

The Religious Intelligencer.

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

Rev. J. McLEOD,

"THAT GOD

IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."

Editor.

[Editor and Proprietor.

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SAINT JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1872.

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The Intelligencer.

THE MENNONITES.

Their Religious Tenets and Usages.

BY ALEXANDER GONANT.

The following sketch will not be without interest to our readers. It is said that they have been prospecting in Manitoba, with a view to settling a colony there.

Forty thousand Mennonites, it is said, are about to seek a home in the United States. It is worth while to inquire what are the characteristics of this vast body of immigrants; what they bring to us from the old world; why Europe casts them forth.

The Mennonite seeks in the Bible not only rules to guide his conscience, but in his manners, dress, customs, he conforms with rigid exactness to a literal interpretation of its teachings. Inspired prophecy loses its poetical coloring, and the charm of Oriental hyperbole vanishes in painful fidelity to the letter. And yet there is a guilelessness in this homely simplicity which disarms criticism, especially since we find practical precept conform so closely, that, with the Mennonite, turning his cheek to the smiter is no mere figure of speech, and that his goods are literally bestowed to feed the poor.

M. Michiel, in his charming sketch of life in the Vosges, gives an interesting account of this curious sect. These mountain solitudes offered asylums to the persecuted Mennonites. There they flocked in great numbers, and have turned the wilderness into a garden. But, whether in safety or in peril, in the desert or the crowded city, everywhere they have maintained the same characteristics. Narrow and prejudiced they are, no doubt, for persecution does not foster "sweetness and light," and they have clung with the more ardent devotion to tenets sanctified by the blood of so many martyrs; but, though outraged, belied, and outlawed, they have been steadfast in their faith, and have never raised their hand against the oppressor.

The fundamental articles of their creed is the rejection of infant baptism. Children are carefully instructed in the Mennonite doctrines, and at the age of fourteen or fifteen are usually admitted into the church. They do not believe that baptism effaces original sin; for that disappeared when the Saviour uttered his loud, expiring cry upon the cross. The price of our ransom was then paid, and man entered upon a new existence. Of course, children dying in infancy are saved, since they have committed no sin.

The Mennonites reject the authority of tradition, and take the Bible as their sole guide, not only in matters of faith, but in the affairs of daily life. They have no stately hierarchy, no magnificent churches. All places are equally sacred to the church. Why build him costly temples? From their own number their officers are every year selected—one, the pastor, or "Servant of All," to preach, baptize, administer the communion, and have the general oversight of the church; another, the "Second Servant," to expound the Scriptures and the confession of faith, and to preach when the pastor is absent. To the third, the deacon, or "Servant of the Poor," is intrusted the care of the needy and infirm. That no false doctrine may slip in unawares, he is charged also with the oversight of the pastor's discourses. These officers receive no salary. They work with their hands, wear the same dress and live with the same frugal simplicity as their flock.

As the Mennonites follow the example and precepts of the Master with the utmost strictness, no circumstance, however trifling and minute, is neglected. Since he, after the Supper, washed the disciples' feet, they perform the same ceremony. In the ordinance of baptism, a studied simplicity is observed. The candidates wear new garments, but of no special fashion. One by one they are conducted into a room, where only two persons, the pastor and the deacon, are present. Kneeling down, the catechumen repeats a *credo*. The pastor asks if he desires to be baptized. "Yes," he answers. "In whose name?" "In the name of Jesus our Lord." "What is your name?" The candidate gives his name. The deacon then presents a bowl of water to the pastor, who takes some in his hand and pours it on the head of the candidate, pronouncing the words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Then, raising him, the pastor says, "Rise and go in the name of Jesus Christ." After all the candidates have been baptized, they meet together to worship God. A month later, they take the communion for the first time. The Lord's Supper is regarded as merely a commemoration of Christ's death, and is administered as in most Protestant churches.

