

The Religious Intelligencer

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER,

FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

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Religious Intelligencer.

A New Year's Sermon.

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than we believed.—ROM. xii. 11."
Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.—EPIES. v. 14.

Yes, it is "high time to awake out of sleep." What has a season like this to do with spiritual slumber? A new year has come: the old year, with all its signal mercies, its solemn providences, its precious opportunities, its dread responsibilities, its holy sabbaths, its indelible records of sin in the book of God's remembrance—is gone for ever; and a new year is begun.

Is this, then, a time for sleep? If "God requireth that which is past," is not this rather a time for deep solemnity of spirit? Some many there are who spend the last moments of the departing year and the first of the new year in devout communion with God. Methinks it is well, thus in the closet alone with God, thus in the great congregation, prostrate in awful silence before the mercy-seat, to keep midnight watch and welcome a new year. But what if many who are Christians, even now when a new year has begun, are asleep? And what if others are buried in the deep slumber of spiritual death, and have never yet woken up?

To each class the new year brings a message:—
I. A solemn yet animating appeal to the slumbering saint. II. An alarm to the sleeping sinner.

1. There is a message of warning to Christians themselves. This is evident from the motive subjoined. It is, then, a mournful fact that even believers may sleep. Yes, Christians are often in a drowsy frame. While the bridegroom tarried, even the wise virgins "slumbered and slept."

2. Such a condition is sadly reproachful, oh child of God, to thee! Saved by grace, plucked as a brand from the burning, bought with such a price, and yet drowsy in the song and service which thy great Deliverer and Redeemer demands. Negligent while others are active; loving to slumber while others who began the Christian race are pressing on to the goal—precious opportunities for receiving good or doing good unimproved. How shouldst thou be filled with shame and confusion of face this day! Art thou a disciple of Jesus? Did he ever speak an idle word? Did he ever lose a useful moment? "I must work," said he, "the work of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh wherein no man can work."

3. Again, how perilous is such a condition. How helplessly exposed to danger is a man asleep. The flames may rage around and may seize on the couch on which he lies, but those flames may but lull him into a more profound repose. The assassin with his dagger may stand over him, and his glaring eye may take measure of the blow, but the victim sleeps on, unconscious of his peril. And so it is, when by Satan's unsuccessful devices, and by spiritual sloth and self-indulgence, the child of God is led on slowly but surely into great sin, as David was: then how profound that guilty sleep in which the soul is wrapped. This sleep deepens and becomes more profound, until, like the drowsy state which forebodes the approach of death to the body, there seems to come over the soul the *coma*, that must speedily end in death eternal.

Let Christians resist the first approaches of spiritual slumber: let them shun all contact with those influences, employments, or companionships, which would chill and freeze the current of spiritual life. The Alpine traveller, toiling up the snow-crowned peak, benumbed with cold, feels a soothing torpor creep over him. He lies down to sleep, to wake no more.

And have we not read of Christian, when climbing the hill Difficulty, falling into fast sleep in a pleasant arbour, and how in his sleep that roll which symbolized the Spirit's witness of a free and full salvation to his soul, "fell out of his hand."

And let us mark also how apostasy begins:—

"Now," said Christian, "let me go hence."
"Nay, stay," said the Interpreter, "till I have showed thee a little more; and after that thou shalt go on thy way."

"So he took him by the hand again, and led him into a very dark room, where sat a man in an iron cage."

"Now the man, to look on, seemed very sad: he sat with his eyes looking down to the ground, his hands folded together, and he sighed as if his heart would break."

"How earnest thou," said Christian, "into this condition?"

"I left off to watch and be sober; I sinned against the light of the word and the goodness of God. I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; I tempted the devil, and he is come to me; I have so hardened my heart, that I cannot repent."

"Christian: For what did you bring yourself into this condition?"

"Man: For the lusts, pleasures, and profits of this world. O, eternity, eternity! how shall I grapple with the misery that I must meet with in eternity?"

