

Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XV. No. 21.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, May 25, 1870.

WHOLE SERIES
Vol. XXXIV. No. 21.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved?"—Cantic 8: 6

Jesus, I lean on thee,
My tottering steps sustain;
The way is rough and I am weak,
And filled with grief and pain.

But still I lean on thee;
Through all the weary way
Thy gracious arm surroundeth me,
Thy presence is my stay.

Yes, while I lean on thee,
Both grief and pain are gone,
All ills before thy presence flee,
Thou, thou, art ALL in ONE.

O, I will lean on thee,
Till all life's ills are o'er,
Till shall be sweet, even rest to me,
And sorrow known no more.

Jesus, I lean on thee,
Upon thy loving breast;
All strength thou art, all joy to me,
Eternal peace and rest.

S.

Religious.

BENEVOLENCE IN BUSINESS.

We recently listened to a spirited discussion which hinged on the definition of benevolence. Which is the more benevolent, he who gives ten cents to a beggar and ten thousand dollars to a charitable society, or he who, without giving away any money, conducts his business in such a manner that the greatest possible number of his fellow creatures shall share with him the benefit of it? As in all discussions, so in this; more than half the arguments were simply statements of prejudices, and the largest show of these carried the day.

We suppose the majority of men will always be in favour of doing good "in the lump" rather than by detail; it is an easier process, sooner through with, and elicits more general admiration. But we would call attention to the exceeding worth of that practical benevolence which devotes time and thought to lightening the burdens of the poor indirectly. If it is charity to give to the destitute, it is more than charity to provide remunerative employment, for thus, while affording relief, we help men out of dependence to a position of self-respect. Alms-giving, even when most discreetly ordered, is but a temporary expedient, which often aggravates the evil that it is designed to allay. There are few recipients of charity who are not weakened in character by its bestowal, and the givers are often betrayed into false theories of philanthropy.

There is a practical truth in the maxim, "Business is business," and yet it is sometimes greatly abused. When a man considers that money put into the contribution box on Sunday discharges his obligation of helpfulness to his fellow-man; when he makes his annual subscription a set-off to methodical meanness in his treatment of employees; when he is more anxious to obtain the highest possible per cent. on his capital than to make life tolerable to the workers, he is deceiving himself. He is not benevolent; he is not a good business man. The net result of his business and charitable operations is a loss of manliness. He does not truly love his neighbour, for he takes away with one hand more than he has given with the other. He is not doing a large and successful business, for while his own income may be large, he is making that of hundreds and thousands as small as he can. He is pinching his own soul instead of enlarging it, he is putting a drag upon human progress.

We do not believe that there will be any extensive and permanent healing of those diseases which spring from poverty until benevolence invades the counting-house and the factory. It is not that clerks and labourers are to be overpaid; that the same amount of money is to be earned in

eight hours that can be earned in ten; or that capital and brains are to have and exercise no advantages over mere muscle; but that every man, from the capitalist to the hod carrier, shall be less greedy of profits—more willing to share his good luck with those worse off than himself.

As affairs are now generally conducted, business is simply a game of "grab;" he who can use his elbows in a manner most regardless of his neighbour's ribs, and do the most "bluffing" is honoured with the highest reputation for business ability. It matters little to the struggling poor at large that this or that firm, which makes the "largest sale," gives 10,000 dols. a year to charitable institutions, for there are thousands upon thousands who feel the pressure of a monopoly, there are millions whose daily bread is poorer for the extortions of these "benevolent" men. The ten or twenty per cent. added to a fair profit is so much wrung out of bodies already blistered by the burdens of poverty. A man who makes his million by an oppression like this cannot buy a title to benevolence by a "generous donation."

But in the "good time coming,"—will it ever come, we wonder?—we shall see a greater readiness to take time and trouble—more precious to a business-man than gold—for helping a neighbour, an employee a weaker brother in need of help; we shall see no less earnestness in the pursuit of fortune, but it will be an earnestness tempered by consideration for the welfare of those less fortunate; we shall perhaps have no more organisations for the removal of distress, but there will be constant care to prevent it.—*Christian Union.*

DIFFICULTIES IN REGARD TO PRAYER.

