

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

{ NEW SERIES. }
{ Vol. XVIII, No. 12. }

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, March 19, 1873.

{ WHOLE SERIES. }
{ Vol. XXXVII, No. 12. }

Poetry.

PRAYER ANSWERED IN DISAPPOINTMENT.

BY NEWMAN HALL.

"One jewel more," I asked, "to make me glad."
He took the one I had.
"Come quickly, Lord, and heal this wounded heart!"
Still he made it smart.
"At length," he said, "your trouble bid my heart repose."
Yet thicker came the blows.
"Grant me a life of active zeal," I said.
He laid me on sick bed.
"I asked to soar in sunlight, as the lark,"
But groped on dull and dark.
"At least give peace in victory over sin,"
More loud grew battle's din.
"Oh, let me rest with thee in pastures green!"
Only sleep crags are seen.
"Why with keen knife, dear Lord, dost prune me so?"
"That grace may grow."
"Why in my portion mix such bitter leaven?"
"To fit thee more for heaven."
"Lord, take thy way with me, thy way, not mine."
"My child! all things are thine—
All in the end, though grievous, shall prove best,
And then—eternal rest."

Religious.

PRAYER MEETING CALORIC.

Many a housewife vexed by half-done pastry has often impatiently asked, "Why won't the fire burn?" Many answers are possible; fuel may be needed; or the stove may be choked with ashes; or the dampers may be closed; or the wood may be green or wet; or the chimney may be badly constructed or clogged; or the atmosphere may be muggy and unfavorable for a draft; or the wind may be the wrong way. Every housewife knows reasons enough why a fire may not burn, and she usually knows the remedy, and applies it if possible.

I have heard the prayer-meeting called the thermometer of the church. I should think it might also be described as the fire-place of a church—a place where it goes from the chilling air of the world to get warm—just as a man at work about his door in the winter will now and then go in to warm his hands and feet at the stove.

It does not follow that the fire is not burning because you cannot hear its roar. Often more heat is generating when it burns quietly but surely. So it does not follow that a prayer-meeting is dull, and the fire of Christian love burning low, because brother B. does not stand waiting for brother A. to finish his experience, so that he may tell how he feels. We cannot have a meeting go at a 22:40 rate of speed all the time. It must go slow sometimes. We must stop to catch breath. The train must stand still while the engine takes wood and water. Great bodies move slowly till they get under way. Great thoughts and emotions burn deep, and make but little stir on the surface at first. The fire may burn while men muse.

But it will not do to muse always. The fire must rush and roar part of the time, if it would not go out. When you want heat in your furnace you open the drafts and throw on fresh coal. Often there is occasion for pastors to ask:—"Why will not that fire burn?"—meaning the prayer meeting. Sometimes one might as well seek to thaw his frozen fingers at an iceberg as to warm his soul spiritually in the prayer-meeting. Not because it does not run on glibly, but because it lacks heart. A meeting without any vigorous spiritual pulse would be like a symmetrical statue; beautiful to see, but lifeless. A few such would be to a church like a few sharp frosty nights with the thermometer down out of sight. Things get frozen up. Possibly that is one reason why some churches seem so much like mountains of ice—ponderous, but frozen.

Just the thing needed to set and keep the fire burning vigorously is a deep sense of the Spirit's importance, and deep experience of it in every soul. When the Holy Ghost comes down upon a church and into individual hearts in response to earnest prayer,

the obstacles are removed, the air is purified, and the fire burns. Open all the drafts and put on abundant fuel in the secret closet, and then go to the prayer-meeting with your soul under the sway of God's Spirit, and you will not have occasion to ask: "Why will not that fire burn?"—*Advance.*

MISERIES OF SELF-IMPORTANCE.

Observe how self-importance makes a man moody and unhappy. He who is always thinking of his own excellences renders himself thereby unfit to enjoy the good of others, and is prone to imagine that every token of affection given to another is an insult offered to himself. Hence he is touchy, sensitive, irritable, and envious. He takes offence when none is meant, and even when those around him are not thinking of him at all he interprets their conduct as if it were studiously discourteous, and goes through the world smarting from wounds which have sprung, not so much from neglect of others as from his own overweening self-conceit.

There is no surer way to make ourselves miserable than to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. It isolates us from all about us. The man who has a wound about him, no matter where it may be, feels it to be always in his way. Let him do what he will, or go where he may, he cannot move himself but he is conscious of its pain. In like manner he who has this feeling of self-importance is continually smarting. Somebody has always been slighting him. He is constantly complaining of having been insulted, and when honor is given to another he feels nothing but that he has been overlooked. Thus he shuts himself out from every festal val, and mopes most of all when others are merry. May God deliver us from this idolatry of self, on whose altar all true nobleness and real happiness are completely immolated.—*Rev. W. M. Taylor.*

SENSATIONAL PREACHING.

