

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XVII, No. 37.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, September 11, 1872.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXXVI, No. 37.

Circular Letter.

(Inserted by Special Request of the Association.)
CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE NOVA SCOTIA EASTERN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED, 1872.

Dear Brethren,—

The subject to which, in this Circular Letter we desire to present for your consideration and action is that of the duty of regular and proportionate christian beneficence.

Christian beneficence is as clearly taught in the Word of God, as faith, repentance, prayer, or any other duty. So obvious is this, that it seems unnecessary to refer to the many passages in which it is recorded, and proceed at once to urge the subject as above indicated, namely, that our christian beneficence should be regular and proportionate.

Both these have important bearings on successful christian work, the former is necessary to a wise and economical expenditure of means as well as to any hope of ultimate success. The latter, is necessary to meet the biblical requirement also, that one be not "eased and another burdened," but, by an equality sharing the labor, and extending the effects of christian effort. Our contributions for benevolent objects should be

REGULAR.

1. Calls for these are constant and pressing. Objects other than those designated religious, are frequent, and would therefore seem to necessitate some regular manner of conduct on the part of donors, to meet the constantly occurring cases. The poor and unfortunate are always with us, and whenever we will we may do them good. Our Educational institutions, Foreign Mission operations, all benevolent objects, are pressing, and constant in their appeals and necessities, regular and continuous, therefore should be the supply of the means.

2. Spasmodic and fitful efforts are productive of far less good, and subject to great inconvenience, often to loss and failure.

That circumstances may arise in beneficent operations where unanticipated contingencies may call for immediate and impromptu action, we do not doubt—contributions, the free and spontaneous uprising of quickened spiritual life, may, and very properly flow suddenly into the treasury of the Lord, and meet unanticipated demands. Nor would we say ought against the large and generous gifts to the Lord's cause, which as in the past, when, on the occasion of some stirring appeal to the benevolent feelings, donations have been bestowed.

Still such efforts, which are generally called forth by extra appeals, and not the result of careful and premeditated plans, are likely to be unhealthy in their general effect. The zeal above its proper medium, is almost certain to ooze out, and leave the heart too cold, for continued generous action. And then the institutions called forth by the necessities of the case, the wants of the denomination, and the cause of the Redeemer, receive not the regular supply needed for their continuance, the most disastrous results follow, and likely, entire failure.

On every consideration, continued and regular contributions, for our benevolent objects, whether Educational, Missionary or others, are the great demand upon the churches. Agencies outside of the churches, would not be so imperative. Each church awake to its responsibilities, each member feeling his personal obligations, the contributions would flow regularly, and conscious spontaneous christian feeling would be the constant reminder of duty.

3. Scripture teaching clearly indicates and confirms the same line of thought. Ready to every good work, is a scriptural watchword, applicable to the whole christian life, and embraces all its duties.

"Be ye ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh," sweeps the whole sphere of christian obligation. It is not a readiness which concerns the closing scene of life merely, nor is it a call to repentance and prayer alone, but to continuous daily service in the Lord's vineyard, and includes that part of christian duty on which we are remarking, as certainly as any other calling of the christian life, and demands of us that we "abound in this grace also," and with as much regularity and constancy as any other.

Paul had even boasted to the Macedonians of the readiness in this matter of the Corinthian church, and that the latter might meet his expectations in the case, sent messengers to remind them of their duty, and of his praise, both of their liberality and promptness. The Apostle further informs the Corinthians that the giving should be ready as a bounty and not as covetousness, and also according to a formed purpose in the heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity, but cheerfully. See 2 Cor. ix. And wishes to see "this grace" abounding in them, and that as well, and as promptly as they abound in "faith and utterance and knowledge, and all diligence and love," and like these graces, constant. Christian beneficence should also be

PROPORTIONATE.

As the Lord bestows, so is the responsibility—"to whomsoever much is given, of him much will be required. This principle addresses itself to our reason, there is a conscious recognition of its righteousness. To whom men have committed much, they will ask the more.

Christians are stewards. Their Lord has committed to them important trusts. How solemn, Dear Brethren, is our position. We shall surely be called to give account. If we have wasted our Lord's money, or not employed the talent committed to us, in both cases, we are guilty.

First, the willing mind, then the gift becomes acceptable, when it is proportionate—"According to what a man hath,"—as he is prospered. If even the "willing mind" is present, but the offering is not proportionate, not according to what he hath," not "as he is prospered," then the required condition is not fulfilled.

Here we may state, that by proportionate beneficence we do not mean that, one christian is to measure his gifts by some other christian's offering? What another does, or does not, is not the rule of proportion the scripture recognizes. Measuring ourselves by others, or comparing ourselves with others is not the divine standard. As

the Lord "has prospered," "according to what he has," so must he minister as of the ability which God bestows, as each has received the gift."

