

# CHRISTIAN



# VISITOR.

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"BY PURENESS BY KNOWLEDGE—BY LOVE UNFEIGNED."—St. PAUL.

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## THE EMPTY PEW.

BY W. HOBKIRK.

When friends to other lands depart,  
We used so oft to meet;  
We miss them in each favourite path—  
We miss them in the street.

But chiefly in the House of God,  
Where holier feelings grew—  
We miss them where their absent forms  
Have left an empty pew.

When swells the joyful song of praise,  
And when in prayer we bow,  
We ask—will this sweet task be theirs—  
Will they be singing now?

And will this beauteous Sabbath morn  
Bring blessings to them still?  
The quiet rest—the house of prayer—  
The message of good will.

'Mid altered scenes, and faces strange,  
And unfamiliar things;  
When they are brought to feel the change  
That to aught earthly clings—

Will some impressive, earnest voice  
Lead them to look and bow,  
To Him whose love may never change—  
Whose care surrounds them now?

We thank thee, Father! that our friends  
Afar on land or sea,  
Though called to part with much they love,  
Need never part with thee.

And though divided—still in Thee  
Our hearts can meet, and feel  
Beneath thy safe, all-sheltering wings,  
As if together still.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

## MEMOIR

OF THE LATE

REV. SAMUEL ELDER,

OF FREDERICTON, N.B.

In the following Memoir I shall avail myself, as far as possible, of the materials which Brother ELDER has left behind him in Journals and other papers.

SAMUEL ELDER was born at Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the 6th of February, 1817.

He enjoyed the advantage of early religious training; for both his parents were pious; and the record of the death of his mother, contains the following passage:—"I remember most clearly how she taught me, when a child, to read the hymns of Watts for children and to commit them to memory. From her lips I first heard them, and they easily imprinted themselves on my mind. I have not forgotten them. I seem now to see her, as in those early days, when she would draw my brother and myself to her side, and sing some of the most select of the Divine Songs. Her voice is yet in my ear. She also taught me to read; and I could manage to read a chapter in the New Testament before I went to school. Nor was she contented with our being able to read the sacred word; she explained its truths; and endeavoured to impress them upon our hearts. It was especially her delight to dwell upon those passages in which Christ is presented as the Good Shepherd; and those which exhibit his benignant condescension, and love to the disciples. These and many other recollections live and glow in my heart; and they now help me to estimate the worth of my beloved mother, and the gratitude due to her memory."

May the Lord shed his Spirit upon all the "Mothers in Israel," that their children may in like manner remember the sacred instructions they taught them out of the Bible, and rise up to fill important stations in the Church of Christ!

He appears, as a boy, to have delighted in rambling about the fields, and taking healthy exercise in the open air; this taste continued

unabated to the last, notwithstanding his love of reading and sedentary habits after he commenced his career at College. During the summer of 1851, he paid a visit to his relations in Cornwallis, and after mentioning in his journal an excursion, before breakfast, in company with his brother Thomas, to gather strawberries, on one of the hottest days in July: he observes,—"The earnestness with which I give myself to such a task, and the perseverance with which I pursue it, surprises those who feel it rather wearisome. Indeed I often smile at my own enthusiasm as a berry gatherer, and wonder how I can be so interested. But the secret is that I was much given to it when a child, and was always ranging the fields and woods in the summer season, with a delightful sense of freedom and health in the exercise. Even before I had any consciousness of the origin of my happiness, or had begun to reflect upon the operations of my own mind, I was a lover of flowers and trees, of hills and woods and waters; and it mattered not that I was often without a companion in my rambles; I was always at home. To these early habits I owe the strong and instinctive pleasures which I now experience on engaging in these excursions. And I am by no means ashamed that the boy's delights have outlived the period of boyhood." In this partiality for field excursions, and delight in the lovely forms of nature, which grew up spontaneously in the heart of the boy may be traced the germ of that intense admiration of picturesque scenery, and exquisite delicacy in depicting natural beauties, which characterized the man.

At an early age, he removed, with his parents, to Annapolis County; and while residing at Bridgetown he enjoyed the instructions of Mr. Andrew Henderson. Under this gentleman's care he acquired a good knowledge of the elements of learning, and laid the foundation of his future success as a scholar. Thirsting for information and ardent in the pursuit of knowledge, he stood foremost among his school-fellows, and his very boyhood gave promise of those fruits of genius and talent which his riper years fully realized.

Passing rapidly over the incipient stages of our beloved friend's course in life, we would more minutely dwell upon that wonderful and interesting period when the power of divine grace became manifest in his conversion. In order to appreciate in some measure the depth and magnitude of the change which he then experienced, it is necessary to describe the impression which he made on his friends and associates, prior to the surrender of himself to the service and Church of God. It was the spring of the year 1838, when he removed to that part of Cornwallis called Pleasant Valley, and engaged in the occupation of school-teaching. His talents and amiableness of disposition; his sociable turn of mind, and conversational powers, could not fail to attract attention, and draw congenial spirits round him; the decided manner in which he held the doctrine of universal salvation fortified him against any other reception of Christ, than that which he had already given to him, for why need he deny himself and forsake all to follow the Saviour, when his safety was as secure (according to the views he then held) as the death of Christ could render it. Occasionally, indeed, he did attend the ministry of Elder W. Chipman, whose valuable labours are still enjoyed in that locality, but his theoretical opinions must have rendered him proof against all appeals: or if the voice of conscience sometimes alarmingly enforced the truths spoken by the preacher, and Universalism appeared so hostile to evangelical discourses, that peace of mind required the abandonment of one or the other; the struggle

between conscience and inclination terminated (as he afterwards avowed to Elder Chipman) in a resolution to discontinue further attendance upon the Ministry of the Gospel. Such was the state of mind upon which it pleased the Holy Spirit to work, with transforming power.

