

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

{ NEW SERIES. }
{ Vol. XVIII., No. 40. }

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, October 1, 1873.

{ WHOLE SERIES. }
{ Vol. XXXVII., No. 40. }

Poetry.

THE QUAKER MEETING.

BY MARY S. BRAINARD.

Hush! brooding Silence less-fer soft wing fall,
And Peace stoops down to kiss each reverent face;
The noisy world, outside the high brick wall,
Heightens the calm of this secluded place.
No movement of the forms in sober gray,
No whisper, not the creaking of a door,
No wandering hands, nor roving eye astray,
No moving foot upon the spotless floor.
We sit with placid brows and hidden thought;
Who knows the secrets of his neighbor's breast?
How many hearts, 'neath lips that utter naught,
Toss like the troubled sea that never rest?
At length, an aged, gray-haired man stands up,
And, 'Thou, God, seest me,' he slowly says;
Then speaks of Hagar and her empty cup,
And how God's presence fills the need all ways:
God with the three young men amid the flame;
God with His prisoners in the silent night;
God with His servant, exiled for His name;
God with us always, making darkness light.
He ceased, and Silence bowed her holy face,
And spread her benediction over all;
Till, rising, each walked slowly from the place
To find the world outside the high brick wall.
How many ways, O God, to worship Thee!
With pictured walls and incense, priest and stole;
With simple hymn and earnest homily;
Or, in the secret of a voiceless soul.
O Love! forever finding those that seek,
All upright souls are open to Thy light;
Thou seest the struggling ones, the strong, the weak,
And those who grope amid the dark for light.
And many a one, from out the earthly glare,
Flies to the shelter of Thy secret room,
And prays alone the universal prayer—
'Lord, God Almighty, let Thy kingdom come.'
—N. Y. Observer.

Religious.

HOLD ON.

Some of our Sunday-school people are constantly and needlessly troubled with the question whether they ought to continue or relinquish the particular work they have in hand; and even the more unquestioning workers are sometimes forced seriously to ask whether they ought to remain in their present field of activity, or change it for another. Within a week a faithful superintendent, beloved for the priceless work he has done, year after year, in the same school, has told me that "unless things go better to suit him," he must resign. Another busy man, with evident pleasure, has informed me that his school has "finally been persuaded to excuse him from the duties of superintendent," alleging as a reason for his desiring the release, that circumstances prevent his doing justice to the work which devolves upon the leader of a school. An earnest pastor has also taken me seriously by the hand, to ask whether I do not think it his duty to give up his unpromising charge, and "go where he can do more good." Sunday-school work, as well as pastoral work, is so momentous in importance, its responsibilities so great, and its duties often so taxing and trying, that we cannot wonder, when we find workers in this field constantly asking, "Am I in the exact place of duty?"
And yet it cannot be that any willing and prayerful heart need be long in doubt, in regard to its own place of work. The loving Father, who has directed every step thus far (we all see how that has been), will not leave us in the dark, in regard to the step to be taken instantly and immediately, if in any doubtful instant we seek his direction. Usually, it is only about what we ought to do in the long future that

we are troubled. Surely we need not be. Our God will order all that is to come, and show us ways of service when we are ready to enter them.

But what a tremendous power would be gained if every Christian worker bent to the task immediately before him, as though it were his life-work, feeling that God himself has set him to it, nothing doubting that it is *his* place, and *his* work, and never once unsettling his mind by thinking of the possibility of laying the burden upon some other shoulders than his own. I have often prayed for such a settled conviction, in regard to duty, as was revealed to me by one who is, with steady purpose and marvelous enthusiasm, devoting his life to Sunday-school work, when he said, "Talk about thrones and kingdoms, and places of power! I can say to you honestly, that no other position in this world has for me a feather's weight of value, in comparison with my place of work for Christ and the children. I tell you truly, that, if I could have my own sweet will, if God should say, 'Choose your lot,' I would reply, 'Lord, let me take the four o'clock train towards home, that I may there again take up the work thou hast already set me to do.'"

We may rest firmly in the belief, that God will send us "where we can do more good," just so soon as we are worthy of promotion. Meanwhile, it is wicked to let go our hold of work with one hand, and occupy all our thoughts in wondering whether we had not better let go with the other. Men do not drop into positions of higher usefulness. They climb to them.—*Working Church.*

SWEDISH MARIE.

