

# The Religious Intelligencer.

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWS PAPER FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

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"THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS

MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."—Peter.

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## THE INTELLIGENCER.

### THE PROGRESS OF GRACE.

IN THREE LETTERS TO A FRIEND.

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First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.—Mark iv. 28.

LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,—The manner of the Lord's work in the hearts of his people is not easily traced, though the fact is certain, and the evidence demonstrable from Scripture. In attempting to explain it, we can only speak in general, and are at a loss to form such a description as shall take in the immense variety of cases which occur in the experience of believers. I have already attempted such a general delineation of a young convert, under the character of A, and am now to speak of him by the name of B.

This state I suppose to commence when the soul, after an interchange of hopes and fears, according to the different frames it passes through, is brought to rest in Jesus, by a spiritual apprehension of his complete suitability and sufficiency, as the "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," of all who trust in him, and is enabled by an appropriating faith to say, "He is mine, and I am his." There are various degrees of this persuasion: it is of a growing nature, and is capable of increase so long as we remain in this world. I call it *assurance*, when it arises from a simple view of the grace and glory of the Saviour, independent of our sensible frames and feelings, so as to enable us to answer all objections from unbelief and Satan, with the apostle's word: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8: 34. This, in my judgment, does not belong to the *essence* of faith, so that B should be deemed more truly a believer than A, but to the *establishment* of faith. And now that faith is stronger, it has more to grapple with.

I think the characteristic of the state of A is *desire*, and of B is *conflict*. Not that B's desires have subsided, or that A was a stranger to conflict; but as there was a sensible eagerness and keenness in A's desires, which, perhaps, is seldom known to be equally strong afterwards, so there are usually trials and exercises in B's experience, something different in their kind, and sharper in their measure, than what A was exposed to, or indeed had the strength to endure. A, like Israel, had been delivered from Egypt by great power and a stretched-out arm; has been pursued and terrified by many enemies; has given himself up for lost, again and again. He has at last seen his enemies destroyed, and has sung the song of Moses and the Lamb upon the banks of the Red Sea. Then he commences B. Perhaps, like Israel, he thinks his difficulties are at an end, and expects to go on rejoicing till he enters the promised land. But, alas! his difficulties are in a manner but beginning: he has a wilderness before him of which he is not aware. The Lord is now about to suit his dispensation to humble and to prove him, and to show him what is in his heart, that he may do him good at the latter end, and that all the glory may redound to his own free grace.

Since the Lord hates and abhors sin, and teaches his people, whom he loves to hate it likewise, it might seem desirable—and all things are equally easy to him—that at the same time they are delivered from the guilt and reigning power of sin, they should likewise be perfectly freed from the defilement of indwelling sin, and be made fully conformable to him at once. His wisdom has, however, appointed otherwise. But from the above premises, of his hatred of sin, and his love to his people, I think we may certainly conclude that he would not suffer sin to remain in them, if he did not propose to overrule it for the fuller manifestation of the glory of his grace and wisdom, and for the making of his salvation the more precious to their souls.

It is, however, his command, and therefore their duty; yea, further, from the new nature he has given them, it is their desire to watch and strive against sin, and to propose the mortification of the whole body of sin, and the advancement of sanctification in their hearts, as their great and constant aim, to which they are to have an habitual persevering regard. Upon this plan B sets out. The knowledge of our acceptance with God, and of our everlasting security in Christ, has in itself the same tendency upon earth as it will have in heaven; and would, in proportion to the degree of evidence and clearness, produce the same effects of continual love, joy, peace, gratitude, and praise, if there was nothing to counteract it. But B is not all spirit. A depraved nature still cleaves to him, and he has the seeds of every natural corruption yet remaining in his heart. He lives likewise in a world that is full of snares and occasions suited to draw forth those occupations; and he is surrounded by invisible spiritual enemies, the extent of whose power and subtlety he is yet to learn by painful experience.

B knows, in general, the nature of his Christian warfare, and sees his right to live upon Jesus for righteousness and strength. He is not unwilling to endure hardships as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; and believes, that though he may be sorely thrust at that he may fall, the Lord will be his stay. He knows that his heart is "deceitful and desperately wicked," but he does not, he cannot know, at first, the full meaning of that expression. Yet it is for the Lord's glory, and will, in the end, make his grace and love still more precious, that B should find new and mortifying proofs of an evil nature, as he goes on, such as he

could not once have believed, had they been foretold to him, as in the case of Peter, Mark 16: 20. And, in effect, the abominations of the heart do not appear in their full strength and aggravation, but in the case of one who, like B, has tasted that the Lord is gracious, and rejoiced in his salvation. The exceeding sinfulness of sin is manifested, not so much by its breaking through the restraint of threatenings and commands, as by its being capable of acting against light and against love.

