

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER,

And Bible Society, Missionary, and Sabbath School Advocate.

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

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Religious.

SECRET PRAYER.

Our Saviour, in language the most emphatic, has enjoined upon us this duty: "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." How distinct is this command. And yet it is to be feared that, by many professed Christians, it is more neglected than almost any other.

1. Let us contemplate its IMPORTANCE. When mid-night spreads its gloom over Judah, why was our Saviour found a lonely wanderer in its most unfrequented wilds? Luke tells us it was his custom to retire to those solitudes for private devotion. We have many instances given in which he prayed with his disciples: but every day he left the crowds with which he was surrounded, and went alone to hold communion with God. Christian, it is not important that a duty should be fulfilled which is enjoined by the Saviour's lips, and enforced by the Saviour's example. And remember, that this is secret prayer; the prayer of retirement; the communion of the soul with God, when that soul is withdrawn as far as possible from every external influence.

The example of pious men in all ages of the world shows the importance of secret prayer. Witness Daniel, three times a day retiring to his chamber for prayer. Read the biography of any eminent Christian, and you will find that it is in secret prayer that his strength has been obtained. O, there is a host of worthies who rise at once in attestation of its infinite importance. And another host may be seen of languid, spiritless, desponding professors, whose lives are passing unprofitably and wretchedly away because they do not strengthen their faith and animate their zeal by the devotions of the closet. Here lies the cause of so many doubts and fears of the Christian; of that paralysis of Christian feeling which makes so many professors an incumbrance and a burden to the church.

There are peculiar sins to be confessed, which it is not proper to confess in public or in social prayer. This Christian needs to go to God in all the confidence of a private interview, and there to unfold the inmost secrets of his heart. He has peculiar temptations from which he needs to be guarded; peculiar trials, under which he needs support; and he must in private go to God, that he may seek relief for these private wants.

Secret prayer affords the most direct intercourse the soul can have with God. In the hour of retirement and solitude the soul is most perfectly cut off from all external influences. It can then be more easily ushered into the immediate presence of its Maker. These are the occasions in which the soul breaks from the trammels of earth, and soars, as it were, on angels' opinions, to the bosom of its God. And it is from such visits as these, that the soul returns to earth refreshed with draughts from the fountain of life, warmed by the joys it has felt, and showing to the world around, by the glow of its feelings, that it has, like Moses, seen God in the mount.

2. The MANNER in which this duty should be performed. When our Saviour says, "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father," he does most undeniably mean that we should seek actual retirement; that we should go to some place alone, where we may pray to our Father in secret. It does not do to say that we can pray anywhere; that we can, in the bustle of business, withdraw our minds and have sufficient communion with God. The Saviour's command is positive, that we must seek retirement, and there in secret make known our requests to God. Surely, if Christ found it necessary to withdraw from the crowd, and even from every friend, that his devotions might not be disturbed by passing scenes, it is the most egregious folly for the frail disciple of Jesus to pretend that secrecy and retirement are not essential in his own acts of devotion. Yes, follower of Jesus, you must actually go to the place of retirement. It may be to the chamber; it may be to the grove; but it must be to some place where, alone and uninterrupted, you may commence with God.

There should be stated times for secret prayer. The habit should be formed of going at particular hours of the day in the presence of God. Unless the Christian has resolution to form a plan, and to abide by that plan, he cannot make advances in the Christian life; he cannot enjoy religion. If you say, "I will daily enjoy the privilege of secret prayer," and yet do not set apart some particular portion of the day, which you will appropriate to this duty, you will find that your resolutions are made but to be broken. The evening twilight appears to have been the favorite hour with our Saviour for this purpose. Daniel selected the morning, the noon, and the evening, as his seasons of private devotion.

The very design of secret prayer is to enable the Christian to approach God with the least possible restraint. We should at such times, with great particularity, acknowledge sin. Has any temptation excited irritated feeling? In your closet confess that individual sin to God. Have you neglected duty? In penitential prayer allude to the time and to the circumstances, that your heart may not be sheltered by the vagueness of mere general confession. In your closet review your actions, and speak to your Maker distinctly what you mean, when you confess you are a sinner. In the solitude and the silence of the soul's retirement with God we may become acquainted with ourselves. This is the way to make confession of sin which is acceptable to God.