The motives urged for wakefulness are two-fold:—

First, the peculiar solemnity of the time.—"And that, knowing the time, it is now high time to awake out of sleep." When the apostle wrote these words, judgments were impending, or had already burst in tempest on the world; and nearer and nearer drew nigh the "great tribulation"—the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of the Jewish church and nation.—

Was this a time for the church of Christ to slumber? That day of doom on Jewish unbelief was also to be the crisis of the church's larger triumphs. Her bitterest foes, who had not only killed the Prince of Life, but persecuted all that called on his name, invoking heathen aid in their cruel assaults, these would soon be swept from her path, and a career of spiritual conquest is before her. Shall she sleep at such an hour as this?

And does not the present year open on a world trembling under the heavings of those mighty earthquakes of the last times, which holy seers and apocalyptic visions have taught us to expect? Politicians are perplexed, and nations tremble: commerce is well nigh paralyzed, and rebellion, coming after war and pestilence and famine, has wasted England's strength, and has given over to the slaughter and to untold atrocities her sons and daughters on the plains of Hindostan. And shall we, who are Christ's—ye, who are taught that he sits on the throne of providence—who believe that while now on his head there are "many crowns," he shall ere long (when judgment) have done its dread work as his avenger and herald) receive yet one crown more, "the crown of all the earth"—shall we, I say, "knowing the time," and discerning its signs, now give way to slumber? God forbid.

It is at any period, however calm and peaceful, a solemn thing, on a new year's day, to look back on the ravages of time, and the desolations of death. Solemn too it is, with the dark future of another year only begun before us, to gaze on that unfathomed curtain, and to wonder who among us are the year is out shall die.

With the new year's dawn began death's dread progress, and the harvest of this Great Reaper extends over all the year.
"Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither, at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all,
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O Death!"

Death's ravages, then—death's certainty to each one of us, and life's uncertainty—and all this coupled with time to be redeemed, the flesh to be mortified, holiness to be advanced, God to be glorified more than ever we have done it—tell us, as the year begins, that it is "high time to awake out of sleep."

But a second and more animating motive remains to believers in Christ: glory is nearer; the fulness of the beatific vision, the personal presence of that Lamb in the midst of the throne, whom, all unseen, we have trusted. "Our salvation," as a new year reminds us, "is nearer than when we believed."

Christians! you were saved the moment you believed (for "he that hath the Son hath life"). You were sealed unto the day of redemption, yet still that full "salvation with eternal glory" which the day of redemption shall reveal hath not come; but now, nearer and nearer still it approaches. Wake up, then, and hail the first streaks of its dawn in the dappled east. Wake up, sleeping saints; lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.

As the weary traveller revives when from some distant hill his cottage home is seen afar; as the land-birds and floating weeds and plants far out see tell the homesick exile that ere long the white cliffs of his country shall greet his eyes; as the pilgrims in the desert press on with new vigour, as the soft perfumes of "Araby the blest" and "the land of frank-incense" wafted on the breeze assure them that the desert is well nigh past; so believers in Jesus, watchfully, earnestly, joyfully, let us go forward, for "now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Very soon, sooner it may be than we expect—it may be ere this year has seen its noon, or reached its dying day—we may be with our Lord. Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is.—Watch, for even to-night he may come. "Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing."

II. With the new year there comes a cry of alarm to the sleeping sinner: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead!" Alas, sinner, careless sinner! how awful is your condition!

You are asleep on the brink of destruction; you are insensible to the danger; but is your immortal soul less exposed to ruin? Look yonder. See that canoe gliding swiftly down the mighty river: no oar is plied; no helmsman guides the bark. The Indian owner is asleep. With his blanket wrapped around him, unsuspecting of peril, and dropping the long-poled oar far up the stream, and thinking he could wake at any time, and would wake long before the rapids were nigh, he still sleeps. The rapids toss the bark, but still he sleeps; the rapids hurry him to the catastrophe, but on its very verge he sleeps. Another moment, and the sleeper is over the precipice.

