

## Quarterly Sermon.

Preached at Woodstock, N. B., December 11th, by Rev. F. N. Atkinson and Published by Request of the Conference.

Text, Is. 40: 31, "but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

To my mind this waiting upon the Lord referred to in the text carries with it, and within it, the idea of service.

It does not mean lounging lazily upon the bank of the river, waiting for that "tide in the affairs of men" to come along and carry us up to high water mark; but rather paddling your own canoe, pulling up stream. Nor does it suggest simply striking the iron while it is hot, but gathering the fuel and blowing the fire that will cause the glow and the glory, too. In this coldhearted world, one needs almost perpetual motion to keep up healthy circulation between opportunities. I have failed to find it on record that our model ever shivered; but I do read that "It was winter and Jesus walked in Solomon's porch." John 10: 22.

Servants as a class are a strong people, blessed with the power of endurance. That brawny arm and burly wrist, while in some measure natural, are very largely acquired: the result of persistent unflinching effort to provide daily bread, or the endeavor to please their masters. I need not remind you that labor is necessary. Every mite of cash and every morsel of food represent so much honest exertion on the part of some one.

We cannot mention service without suggesting the idea of obedience. In this we have the noblest example. From beginning to completion of His work on earth, Christ conformed to the standard of duty: "Take my yoke upon you" was his own pattern given as well as His entreaty; and finally, "being found in fashion as a man he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

This text implies lack of strength. It is evidently not there now. The note is due, the subscription has expired, the stomach is empty, blood impoverished, support crippled, sustenance gone. Just how closely one may come to the bound of life and still claim existence, I am not authorized to say even if I knew. However, in the words of the wise man I can affirm "the glory of a young man is his strength." The same is true, also, of any Christian or any body of believers. Not brilliancy, not back numbers, nor large numbers; but deep spirituality, pure and undefiled religion. On the other hand, then, what a shame that there are so many with sickly sigh, sorrowing heart and sapped vitality. If no remedy could be found then the condition would be sad as well as shameful.

Instead of this our scripture this morning comes freighted with encouragement to set about renewal. Let bygones be bygones. "Sis! no more lest a worse thing come upon you." Don't break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Do not deal a death blow in words. Cheer the sufferer, for while there is life there is hope, yes in this case certainty. *Shall* is a very strong auxiliary in inspiration as well as in English grammar. Our medical man would, of course, first discover the nature, and give the name of the disease or ailment, then ascertain the cause; afterward advise or prescribe accordingly. Health laws have been violated, rules broken, until the system has become deranged and diseased. An experienced sportsman, if bewildered in the forest, finds the circuitous back track, although not shortest, many times the surest way back. Here, in the thought of our text this morning weakness is the trouble. In most cases it may be termed general debility—that terrible tired feeling; "so tired" is the somewhat familiar expression that follows the strongest symptoms. The week days are too short and Sunday too long. The once blessed hour of prayer now drags heavily. The grasshopper has become a burden, even in the prime of your manhood—all over weary in well doing. Very little relish for either old-fashioned gospel or new-fashioned gospel. Causes: indolence, inactivity, improper nourishment, impure air.

The prohibition poet says:

"The fountain of wrong I would forever dry,  
To stop the flow I would stop the supply."

Ceasing to labor cuts off not only the supply but the very means of supply, not the source. Men may abuse themselves but they cannot destroy God.

"Holy source of consolation,  
Light and life thy truth imparts."

In spiritual matters especially "if any will not work neither shall he eat," consequently down goes his constitution, weakness follows. The poorly fed soul as well as the starved body must dwarf and droop and dwindle. Swine food is insufficient. No pods for me. Honey and not hanks, if you please. It was fatted calf that fleshed out the emaciated prodigal, and the roast was ordered the moment that he said "make me as one of thy hired servants."

