

The Religious Intelligencer.

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

REV. E. McLEOD.

"THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."

Peter.

[Editor and Proprietor.]

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THE INTELLIGENCER.

THE PARENT'S RETURN.

A TALE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

"Mother, dear, I cannot leave you. Let me unpack my trunk and remain at home. I can find something to do here."

"You had better go, Helen. The mother spoke these words in a low tone, and with her face turned away from the child; and it was plain to be seen that she was speaking as she had schooled herself to speak not from the impulses of the heart, but from the dictates of necessity."

"You had better go, Helen, I shall find friends; and a busy habit will give me relief."

Mary Anderson was a middle-aged woman, slight of frame, from whose pale, care-worn face the traces of rare beauty were not yet obliterated. Her daughter resembled her, not only in form and feature, but also in the expression of care and toil which cast its shadows over her face. They lived alone in the humble cottage just out from the village, and for years their daily bread had been earned by constant labor. Ellen had learned to work, when a mere prattling child, and as she grew older her busy hands found employment in many useful ways. And now, at the age of fifteen, she had made arrangements to go away from home and work among strangers. Her few clothes had been packed in a small trunk, and the stage was to call on the following morning.

It was early winter, and the day had been cold and dreary. As the sun went down the snow began to fall, and by the time night had fairly set in the storm was raging furiously.

"I shall be very lonesome and unhappy away from you dear mother, said Ellen, clinging close to her parent's side."

"This storm has settled heavily upon your spirits my child," returned Mrs. Anderson. She arose and put more wood upon the fire, and when the blaze leaped once more up the wide chimney, she resumed her seat; and for some minutes no further words were spoken.

Finally Ellen drew more closely to her mother's side, and taking one of her hands she said:

"Mother, if I am to leave you in the morning, you must tell me the story which you promised I should hear before I went away."

Mrs. Anderson clasped her hand upon her bosom, and bowed her head till her face was hid.

"Dear mother, I did not mean to pain you; but, O, I must know something of my father, before I go into the world. The doubts of uncertainty are more burdensome than a knowledge of the truth can possibly be. If he even—was guilty of—"

"Hush my child! And as the mother thus spoke, she put forth her hand and rested it upon her daughter's head. I will tell you the story, if I knew that your father was dead I would tell the grave hide the record; but I do not know it."

The storm was increasing in fury, and as the driving snow came piling about the windows, and the chill wind came creeping in through cracks and crannies, the mother and the child drew nearer to the fire and shuddered as some giant blast hurled its load of snow upon the quivering panes.

"O, Ellen, it was on such a night as this, thirteen years ago, the storm was riding in the heavens, and the white snow was driving upon the earth! It was on such a night that your father left us!"

The daughter bowed her head upon her mother's shoulder, and waited to hear more. After a while Mrs. Anderson again spoke. She had gained control of her emotions now, and her voice was more calm and steady.

"Ellen, as you are going away to-morrow, and as we don't know what may happen beyond that, I shall tell you all about your father. It won't be in many words, darling; and if it is dark and windy find that it might be worse. Five-and-twenty years ago there was not a young man in all this section so generally liked, for his social and generous qualities, as was Thomas Anderson. He was the very picture of manly beauty, and a type of all that was noble and devoted. When I became his wife I was envied by my friends; and I certainly felt proud and happy. For two years our life passed in joy and sunshine, and not a cloud rested upon us. A little cherub had come to bless us, whom we named Freddy; and I think Thomas held that little one in his heart as something heavenly and sacred. But the boy died, and sorrow came upon us. My husband had always been free to drink wine when he pleased, though until now I had never seen him disordered by liquor."