Thus it was with Hezekiah. He had been a faithful and zealous servant of the Lord for many years; but I suppose he knew more of God and of himself, in the time of his sickness, than he had ever done before. The Lord, who had signally defended him from Sennacherib, was pleased likewise to raise him from the borders of the grave by a miracle, and prolonged the time of his life, in answer to prayer. It is plain, from the song which he penned upon his recovery, that he was greatly affected with the miracles he had received; yet still there was something in his heart which he knew not, and which it was for the Lord's glory he should be made sensible of; and therefore he was pleased to leave him to himself. It is the only instance in which he is said to have been left to himself, and the only instance in which his conduct is condemned.

I apprehend, that in the state of B, that is, for a season after we have known the Lord, we have usually the most sensible and distressing experience of our evil natures. I do not say that it is necessary that we should be left to fall into gross outward sin, in order to know what is in our hearts; though I believe many have thus fallen, whose hearts, under a former sense of redeeming love, have been as truly set against sin as the hearts of others who have been preserved from such outward falls. The Lord makes some of his children examples and warnings to others, as he pleases.

They who are spared, and whose worst deviations are known only to the Lord and themselves, have great reason to be thankful. I am sure I have: the merciful Lord has not suffered me to make any considerable blot in my profession, during the time I have been numbered among his people. But I have nothing to boast of herein.

I have not been owing to my wisdom, watchfulness, or spirituality, though, in the main, he has not suffered me to live in the neglect of his appointed means. But I hope to go softly all my days, under the remembrance of many things for which I have great cause to be abashed before him, as if I had been left to sin grievously in the sight of men. Yet, with respect to my acceptance in the Beloved, I know not if I have had a doubt, of a quarter of an hour's continuance, for many years past. But, oh, the multiplied instances of stupidity, ingratitude, impatience, and rebellion, to which my conscience has been witness! And as every heart knows its own bitterness, I have generally heard the like complaints from others of the Lord's people with whom I have conversed, even from those who have appeared to be eminently gracious and spiritual.

B does not meet with these things, perhaps, at first, nor every day. The Lord appoints occasions and turns in life, which try our spirits. There are particular seasons when temptations are suited to our frames, tempers, and situations; and there are times when he is pleased to withdraw, and to permit Satan's approach, that we may feel how vile we are in ourselves. We are prone to spiritual pride, to self-dependence, to vain confidence, to creature-attachments, and a train of evils. The Lord often discovers to us one sinful disposition by exposing us to another. He sometimes shows us what he can do for us and in us; and at other times how little we can do, and how unable we are to stand without him.

By a variety of these exercises, through the overruling and edifying influences of the Holy Spirit, B is trained up in a growing knowledge of himself and of the Lord. He learns to be more distrustful of his own heart, and to suspect a snare in every step he takes. The dark and disconsolate hours which he has brought upon himself in times past, make him doubly prize the light of God's countenance, and teach him to dread what ever might grieve the Spirit of God, and cause him to withdraw again. The repeated and multiplied pardons which he has received, increase his admiration, and the sense of his obligations to, the Lord, and the sense of his obligations to, the Lord. Much has been forgiven him; therefore he loves much, and therefore he knows how to forgive and pity others. He does not call evil good, or good evil; but his own experiences teach him tenderness and forbearance. He experiences a spirit of meekness towards those who are overtaken in a fault; and his attempts to restore such, are according to the pattern of the Lord's dealings with himself. In a word, B's character, in my judgment, is complete, and he becomes a C, when the habitual frame of his heart answers to that passage in the prophet Ezekiel, chap. 16: 63: "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more," to boast, condemn, or censure, "because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." I am, etc.

