

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER,

And Bible Society, Missionary, and Sabbath School Advocate.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY, FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF FREE C. BAPTISTS OF N. BRUNSWICK, AT ONE DOLLAR A YEAR, IN ADVANCE.

G. McLEOD, Editor.
GEO. W. DAY, Printer.

That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ—Paxton.

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NEW SERIES.

SAINT JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK, FRIDAY, AUGUST 11, 1854.

VOL. I.—NO. 32

Religious.

CONSOLATION UNDER BEREAVEMENT.

Letter from Mr. Thomas Oliver to Mr. T. H. Hays,
(Written in 1766.)

My Dear Brother.—A few weeks ago, I was informed of the awful bereavement which Divine Providence lately made in your family: a bereavement, which loudly demands the deepest pity, and softest sympathy of every friend.—To lose the wife of your youth, or your first-born and only son, or even, a dear relation, is, doubtless, a heavy trial; but to have all these taken away, and that by a single stroke, is a trial of the first magnitude; and every one in such circumstances must feel, unless he be past feeling. I doubt not but you feel your share. Your heart is young and unexperienced in such scenes of woe, and therefore they fall on you with double weight. O! it is well you have disappointed to support you, or you would sink beneath your load! you would fall, to rise no more.

The cloud of this dispensation may, in all probability, be so thick at present, that you cannot see the hand which directed it. But it shall soon become transparent; and then you shall see the hand and heart of your best Father; and acknowledge, it was unmerited goodness, which intended the stroke; and unerring wisdom, which directed it so near your heart. Till this appears, be silent; and when it does, you shall adore. You have often recommended to others, "Not to sorrow as those who have no hope." Let me recommend the same to you. Let those tears which evidence your tender affection for your late friend, equally evidence your submission to your Divine Father. You have heard of the patience of Job. With what deep reverence I wish that unfeigned submission! did he receive the repeated tidings of his complicated calamities! "The Lord gave, said he, and the Lord took away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And when he was strongly solicited to murmur at the dispensation, and blaspheme his author, he rejected it with abhorrence; "What I said he, shall I receive good at the hand of God, and shall I not receive evil?" It is then said, to his immortal honour, "In all this Job sinned not." May God say he same of you! "I took away a distant relation—and in this he sinned not. I took away his son—his only son—and in this he sinned not. I then took from his bleeding heart, a tender wife, lately entwined about it—and in this he sinned not. The first messenger of heavy tidings was scarce arrived, when a second followed; and ere he had delivered his more awful message, behold! a third trod upon his heels—and in all this he sinned not." May you thus have a testimony that you please God; and it shall turn to your honour before assembled worlds!

If you have been a means of helping your friend to conquer the difficulties of life and death, she is now blessing the day she became yours. And I hope you were—and that she, and her new-born son are now two shining forms before the throne, rejoicing in the preference of the Lamb. May you follow them to your Father's country! May you weather out every storm, which shall rise against you on the ocean of time—and when the voyage of life is over, they shall meet and hail you on the celestial strand, and bid you ten thousand welcomes to their blessed abode—and it may be, when the all-bountiful Redeemer, and all-righteous Judge, shall assign you your reward, that they will be officious in the garments of light; and in adorning your head with an immortal wreath; and in putting the emblems of victory, and a golden harp into your hands.—O that I was master of the language of immortality! O that I could speak like the disembodied! how loudly would I call on you! how powerfully would I persuade you, to glow to burn! with ardent desire; with holy affection; with flaming zeal—for that better world! for that better company! for that better enjoyment!

Imagine, for a few moments, that your late companion is permitted to do this, and that you hear her addressing you in the following manner.

"O thou blessed among mortals! who wast, for a few short-lived moments, my dearest friend on earth—thou findest by sad, but I by joyful experience, that the sweetest earthly enjoyment is soon over. Thou seest as through a glass darkly, but I with the full blaze of eternal day, that all on earth, which mortals call good and great, is only emptiness, vanity, and disappointment. We, the inhabitants of unclouded day, look down from our exalted summits, and behold your world and all its glory, only as a speck of darkness, encompassed by an infinite ocean of light.—We see how closely eternity besets you on every side; while you, like millions of intelligent atoms, crowd each other within your little sphere; thousands of which are daily hovering on the verge, while other thousands are passing over!—We likewise see, with eyes of pity, how eagerly you toil amidst darkness, snares, and death, and all for the trifles of a moment, while eternity, greedy eternity, not satisfied with the slaughter of six thousand years, still waits, with its wide extended jaws, to swallow up all succeeding generations!—O! how does all heaven pity your folly, in slighting the awful concerns of eternity; and in dissipating the infinite Source of all blessedness; only for the bubbles and shadows of a disordered world.