Such is the divine standard—the rule of christian beneficence. How mild, how easy, how appropriate the Divine rule! But what is the rule of dividend, or what is the due portion or percentage of what the Lord has given us that we are required to bestow?

Here we must be guided by general principles, for under the new dispensation we have no definite proportion mentioned. Under the old dispensation the proportion was more clearly defined, and in some cases, the rich were to give no more than the poor, all were to be equal. How shall we then from the New Testament ascertain our duty in this respect?

Turning to the New Testament we find beneficence interwoven into the very textures of the Christian system, its grand idea is beneficence. Our Lord Jesus became poor and that we might become rich, went about doing good and declares it is more blessed to give than to receive.

The life and ministry and death of Christ, are the exponent and exemplification of this truth, and teaches by example a beneficence as high as heaven, wide as the race of man, and enduring as eternity. He is the Head of the great brotherhood, the pulse that throbbeth in his breast, is intended to be the pulse that is to beat in the whole brotherhood of the sanctified race. Beside our beneficent Lord, who loved us and gave himself for us, measure your beneficence and settle the question with Calvary, in vain "how much owest thou" to thy "Lord?" What part, or portion of your income ought you give to advance his kingdom and glory?

Looking to primitive disciples, in whom the warm pulsations of the Saviour's love so fully glowed, what do we learn from their example. The renewed hearts of these multitudes, in whom so much of the spirit of their divine master dwelt, cast in whole possessions for the brotherhood, and this beneficence to the saints, was the true outflowing of their love to the Lord Jesus himself.

The precepts of the New Testament urge a generous beneficence, they hold forth the example of Christ, and urge it as a motive—make this grace in man to bear a special relation to the moral likeness of God, and thus the benevolent become the children of the highest, give it as a proof of love, and declare the sacrifices it make to be well pleasing to God. In view of such motives what proportion shall I give, seems not so much the question as, can I withhold anything from my Lord.

"Here Lord I give myself away."

"Is all that I can do."

But what proportion do Christians generally give of their income. Do they give even a tenth? Are there not many to whom God has given riches, or abundance of this world who do not even give that small proportion? Do all the members of the churches composing this Association give, in even this low scale, to the cause of benevolence? Such as do so we earnestly encourage to do more, and if any do not come up to this standard we earnestly entreat you to say unto the Lord, of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth to Thee."

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

THREE WEEKS FROM HOME.

ST. JOHN, N. B., SEPTEMBER 2ND, 1872.

My Dear Selden:—

After three weeks of incessant travel in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, I find myself at last in the mood and with time at hand, to drop a line to you, and the friends of the *Christian Messenger*; a paper which I am pleased to say has become a weekly visitor, and a welcome one, to myself and family. God bless you in your sturdy efforts, to preach the truth by the press—a power second only to the pulpit—and yet a power, controlling even the pulpit to no very limited extent.

I arrived in this city in the hour of great exultation; men of worth who had sought the suffrages of their political friends, endorsing, what I heard styled the "successful working of Confederation" had been returned, or newly elected to Parliament, by majorities the most flattering. Of course, I could not appreciate all the good and grand things said of certain men and yet, I did largely enjoy the satisfied declarations of those who had "run," and the many who had cheered them on their course.

One week in Cumberland county, Nova Scotia, amid the rejoicings of the grand majority of the Hon. Dr. Tupper,—(whose personal acquaintance I was pleased to make) almost made me lift my hat and shout with others, all honor to the "Cumberland boy" who after such a race as he had run, could carry off 1270, majority votes. It is well perhaps for the staid reputation of a New England Parson, that he spent but one week amid such scenes, and with a people so delighted with the policy of the Cabinet leaders.

At Amherst, I met the Rev. Mr. Steele, the efficient pastor of the Baptist Church in that village. He is highly esteemed by his people, if a traveller may judge by what the people say.

There also, I found that prince of generosity, Rev. George Miles, the pastor of the church at Oxford. It was soon arranged, and with a young lawyer from New Jersey, Mr. Miles was companion and guide, from village to village by night and by day. Life loses that wearied and worried feeling which prevails with the solitary traveller, when in the society of such a man as the Oxford pastor. If all the Oxford's of this world, would but furnish such men, the world would be freer, society less selfish, and the cause of our blessed Saviour more widely extended and the glorious character of a "pure and undefiled religion" more benignly and practically illustrated.

It was my good fortune to meet with two of the real missionaries of Nova Scotia,—the Rev. Mr. Thompson and the Rev. Mr. McKeen, travelling twenty, thirty and in some weeks even fifty miles to preach the Gospel of the blessed God to the perishing, in the sparsely settled portions of the country whether the lines have fallen to them. As I listened to the recital of scenes of trial, of toil, privation, poor

pay and glorious results in winning souls, I confess I felt ashamed of myself that I had even dreamed of a "hard lot" in the Master's vineyard. If a Yankee may be allowed to guess in Her Majesty's Dominion, I guess it would do many a city pastor good to exchange places for a while with some of those who are doing missionary duty along the "picket line" of our Israel.

