

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XVIII., No. 23.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, June 4, 1873.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXXVII., No. 23.

Poetry.

THE SCULPTOR.

I saw a sculptor all intent
Upon his marble white,
And all his energies were bent
To mould it, day and night.
With mallet hard, and tools of strength,
And many strokes severe,
The block was made to feel at length,
That skillful hands were near.
And I beheld a child look on,
And gaze with wondering eye;
She saw the splinters, one by one,
In all directions fly.
The doubts that filled that simple mind
Were hard to understand,
Like curious things that children find
Upon the ocean's strand.
The marble chips, at every stroke,
Were scattered one by one,
When childish doubt broke out and spoke,
"Father, why waste the stone?"
"It is," he said, in accents mild,
"By strokes and heavy blows
That as the marble wastes, my child,
The more the statue grows."
Are we not all, that children small,
In doubt and want of sight?
And like the little child we call
In darkness for the light.
How many curious questions still
Are asked by children here,
As we behold a Father's skill
Excite our childish fear.
We see our dear ones pass away,
Whom we have loved so long;
Our little one who could not stay,
Whose life was rich in song;
We see our loved possessions fly,
And leave us with such haste;
Then ask in our simplicity,
"Oh, why is all this waste?"
And then, amid our trembling fears,
A Father's voice is heard,
Who wipes away our faring tears,
By His most gentle word:—
"It is," he says, in accents mild,
"By strokes and heavy blows,
That as the marble wastes, my child,
The more the statue grows."

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE CHRISTLY WEDDING.

"Marriage is honorable in all." It is a heaven-derived honor, receiving its sanctions from Him who said: "It is not good that man should be alone." It requires a proper union of man and woman, to complete the true complement of "one flesh." And therein is actualized a deep and pervading unity, whose comprehensive relations sweetly symbolize, to earthly minds, the sublimer relationship existing between Christ and his Church.

The divine maxim which early declared, that it is not good for man to be "alone," receive a profounder emphasis, by far, when applied to the Man Christ Jesus. Though surrounded during eternity's early ages, by multitudes of angelic ministrants, whose holy and intelligent converse, and unspeakable music, must have richly contributed to that pleasurable companionship, which delights the heart of God, and which tends, evermore, to repel the shadows of unwelcome loneliness; yet, there was a peculiar wantage, in the vasty deep of Christ's unfathomable nature, whose yearnings could not be satisfied, till it had reached its courting hand to earth's guest-chamber, and laid it tenderly upon the affections of human breasts, and made them sweetly yield to everlasting espousals. We really believe that the divine nature actually craved the companionship of such a "fit consort," as could be secured, through the perilous and precious "courtship," it has so marvelously accomplished.

And yet, this sentiment does not, necessarily, argue against the grand completeness of Christ's nature, as a Divine Being. It can prove no deficiency—suggest no weakness.

It detracts nothing from God's perfectness, when we say, that he had not realized to himself that com-

pleteness of satisfaction, which the great outflow of his infinite love demanded, till it absorbed human hearts into the embrace of sublimest companionship with himself.

Does it prove imperfectness of true manhood, because that manhood yearns for the companionship of an affectionate and faithful wife? Not at all. It is but the out-acting of that soul of life and love, which makes itself fruitful,—thrice fruitful, in implanting its seeds of affection in natures singularly different from its own, whereby there is returned rounded harvests of loving-kindness, and tender care, and hallowed ministries—a happy complement and counterpart, of that which had been given.

So Christ, manifesting the legitimate out-reachings of his infinite love, offered his dear hand to mortal manhood, that he might graciously wed it to himself forever. He has wanted to endear unto himself a "bride," who shall long love him in return, and enter, also, into his sympathies and sacred services. But, how full of embarrassment has his wooings been! How great has been his difficulty in perfecting loyal engagements! And yet he has grandly persevered.

Though the task has been superhuman, yet the heavenly Lover has "pressed his suit," amid indescribable obstacles, and, at last, has so far completed the holy espousals, that he fondly expects to come and take the affianced one, to his glorious mansion, when he shall have made quite ready. As it now stands, however, the great "wedding" hasn't occurred. Christ has not formally declared the church, his Bride. Between them, there is nothing more than a contract of marriage. The espousals haven't been actually fulfilled. This is evident, if we carefully consider the parable of "the ten virgins." There, the church is represented by the five wise virgins. But, they are called *virgins*—unmarried people; and are not regarded as the wife, of course, till the marriage has taken place. The espoused one, is, however, a wife, truly, in the sight of God, before formal marriage, in an important sense. Still, a formal, and public recognition of the contract, is highly necessary. And so, we see illustrated in the parable, the principle and fact, that, though Christ have engaged to himself a "wife," yet, that ceremony which gives completeness to the contract, and legitimacy to the espousal, has not been "performed," and will not be, till He comes, at last, to take his dear one to himself. When it shall be announced, with trumpet voice, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," then "the virgin daughter of Zion," will go forth to meet Him, whom she hath taken to be her Husband. When Christ comes to earth, riding in his chariot of flaming cloud and fire, having notified his betrothed virgin of his coming, by his loud-voiced trumpet, ere taking her hand, he will soon escort her to her Father's house on high. Then will it be said: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." What a wedding that will be! It will be a high day for God's people then. They will have the best of reasons for being glad and rejoicing. And why shouldn't they all honor Him? It has cost Christ everything to obtain such a bride; he has given himself for her. What an argument!