SOLEMN AND EVENTFUL QUESTION.—An old Congregational minister of the gospel, just closing the 77th year of his age, who is engaged in preparing a book for publication in the city of New York, has been in the habit for a short time past of dining at a coffee-house, where, at that hour of the day, uniformly a company of more or less sober gentlemen, of various ages, were engaged in a kind of game at a table in the middle of the room, merely for pastime, without bet or wrangling among them. On the last day of September, at noon, there were two at the game, one younger man from Europe, and a man of upwards of

sixty years of age, who pleasantly busied themselves in their mode of pastime, while the old minister was taken his mid-day repast. A thought came into his mind on the precious value of time, which was so often wasted as though useless—good for nothing. This led him at the close of his repast to step to that table, and put the following question to the gentlemen at their play: "What value would you set upon sixty minutes of time if you could be assured that this, and this hour only, were allotted you to seek and secure an eternal interest in the kingdom of heaven?" They both appeared astonished, but made no definite reply, except a few words by the younger, who said, "That is a solemn question."

At the coffee-table next day, at noon, that younger man said to the old minister, "Do you remember your question yesterday noon?" "I do." "Well, that old man that was then playing pastime with me, was taken ill in the afternoon, a doctor visited him, and about one o'clock at night he died."

"Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." The above statement may be relied on as fact. Let the question which was put to those men be considered, estimated, and improved by every waster of precious time, which God has given, to seek and secure an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give for his soul?" Sixty minutes—the last hour of an impenitent sinner's life. What is that hour worth?

THE TRIFLER.

It has been said, it is a serious thing to live. It is not, necessarily, a sad or gloomy thing to live. It is such only when the great object of life is lost sight of, neglected, and therefore lost; when all that love, mercy and grace has done and still proposes to do for us, fails to produce the designed and desired result, and consequently life terminates not only in a failure, but in hopeless ruin.

Though it is indeed a solemn thing to live, yet if life be properly improved, it will at the same time be a most blessed and joyful thing. Every well regulated soul, renewed in righteousness and true holiness, feels a rich flow of love, joy and peace, mingled with gratitude for the bountiful bestowments of providence and grace. A mind thus sweetly acquiescing in the Divine will, and contented, has a living fountain within, a continual feast.

The blindness of the carnal mind is such that it leads to the mistaken and ruinous notion that in order to meet the cravings of the soul, the bliss for which it sighs, we must lower ourselves down to the position of silly fools or vulgar clowns. Thus they wholly overlook the fact that true joy has never been found in the ways of vain hilarity. These are spirits having no affinity for each other. The one is a virtue, the other a vice. One has the power to elevate and purify, while the tendency of the other is to dissipate the mind and blunt the moral sensibilities. The trifler fails to find and enjoy the bliss of true refinement. This is felt and known by those who move in the higher and purer walks of society life, where a true and noble intelligence, mingled with dignified cheerfulness, mark the converse which both feeds and elevates the mind, and thus prepares for usefulness and happiness here, and heaven hereafter.

Whatever may have marked the history of the past, we have now hit upon a time when all the rage is for fashion and fun. Fun, everywhere, some how, at any price. Even respectable persons, especially the young, hardly think of writing to their friends without taxing their wit and inventive powers to serve up a dish of fun. Now, nonsense seems to be the general rule, and good sense the exception from that rule. At our social gatherings there are generally those who volunteer their services to act the clown for the occasion, and seek to excel, if possible, in that capacity, and thus secure to themselves a notoriety, such as it is. The squalling of ows and squealing of swine, when compared with some of these scenes, would be regarded as orderly, sensible and most becoming.

If we look at such folly from a Bible standpoint, it looks, if possible, still more unbecomingly, and nothing is gained in its favor.—Read the following touches from the sacred penicil: "The mouth of fools poureth out foolishness. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of fools. Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep."

Such are the interests and the relations we sustain, both to our God and our fellow men, that reason, with revelation, most emphatically forbid us to trifle away our precious time. We move to the destinies of the future with fearful speed. As we thus move, we are forming characters for bliss or woe. By the inevitable laws which justly awards all, we shall go to our own place, the place for which we are prepared. Can we then afford to trifle? Have we surplus which we may squander? While the vast influence of heaven, earth and hell are brought to bear on us, either for woe or woe, have we minutes, hours and days to murder by willing them away? The trifler is a moral pestilence to others, so far as his pernicious influence extends. Well would it be if at his death he or others could wipe out his influence, so that his life might be a mere blank. This, however desirable, cannot be. An influence has gone out which can by no means be gathered up and buried with his remains.