We should also, in secret prayer, pray for par-

ticular blessings. You are a parent. Your son is at a distant school, surrounded by new and trying temptations. In retirement plead for him by name. State distinctly the temptations to which he is exposed. Thus may you pray with a degree of fervor and distinctness which would be impossible and even improper in the more public circles of social prayer. In the prayer taught by our Saviour to his disciples, the petitions are general: "Thy kingdom come," "give us day by day our daily bread," "forgive us our debts," "lead us not into temptation." But when he retired to the garden, in solitude, his prayer was, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Here he unveiled all his secret sorrows to a Father's view. Imitate your Saviour, and daily in secret prayer remember your friends, calling them by name. Remember your own particular temptations, and your own particular sins, and thus will your Father, who heareth in secret, himself reward you openly.

3. Consider the ADVANTAGES of secret prayer. There is no exercise of the Christian which has so powerful an influence in promoting spirituality of mind. Secret communion with God seems to introduce us into his immediate presence. If we go to the closet with the distinct confession of sin, and asking particular blessings, we can hardly fail of receiving an influence into our own hearts which will be abiding. There never can have been a case of one who perseveringly frequented his closet, and there found rest to his soul, who was not a spiritual man and a growing Christian. And the Christian who does not pray in secret must be a languid and a heartless disciple.

There is no persevering from sin so potent as this. An hour of temptation may overcome the Christian. He may be left to the commission of sins, the thought of which now makes him shudder. Temptations may be thrown in your way, and you have no safety—you have no protection but in prayer. He who comes from the audience chamber of God, from intimate communion with his Master, has faith so bright and strong that temptation will in vain assail him. Standing in the very verge of heaven, breathing the very atmosphere of that pure world, he will be enabled to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." The path to the commission of sin lies invariably through the neglect of secret prayer.

There is no exercise which can so purify and tranquilize the mind. It is this which gives that "closer walk with God," which insures "a calm and heavenly frame." This is the mount on which the Christian may stand above earth's vapors and smile at earth's storms. When Jesus went to the garden, as the hour of death approached, he was in an agony. But he came from the retirement of that garden calm and composed. Thus, Christian, may you obtain a composure of mind, and a calm, steady enjoyment, with no opposition or trials can ruffle. Any how happy is the heart, thus fixed on God—thus steadfast in a joyful serenity which nothing can disturb. Neglecting this duty, how full does the heart become of worldly cares. How often depressed with anxiety. How will trifling obstacles disturb and irritate. The remedy for all this is secret prayer. Then if the spirit alike independent of great calamities and of petty vexations.—American Tract.

DR. LEGGE'S VIEWS OF THE CHINESE REBELLION.

Hong-Kong, 21st July, 1854.

Two points seem to be established—first, that the religion of the insurgents is running into a wild and blasphemous fanaticism;—and, second, that they have assumed an attitude of determined hostility to all foreigners. Several new publications have been brought from Nanking by the most recent visitors, which contrast with those obtained by the Hercules in April last year, as darkness does with light. Not only does the Eastern King personate the Holy Ghost, but I understand the Western King personates our Saviour, and the general contents of the books are, it is said, exceedingly mean and disgusting. You will remember that from the first, I professed my disbelief in the revelations to which the leader, Hung-Sau-Huen laid claim, and my horror of his asserting a peculiar brotherhood with our Lord. Dr. Campbell seemed to think, from what he said in the Banner, that the revelations might be real—that in theory at least they were admissible. But "the Bible, and nothing but the Bible," is the only true Protestant principle. Objective truths from any other source, propounded as Divine revelations, are to be traced to madness, delusion, imposture, disease, or the Devil. We now see to what ungodliness they have grown in that vast assembly of men at Nanking. But now, while such blasphemous errors are published, the Bible—the Word of God—without note or comment, continues to be issued. This is strange. Plainly, it seems to me, there are two parties in the camp, not openly opposing each other, but pursuing different and conflicting courses. Perhaps Hung-Sau-Huen, a dreamer, but sincere, the originating spirit of the movement, but since a recluse, is still there, a puppet in the hands of his selfish and ambitious chiefs, but permitted so far to have his own way—publishing the Scriptures, while they are engrossing the management of affairs, and send out their own proclamations, and are intending by-and-by to cast him altogether aside. However this may be, the development of error has thrown the display of truth which attracted us at first, and filled us with hope, into the shade. And as the truth perishes from the minds of the insurgents, so will their power pass away. The iron rod with which they seemed able to break in pieces all opposing force, will change into a reed

of straw. With the Eastern King for the Holy Ghost, and the Western for our Saviour, those thousands can hardly be expected long to cohere. Simple patriotism might suffice to overthrow the feeble Tartar rule; but high patriotic principles will hardly be found to co-exist with degrading fanaticism.