In addition to these skeptical opinions, there was another barrier to his union with the Church, which his keenness of observation rendered very powerful, and which especially hindered his joining the Baptists; and that was, the ignorance and contractedness of view, the weakness of mind, and faults of character, which he discerned among them, and that with peculiar feelings of repulsion; or if they possessed any attraction it was only because they afforded a conspicuous mark at which to aim the shafts of ridicule, and furnished a fruitful theme for invective in graver moods, or keen satire in more sportive ones. It may be observed in passing, that he undoubtedly possessed, in common with all highly gifted minds, the dangerous and ensnaring faculty which would have rendered him a master of irony and satire, had it been freely exercised and cultivated, instead of being habitually, and on principle, suppressed and quenched. So complete was the mastery which he had obtained over his spirit, in this respect, that the latent power revealed itself only in the quiet archness that gave point to the detail of some ridiculous incident; or the evident relish he had for the comic when it formed the zest of genuine wit. While his heart was yet unrenewed, this dangerous faculty was enlisted, professedly against distortions of the truth, but hostility to the truth itself furnished the moving power.

United with these causes of repugnance to the reception of the humbling doctrines of Christ, may be mentioned a character externally moral and blameless, which might appear in the eyes of many to stand less in need of that complete change which is involved in regeneration, than did the characters of some who had professed to experience the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

But this correctness of deportment, while unfavourable, in one aspect, to penitence and cordial apprehension of Christ Jesus as the Saviour of the guilty, and thus far friendly to the preparatory steps leading to repentance, that it stood in no need of the fortress of error, as a protection for immoral indulgences, and a rampart against the terrible thunderbolts of divine justice. His heart had not been rendered insensible by the deadening touch of open vice, indulged and gloried in; his understanding had not been closed against conviction by the blinding influence of a seared conscience. The first thing that appears to have shaken his hold of Universalism was the discovery that the Scriptures so far from yielding proofs of his favorite theory, furnished clear and overwhelming evidence that "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord," awaits the impenitent and unbelieving. He had been led carefully to search the Bible on this point, in order to provide himself with arguments for the confutation of a young friend with whom he was then engaged in controversy. At this critical period of his religious experience, it pleased God to promote a powerful revival of religion in connexion with the Baptist Church at Cornwallis. Protracted meetings were held during the winter of 1838-9. During the earlier part of these meetings, his mind was powerfully exercised by invisible realities; the hand of God had touched him, strange terrors shook his soul; the struggle between the powers of darkness and light commenced in his mind; unable to bear the conflict alone, and craving relief for his troubled spirit, he rose up, at

one of the public meetings, and in the midst of the congregation, besought with impressive voice, deep solemnity of manner, and subdued feelings of heart, the prayers of God's people on his behalf.

It may be well imagined that the effect produced upon the audience, more especially on the Church, was powerful in the extreme. Conflicting thoughts must have rushed through the mind of the Pastor and his flock; emotions almost overwhelming must have weighed them down, as they beheld this young man, the first fruits of the Spirit, thus bowed in soul before God, and seeking the sympathy of the once despised Baptists. The Christian attentions of Deacons and other Brethren were not withheld; and eventually, "God who called him by his grace, revealed his Son in him," and caused him to rejoice in Christ Jesus as his Redeemer.

On the 4th of January, 1839, he related his religious experience to the church, by whom he was joyfully welcomed to a participation in their privileges; and on Sabbath day, the 5th of January, was baptized in company with twenty-one others, by Elder W. Chipman, who still survives to praise God for the manifestation of his saving power on that memorable occasion.

Several suggestions occur to the mind on a review of our dear Brother's conversion. It presents to our notice traits of character for which he was always distinguished; unwearied assiduity in pursuit of truth; a fearless disregard of the unwelcome consequences to which such a pursuit may lead; and a simplicity of purpose in avowing the convictions of the mind, unbiased by shame or other ignoble passions. The result of the Spirit's work upon a mind thus constituted, was stability of christian principle; growth in religious experience; and firm attachment to the system of divine doctrines which he had imbibed from the Scriptures. There can be no question as to the thoroughness and reality of the change he then experienced; his whole subsequent career, with whatever imperfections it was chargeable (and no one deplored these more feelingly than himself) exemplified the wise man's description of the path of the just, as shining "more and more unto the perfect day." (To be continued.)

**PHYSICAL BENEFIT OF THE SABBATH.**—The Sabbath is God's special present to the working man, and one of its chief objects is to prolong his life, and preserve efficient his working tone. In the vital system it acts like a compensation-bond; it replenishes the spirits, the elasticity and vigor which the last six days have drained away, and supplies the force which is to fill the six days succeeding; and in the economy of existence, it answers the same purpose as, in the economy of income, is answered by a savings' bank. The frugal man who puts away a pound to-day and another pound next month, and who in a quiet way is putting by his stated pound from time to time, when he grows old and frail, gets not only the same pound back again, but a good many pounds besides. And the conscientious man, who husbands one day of existence every week—who, instead of allowing the sabbath to be trampled and torn in the hurry and scramble of life, treasures it devoutly up—the Lord of the Sabbath keeps it for him; and in the length of days, the hale old age gives it back with usury. The savings' bank of human existence is the weekly Sabbath.—[North British Review.]

**HOW TO PREACH.**—When you preach, be real. Set your people before you in their numbers, their dangers, their capacities; choose a subject, not to show yourself off, but to benefit them, and then speak straight to them, as you would beg your life, or counsel your son, or call your nearest friend from a burning house, in plain, strong, earnest words.—Bishop of Oxford.

A moment of time is a monument of mercy.