Movement increases as well as requires muscle. Soul strength is in a large measure gained by the exercise of gifts. One can indeed gain by trading. That withered arm was outstretched and Christ healed it, but who

could imagine it still dangling at the side of the man of faith? The difference between a puny, sickly, pining son and a Simpson-like servant may be that while the one is obliged to work the other has neither exercise nor employment. My brother, we may sing, never so sweetly, "I am the child of a king," and glory in the thought, if you can, nevertheless there are other—at least one other—precious relationship of which we may be more justly proud. "A living dog is better than a dead lion." "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross," was the utterance of a chosen and choicely tuned instrument whose superscription as well as subscription was—Paul a servant of Jesus Christ. To serve the Lord one must be diligent in business, fervent in spirit. Look carefully now my afflicted friend; did not your soul sicken when your devotion began to die? There was a time when you seemed to be stronger; now you can scarcely "Stand up for Jesus" even after that beautiful hymn has been sung. What ails you? Is it do-nothingness, bad food or something else? Do you desire to recover? If so, now is the time, here is the prescription from the pen of inspiration. Wait upon the Lord. Only four words. Don't forget to repeat the dose. Diet: "Eat ye that which is good." The exact words of the prophet elsewhere are "Hear, and your soul shall live." The substance of our text to-day is "Serve and your spirit grows strong." The very nature of the service is calculated to build you up. It affords healthful exercise, wholesome food and remunerative employment.

For a moment longer let us have means of renewal somewhat more fully specified. Confession will give us a fair start. Acknowledge thy transgression. That wandering younger brother was half way home, in his mind, as soon as he came to himself. Don't get your back up and keep it up, but bend down on your knees before God, and man, too, if duty demands that you should. Profession increases confidence in yourself and in what God can accomplish by means of you. It brings you nearer to the brethren and into closer fellowship with the Son of God's love. Take the name of Jesus with you and use it often. Helping others is good. It is a blessed means of self-forgetfulness, keeps your mind off the sore spot, if there be such. Do good, as Jesus did, and verily thou shalt be fed, with meat that the lean-souled, niggardly world knows not of. Right here, I am free to confess, that, whether real or imaginary, most likely difficulties will have to be encountered. Diffidence on the part of some; others use the much worn word unworthy, which in too many cases means unwillingness to be small and do as well as we can; other hesitant, faltering ones need only a little encouragement and responsibility. Spurgeon said, "Serve God by doing common acts in a heavenly spirit." While taking breakfast in a Nova Scotia town some time ago the movements of two young ladies attracted my attention. They had been engaged as waiters the night before and were now on duty as such for the first time. They silently taught me a lesson. I could notice them first catch the eye of their master and then cater to the guests; later, thought I, any corner of the cloth among the crumbs will do for themselves. Please God first, fellowmen next, as much as possible, lastly. See Acts 20: 24, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself." If this is your spirit and aim all difficulties can be overcome. It can scarcely be proved that the day of miracles is altogether in the distant past. Gravitation is that law or force in nature which attracts toward the centre of the earth; consequently unless objects are suspended or there is some obstruction all would cluster at the earth's core. Nevertheless, on the nourishment received from earth and air the tiny twig springs up and trees stretch themselves skyward. A ball or a stone can be cast high in the air, and the leavened lump rises. The spring of the power of all earthly attractions would drag downward and degrade and destroy Christian character. But, brother, it is certain that in the God-given, service-acquired strength you can move in the opposite direction, mount upward as eagles. Nature's God has given the eagle air tubes by means of which to lighten his body. Buoyancy within was against another law without. Along with this give me the wings of faith well worked by love and upward I fly. I shall then have not merely an opposing force but overcoming ability. "How firm a foundation," is one fine hymn not altogether appropriate for every occasion. So many people are content with just keeping above the sod. Don't say all the time, "How can I sink," but sometimes, at least, "How can I rise." Incidentally, for illustration somewhat as well as warning, let me mention the downward tendency of trashy literature. A faithful pastor once entered a home where was found the periodical visit of the People's Literary Companion, so called. The minister suggested a change; said that the food it contained was adulterated and unwholesome stuff for youngsters. The father replied that he could utilize the several numbers in making kites. The man of God made answer, "Mistaken, the tendency is the other way," downward.

