Messenger and Visitor

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The Messenger and Visitor.

As announced in last week's issue, a special canvass is now being entered upon with the purpose of securing a large addition to the subscription list of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. An excellent brother has been engaged as general agent and canvasser, and with the hearty sympathy and coöperation of our friends throughout the country a thousand new subscribers should be secured before the end of June, when our financial year closes. This coöperation on the part of our friends and readers we are encouraged to expect because we are aasured that they appreciate the paper and place a high value on the work which it is endeavoring to do. Our pastors especially, recognizing in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR an invaluable helper, desire that it shall find its way to every Baptist fireside, and our many friends who know the interest and the value which is attached to the paper in their own homes, naturally desire to see its influence extended to others. We may confidently expect the sympathy and coöperation of every active worker in our churches, because the interests for which they are laboring are those which the paper is also constantly seeking to promote. The MESSENGER AND VISITOR, we need not say, does not exist to serve any merely private or individual aims or to promote any sectional or party interests. It was not established with the purpose of making money, and to those who ventured their money in the undertaking, it has paid, taking one year with another, only moderate dividends. That it has been able to do that much speaks well for its management. The paper does not stand for any one phase of denominational activity, but broadly for all, and seeks earnestly and impartially to promote all alike. Without transgressing the bounds of a becoming modesty we think it may be asserted here that the paper has exerted a large influence in fostering the intelligence and religious activities of our people. Familiarity with its columns is essential to anything like a correct knowledge of the affairs and interests of the denomination and therefore essential to an intelligent and hearty coöperation in its work. Pastors are sure to find their most intelligent and efficient helpers among those who are readers of the denominational paper. And it is in vain to expect that men and women will feel earnestly disposed to promote causes, however good they may be, concerning which they have only a vague and imperfect knowledge.

Further we desire to say that the paper not only expects, but in order to enlarge its circulation and realize its aims, it is very necessary that it should have the earnest coöperation which those who value its work and its influence can give. To establish and maintain a denominational newspaper on a paying basis is a more difficult matter than many persons suppose. In the first place its denominational character necessarily limits its constituency, which places it at a serious disadvantage in competition with certain undenominational papers with an immense circulation. Then, it is a regrettable fact that many of our Baptist people, just because they have not been readers of the paper and therefore have little knowledge of and interest in our denominational work and the great interests of the religious world, feel comparatively little attraction toward a paper which presents these things for their consideration. There is also the increasingly strenuous competition which the religious paper has to meet. There are the great secular newspapers cheaply produced and sometimes, in the interests of advertising business or of politics, furnished to subscribers at a merely nominal price, and there is all the cheap, and too frequently debasing, literature of the day, with which the religious newspaper must come into unequal competition. During the past ten years especially this competition has been growing steadily stronger. That it is by no means an easy thing for a religious newspaper, with such a constituency as the Baptist population of these Maritime Provinces afford, to pay a moderate percentage of interest on the money invested in it and the running expenses necessary to maintain a satisfactory standard of excellence, is shown by the fact that the Canadian Baptist, the excellent organ of our denomination in the upper Provinces, with a constituency about equal to our own and conducted as a denominational enterprise under the Convention, reported at the close of the last fiscal year a deficit of nearly a thousand dollars. We do not mean in the least to intimate that either here or in Ontario there is not a good prospect of success and enlargement for the denominational paper. For we believe that, with the blessing of God and the help of the people, the prospect is good. But we do mean that the conditions which the denominational paper has to face are such that, in order to the achievement of the desired results, the pastors and the more intelligent and influential members of our churches must fully recognize the importance of the paper to the denomination and exert their best influence to promote its circulation. This we feel assured our pastors and their people will be glad to do, and from their sympathetic efforts in connection with the special canvass which is now being undertaken we hope for the best results.

The Rich Young Ruler.

The story of the Rich Young Man, which is the topic for study in our Sunday Schools for the coming Sunday, has lessons for us to which we do well to give heed. It seems to teach quite clearly that one may possess many traits of character which render him attractive and estimable in the eyes of his friends, and yet lack that which is essential to hearty and saving fellowship with Jesus Christ. The frankness and earnestness of this young Jewish ruler, his courtesy, his freedom from bigotry, his openly expressed reverence for one whom he, like Nicodemus, recognized as a teacher come from God (whatever bigoted Scribes and Pharisees might say), his outwardly stainless life, his reverent observance of the law, the attraction that he had felt for Jesus and his desire for perfection and eternal life,—all this is very admirable, and we do not wonder that, as Jesus looked upon this young man, he loved him. And the young ruler on his part had come to Jesus so earnestly and reverently doubtless because he had felt that in him there was a fuller and more authoritative expression of truth than he had found elsewhere. He had hoped for and expected approval and blessing from the Good Master, and it was hard for him to go away sorrowful,—unblest and virtually self-condemned in the light of the Master's words.