The hostility manifested by the chiefs to all foreigners is very much to be deplored. They have a Divine commission, they say, first to destroy the Tartars, and then all other peoples, who will not submit to their leader, as the God-appointed Lord of all the world. I could make allowances for distrust and dislike of foreign powers. These are all in alliance with the Tartar Government. They must also be identified in their minds with the opium traffic, the introduction of that "flowing poison," which has wrought and continues to work so much evil to China. The general welcome given to the visitors in the Hercules, as brethren, seemed to indicate the subservience of Chinese prejudice and hostility to foreigners; but I could bear being disappointed in that hope. Those other considerations might have come in to check the outflowing of the feelings promoted by their new principles; but they are vain-glory and fanaticism, which seem to influence their conduct. To themselves the declaration of universal enmity can only be disastrous.

I confess to be much distressed by the things on which I have thus dwelt. I seemed to hear the voice of a watchman crying concerning China, "The morning cometh, though still it is night;" and now the voice is hushed, and darkness seems to have repelled the threatened disturbance of its reign. Yet great changes are evidently impending over the nation. The feebleness, falsehood, and general unworthiness of the present Government is every day being more fully demonstrated. For the last three weeks the inhabitants of Canton have been full of agitation and alarm, expecting the city to be attacked by a combination of Traid Society men. Some seven or eight thousand of these do hold Fort Shan, a town of at least half-million inhabitants, by the river about twenty-miles distant, and the Mandarins are not able to dislodge them. The people in the villages about cover like birds in their coverts, and dare not stir out into the fields or roads. Rebels and soldiers are equally dreaded by them. Scores of heads in Canton almost every day, many of them suspicion of being rebels. False reports are issued from the Government offices of success gained by the troops. Men's hearts are failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are feared upon the earth. The empire will become more and more disorganized, and the misery endured by hundreds of millions will be indescribable.

Never did China make such a demand on the compassion, and prayers, and efforts of the Christian Church. From God her help must come,—from God, through the channel of His church. Prayer is now pre-eminently the duty of every Missionary, and of all the friends of Missions. And shall not the Church be found proving its faith, by sending many of its best and ablest men to raise up in these distracted provinces the standard of the Gospel? The real spiritual life of the Church is now being tested by China. A million copies of the New Testament—that is a splendid gift. But a mere many who will give their money to China, and few or none who will give their sons?—few or none who will give themselves? God will work in the administration of His providence, so that order shall yet shine upon China, after the day of its calamity and confusion has passed away; and I feel assured He will work for it also in the administration of His church, so that ere long its many millions shall be called the people of the Lord.

P. S. On the 3rd of August, Dr. Legge thus writes:—

"The state of this poor country becomes more and more distracted and miserable. Many families have come here (to Hong-Kong) from Canton; and one advantage flows to them from their taking refuge here, they have an opportunity of hearing the Gospel. The Sabbath before last, I had a large company of ladies and their attendants present at my Bible class for women and girls. They behaved with much decorum and attention. Their leader, an elderly lady, was very intelligent, and could read well. She declared that the doctrine was good. Poor things! their feet were deplorably small, and some of them had carried home on the backs of their attendants, women of course."

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

There is no place like a death-bed to answer the great question—"What is your life?" Then, if not before, will the folly or wisdom of life's doings be manifest. To have then a good hope through grace will be above all price, unpeakably blessed! But to "die and give no sign"—to face death without a Saviour—to pass away to the world of spirits under a cloud of mid-light gloom, must be dreadful indeed. To escape such an hour, and all of evil that lies beyond, is surely worth a long life of prayer and obedience.

"Man lives to die, as flowers bloom to fade:
Expanded bloom is but incipient decay;
The rose that with the morning zephyr played
At eve lies scattered on the ground beneath;
And flowers at eve that formed a living wreath,
When morning beamed bright, all drooping lie,
Cast on the ground to waste their fragrant breath,
Or tell their story to the passer by.
That they, one highly prized, are cast aside to die.
We know that we must die. Oh then how strange
That he, whose life is but a passing day,
Should live regardless of his last great change!
All earthly brightness soon must fade away:
All earthly things are hastening to decay:
And man, possessed of an immortal soul,
Lives to exalt his perishing mortal clay.
Nor listens to the never ceasing toll
Of hours he may regret while endless ages roll."

Communications.

EDUCATION.

LETTERS ON THE COMMON SCHOOLS OF N. BRUNSWICK. No. 2.

