

The Christian.

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"THE CHRISTIAN,"

P. O. Box 106,
St. John, N. B.

EDITOR:

DONALD CRAWFORD, . . . NEW GLASGOW, P. E. I.

CO-EDITOR:

T. H. CAPP, St. John, N. B.

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BEGINNING OF VOLUME III.

Our readers will please notice that with this number commences Volume III. From the reports given at our last Annual it will be clearly seen that, financially at least, our paper has been a success. At the close of Volume I., after meeting all its liabilities, it had to its credit in the bank \$100.00. At the yearly meeting in Leonardville the question was discussed as to what should be done with this surplus. Some suggesting it be used for the improvement of the paper—make it larger, or a semi-monthly; others that it be placed in the treasury of the Board for missionary purposes. But some of the more careful and safe-going brethren thought that possibly the second year would see a deficit, and that the money might be needed to meet it. It was finally decided to leave the money in the bank for the year. But the report at the close of the second year gave such assurance of success that it was decided that the \$100.00 of the first year, with its accumulated interest, be expended in the missionary interest; that one-third of it be forwarded to the Missionary Board of P. E. I., and that from one to two hundred extra copies be struck off each month and sent gratuitously (when requested by some friend or agent) to families desiring, but unable to take the paper. Now we take this opportunity of thanking our friends for the many words of encouragement sent us, for their efforts to circulate and make interesting the columns of our paper, and we trust that the year upon which we now enter will witness even a greater activity in making this feature of our work a power for good.

EDITORIAL.

CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY MORE A PRIVILEGE
THAN A DUTY.

Jesus says, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." We understand His yoke to be the action, by which the true believer puts on Christ, and His burden to be all things which he has commanded those to observe who have taken His yoke. While His yoke is easily understood and accepted, His commandments are so free from tyranny, so good and wise, that His people love them. He is a king who ardently loves His subjects; and His subjects are a willing people. They can neither accept or enjoy the service of another.

Christ has cheerfully given up everything for our salvation, and for the salvation of the whole world,

and asks us to give cheerfully of our time and substance, that the world may know and enjoy that salvation. This He requires of us for the very best of reasons. First, that He may lavish His love upon us. How can He love those who refuse to give to Him, or who give reluctantly, seeing that He gave up for others all He had, and then gave Himself? Secondly, He asks our cheerful offerings, that we may be like Himself. His love cannot be satisfied unless we bear His image, and all our training on earth looks to that time when we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him.

Again, He requires cheerful giving from His people because of its benign influence on all concerned. The needy rejoice when their wants are supplied, especially by the hands of loving brethren. They glorify God for His rich grace which can move others to deny themselves to assist them. When men are saved by the Gospel of Christ their joy stirs the very hearts of angels, and they rejoice over them, and if true happiness springs from happying others, and if "it is more blessed to give than to receive," what must their joy be whom God employs to relieve the sufferers and to carry to the dying His messages of life and love? For it must be remembered that lost sinners never go after the gospel to find it, and angels never carry it to them, but God gives this blessed privilege to His children. Christ is over all most blessed, because He is always enriching others with His fulness, and can be enriched Himself by none. He blesses His people both in receiving and in giving, but the giver is more blessed, because he is more like his living Lord. No happiness can equal the luxury of doing good.

No Christian can afford to keep back his property from the cause of his Redeemer, or to live without self-denial for the good of others. It is a priceless privilege for the poorest to put into the Lord's treasury. The poor widow illustrated this; her two mites was a small offering in the sight of men who would stand by ready to upbraid her for ostentation and imprudence; but it was large, very large, in his sight who knew the blessedness of giving all he had for such a purpose.

Covetousness is the very opposite of Christian liberality, and holds high rank among the crimes of all ages. Wherever we read in the Bible a summary of sins against God or men, this crime takes a leading place. It brought forth sin in Eden, whence followed "death and all our woes." It distinguished wicked men in Old Testament history. Balaam, through love of gold, attempted to curse the people of God, and when he failed in this he was successful in another plan. "He taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication, and there fell of them in one day three and twenty thousand." It gave distinction to Pharaoh, Achan, Hahab, Gehazi and Saul as monuments of Divine displeasure. It is so subtle as to assume the most pleasing forms, and it gains the applause even of those who would denounce murder and theft and other crimes. "The wicked blesseth the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth." It is so shameless as to show its face in the very presence of Him who is the embodiment of disinterested love. Its heaven-daring enormity is exhibited in the professed friends of Jesus on either side of His cross. For thirty pieces of silver Judas betrays his Lord. And just after His resurrection Ananias and Sapphira join those who were giving their all for Christ but persisted in lying to the Holy Spirit and in keeping back part of the price. How dreadful the crimes which could be committed by Jesus' professed friends under the very shadow of the cross and how unpardonable their nature when condign punishment must be inflicted even by Him who pled for and obtained the salvation of His murderers. Covetousness was quite able to produce these crimes.

Whoever faithfully studies the Bible and contrasts covetousness with Christian benevolence will strive and pray to be delivered from one and enabled to practice the other. Its last lesson on the subject is in the 25th of Matthew, telling us what will most certainly take place in the last judgment. The King will gather all nations before Him and place one part on His right hand, the other on His left. He will say to those on His right, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry and ye gave me meat; thirsty and ye gave me drink; naked and ye clothed me. I was a stranger and ye took me in," &c. "Then shall He say to them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink: A stranger and ye took me not in," &c., &c. Our Judge here faithfully shows us the hinge on which will turn our eternal destiny. Can we now afford to withhold from Christ what He requires of us and in that day meet the consequence? Although we may not now remember our actions, they are all open and naked to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, and they will be read by Him in the judgment-day.

When the cause of Christ appeals to us for aid we stand on critical ground. If we think of hard times and the many demands which we are in duty bound to meet and conclude that we can't give, or at best, can only give a little to Him who gave Himself for us, will we be blest of Him here or in the judgment? If we give because "we can do so without feeling it," will that be acceptable? Or if we give merely to escape a dun "entreating that the word should not be spoken to us any more," or if we give "to be seen of men," can we in either case expect the approval of Christ and regard our actions as Christian liberality?

Christ always enjoined on His followers self-denial to do good to others, even their enemies, that they may be like their Father who gives rain and sunshine to the just and unjust. He Himself on the road to the cross often stopped to relieve the needy. He cheerfully healed the sick, the lame, the blind, and wept with the sons and daughters of sorrow even when about to dry their tears. He forgave all who sought His favor, and thus sowed the seeds of the benevolent plans which rise around us in His Church to relieve the distressed and to let all nations know who He is and what He has done for their salvation. He told others to carry the Gospel to us when we were without God, and having reconciled us to Himself through Christ He commands and entreats us to send it to others for the same purpose.

The sympathy of liberal brethren often cheered the great heart of the apostle Paul, whether it was shown in relieving poor brethren or ministering to his own wants when preaching the Gospel. To the church at Philippi he writes, "Now ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the Gospel when I departed from Macedonia no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessity, not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound, I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing unto God." He rejoiced in "the things sent" not so much as a desirable gift, for he could and willingly would labor with his own hands to meet his wants, but he rejoiced mostly because they were an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God, and being the fruits of the Holy Spirit springing forth from loving hearts, "WOULD ABOUND TO THEIR ACCOUNT." Phil. iv. 15-18.

D. C.