

## Messenger and Visitor

Published in the interests of the Baptist denomination of the Maritime Provinces by

The Maritime Baptist Publishing Co., Ltd.

TERMS: \$1.50 per annum *in advance*.

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Address all communications and make all payments to the MESSENGER AND VISITOR.  
For further information see page nine.

Printed by Paterson & Co., 107 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

### Testimony.

It would be foolish to refuse to recognize the importance of testimony. Not merely in the religious sphere but in the sphere of human belief and action generally, testimony plays a great part. The actions of men are to a very large extent based, not upon actual knowledge or personally ascertained facts, but upon belief in the truth of the testimony of others. And not only is this true in regard to the practical business of life, but also in regard to the conclusions of science. Every scientist, even in the field in which he is a specialist, is, we suppose, more or less dependent upon the observation and the testimony of others. Much more is he thus dependent in respect to all scientific knowledge outside his own particular field of observation. Accordingly the general conclusions which any man however eminent may affirm in the name of science must rest largely upon testimony. Invalidate this testimony and the temple of science will come tumbling down. As a matter of fact there is a process of dilapidation, as well as one of building, going on continually in the structures which science rears. For her witnesses agree not together. The testimony which finds general acceptance today is contradicted tomorrow on the authority of a greater name or a wider induction. Not a little of that which, on the authority of Charles Darwin, had been quite generally accepted as assured scientific knowledge is now, in view of a wider observation and a more careful induction, quite discredited. All this however does not discredit testimony as such. It only emphasizes the importance of the facts being carefully observed and honestly reported, for if testimony, once received, is to be set aside, it is on the grounds of a testimony which can show better claims to be recognized as true.

In the field of Christian experience, testimony has exercised a powerful and gracious influence. The relation of Christian experience has been one of the most effective means of edification within the church. It has been also in the highest degree influential to persuade men to the acceptance of Christ and His Gospel. In proportion as the church loses the power to bear testimony to the truth, it loses its evangelistic power. Are we right in thinking that in the evangelical churches of our land there is at the present day a lamentable lack of the ability on the part of individual Christians to bear that forceful testimony for the truth as it is in Jesus, which in other days has been so powerful an influence to bring men into the Kingdom? There is indeed a good deal of what is called testimony bearing in our religious meetings. We do not mean to question the sincerity or the value of very many of the utterances which are heard in our social religious meetings. There is perhaps only a small proportion of them to which the terms "parrot-like" or "mechanical" could be justly applied. But what one misses is the clear testimony profoundly touched by emotion, which is heard when the believer speaks out of his own experience to tell what God has done for his soul. This utterance of Christian experience, springing spontaneously from the heart, was in the days of our fathers a mighty power in the churches. The testimony of the newly converted was especially significant. When one who had been indifferent to the claims of religion, or openly wicked and profane, arose in the church, and in words broken with deep feeling, told how God had had mercy upon him and what it had meant for him to pass from darkness unto light and from the power of Satan unto God, the assembly was thrilled with his testimony. Scarcely could the hardest or most

apathetic heart remain untouched. The earnestness, the manifest sincerity, the hatred of the sinful life renounced, and the joy in the new life of fellowship with Christ united in the new convert's testimony to constitute a message to the heart of every hearer more persuasive than the clearest logic or the most burning eloquence. We do not mean to say that the voice of such testimony has been silenced in our churches. Doubtless it is heard, but what we fear is true is that in respect to frequency and power, it is not heard now as in the past.

But Christian testimony, if real and sincere, is not a matter of speech only. It makes its most powerful impression, not through the lips but through the life. If the speech is keyed to one note while the life is keyed to another, there will be discord, and they who listen to the speech, however good it may be in itself, are likely to be distracted by the discord rather than edified by the words. "How can I hear what you say," says Emerson, "when what you do sounds so loudly in my ears?" It is only the sincere of heart who can bear effective witness, for the sense of discord between life and speech will shame the witness-bearer, and render his words weak and unconvincing. And here doubtless we touch the great reason why Christian testimony is not more influential and convincing than it is. What is called Christianity today is lived too much in the plane of a world which does not acknowledge Jesus Christ as its Lord. If we realized in our lives more of the consciousness of Jesus, we should have a proportionately richer experience, and it would be as impossible for us to fail to give an effective testimony, in word and life, as it was for him who could say in the deepest sincerity of heart, "For me to live is Christ." If we believe, with Jesus, in the love of the Heavenly Father, in the forgiveness of sins, and the presence and comfort of the Holy Spirit; if through Jesus we have the consciousness of deliverance from bondage, the sense of liberty as the children of God, if we are walking in the light, even as he is in the light, and in the fellowship of the divine love, it surely must be that we have testimony to bear which we cannot forbear to utter and which is infinitely better worth the world's hearing than all that men have gathered from every other field of observation or experience.