"But, with ineffable pleasure, we behold the happy few, who have declared eternal war with the prince of darkness; who despite the empty enjoyments of a vain world; who rise superior to their own degeneracy, and seek their all in God.—Such are esteemed by you, O ye blind mortals! as the fifth and off-scouring of your world; but

we, through all our different orders, esteem them as some of the brightest ornaments of ours. You long to drive them from earth; but we, to receive them into heaven. And when He who bought them with his blood, shall sign their happy dismissal; a detachment of celestial messengers, a convoy of flaming guards, shall safely guide them through death, and swiftly conduct them home. Then, then shall the living doors spontaneously fly open to admit them—and all the tapers, and eyes, and hearts of heaven, shall bid them a thousand welcomes—while the mighty concave, made vocal by the universal acclamations, reverberates the sound. Till then, their lot is to labour and suffer: to obey God, to resist the devil, to renounce the world, to crucify themselves. O! with what soft regard, tender pity, and deep compassion, do we behold their toil, their difficulties, their enemies, their dangers! yes, how do we almost tremble, to see their everlasting fate so often weighed in a doubtful balance! But all the mighty powers of heaven rejoice, and through all their countless myriads, bow in grateful homage, to that exalted Name which preponderates the scale.

"But, O thou! the late partner of my weal and woe, whose friendship followed me through life, through death, and still follows me beyond the grave: what floods! what oceans of immortal pleasure! fill! overflow! and deluge my disembodied capacity, on that account! O how I exult and triumph, on seeing thy face toward Zion! With what inconceivable ecstasy do I behold thee labouring up to the skies, and beckoning to thy fellows, to follow after! Joy—ecstasy—transport—glory—increases;—and wider! and still wider expands my happy spirit, on every prospect of thy arrival to this happy world! It exalts my most exalted joys;—it brightens my highest praise, to think that my dearest earthly friend shall soon shine brighter than ten thousand suns; and that ere long we shall sit down together, at Emmanuel's feet, to recount the dangers we have escaped on earth, and to repeat the story of redeeming Love.

"Till then, go on in the name of thy great Master. Let nothing on earth obstruct thy passage, or retard thy motion, toward a blissful immortality. Let thine eye be ever fixed on that sacred ray which proceeds from the throne of God, and which is great mercy, glimmers through the skies. Let it direct thy steps through all the darkness and dangers of time, and point out thy way to this world of glorious light; and when thou arrivest, whole floods of endless day shall be poured on thy astonished sight. Let thy ears be always open to the sacred calls of thy divine Master, and let them continually attend to the humble complaints of his afflicted servants; and in a short time, thine enraptured soul shall be filled with the sounds of these mighty, these thundering halloojahs, which burst for ever around the tremendous throne. Let thy tongue, now feeble and faltering, and which shall soon be silent in the grave, publish abroad through all the earth, the Love which astonishes all heaven. Publish, O publish! its exalted height; its profound depth; its immeasurable length and breadth!—Toll the rebellious sons of earth, of immensity contracted to a span!—Toll them of luxury crushed beneath the load!—Toll them of immortality dying in their stead!—Employ in this service, thy best strains, and thy loudest accents; and, in a short time, thou shalt have a tongue of celestial fire, and a voice which shall reach the most exalted of all our radiant orbs.—Let thy whole soul; thy whole strength; thy whole time; be employed for Him who lived! who bled! who died for thee! O! be active as fire; be humble as the dust; be furious as death; be solemn as the grave! Let thy faith be like Abraham's; thy weakness like Moses's; thy patience like Job's; thy prayer like Elijah's; thy repentance like David's; thy zeal like St. Paul's; thy love like St. John's; thy praise like a Seraph's;—and thy joy shall soon be mine!—And O, what rising joy!—what swelling pleasure!—what streaming, shining, flaming glory fills this place!—How mighty! how huge is the reward of heaven!—All is infinite!—All is eternal!—and all is mine!—Adieu.

And now as she returns, imagine you hear the lessening sounds, "Hallelujah—Hallelujah—Hallelujah."

Thus she, being dead, yet speaketh. May the important admonition have its due effect on your mind! May the sound of it enter your very soul, and follow you wherever you go; so shall your abundant loss become your more abundant gain!