BY REV. KENDALL BROOKS, D. D.

There are difficulties which all of us feel connected with prayer. Almost every thinking person has asked the question again and again, "How can it be that God answers prayer? Can God, an unchangeable being, consistently allow our petty prayers to prevail with him?" This is a difficulty which affects even us Christians more or less. Let us look at it. To be specific,—can there be any turning aside of the laws of nature by our petitions? Is it not folly to pray that a missionary crossing the sea, for instance, may be kept from wreck? The objector says that if the ship in which he rides meets a severe storm, and the ship be not sound, and the officers and crew be not skilful, the ship will go down; otherwise, she will make her destination in safety. What, then, is the use of prayer? So, again, continues the objector, why pray for a sick man? Such and such conditions being fulfilled, he will get well; otherwise, he will die.

Nature is a great machine, working according to certain principles, producing definite results. What power is there in prayer to move it?

We reply, the objector does not go far enough. Nature may be called a mechanism, truly, controlled by definite principles. But it must not be forgotten that God is over all. A piano gives forth from each key the very same sound always. Yet the player can strike different keys and thus produce different results, as far as harmonies and melodies are concerned. So God can use laws to accomplish what he wishes. He need not set them aside. They are all in his hand. He can, then answer prayer.

But, further, if he can, will he? Perhaps his purposes are such,—purposes formed from eternity,—that he does not see best to answer prayer. In reference to this we may safely and confidently rest upon God's declarations in his word. He declares that he is willing to hear prayer. It is not presumption, then, to say "prayer moves the arm that moves the world." Moreover, the Christian knows from his own experience that God does hear prayer. And then, too, the history of the world,

before and especially since Christ, is full of records of the answers of prayer.

But another difficulty arises. Men are all the while praying for things which are not received. Such unanswered prayers are innumerable. Why is it? Why is it granted further that the Bible teaches God's willingness to hear prayer, and further that we all have experienced answers to prayer ourselves,—yet it still remains undeniable that a great part of the prayers that we hear and offer are not perceptibly answered. How are we to account for it? We reply: In the first place, prayer is always conditional. Are we sure that the prayers which we refer to as not answered, fulfil the necessary conditions? I think, on the other hand, that we may be sure that they do not fulfil the necessary conditions.

Again: Our prayers are often answered, but we do not know it, because the answer comes in a form we had not looked for, but in a form which is better, as we often see afterwards.

Yet, after all, it remains true that much prayer is not answered at all. Is there no further explanation? We reply: Does not an explanation lie sometimes in a lack of earnestness in prayer. It is the fervent prayer of the righteous man that avails much. Indifference in the soul, does it not necessarily kill prayer? Very well, grant this; but yet is there not a difficulty? Is there not much earnest prayer that is, nevertheless, never answered? Seemingly we must answer "yes." Is not here a key to the truest and deepest explanation? Notice the word *righteous* in the text referred to. It is the fervent prayer of the *righteous* that avails much. Prayer becomes powerful and effectual in exact proportion as the supplicant grows in true piety. As a Christian becomes more and more closely allied to God, his prayer must become more and more potent. There must be a foundation on which to build assurance of the efficacy of prayer. That foundation is a true, genuine Christian life. Can we expect that a man who is passionate, and unjust, and lustful shall have power in prayer? Here is a man who is a slave to money, or ambition, or pride. Can we expect that his prayers will have much power with God? The most godly man is the most effective man in prayer. If we, then, wish to get nearness of access to God, and ability with God, we must cultivate depth, and purity, and genuineness of Christian life and experience. Let us be sure that efficacy in prayer does not depend on correctness of intellectual belief, or profound understanding of theories, or on forms of supplication, or on the number of our words, but on personal piety. "The fervent, effectual prayer of the *righteous* man avails much."