And though the church haven't been publicly recognized, through the formality of a wedding ceremonial, as the wife of Christ; yet, the relationship, is just as vital, and demands firm fidelity on her part. Christ is true to her. He will never leave—never forsake her, at any time. Christian, you are under a very great obligation to remember your "contract" with Christ. Prove true to him.

Don't turn after any other lover. No right have you, to "coquet" with any one else. Cultivate deeper love for that Saviour, who has done so much to engage your heart and hand to him. Sanctify to him your whole soul.

Never be ashamed of him, for it is a very "honourable" marriage. Don't think of forsaking him; but keep your lamp of holy engagement, brim full of the oil of grace—the fluid of pervading, persevering love. And remember, dear reader, if you carry only a lamp of "profession" in this world, you will be left in utter darkness, when the Bridegroom departs with his true bride. The light which you may have, in your intellectual lamp, will never shine bright enough, to enable you to see heaven. You must have the full-orbed light of regeneration here, if you would be ready to go with Jesus, when he comes after his espoused church. It is impossible for those who spurn Christ's courtship here, to get admittance into the festal hall, and marriage supper of the Lamb, in heaven. But, to all such as rightly receive his "attention" on earth, they shall be "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen, is the righteousness of the saints."

Let none of us be "disappointed," in that great day—that notable day of the Lord. C. H. WETHERS.

Broadalbin, N. Y.

HODGE ON BAPTISM.

No American theologian has merited the thanks of his readers more fully than Dr. Hodge, of Princeton. He not only states his own views, but the chief views held, on the wide range of subjects of which he treats. This gives us not only doctrines, but their origin and history. His three volumes cover 2,290 pages. It is not difficult to agree with Dr. H. in most of his positions, but there are a few instances in which he tries to defend tradition rather than interpret Scripture, and in such a case, as may well be imagined, he makes great havoc of logic and common sense.

A notable instance may be found in Vol. iii, p. 548, where he is treating of infant baptism. On p. 546, he opens the subject (infant baptism) thus: "The difficulty on this subject is, that baptism, from its very nature, involves a profession of faith." Very sensible. Hear him again: "In order to justify the baptism of infants, we must attain and authenticate such an idea of the church as that it shall include the children of believing parents." A very important idea to authenticate. And as the Dr. is ready to "authenticate" it, we will hear him proceed. To accomplish this marvellous feat, he lays down eight propositions, spaced off like propositions in geometry, as though they were to be demonstrated with mathematical exactness. These eight propositions have reference to the church (not Baptist churches, however), and the first is: "The visible church is a divine institution." The second great proposition reads thus: "The visible church does not consist exclusively of the regenerate." To prove this, he gives us five statements. The first two are as truly believed by Baptists as by Dr. Hodge: "The Church does not consist exclusively of the regenerate," says the author, "1. Because the attainment of such a result . . . is an impossibility." "2. The conditions which, under both dispensations, He has prescribed for admission into this visible society of his professed worshippers, are such as men, not truly regenerated, may possess." We excuse the Dr. for this slight mixture of "both dispensations," and allow him to proceed with "3. Our Lord expressly forbids the attempt being made." (Attempt to keep out the unregenerate.) "He compares his external kingdom, or visible church, to a field in which tares and wheat grow together. He charges his disciples not to undertake to separate them, because they could not in all cases, distinguish the one from the other. Both were to be allowed to grow together until the harvest." We take it for granted that this is the strongest proof text that the Dr. could find, and it is the only one adduced under his second proposition. Now, this is certainly remarkable theology. It must be borne

in mind, that infant church membership is the "idea" the Dr. is after, and he finds it (infants) in the tares. That is to say, the young tares (infants) must not be cast out of the Church, "our Lord expressly forbids it!" But who sowed the tares the Lord tells about, but who sowed those little tares in the Church? We suspect that the same hand sowed both crops. Let us compare the Lord Jesus and Dr. Hodge as interpreters of Scripture: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world (kosmos). The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil." Matt. xiii. 37-39: "The field is the church. The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of believing parents. The enemy (!) that sowed them is the devil."—we beg your pardon—"the friends that sowed them are the parents and ministers—the church."—Dr. Hodge.

But again: "4. Christ, to whom all hearts are known, admitted Judas to the number of his most favored disciples, and even made him an apostle." Therefore, we would naturally infer, we are to receive Judases, knowing they are such. But the Dr. is pleading for infants, and hence the little Judases must be admitted. But upon this ground, why exclude the children of Judas any more than the children of Peter? The Dr. would have us receive Judas, and Peter's children, but the poor, fatherless children of the suicide Judas must be cast out. Are they not tares too?