The advantages intended you, by this visitation, are, first, To convince you, most deeply, of the mutability of all earthly comforts. Through the medium of this dispensation, you see more clearly how fluctuating these things are, and how little they are to be depended on. You see that riches, honours, friends, health and life, may be at our command in this hour; and in the next, make themselves wings and fly away. With what clearness do you now behold that "all flesh is grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass!" With what advantage do you now read that "the fashion of this world passeth away." passeth away, even while we are beholding it; and that with such speed, that ere we have a full view, it is out of our sight. Happy are they who have a divine confidence that an unchangeable God is their father, and who have a "lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away! May that confidence and hope increase in you daily, and be preserved steadfast unto the end!

A second advantage intended, is, That you may sit more loose to the world and its enjoyments. Wretched as these enjoyments are, there is something in them so peculiarly ensnaring, that it is almost impossible to possess them and not be des-

troyed; and it is much to be feared, that thousands, who have overcome every other difficulty, will after all, be dashed in pieces on this rock. But this is not for want of caution: the sacred admonitions are ever sounding in our ears; "Be not conformed to this world. Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; Love not the world, nor the things of the world; Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Now if after all these fatherly instructions, and kind commands, we still incline to wander, God will hedge up our way with briers; if we break through these, he will in mercy, conceal some thorn under our favourite flower, or mix our sweet delight with gall. If this proves ineffectual, and the little impermanencies of earth still cleave to us, even like the flesh to the bone; in this case, God is obliged to put us to more pain, and (in order to prevent our eternal ruin) to save us by such means as are like bearing the flesh from the bone. O what a privilege is this! to have God striving, by every means, to save us from this present evil world. And this privilege is yours at present. Your most gracious Father is now telling you, that you must be all his own; that he will have all your heart; that you shall be fully blessed.—And rather than the world of sin, or Satan should destroy, or hurt, or even touch you to your disadvantage, that he will interpose with all his wisdom, and power, and mercy, and truth; and that nothing, but the most wilful obstinacy, shall be able to harm you. O what rich mercy and astonishing goodness is this! and how unutterably great is your privilege! May it teach you to praise and adore its divine Author, with the most pure and warm affection! May it teach you to watch with the strictest jealousy over your heart, and to keep at the utmost distance from the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life! And may it teach you to look on yourself only as a poor pilgrim, who is travelling through a vale of tears, in search of a better country; only as a stranger and sojourner on earth; who is urging his way to eternal life, through the valley of the shadow of death!

A third advantage intended, is, To quicken you in your way; to cause you to mend your pace and double your diligence. We all have constant need of this. Our work is so important; and our strength so little; and our time so short, that we ought to be broad awake, and all alive and on full stretch continually. But this is not pleasing to flesh and blood; not agreeable to our wretched, slothful hearts: these love to be at rest and to be quiet and ever incline us to fall asleep. To prevent this, we have need of all the grace of God, and of the assistance of all his dispensations.—Affliction (your present dispensation) is of singular use in this case; because, thereby, the soul is purged of that grossness which occasions its dulness and stupidity. Hence we often find, that persons in affliction are zealous and active, who, at other times, are cold and negligent. With what fervency do they then call upon God! With what steadiness watch over their own hearts! With what impartiality examine themselves! With what indignation war against sin! With what holy resolution devote themselves to God! And with what deep humility, seriousness and circumspection walk before him!

How often have you desired God to help you, thus to double your diligence? How often have you begged, with strong crying and tears, that he would do it by any means, so it might be done effectually? And behold! he is now answering your prayer; he is now granting the request of your lips and the desire of your heart. May the means by which his infinite and adorable wisdom is promoting this desirable end, promote it more abundantly day by day! May you continually increase in zeal for the glory of God, and in pity for a dying world! May you see, in the clearest light, what numberless scenes of misery! what universal ruin and desolation; cover the whole earth! And may you see how the common enemy lieth in wait for unwary souls: how he first lays snares and baits for them; then entrap them; then blinds them; then drags them in his cursed chain to eternal death; and then triumphs over his prey, and insults the throne of God! May holy indignation against this enemy of God, this devourer of human kind, set you all on fire! And may the deepest compassion, and the most generous concern for your fellow sufferers, soften, and melt, and enlarge your soul! And may this cause you to found the name of Jesus, and publish his great Salvation, with all your might. O may you fly with the sacred Tidings, to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south! And may you esteem it your highest honour, and make it your chief concern, to be instrumental in plucking dying souls out of the jaws of destruction; to be instrumental in "turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by Faith which is in Jesus.

That you may thus act your part on earth; and quit the stage of life with honour; and rejoice in the tremendous day of accounts; and be for ever with them whom your soul loveth; is the sincere and fervent prayer of your sympathizing Friend and Brother.