M. Michiel gives a lively description of the Mennonite marriage ceremonies in the Vosges. They follow point by point, the model laid down, as they believe, in Scripture. The story of Isaac, sent by Abraham to select a wife for Isaac, is copied as literally as possible.

When a young man has obtained his parents' consent to his marriage, he informs the Third Servant of his intentions, and employs him to make them known to the maiden and her family. The *Steckelmann* (as he is called on such occasions), mounts his horse, and proceeds to the house of her father. He stops at the fountain, in the mountains placed before each dwelling. As soon as the girl perceives him, she trips out of her house, pitcher in hand, and proceeds to fill it. Inclining his head, the *Steckelmann* entrusts a drink from her pitcher. "Most willingly," she replies; and he moistens his lips with the water. If the offer is well received, she fills the wooden trough below the fountain, and invites the ambassador to let his thirsty beast drink also. If not, she returns to the house without another word. After the animal has drunk, the *Steckelmann* takes from his valise the presents destined for the modern Rebekah, a piece of linen, a gown, and a kerchief for the neck, and presents them to the maiden. He then asks if there is room

in her father's house. She answers in the affirmative, and hastens to inform her parents of the expected visitor. Her father goes out to receive him. "Enter, thou blessed of the Lord," he says. "Why standest thou without? Our house is open to thee, and we will shelter thy beast also." The *Steckelmann* alights, and enters. Food is placed before him, but he refuses to taste a morsel till his errand is made known. Then he formally demands the girl's hand, mentioning the name of her lover, and all details necessary on such an occasion. The parents answer, "It is God who has sent you. It is he who has put the words in your mouth. How can we but respect his will? We must, however, consult our daughter; for we cannot marry our child against her wishes."

The maiden, who has retired to another room, is now recalled, and asked if she accepts the proposed husband. With modest timidity, she replies, "I will follow him under the roof where he dwells." A repast is then served, after which the *Steckelmann* returns to give an account of his mission.

The burial ceremonies of the Mennonites are very simple. As soon as one of their number has ceased to breathe, the watchers kneel down, and commit his soul to God. The body is then prepared for burial, and laid in a black coffin. All night long, friends watch around the coffin, and, from hour to hour kneel down and commend the departed spirit to the goodness of the Almighty. On the next day, the whole community assembles; the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians is read. The coffin is placed upon a wooden frame, and borne to the grave by four young men, while the members of the church follow, singing hymns. At the grave prayer is offered, the body is lowered into its last resting-place, and the earth smoothed over it. No memorial, even of the simplest kind, marks the spot, and the grass and flowers spring up soon obliterate every trace. It is not neglect or forgetfulness of the dead. It is rather a conviction of the nothingness of all earthly things, a desire to turn the thoughts away from the decaying body to the spirit which has burst the bonds that held it down to earth.

There is but one penalty against church discipline—exclusion. While it lasts, the excommunicated person cannot eat or drink with his own family, vote or take the communion. But even here, the reformation of the offender is the aim of the sentence. Should he manifest true penitence, he is joyfully received again.

In politics the Mennonites take no share, believing that the fate of nations is in the hands of the Almighty, who directs it as he will. They pay implicit obedience to government, praying for their rulers, whoever they may be. In the affairs of the outside world they take no interest, and read no books except such as relate to their own sect. Their religious belief does not require them to live apart from the world, yet, forbidden by their rules to share in many of its customs and amusements, they prefer to live in communities by themselves. Though seldom rich, poverty is almost unknown. Their benevolence towards the afflicted is worthy of all praise. Nor are their charities confined to their own poor. To all in want and misery, they stretch out a helping hand; and, though their kindness is often abused, it is never wearied.

Appeals to the civil tribunals is forbidden by their principles. If a debtor, not a Mennonite, refuses to satisfy the claims of one of their number, and persists in his refusal after his unjust behavior has been fully set forth to him, a free gift is made of the amount in dispute. "Peace and concord," they say, "are worth more than the transitory things of this world."