### A Little Talk With Subscribers.

THE MESSENGER AND VISITOR is not accustomed to boast of its performances, and it does not mean to do so now. We only wish to say that in the endeavor to fulfil our engagements with our subscribers a large amount of earnest and patient labor is necessarily expended from week to week through all the fifty-two weeks of the year. With honest and persistent effort it is sought to produce the best paper that conditions render possible and to make it worthy the esteem and support of its readers and patrons. This we regard as our part of the contract with our subscribers, and we have many kindly testimonies to the fact that our endeavors are not unrecognized or unappreciated. A very large number of our friends, too, are prompt in fulfilling their part of the contract by paying their subscriptions in advance or within a reasonable time after the beginning of the year. But some of our friends are neglectful or forgetful in this matter, and so have allowed their subscriptions to fall behind a full year and in some cases for a longer period. With many, no doubt, this is a mere oversight or inadvertence. The months have passed so quickly that they have failed to perceive that they are in arrears. Now that their attention has been called to the matter they will consult the labels on their papers, promptly forward the amount due, with regrets for their oversight, and we shall have the pleasure of sending them receipts for advanced payments. Then there are some of our friends who have many calls for money, and who will say to themselves, now that their attention is called to the matter—"Oh yes, that subscription ought to be paid, but I have so many demands upon me; the paper must wait a little longer; and really the \$1.50 or \$3.00 for which I am in arrears cannot make much difference with the publishing company." No, standing by itself, it would not of course amount to a great deal, but when it is multiplied by one or two thousand subscribers who are in the same case, it is easy to see that it becomes to the publishers a very serious

matter. It is much easier to make bricks without straw than to publish a paper like the MESSENGER AND VISITOR without money. Now, if we try industriously and with the best ability we can command to give to our readers a paper which they can on no account afford to do without, we argue that we have a right to expect that our subscribers shall fulfil their part of the contract by prompt payments. If all will do this we shall be able to go forward, not only without embarrassment, but by constantly improving the paper, make it more and more worthy of the esteem and support of its friends and patrons. Now may we ask that each subscriber to the MESSENGER AND VISITOR will kindly consider what his engagements with the paper call for at this time, and do the best he can to fulfil them.

### Editorial Notes.

—The American Baptist Missionary Union closed its accounts for another financial year on the last of March. Expenditures for the year were somewhat larger than for the preceding year and the receipts have been sufficient to meet this increase. An increase in contributions from churches and individuals shows that the foreign mission work retains its hold upon the hearts of the people. The Union, however, carries over from last year its debt amounting to about \$38,000.

—A life of Dr. Barnas Sears, a former President of Newton Theological Seminary and later President of Brown University, by Dr. Alvah Hovey, is announced. In reference to this Zion's Advocate says: "The preparation of this work could not have fallen into more competent hands. Dr. Hovey knew Dr. Sears better than any man now living, and he will be able to give us a faithful portrait of one of the most useful and prominent New England Baptists in the last century."

—The Watchman notes that the question is being soberly asked—Why military rule that has proved to be so beneficial for Havana should not be applied to American cities? and says the answer is that—"Americans believe that self-government is more to be desired than good government, and that the way to permanent good government is through self-government." This no doubt used to be orthodox American doctrine, but if it is so still, it seems evident from existing conditions in Hawaii and the Philippines and the progressive exclusion of negro citizens from the franchise in the Southern States, that a good deal of practical heterodoxy has crept in. The opinion appears to be growing rapidly in the United States that the value of self-government depends very largely upon the question whether or not it applies to white Americans.

—We are sorry to observe that our esteemed contemporary, *The Casket*, continues in so unsatisfied and disturbed a condition of mind in reference to the relations of Maritime Baptists, and of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR particularly, to the Grande Ligne Mission. But if a paper jumps to conclusions in the reckless way the *Casket* has been doing in this matter, it cannot expect to avoid confusion. Because a contributor to the MESSENGER AND VISITOR had said that the Grande Ligne Mission had been instrumental in bringing to Christ Roman Catholics and priests of the Roman Church as well as the children of Protestants, the *Casket* strangely inferred that this must mean that Roman Catholics, by virtue of their being such, were without Christ, and as destitute of the truth as the heathen that perish. Of course the words did not imply that at all, any more than they implied that the children of Protestants, by virtue of their being such, were without any saving knowledge of Christ. And when the *Casket* was assured that our support of the Grande Ligne Mission did not rest on the assumption that Roman Catholics as such are without any saving knowledge of the truth—an assumption contrary to the belief of Baptists, but that our people supported the mission on the ground that it was doing a good and much needed work for Roman Catholics as well as for Protestants and that Baptists believed that they should let their light shine wherever it is most needed, the *Casket* at once jumped to the conclusion that this was to say that Roman Catholic Quebec was religiously the darkest spot on the face of the earth. After two such remarkable performances in the line of inferential reasoning it is hardly surprising if the *Casket* is somewhat confused as to its logical reckoning. At large expenditure of labor and money, the Baptists of these Provinces have established a mission among the heathen people of India. To this they contribute a good many thousand dollars year by year and upon it they concentrate their efforts for world-evangelization outside their own territory. The Grande Ligne Mission they did not found, but believing that it is a light in a dark place, that its influence and results have been excellent and that if these were multiplied a thousand fold it would mean incalculable blessing to Quebec and the whole Dominion, they give it their hearty sympathy and support and earnestly pray that its work may prosper.