BRIEF NEWSPAPER RECORDS.
Some readers of a daily newspaper often turn first to the list of marriages and deaths. These are placed together, as if to remind us that if there is a time to rejoice, there is a time to weep, and that these times may often be found in close connection. The announcement of a marriage implies a season of joyousness and the assembling of glad hearts, offering their congratulations, and in silent upon enjoyment. It is a brief record, but

full of impressiveness. Before the curtain are happy faces, loud hearts, and gay visions; behind it, and in the vista of coming years, are stern realities, and sad and sober reflections. Life has its seasons of happiness, which are usually brief, and if as its entrance it is a vale clothed with verdure and scented with the fragrance of flowers, it soon reveals its true character as a vale of tears.

There are not only hymenial notices, but obituary records, to attract our daily attention; the one denoting seasons of gladness, the other seasons of sorrow. In scanning the latter we have often imagined that we were behind the curtain, and privy to the scenes enacted, which have furnished the data for the brief record. All that meets the eye is that such a one has died, with date and age appended. If the persons whose destinies have thus been unalterably fixed are unknown to us, the record is no sooner read than forgotten. But each event of the kind has its memories, and, alas, they are saddened ones! There are households shrouded in mourning, there are family circles invaded, there are hearts overpowered with sorrow. The loving wife is an inanimate corpse; the husband, in the prime of his days, ceases any longer to take a concern in his family; the child, the pride of its parents, has bid adieu to all earthly scenes. These things may be inferred from the brief notice that death has taken another victim. There are scenes still more thrilling connected with the records which we so carelessly read. They are associated with the departed. We may imagine what they are from what we have seen. Often are they terrible, sometimes they are cheering. Let us exemplify them: "Died, J. T.—aged forty-five years." This meets the eye which cursorily runs over the announcement. Pause a moment. There are circumstances connected with the event which do not appear. J. T.—was a merchant in prosperous business, who was intent on acquiring fortune. He was cautious, prudent, and successful. Although his accumulations were considerable, he had not yet reached that high mark at which he aimed, and on the attainment of which he had promised himself repose and enjoyment. With this world alone he was conversant—he thought but little of the next. With firm health, he scarcely imagined that there might be but a step between him and death. In the midst of his business he is struck with alarming disease. His return to his house is full of anxiety. Physicians promptly repair to his relief. Their disturbed looks alarm him. He finds himself on the verge of a dark and gloomy eternity. Terror seizes his soul. His grasp of this world is relaxing, and he has no Saviour to lean on. In the few hours which remain to him of life, a concentrated terror takes possession of him which no language can express. Friends surround him, who, ignorant as himself of the way of life, think only of mitigating his bodily pains. There he lies struggling and gasping for breath, the sweats of death rolling from his forehead, and his heart pierced with an incurable grief. Dark and gloomy is that chamber, for a soul is passing hence without God or hope. In a moment the body is still; but where, O where is the soul? It has realized the full weight of that folly which could so love the world as to forget God and eternity.

Here is another example: "Died, T.—R.—aged twenty-five." A young man just entering upon life as it were, and yet cut down in his immaturity. Such the comment we would be likely to make. What his secret history? He was a disobedient son from his early youth, and, being without proper discipline, he grew up without principle. Only twenty-five years of age, and yet there was not a vice with which he was not familiar, and which he had not indulged with reckless boldness. He was a polluted profligate, and, coming out of one of his midnight revels, with his brain diseased and maddened, he died a raving maniac, and went to his place. The scene was frightful, and such as the observer never would again wish to witness.

A third record refers to the death of a gay and beautiful girl, aged seventeen years: the admired of all; the belle of the ball-room, and utterly thoughtless of every thing but present amusement and enjoyment. Sickness invades that fair form. Her friends, anxious for her recovery, cheer her with flattering hopes. The word death is not permitted to be named in her presence, and yet that death is steady to his purpose, and is making his gradual advances. The truth, at length, flashes upon her with all its undescribed horror—she must die—no power on earth can save her. Unhappy girl! she has never been religiously instructed, and now in her extremity she knows not where to flee. "Where am I going? Why did you not tell me sooner that I was to die?" are among her last agonized words.

To relieve these sombre shades of the picture, we advert to one other record. It is as brief as the preceding, and as silent about all the attendants of death. "Died, W. L., aged forty." And who was he? He was distinguished for neither learning or wealth. He was comparatively unknown. Known to God, however, he was. For years he had been an humble and conscientious Christian. Daily he conversed with God and his own soul, and his chief aim was to do God's will and to prepare for his presence. When the summons came, it found him ready. He suffered greatly in his last sickness, and neither day or night brought relief to his distressed and wearied body. He was calm and submissive; his faith failed not. He had a bright prospect before him, and he could enjoy it. His Saviour was at his side to cheer and support him; all clouds were dissipated; his chamber was the very gate of

heaven; and serenely and joyfully he encountered the anstering stroke which transferred him from the cares and sorrows of time to the joys and glories of eternity.

