

Messenger and Visitor

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Is it Easy to be a Christian

"How very hard it is to be a Christian!" exclaims Robert Browning in his "Easter Day," and those who mark and ponder and digest that remarkable poem will hardly deny that the poet has made good his declaration. It may be admitted that this does not seem to harmonize very well with much of the religious exhortation which one hears. The aim of a great deal of what is said and sung upon this subject seems to be to declare how easy a thing it is to be a Christian. "Only give up trying to make yourself better," the inquirer is told, "Cast your deadly doing down. Christ has paid the debt. There is nothing great or small now for you to do. Look to Jesus, for there is life for a look at the Crucified One, therefore look and live."

One would not wish to deny, but rather most strongly to affirm, that there is great and gracious truth in such words as these. It is truth of the gospel that every penitent soul may come to Christ, and in humble self renouncing faith cast itself upon its Saviour, and find that rest which the sin-plagued conscience seeks vainly elsewhere. This, we say, is truth of the gospel,—otherwise there were no gospel for sinful men. But are we not too apt to forget that this is not all the truth, and to ignore those strenuous notes which sounded forth so commandingly in the full message of the gospel as declared by Jesus and his apostles? Jesus does tell men, according to the record of the gospel narratives, that eternal life is the reward of faith in him, that those who come to him shall find rest and that fellowship with him means repose for the soul. But he never tells men that the Christian life is a life of ease. His followers must not expect to float lazily with the currents of the world's life, but rather to battle, with all the power of a redeemed manhood, against its winds and tides. He bids men count the cost of following him. Are they able to be baptized with his baptism? To be a Christian, as Jesus interpreted Christianity to men, is not to "sit and sing one's self away to everlasting bliss." There is a call to strenuous struggle with the world, the flesh and the devil. It means self-surrender and self-renunciation, a life of vigilance,—the lighted lamp and the girded loin. It means a reversal of this world's judgments in respect to the things to be made the first object of endeavor, and the sacrifice of life according to the world's standards, in order to live the unseen life with Christ. It means making the animal man the servant of the spiritual, living for the unseen instead of the seen, the hiding of the life with Christ in God that it may in the fulness of time be manifest in him. It means the transforming of the life through the strivings of the indwelling Spirit and the proving of the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. It signifies a constant aim and endeavor toward the measure of the stature of manhood in Christ. Christianity involves the law of self-sacrifice—self-sacrifice which finds its motive—not in ambition for sainthood, but in love. As Robert Louis Stevenson wrote, "to renounce when that shall be necessary and not to be embittered," or as Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis has put it in a recent sermon, "To fail and not be cynical; to give kindness and receive ingratitude, and not be skeptical; to sow good seeds and see another reap the sheaves with shouting; to pour one's very life blood about the roots of some reform or philanthropy, and see another step in and take the honors, decreasing into obscurity while one's successor leaps into prominence,"—and to do all this with that charity which seeks not its own but rejoices in the truth—that is what it means to be a Christian according to the ideal of Christ and of Paul. Who then is ready to measure himself by this standard and declare that it is an easy thing to be a Christian?

"The ideal of Christ and of Paul," we have said. To Paul the Christian life in the fulness of love and

power was indeed an ideal. For him it could not be a full realization. He was reaching forward to it, striving strenuously, through battlings with himself, the world and the devil, that he might attain to it. But he had not attained. He could not say—I have been made perfect. But in Jesus Christianity was not an ideal merely, a distant goal; it was life, completeness, power,—power not only to live himself but to make others live. "The second man" is the Lord from Heaven—a life-giving spirit. His fellowship is a fellowship of life. To those who believe in him he is what the vine is to the branches. And so for Paul, as for all others, the one hope of realizing the divine ideal is through faith and fellowship in Jesus Christ. It is worth while to ask ourselves—Is Christianity for us—it not a perfect realization, at least a veritable ideal? Is it to us more than a song or story or picture of some far land or some far time, that attracts our thought and our admiration. Does it grip, inspire, impel us upward, onward toward the apprehension of that for which the divine hand of Jesus has laid hold on us? Is our ideal—it is really worth while to ask—Christ's or the world's? Have we really obeyed the gospel? Does the religion in which we trust mean conformity to the world, or does it mean transformation into the image of Christ?

