

Pastor and People.

THE PRAYER.

Tune. "Home, Sweet Home."

Our Father in Heaven be hallowed Thy name,
Thy kingdom come quickly, and ever the same
On earth as in heaven may Thy will be sped.
O give to us daily our portion of bread.
Our sins O forgive us; and as we extend
Our pardon to others, Thy mercy bestow.
Be guard from temptation, deliver from sin
Be thine all the glory, for ever. Amen.
Jesus, Saviour, King.
Our love and our praises, to Thee now we bring.

THE TRUE RICHES.

BY GEORGE W. ARMSTRONG, LONDON.

I often think how poor are the greatest earthly riches. Imagine a man, whom the world calls rich, presenting himself at heaven's gate, seeking admission.

The porter asks: "Where are your credentials?"

And now, probably for the first time, he feels the poverty of his wealth, but still holds on to his only refuge and replies: "I was a millionaire on earth. One whom the world envied and called rich. I made—I accumulated a million and more dollars."

The porter asks: "Where are they? A million dollars! Why, what is that? Dollars do not count here. Have you noticed this city? It is built of pure gold. Look at the walls, they are built of jasper; inspect their foundations—the foundations of the walls of the city are adorned with all manner of precious stones. Look inside the gates and you will see that gold is so common the streets are paved with it—pure, bright and transparent even as glass. Look at the gates of the city—this new Jerusalem, and there are twelve of them—on the east three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the west three gates. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each one of the several gates is one pearl. A million dollars! The wealth of this city is so great that a million dollars, or a thousand million dollars, is beneath our notice and cannot possibly be a passport to get within its walls."

And the rich man who gloried in his riches and whose life had been devoted to accumulating earthly wealth, making it the chief end of his being, turns away in confusion and despair: he sees how trifling are earth's millions compared with the unbounded wealth of heaven, and he finds to his eternal undoing that his life on earth was one great and irreparable blunder.

On the other hand a man whom the world called poor, but who is rich in faith and heir to the promises, advances to the pearly gates, and in response to the porter's query says: "I know in whom I have believed."

The choirs of heaven in one grand, glorious and united refrain break forth into song: "Lift up your head, O ye gates, and even lift them up ye everlasting doors, and let this son of faith come in. And the Redeemer in whom his soul delighted and found its chief good, and around whom his strongest faith centred, greets him with loving welcome: "Come in, thou beloved of My Father. All things are thine: enter into My rest; sit down on My throne." And yet men will barter away eternal riches for earthly and perishing gain!

IRISH PRESBYTERIAN STATISTICS.

The report on Statistics, made to the General Assembly, gave the following:—

In the course of the year the returns of the last census were published, and these showed that the population of Ireland had fallen during the preceding decade nine and one-tenth per cent. The same authorities gave the entire number of those claiming to be connected with the several Presbyterian Churches in the country as 446,687, or a decrease of 24,047, or, in other words, of five and one-tenth per cent in the ten years. Comparing the total number of families in connection with the various congregations of the Assembly with what they were in 1882, we are pleased to find that they are 3,000 more numerous now than then. With a declining denominational population there is thus an increase of Church membership. The conclusion necessitated by these figures is that the Church has been taking more vigorous measures to look after the spiritual interests of her adherents. It is with sincere pleasure we notice the gain in the number of contributions to the Sustentation Fund, stipend-payers, membership of temperance societies, membership of Bible classes, national schools and Sabbath schools, but the gratification of these indications of prosperity is more than balanced by the loss in families, communicants, prayer-meetings and Sabbath school scholars. In Belfast, where the population has been gaining with a rapidity that continues to attract the attention of the entire kingdom, the Churches only claim an increase of forty-four families in the year. Admitting that no information has been obtained of the membership of the recently-established Cooke Centenary Church, the progress made is not in keeping with our responsibilities. The funds invested on behalf of the various educational, benevolent, missionary and other interests of the Church appear to great