My preceding remarks upon the important subject of EDUCATION were mainly predicated upon the general features of the present existing, lamentably deficient Educational Establishments of this province, and the prevalence of so many "solemn mockeries" in the shape of schools which are hourly contravening the noblest aim of the Minister and Educationalist. For my own part, while I am compelled to confess the utter inefficiency of the System, I am at loss to perceive an equitable reason why, in this era of moral development in the noble science of Learning, New Brunswick should lag so far in the rear of American and Continental cities and provinces generally.

Are the sons of New Brunswick naturally deficient in instinctive acumen and understanding? are they very paucers inasmuch as the wealth of natural liberal intelligence is concerned?—have they no inbred love of progressive intellectuality?—are their innate hopes and aspirations less noble, less exalted, less holy than the Sons and Sires of older lands?—is the Country so deficient in natural riches and resources that it is merely fit to become the barren patrimony of one ignorant generation to successive ones?—is it always to be contented as an obscure colonial "niche" amid the innumerable dependencies of our Mother Country?—have we no germ self-existent here, no guarantee for future progress?—is there for New Brunswick and for New Brunswickers no onward and upward march, no continuous development of rational and religious sentiment?—no room, no care for marked improvement in the mental and material capabilities of our Colony?—is there no glimmering hope for the moral, social, political, and religious salvation of country from its present comparative nothingness? Let the mind, energy, sons and resources of our province and people answer!—the former pregnant with untold and unexplored wealth, the latter big with the ever-onward spirit of Anglo-American determination. But when they do answer let not a well meant enthusiasm dethrone the sober judgment, not a wild and visionary spirit usurp the seat of a calmer and cooler reason; and let it be never forgotten that there CAN BE NO substantial, real, permanent progress unless CHRISTIAN EDUCATION becomes, at the same time, both a grand incentive and a chief corner stone.—Your province Parliaments may enact laws and your colonial Senators talk grave wisdom, but all change for the better will be as transient as twilight, and as fleeting as the morning dew unless the mass of the people are redeemed and ransomed from the ignominious servitude of mental ignorance—that queen of superstition and mother of Sin and Infidelity. As well go plant an already withering rose bush, beneath the verdant heat, upon a barren rock, and expect it to blossom and blow, as expect permanent prosperity without progressive Education: you will only sow in the storm and gather in the tempest—for as the night succeeds the light of day, so will the perennial darkness of a night of gloom, and ignorance succeed any such an imperfect attempt to advance New Brunswick: you merely build a superstructure of shadows upon a substratum of shades!

Much, therefore, is to be accomplished; and to secure its full accomplishment, we must begin calmly, prayerfully, and ab initio.

I find that the Legislative Statute under which our people are supposed to be educated is a long, cumbersome Act passed in 1852, by which the antecedent Acts of 10 and 12 Victoria are repealed. As the Act in force contains some thirty sections, well interpolated with the "glossolalia" and other technical jargon of legislative enactments, we might be led to conclude that it was more than a dumb show "sound and fury," and signified at best, a little more than "nothing." It does not! I might introduce section succeeding section, and by a dry process of theoretical argument show wherein that very Act, with all its profusion of the jargon of jurisprudence, most ingeniously defeats its own object! At best, however, this would merely be a fine spun tissue of theory—certain deductions logically derived from given premises. The shortest and most practical method of testing the question is as follows:—The grand cause of the Educational advancement of New Brunswick would justly be said to be the laws by which that advancement was ensured, and all rational progress would be attributable to them: provided, *defacto*, we were advancing or had advanced. So, *converso*, New Brunswick having really retrograded the logical deduction (supported at the same time by the strongly corroborative testimony of the *wording* of the Act) is, that something is inadequate—non-productive—non-beneficial—rotten, in the system—and in the Laws upon which that System is based. In brief, I contend, that the standing, impartial and uncontrollable proofs of the deficiency—not to say, mimicry and utter uselessness of 15 Vict. cap. XL., are the paucity, and disheartening fruits by it yielded.

Before I leave this Act, permit me to call attention particularly to Sect. 13, after which I will conclude for the present with a few general reflections accruing therefrom. Having, in another section, provided for the appointment of Inspectors, the section before me defines an Inspector's duty with this language:

"Each Inspector shall visit and examine the Schools respectively within his district four times in every year * * * and shall at each visit examine as to the progress of the pupils, the discipline, system of instruction, mode

of keeping the Registers, the average attendance of pupils and the character and condition of the buildings and expense; * * * present improper and recommend authorized books (if any) [if they are authorized should they not be adopted *perforce*?] to be used in such Schools * * * and exercise his influence to induce Parents, Guardians, Trustees and Teachers to improve and make such Schools efficient." (What a confession; it yet requires the "exercise of the influence" of the Inspector to make the Schools efficient?—argue if the Inspector fails to "exercise his influence," or has no influence to exercise, the School must remain inefficient! He shall by the first day of November, in each year, prepare and transmit to the Superintendent, a Report of the Schools in his district, in the form prescribed, &c., &c.—[*vide Revised Statutes of New Brunswick*, vol. page 118.]