Such scenes as we have portrayed are of daily occurrence in our large cities. Few comparatively witness them—the multitude only notice that each day brings before the public a brief and meagre obituary list.

MY MOTHER'S BIBLE.

About sixteen months ago, a young man called at my study and introduced himself as a stranger. He brought no letters; nor did he bring me any tidings from my friends. He told me he was an adventurer for gold; and before leaving me asked that information and advice, so usually sought and so freely given. But to obtain this was not the object of his call. I had observed, on his entering the room, something under his arm carefully wrapped around with a handkerchief. From its size, I judged it to be one of those bundles of tracts and religious books put into the hands of adventurers, by benevolent individuals and Societies at home, for distribution at the mines, but which so many miners had found it convenient to leave behind the counter of some pious merchant, or in the corner of some clergyman's study. But I was mistaken. The young man said: "I have come to ask a favour—I have something here more precious than gold, which I wish you to keep in safety till my return." Unwinding the handkerchief from it, he said, at the same time handing me a large and well-worn book: "It is my mother's Bible. She gave it to me, on her dying bed, and I would not part with it for all the gold in the mountains. I have another one which I take with me, but this last gift of my mother, I wish to leave with you, lest it should be injured, or lost in my wandering through the mines." I took it, gave it a place on my table, and as you may well suppose, sat down to cultivate an acquaintance so auspiciously begun. But our interview was short. I am sorry to add that it was our last. He took his passage that very day for the enchanted river, but to my knowledge he has not returned. Perhaps he has died, and gone to his mother. Perhaps, but I think it not—gold has corrupted his heart, and he cares not for his mother's Bible. Perhaps, which I hope—he yet reads daily the little Bible he took with him, and yet thinks of, and cherishes as sacredly as at first, his mother's last gift to her son.

I need not dwell on an incident so rare and delightful. It exhibits feelings too admirable for praise. It appeals to the sensibilities of too many of our readers to be forgotten.

"After he had left I opened the volume he had deposited in my care. It is a Boston edition, published by Langdon Coffin, in 1834, embellished with a vignette of Christ washing the disciples' feet. Some of your New England readers may recognize it as the venerable book, around which they gathered for family worship. But it is not to introduce you to its title-page that I prolong this article. I wish to read you a few 'lines' from the 'Family Record.' They are from the pen of a well-known poet, and are here subscribed and dedicated by a dying mother to her son. Many of your readers may have read them, years ago, but they will be glad again to peruse them on the shores of the Pacific. Perhaps even more of beauty and truth will attach to them, from the circumstances in which they are once more presented to the public:—

"Remember, love, who gave thee this,
When other days shall come,
When the whys and the wherefores,
Sleeps in her narrow home.
Remember! 'twas a mother gave
The gift to one she died to save."

"A mother sought a pledge of love,
The holiest, for her son,
And from the gifts of God above,
She chose—a golden one—
She chose for her beloved boy,
The source of light, and life, and joy!"

"And bade him keep the gift—that when
The parting hour should come,
They might have hope, and meet again
In an eternal home.
She said his faith in that should be,
Sweet incense to her memory."

"And should the scolder, in his pride,
Laugh his fond faith to scorn,
And bid him cast the pledge aside,
That he from youth had borne;
She bade him pause, and ask his breast,
If he, or she, had loved him best!"

"A mother's blessing on her son,
Goes with this holy thing;
The love that would retain the one,
Must to the other cling.
Remember! 'tis an idle toy—
Thy mother's gift! Remember, boy!"

"I shall have accomplished the object of this communication, if after reading it, he who loves and reads his Bible daily, shall love and read it more; and he, whose Bible—perhaps the parting gift of a mother or a sister—lies neglected in his trunk, or forgotten on his shelf, shall wipe the dust from its cover, and in remembrance of the weeping giver, shed a tear over its unheeded pages.

"Yours, in behalf of many readers,
"San Francisco, July 18, 1850."

DECISION AND TRUTH.—Whatever you think proper to grant a child, let it be granted at the first word, without entreaty or prayer, and above all without making conditions. Grant with pleasure, refuse with reluctance, but let your refusal be irrevocable; let no importunity shake your resolution; let the particle "No," when once pronounced, be a wall of brass, which a child, after he has tried his strength against it half-a-dozen times, shall never more endeavour to shake.