advantage in the table, and were it not for the seemingly very serious falling-off in the amount put down for local endowments, £9,266 17s 6d would exhibit an increase of over £11,000. The proceeds of investments show an increase of £652 19s 8d. The total income of the year is therefore £232,834 10s, or a decrease of £6,354 4s 7d as compared with last year. Although congregations have this year raised for all purposes £5,815 10s 8d less than in 1891, it must be recollected that the advance made last year was unusually great, being no less than £13,735 5s 11d over anything that had been given before. Whilst the total congregational income is therefore less than what it was, it is satisfactory to observe that those departments of Church finance which will be always looked to in the first instance, to indicate whether our people are progressing in the grace of liberality or not, make it clear that the stream of Christian beneficence is flowing with a steadily swelling tide. No feature of our Church life affords more sincere cause for thanksgiving and encouragement than the deepening interest in missions. In 1882 mission collections amounted to £11,975 8s 4d; four years afterwards they had sprung up to £13,563 6s 2d; in another four years they had reached £17,293 14s 5d. Last year there was a gratifying increase of £1,265 12s, whilst this year an additional £674 7s 4d have been contributed, bringing up congregational efforts to the sum of £19,233 13s 9d. In ten years the progress has thus been at the rate of sixty per cent. Apart from this the stream of donations and bequests for this purpose flows rapidly, being no less during the twelve months than £6,217 18s 8d. Putting congregational givings, donations and the proceeds of investments together, we find that the Irish Presbyterian Church expends about £30,000 annually in mission work in her own and other lands. In round numbers about one-seventh of her entire income is devoted to the extension of the kingdom.

THE INFLUENCE OF HYMNS.

Do we realize, I wonder, how great is the influence of the treasure we possess in these sweet pilgrim songs, that cheer our earthly way? I wonder how many times a year we pause in life's journey to think how dear to us are the sweet old hymns, familiar from our very babyhood.

One of my earliest and pleasantest recollections is that of sitting upon my father's knee, in the Sunday twilight-time, and being delightfully trotted to the words and tune of "Where, O, where are the Hebrew children—I love it yet, worn-out and hackneyed as it is! How real they all seemed to me, "Daniel in the lion's den," "Elijah and his wonderful chariot of fire," the "Weeping Mary," and "Martyred Stephen." It was, indeed, the oratorio of my childhood!

Looking backward I see that two hymns have specially been the tonics of my spiritual life, just as invigorating sea-breezes have given tone to my physical being; they are the world-renowned, world-loved hymns, "Jesus lover of my soul," and "Lead, kindly light." The favourite hymn of a certain friend was, "My Jesus as Thou wilt; so many times, in so many ways his will was crossed that his soul craved the strength that lay in the words of exquisite submission. Our Great Physician knows our hearts, and gives what is best, in a short time this friend developed into one of the noblest characters I have ever known; his earthly work was early finished, the "As Thou wilt," has led him from earth to the blissful satisfaction of Christ's "Ye shall know."

One time, while away on a visit, something occurred in connection with the subject of hymns, which nonplussed me deeply. It was Sunday evening, the parlour was full of people, most of them entire strangers. Presently some one asked me to sing, I never felt so much like declining, but upon being asked again I sat down at the piano and sang "Jesus lover of my soul," after which, at my suggestion, we all sang three or four familiar hymns. When I returned to the sofa I had left, a gentleman, to whom I had been introduced half an hour before, said in a loud voice: "You don't know how glad I am that you sang that first hymn, I wondered what your choice would be. That hymn was my salvation; you will be surprised when I tell you that once, a number of years ago, I was so miserable and unhappy that I was just on the verge of suicide, when from somewhere I heard a man's voice singing 'Jesus lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly.' I stopped to listen, for words and voice were sweet, and then and there felt that God had sent the singer to save me from my desperate deed."

A hymn to me seems a prayer with wings. What, for instance, could be more uplifting, more consoling than the dear old evening hymns, "Glory to Thee, my God, this night," and "Softly now the light of day"? Could any breath of prayer be sweeter? We need to learn more of them, and to keep them rhythmic melodies, endeared by many memories, warm within our hearts.—*Mary G. Woodhull.*

HOW A CHRISTIAN BEARS TROUBLE.

As the Bible was intended to be a guide for human life, quite a large part of it is made up of biography; and it abounds in object lessons drawn from human experience. One of these many object lessons is presented in the twelfth chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles; it pictures to us a scene at midnight in a Jewish prison. Peter is in his cell, and on the next day he is to be brought out by Herod,

and sent to heaven in the bloody suit of a martyr. This is his last night in trouble. To-morrow the executioner's axe will send him where trouble never comes.