If the dispute is between Mennonites, a council is held of the three *Servants*, before which both parties appear. Their decision, from which there is no appeal, is submitted to without a murmur. A brief sketch is all our space allows of the principles and practices of this long maligned sect. Even now, though no longer subject to tyranny and outrage, its good name still suffers from the stains cast upon it in days when toleration was the worst of crimes, and sectary was a name of infamy. It is time that the baselessness of these calumnies should be acknowledged, and justice done to a body of Christians, who, though mistaken in some of their religious views and usages, have always honestly sought to carry out to their fullest extent the precepts and spirit of the gospel.

Besides the first-class family reading of a religious character, the *Intelligencer* always furnishes the latest and most reliable news.

ORIGIN OF SOME QUOTATIONS.

Many familiar phrases are supposed to have their origin in the Bible that are not in the good book, but the phrases are good and we love to use them. The following may be useful to prevent misquotations from Scripture:

"God tempests the wind to the storm lamb." From Stern's *Sentimental Journal* to Italy. Compare Isaiah 29: 8.

"In the midst of life we are in death." From the Burial Service; and this originally from a hymn of Luther.

"Bread and wine which the Lord hath commanded to be received." From the English Catechism.

"Not to be wise above what is written." Not in Scripture.

"That the spirit would go from heart to heart as oil from vessel to vessel." Not in Scripture.

"The merciful man is merciful to his beast." The scriptural form is: "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast."—Prov. 12: 10.

"A nation shall be born in a day." In Isaiah it reads: "Shall a nation be born at once?"—Isa. 66: 8.

"As iron sharpeneth iron so doth a man the countenance of his friend." Iron sharpeneth: so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.—Prov. 27: 17.

"That he who runs may read."—Hab. 2: 2.

"Owe no man anything but love." "Owe

no man anything, but to love one another."—Rom. 12: 8.

"Prone to sin as the sparks fly upward."

"Born to trouble as the sparks fly upward."

Job 5: 7.

"Exalted to heaven in point of privilege."

Not in the Bible.

Eve was not Adam's helpmate, but merely a help meet for him; nor was Absalom's long hair of which he was so proud, the instrument of his destruction; his head, and not the hair upon it, having been caught in the boughs of the tree. (2 Samuel 18: 9.) A London wig-maker once had a sign upon which was painted Absalom suspended from the branches of the oak by his hair, and underneath the following couplet:

"'Twas London hadn't worn his own hair,

He'd ne'er been found a hanging there."

—N. Y. Observer.

THESE COLUMNS always contain a great variety of choice reading, useful in any family.

LORD CONGLETON'S OFFER.

The following incident I had from a friend, Rev. George J. Miggins, Superintendent of New York City Missions, as something he believed to be true.

Lord Congleton was one of the noble British laymen, of whom the Earl of Shaftesbury is perhaps best known, at the present day, on this side the Atlantic. He had thrown himself, like an earnest man that he was, into evangelistic work, both on his own estates and among the London poor. He was also an eccentric character, and would do good in a style all his own. So his tenantry had learned to trust his goodness of heart, while wondering what he might do next. As thought went out towards those whom he would lift up, he satisfied himself that a change of life and heart must precede and underlie any solid reformation. So, with all temporal provisions and aids to self-help for those who had gone so far down, he pressed earnestly upon their attention the godliness which is profitable for time and eternity.

As he labored, he could not understand why men were so slow to believe and accept God's free salvation; and in his own peculiar manner he resolved to work out an old story he had read, and give all his tenants a practical object-lesson in their obligations. To answer must give also a statement of their own means and whatsoever property they may have.

The session of Parliament was over, and he started for his country-seat. The morning after his arrival he had the following notice posted in various conspicuous places about the village that lay upon his estate, and on the great gate of his private grounds:

NOTICE.
Lord Congleton will be present, with his steward, at his office in the village, between the hours of 9 A. M. and 12 noon, — day of —; and will then and there pay all accounts and debts, and the several owing, of any of his tenants who cannot discharge their obligations. To answer themselves of this offer, the applicants must present their accounts in the form of separate bills, containing the exact statement of the amounts and nature of the debts owing to each creditor. They must give also a statement of their own means and whatsoever property they may have.