"Freddy died in June, and in September following Thomas was thrown out of work by the failure of the company who had employed him—not only thrown out of work, but he lost a little money which he had invested in the concern. The long cold winter passed, and he had no work to do; and during that winter you were born. He drank very often, and often drank too much; but still he was kind and promised to amend. In the spring he had worked again in a large mill which was built in an adjoining town, and through the warm months he was steady at his work, though I could see that the habit of drink drinking was growing upon him. When the mill was done he was out of employment again, and again, through the long winter he was out of employment. He sunk very low—very low! Summer came again and he worked some; but the evil habit was upon him so strong that he became wholly its slave."

"Another winter was before us, and you were two years old. Your father was so low that all respect was gone from him, and from pitying people had come to despise. One night—just such a night as this—when the wind blew, and the driving snow filled the air—he came home sadly intoxicated. I was sitting by the fire, holding you in my arms; for I dare not trust you in the cold bed alone. I had made your father angry, and he was because you were not in bed; and when you began to cry he snatched you from my arms. I started forward to grasp you from him, and he struck me a blow that fell me to the floor. How long I remained so I know not. When I recovered to consciousness I was upon my bed; you were upon the pillow, by my side, and some of my neighbors were bending over me, trying to revive me."

"Other help was called, and when it was known that I was out of danger, Thomas left the house. They told me, darling, that he bent over me and kissed me—kissed me twice, kissed, as though in pain and anguish, and then he went away—he went out into that storm as this—thirteen years ago—and I have not seen him since!"

"And have you never heard from him?"
"Never word my child!"
"Don't cry so, mother!"
"O, I cannot help it. Alas, my precious child, tears are my only solace, when his sad story occupies my mind."

"But you have forgiven him?"
"Forgiven him! O, how could I refrain? He kissed me when he went away! He was broken down and lost. He had struck his wife, and he dared not meet her again."

"Perhaps," whispered Ellen, "he died in the storm."

"I have thought it might be so darling; but his body was never found. Hark! what was that?"

"I heard nothing, mother."

"It was but the howling of the blast—you are frightened."

"No, no, Ellen, I am not frightened; but I may have been deceived. It is very cold."

"I would not put on more wood now, mother. Let us go to bed."

"Not yet, darling. I shall not sleep while this storm is howling. O—it was on such a night as this—hark! Did you not hear that?"

"Yes," replied the daughter, starting to her feet.

"Somebody knocked at our door. And there it is again. Let me go!"

Thus speaking Ellen took the candle and went to the outer door; but when she opened it the furious blast swept in, bringing a cloud of snow and extinguishing the light. As she moved back, and brushing the snow from her eyes, some one came into the entry and closed the door, thus shutting out the raging storm.

"I am a stranger, lady," said a deep gruff voice; and I have lost my way in the storm."

Ellen could not see the speaker, but the gruff voice did not frighten her.

"Come in, sir," she replied. "Come in where it is warm."

He stamped the snow from his feet, and shook it from his garments, and then followed her into the room where her mother sat; and when she had relighted the candle, she turned and beheld a large, powerful man, habited in a seaman's garb, his face covered by a dark beard, from which the melted snow was trickling down like tear drops.

"If you will give me shelter for the night," he said, "I will repay you well. I cannot go further in this storm."

"Good sir, replied Mrs. Anderson, moving a chair to the fire as she spoke, "you are freely welcome. My daughter will take your coat, sir; and when you are warm you shall have refreshments. Our pay will be in the knowledge that we have helped you. Am you ill?"

"No—no, Madam, I am very much fatigued—I have had a hard battle with the storm."

The stranger had trembled violently and had almost staggered; but as he grew more steady, and when he removed the heavy pea coat, and little Ellen had taken it, he sat down and spread his hands towards the fire.

Now that the heavy outer garment was off his form was more plainly seen in its grand muscular proportions, and he looked more like a christian man, notwithstanding the bronzed brow, and the thick, long beard, that hid his mouth and cheeks.

"Can you tell me," said he, after he had warmed his hands, "if a woman named Anderson lives hereabouts?"

"My name is Anderson, sir."