This incident narrated in the text of the lesson is full of instruction for us, if only we have the ears to hear and the good and honest hearts necessary to its reception. This young man must have gone away with the feeling that he had been profoundly mistaken in his idea either of Jesus or of himself. He had come for a blessing, but he was going away under the consciousness of what felt like a curse. He had come kneeling and saying, "Good Master," and asking to be instructed respecting the most momentous of all interests, but when the test was put to him, which should show whether he were absolutely sincere in his attitude toward Jesus, whether he really believed him to be the Good Master, able to show men the way of eternal life and whether he himself desired that eternal life more than present comfort and respectability,—then his heart faltered, his countenance fell and he went away sorrowful. And there is great danger still that we shall make the fatal mistake of coming to Jesus simply to obtain his approval and his blessing upon the course which we have chosen for ourselves, and not to put our humanly hopeless case in his hands as the Divine Physician and to receive our commands from him as the Divine Master. And when he will not build upon our foundation and will have none of our ways, when his word of Truth smites our "Palace of Art" into ruin, and when, with all the gentle but inexorable authority of the love that endures the cross and despises the shame, he commands, "Come, take up thy cross and follow me," we go away sorrowful, unblest, unable to receive his word and enter into his divine fellowship. We sometimes hear men say that they have taken Jesus Christ into partnership with them in business. It is a great and comforting truth that Christ is willing to be associated with any man in any right and legitimate business in which he may be engaged, but it is well for us to recognize clearly that when a partnership between Christ and any man takes place, it is the Divine Man who is head of the firm.

There are many things which may stand between a soul and Christ. In the case of this man it was his great possessions. It seemed too much for him to give up his wealth and the position in the eyes of men, the comfort and the influence which that wealth assured, and become a follower of the prophet of Nazareth—despised by the Scribes and the Pharisees. Perhaps it is not easier today than it was in the days of Jesus for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. But by a rich man our Lord probably did not mean simply a man who has wealth at command, but the man whose pride and whose trust is in riches, who makes wealth the first consideration, so that it is virtually his god. A man may have a great deal of wealth in his possession and yet, if he makes himself the steward of that wealth, to use it for the glory of God and the blessing of his fellowmen, he is not rich in the way that keeps men out of the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, a man may hardly have a dollar in the world, yet if his trust is in wealth, if it is his grand controlling ambition to become rich, then the wealth in which he trusts, though he does not yet possess it, may be for him as effectual a barrier from the kingdom of heaven as it is for the miser who gloats over his gold, or the multi-millionaire whose pride and trust are in his riches. It is not money, but the love of it, which the Scripture declares to be a root of all evil. But the deceitfulness of riches is great, and there is scarcely another sin against which the Scriptures contain more emphatic warnings than that of covetousness.

Editorial Notes.

—The many friends of the late Rev. J. W. S. Young will be pleased to see the likeness of him which appears on our 12th page. The cut is from a photograph by Mr. J. R. McLean of Hampton Village.

—Dr. Cuyler uses an apt illustration when he says: "The pull of our prayer may not seem to move the everlasting throne, but like the pull on the line from the bow of a boat—it may draw us into closer fellowship with God and into fuller harmony with his wise and holy will. When our desires chime with the will of God we are sure to receive some blessing.

—Principal Fairbarn of Oxford, writing of the union of the Free and the United Presbyterian churches of Scotland, describes it as an act of high statesmanship, but infinitely more, "it is an impulse of grace. Churches that can become one ought not to remain two. It is economy of energy, of resources, of affections. It is the concentration of the powers that works for good."

—It is announced that Mr. G. Campbell Morgan who was for a time associated with Mr. Moody just before the collapse of his health, has resigned his charge in London to come to America, and that he will be engaged in evangelistic work with Northfield as a centre. Mr. Morgan's coming to Northfield is said to be in compliance with the urgent request of Mr. W. R. Moody, son of the great evangelist.

—Professor George P. Fisher who has a world-wide reputation as scholar and author in the line of church history, and whose term of service as a teacher in that department at Yale covers nearly forty years, has recently presented his resignation to the trustees of the University. This action has been taken by Dr. Fisher in order to secure the necessary time for the carrying out of some plans of literary work which he has in hand. Doubtless Dr. Fisher has judged wisely that the working days which remain to him can be more fruitfully spent in gathering together and preparing for publication the ripest results of his studies than in continuing in the work of the lecture room, though his work as a teacher is recognized as being still, as it has been, of a very high order; and, as the Congregationalist says, it will be hard to fill the place which he will leave vacant.

—The death of Judge Johnston of Dartmouth, to which an obituary article by Dr. Kempton, published elsewhere in this paper, makes extended reference, removes one who faithfully and efficiently served the public and the interests of justice as a member of the judiciary of his Province, and one who had been also for many years a leading and influential member of our denomination. He held unswervingly to its principles, and its interests were dear to his heart. Judge Johnston was the only surviving member of the first class to graduate from Acadia College, and he continued always to manifest a lively interest in its welfare, rendering valued service upon the Board of Governors and being a very regular attendant upon its anniversaries. His absence in the future from these gatherings and from the annual meetings of the Convention, will be sadly noted. To the family in its sad bereavement we would extend a kindly Christian sympathy, in which, we feel sure, the whole denomination would desire to unite.