

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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(From the Examiner and Chronicle.)

BROTHER CLOSE.

Brother Close was one of our church-members, and "in good standing." He always paid some part of the minister's salary, and of the other current expenses of the church, but the sum was very small compared with that which he was able to give, and if the salary of the pastor ever so much needed increasing, it was useless to try to persuade him to add to this sum. He thought the preacher well enough supported, and inclined to the opinion that all he received was "really almost a gift," and that he led a very easy and pleasant life altogether. He was one of that still marvellously large class, who think no intellectual work so hard as manual labor for a man's soul or body. One afternoon he met the minister in the churchyard, whither he had gone to erect a stone at the grave of his son, John Close. After some conversation which naturally led to it, the pastor remarked, as they left the place, "Yes, there is no doubt that if better acquainted with each other's individual trials, we should have much stronger sympathy for them."

"Indeed, I think those who work together with their hands, and those who work exclusively with their brains are apt to misunderstand and perhaps to undervalue each other. But the fact is that each fills an indispensable office, that each labors for the same Master, and can gain his approval as well in one position as another, if it is of his appointing. The work of the faithful servant is perhaps as hard, too, in one place as another."

"I don't think so," returned Brother Close. "I can't see, for instance, how a man who sits in his study all day reading and writing, or rides around to visit the folks and attend meetings, has half as much to do as I do, out in the rain, working like an ox in a yoke from sunrise to dark."

"You don't understand it because you have not tried manual work for any length of time. I have had one short experience of it, however, if I remember rightly. Don't you remember how nearly worn out you were after your son's death, with the settling of his estate? That was wholly mental labor; you didn't use for it active bodily strength, and yet at the end of a fortnight—"

"I was perfectly used up, root and branch," put in the brother; and forgetting for the moment the drift of the illustration, he went on to amplify the case.

"That was a dreadful time. Everything was left to me to settle, and being not at all used to legging—well, I rather work through haying and harvesting twice over, than to go through such a job again. I tried to take it easy, but sitting in the office all day, ciphering, and going up and down page after page of figures, I tell you 'twas warmer than standing under a July sun. Sometimes I got so confused, that I couldn't think of anything; then when night came I couldn't sleep for fighting figures all night. I couldn't eat anything, either, all that time, with such a responsibility on me, for you see all his family had at stake; and I had my own affairs to look after, too. On the whole, I never did have such a worry. Why, I lost seven pounds of flesh in those two weeks. Here, seeing the minister smile, Brother Close suddenly remembered that he had helped the argument against himself, for he added quickly, and with a troubled expression, "But you see I wasn't used to it, and that makes all the difference."

"Not at all difference," rejoined his companion gently, "for though I have long been used to this thought-work, there are many times, when, if my Master were willing, I should be glad to lie down to my last sleep. I suppose you could hardly believe, were I to tell you the amount of time sometimes needed for a single sermon. Only yesterday I had to look over nearly a dozen volumes in studying a single point, to which, in speaking, I should give not more than five minutes, yet it was an important thing; one that could not be passed over, indeed, for I have promised you and the Great Shepherd to make a faithful use of my powers, and of all the means within reach for the good of this people. Some-times I search for a text, in vain; I can't think; nothing seems clear. Or after long trying, just as I get one train of thought, in my mind, and am ready to make the outline of a sermon, some poor brother in trouble calls, and I must see, and try to comfort him; and so upon reaching the study again the whole plan is lost."

"Or I am suddenly called to visit a dying man, to try and lift the heavenly light before his closing eyes; or to sympathize with those left alone; or, perhaps, to sit beside the sick bed of one of my own family. At other times I must hear and settle a difficulty between brethren. Last week I had one or more of these interruptions every day, and on Saturday morning, sad and disheartened, weary from watching with my sick child, and trembling at the awful responsibility of speaking to the souls of the people with so little preparation in prayer and study, I felt upon my knees, and with sob and groan, besought the Lord to put his arm about me and his thoughts into my heart. He did, and gave without effort of mine, what, unless his providence hinder me, He generally helps me search for, but sometimes I find no help; my heart is cold, I cannot pray, and though I delve with pick and spade among the deep things of God, I am too blind to see the precious ore, and I feel that to the hundreds of souls in my care I can bring no true riches, of any consequence."

"It is this, above all the other legion of cares, that makes my heart heavy, that keeps sleep from me, and wears away my life."