Editorial Notes.

—A note just received as we go to press from Rev. R. Sanford, Vizianagram, India, dated April 17, says: "It has pleased the Lord to grant us much encouragement in our work during the last four months. Twenty-four in all have been baptized. Of these, eighteen have come from that class of people known as the Madagas, and they all live in one village. There are several other villages also in which there are interested enquirers. Opposition sprang up at once. Severe persecution, in various forms, has been borne by the new Christians; but hitherto they have continued steadfast. It is a time of anxiety with us, lest that which evidently is the work of the Lord should be hindered by the adversary. Pray for the weak ones."

—The Antigouish Casket intimates that the death of Dr. Justin D. Fulton has afforded it that sense of relief which a person may experience who is assured that a peculiar bad smell from which he has suffered will offend his nostrils no more. If the Casket can assure itself that the offense to its sensibilities was due simply to some uncleanness attaching to Dr. Fulton it may have reason to congratulate itself, but if the unpleasantness arose from the fact that Dr. Fulton was engaged in investigations in certain unsanitary quarters with a view to promoting more healthful conditions, then the Casket can have no guarantee that its nostrils will not again be offended. Those who knew Dr. Fulton best testify that personally he was one of the purest of men.

—It has been very clearly shown that it would be a great and general advantage if the people of this country would adopt the plan of using wide tires on their heavy wagons. The man who uses a wide tire not only makes it somewhat easier for his own team, but he thereby preserves and often improves, instead of injuring, the road for the teams that follow his. There's a principle in wide tires that ought to appeal to Christian men. Every Christian ought to be a "wide tire" man in a larger sense. He ought not to be content merely to get over the road himself in any sort of a way, but he ought to make the way he travels in a broader and a solidier way for those who are to come after him. Our grandfathers and our fathers have turned "bridle paths into turnpikes, made crooked paths straight and rough paths smooth, and it would be base ingratitude in us to appropriate the improvements which their toil and self-denial purchased for us without endeavoring in our turn to pass on like benefits to others.

—A society has been lately organized in St. John under the title "Fabian League," the purpose of which, as we understand it, is to promote interest in social and economic questions. At the first meeting of the League, held last week, a gentleman prominent in business circles and actively interested in questions relating to human welfare, occupied the chair. Various elements were represented in the meeting, and, among others, a Roman Catholic priest, a Baptist pastor and a Jewish Rabbi participated in the discussion. One of the subjects discussed was The Relation of Poverty to Vice. As might be supposed there were differences of opinion on this topic and the discussion is said to have been a lively one. There are to be monthly meetings of the League during the summer. Such discussions, participated in by men who are sincerely interested in the promotion of right and justice in society, and who are willing to consider economic and social questions from the different possible standpoints, should do much good in promoting correct thinking and thereby helping to promote right living.

—Wolfville's anniversary week is drawing near. The class to graduate this year is, we believe, a comparatively large one, and it will have the distinction of a first place in the century. We are pleased to learn from President Trotter that Acadia is looking forward to the approaching anniversary as one of special interest. The Baccalaureate sermon is to be preached by Dr. T. Harwood Pattison, of Rochester Theological Seminary, who will also lecture before the Senate. The Rev. W. A. Newcombe of Thomaston, Me., an honored alumnus of Acadia of the class of 1870, will speak under the auspices of the Y. M. C. A. of the College on Sunday evening. Among other visitors expected from abroad is Dr. Lewis Hunt, of Sheffield, England, of the class of 1868.