"Yes, sir, Mary Anderson?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah—am I so near the object of my search? I have a message for Mary Anderson. I promised thirteen years, when in a far distant land that I would find her if I could; and that I would give her a message from—"

"From whom?" asked the hostess, trembling and holding her breath.

"I think," replied the stranger, spreading his hands out before the fire "that he was once a friend of yours, as he has since been a friend of mine. Thomas Anderson was his name. Do you remember him?"

The woman bowed her head upon her folded hands, and as she seemed ready to sink her daughter hastened to her side.

"No, no, Ellen, I am strong now. Go and sit down. The shock is past. He yet lives!"

A little while afterwards Mary Anderson raised her head, and spoke to the stranger again. As she had gained control over herself,

"Thomas Anderson was my husband, sir."

"So he told me, Madam."

"You said you had seen him. Where?"

"In a far off land, where the noonday sun rides high in the heavens while it is midnight here."

"You said you had a message from him."

"Yes, lady."

"Give it to me. O tell me what he has said."

"Thomas Anderson told me his story—with tears rolling down his cheeks, and with many bitter words. He told me how he left his wife and infant child—how he sunk from had to worse, and how in a moment of madness he struck his faithful companion to the floor. When he saw what he had done fear and remorse seized upon him, and when his neighbors had come in, he fled from his home. Shame and dread drove him on, and by the time the mad fire was out of his veins, he found himself in a place where ships came and went. He had resolved that he would be a man again if he lived; but he dared not return to his home until he could carry with him some proof of his sincerity. He went on board a ship bound for India, and he had grown strong to write home cheering words to his wife. But it was not so to be. In the Indian Ocean the ship was cast away upon a strange island, and he, with three others, the only ones saved from the crew, remained three years. Finally a Spanish trader picked them up, and once more they were cast away upon the African coast, where two years more were spent. At the end of that time Anderson was picked up by an English ship bound for the Pacific coast. He was landed in Victoria, where he remained until I got ready to leave him. He has been a man—he has done well—and if he knew that his wife had forgiven him, he would come home; and he would spend the rest of his life in trying to make some atonement for the past."

"Oh, sir," cried Mary Anderson, "clasping her hands, and weeping as she spoke, you don't know how good and noble he was before he suffered. O, if he could know how I have loved him—how I have prayed for him—how I have borne his image on my heart, forgive him—how he would not stay away!"

"But, lady, Thomas Anderson will come back to you no longer poor. In that far off land where gold sparkles in the sand, he has gathered for him-

self much wealth—he has gathered a sum that might seem almost fabulous to the honest people of this place—gathered it not for himself—no, no; but for those whom he hoped to bless—for his wife and child."

"Come he rich, or come he poor—come he to give me succor, or come he to be nursed in weakness or want—if he only come with the love he pledged in the bright morning of our youth, I will take him to my bosom, and bless him with a wife's true affection."

So spoke Mary Anderson; and as the words fell from her lips the strong man started to his feet, with his arm outstretched. A moment he stood thus, gazing at and fro, and then as though all his strength had left him, he sank down upon his knees, and covering his face with his hands, he sobbed aloud:

"O, God! Thus upon my knees how often have I prayed for this—My wife! My child!"

They went down by his side—their arms were about him, they called him husband and father, and the bright firelight shone upon their mingled tears.

In the morning the storm had passed, and the sun came brightly up. Late in the afternoon the stage came along the road which strong and busy hands had dug through the drifted snow; but Ellen Anderson did not go away with it. And many suns arise, beaming warm and brightly upon the home of Mary Anderson, but the light and warmth from without was as nothing compared with the light and warmth within. The love of the earliest time had been renewed, and the noonday of life turned the evening with promise of joy made richer and more enduring by the stern trials of the dark years which ended in the Winter Storm.

From the New York Observer.

SCENES IN A SOLDIER'S HOSPITAL.

Chester Hospital, Fortress Monroe, Oct. 1, 1862.

