

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XXII, No. 6.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, February 7, 1877.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XLI, No. 6.

Poetry.

Do Something Better.

There was an enlaving and a wind
about still upward—
Do something better, for as yet your
best has not been done,
Your past may have some noble deeds,
some brilliant victories won.
Doubt not yourself you may possess
some unknown latent power
That, like an aloe, may in time burst
forth in glorious flower.
Do something better, look around and
see what men have done
You little know the doubts they had
when their best work began;
Know that the bravest felt alarmed
as they drew near the foe,
But courage rose and conquered fear
and hence the fame they know.
Do something better, for the world
grows stronger every day,
And noble souls must stronger be if
right shall gain the sway.
There is a store of wisest thought and
courage for the weak,
And holy power of every kind God has
for those who seek.

Do something better, never rest in
spurious content,
The Master has not yet appeared to
claim the talents lent;
Some rarer gem than what you have
seek for your high renown,
Some nobler work to sparkle on your
everlasting crown.
J. HUNT COOKE.

Religious.

The Crisis of Sin and the Doom of the Sinner.

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"Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting."—DANIEL vi. 27.

Although these words form part of a narrative of a mysterious and extraordinary event—revealing in a supernatural and terrific manner the impending doom of an impious king, and the sudden fall of one of the chief empires of antiquity—yet the words are suggestive of a solemn and awful truth which is of universal application, viz., THE CRISIS OF SIN AND THE DOOM OF THE SINNER.

I. THE SOLEMN ANNOUNCEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH BELSHAZZAR. He was a king of Babylon, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon was an idolatrous and licentious city, impious, proud and despotic. At this time she had filled the measure of her iniquity beyond which she was not allowed to proceed any further. Belshazzar was a debauched, profane and cruel monarch. He made a feast to a thousand of his lords. A thousand nobles fill the banquet hall of the young luxurious monarch, who, by their impious flatteries, soothe and laud his monstrous crimes. When the wine began to dis-temper his feeble brain, we can well imagine how the effeminate debaucher, who had never performed a noble deed in his life, felt a wonderful elevation of mind and enlargement of ideas respecting his own greatness and glory, until he thought himself a hero equal to worshipped Bel, the founder of the empire. The company toasted the new drunken divinity in a full goblet and a Bacchanalian song of blasphemous flattery:—

"Great Belshazzar like a God
Rules the nations with a nod!
To great Belshazzar be the goblet
crowned,

Belshazzar's name the echoing roofs rebound."
They exalted him above all the kings and gods of the nations—even the boasted God of the despised Jews, whose power had been so signally overthrown by the King of Babylon. The mention of the Jews roused a thought in Belshazzar. He remembered that among the spoils of the captivity of Judah, with which his grandfather had garnished his triumph, there were the golden vessels of Jehovah's temple, which were kept in the house of his god Bel. In the madness

of intoxication the impious monarch fills to the brim the cup of Babylon's iniquity by sending for those sacred vessels to grace the orgies of a drunken banquet, as if to hurl defiance at the God of the captive Jews. "And the king and the princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank out of them." And doubtless, in doing so, many a scoffing allusion was made to the poor Jews, whose harps were hanging on the willows; and also to the futility of Persian invasion that was now thundering at the gates of Babylon. But the insulted God of the weeping Jews was not asleep. "In that hour"—that hour of impious jests, of noisy revelry, and licentious uproar—"In that hour," the King sees the image of a hand writing on the wall, opposite him, the mysterious words—"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." The goblet falls from his hand, and he is struck with speechless horror. "The joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other." He shrieked with terror, and called for the learned magicians, who dealt in wizard spells, to come and explain the mystic writing. They come; he points them to the wall and says, "Look there; see that writing—tell me what it means—speak, or instant death awaits you—What? Dumb!—all dumb! Where is your boasted skill?" With shame and terror they confess their inability to help him. Rage is now added to his increasing terror. "Curse on your shallow and lying pretences! You shall not live an hour—off with their heads!"

At this juncture the King is told of Daniel, one of the captive Jews, who had the spirit of the holy God in him, and could solve mysteries, and interpret dreams. Daniel is brought before the King, who tells him what he has heard concerning him—that he could solve dark problems, and read the fates of men with prescience more than human. He promises him magnificent rewards if he can interpret the writing. In reply Daniel says, "Let thy rewards be unto others, yet, by the help of my God, I will declare the mystery, and unfold the high decrees of heaven. And now prepare to hear what Kings have seldom heard—what servile courtiers seldom tell—prepare to hear the truth. The mighty God, who rules the destinies of Kings and nations, gave thy forefather this great empire, with such weight of power that the whole earth trembled under the terror of his name. But Babylon's great King forgot himself—insulted the God of heaven. His pride was punished. God hurled him from his throne—turned him into a maniac—made him fancy himself a beast, so as to roam and pasture with the beasts of the field, exposed to the cold dew of heaven, for seven years, until he confessed that 'Pride was not made for man.' But instead of learning wisdom from his humiliation, thou hast even exceeded him in impiety. Thou hast defied the God of heaven by profaning, with impious hands, the sacred vessels of his temple. Therefore hear thy doom." Then was the part of the hand taken from him." Daniel then read the writing—"MENE, MENE: God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL: Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES: Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians, and in that night was Belshazzar the King slain, and Darius the Median took the kingdom." How sure the judgment of God upon the wicked!

