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Poetry.

The Chamber over the Gate.

BY HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

Is it so far from thee
Thou canst no longer see
In the Chamber over the Gate
That old man desolate,
Weeping and wailing sore
For his son, who is no more?
O Absalom, my son!

Is it so long ago
That cry of human woe
From the walled city came,
Calling on his dear name,
That has died away
In the distance of to-day?
O Absalom, my son!

There is no far nor near,
There is neither there nor here,
There is neither soon nor late,
In that Chamber over the Gate,
Nor any long ago
To that cry of human woe,
O Absalom my son!

From the ages that are past
The voice comes like a blast,
Over seas that wreck and drown,
Over tumult of traffic and town;
And from ages yet to be,
Come the echoes back to me,
O Absalom my son!

Somewhere at every hour
The watchman on the tower
Looks forth, and sees the fleet
Approach of the hurrying feet,
Of messengers that bear
The tidings of despair.
O Absalom, my son!

He goes forth from the door,
Who shall return no more.
With him our joy departs;
The light goes out in our hearts;
In the Chamber over the Gate
We sit disconsolate.
O Absalom, my son!

That 'tis a common grief
Bringeth but slight relief;
Ours is the bitterest loss;
Ours is the heaviest cross;
And forever the cry will be,
"Would God I had died for thee,
O Absalom, my son!"
Atlantic Monthly.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

Church Polity.

No. III.

THE PRAYER MEETING.

Immediately after his resurrection the Lord Jesus commenced a series of meetings with his disciples, which were continued during forty days. In those meetings he gave them instructions "pertaining to the kingdom of God," which were afterwards carried into effect in the early years of the Church's history. He directed them to wait at Jerusalem for the promised power from on high, but to do nothing else till the power came. How did they spend the time? They engaged an upper room, where they met, in numbers "about one hundred and twenty," and "continued with one accord, in prayer and supplication." It is expressly stated that besides the apostles, "Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brethren" were present. This was a protracted prayer-meeting; and it was an effective one. God's plans comprised these three particulars:—1. The promise of gracious blessings; 2. Prayer for them. 3. Believing and patient waiting till the appointed time. It came. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place"—the "upper room," before mentioned. The habit of united prayer, then first formed, continued in operation: "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The church at Jerusalem was mighty in prayer. (See Acts iv. 23-31.) When apostolical letters were circulated among the other churches, believers were always exhorted to perseverance in this practice. The Thessa-

lonians were bidden to "pray without ceasing;" the Colossians, to "continue in prayer;" the Ephesians, to "pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit;" the Philippians, to "let their requests be made known unto God in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving." Prayer-meetings were standing institutions in Christian churches.

What kind of meeting was the primitive prayer-meeting? It was more than a form of outward service. There was engagedness with God. There was an actual errand at the throne of grace. Every Church had its own special needs which were to be presented to the Lord, in faith and earnestness, and with expectation of bestowment. Christians were taught that we are living under the ministration of the Spirit, and that the required supply is to be obtained in answer to prayer. So it is still. According to the hymn which was often sung in the old country:—

"Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give;
Long as they live should Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live."

When we go to the prayer-meeting, we go, not to render service, but to obtain a blessing. Every church has its own wants. They should be ascertained—meditated on—pleaded before God. The leader of the meeting should dwell on the state of the church, and labour to impress strong convictions on the subject. Those who pray, should pray in the spirit of Jacob "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." And they should "speak often one to another," that they may "gird up each other to the race divine." We should aim to realize the condition of things, and go to the meeting with an *idea* in spirit of adoption!

J. M. C.

The Second Coming of Christ.

AN ESSAY READ BEFORE THE BAPTIST MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE HELD AT LAWRENCETOWN, ANNAPOLIS CO., APRIL 8TH, 1879.

By REV. JOHN BROWN.

(Published by request of the Conference.)

(Continued.)

4. THE TIME.

Little difference of opinion exists as to the fact: the manner and the object of Christ's second coming. A very wide difference, however, exists as to the time, and I suppose will more or less till the event itself explains the prophecies concerning it. There are many in these days who believe the day of the Lord is very near at hand, and that he may be expected at any moment; others, that that day is yet far down the future. It is argued, and with some reason, that if the Apostles expected Christ to come in their day, how much more should we now that eighteen hundred years have passed away. But the fact that so many hundred years have elapsed since the Apostles' day, and Christ has not yet come, shows that if they did really expect him, they were very greatly mistaken, and if they were mistaken so widely as nearly two thousand years, they might have been mistaken twice that length of time.