The wickedness of the army is most appalling. All sacred restraints seem, by consent, cast off. As an officer, who has been through the whole Virginia campaign, remarked: "The devil seems to take complete possession of men when they enter the army." How little is known of it by the quiet, though anxious, homes of our land. When brought to a hospital, men begin to reflect. The Spirit brings up their past in bold relief. The scenes of the hospital seem the last calls. Former instrumentalities have failed. Prayers of parents, teachings of Sabbath schools, preaching of the sanctuary, dangers, imprisonments even, and escapes of the battle field—all these have failed to bring them to Christ. A last agent is a bed of lingering sickness and pain. There many find the Saviour. How wonderfully God thus displays his mercy in such given them assurance that Christ is ever willing and able to save men to the uttermost, so that their dying chamber is turned into the very gate of heaven.

One day I found a message from Dr. Pierce, of Holyoke, Mass. He was a surgeon of a New York regiment. He had just come from Harrison's Landing. He knew his life was fast wasting away. He said he wanted to meet and pray with a Christian friend. He lingered a few days before he died. He sent for me a few hours before his death, and said: "Tell my only child and daughter I love her dearly, dearly, dearly." Then yielding the last earthly tie, he fixed his heart on Christ, whom he had long served in his church and society. Said he: "I wish to testify before all men that I love Jesus Christ; in blessed Jesus is my only hope." I asked him if he would rather be restored to his friends and his home than to go home now to Jesus. He looked up, smiling, and said slowly, as his breath was short: "I would rather go home to Jesus, and be sure, be eternally sure." Neither the stolid indifference of infidelity, nor necessity, nor manhood even, could prompt such thoughts. Only a long cherished and now triumphant faith in Christ moved his waiting heart. If living men are often finger-posts towards heaven, so are their monuments when dead, if engraved thereon are such proofs of the reality of Christ's mercy to the believer in death.

A member of a cavalry regiment came here with a gunshot wound through his lung. He was petulant and profane. Life was a burden. He wanted to die and be out of physical misery. But the mental anguish of a soul forever banished from the presence and love of God would not better his condition. He at first was indifferent to the promises, yet God soon awakened him to a spirit of repentance. Prayer was sweet to his soul. He suffered, physically, most excruciating pain; yet nurses and physicians confessed a great change had come over him. Yes, Divine grace had prepared him for eternity. He often recurred to the early pious instructions of his mother. Almost perfect submission to his condition; "for," said he, "let God's will be done." Then again he would have dark hours in his faith. At such a time he sent for me at two o'clock in the morning; he thought he was dying. All the time I was praying with him he was exclaiming: "Oh! Christ Jesus, receive my spirit. Thank God, I come to this hospital. I should have been lost had not the mercy of Christ met me here." As I left him at my last interview, a few nights after, when he was quietly enduring most terrible suffering, I bade him good-bye, and told him I hoped we would meet in heaven. He said: "Yes, brother, we shall meet here." His days here were his best days, for here he was prepared to live beyond the grave.

Great was the contrast between this and another scene, where an officer was just passing the portals of death. His companions had been Volney and Tom Paine. He would not talk of death; yet the little he did I told him frankly he could not live, and spoke to him of the promises and the mercy of Christ. He would simply assent, "Yes, yes." Then looked him if he had any special word to send to his family, as he could not live but a short time. He looked such blank despair, turned his head, closed his eyes, as he said: "Oh, pshaw! Don't discourage me." These were his last words. The contrast is striking. Death had terrors to him. Peaceful departures are not triumphs always. There are death-bed victories apart from Christ. Long and desperate sinning may exclude judgment and defy the grave, and so a soul may pass away, like that of Hume, without parole or display.

