

The Provincial Wesleyan.

Published under the direction of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Eastern British America

Volume XX. No. 23

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 1868.

Whole No 982

Religious Miscellany.

Why Stand ye Here all the Day Idle?

BY REV. W. MORLEY FUSION, M.A.

Two fields for till—the outer and the inner.

Who to the laborer hasten, to the winner;

Of all the laborer's meeds?

To bath in radiant mornings, daily spreading

Over the heavens new;

To all "blessings" of life, forever shedding

Their benediction down—

To rouse a spirit, formed for God, from slumber

And rob it for the light;

The heirs of heaven from clay to disengage,

Which clogs their upward flight.

To lift a world, "death sin" and sorrow lying

And "pour in oil and wine";

To warble, in the dulled ear of the dying,

Refrains of hymns divine.

Work for a lifetime, in each up-springing

In low or lofty sphere!

Hark to the Master's summons, always ringing

In quick and heedless ears!

Cool brain, strong sinew, heart with love o'er-

flowing,

Shall all in sloth escape?

Like vice, which, fruitless through its wanton

growing,

Ne'er purples into grape!

The daylight wanes and dies—"Why stand ye

idle?"

Life hasteth to its bourne!

The bridegroom tarries—will ye greet the bride,

Or in the darkness mourn?

Lo! in the fields the yellow harvest drooping,

As lies in the rain;

Where are the reapers, that they come not

trooping,

To gather in the grain?

Some, in the festive hall disporting gaily;

On slothful pillow, some;

Some, in delays most blameful, and yet daily

Exclaiming, "Lo, I come."

And some, infatuate, 'mid the alien's scoffing,

Quester after their toil;

As wreckers, when ships founder in the offing,

Grow murderous over spoil.

Meanwhile the harvest waits for the reaping,

God's patience hath not tired.

Ye cannot say—extenuate of your sleeping—

"We wait, for none hath hired."

Through the heaved noon-tide hour the Master

callet;

Ye cannot choose but hear;

Still sounding when the length'ning shadow

falleth,

"Why stand ye idle here?"

Up! for awhile the plying gill ye linger!

Work while 'tis yet day!

Ten next the Sabbath, rest—where angel-singers

Make melody for ye.

Jacob Wrestling with God.

BY REV. W. MORLEY FUSION, M.A.

Some to consider one of the most eventful

events in the history of Jacob's eventful

life. Fourteen years have passed away since

he had the encouraging vision, and received

such cheering promises; and now he is about

to return to the land he had left under the

most painful circumstances. In a solemn review

of these years he says, "I am not worthy of

least of all the mercies and of all the truth which

God has shown unto me; for with my staff I

passed over this Jordan, and now I am

become two bands." When he uttered these

words the blue hills of his native land were

in sight, and he was near to all the familiar

scenes of his youth, so affecting to the heart of an

exile when they appear into view. He had tested

God's promise, and it had not failed him; and

now that he is again in trouble he knows where

to go for help.

With his large family and abundance of

alarm; that for a time makes them fear that

he has become their avenging enemy; but soon

we find that the hand that shook us so vigorously

has, after all, contained a most precious blessing

for us. He wounds only to heal; he casts down

only to exalt.

We are not to understand this as a vision, but

as a real transaction. There was no doubt a

bodily struggle, but still the chief thing upon

which our minds are to be fixed is the spiritual

conflict and victory. Hence it is that deep

anguish and agony of soul in pleading with Je-

hovah has been called "wrestling with God." This

is something, however, that mere formalists

and ritualists cannot understand. It is to plead

until every power of the soul is on the stretch in

intense longings after God, and big waves of

emotion chase each other across the soul. So

wrestled the adorable Saviour on that dark night

in Gethsemane till the bloody sweat came from

every pore. Thus did Paul wrestle who felt

heavenly heat for his brethren according

to the flesh. Thus did Luther wrestle in certain

great crises of the Reformation work. Thus did

Knox wrestle when in an agony he cried out,

"Lord, give me Scotland or I die!" And thus

it was that Jacob wrestled.

It is a legitimate subject of inquiry, Who was

this person that wrestled with the patriarch?

The narrative here is called "a man," while

Hosea speaks of him as an "angel," and Jacob

himself says, "I have seen God face to face." He

is also said to have had "power with God." To

us, therefore, this mysterious stranger is a

stranger no longer. It was the Lord Jesus; he

who is the "angel of the covenant" had often

appeared in a bodily form, till the fulness of the

time came, when he assumed our nature. Then

"the word became flesh, and dwelt among us." It

was the same who had walked in Eden in the

cool of the day, and talked with the first pair—

who conversed with Abraham—and showed him-

self amid the shadowy visions of the prophets,

who now strove with Jacob. He might, there-

fore, have again said, "Surely God was in this

place, and I knew it not."

Concerning this great Being, the wonderful

expression is used, "And when he saw that he

prevailed not against him." How strange! The

high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity does

not prevail against a poor sinful child of earth.

The reason was that Jacob was pleading his

Lord's own promises, trusting his own pledged

word, and that he can never deny. The reason

Jacob prevailed with God is because he kept

pleading the promise, "I will surely do thee

good." Still, that Jacob may not become proud

and think that he had gained a great victory in

his own strength, with one touch of the divine

finger his sight is disoriented. Just as Paul, after

the heavenly revelation had been made to him,

had a thorn in the flesh left with him lest he

should be exalted above measure.

But though the pleader is now disabled and in

pain, he does not give up the contest. He now

has a perfect understanding of who it is with

whom he is being striving; and this only in-

creases his ardor to obtain the blessing. The

divine Visitor seems as though he would leave

him, saying, "Let me go." Just as the same

Holy One, many centuries after, in going with

the disciples to Emmaus, seemed about to go

further, and yet, in answer to their constraining

prayer, tarried with them; so he was now only

trying his servant's faith. He did not wish to

leave him unbelief in his weakness and de-

spair. He is more willing to give than to ask.

It is worthy of remark that Jacob does not

specify immediately what he wanted, but only

that he would be blessed. He knew that the Lord

was with him, and he knew that he was

pleading his own promises, trusting his own

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the heavenly revelation had been made to him,

had a thorn in the flesh left with him lest he

should be exalted above measure. But though the

pleader is now disabled and in pain, he does not

give up the contest. He now has a perfect under-

standing of who it is with whom he is being

striving; and this only increases his ardor to

obtain the blessing. The divine Visitor seems

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He did not wish to leave him unbelief in his

weakness and despair. He is more willing to

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