"I know, Brother Close, that merely temporal things, though they seem so weighty that nearly all labor for them untiringly, are of no real consequence, compared with the saving of souls; and there are in one sense committed to my keeping. Who shall answer for me here?" the speaker's voice was very tremulous—"what infinite interests are at stake? You felt that there was in a way responsible for the earthly all of your son's family, and it gave you sleepless and weary days. But what were the loss of all earth, compared with the loss of an endless life? This is the care that makes the minister's burden, and beside which such as yours of late year are only trifling. But of the merely earthly ones I have also a large share. All I have of this world is a small stock of books and household goods, with the food and raiment of the year. For future use I have an earthly pledge of nothing; nothing which I wish to educate my sons; nothing with which, when ready, they can begin business."

"It sometimes happens, too, that the current supplies get very low. My potato-barrel has more than once been empty; and then comes the tempter, saying, 'Ah, if you could but use your talents as other men do, you too would have for yourself and family the comforts and ability to bless which others enjoy.'"

By the time Brother Close was ready to turn homeward, he had heard many things of which he had not before thought seriously, and when he bade the minister "good-day," there was real sympathy, almost tenderness, in the tone of his voice and the grasp of his hand. A month passed. Brother Close was ill. For two days and nights he had suffered much, and now on the third day he sent for the pastor. As the latter entered the room, the sick man put out an eager hand, saying, "I am glad to see you. I've suffered on your account, and I've got to confess to you." Taken by surprise, the pastor had not time to reply, when he added, "Sit down, and I'll tell you. I can't rest till I tell of my mind."

"I dreamed last night that you and I had changed places; that I was the minister, and that you were Aaron Close; and of all the nightmares I ever had, that was the toughest. It was the preacher's troubles, you see, that set the heaviest. I went through them all, but you know every one, and I haven't breath to tell them over, either. But I must tell you of the last, and of the dream. I was most heart-broken because the brethren didn't stand by me, as they ought to have done, in anything, and at last I got into terrible anxiety about my two boys, your Albert and William. I said to myself, 'These two boys must be educated, and yet I haven't a cent to do it with. There's nothing left of my last year's salary, and this is the year the church decide that they can't give me any more, and so, though they've all prospered, I and mine must pinch along the old way.' Now, I thought, 'there's Brother Close, with all his property, and not a child in the world, and yet see how little he does for me or the church.' Brother Close looked the meanest of any man in the church to me, and I said, too, 'the Lord took away his boy last year, so that he hasn't anything to work for but the Lord, and yet he's as greedy as ever. Oh, if he only would open his heart, and help me do for my boys!'"

Here the sufferer wiped his eyes with a trembling hand, and went on.

"But no help came, and I waked up saying, 'I am alone, and may God help me, for brother Close won't.' I tell you it was a new chapter to me. I could see a hundred ways for the salary to go that I never thought of before, and I told the good Lord who had not called me to be a preacher, when I woke, that I would be glad to help his servants carry their burdens hereafter, and that I would never forget that for their mental work and their time we owe them an easy support—over it, not give it—and that Aaron Close would try to do his full share after this, too. And now if you can carry the preacher's load, 'I'll thank Him if he'll let me dig for your bread.' 'Wife,' he continued, 'hand me my old wallet.' 'There,' he added, turning to his pastor, 'take that fifty dollars. I put it away for John's birthday present, but he's where he doesn't need it now. Use it for your boys, and—' he could add no more. Here the donor, and he who silently received the gift, lost voice and sight together."

There is no need for comment on the scene. Brother Close recovered his health, and kept all his promises. The pastor had confided the trials of his heart and life to him tenderly, and without proud reserves; he had made him feel a sympathy with him by his trustful confidences, and there was a good result. A month's thought, and one dream did the rest. Let pastor and people confide in each other more. "Love as brethren."

A TRUE STORY OF CONVERSION.

It was a wretched home; dirt and poverty were everywhere. In the grate were a few smouldering embers, and hovering over the unwept hearth sat a forlorn woman, bent double, her eye wild, and her cheek haggard, while her attitude had the crouching look so often seen in the wives of poor and depraved husbands. She seemed thinking moodily, and was evidently in fear—for a sound as of a door opening behind her made her start once or twice. "How much longer can this last, I wonder," she presently muttered. "I'd rather die than live in this misery." All at once the door was flung violently open, and a miserable, blood-shot man entered the room; he was evidently intoxicated. "Get up, idler, and give me some supper," was his greeting.

"What is the use to ask me for supper? I have no food, no fire, and no money, and none we are likely to have while you spend everything you get in drink."