St. John, N. B., I have made "head quarters," and returning at the close of each week, have now enjoyed three Sabbaths of worship with the people here. I have listened with delight to the preaching of Rev. Messrs. McKenzie, Hueston, Harris and Carey. Brussels Street Church, have called Rev. Mr. Everett from the United States to become pastor. He has accepted and will soon enter his new field of labor. He is well known here, and the people wait his coming with great happiness and gladness of heart. He, and all the pastors of this city will find enough to do. In no spirit of fault finding do I utter it, but of all Protestant cities I ever visited, I think there is a little more "Sabbath breaking" here, than I ever found elsewhere. Dram-shops open in full blast, and blasting at that boat-sailing and boat-racing and horse driving, pleasure seeking in the parks and through the streets. No stranger can fail to observe it. I recollect a friend once observed, that such scenes always attended on the residence of troops in a city. That certainly is not correct, there is no army here, but a civilian service, to be found anywhere, "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." A royal and loyal moral sentiment on the sanctity of the Sabbath is what is demanded; Sabbath-Schools, Bible School, or churches opened for preaching on Sabbath afternoons. In this city of churches I walked a mile to find an open sanctuary on the afternoon of the Sabbath, and worshipped with profit with the "Scotch Presbyterian," of which—Rev. Mr. Hueston is the popular preacher.

Let it be said however in all honor to the christian people of St. John, that when the sanctuaries are open, large and attentive congregations attend the services. The St. John river, so highly and so frequently spoken of by all classes of travellers, fully compensates one for a sail on its bosom of liquid silver. Less bold and grand than the noble "Hudson," it is truly more beautiful in its slopes and graceful in its winding folds. After a day's feasting on the river scenery, we found Fredericton the grand, old dull city—of musty "records" worm eaten "deeds" and churchly proprieties;—for in the very hour of business, we saw his lordship the Bishop, attended by several of his clergy, "confirm" about fifty persons. It is devoutly hoped they may remain confirmed. Our stay at the Queen's Hotel was made truly royal, by the worthy host. Speaking of hotels, I cannot refrain from adding that while St. John boasts of its *Victoria*, which is indeed complete in all its appointments, the *Royal Hotel* under the proprietary of Capt. J. F. Raymond is one of the most quiet, home like and desirable we have met in our travels. It is said, professional men have the best taste on this subject. If this is true the Royal Hotel of St. John is splendidly endorsed. We have here doctors, Ministers, Priests, and Lawyers, the Chief Justice of P. E. I. and representatives abundant of all departments of enterprise. It was my purpose to have spent a week in Halifax, but the days I assigned to meet old friends there, I learned were given by you to the Institute and Convention at St. Stephens.

Hoping still for a brief visit with you and other friends, I remain,

Yours, &c,

D. HENRY MILLER.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE FRENCH MISSION'S BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

Dear Brother,—

A very encouraging incident was related by some Missionary as I visited him on my return from the Convention. Some eight years ago a man and woman visited the mission house in Tusket in the absence of the Missionary, and asked Mrs. Normond for a Bible, this she gave them without learning their names or place of residence.—Nothing more was heard of this bible until a few weeks ago these parties drove again to the Mission house at Saulnierville, to talk with our Missionary on the great subject of salvation, and to tell of the good things they had learned from that Bible. On visiting them, bro. Normond found three families in their neighborhood renouncing Romanism and asking for the gospel. To them he is now ministering. This new field is not far from the mission house at Saulnierville. By this circumstance we are encouraged. The Lord still says to us, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."

Yours very truly,

J. H. SAUNDERS.

Beaver River, Aug. 30, 1872.

MARK OF A GENTLEMAN.—The late Rev. Dr. Sutton, Vicar of Sheffield, once said to the late Mr. Peech, a veterinary surgeon: "Mr. Peech, how is it that you have not called upon me for your account?" "Oh!" said Mr. Peech, "I never ask a gentleman for money." "Indeed!" said the vicar: "then how do you get on if he don't pay?" "Why," replied Mr. Peech, "after a certain time I conclude that 'he is not a gentleman, and then I ask him.'"

GOD'S VERY WORD.—The force of a text of Scripture is sometimes greatly weakened by even a slight change in the inspired words.

When Rev. James W. Alexander was on his dying bed, a friend quoted to him 2 Tim. 1: 12 incorrectly—"I know in whom I have believed."

"No," said the dying man, "I know *whom* I have believed." In his estimation there was no room even for a little preposition between him and his Saviour.

A REAL CHRISTIAN loves close, pointed, searching, preaching, and seeks not the ministry of those who speak enticing words of man's wisdom.