THE MOUNTAINS OF PALESTINE.

BY REV. C. H. ROWE.

Mountains are God's ministers to the church and to nations. There is an wonderful interest that clusters around them. They are teachers of law and gospel. God's feet have sanctified them. They seem to lift us near to God. When we stand on their summits it seems an approach unto heaven.

The mountains of Palestine have been preeminently the places where men have approached God in hallowed communion. The gray haired old patriarch of six hundred years, who came forth with his family from the resting ark, to stand once more upon the green earth, built an altar on Mt. Ararat and lifted the voice in prayer. And God remembered him and sent him forth from thence to rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, and to make the wilderness blossom with its vineyards and fruitage. For as the flame of morning sacrifice rose from the mountain top, bearing in its sweet breath the reverential Patriarch's perfumed prayer heavenward, Jehovah's sure and neverfailing promise was given, that no more should the waters of the flood return, and that seed and harvest, summer

and winter should not fail to bring to the hand of man blossoms and ripe clusters, and in the clouds above, arching the man of God as he prayed, the bow of promise was the pledge of God's fidelity in the covenant of God with man.

There was a rude altar built on Mt. Moriah nearly four thousand years ago by Abraham "the father of the faithful," that bore a sacrifice acceptable to God in its offering, before the trembling hand of the worshiper had smote the life out from the panting breath of the child of promise and love. The Patriarch, tried in his faith and devotion to God, was ready to lay even Isaac at the feet of Jehovah, assuredly knowing that God was able to raise him from the dead and restore the holocaust kissed with the flame, as the living Isaac descending with him the mountain side, and accompanying his returning footsteps in the three days journey to the cherished home and the mother's love. He believed God would give him back his son, and there his faith rested. He doubtless thought it would be after the sacrifice was consummated, but God only needed the offering as a testimony to future ages of the righteousness of faith. On no mountain did ever father and son bow in such tearful gratitude and realize the preciousness of God's goodness as filling all in all. Never did the smoke of sacrifice bear more truly in its bosom the reverential worship of human hearts than that which sanctified the sublime faith of those who knelt by that rude altar of stones on the top of Mt. Moriah.

And from that day, of all the mountains of Palestine, or of the wide world, there have none clustering around them so many blessed memories, so many deeply interesting associations, as the mountains of Moriah round about Jerusalem. Here was Mt. Olivet which one might climb without weariness, where so often the Savior walked under the shadows of its grand old trees, and discoursed to the little band of disciples the things concerning the kingdom of God, in the shadows of the evening after the temple service of the day was over. Here he wept over Jerusalem when she knew not the time of her visitation. Here at length he came in the quiet night, to breathe his last prayer with his loved ones, and make Gethsemane ever memorable of tears and struggles and triumph. But a little distance and his feet pressed the slope of another hill and made Mt. Calvary with its fainting, bleeding, dying Redeemer, the Desire of all nations and the Saviour of a race.

Mt. Zion too, was one of the hills on which Jerusalem was built. Standing at the southern extremity, it was higher than any other part of the city, crowned with its palaces and fortress it formed the heart and strength of the city, and came in time to stand for the city itself. It became a word filled with such endearing associations to the Jews that they could never let it go from them in speaking of their city. God's affection for his people was expressed by his love for Zion,—"He overthrew the gates of Zion." It became the representative of the pride of the nation, and hallowed with cherished memories, of which her poets sang and her prophets spake. And all this was in the mind of the Apostle when he caught up in thought the beautiful figure of Mt. Zion as an emblem of the heavenly Jerusalem, the home of the Redeemer, the City of the living God, with its far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined."—*Ch. Era.*

A convert baptized a while ago in Brooklyn, related his experience substantially as follows:

"I am here under three convictions. 1. The reality of sin, and the fact I am a sinner. 2. The only way to get rid of sin is by the atoning blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ. 3. Having embraced this salvation I deem it my duty to confess Jesus Christ as my Saviour and obey Him." A most complete epitome of genuine Christian experience.