—The many friends of our highly esteemed brother in the ministry—Rev. G. W. Springer, of Jemseg, will be sorry to learn that his health is now very feeble. From Pastor McIntyre of Chipman, who was in the city last week, and who had seen Bro. Springer a day or two before, we learned that he is in a very weak condition and suffering much weariness and distress, his disease being of such a nature that he is unable to lie down. Our brother was permitted for many years to blow the Gospel trumpet and he made good use of his opportunities. He has been a faithful minister, preaching the Gospel in love and deep earnestness, and the divine blessing has rested upon his labors. Bro. Springer's large-heartedness and hopefulness of spirit has won him many friends, and his presence at the public gatherings of the denomination has always been most helpful and inspiring. Many friends will unite in the prayer that our aged brother may be very graciously sustained in these days of suffering and of waiting for the better things beyond.

—The Sunday School Times has an article on "The Art of Coughing." Its reference is particularly to coughing in church. Unfortunately there seems to be no prospect of this performance becoming numbered among the lost arts. The Times complains that coughers seem to throw their best energies into making themselves heard at the most inopportune times. "Just as the speaker's oratory reaches its climax, the cougher opens his mouth the widest and asserts his hoarse prerogative. He is never staggered nor afraid of his own voice. The rule of precedence is always in his favor." We confess that we have just as little sympathy for the army of church-coughers as has the S. S. Times. Whatever may be said for children, the adult worshipper should certainly have strength of will and manners enough to refrain from coughing in church. Occasionally, of course, there may be a cough that will conquer the best intentions of persons whom we should hesitate to characterize as weak-minded, but generally speaking, a good intention and a moderate degree of will power are quite sufficient in order to suppress the inclination. About ninety-nine one-hundredths of the coughing one hears in church is wholly unnecessary. If every member of the congregation was promised a sovereign at the close of the service on the condition of having abstained from coughing, the person offering such an inducement would not be wise to figure on a discount of even one per cent. in providing for the number who would be able to claim the reward.

—It is a great fallacy to suppose that only men who drink to the point of drunkenness suffer any great injury from the liquor habit. As a matter of fact no doubt the man who drinks every day a large quantity of liquor without losing his head often suffers more from the habit mentally and physically than the man who occasionally gets drunk. Dr. Clouston of the Edinburgh Asylum, Scotland, is quoted by the Health Monthly as saying: "I am safe in saying that no man indulges for ten years continuously, even though he was never drunk in all that time, without being psychologically changed for the worse. And if the habit goes on after forty years the change is apt to be faster and more decided. We see it in our friends, and we know what the end will be, but we cannot lay hold of anything in particular. Their fortune and works suffer, and yet we dare not say they are drunkards, for they are not. It all depends on the original inherent strength of the brain how long the downward course takes. Usually some inter-current disease or tissue degeneration cuts off the man before he has a chance of getting old. I have seen such a man simply pass into senile dementia, before he was an old man, from mild, respectable alcoholic excess, without any alcoholism or preliminary outburst at all. And I am sure I have seen strong brains in our profession at the bar and in business break down from chronic alcoholic excess without their owners ever having been once drunk."

Meeting of the Board of Governors at Wolfville.

A special meeting of the Board of Governors was held in the college library on Wednesday, the 8th inst. The meeting was well attended, and the business transacted was of special importance. The immediate occasion for the calling of the meeting was the

RESIGNATION OF MR. McDONALD,
as principal of the Seminary. It is known to the readers

of the MESSENGER the Frederickton of McDonald a call sidering the matt duty pointed tow the 3rd inst., secretary of the not competent to cipal, the Board Donald has devo zeal, and it is a feel constrained view, however and the decla Board found no tion. Mr. McD the pastorate, been associated also has endeav known her well warm regard of was appointed the retiring pri if possible. Th and the commu task.

As it was ne another matter timated, in the al Committee lity of appoin Payzant found For three ye work has been fund. The am ently to warra it was believed that the full necessary dela does not furni course, it has how to organi way. The me mittee, and p earnest and p In the end appoint a sec 1901. This on Wednesda nominating c tion to the with the abov ed a scheme was proposed and be taug scheme was the Board. shall ask per extenso, to t Wolfville,

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