In such a world as this, where the moral current always runs in the wrong direction, it is not marvellous that the infatuated masses are carried headlong by its influence. Borne on by this tide, the trifler with their own dearest and best interests, and that of others, and having trifled their way

through the world they finally go out of it as they went through it—*triflers*. It is painfully marvellous that the professed disciples of Christ should do this dreadful thing, when the word of warning love is ever sounding in their ears, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." The trifling christian, so called, cannot have the spirit of cheerful obedience, hence duty becomes a burden and a task. Their attempt at the performance of duty is through fear, to keep up an appearance, or some selfish motive, and not because God's service is a pleasure and delight to them. Sinning and praying will not mix pleasantly together—Thousands neglect the latter, rather than break off from the former. Like Samson, shorn of his locks, their strength is gone, they have neither confidence in God or themselves. The little foxes have spoiled the vines, and hence there is no fruit wherewith to glorify God.—Miserable self-deception. Salt that has lost its savor, and is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men. The evidence that we are Christ's is not in profession or name merely, but in being Christ-like, "putting on Christ," and following him. The sin of trifling is as positively condemned in the sacred scriptures, as are other sins. "For I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment." What, then, is the hope of the trifler, whatever may be his profession or pretensions? Can professed christians read such scriptures, and still continue their trifling?

Here these remarks would close, could it be so, in truth and faithfulness to all concerned. We are often reminded from sources the most reliable, that there are, even in the ministry, some addicted to the habit of trifling; may the number be small and ever diminishing. It is still true that "men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles, neither doth a fountain both yield salt water and fresh." How painful the fact that is forced upon us, that the mouth of him whose business is to dispense God's holy truth, should be defiled by foolish talking. That at one time it should speak the most solemn truths, which God has ever revealed to man, and at other times and under other circumstances the most silly and vain expressions, as if to excite mirth, and every way calculated to drive away serious thought and desire. Paul went from house to house warning and teaching with tears. Some ministers now go from house to house relating laughable incidents and merry jokes, and then wipe their mouths and possibly close up with prayer, and probably call it a pastoral visit. Of course this is all a very religious affair, who can doubt it! There are those, both in and out of the church, of the same spirit, who will admire those so called social qualities and brilliant witticisms at wedding parties, donations and elsewhere. What saith the word of God? We shall see. "Neither foolishness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks."—Eph. 5: 4. By reading the third and fifth verses in connection with the scripture here quoted, it will be seen that *jesting* and *foolish talking* are associated with the vilest sins that fallen humanity is capable of. It is the conduct and daily deportment of the gospel minister which makes him a safe and faithful guide, more than his sermons. Christ was not mistaken when he said "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Let triflers read and meditate on the following scripture. Its meaning is so obvious that it will be difficult to evade or misapply: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain."—James 1: 26. Alas for those whose splendid sermons fall from trifling lips.

How shall the tongue of the trifler be tamed and his folly forever depart? His is a heart disease, and there only can the cure be effected. The Holy Ghost can do the work and spoil his love of fun, and make trifling a perfect loathing and abhorrence unto him. It is wonderful how much the heart has to do with the tongue. Hence that remarkable scripture, "He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace (ornament) of his lips, the King shall be his friend."—Prov. 22: 11.

Let none say that religion is a gloomy and sad thing, merely because it forbids trifling and folly. It also forbids gloom and sadness. A most valuable christian axiom is, "Serious but not sad, cheerful but not in vain." A few scripture references will establish the fact that true religion dispels sadness and brings joy and gladness. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." "The meek only shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." "But rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." "Yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice." Here, indeed, are revealed the privileges of the christian. Such joy as the world knows nothing of, even that joy which is *unspeakable and full of glory and lasts always*. Where, then, is the necessity of forsaking God, the fountain of true bliss? Why go to the world for joy, and sip at her broken cisterns and muddy streams, for one poor morsel, still disappointed, sad and forlorn, and strangers to true happiness?—*Northern Christian Advocate*.