There are passages which seem to teach that Christ was coming the second time during the lifetime of some to whom he spoke. In Matt. xvi. 27, 28, we read: "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Verse 27 seems to point to his coming to judgment, and v. 28 would indicate that some of those to whom he spoke should live till that event; but that cannot be, for they are all dead many centuries ago, and Christ has not yet come, so that v. 28 must refer to some

other coming; and I would suggest whether he did not refer to the day of Pentecost. He said to his disciples, "I will not leave you comfortless, (literally, orphans) I will come to you," and on the day of Pentecost he came (though not in visible form) in power and great glory. Or it may have referred to his transfiguration, when Peter, James, and John saw him as recorded in Matt. xvii. 1-9 and referred to by Peter in his 2nd Epistle i. 16-18. I prefer, however, of the two to apply it to Pentecost. Similar passages are found in Mark viii. 38 and ix. 1, and Luke ix. 26, 27. It is often, however, referred to the destruction of Jerusalem. In Matthew xxiv. 28, Christ (if I mistake not) foretells the destruction of Jerusalem, and then says v. 29-31, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in Heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other." I do not see any reason to give "immediately" any meaning but what it naturally bears. The word *eutheos* translated "immediately," occurs eighty times in the New Testament, and is rendered immediately, 35 times; straightway, 32 times; forthwith, 7 times; as soon as, twice; by-and-by, twice; shortly, once; anon, once. Robinson defines it, *immediately, without delay, forthwith, as soon as possible, straightway*. Liddell & Scott: (abr. edit.) *straightway*. Pasor: *statim*, which Ainsworth defines by *incontinently*, (which properly means without any delay) *forthwith*, &c. Pasor refers to Mark ii. 12 as an illustration of the meaning of *eutheos*: "And immediately he arose, took up the bed," &c. Parkhurst: *immediately, instantly*. Thus the word appears to have a very definite meaning, corresponding to the English "right off," or the American "right away."

Besides, according to Alford, the "then" of verse 30, (Greek *tote*) "so emphatically placed and repeated, is a definite declaration of time,—not a mere sign of sequence or coincidence, as for instance in verse 23:—when these things shall have been somewhat filling men's hearts with fear,—then shall," &c. Of verse 31 Doddridge says: "The words of this verse are equally applicable to the destruction of Jerusalem, as to the final advent of Christ to judgment."

In view of the force of *eutheos*, immediately, forthwith, &c., and of *tote*, then, at that time, I conclude that what follows (whatever it meant) occurred immediately after the tribulations spoken in the former part of the chapter. Besides, if this passage be made to refer to the end of the world when Christ will come, how shall we harmonise the expression in verse 30 (Matt. xxiv) which says, "then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn," with those prophecies which speak of the universal reign of Christ when he shall come? such as, "all nations shall call him blessed," &c. If the state of the world at Christ's coming is to be what the Bible represents it, what will there be in his coming to cause all the tribes of the earth to mourn? Will they not rather rejoice, save the comparative few of those who will be in a state of unbelief? Some take verse 29, and what follows as spoken in a double sense; as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, and also to the end of the world. This may be, yet it is difficult to conceive how Christ should use such a word as immediately, in speaking of what would take place at a certain time in the lifetime of some to whom he spoke, and at the same time to a period many hundreds certainly, perhaps thousands of years after. In

the account given by Luke of the tribulations spoken of by Christ as recorded by Matthew and Mark, Christ says (Luke xxi. 28,) "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads for your redemption draweth nigh."

Does not this look as if the "thing" just spoken of by Christ would be witnessed by those whom he addressed? It is worthy of notice that while the three Evangelists speak of the tribulations and woes that were to come, and of the coming of Christ, and the angels being sent on their mission: neither of them says a word about the judgement itself. Moreover, the Saviour's words are very explicit, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled." Luke xxi. 32. These passages are dark and enigmatical, we must therefore tread cautiously.

From John xxi. 21-23, it would seem as if the disciples did not expect to live till Christ should come. Peter said to Christ concerning John, "Lord and what shall this man do? Jesus saith to him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die." This looks at least as if they expected to die before Christ should come. The apostles, Paul, Peter and James in their epistles appear to have some expectation of his coming. See 1 Thess. iv. 15; Heb. x. 25; 1 Pet. i. 5; James v. 8. Yet it is possible that in common with others they had some lurking hope that Christ would come to restore them to their nation and kingdom, and deliver them from the Roman yoke. While however this appears to be the case with them, it is worthy of note that nowhere nor did they point out, or give any data whereby the time of his coming may be expected.