Boston preachers are not wholly free from the absurd practice of seeking to draw congregations by clap-trap. One of our city pastors—I am glad to say he is not a Baptist—has announced a course of sermons on "The Trees of the Bible." The Congregationalist expects him "to go down to the roots of things, and follow his subject out in all its branches." It is amazing to see sensible men pursuing such folly. Not long since I heard of a minister trying to get a congregation by advertising that he would preach on "The Contracted Bed and its Meagre Covering." And of another who announced a series of sermons on Scripture characters, one being on "David—or getting a scolding;" another on "Elijah,—or 'having the blues.'" Just before the recent election a prominent minister advertised his subject as "Whom shall we vote for?" When the crowd assembled, he told them he was not going to preach a political sermon, the sanctity of the place forbade it; but he had one to present to their suffrages, and then expounded his text: "Not this man, but Barabbas." "It was perhaps, a little irreverent, but not marvellous, that a wicked, secular paper announced, next morning: '—says we must all vote for Jesus; anything to beat G—.' A minister, not far from the last mentioned, some time before preached a sermon on the prodigal son, and announced as his subject: "The young man who went down among the hogs." Now, these are not fictitious cases. They have all occurred within a year or so. I have seen the announcements. The most flagitious case of the kind of which I have any knowledge, is now going on in one of the leading cities of New England. A large, influential, and hitherto conservative church, belonging to what used to be called the "Standing

Order," lately called "a brilliant light" from England. He has waked up the town by his "flashes." Just now he is preaching a course of sermons which he calls, "Nook and Corner Series." The first one was on "Deformed Feet;" the second on "The Strange Contents of a Lost Trunk;" the third on "The Tragic History of a White Lie." The sermons are preached in the afternoon to audiences which pack pews and aisles. In the morning, his subjects are not so connected. They are rather miscellaneous productions, one of the subjects recently announced being "Up a Tree."

I can scarcely think of anything more sad, not to say disgusting, than to see a gaping crowd assembled on God's day, and in God's house to listen to such stuff. The *Liberal Christian* recently maintained that the demand of the people is now for "instructive sermons," but the spectacle witnessed every Sunday in the heart of Massachusetts refutes the idea. Our fathers, with less culture, would not have tolerated it. Boston Correspondence of *National Baptist*.

STRAUSS'S OLD AND NEW FAITH.

The truth! We find no such marks of certain truth in the wild and baseless theories which he substitutes for Christianity, as we find in that historical faith against which he puts forth all his strength. Even if we could not satisfy ourselves that his belief in God was well-grounded or his longing for immortality a true instinct of his nature; even if we allowed that doubt might be cast upon our most cherished beliefs, we are bound to say that the creed which is here offered to us in their place rests upon no true foundation of reason and experience, but takes the most unwarrantable and unproved assumptions as its starting-point. To the difficulties of the Darwinian transformation of species, the creed of Strauss adds difficulties of its own. Neither Mr. Darwin nor he can produce from the history of the world an instance of a barbarous nation or tribe spontaneously emerging from barbarism to civilization, without external aid and influence. His cell theory is a mere arbitrary notion, which takes for granted a most cardinal fact, which it was above all necessary to prove; and his history of the acquisition by mankind of moral principles, simply as the result of experience, is notoriously at variance with the true history of mankind: In an age of eager inquiry, of doubts and divisions, theories like these will arise; will "have their day and cease to be." Their broken remains strewn along the highway of time will bear witness to the eternal truth: "No weapon that is formed against Thee shall prosper."—*The Guardian.*

FOUR IMPOSSIBLE THINGS.

1. To escape troubles by running away from duty. Jonah once made the experiment, but it did not succeed. Therefore manfully meet and overcome the difficulties and trials to which the post assigned you by God's providence exposes you.
2. To become a Christian of strength and maturity without undergoing severe trials. What fire is to gold such affliction is to the believer. It burns up the dross, and makes the gold shine forth with unalloyed luster.
3. To form an independent character except when thrown upon one's own resources. The oak, in the middle of the forest, if surrounded on every side by trees that shelter and shade it, runs up tall and comparatively feeble; cut away its protectors, and the first blast will overturn it. But the same tree, growing in the open field where it is continually beaten upon by the tempest becomes its own protector. So the man who is compelled to rely on his resources, forms an independence of character to which he could not otherwise have attained.

4. To be a growing man by looking to your position. Therefore, prefer rather to climb up the hill with difficulty, than to be steamed up by a power outside yourself.—*Church Gazette.*

THE ABSENT CONGREGATION.

We recently heard a preacher say, very impressively, that often, when preaching to his own people, and looking down upon their multitudinous up-turned faces, he saw another audience of indefinitely vast proportions beyond the sound of his voice—the great multitude that cannot hear and will not come within his reach. He was haunted, he said, while feeding his own flock with a vision of the gaunt faces that stood and stared in the unapproachable and unapproaching distance. We suppose there is not one earnest preacher in any great city who is not often moved in the same way, and who will not be sympathetically touched by this representation of the great masses with whom, and with whose needs, he finds it impossible to place himself in helpful relations. How to reach with Christian truth and influence the poor, the degraded, the unbelieving, the vicious, the careless, who never cross the threshold of a church or hear the sound of a preacher's voice, is still a problem unsolved. To the poor the gospel is not preached as it ought to be, and as it must be, before the hopes and expectations of the Christian world are realized.