It is supposed that the words of our text refer to the notion entertained by the ancients, that the actions of men are solemnly weighed in balances before God; and that the condition of the departed is determined according to the preponderance of good or evil. Such judgment scenes are often represented in the hieroglyphical paintings of ancient Egypt. In the light of this doctrine the interpretation of Daniel must have been exceedingly solemn to the terrified and guilty monarch. He was weighed, found wanting, and condemned. The text comes home with a warning voice to all men: for "the

Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him the actions of men are weighed."

II. SOME OF THE SOLEMN TRUTHS SUGGESTED.

1. We have here a striking proof and illustration of the supreme and sovereign government of God over the affairs and destinies of men. "The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble." The same God that humbled the pride of Nebuchadnezzar, that weighed Belshazzar in the balances, and transferred the empire to another dynasty, still rules supreme over the destinies of kingdoms and nations. He prospereth the virtuous that respect his laws, but He blasteth the pride of the mighty that rebel against him. He has a rod of iron, to chastise the rulers and the nations, who set his authority at defiance. He casteth off the spirit of princes, he removeth away the speech of the trusty; he turneth the wisdom of the wise into folly, and causeth them to grope in darkness.

The time had come for the deliverance of God's people from Babylon. But how shall the prey be delivered from the mighty? God argues the case with the faint-hearted: "Who art thou that fearest continually the fear of the oppressor? Why dost thou forget the Lord thy Maker, who laid the foundation of the earth?" Be the difficulties ever so great, "the captive exiles hasteneth to be loosed, for the Lord who divided the sea is his deliverer—the Lord of hosts." Belshazzar's doom is fixed—in one night proud Babylon shall fall, and the captive daughter of Judah shall be free.

This great God of infinite power, wisdom, righteousness and goodness, not only rules the destinies of Kings and empires, but all things are under his personal and sovereign control—the elements of nature, the irrational creation—even the fall of a sparrow on the ground: how much more the events and affairs of human life. All are under his inspection, subject to his control. To be at peace with him, and guided by his will, is of the highest importance—the first condition of well-being; while rebellion against him is madness and inevitable ruin. "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord."

2. However impious and presumptuous sinners may be, there is a crisis of awful solemnity and fearful retribution awaiting them. Belshazzar and his thousand lords, in the midst of the mad revelry of that night, fancied themselves most secure, but their doom was most imminent. "In that night" of impious mirth and false confidence, came their destruction with awful suddenness. There is another Babylon—the mystical Babylon of the book of Revelation—that great foe of pure Christianity, the church of Rome. That evil and mighty system is the same in relation to the New Testament church as ancient Babylon was in relation to the Old; and such will be her doom. She is described as "the mother of harlots, and abomination of the earth"—a persecuting power, drunk with the blood of the saints. She has insulted heaven by her horrid blasphemies, and cursed the earth by her priestcraft and foul imposture. She has desecrated the institutions of Christ—profaned the vessels of his spiritual temple, for her own vile advantage, and the spiritual intoxication of the nations. But the time of her doom is near at hand. The mysterious hand has already written her impending judgment on the walls of the Vatican. It will be soon said of her as of ancient Babylon, whose doom came so suddenly, "Alas, alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city, for in one hour is thy judgment come upon thee!" All other systems of ecclesiastical priestism and worldly establishments of religion, for political ends, seem to be weighed in the present day in the balances of God's judicial Providence, and are found notoriously wanting in all kingdoms and countries. Arrogant priestly assumption, the merchandise of souls, and ritualistic infatuation—the effect of the deleterious liquor from the golden cup of the great harlot—are fast working their

destruction. May it not likewise be said, more or less, of all the organized forms of Christianity, called churches, with their pretentious and exclusive sectarianism and conventional professions—weighed, but found wanting. Who can doubt that all this must be substituted by something more spiritual—more real, Christ-like and influential, before the regeneration of the world can be effected.