A solemn scene transpired in one ward of over a hundred soldiers. A member of the Baptist Church knew he must die, and desired the administration of the Lord's Supper. Mrs. Duffey, the matron, who is ever ready to aid in the spiri-

tual or physical wants of the men, was present with us in this solemn rite. This dying soldier had given up all, wife and family, four children, for his country, and now with perfect confidence, had committed them to the care of a covenant-keeping God. As we passed into the wards with the emblems, groups of men were here and there, on couches, talking, and laughing, and playing cards. Deaths are so common soldiers grow hardened to the scene, and scarcely notice the departure of a comrade on a neighboring couch. As the emblems of Christ's broken body and shed blood were presented to that faithful, that happy man, his face glowed with almost Divine splendor, and his prayer to Jesus for giving him a clean heart was most touching and impressive; his knees and hands were offered and his prayers were sung, a most solemn stillness prevailed, and the men had quietly sought their various couches, most attentively witnessing the scene. The influence of that solemn occasion may never be effaced. It added new joy and grace, even glory, to the dying Christian, and planted, we trust, solemn thoughts in the hearts of the living.

As we pass from ward to ward, and from couch to couch, how sad, yet how interesting, to hear the expressions of these different men. Among one class every comic phrase imaginable seems familiar. They seem to enjoy their gunshot and shell wounds. They only regret they are not in the field. Another class, broken down, unfit for service, rejoice that their case is this, that they can get discharged so as to return to their needy families. Not from cowardice, nor from want of patriotism, do they desire to go home, but because weekly they get intelligence from home greatly needing their presence and support. So they thank God their ruined constitutions will discharge them. Another class are low and nigh unto death. To these especially, but to others also, how precious is home and mother. "Mother!" "My mother!" How sacred the name! All their early instructions are recalled here. Their prayers, taught when these men were thoughtless, stubborn youths, are remembered, and they cling to them almost as the ground of their salvation. No earthly influence has stamped itself so indelibly. Their early prayers and kind admonitions are pictures on which memory constantly lingers. How suggestive of mothers' responsibilities! One poor fellow said, before he died: "My thoughts, when I went into the battle of Mechanicsville, were, 'My country and my mother.' A Richmond prisoner exclaimed, in his death agonies: 'Oh! that I could once more see my mother.' Another who had failed to get his discharge in time to get home, told me to be careful how I reported his death to his mother, for she was not strong in health. He was prepared to die. He looked up just before he breathed his last, and slowly spoke: 'I am going home. I shall get my discharge to-night.' It was five o'clock in the evening. His discharge from earth was an entrance into heaven.

THE FULLNESS THAT IS IN CHRIST.

It pleased the Father that in him should fill all fullness dwelt; dwell, not come and go, like a way-faring man who tarrieth but a night; who is with us to-day, and away to-morrow; not like the shallow, noisy, treacherous brook that fails, when most needed, in heat of summer, but like this deep-seated spring, that rising silently though affluently at the mountain's foot, and having no communication with its exhaustless supplies, is ever flowing over its grassy margin, equally unaffected by the long droughts that dry the wells, and the frosts that pave the neighbouring lake with ice. So full the joys of earth; so full, supplied by the fulness that is in Christ, the pleasures and the peace of piety. It cannot be otherwise. A man love me, says Jesus, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come into him, and make our abode with him.

I have read how, in the burning desert, the skeletons of unhappy travellers, all withered and white, are found, not only on the way to the fountain, but lying grim and ghastly on its banks, with their skulls stretched over its very margin. Panting, faint, their tongue cleaving to the roof of their mouth, ready to fill a cup with gold for its fill of water, they press on to the well, securing their course by the tall palms that stand full of hope above the glaring sands. Already, in fond anticipation, they drink where others have been saved. They reach it. Alas! sad sight for the dim eyes of fainting men, the well is dry. With stony horror in their looks, how they gaze into the empty basin, or fight with man and beast for some muddy drops that but exasperate their thirst. The desert reels around them. Hope expires. Some cursing, some praying, they sink, and themselves expire. And by and by the sky darkens, lightnings flash, loud thunder roll, the rain pours down, and fed by the showers, the treacherous waters rise to play in mockery with long fair tresses, and kiss the pale lips of death.