CONGLETON.
Soon, around each placard a crowd began to gather. Curiosity, astonishment, possessed the villagers. "What does it mean?" And crowds gathered around the office. To one and all, the steward gave only one answer: "That is Lord C.—'s signature: the notice speaks for itself." Further explanations of his master's motives he refused; nor would he answer any questions. "He was simply ordered to fix up those placards. That was all he knew."

The day drew on, with an increasing excitement on the part of the poor. Some looked at the latter clause. It seemed to intimate that they must surrender all they had, to claim the benefit. They were not insensible; and so they concluded not to apply. Others had accounts of a nature they did not like to expose to the world. "Twas some new unaccountable whim of Lord C.," said one. "But there's his own signature; he'll never dishonor that," said a neighbor. And so discussion ran high.

Many gathered up their accounts, and made out the required statements, resolving to see how others fared, and if they succeeded, to present their lists of hopeless debts. Some planned how to keep back part of their assets, and some again, deterred by arguments or ridicule, gave up all thought of the matter.

The day came, and a crowd of tenants and lookers-on were gathered near the office. All doors to gain any further information were fruitless. A little before the hour Lord Congleton's carriage drove up, and he stopped hastily into the office, and the door was closed and locked after him. Precisely at nine a step came from the inner room, and they heard the bolt thrown back.

Men looked at each other. None were willing to go first, fearing either the confession of poverty, or the ridicule that would meet an unsuccessful application. "You go and try, Jones," said a man to his neighbor. "I'm not so poor as you think for," was the reply, albeit each had shown friends their lists, and consulted with them about the debts they meant to present. So the minutes wore by, while men looked upon each other and waited.

It was near ten o'clock when an old couple, who for two or three years had been inmates of the poor-house, entered the group before the office. "Is it true," they said, "Lord Congleton has offered to pay all our debts?" "Don't know; he has said none here." "But has any one been in?" "Not yet." Just then the notice hanging outside the office door caught the old man's eyes. It was faded by sun and rain. "Why wife," said he, "this has been here for days, and I know his Lordship's signature. Thank God! we can die at least free of debt," and they started for the door. "Aye, aye; you go first, old man, and tell us how you fare." "I don't think you are out of the poor-house yet." "Guess he'll be fooled." So their neighbors' comments fell upon their ears as they entered.

Within the inner office they found Lord C. and his steward. The old man laid his state-

ment and bills upon the table, saying, "These are my debts, my Lord. I have nothing, but live in the poor-house. This, however, matters little, if I die debt-free." "Why should I pay your debts?" asked the gentleman. "I can't tell *why*, except that you *say* you will. I know your signature, and believe your promise." "That is enough," said Lord C.

The steward then made up the account and drew a check, which he handed to his master. He looked at it, compared it with the statement, and passed it with his signature to the old man. He earnestly thanked his benefactor, and then started for the door, saying, "I must tell my neighbors." "No, you shall not," said Lord C. "they must trust *my* word." Then the old couple were shown into another room to wait till twelve; and in the meantime the steward told his master their history. Coming down from comparative comfort, their poverty had been misfortune, but not fault. Lord C.—was interested in them, and ordered the lease of a little place to be made out in their name, which he added to the check.

Outside, the time wore away; and as the old people did not come forth, all settled down to the opinion there was nothing in it. Twelve years near. Men looked at each other, but did not go. Slowly the hour rang out, and with the last stroke the door opened, and the old man came out. "Have you got your money?" With that he showed the check. "Good as a note of the Bank of England," there was a rush around Lord C.—as he entered his carriage, and men shook at him their statements. "My Lord, will you pay my debts?" "Lord Congleton, there's my account."

"Friends, it is past twelve o'clock," said he, as he drove away.—*Interior.*

Free Baptists especially ought to have the *Intelligencer*.