In 1 Cor. xv. 51 Paul speaks as if he expected to live till Christ should come to judgment. His words are: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed &c." But in 2 Cor. iv. 14, he speaks as if he did not so expect it, for he says: "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." In Phil. i. 23, he says: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better." Such expressions as that in 1 Cor. xv. 51. "We shall not all sleep &c.," MacKnight says are not necessarily understood of the writers themselves. In Gal. i. 23, Paul even classes himself among those whom he formerly persecuted. He speaks of the churches of Judea having heard "That he which persecuted us in time past now preacheth &c." Like use of the word "us" is found in Psalm lxvi. 6. In speaking of Israel crossing the sea, David says: "He turned the sea into dry land, there did we rejoice in him." Paul classes himself, with those who should live many centuries after him, and David with those who had lived centuries before. They appear to identify themselves with the people of God, and speak of what had happened, or may yet happen to them as happening to themselves. In this light it is rendered less certain that Paul expected to be alive at the coming of the Lord.

From what Peter says in his 2nd Epistle (i. 14), he evidently has no idea of Christ coming during his life. He says: "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me." Christ had told Peter that he should die, (John xxi. 18, 19) and from the above passage it is clear that he so understood him, notwithstanding what he says in 2 Peter iii. 12, "Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, &c." If Christ told him he was to die, it is difficult to conceive how Peter writing under Divine inspiration should think he should not. From what Christ told him, he expected to die, and he did die, according to the word of Christ. He could not expect to die, and not to die, at the same time.

Going to see "H. M. S. Pinafore."

The following is an extract from a sermon on Amusements, preached at Newton Centre, Sunday evening, April 13th, by the pastor, Rev. W. N. Clarke. The passage was preceded by one in which it was said that there is a great popular movement toward freedom in amusements, that it is the duty of Christians at such a time to hold a conservative attitude, and that we are constantly solicited to yield our ground, and for the sake of a little pleasure, to decide the whole question in favor of indulgence.

"For example, here is 'Pinafore,' a play. It is said to be pure fun, and to be clean and decent. Everybody is running after it. Now I want to know whether I shall go and see it to-morrow evening. No man enjoys a good laugh better than I do, and undoubtedly an evening of clear recreation would be a benefit to me. I have read passages from the play in the newspapers, and laughed at the fun as heartily as any one. Let us talk it over. Shall I go, or shall I not go? Give me your advice.

"My being a minister has nothing to do with it. If any of you have a right to go I have the same. I claim all the privileges that any Christian has, and no one shall take them away from me. Indeed, we are all on one level. If it is right and expedient for any of us to go, it is right and expedient for all of us, minister and deacons, men, women and children.

"Well, let us go. They say the play is clean. Some of these burlesques would make a new theatre goer blush to the hair; and if our young men should take to saying to our young ladies such things as, 'We will go, the whole church together. It seems not to be sinful in itself, and if it is right for one, it is right for all.

"But I like to look ahead a little. We shall have to come back after it is over, and live together as before. What shall I say, as a preacher and a pastor, an advisor of other souls? The theatre that I am going to is not the 'reformed theatre,' of which the prophets tell; this is not the 'legitimate drama,' exactly; this is not Shakespeare. This is not a great dramatic event, with great players and high art. I am simply going to see a jolly burlesque, which happens to be pure as well as jolly. What shall I say about the theatre afterwards? I cannot say much against it, can I. My mouth will be shut. To go will be to give up my ground,—if I ever held any. The theatre will be open, as far as my influence goes. Besides saying to all who know me, 'Go, if you like, I shall have said, 'You need not wait, either, for Booth to come, with his 'Hamlet'; you need not insist upon high art or the legitimate drama. I have given you my example in 'Pinafore.' The door is open.

"But I think I ought to ask, Do I wish to open the door? Am I ready to say to this whole community, 'Go, if you like? Are you ready to have me say so? Would it be right for me a Christian, to take that stand? I do not utterly condemn the theatre, but I have long known that the theatre, on the whole, was a school where more evil than good was learned. I know young men to-day, to whom the frequenting of theatres is a part of a coarse, reckless, unmanly life, in which I greatly fear that they will lose all their purity and all their worth. I would like to be able to remonstrate with them, and help them to a more manly course. For myself, I may not be contaminated; for I shall go to a clean play, and I shall pay for a good seat, in as respectable company as I can find. But am I entirely ready to have my mouth shut as to any further objections to ordinary theatre-going? Let me see, what is the consideration that is to be paid for all this? What am I to get if I go? A laugh, a good hearty laugh, three hours of solid fun. I have my doubts about the sufficiency of the consideration. I can laugh elsewhere. Fun comes to me, as much of it as I