High words followed, blows succeeded, and at length the cowardly fellow slunk away, and the bruised, half-starved wife threw herself, heartbroken and stupefied, upon her uneasy bed. What wonder if life's burden did seem too heavy to poor Mary Monk? She was without God, and had no hope; her husband was a drunkard, her children were in the street, her spirit crushed, and her home, unhallowed either by God's fear or man's love, was little more than a shelter from the winds of heaven.

Her husband went staggering on in his maddening state, and was presently engaged in the usual calling—singing comic songs at a public house, till the night was far advanced; for he rarely began till an hour when thoughtful men are preparing themselves by rest for the next day's duties. Some weeks after the commencement of my story he was observed by a man devoted to the salvation of perishing souls, strolling idly along one Sabbath evening just before service time. Something in his aspect looked aroused pity in the heart of the observer, and turning suddenly round upon him, he asked him to go to chapel with him. Perhaps it was the novelty of the request, perhaps the pleasant manner of the stranger, or, higher than any second cause, a gentle drawing of the good Spirit from above, that made him comply. At any rate he did comply; and in a few minutes they together entered the mission chapel, where Mr. S— conducted evening worship.

The room was not lighted; and uttering a profane comparison between its darkness and that of the pit of perdition, William Monk followed Mr. S— into the little vestry beyond.

"Wait a minute," said Mr. S—, solemnly, his spirit awed by the language of his companion; "I will soon get light, and I trust we may yet have it in more senses than one."

"Now let us pray," he added, as the last lamp was lit. The men knelt. One prayed. The other, according to his own subsequent statement, mocked. Before the service began, Mr. S— had drawn much of his history, with his name, from "Billy Monk," as he called himself. He said his mother had been a good woman and had loved her Bible. He had been sixteen years given to drinking. His occupation was that of a comic singer of immoral songs, at a nightly concert and dancing-room. He earned two guineas a week, but had no good from his wages. His wife was almost starved, and he was afraid, not too well pleased. He was not happy—no, he knew that; but what was the use of caring? he could not alter things, they must just go on.

"Well, what's the use? I shall break it again," "Perhaps not. Will you try?" "I don't know; I'll think of it."

"Wait for me after the service, will you?" "I will," and he did: he stayed to the prayer-meeting; and in the conversation which followed he promised to sign the temperance pledge; not, however, with any apparent sense of its possible benefit, or even, the least evidence of serious feeling. A vein of mockery seemed to pervade his whole character. He left the chapel, and the next day he kept his word and signed the pledge; but he did not come to the week evening service, as he promised. His friend sought him again. The Sabbath returned. He was in his place; and this went on for two or three weeks, during which he never once broke his pledge, but gave no other hopeful sign—and so time passed on. Many hearts were praying earnestly for poor Billy, the bald-singer; his attendance at the meeting was closely observed. Sometimes he was so attentive as to kindle hope, and then irregularity damped expectation. But he was never lost sight of, and they who "continued in prayer" believed in its power.

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stand to such tests as time would give it; but if, as I believed, it was God's own hand, it would prove its Divine origin by resisting all the snares of hell, and all the assaults of sin."

The work proved to be of God; it withstood all temptations. The subject of it abandoned old habits, associates, and means of living; and, aided by Christian friends, pursued the honest trade he had been taught, with more comfort, if with less profit, than the sinful course ever yielded. His wife looked a new creature, and his home a new place. Billy Monk had a pious mother; her prayers and his salvation may be seen hereafter to have been bound together in a holy alliance, and graciously linked as cause and effect.

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"Pray, William, pray. Look to Christ for help, believe in him for salvation," was Mr. S—'s counsel. "I can't pray, I can't believe; oh! my sins, my sins!" That prayer that prayer! "What prayer?" "About the wicked songs: my head is full of them, and their words are stings. I am lost, lost; I have ruined myself, and myself too."

"Oh, sir! why glad?" "Because for each there is good news. Do you know who Jesus came to save?" "Yes, yes, I know sinners; but not my sort, not me. I can see my sins, but no Saviour. I have been sixteen years a drunkard; I have half killed my poor wife; I have sold myself to evil men and my soul to the devil. Not for me! not for me! Christ will spare me, such a poor outcast as I am."

stand to such tests as time would give it; but if, as I believed, it was God's own hand, it would prove its Divine origin by resisting all the snares of hell, and all the assaults of sin."

The work proved to be of God; it withstood all temptations. The subject of it abandoned old habits, associates, and means of living; and, aided by Christian friends, pursued the honest trade he had been taught, with more comfort, if with less profit, than the sinful course ever yielded. His wife looked a new creature, and his home a new place. Billy Monk had a pious mother; her prayers and his salvation may be seen hereafter to have been bound together in a holy alliance, and graciously linked as cause and effect.

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