"SUNDAYISH."

"Sundayish" is certainly not an elegant word, but it may be to some of our readers an expressive one. It expresses a feeling of excessive weariness, accompanied by a lassitude of body and mind, and an insensibility of heart which have made many an hour of public worship painfully unprofitable.

We had occasion once to say to an esteemed member of our charge, "Your place, brother, in the house of God has been a long time vacant." "Yes," was the emphatic reply, "and I assure you that I am so weary on Sunday by the week's labor, that when I go to church I cannot keep awake. So I think it better to stay at home."

Years ago we had a hearer of another spirit. He was a farmer as was the one just named. He was besides an older man, and in labors on the farm more abundant. He lived further from the church, having to ride about three miles. Yet he was always in his place. Heat and cold were alike unable to keep him at home. He even braved the terrific hindrances of "haying days," and on the Sundays between his hay days, triumphantly sat down among the worshippers in God's house. And while there, his fixed attention and quiet "amens" evinced his wakefulness. He assured the writer that he had not heard an unprofitable sermon in twenty-five years. He diligently with prayer sought the honey, and so he found it in flowers of little beauty or sweetness.

The question then recurs: Where does the Sunday imbecility come in? We venture to reply a few suggestions. We need not stop to qualify our remarks by exceptional cases arising from disease or from extraordinary business exigency. We speak of the general facts in the case. They are, we think, these:

Our week-day work is unreasonably intensified. No small amount of it is imposed by hastening to be rich; and more perhaps by "taking thought for the morrow." Anxiety, as well as too much work, exhausts our vitality. There is certainly attainable in the church a grace that shall enable them to "be content with such things as they have," and to "be careful for nothing."

Again, carrying the labors of the week late into Saturday night, makes a heavy Sunday. We fear many continue on the morning of the Sabbath, labor which might be done on Saturday. So they work up to the church hour, and get chafed in spirit over the threshold of the courts of the Lord. No wonder they have both mental and spiritual insensibility.

The puritan Saturday-night Sunday was a good institution, but not their Sabbath-evening Monday. We can afford to be generous with our time towards the Lord's day.

One more suggestion: We believe there is somewhat prevalent, a mistaken idea of the nature of the rest to be sought on the Sabbath. We are persuaded that Christians will not find all, nor even the best part of it on the lounge. Change is an excellent part. The toil of the Sunday-school teachers, genuinely in earnest to do good, does not cause him to be less rested on Monday. The man who with a warm heart listens to two sermons, and enters into the duties of the Sunday-school and prayer-meeting on every Lord's day, will find his body and brains more refreshed than he who sleeps in church or lounges at home. The refreshing showers of grace obtained through the ordinances of God's house, are to the soul what a bath and friction are to the body. They remove the soreness, and give rest.

There is a mother in Israel of our acquaintance, who loves to tell the following fact of her early religious life: She was at the time doing the work in a large family of a farmer. She rose early Sunday morning, prepared the breakfast for the family, and walked five miles to the circuit-preaching. The first hour at the gathering was spent in a class meeting. Then followed the public service. A sermon was listened to, "not cut off at both ends, and flattened in the middle," but long and unctuous. Then the brothers and sisters were not content to leave without "a little season of prayer." After this came the walk home, and the work of preparing and clearing away the family supper table.

The old lady declares with moistened eyes, that these Sundays were days of refreshing, "full of blessed comfort and rest," and that

she arose before daybreak on Monday to do her weekly washing, "as sprightly as a bird."

We conclude, therefore, that the church does not need fewer Sabbath services, but a better preparation for them, and a heartier relish for the bread and water of life.—*Rev. Z. A. Mudge to Zion's Herald.*

Now is the time to canvass for new subscribers.

"LITTLE THING" CHRISTIANS.