During the past year how many have thus perished! Upon most men death comes unexpectedly. How many instances have we known of this kind within the last twelve months, where the summons was as unexpected as the soul was unprepared? Shall the new year then come and pass away in spiritual sleep? "What meanest thou, O sleeper!" the tempest of divine anger rages, and, as the Lord liveth, there is but a step between thee and death eternal. Are you saying, "Time enough yet?" Is it thus you requite God for the mercies of the past, and for the dangers you have escaped? Shall not his goodness lead you to repentance? Will you abuse his long-suffering and quench his Spirit any longer? Before death comes your day of grace may be over. There is "a day of salvation," but that once past and unimproved, the sinner is left to sleep on till he wakes up in the place of everlasting sorrow.

"There is a time, we know not when,
A point we know not where,
Which seals the destinies of men
To glory and despair."

A short time ago, a man who neglected his soul lay on a dying bed. He was filled with terror; he knew not how to seek mercy; he asked for a minister, who came, and found him sinking fast. No time is to be lost. Stopping over the dying man, he makes several inquiries as to his views and feelings; but there is no reply. "You have been a great sinner, but Jesus has died for sinners. Will you trust in him?" There is still no reply: the man has lost his speech. Laying his mouth close to the ear of the dying sinner, the minister speaks to him of sin and salvation. To his astonishment, he finds that another of his senses is gone: the man has lost his hearing. He calls for an old family Bible; he opens it, and places in succession the promises of divine mercy through Jesus Christ before the dying man; but the glassy film of death veils his eyes: he cannot see. Overwhelming thought! Every avenue is closed: no beam of heavenly light gleams across the dark horizon of that parting spirit.

Careless, procrastinating spirit, awake, arise, or perish. Christ waits for thy waking. His Spirit is ready to quicken thee and "give thee light." Seek his favour now; ask for that Spirit now. The Father will give him to them that ask him. Repent, believe, and live for ever. Begin the year with earnestness in seeking salvation. Is it not high time to be earnest about your eternal life?

"Time is earnest,
Passing by;
Death is earnest,
Drawing nigh;
Sinner, wilt thou trifling be?
Time and death appeal to thee."

"Heaven is earnest;
Solemnly
Float its voices
Down to thee;
Thoughtless mortal! art thou gay,
Sporting through time earthly day?
"Hell is earnest;
Fiercely roll
Burning billows
Near thy soul.
Wee to thee, if thou abide
Unredeem'd, unsanctified.
"Christ is earnest;
Bids thee 'Come';
Paid thy spirit's
Priceless sum.
Wilt thou spurn thy Saviour's love,
Pleading with thee from above?"

"Wherefore he saith, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Amen.

The Wrong Train.
As I was traveling recently, homeward bound, in the New-York express train to Boston, an incident occurred which excited the attention of many passengers. In the same seat with myself there sat a young man of gentlemanly appearance, who, for many a mile, appeared to be in a state of uneasy and dreamy slumber. The conductor, for a long time, passed and repassed him without disturbing his sleep; but, at length, it became necessary to awake him. "Your ticket, sir," said he, as he reluctantly aroused him. The ticket was produced. "Where are you going, sir?" continued the man of the tickets. "Going," said the passenger, "I am going to—," naming a city more than an hundred and fifty miles distant, in an opposite direction. "No, sir," replied the conductor, "you are in the wrong train; you are on the way to Boston." "To Boston!" exclaimed the astonished traveler, "why, I procured my ticket and had my baggage checked at —, and when I took my seat in the cars at the depot I supposed I was in the right train." "But you are certainly in the wrong train and going the wrong way, notwithstanding," said the conductor. "Then," inquired the traveler with a look of earnestness and solicitude, "what must I do? I have an engagement in — at — o'clock, and I would rather have given one thousand dollars than to have incurred this mistake."

He had already traveled about fifty miles in the wrong train. It was not strange, therefore, that, as a man of business with an engagement at a given hour and much at stake, he should look troubled and anxious. And when the conductor told him that his only course now would be to stop at the next station, just at hand, and "right about" in the next train for —, there was an eager promptness in his decision to follow the conductor.