In our little home circle we have a fashion of talking, now and then, about the women of India and of China, and of the little orphans; while the names of the precious missionaries are household words.

Our Marie, moving noiselessly about, picks up many an idea, but we little knew how deep the missionary stories have penetrated her honest Swedish soul. She came into the room one day, her eyes filled with tears, welling up from her overflowing heart.

Handing me a five-dollar bill, she said, "Here, missis, I geeve tis for te poor wimmens tat neever know nothing 'bout Jesu."

I thought of her loneliness, not a relative in this country—not even an "old friend."

The one family she knew, and with whom she crossed the "big sea," lived in the "North side" before the "Fire"—nothing heard of them since!

I thought of the months she had spent in the hospital—her right arm being disabled by a sad accident; then of the months when, in her helplessness, she was kindly cared for by a Christian family—all months without wages. Yet now, able to earn only medium wages during a few weeks, she brings her offering of five dollars.

"And, missis," she said, "me tink its petter all new and clean." (Marie's life's battle is with the foes to neatness, and she couldn't conceal the satisfaction with which she handled the "greenback," "span new.")

"You see, dis will help send dear young ladies to teach te poor wimmens to read Gott's word."

"O Marie!" said I, as delicately as I could, "one dollar will be a large sum for you to give just now—"

"No! no! I geeve tat—youst tat! Gott ees so goot to me; he make me good friends; he make me goot home; he make me happy many times." And with an impressive look upward, which was full of faith and trust, she said, "He geeve me more, more in my heart!"

Oh! ye who abound in this world's goods, and yet are indifferent to the interests of heathen women! Ye women that are at ease in Zion, can ye stand side by side with Swedish Marie in that day when the "books are opened"?—*Heathen Woman's Friend.*

ON THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF "GOLD AND FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH."

(Matthew II. 11.)

BY BURNSTORN MUSGRAVE.

A taste for symbolism is an element of human nature: and an appreciation of correct analogy is one of the faculties in every well-balanced mind.

Arguments from analogy have therefore always a certain force, because they appeal to this radical sense of proportion. And yet nothing is more common than to find metaphors violated, and analogies confounded, so that all the true points of a comparison are marred. In this way it often happens that what is intended for illustration serves only to thicken obscurity.

The scripture, far from countenancing, expressly blames a loose or careless use of types or figures. "The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools." As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard; so is a parable in the mouth of fools.

We ought even to consider whether some confusion in thought has not resulted from the use of a type in a secondary sense when its primary sense is so marked and important that any related—or collateral—sense must lessen its dignity.

Thus the Ark was a signal type of Christ as the Saviour; and, in relation to the Ark, Noah and his family typified the Church which finds refuge within Christ. "Look on Jesus Christ as the ark of whom this was a figure," (says Archbishop Leighton) "and believe it, out of him there is nothing but certain destruction, a deluge of wrath all the world over, on those who are out of Christ."

It is very unquestionable then whether the common expression "the ark of Christ's church" does not obscure the teaching prefigured by the Ark itself. But if so clear a type as that of the Ark has received varied application, we cannot be surprised that very far from clearly settled is the exact significance of the three several gifts laid at the feet of the Messiah by the wise men from the East.

The Gospel narrative does not specify all that we are to understand from these particular offerings: but they have always been deemed typical; and in the narration they are manifestly connected with the actual acknowledgment and worship of the Saviour. "And when they" (the wise men) "were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts;—gold and frankincense and myrrh."

As these Magi were miraculously guided to the recognition of Christ—as their whole conduct from first to last appears from revelation to have been controlled by divine influence—we infer that their selection of offerings was divinely ordered.

We know that the substances specified, were most precious and highly esteemed in those days; but we infer further that they were acceptable and appropriate, in the way of tribute, to "God manifest in the flesh." What then were these gifts, which were in their return to the fountain of all good, worthy of their origin?

It has been surmised that they had reference to the triple function of the Saviour as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his people: and we may think that we may establish this likewise; if we can ascertain from other Scriptures the true meaning of the gold and the frankincense and the myrrh. The gold symbolises the heart's obedience; the frankincense symbolises the spirit's worship; and the myrrh symbolises self-denial—or the mind's change (repentance—metanoia) acted out. These are the offerings which are constantly in intention rendered back to the Saviour by his whole Church—as received by every member of it, out of Christ's own fulness. For as the Church collectively says gratefully, "Now therefore our God we thank Thee and praise Thy

glorious name," so every individual "member of Christ" adds with David "But who am I and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee."

