. See if you can't gather a few drops of the dew which falls on Hermon. You may not be a watch or telescope-maker, but you can do something, if you will think of it beforehand. You can utter a thought in a few moments which cost you, perhaps, days to think out. A single thought, that has been revolving in your mind, is valuable in proportion as it has been thought over. The pebble which David chose was one that had been washed and smoothed in the brook a long time. It was all the better for its polishing. On the day of your meeting, don't forget to think about it; mention it in your family worship; let your family see that it lives in your heart. Be sure and pray for it before you go to it. Ask, plead that Christ will be manifested in it. Pray that the Holy Spirit may be present to warm, cheer, and animate every heart.

2. Feel responsibility for it. Make it a solemn duty, a habit, and a privilege to be there. Go with a cheerful face. You would do so if going to a party. Don't go acting, looking, or feeling that you have a chain around you, called Duty, by which you are dragged to the place. If the room is dark, move round and get more lights. If not warm, go to your brethren and insist upon it that the room must be made comfortable, pleasant, and inviting. If others seem inclined to shirk, don't you. If the singing is tame, or dull, or not at all, be careful and see some one of the brethren who is a singer, and urge him to be there. If you can't sing, he must go. If you can, you need his aid. Go up near the pulpit or table—up where your minister and your brethren can see you, and feel that your breath is warm.

If the meeting is "thrown open" to, and for anybody, don't sit and wait for others. Be ready. Have your gun loaded and shoot quick. There is no electricity in silence or in waiting. Let your prayer be short. You have no idea how long it

will be; do your best to be short. Just suppose it divided into three, and it will be long enough. I once heard, and joyfully united, in six prayers, no one of which was over two minutes long. They were intensely good.

3. Feel under obligation to have variety in your meeting. It is fatal to make a prayer-meeting stereotyped, and there is no danger that is greater. Can't you sometimes have something new sung? Can't you get this or that diffident young man to come in and say a few words? Can't you get that other man, who never speaks, to open his mouth? You must go to them alone before the meeting, and speak encouragingly to them. Don't scare them by making them think they must make a great speech. Go to your meeting hopeful—I mean, really believing Christ, when he promises to be in the midst of the two or three who gather in his name. You may feel, perhaps, that you are cold, and others are cold. But there certainly will be one there—Christ—who is not cold.

Don't scold. It will do no good. Those present know that they don't deserve it, and the absent don't hear it. The prayer-meeting is not the place to let off spiritual dyspepsia. Don't whip your pastor with your prayers. His heart is heavy enough but he knows it is his duty to keep his heartaches to himself, and to be outwardly cheerful, at least. He wants and needs your earnest prayers, but don't take him up as you would a frosty iron, and drop him as if you feel the frost.

Don't teach false theology. You sometimes hear men say, "If now this Church would only come down on her knees in the dust before God, a revival would follow!" Don't you know that if she should thus come down the revival is already there?

Don't carry a burdened conscience to the prayer-meeting. If to-day, or the last week, you have wronged any one in bargains, in words, or in any way, settle it with him, and with God, before you come to the meeting. You will find the meeting dead and cold to you if you do not. "Our sins separated between us and thee." Don't be afraid, you will do more than your share to make "our prayer-meeting interesting." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might." In building a church edifice—the mere shell to contain the Church—there must be the architect, and the contractor, and carpenters, and also the men with the spades, and men to carry the brick and the mortar. They are all needed. And so in our Churches, every one can and should do something. All can not talk or pray in public; they can always be there. And even such, constant, meek, and good, are helps to the meeting. Every one who goes help shall to feel that there is another heart to feel, to sympathize, and to thrill with all the rest. Go, then, constantly; and carry there faith, hope, charity, and love to Christ, and you will surely grow in life, and will never complain that "our prayer-meeting" is not interesting.

HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN GROWTH.

Let me group them into classes, for they are too numerous to receive separate mention.

First of all, IGNORANCE.

How few Christians have a thorough knowledge of what they are undertaking in the Christian life! Too often they are like the child, content with the scraps of learning he can pick up by the way, instead of a complete education, the discipline and furniture of all his powers.

Some are sadly ignorant of the doctrines of our holy faith. They cannot give an intelligent answer to one who questions them of the faith that is in them. It is not of course requisite that every believer should be a theologian. But every one should know and understand, what are called "the doctrines of grace." Ignorance here certainly holds the Christian back from the high attainments he might make.

So there is ignorance as to practical duties. What is the "mind of the Spirit" on this important point in daily living, or on that? Alas, how often is the question unanswered. The Christian, though he ought to be able to do this, is ignorant. He does not know the standard at which he should aim. Sometimes he does not seem to have mastered even the alphabet of religious living; and consequently, through this ignorance, his efforts are fitful, feeble, and of little value.

This ignorance can be overcome. It should be overcome. The devout study of God's word is possible to all; for there can be devout, earnest study of it, though but a very small portion be kept in mind at one time. There can be constant prayer for guidance and support; prayer not only in the hour of devotion, but in the midst of the task of the busy day. Thus the ignorance that stands in the Christians way, and hinders his progress, can be put to flight. The Christian can add to his faith, knowledge.

There is another class of hindrances that may be grouped under the term SLOTH.