But yonder, where the cross stands up high to mark the fountain of the Saviour's blood, and heaven's sanctifying grace, no dead souls lie. Once a Gethsemane, Calvary has ceased to be a place of skulls. Where men went once to die, they go now to live; and to none that ever went there to seek pardon, and peace, and holiness, did God ever say, Seek ye me in vain. There are times when the peace of God's people, always like a river, is like one in flood, overflowing its margin, and rolling its mighty current between bank and brae. There are times when the righteousness of God's people, always like the waves of the sea, seems like the tide at the stream, as swelling beyond its ordinary bounds, it floats the boats and ships that lie highest, driest, on the beach. But at all times and seasons, faith and prayer find fullness of mercy to pardon, and of grace, to sanctify, in Jesus Christ. The supply is inexhaustible.

Mountains have been exhausted of their gold, mines of their diamonds, and the depths of the ocean of their pearls. The demand has emptied the supply. Over once busy scenes, silence and solitude now reign; the caverns ring no longer to the miner's hammer, nor is the song of the pearl-fisher heard upon the deep. But the riches of grace are inexhaustible. All that have gone before us have not made them less, and we shall make them no less to those who follow us. When they have supplied the wants of unborn millions, the last of Adam's race, that lonely man, over whose head the sun is shining, beneath whose feet the earth is reeling, shall stand by as full a fountain as this day invites you to drink and live, to wash and be clean.

I have found it an interesting thing to stand on the edge of a noble rolling river, and to think,

that although it has been flowing on for six thousand years, watering the fields, and slaking the thirst of a hundred generations, it shows no sign of waste or want; and when I have watched the rise of the sun, as he shot above the crest of the mountain, or in a sky draped with golden curtains sprang up from his ocean bed, I have wondered to think that he has melted the snows of so many winters, and renewed the verdure of so many springs, and painted the flowers of so many summers, and ripened the golden harvests of so many autumns, and yet shines as brilliant as ever, his eye not dim, nor his natural strength abated, nor his floods of light less full for centuries of boundless profusion. Yet what are these, but images of the fulness that is in Christ! Let that feed your hopes, and cheer your hearts, and brighten your faith, and send you away this day happy and rejoicing. For, when judgment flames have licked up that flowing stream, and the light of that glorious sun shall be quenched in darkness or veiled in the smoke of a burning world, the fulness that is in Christ shall flow on throughout eternity in the bliss of the redeemed. Blessed Saviour, image of God, divine Redeemer! in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. What thou hast gone to heaven to prepare, may we be called up at death to enjoy!—Rev. Dr. Guthrie.

THE CHURCH GOVERNMENT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

BY THE REV. DR. ANOUS.

The government of the churches of Christ bears but a faint resemblance to any organisation of civil society. Christian churches are really theocratic, and are ruled by the will of God. They form the kingdom of Christ. Their constitution is simply the supremacy of divine law, applied and enforced by Christian men, and in Christian love. The meaning of the law is substantially agreed upon when the church is formed; and if a diversity of judgment arise on the interpretation of the law, or on questions of fact, the decision is with the pastor, or with the deacons, if the matter is within their provinces, respectively, and with the church if it is beyond it. In every such case it is a question of interpretation or of fact—not of legislation or of authority.

Need it be added how completely this idea of government—the supremacy of law, and that law the law of love—meets the aspirations of some of the noblest and clearest thinkers of our race? It is the perfection of government. Nor need any fear its working or its efficiency, provided only care be taken to admit and to keep in the church goodly men. If, through carelessness or apostasy, the church ceases to be a community of such, the community will itself dissolve; for it is part of the excellence of this system, that without life there is neither cohesion nor strength. Other ecclesiastical systems retain part of their aggressive power after the life has died out, and seem even to gain power from their corruption. Christian churches, when once the spirit is gone, crumble into decay. It is the law of nature and of Scripture that then they be buried out of our sight. Their vitality is their spirituality; when that ceases, they themselves disappear. The "salt has lost its savor, and is forthwith good for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men." Herein is one proof of their divine origin, and of the super-human sagacity that created and that rules them.