I began to muse.—Well, then, there is such a thing as a "wrong train;" there is such a thing as traveling in a wrong direction, though I have often heard men say that, on the road to eternity, there was not. Two men, whose principles, ends, aims, and grounds of hope for another world are exact opposites, can not both be on the right road, and cannot reach in safety at last the same place of rest. If one is right, the other must be wrong.

A man may take the wrong train, and travel in the wrong direction when he fondly thinks he is in the right. Alas, how many do this! "It is no matter what a man believes," say they, "if he only thinks he is right;" and so the thoughtless, dreaming, and often very insincere multitude through the paths of error and the ways of death, and rush on in the wrong direction.

Men suffer by their own mistakes. A man's insensibility to his mistake does not make the mistake any the less real. He may slumber along the way and say to himself, "All right!" but it is none the less certain that he is all wrong.

Sooner or later those who are going the wrong way must be made sensible of their mistake: they can not persevere in going wrong, and yet come out right. They may be rescued from their slumbers, like our friend the traveler, in season to retrace their steps, and in some measure, retrieve their loss, and they may not. But, in season or out of season, on the journey or at the journey's end, they must assuredly ascertain that all is wrong.

When men are made sensible of their mistake, it is the part of true wisdom anxiously to ask the question, "What must I do?" Manifestly something must be done. It will not answer to keep right on. The swiftness of the progress in the wrong direction calls loudly for an immediate decision. And in the restless solicitude of a soul conscious of being wrong, and therefore, ill at ease, the question, "What must I do?" should be asked with all the earnestness and honesty which a genuine sense of need dictates.

The answer given to our friend, the traveler, suggests the true answer to the traveler to eternity who asks the question, "What must I do?" Stop! Turn right about! Repeat of your folly and indifference. Take the right path, which leads to Calvary and the Cross. No other is right or safe. No other will conduct to heaven. Penitence and faith must lead you to the Lord Jesus Christ. Every other way is fatally wrong. You may dream, as you pursue it, that it is right, but it is not right; it will not end right; it is "The Wrong Train."

During the few days that have elapsed since the incident, I have noticed one and another on the highway of life, and have said "Ah! like my friend, the traveler, he is on the 'wrong train.' He is careless, insensible, slumbering, but wrong, wholly wrong, nevertheless. And he incurs the risk of a loss, compared with which the thousand dollars of our traveler on the railroad, is utterly unworthy of a thought. That young man who is rushing along the seductive paths of sinful indulgence, heedless that his steps take hold on hell, is on the wrong track. That giddy young lady, who dances over the pathway of folly, is going the wrong way. That numerous throng, who so eagerly pursue the mazes of error, heedless of the instructions of the Great Teacher and the directions of the Divine Conductor, are wrong, wrong. However insensible of it they may be, however fondly they may be dreaming of safety, they are on the wrong train.—Tract Journal.

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"I have Missed it, at last."

So said a gentleman on rising to speak a few words in the Fulton street meeting. These were the words of a young man who had died the night before. They were addressed to his physician, who was sitting by his bedside, and who had just communicated to him the surprising intelligence that he had but a very short time to live. The young man looked up in the face of his physician with a most despairing countenance and repeated the expression,

"I have missed it—at last."

"What have you missed?" inquired the tender-hearted, sympathizing physician.

"I have missed it—at last," again the young man repeated.

The doctor, not in the least comprehending what the poor young man meant, said, "My dear young man, will you be so good as to tell us what you mean?" He instantly interrupted, saying,

"Oh! doctor," he answered, "it is a sad story—a sad—and story that I have to tell. But I have missed it."

"Missed what?"

"Doctor, I have missed my salvation."

"Oh! say not so. It is not so. Do you remember the thief on the cross?"

"Yes I remember the thief on the cross. And

I remember that he never said to the Holy Spirit—'Go thy way. But I did. And now he is saying to me—'Go your way.' His lay gasping awhile, and looking up with a vacant, staring eye, he said—"I was awakened and was anxious about my soul a little time ago. But I did not want religion then. Something seemed to say to me—'Don't put it off—makes sure of salvation. I said to myself, I will postpone it. I knew I was a great sinner and needed a Saviour. I resolved, however, to dismiss the subject for the present. Yet I could not get my own consent to do it until I had promised that I would take it up again, at a time not remote and more favorable. I bargained away, insulted and grieved away the Holy Spirit. I never thought of coming to this. I meant to have religion, and make my salvation sure. And now I have missed it—at last."