The Christian life demands exertion. It is represented as a warfare, which is no holiday matter. Men can't just drift into heaven. But how often do the professed followers of Christ suffer themselves to yield to the enticements of sinful sloth, and take their ease when they ought to be at work. This is often the case even when they know just the point at which they should aim, just the fault that needs to be corrected, just the duty that demands to be done. Or if there is not entire inactivity, how often is there but half-hearted, intermittent, listless effort.

And yet the Christian has heaven before him! He does not seek that which is unattainable, he does not "fight as one that beateth the air." It certainly ought to rouse all the enthusiasm of his nature that he serves such a Master as the Lord of Glory; that he is the heir, through the sacrifice of the Son of God, to a heavenly inheritance. Sloth should not stand in his way. Before him gleam the shining walls of the new Jerusalem; the gates stand wide open to receive the blood-washed throng. Shall he not gird up the loins of his mind, and "run with patience the race set before him, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith."

WORLDLINESS constitutes another class of hindrances to Christian growth.

Worldliness is not mere wealth. There may be wealth and great spirituality; as there may be poverty and worldliness of spirit. It is a matter of kind, not of degree.

Nor will worldliness be avoided by retiring from active mingling in the affairs of life. That would be asceticism, or monasticism; but he must make his whole life sacred. He must not divorce his secular life from his religious life. It is just at this point that worldliness gets a foothold. It insinuates itself into the daily duties, and then seeks to control what may be called the devotional part of the life also. It settles down upon the character like the black pall of smoke that hangs sometimes over a manufacturing town, shutting out the sweet light of heaven, and blackening all around.

This worldliness does not always present itself in its true shape, or it would be more surely resisted. But it can be easily tested. That is worldliness that leads one to look at things from an earthly standpoint only or to measure conduct by worldly rules rather than by God's word; or to admit questionable practices for fear of provoking "the world's dread laugh;" or that bounds life with this earth, and never casts a glance over this narrow horizon to the celestial realities beyond.

This spirit of worldliness is the great danger of the church to-day; it must be guarded against. This insinuating foe must be kept at bay, must be conquered by the greater force of a deep spirituality reigning in the Christian breast; it must be conquered by "the power of an endless life."—*Am. Mess.*

"THE LORD SENT HIM."

One Sabbath a poor drunken man walked into one of our wealthy and fashionable congregations, and seated himself near the pulpit. He came in at the close of the first hymn, and his shabby appearance and uncertain gait attracted general observation.

The minister had scarcely commenced preaching, when the stranger had sunk into a deep sleep; his loud snoring almost drowned the voice of the speaker and one of the officers of the church approached to lead him out of the building.

"Let him remain," said the minister; "he does not disturb me. If he does you, try and bear with him. I hope he may hear some word before he leaves which will persuade him to seek a new life. The man is not in his senses; there is some influence we do not perceive which has led him here. I believe the Lord sent him."

He continued to sleep on, but more quietly. The pealing of an organ and the singing of the choir at last aroused him. He started to his feet and gazed in bewilderment around. It was the old hymn, "Rock of Ages," which they were singing. He sat down and buried his face in his hands. What memories came thronging upon him who shall say? That he was affected might be seen by his flowing tears. He listened to the prayer which followed, a touching petition that all might repent and seek the Savior, and that each one might find pardon and peace.

The next Sabbath he was again in church. This time he was a punctual and attentive listener. Although still shabbily dressed, he had paid some regard to his attire. He continued to attend and to improve in his appearance. In one of the prayer-meetings he arose and said he hoped that he had become a Christian. He had a pious mother her great desire was that he might become a Christian. Since her death he became a victim of intemperance. For years his course had been downward. On the Sabbath when he first entered the church, he had heard the singing, and paused to listen. A voice seemed to bid him enter. He thought it might be the voice of God speaking to him for the last time. Half overcome with drink and almost in rags, he entered the church. He heard part of the hymn, "Rock of Ages," the hymn sung by his mother upon her death bed. The prayer which followed seemed meant for him. He resolved to leave off his old habit, and by the grace of God he had kept his resolution.

He became a sincere and devoted Christian. Of that church he became a member and subsequently a deacon. "I do not know," said his pastor, "a man more earnest, or more successful, in doing good than he."—*Temperance Vindicator.*

RELIGIOUS PAPERS.

A young minister was once called to a young and plastic church. One of the first questions which he asked was, "Do your people take good religious papers?" The elders scarcely knew. He was unwilling to accept their call unless they would see that the congregation was supplied with that sort of literature. They liked his proposal. The people began to read more upon church and Christian affairs, and he began to arouse them to earnest working and generous giving. The contributions increased wonderfully, for the people were learning the real wants of the church. The preaching was blest. Press and pulpit lent a force to each other. Pastor and editor were mutual helpers in the same good work. And here is the real design of an earnest, thoroughly Christian paper. It is not to draw dividends upon the large investment, not to wage controversy, not to deal out the mere news of the day, not to publish brilliant essays; its leading design is to do what pastors should be doing if they knew every thing and could be talking and teaching every week in every house. It is his assistant and vicar in the parish. It supplements his work. It goes when and where he cannot go. It makes a Saturday call on his people and fits them