A few words on the advantages of this system, and on some abuses to which it is liable, may fittingly close this discussion. The Christian church is a theocracy, administered through the conscience and hearts of Christians. This peculiarity is an advantage in an age of democratic tendencies, when men are qualifying to exercise their rights, and are preparing to claim them. Communism and democracy the Gospel repudiates, and yet it recognises the brotherhood of the entire body.

The Christian church is based on the consecrated activity of all its members. The scope it gives to individual development, and the power for good it brings into play, fit it for the great work to which the church is called. It is the business of each generation to give the Gospel to the world—man to man—and in no other way can that business be fulfilled than by the personal devotedness of every member.

The Christian church is formed on the double principle, that all true religion is a personal thing, and that churches of Christ are associations of religious men—of all such, and of none besides. This principle is taught by the very genius of our dispensation, and is the only one that harmonises the doctrines of evangelical truth. Our church polity is the Gospel, in palpable form, and in actual life. The members of such communities are prepared to honour piety wherever they find it. Nor do they require for fellowship anything that Christ does not require for salvation. "Alliances," Evangelical or otherwise, are at best faint copies of this holy brotherhood.

Even the negotiations of this system are advantages, if we rightly understand and apply them. In our country and age, Christian churches are largely Nonconformist. They hold that forms should be simple and spontaneous, unless Scripture has made them obligatory; that they should grow out of the inner life, and should be moulded by it. Above all, they hold that no forms should be made terms of communion, and that none should claim authority to create and enforce them. This struggle for negotiations, as it seems, is really a conflict for liberty.

Christian churches are largely voluntary. They condemn compulsory service and compulsory gifts, not holding, as some think, that men are free to do as they please in Christ's church, but only that every religious act, to be acceptable, must be the willing offering of the heart. Christ's law is the measure of our obedience. Herein Christian churches are not so much a protest against necessity and compulsion, as a plea for willinghood and love.

Once admit, these views, and would ecclesiastical systems according to them, and we get rid of most of the scandals that have for ages disgraced and impeded the progress of religious truth. If compulsion is allowed in enforcing religious duty; if truth on which, as Scripture teaches, really Christian men may differ, are made essential to fellowship; if forms are made binding upon the conscience, a great wrong is inflicted on Christian men, and on the Christian churches. The wrong done to Christian men may be lessened, as it is their own fault, and the forms which seem to them "the most becoming," that are enforced

but the wrong to Christian truth and love remains. Church history is largely the record of struggles to shift the former of these wrongs from one another—to ease one man's conscience at the expense of his neighbour's. The thing for which we plead is to ease them all, and to end the struggle, by maintaining the freedom, and charity, and willinghood which the Master enjoined.

These are among the advantages of the Scriptural system. But, on the other side, the system is liable to abuse; not, indeed, from any inherent tendency of its own, but from the misconceptions and the weaknesses of the human nature that works it. The wisest plans are often impaired by human infirmity; and the divine theory of the Christian church is no exception to this rule.

Christian churches are in danger from minute and fierce divisions. This is the bane of all governments that are partly democratical. With spirituality, the dissensions and votes of Christian men will never be widely discordant or much embittered. Till this grace is more largely gained, let there be forbearance, and candour, and self-control.