It is not very difficult to be a Christian in the prayer-meeting, or in church on the Sabbath. There everything tends that way, and a man can talk and pray and feel good to his soul's content without much exertion. But it is when he is away from Christian influences—when the current of life is in another direction—that the man who wants to lead a Christian life has need to look well to his ways. It is not so easy then to feel good, or to be good. And the hardest of all forces to bear up against, and to walk Christianly in spite of, is the overwhelming power of little things.

We all know how it is. To resist a great temptation, a true man braces himself and squares his shoulders, with the firm resolve not to be subdued by it. If his right hand cause him to offend, the high impulse of his soul is to "cut it off, and cast it from him." But alas for his courage when the little, nagging temptations of the hour come trooping in upon him! The assault of a fly or a mosquito will fret a man, and spoil the sweet flavor of his temper to an extent almost incredible. It is humiliating—it shames us in our moments of cool after-reflection—to observe how easily we are affected by these puny forces; but they do come so unexpected, and their charge is so simply annoying—how can we fortify ourselves to resist it!

But really it is just here, when we are abroad in the world, away from uplifting influences, and surrounded by the thousand-and-one provoking little temper-rufflers, that we are most bound to show our Christian courage, our Christian power of resisting evil. What if the mosquito does sting—have we not grace enough to keep our temper under the infliction? The petty cares and troubles and annoyances of life are among the things that will come, and if we suffer ourselves to be constantly disturbed by them, we not only do ourselves a grievous wrong, but are sure to give pain to those about us, and so sin against the great law of love which, as Christians, we are bound to observe in all situations.

If we look carefully back upon our "record" of misdoings in regard to the little things of life, is it not true of most of us that the page will show a very unseemly face? How often have we been "upset" by the merest trifle, and led into a frame of mind lamentably unsuitable for a follower of the meek and loving Jesus! A careless word has stung our pride—a misplaced article that we happened to want has made us fretful—a little delay, perhaps quite unavoidable, in matters affecting our comfort or business arrangements, has set us fuming with impatience—a blunder of servant or child or clerk has made us unreasonably cross and severe in rebuke;—how mean, how unworthy of us it all seems in retrospect. Yet over and over again we let the selfish little worries get the better of us, just as though no broad, exacting principles of right living had place in our hearts.

We know this is not to be "like Christ." We know that in little things, as in great, we must acknowledge and stand firmly by the noble law of love if we hope to attain true holiness, and live a godly life. It is, as we have said, a hard thing to do—a harder "cross" by many a name, than the things so often erroneously styled "crosses"—but if we would be Christ's disciples, we must take up and bear our little great crosses with manly spirit and unquenchable devotion. Don't let us be the servants of little things.—*Examiner & Chronicle.*

RANDOM READINGS.

Grown in grace, because this is the only way to be certain that you have any grace at all. If we sin not at growth in grace, we have never been converted to goodness. He that is satisfied with his attainments has attained nothing.

If thou desirest Christ for a perpetual guest, give him all the keys of thine heart; let not one cabinet be locked up from him; give him the range of every room, and the key of every chamber; thus you will constrain him to remain.

Look we into the life of Christ and we shall find the philosophy of the simple, the nurse of young men, the meat of strong men, the buckler of the weak, and the physic of the sick; the book full of Divine instructions; fit for all mankind.—*St. Chrysostom.*

Unquietness is the greatest evil that can come to the soul excepting sin. For as seditions and civil disorders of a commonwealth ruin it entirely, and disable it to resist a stranger, so our heart, being troubled and disquieted in itself, loseth strength to maintain the virtues which it had gained, and with it the means to resist the temptations of the enemy, who at that time useth all kinds of endeavors to fish (as they say) in troubled waters.—*De Sales.*

The past is no safe ground; and yet there are those who have sit mumbering their satisfaction. They boast of what they have done. They have made fortunes. They have scraped in money—they are not careful to recount how! They have built warehouses. They have invented this, that, or the other thing. And so they sit piping about themselves as if the world had been sustained to keep them up, and as if the little they had done here and there was a fit theme for their everlasting meditation.—