These gifts, tendered to the Saviour as the Lord of all have a relation to the "first and great commandment" republished by the Saviour Himself. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

We can prove in the first place—(1) that the gold signifies, exactly the obedience or loyal submission of the heart.

Our Lord in one of his last communications to his disciples said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." And St. Paul repeats the same truth "Circumcision is nothing: but the keeping of the commandments of God."

It is plain then that the new covenant cannot be intended to supersede man's highest duty, that of loving filial obedience—although it has changed the motive of that obedience from a desire to merit salvation by our own effort, into a grateful attachment to Jesus who has procured for us the salvation by his own finished work. Obedience to God is still man's highest privilege: but it is now characterised by St. Paul as "the obedience of faith." That this obedience is not external only, but profoundly springing from the deepest submission of the heart, is apparent from several scriptures: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love"—

faith energised through love. And that the spirit of dutiful love must rise not only above external rites (as of circumcision—the first, and therefore probably the best of all and as such mentioned for all the rest.) I say not only above external rites, but even above external duties, while permeating them all—we learn from that impressive warning "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

"The end of the commandment is Love out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned."

The old Testament is quite as emphatic as the new in insisting on the devotion of the heart: "My son give me thine heart." "Keep thine heart with all diligence (above all keeping) for out of it are the issues of life." "For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

Indeed the Old Testament equally affirms the priority of the gold over the frankincense. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

"Gold" evidently includes "good works"—those works reflecting the grace of Christ which are wrought by faith from love to the Redeemer—"the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." Therefore the Saviour counsels the church of Laodicea to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire."

Nothing was more marked in our Saviour's teaching than the pre-eminence which he assigned to this docility and obedient movement of the heart, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."

Even dogmatical correctness was comparatively slighted, "If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them."

And while the Redeemer's teaching rose constantly above the level of human reason, it is not a little remarkable that He never annihilated the honest conviction derived from the light of nature. Thus Cicero had written "Virtutis enim laus omnis in actione consistit." And the Saviour of the world irradiating that fragment of truth with His own light "stretched

forth his hand toward his disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

(2.) To come secondly to the Frankincense, it might seem that in making the "gold" so comprehensive a symbol, we leave no room for other distinct offerings. But so complicated is the structure of man, in its relation to God, that man is capable through grace, of other tribute. Gold is the tribute appropriate to the King, frankincense was associated with the function of the Priest. We read of "golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of saints." In contrast with the most solemn warning to those "that forget God." Jehovah says in the Psalms, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." In our prayer book version, "Whoso offereth me thanks and praise, he honoureth me."

Prayer and praise are manifestly the ingredients of true spiritual worship—the very respirator of the soul. The soul inhales vigour from God in Christ, by prayer; and exhales its gratitude in Christ Jesus, by praise. And this spiritual offering has a marvellous—a singular honour put upon it: for it was even declared by our Lord to be sought by God; "the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit, and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

This particular statement which displays the grace or favour and condescension of our heavenly Father was followed by the more general declaration which for ever ennobles true spiritual worship, "God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." St. Paul also again exhibiting the superiority of this offering over the rite of rites, makes spiritual service the chief distinction and privilege of Christians. "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

We cannot conceive in nature—that is, among God's created works—any type that could represent more closely the aspiration of the soul to God than this volatile and fragrant incense. Thus David says "Let my prayer be set before thee as incense." And that acceptable worship is presented to God through the Mediator "a great high priest that is passed into the heavens Jesus the son of God"—God's latest revelation indicates:—"And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne."

"And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angels' hand." Our very prayers need the perfume of the Saviour's own intercession and have efficacy only as presented from His merit.

—Thus we need a high priest while we own a King: and "we have such an high priest." "For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was since the law maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

When the Redeemer's Kingdom shall be extended the promise is "They shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord."

"Pure frankincense" was combined with "sweet spices" in the perfume or confectio "pure and holy" that Moses was ordered to make: as "pure myrrh" was an ingredient of the holy oil.

Myrrh and frankincense are frequently associated, as connected symbols, (in Solomon's song;) with obvious reference to the derived graces of the church militant—before the light of the Redeemer's kingdom shall shed glory on her. Accordingly the Lord of the church says, "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and