

POETRY.

THE SABBATH.

I love thy chime of bells,
I love thy house of prayer,
The hallow'd song which swells,
And breathes devotion there;
Return, return, thou welcome guest,
Thou day of holiness and rest!

As Gilead's healing balm,
As dew on fainting flowers,
Thy soft and holy calm
Revives our drooping powers;
Almost as though, restored awhile,
Earth had resumed her Eden smile.

But these our Sabbaths here
Are only transient guests;
Their errand is to cheer,
To point us to our rest:
O may they prove, as kindly given,
Emblems and harbingers of heaven!

—Wesleyan Methodist Magazine.

FAMILY CIRCLE.

"I wonder if my Mother is in Heaven."

Some time ago it was the lot of a Christian Minister to preach in a beautiful little chapel not far from one of the largest cities in the world. It was a Wesleyan chapel, situated in the midst of a dense population, and had been but newly built. Yet the attendance was very small: in a place that would have contained two hundred, not more than twelve to twenty were usually found. I chabod seemed written there. Things had been better: there had been a flourishing society, and a large congregation, by whose united exertions this very chapel had been raised. But a disagreement arose, and led to the total loss of the congregation, and the greater part of the society. Only a few remained steadfast in the hour of trial, and they were truly devoted Christians. On the day to which we refer, there were so few persons present that everything particular would of course attract the minister's eye. As he looked round upon the empty pews thinking of the painful circumstances of the small flock, he saw an elderly man enter, on whose face deep thoughtfulness seemed imprinted. The old man knelt down solemnly. Into every part of the service he entered with evident fervour. He heard the sermon as if it had been a message from God to him. It was evident that he could say, "I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth." All present were attentive, but there was a particularity about him which could not escape notice. The service over, the Minister asked of his host who the old man was, and if he could tell him anything of his history. In reply the following narrative was in substance given.

Only a few years previously that old man hated and despised Christianity. He was an avowed Deist, and his time, money, and worldly influence were employed in the cause he had espoused. Being a man of considerable powers, he was a sort of champion, a leader among his companions, and had thus attained an unenviable dignity. He rarely read the Bible, and never with a view to edify. It was a settled point with him that the scriptures were not divine; and therefore he treated them with contempt. His favourite authors were those who opposed revelation: with the arguments of others he did not trouble himself. Of course, he never attended any place of worship.

He was married, and had one child, a girl, whom he desired to train in his own principles, and carefully kept from all religious influence. He was very fond of this child, and allowed her to have considerable influence over him. Her wishes were generally consulted; he could not easily deny her. She got an idea that she should like to go with some of her companions to Sunday-school, and mentioned it to her father. He objected; but she was firm, and succeeded in gaining a reluctant consent. To the Sabbath-school she went, nor was any one more regular in attendance than she. Weeks rolled on, and months, and things remained as usual, the child learning religion in a Methodist Sunday-school, the father an infidel. Providence now interfered: the wife, the mother, sickened and died. He wept, his heart bled, (for, though a Deist, he had loved his wife most tenderly,) and he knew of no balm to heal his spirit.

On the following Sabbath after the funeral of her mother, the child was at school, and her teacher kindly strove to impart to her such instructions and consolations as the mournful circumstance demanded. She bent her step homeward, thinking of her mother, and greatly concerned about her eternal condition. Her little heart beat with intense anxiety as the thought passed through her mind, "I wonder if my mother is in heaven." In the evening of that day,

as she sat by her father, down whose cheeks the big tears often rolled, she looked up in his face, putting her soft little hand in his, and gently said, "Father!" He awoke as from a reverie, startled by the voice of his child, and by a sudden look seemed to say, "How cruel to disturb my silent grief! Let me alone: it is better for me to die than to live." But he did not utter a word. "Father," again said the child; "father! do you think my mother is in heaven?" "O, what words were these, what piercing words!" He eyed the flowing locks, the rosy countenance, the tearful eye of her who spoke; it was his child, his only child, whom he loved as his own soul; but reply he made none. Again she demanded, "Father, do you think my mother is in heaven?" He now replied evasively, and strove to divert attention from that to another subject. They retired in thoughtful mood: the child slept, but not so the father. For as he laid him down strange feelings came over him, and new thoughts filled his bosom. Fain would he have buried his griefs and reflections in slumber, but that was denied. Of one thing chiefly did he think that night,—the query of his child. It was constantly sounding in his ears. He strove to forget it, but in vain. It had reached his soul: he was deeply wounded. He began to yield to conviction. "The Bible may be true," he said: "there may be a heaven, for which I am unprepared; and a hell, to which I am hastening." He rose to pray; his infidel heart was broken, and he offered it to God.