By the way wings suggest and surely imply aerial navigation—getting somewhere. None of your hazardous, fool-hardy balloon ventures perchance to find the North pole, but coming out from among, and keeping out from among, the soul chilling icebergs. Not carried about by every wind of doctrine which results in religious collapse, but giving earnest heed to the things heard and shaping your course accordingly. Again, up there what a glorious advantage. Clear sky, broader view, extended vision, brighter prospects. Above the smoke, din and disorder of this present evil world. No religious blue Mondays, no whining, no worry about what we shall eat or wherewithall shall we be clothed. The hard times soften as you get above them. Those very broad acres will seem but a speck while the type of your legal title

to mansions above shall be magnified seven fold. Live higher and you will learn to trust him more. This is a day in which much is said, and well said, concerning an educational atmosphere; but one thing seems to be much more needful, viz., a religious atmosphere. When supplying our young converts with the sincere milk of the Word, why not "give them a breeze" that is something more than common slang. Create a current of your own. That Christian who cannot fan himself must be far gone indeed. Drooping soul it is your blessed privilege to stand erect. Sickly Saint, you are breathing that which is poisoning the lung and life blood of your spiritual existence. Come up higher. Sit still and sicken, doubt and be condemned, but wait upon the Lord and you shall become a vigorous Christian. Not arms of faith but wings of faith moving daily. Ye who are lingering about the slime bogs and malarial swamps, living upon carrion, and shading under the deadly upas, get ye up into the mountain, away above the clouds, and then stay up there, in service, until you cannot hear a cur bark nor see a carcass.

Lastly we find in the text the promise of that wonderful blessing, endurance. This will do away with your ups and downs; put a finish, or rather a finis, to your fits and starts. A revival wont run away with your head nor carry you beyond your loyalty. Special effort is not a weariness, and even the reaction, if there is such, is only another means of grace. I think it was Carey who said "I can plod." Truly one can sometimes go with the tide, if the current runs in the right direction, but should tide turn there is no need to faint-heartedly fold our arms. In conclusion let me repeat that serving God is not staying for something to turn up but turning this world wrong side down. That Spanish admiral, cooped up in a Cuban port had better stayed out to sea and bombed the enemy. An honest failure is no disgrace. He crawled in waiting for an iron that never red-ened but for the destruction of his entire fleet. Brethren, both the dilatory and the excited spurter shall utterly fail, but you may become a hare and a tortoise combined. "They that wait upon the Lord shall change their strength." They shall become adaptable, adjustable, all round men of God. "They shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."

## A Year in North Carolina

The People and Schools.

BY REV. JOHN LEWIS.

IN THE SCHOOLS. (CONTINUED.)

Whatever be the grade of the school the races are kept entirely separate except that in a few instances there are white teachers in negro schools. The common schools of the colored people are now taught by colored teachers and I notice that the Baptist Northern Home Mission Society's Secondary School at Winton has five colored and no white teachers. It has about one hundred and eighty pupils.

At Shaw University, in Raleigh, there are fifteen white teachers and only nine colored. I am only sorry that I did not ask permission to see more of this institution. The little I did see made a very favorable impression on me. The school is not in favor with many of the politicians, but I believe it is doing excellent work for the negro race. One of its graduates lived in this town until recently and commanded the respect of the whites as well as of the blacks. Several of the pastors and Sunday School and mission workers in Raleigh help the institution by giving lectures to the students. The medical department is very highly spoken of. It has a female as well as a male department and the charge for board and tuition is exceedingly low—only about six dollars a month. There are about three hundred students. If any of your readers should pass through Raleigh and have any time to spare I am sure that President Mervin, or any of his helpers, would be glad to show them around the school. One may have to inquire more than once before he can find it. The clerk at the leading hotel could not tell me without inquiring of a colored man, though the buildings were but a few blocks away. In some sections the white teachers that come from the North to educate the negroes are ostracized by the white people of the South—I understand that the teachers in the Congregational school in an adjoining town are not noticed and I have heard of others, but in Raleigh it is not so. The teachers often work in the white churches as well as among the negroes. It is of interest to Canadians that Principal McVicar, formerly of McMaster University, is now superintendent of these and other schools of the Northern Baptist Home Mission Society.

I heard an intelligent newspaper man say some time ago that the Northern Baptists had now concluded that they did not understand the negro and had decided to hand the educational work over to the Southern Baptists, but I am pretty sure that is not true. I believe there is more of a tendency to co-operate in the education of the negro than there was. But as long as the notion prevails in the Southern churches that education spoils the negro it will not be very safe to hand the work over to them. I have no doubt however that the younger generation of ministers and educators in the South are becoming more and more in favor of educating as well as evangelizing the negro, but it will be some time before the churches are prepared for that step. I hardly think that high schools and academies for the colored people are numerous. Many such schools, with industrial departments, are maintained by Northern Christians of all denominations, but I have no reason to believe that there are many maintained by the negroes themselves.