THE METHODIST PREACHERS' EVERYWHERE.—The *North American Review* in an article on Rev. Dr. Sprague's volume on the Methodist clergy has the following:

"Of the presence of these itinerant preachers in the backwoods settlements we have already spoken. Wherever the rifle and the axe of the hardy pioneer were seen, there were also soon to appear not long afterward the saddle-bags of the

Methodist minister. An anecdote which we find in the sketch of Richmond Nolley well illustrates this. Mr. Nolley was one of a small band of missionaries sent out from the South Carolina Conference, about 1815, to labor in the wilds of Mississippi and Louisiana, which were then very sparsely settled, and occupied to some extent by tribes of not always friendly Indians. Mr. Nolley was a man of great energy, zeal, and courage. He was exposed to many dangers in the prosecution of his work, both from the hostile savages and the opposition of white men. But he was rigidly faithful, and omitted no opportunity of doing good to persons of any color or condition, in whatever obscure corner he could find them. On one occasion, while travelling, he came upon a fresh wagon-track, and, following it, he discovered an emigrant family, who had just reached the spot where they intended to make their home. The man, who was putting out his team saw at once, by the costume and bearing of the stranger, what his calling was, and exclaimed:—'What! another Methodist preacher! I quit Virginia to get out of the way of them, and went into a new settlement in Georgia, where I thought I should be quite beyond their reach; but they got my wife and daughter into the Church. Then, in this late purchase, Choctaw Corner, I found a piece of good land, and was sure I should have some peace of the preachers; but here is one, before my wagon is unloaded.' 'My friend,' said Nolley, 'if you go to heaven, you'll find Methodist preachers there; and you see how it is in this world. So you had better make terms with us, and be at peace.'

ONE CENT A DAY.—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," was the last parting injunction laid on the churches by their ascending Lord. Are they able to fulfil the task? They are, and more than able, were the proper system adopted to raise and collect the required means. To show the churches this, we beg leave to submit to their consideration the following facts:

One million of persons contributing *one cent a day*, would raise daily a mission fund of \$10,000. In one year this would amount to \$3,650,000. At a salary of \$500 a year, this would keep in the field 7,300 missionaries. Or two millions of Christians contributing *one cent a day*, would keep in the field 14,500 missionaries.

This system adapts itself to the poor, and gives to all and every one alike opportunity of glorifying God with their substance. It asks not for rich nor great gifts. Could the yoke of Christ be made more easy, or his burden more light than this system makes it? Who through the day would feel himself the poorer for the want of the cent which in the morning he dropped into the mission-box?

Shall not the system be immediately adopted in the churches, and acted upon by them all? Neither talking nor publishing will raise the funds necessary for our boards; but this system will, would all of the churches act upon it. No other means to collect funds would be necessary; it alone would yield funds enough and to spare.

One cent a day would preach the gospel to every creature. Shall it not be given?—*Am. Messenger*.

Faith means, as Brenz beautifully says, to *live in death*; or as before has been said by St. Paul: "As *dying* and behold *we live*." (2 Cor. vi. 9.) Faith can boldly reverse the words of the old saying—"Even in the midst of life we are in death,"—and boldly sing, "Even in the midst of death we are in life." For he who believes *has* eternal life, because he is joined as a member to the Lord and Possessor of life, and comes not into condemnation; because he has come out of the judgment of death in which he was, as a sinner, together with the Son of God who died for him. He has gone forth and *passed into life*, the life in which the Son of God, the Prince of Life, triumphs for ever over death and hell. Who will condemn us, if He, unto whom all judgment is given, justifies us?—*Besser*.

THE DYING WISH. The following beautiful lines deserve a place in the scrap-book of memory: A little Sunday School girl, when dying, wished her mother to put no roses round her in the coffin; and on being asked why not, said, "Because Christ's head was crowned with thorns." This beautiful thought has been verified by James Montgomery, Esq.

"Mamma," a little maiden said,  
Almost with her expiring sigh,  
"Put no sweet roses round my head,  
When in my coffin-dress I lie."  
"Why not, my dear," the mother cried,  
"What flower so well a corpse adorns?"  
"Mamma," the innocent replied,  
"They crown'd our Saviour's head with thorns."  
Banner.

GREAT INFLUENCE OF LITTLE THINGS.—The man who wrote the four simple lines beginning with "Now I lay me down to sleep," seemed to do a very small thing. He wrote four lines for his little child. His name has not come down to us, but he has done more for the good of his race than if he had commanded the victorious army at Waterloo. The little fires which the good man kindles here and there, on the shores of time, never go out; but ever and anon they flame up and throw a light upon the pilgrim's path. There is hardly anything so fearful, to my mind, as the mind reaching down into the coming ages, and writing itself upon the minds of unborn generations. We know not whose hand held the pen that wrote the Arabian Nights; but what a book! How few are the children who have not at spell-bound at the feet of that enchanter!—*Dr. Todd*.