In the morning he was an altered man: he took up the long neglected Bible, and began in earnest to seek for mercy. He gave up all evil company, destroyed his vile books, and, being truly penitent, soon obtained a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins. Now he came every Sabbath to the house of God with his dear little girl, whom he regarded as the instrument of leading him to the Saviour; and having given himself to God, gave himself also to the church by the will of God. From the period when his membership commenced to this day, he had been a most exemplary Christian.—W. H. Bambridge.

A Good Resolution.

There was once a boy that made a resolution, that wherever he went, or with whomsoever he conversed, he would try to make them wiser and better. It was a noble rule, and he faithfully observed it. He began with the domestics of the family; next he tried his young companions. If he met the ignorant and vicious, he sought out some pleasant precept or kind advice to which they would be likely to listen. And he was soon respected and beloved.

This excellent habit grew up with him, and was strengthened from above. Throughout the whole of his life he was distinguished by his conversations, his writing, and his charities, and the blessings of many hearts, and the favour of heaven was his reward.—Mrs. Sigourney.

Two Little Boys' Note for Prayers.

At the late meeting of the American Board, Dr. Todd, of Pittsfield, related the following incident:

When I was young in the ministry, two little boys came and handed me a note, saying their grandmother was dead, and they desired the prayers of the church. During the prayer there was not a dry eye in the house. They went into the Sabbath-school, and were soon hopefully converted. A young man, himself a young convert, took up one of them and educated him, and he is now a missionary in Northern India.

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AN ANOMALY.

ANOMALY is the position of an unconverted Minister of the Gospel. Proper qualification is held to be indispensable for

the discharge of the duties of the various professions in which persons engage. A lawyer, ignorant of the principles of law—a physician, unacquainted with anatomy and the *materia medica*—a merchant, destitute of a knowledge of conducting business-transactions—a military or naval commander, having no acquaintance with tactics—would at once be considered as occupying a most preposterous situation. Why?—Simply because they had assumed a profession for which they possessed not the necessary qualifications. They would with unerring intuition be condemned as mere pretenders; and the most serious would be able scarcely to maintain their gravity in the presence of folly so great, of a mistake so inexcusable. But in what essential point differs the case of an unconverted Minister of the Gospel from the cases here supposed? Is he not, in a sense, as unqualified for the duties of his office as they are for the duties of theirs?

Ministerial qualifications are clearly stated by the sacred penmen; not leaving us to doubt or conjecture on a matter so essential to the purity and energy of the Church, the triumphs of Christianity, and the salvation of the lost. These qualifications are numerous and important; but there is one so absolutely necessary, as without it all others avail not, all others are vitiated. That one, is the conversion of the soul, or the regeneration of the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, sought for and obtained by evangelical repentance for sin, and saving or justifying faith in Christ. We hold, with all orthodox formularies, that a divine call is essential to the true Ministerial character; but we equally hold that such a call is not given to a man who is yet in his sins, and in an unrenewed state of mind, though he were possessed of unbounded learning, and could display the most thrilling eloquence. "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" (Ps. l. 16.) Sharp and terrible were the rebukes which God dealt out to the deceived and deceiving prophets of old. "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied."—"I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words, every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.—Behold I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." (vid. Jer. xxiii.) The alarm is sounded also by our Lord in those startling words—"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matt. vii. 15, 16.) These statements indicate with certainty that the absence of a renewed heart disqualifies for the sacred office of the Ministry.

Much stress is laid in other parts of the Sacred Volume on the necessity of external morality in the Minister of Christ; but then the required state of heart is equally indicated. "A bishop"—a term used for the Ministry generally—"must" not only "be blameless, as the steward of God," but also "holy," "holding faith, and a good conscience." Hence, as an instance, we may cite the command of St. Paul, who had himself first "obtained mercy" before he entered on his ministerial course, to Timothy, his "own son in the faith"—which pre-supposes

the conversion of Timothy—"Thou, O man of God,—follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and professed a good profession before many witnesses." (1 Tim. vi. 11, 12.)