Christian churches, based on equality, are in danger from jealousy. They are apt to look with envy on all who have been greatly blessed, and who are, therefore, largely influential. All such feeling is a loss to the community, a wrong to our brother, and a grief and dishonour to the Lord. Christian churches based on spiritual truth, and avowedly independent of one another, are in special danger of isolation and exclusiveness. All religious truth is important, and all error really mischievous. Men of clear insight and of earnest nature are apt to feel so strongly that they cannot cordially act with brethren who deny anything they hold. To stand aloof seems often a protest for truth and conscience. Men and churches, moreover, bring into their fellowship temperaments neither "lovely" nor of "good report"—temperaments that do not make them more welcome. They have grace; but it is grace grafted on the crab, and the fruit tastes too much of the double parentage. Both causes combine with natural disposition, and the dread that some have of all ecclesiastical organisation, to discourage Christian communion. Christian men, therefore, seem too often as "one of a family" and as "two of a city," while Christian churches stand each "alone among the nations."

To meet these feelings, and to correct the isolation they foster, let the following facts be kept in mind. Among true Christians the things wherein they differ are small compared with those wherein they agree. Co-operation in the Gospel is not compromise of differences: it is homage to essential truth, as isolation because of differences is preference of what is subordinate to what is essential. Forbearance and brotherly love are sometimes difficult; and therefore we must exercise them. Nor is a "fugitive," "cloistered" virtue that shuns the struggle of much worth. Ecclesiastical organisation have ended in dominion over men's faith; but the "idols of the den," the tyrannies of isolated fancy and temper, are as numerous, probably, as the "idols of the tribe." And, in truth, our strength rests as much on our unity as on our independence. Our divisions tend to perpetuate less Scriptural but more compact bodies, and we give to them the honor of presenting to the nations that visible unity which belongs properly to the church. Nor must we forget that, as the world sees and feels that we are one, is this the import of our Lord's intercessory prayer!—the world will believe.

Christian churches are in danger from indifference to truth. For purpose of fellowship they destroy or ignore the distinctions that divide Christians; and they sometimes go further, and are tempted to ignore the truths themselves. The tendency of the age is to hold that whoever feels anything has the Spirit. A Christian church, as opposed to a narrow, sectarian church, seems to sanction this tendency, or may be supposed to sanction it. Let it be made clear, therefore, that we plead for liberty in non-essentials, not because all beliefs in relation to them are alike harmless, but because, if men are Christians, they are to be welcomed in spite of their mistakes. The mistakes themselves we must disown.

Christian churches, whose strength is in their purity and in their tenderness, are apt to forget their spirit, and to copy the world in its maxims and temper. Occasionally this tendency shows itself in the form of persecution; oftener of angry strife, or of ferocious vituperation. Christian men forget that railing, as certainly as the sword, is forbidden even to archangels, and that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men." Christ's kingdom is not of this world, in its agency or instruments, nor yet in its spirit.

And finally, Christian churches are in special danger of forgetting the secret of their strength. Other associations have elements of power of their own—wealth, social position, organisation, respectability, and learning. These Christian churches may have, and yet, for all saving purposes, be powerless. For their successful working they need piety, spirituality, holiness, the special presence, the recognised and incessant presidency, of their Lord. Without him, the freedom of Christian churches is anarchy; their independence, isolation and weakness; their power, "the shadow of a name"; their union, tyranny or strife; and their usefulness, a delusion and a snare. With Him, they are the noblest forms of social life. His loving representatives on earth, and the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost.

THE LAST BROTHER. A Major General of the U. S. Army, when dying from a wound he received a few days ago, expressed his regret that he had not long ago turned his attention to the subject of religion. He refused to converse on any other subject, and in fifteen minutes after he was shot, he was dead.

Of the thousands who go to war and expose themselves to the dangers of the battlefield, how few are prepared to die! How few have given their attention to religion in youth and peace at home. We hear the most heartrending accounts of the wickedness of our soldiers, and we know that profaneness has become so common a vice that it ceases to be regarded as unbecoming in gentlemen. One correspondent writes to us that professors of religion in his vicinity never as freely as others.

But we would suppose, that facing death as these men do, and seeing their companions suddenly summoned into eternity, that they would turn their attention to religion; make their peace with God and not put it off as the Major General did, and death comes when it is forever too late.—