CONCERNING PERDITION.

In reply to the question, "What do you think of the perdition of the wicked?" the *Christian Union* says:

Most people have a keener interest in this subject than almost any other; they certainly feel a more living interest in that than they do in questions relating to their own duties in this life. We answer: First, that there is a perdition of the wicked plainly taught in the Scriptures in various figures of speech. Secondly, that, while the fact is plainly taught, the nature of retribution in the next life is left in obscurity, and that here, as elsewhere, the assurance of dogmatists has always been in proportion to their ignorance and the obscurity of the subject. The more difficult it is to attain to certainty about anything, the more vehemently will men maintain their opinion about it. Thirdly, that perdition will probably consist more in what men are than in where they are; it shines out of the eyes of many men even in this life. And fourthly, that hell is a very bad thing, make it what you will. Keep out of it.

THOUGHTS ON "A VISIBLE CHURCH."

1. A visible church is a means to an end. The work is of greater importance than the means. The salvation of man, and the glory to God are infinitely more important than the churches used to secure these results. An education is better than the text books and the drill used to secure it. The visible church is a means, not an end. It was appointed for man, not man for it.
2. A visible church is a church in session, that the eye may behold.
3. A visible church is a whole made up of many parts. It is equal to the sum of all its parts. No one part is equal to the sum of all its parts. No one part can equal the whole. If any one part is essential to the existence of all the rest, then it equals in importance all the rest, which is absurd. The subtraction of one part must leave a remainder.
4. A complete visible church is a congregation of regenerate followers of Jesus. (1), who have been immersed in the name of the Trinity; (2), who have duly elected pastor and deacons; (3), who are engaged in some one of the several holy exercises enjoined by the Word—praise, prayer, preaching and hearing the Gospel, partaking of

the supper, or administering baptism—and are thus securing the end sought, the salvation of man and the glory of God.

By this fruit ye shall know them.

5. But all visible churches are not complete, as all fruit-bearing trees are not. Sometimes a visible church is not engaged in any of the holy exercises, but all are in waiting for their leader. Sometimes a visible church has no pastor and deacons. But these defects are not fatal. The absence of fruit and leaves does not destroy a tree. So the lack of immersion in the name of Trinity does not reduce the visible church into a nonentity, nor to a secular body. True, it is not distinctly a Baptist Church. But if it is therefore not a Christian church, then the subtraction of a part from the whole leaves no remainder, and immersion, no appointment, is the paramount of all others, surpassing in importance prayer, praise, preaching, and communion; and is tantamount to the end itself. For the "saved are added to the [visible] church," which on their theory cannot exist without immersion.

A visible church, like a visible school, or a visible army, is to be tested by the general aim, and the end secured, not by one specific act. A body of people associated for the purpose of developing and informing the mind, is a school, whatever the method of matriculation and tuition may be. Various methods may give the school various names, as military, polytechnic, common—yet all are visible schools.

So we have Christian churches, Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregationalist, etc., which various names—none of them based on Scriptural authority, but merely given for convenience—indicate so many various politics and methods of work. They do all bring forth "churchly" fruits, and some of them, although greatly defective in their ordinances, very sweet and precious fruit. "By their fruits shall we know them." Who are we, that we should contradict our Lord?

Let us try to bring our Pedobaptist brethren to the unity of faith and knowledge; but we shall do this best by recognizing the good there is in them and their churches.—*"Delta" in National Baptist.*

For the Christian Messenger.

ACT FOR INCORPORATING THE N. S. H. MISSIONARY UNION.

Having been for some few weeks past, engaged on a series of letters to the readers of the *Messenger* are aware, discussing the question of "Home Missions and Home Missionary operations," my attention was recently directed to an official announcement in the public press, that a Bill was before the Legislature now in session "to incorporate the Nova Scotia Baptist Home Missionary Union."

If the Bill contemplated nothing more than its title warrants, I am not aware that any person should, or would take any exception to such a proceeding.

As an officer however of the Board of Managers of the Baptist Home Missionary Society and after consultation with the President and other members, I thought it advisable to procure a copy of the draft Act of incorporation referred to, and of the Petition upon which it is founded, and upon perusal being not a little surprised at the contents of these documents, I have thought it wise to lay them, through the medium of the *Messenger*, before the reading portion of the denomination.

Knowing, as the promoters of this Bill some or all of them do, that the Board of Managers of the Baptist Home Mission Society regard the operations taken at Berwick and subsequently at the Western, and Eastern Associations very differently from what they do—and as being directly at variance with some of the positions and assumptions contained in the accompanying documents, one