"You remember," said the doctor, "that there were some who came at the eleventh hour."

"My eleventh hour," he rejoined, "was when I had that call of the Spirit. I have had none since—shall not have. I am given over to be lost."

"Not lost," said the doctor, "you may yet be saved."

"No—not saved—never. He tells me I may go my way now. I know it—I feel it—I feel it here," laying his hand upon his heart. Then he burst out in despairing agony, "Oh, I have missed it. I have sold my soul for a pin—a feather—a straw—undone forever." This was said with such unutterable, indescribable despondency, that no words were said in reply. After laying a few moments, he raised his head, and looking all around the room for some desired object—turning his eyes in every direction—then burying his face in his pillow, he again exclaimed in agony and horror, "Oh! I have missed it at last!" and he died.

It was a young man who had been speaking. I want to say, he continued, that it is my deep conviction that there are some awakened sinners here. I urge you not to sin against the voice of conscience—not to sin against your own souls. Come to Jesus now—just as you are.—N. Y. Observer.

They that sow in tears shall reap in Joy.

Why do thy tears so often flow?
The weeping eye some sorrow shew?
The cheerful glance, the merry smile,
Is gone, alas! is gone awhile.
Is there no friend can soothe thy mind—
No remedy that thou canst find—
No balm in Gilead to be seen—
No comforter on whom to lean?
Let not thy sorrow dwell alone,
Derive support from yonder throne.
The God that wounds can also heal:
He knows the feelings that we feel.
Let all thy griefs ascend on high;
Expect from God a prompt reply;
Though weeping may endure all night,
Joy will return by morning light.

A Lost Man.
Mr. Whitefield had a brother, who for some years appeared to be an earnest, sincere Christian. He was declined, and finally wandered from the path of duty. After hearing his brother preach one afternoon, he retired in distress of mind. At the supper table he groaned, and could neither eat nor drink, saying, "I am a lost man."

The Countess of Huntingdon, who sat opposite, exclaimed, "I am glad of it, I am glad of it." "It is wicked in you to say you are glad that I am a lost man," said he.

"I repeat it," said she, "I am heartily glad of it."

He looked at her, astonished at her barbarity. "I am glad of it," said she, "because it is written, 'The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

With tears rolling down his cheeks, he said, "What a precious Scripture truth is that. And how is it that it comes with such power to my mind? O! Madam," said he, "I bless God for that. Then he will save me; I trust my soul in his hands; he has forgiven me."

He soon after went out, felt unwell, fell down and expired.

We are all lost; happy will it be for us if we become sensible of it, and are found, before the summons of death shall come. Let backsliders take warning, and see to it that they return to the Great Shepherd ere their feet stumble on the dark mountains of death.—[Spurgeon's Sermons.

The Martyrs of Madagascar.
More than twenty years have passed since the profession of the Christian faith was publicly prohibited in Madagascar, and during this period every available means have been employed, often with subtle ingenuity and great severity, to enforce the prohibition. Death has not only been inflicted, but in the preliminary treatment of the condemned, and in the manner and circumstances of their punishment, it has been an object to augment the agony of their sufferings, and to render the prospect of death most frightfully appalling. The first Christian martyr in Madagascar suffered in 1837, the second in the following year: Three or four years after, nine at least were put to death in such a manner, and with such accompanying circumstances, as were intended to involve the supposed criminals in the deepest ignominy. In the year 1846 the sufferings of the people appear to have been great; but the severest persecution to which they were subjected, and in which the greatest number fell, occurred in the year 1849. At this period a few saved their lives

by escaping from the island. Some of these visited our country, and all eventually found an asylum in Mauritius. Others, I was informed, who had been either sentenced to die, or who had much reason to fear that if seized their lives would be forfeited, escaped, and either remained in concealment, or became homeless wanderers in the country.