Nor is the character of those who should succeed to this office left in uncertainty. It is described with great clearness. "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful (πίστοις) men, who shall be able (δύνατοι) to teach others also." (2 Tim. ii. 2.) The men were to be faithful, believing Christian men; men of experience, acquainted with the things of God, and for this reason, that they might be able, competent, qualified, to teach others the way of salvation.

This leads us to another observation. Whilst our Lord Jesus Christ died for the salvation of sinners, to secure for them, in this life, pardon, peace, a renewal and holiness of heart, the Ministry, as an instrumentality, is designed to lead sinners to the actual enjoyment of these blessings. For this purpose they require to be taught—obstacles have to be removed—the way to Christ clearly pointed out—encouragements to be applied—and Christ himself as the Saviour, in all his fullness, in all his ability and willingness to save, exhibited. Hence Ministers are required to be competent or qualified to teach others these necessary things. But how can one, himself ignorant of salvation, as well as of the way to Christ, impart this instruction, and lead the souls of others to Christ for that salvation? Our Lord has decided this question:—"If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

For want of just views on this subject, and keeping this necessary qualification vividly before the mind, the Ministry has been considered by some in the light only of a "Profession," and, regardless of the state of the heart, and the call of God, youth have been trained for its sacred duties, as a mere vocation, as others have been for the courts of law, and the practice of medicine. Thus an unconverted Ministry has been for centuries obtruded upon the Church, inflicting upon her irreparable evils, from which she has not yet fully recovered; and hereby an anomaly has been perpetuated, alike reproachful to the Ministry and injurious to the Church and the world. Unconverted Ministers,—not the truly pious, and the called of God, though not in the line of an imaginary and fabulous succession,—are the real intruders into the sacred office, tending to schism and the scattering of Christ's flock. When this positive and great evil shall have been removed, then, and not till then, may we reasonably expect the Church of the living God, in its various branches, to correspond to the state, implied in the question—"Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

"REVIVAL MEETINGS."

We perceive our cotemporary, who has had a fling at "Protracted Meetings," has given an extract from "The Church in Earnest," by the Rev. J. A. JAMES, of Birmingham, headed, "Revival Meetings." As to the best means of accomplishing good, or in what manner, or under what circumstances, these means should be employed, there may be some diversity of opinion. But that, in the time of spiritual lukewarmness and abounding iniquity, some special

means should be employed by the and Members of the Church, to re-work of God in believers, and to souls of sinners, is generally admitted by those who take a scriptural view of the subject, and who are free from the slavish, invincible prejudice. All that we contend for in our recent at this subject is conceded by the "the Church in Earnest." "There he, 'another kind of special service for the purpose of conversion, if sorted to with great advantage, if with propriety: I mean continuing, carried on for several successive years, accompanied by earnest prayer part of the members of the Church; a minister perceives that little to result from his preaching, that not converted, and that professor warm and worldly, is there any remedy to sobriety of reason, to reveal laws of propriety, or to the minds of man, in determining by a continuing of services, sustained through the of a whole week, to keep religious minds of the people, and rouse the ing attention to its high import? consonant with the strictest doctrine the most refined spiritual sensibility one minister, the pastor, may strength enough for such service or more than one, may be called him. During all this while, m should ascend from the Church for blessing to come down upon a What can be objected to in such Who has ever tried it without a suit? What, in fact, were the Whitefield and Wesley, yea, the labours of apostles, but such convictions as these? It is said of Paul, he disputed, or as it signifies translation, discoursed, daily of Tyrannus."

Here then are clearly, distinctly stated the rationale, the reviving tendency, and suits of "Protracted Meetings: did the writer of these extracts be challenged objection to this demanded, if there were any thing contrary to sobriety, to reason, to the laws of propriety, or to economy of man? that there were in this city an "evangelical ad would "witness" against him, the whole "mechanical process these meetings," as "unsound," "savouring of an attempt to agency of the Spirit," as "unscripture as well as by the whole well accredited Revivals," "w Scripture or in the page of his of Revivals taking place, save blessing attending the use of means laid down in the Bible dangerous in their consequence "calculated to operate upon frame in such a way, as to delude into the notion that they have thorough and radical change of all that has been passed through more than a few natural elements forth by external circumstance

Now here we have the Press point blank opposed, not only, but to the Rev. JOHN A. of Birmingham, England, who fatuity, has been summoned to our cotemporary to bear in money! How is this? We w readers. Mr. James says some against "extravagance" and advises that there should be seat." Here then is a clear