The same also may be said of the political institutions and governments of the world. It can not be denied that many of them, under the influence of Christianity, have made great progress in external civilization and material greatness; but below the surface, what do we find? Selfish motives, unscrupulous ambition and rapacity. The best interests of the people are often sacrificed to the greed of power and gain. Their increasing revenues, and the wondrous development of their resources, applied—not for alleviating the sufferings and elevating the condition of the toiling millions—but for material aggrandizement, the enrichment of unprincipled office-bearers, and the improvement of the murderous machinery of war and human slaughter. Think of the millions of men kept constantly under arms, among Christian nations, at the annual cost of so many millions sterling! And why? To carry out the will of heaven? Oh no, but to outrage the spirit of Christianity, to gratify their selfish and cursed passions by deluging whole continents with human blood. These governments are conscious of their danger; hence their bloated armaments and their constant readiness for war. This is an abnormal state of things; it is in direct antagonism to the great purpose of the gospel. These institutions are not adapted to the exigencies of the great crisis at which the world has arrived. Their "TEKEL" is written; their Armageddon is at hand, when the saints of the Most High shall take and possess the kingdom for ever and ever.

The whole system of the present world, with its arts and science, politics and commerce, &c., is doomed. Its boasted greatness and gigantic achievements are, as a rule, godless in their spirit, and intensely selfish in their end. They are used, not for the promotion of the glory of God, and the highest good of universal man, but of selfish worldly profit and material aggrandizement. The boasted civilization of this nineteenth century is more like gilded selfishness and corruption than the development of the divine ideal of Christianity. Christianity has been in the world for more than eighteen centuries; millions of Bibles have been circulated, and immense labour expended, at an immense cost; and yet how little, comparatively, has been accomplished. Is Christianity, under the present system of things, destined to conquer and regenerate this human world? We should like to know when at the present rate of progress, will that glorious consummation be realized. Under the existing state of things, the conventional Christianity of the churches, in the most christian countries in the world, and where Christianity has existed since the days of the apostles, is too weak to keep abreast of the increasing population, and the gigantic development of the carnal spirit and policy of the present world. It is found wanting. It has lost its virility and apostolic power. Some mighty and radical changes must take place before the kingdom of heaven is fully established on earth. The doom of the present world—its nominal Christianity—its unbelief—its godless science and intense worldliness—is written in language full of woe, awful judgments and tribulations such as have not been since the world began. Like the doom of Babylon, it will come suddenly like a snare upon all them that dwell upon the face of the earth. And what besides? Will it be the manifestation of the Son of Man—the personal reign of Christ upon earth, for the restitution of all things, and to receive dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people,

nations, and languages should serve him?

But let us come nearer home and give the subject a more personal application. This awfully solemn crisis awaits every impenitent sinner individually. That same hour of awakening conscience will overtake the most obdurate and presumptuous sinner as truly as if his doom were written on the walls of his chamber at midnight by a mysterious ghostly hand. This divine manifestation may be very quiet, as in the case of Belshazzar—no lightning flashing; no thunder pealing; but the gentle and silent movement of a mystic hand against the light, and before the eye of the guilty conscience. It may be very sudden and unexpected, in the midst of boisterous mirth, when the tide of festive joy is running high. "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape."

3. The moral character of men in this world will determine their final destiny in the judgment to come. "Weighed in the balances." When a party of New Zealand chiefs, some years ago, visited England, they were taken, among other places, to see the Bank of England. The machine for weighing sovereigns excited their curiosity; and one of them, watching the regularity with which the light weights fell into the box on the left side, and the heavy ones into the box on the right, very emphatically remarked, "Ah, that is just how it will be with us all at the last judgment. We shall be weighed in the balances, and the light weights will go to the left, and the heavy to the right." We are warned not to deceive ourselves on this matter, "for that which a man soweth, he shall also reap." The impenitent sinner treasures up wrath against the day of wrath; but a life of faith and obedience to Christ has the sure promise of eternal blessedness. Those who are reconciled to God through the blood of Christ, and who overcome the corruption that is in the world through lust, shall enter in through the gates into the city, and reign with Christ for ever.

The word of God will be the balance in which we shall be weighed. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day." If we do what the word of Christ tells us, it will acquit us, and proclaim before an assembled universe our title to an inheritance among the saints. But if we heed not its warnings, and spurn its gracious invitations, the Word will condemn us, and deliver us to the tormentors. How solemn our present relation to the word of God! How pregnant with eternal issues! It will be for the want of something that men will be condemned in the judgment. "Found wanting!" Their actual sins may be forgiven; but if they are wanting in the righteousness of the Gospel, which is through Jesus Christ, they will be as light as the chaff which the wind driveth away. Make your peace with Christ before you are called to meet him as your Judge; for

"The Man who bled on Calvary,
Every eye one day shall see;
Sitting on his throne—holding
The balance of high decree.
All men shall there be gathered,
In his presence to be weighed,
The thought is full of terror,
It makes my heart afraid!
My soul, seek that redemption,
That shall the balance turn,
The day of retribution,
When the whole world shall burn!"

4. The final and hopeless doom of the impenitent and ungodly.—"And art found wanting!" The Judge is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on all that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thousands will be found wanting who now cherish high expectations of heaven. It will be useless to remonstrate; the balances of God are righteous and true. "Lord, Lord, we have spoken, and done many things in thy name. We never thought it would come to this." The Judge will point to the rule and standard of judgment, and say, "Look there and see how far you are from its require-