Now no reflective reader can even cursorily scan this section without arriving at the conclusion that one of these three propositions is inevitably correct:

The Inspectors have not attended to their duty; or, (if they have,) they have made improper Returns; or, (if they have not,) the LEGISLATURE has wilfully been derelict in its duty, and has a grave charge to answer at the bar of that people whose ignorance they have, to a great extent, perpetuated.

Whichever conclusion should eventually appear the true one, the great fact cannot be altered that the people have been the innocent sufferers. And why do I argue that one of these propositions is irrefragable?

My answer, brief but comprehensive, is the present miserable appearance of the SCHOOL-HOUSES through this province. One of the particularly specified duties of an Inspector is to examine and report the "character and condition of the buildings and premises." Now, how many School-houses are now in New Brunswick deserving the name. Are they not at least miserable shanties or log huts; cold, desolate, uninviting; enough in "character and condition" to subject a person to periodical attacks of the "fever and ague" as often as the form and appearance of them recur to the mind; not half as comfortable as the neighbouring barns; miserable, make-believe, tottering, tumbling, plebeian apologies for Parish School-houses; enough to make even the brightest scholar hate the name of "School;" low and loathsome, damp and disheartening; floored, as it were with consumption, and painted with the blues! And in such the young mind of New Brunswick is cradled! In these the interests of religion and learning are conserved! And all, (if rumor speaks true,) under the supervision of the Inspectors, and the silent consent of the legislators of the land! Educational establishments! Seminars of learning! Shades of Trinity College, Eton, Harvard, Brown and Yale!! And inasmuch as the Books are concerned, I have seen Bibles and the *Boston Pilot*, the First Book of Lessons and King Crooked's *Chain*, the Ten Commandments and Thomson's Tables, the Shorter Catechism and *Little Boy Blue*! in glorious, inextricable, inscrutable confusion! carpeting the so-called floor!

WHAT? Can these things be? Where were the Inspectors? Have they fully and accurately reported? Has our Legislature quiescently tolerated all this? Which of my three propositions is the true one?

I must not now prolong my commentary; but I cannot conclude without asking THE PEOPLE how long these things are to remain? How long is superlative ignorance to hold her palace beneath the dome of New Brunswick? How long are your sons, to some extent, to remain uneducated outcasts and pilgrims because they have not that EDUCATION which can always ensure them a glad reception into the halls of intellectual grandeur? How long by supineness and indifference in this matter will you continue to close effectually the portals of preferment against the natural fruit of your own loins? Why, do all you can for your children and you can rid them but little; but by your present conduct you are increasing the weight of their burthens by rearing them in ignorance,—if not in utter idiocy. At least how true the sentiment:—

"Oh! who can tell how hard it is to climb,
The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar!
Oh! who can tell how many a soul sublime—
Has felt the influence of malignant stars—
And waged with Fortune an eternal war!"

But how much harder to climb the still steeper ascent to Fame when the road is rendered dull and gloomy, because uncheered by the golden rays of christianizing and tranquilizing EDUCATION! But here, there is neither steep nor struggle to the ignorant; neither ascent, nor ambition to climb it; "Fame's proud temple" will offer no attractive goal to the far discerning eye of that noble ambition originated by educational contact with those master minds which have been crowned with the myrtle garland of the victor within that Temple's precincts; yea more, while this EDUCATION does so much in the temporalities of earth, it erects a firmer barrier also against the swelling tides of skepticism and infidelity which in vain gather their surge and essay to dash their spray against that BIBLE which is the great learned directory of the citizen of earth and the heavenly consolation of the immortal soul when entered and enrolled among the inheritors of heaven. EDUCATE.

OBITUARY NOTICE,

OF MRS. MARY HOBBS, CONSORT OF THE LATE CAPTAIN LEMUEL HOBBS OF ARGYLE, N. S.

How short is the earthly history of a family! A few years, and those now embraced in the family circle, will be scattered. The children, now the objects of tender solicitude, will have grown up, and gone to their respective stations in the world. A few years more, and children and parents will have passed