If we could borrow the jailer's lantern and enter that dungeon, we should find a "quaternion of soldiers" watching the manacled apostle. Two of them are in the cell and two are before the door. If the prisoner escapes, the guards must pay the forfeit with their lives. This is stern Roman law. The keepers, therefore, are wide-awake. Perhaps some of the leaders in this infernal persecution are awake and busy in preparation for the "auto-da-fé" on the morrow. Around at the house of Mary, the mother of John and Mark, are a company of God's people who cannot close their eyes on that eventful night. They are holding a prayer-meeting and entreating God to interpose and spare their brother "Great-Heart" from his bloody doom. It was the right sort of prayer, for the Greek word describes them as "straining" in supplication; for they realize that this is their last resort.

But in the meantime where is Peter? Low, he is fast asleep! The children of heaven are awake to pray for him; the children of hell are awake to destroy him. But the heart for which other hearts are throbbing dismisses its own anxieties, and falls asleep as quietly as a tired child on its mother's breast. There were many things to keep him awake during that doleful night; there was a far-away wife, and perhaps a group of children up in that home on the shore of Galilee, and he might have worried his parental heart about them. John Bunyan, when in prison for Christ's cause, tells us that "this parting from my wife and children hath often been to me in this prison as the pulling of my flesh from my bones. Especially from my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all I had besides. But I must venture you all with God, though it goeth to the very quick to leave you."

So did the heroic Apostle venture all with God. Family, home, labours for Christ, the welfare of the Churches, and his own life, were all handed over into God's keeping, and he, like a trustful child, sinks to rest in his Father's arms. So God "giveth His beloved sleep." Here is a lesson for us all. How did the Apostle attain that placid serenity of spirit? As far as we can understand, he attained it by keeping his conscience void of offence, and by anchoring his soul fast to God. An uneasy conscience would never have allowed Peter to cover himself under the sweet refreshment of slumber. One great secret of composure in time of trouble is to be at peace with conscience. It was not through Peter's fault but through his heroic faithfulness, that he had reached that prison cell. It lay right in his path of duty, and he had kept that path unflinchingly. He had come there for Christ's sake, and his Master had once assured him, "Lo, I am with you always. How he should escape from that dungeon, or whether he should escape at all, he left entirely in that Master's hand. Faith was the pillow beneath that persecuted head, and so that midnight hour witnessed that sublime scene of tranquil slumber, while the executioner's axe or sword was sharpened for the impending blow.

Troubled child of God, go look at that most suggestive scene in that Jewish jail. Look at it until you get ashamed of many a peevish complaining you have uttered, and many a worry that has driven all sleep from your own eyes. Learn from it how to trust God, and in the darkest hour. Peter was simply practicing the same grace that his brother Paul did afterwards, when from his prison in Rome he wrote to his son Timothy, "I know whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until that day." Paul knew that his martyrdom was just at hand, but he had made Jesus Christ his trustee, and he felt no more uneasiness than he did about the rising of to-morrow's sun. Both these men were just what you profess to be, no more and no less; they were Christ's men. They had no more promises than you have, and no other arm to rely on than you have. The watchword of their brave, fearless, composed, and compacted lives was, "I will trust!" That gave them such calm and delightful peace. In this world so full of difficulties and diseases and disasters, there are a great many anxieties that make people lie awake. "To-morrow morning I will go and draw that money out of that bank," says the uneasy merchant, who has heard some suspicions of the bank's solvency. Distrust of our fellow-creature's honesty, or truthfulness, or fidelity is sad enough, but a Christian's distrust of his Saviour and his almighty Friend, is a sin that brings its own punishment. Half of the misery of life comes from this very sin. There was a world of truth in the remark of the simple-hearted nurse to the mother who was worrying over her sick child. "Ma'am, don't worry, you just trust God, He's tedious, but He's sure."

Perhaps this article may find its way into some sick room. Here is a motto to fasten up on the wall in full sight, "I will trust." Look at it often; it will be a tonic and a sedative too. If you are restless, put it under your pillow and go to sleep on it. Peter must have had it under his head. Swallow the whole fourteenth chapter of John. It will help you to get well, and if it is not God's will that you should recover, it will soften your dying bed and pilot you home to the Father's house in glory. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?" If God has done the infinitely greater thing for you, cannot you trust Him to do the lesser thing? To slumbering Peter came God's angel of deliverance that night and struck off the chains. Perhaps there is an angel of mercy on his way to you, or will be soon.—*Rev. Theodore Cuyler, in N. Y. Evangelist.*