But besides those, multitudes, probably amounting to thousands, and including those of every rank and age, from the unconscious infant who, with its parents, had been sold into slavery, to the venerable sire whose long life had been spent in the service of his country,—or from the noble, whose rank and lineage placed him near the throne, to the poor and friendless slave,—all had been punished for supposed or acknowledged participation in the reading of the Christian's book or the offering of the Christian's prayer. The punishments inflicted had been almost as varied as the condition of the circumstances of the criminal. The tangens, or ordeal of prison-water, had frequently been administered with fatal effects. Fines had been imposed, from a single dollar to an amount equal to the estimated value at which a delinquent or his family could be ransomed. Thus, on one occasion, a prince was fined one hundred dollars, estimated as half his redemption price. Confiscation and seizure had been made of house and land, and of every kind of property belonging to the accused. Multitudes were reduced to slavery, sold in the public markets, and subjected to all the ordinary miseries resulting from separation from their nearest relatives, frequently with two extra conditions intended to enhance the bitterness of their cup, viz, that they should only be sold to those who would engage to make them labour severely and continuously, and that their relatives or friends should not be allowed to redeem them, but that they should be, as it was expressed, "like weeds of the waste, bowing down their heads till they died." Amongst the communications which I received, were deeply affecting accounts of the circumstances of some who, nineteen years before, or at a later period, had been sold into slavery, and of the prices which had been paid for them by their purchasers. Some of these were the widows of those who had been put to death, some were single men or women, others were heads of families, and their wives and children were sold with them. The prices ranged from 23 to 90 dollars for a single individual, and from 110 for a man and his wife to 178 for a man and three children.

Numbers, not sold into perpetual slavery, had been reduced in rank, and sentenced to the hardest kinds of labour, such as quarrying, or carrying stones for the erection of government buildings, or other equally severe labour. Several who, though of considerable rank, had for a long time thus laboured, and some amongst them have since carried to their graves the marks of their punishments, were my frequent visitors; others I learned, had been tortured with stripes. Some had been sentenced to imprisonment, and were in confinement; some were wandering as outcasts from society; others including men and women of rank and station, had been loaded with rude and cumbersome fetters, and a number had been put to death.

I obtained a detailed and deeply affecting account, written in the native language, with the substance of it also in English, of the trials of the Christians of 1849, the period of the last severe persecution. Numbers were informed against, and apprehended by officers of government bearing a silver spear designated "The hater of lies," and numbers, on the requisition of the government, acknowledged having been engaged in christian worship. The nature of their offence may be inferred from the "subjoined recital of the practices of which they were accused during the last persecution. When a number of them were then arraigned, it was asked by the chief officer; "What is this that you do? This that the queen hates—that which says believe in it or him, and obey the gospel; refusing to fight and quarrel with each other; refusing to swear by their sisters with a stubbornness like that of stones or wood; observing the sabbath as a day of rest; the taking of the juice of the grape and a little bread, and invoking a blessing on the bread, and then falling down to the ground, and when the head is raised, the tears running down from the eyes. Now, are you to do these things, or are you not?—for such things, it is said, are done by the praying people, and on this account the people are made to take the oath." Then Ramary stood up before the people and said: "I believe in God, for he has made all things, and I follow, (or believe) the gospel of God. And in regard to fighting or quarrelling, if we, who are one people, were to fight and quarrel (among ourselves), what good would be done? But if the enemies of our country come, the servants of God will fight. And in regard to swearing, if the truth is told, does swearing make the truth a lie? And if a lie is told, does swearing make a lie the truth? For the truth is the truth, and a lie is a lie, whether sworn to or not. I put my trust in God and in Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of all; he is able to be that to all that believe."

Of the numbers implicated, some idea may be formed from the fact that at one time and at one place, 37 who had explained or preached "the word" were reduced to slavery, with their wives and children; 42 who had possessed books were made slaves, and their property seized; 27 who had possessed books, and who had preached or explained, were made slaves with their wives and