Here is the last link in the great Doctor's chain: "5. All attempts to make a Church consisting exclusively of the regenerate have failed. So far as known no such Church has ever existed on the face of the earth. This of itself is no proof that its existence did not enter into the purpose of God." And what a blessed thing it didn't for now we can receive as many little sinners as we please. These little tares, what a blessing to them to grow among wheat, for that will help them to become wheat! Poor botany, and worse theology. Now, in order to carry out God's purpose, as Dr. Hodge presents it, we must not "attempt to make a church consisting exclusively of the regenerate, for in so doing, we may be found to fight against God." This is sufficient. To what extent will not a man go to rescue a waning tradition! What a pity it is that Dr. Hodge is not a Baptist. It would have saved him at least fifty pages on one topic in his third volume. As a Baptist, he could have stated the whole matter in half a dozen pages, made it as clear as sunlight, with plenty of Scripture to sustain him. As it is he wanders in the mists and labyrinths of tradition, proves nothing, and holds fast to that which he received from Rome.—National Baptist.

A STRIKING CONVERSION.

I had the privilege of dedicating a beautiful country church in my State, in a neighborhood surrounded almost entirely with infidels. The preacher directed my attention to a tall, manly, vigorous man in the congregation, and said he would give me his history when the service was over. He was, it seems, a violent, passionate, close-fisted man. Not a solitary farthing could anybody get out of him for the salvation of souls or for the elevation of humanity. He went to the altar a few months ago, said the minister, and gave his heart to Jesus. The infidel in the community said, "Wait a little while—touch his pocket, and you will see where his religion is." "Presently," continued my friend, "I came to him with my subscription paper, and spoke of the difficulties and embarrassments under which we labored in the neighborhood for the want of a church." "Well," said the man, "let us build a house." "What will you give?" inquired the preacher. "Fifty dollars," was the prompt reply, and

the minister passed through the community with the subscription paper, at the head of which was this amount, written in the gentleman's own hand writing, which surprised everybody. A few days afterward the most trying circumstance of his life occurred. His dear wife trembled for him. "O my husband!" she exclaimed, "don't go." His reply was "I must go; my duty calls me there; I am perfectly cool and collected. I shall become excited, but I will not say a word or do a thing out of the way." He passed through the fiery ordeal without the least taint of anger upon him. The community then said, "surely there is something in this; you have reached his pocket, you have conquered his anger, and you have subdued the man. There is power in this gospel of Christ." A few weeks after my visit there, I received the sad intelligence that that gentleman had been buried. He had gone out into the forest, and, unfortunately, a tree fell upon him and crushed him to the earth, and yet did not entirely destroy him. They carried him to the house, and sent for a physician and the minister. He calmly asked for the Bible, and read in a clear voice a chapter in John's gospel. After shutting the Bible, he closed his hands upon his breast, "and such a prayer," said my ministerial brother, "I never heard from mortal lips, for his wife, his children, for his pastor, for the church, and for his infidel friends." In a moment or two after saying Amen, he closed his eyes, and sweetly fell asleep in Jesus. The infidels said, "There is something in religion." A few weeks since I met with the good pastor again. I inquired what about his infidel neighbors, and he replied, "All of them but one are happily converted to God."—Bishop Rouman.

VALUE OF THE RELIGIOUS PRESS.

The *Christian Observer*, writing of the value of the religious press to the masses, says:

Next to the pulpit, it is the most potent instrument of good to the church and to society. Through the well stored columns of a judiciously conducted religious paper the family receive more solid information on a vast variety of subjects than from any other source. When the members of a family will not, perhaps, read a good book once in a quarter of a year, each of them will pick up the newspaper and devour its contents readily. Hence the head of a family who, from a mistaken notion of economy, refuses to subscribe for a good religious paper, is "penny wise and pound foolish," because he not only keeps his family ignorant of many things they ought to know, and which cannot be acquired from any other source, but he also excludes himself from information, oftentimes contained in a single number, which might be worth to him infinitely more than the subscription price for the whole year. A church, the majority of whose members do not take a religious paper, is far behind the exigencies of the times in Christian benevolence and enterprise, to say nothing of practical piety.

And a church not regularly supplied with the weekly ministrations of the word could perhaps do no better work than to get together and raise a sufficient amount to supply each family with a well conducted religious paper. This would be a weekly medium of communicating to them instruction, and be the means of reviving their drooping graces, or of stimulating them to make efforts to have the word steadily preached to them, as well as keeping them informed in regard to the crying wants of the church.

A well conducted religious paper is worth a hundred fold more than what it costs. It is the cheapest, easiest and most interesting means of conveying instruction to the church and to society, and deserves the liberal support and hearty co-operation of every Christian.