

## The Christian.

ST. JOHN, N. B. . . . . APRIL, 1890.

## EDITORIAL.

## THINGS SEEN AND UNSEEN.

We have before us the things which are seen and the things which are not seen—one temporal the other eternal. It is intended that man shall look at the things that are not seen, while inferior animals are only expected to look at the seen; their capacity being unfit to grasp the unseen. The Creator has supplied this want in their nature by giving them strong instinct. "The ox (which cannot provide for the future) knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," and both are cared for in this way. But man is expected to look to the unseen and provide for the future; and if he fails in this he has no such instinct, but sinks below the beasts that perish, dishonors his Creator and is doomed to suffer want. This holds good in nature, nor is it less true in grace.

Being in constant contact with the things which are seen, it is an easy matter to look at them and be influenced by them. The things that are not seen are revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Bible, and we can only see them by faith in the divine testimony and thus be influenced by them. But the influence is glorious. The Apostle says, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things that are seen but at the things which are unseen," etc., etc. II. Cor. iv. 17. Abraham saw Jesus' day afar off and was glad. Moses endured all his afflictions, as seeing Him who is invisible; and Paul could call his afflictions light and momentary, and regard it as the very highest blessing, working for him and his brethren a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory while he looked at the unseen. How often, when we are afflicted do we wonder at our lot, and how glad we would be to understand why it is so, or to obtain even a temporary relief. But here is a sight that unstings all our grief and turns our afflictions into the richest blessings which a kind Father can bestow; blessings that work for us while we are working for others—for the salvation of men, for the prosperity of the church, and for the honor and glory of Christ. Our affliction is working for us—working steadily, unceasingly, lovingly and effectually a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.

This world is the place and this life is the time for work. "The night cometh when no man can work." We certainly are at work. Jesus knows that we certainly are working—working either for Him or against Him. While we are working for Him He makes all things work for us. How important that we work for Christ and have the assurance that all are ours and all things working for us. Looking at the unseen decides this matter. Jesus is unseen, and all His work, His commands and promises. We look at His life on earth, and we see His Father in all the loveliness of His character, for "Jesus is the express image of His person." We see in His life a perfect man, doing all that a man ought to do; and in His death we see a complete atonement for all our sins. A sight of His affliction makes our own light, and momentary, and immensely beneficial. "Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though ye see Him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Peter i. 8.

Looking at the sufferings of Christ made the Apostle feel his own to be light, which from any other standpoint, would seem very severe. Christ had never sinned against God or man, yet He suffered. Paul had sinned against both God and man and he suffered. Christ suffered as an offering for the

sins of the whole world. Paul did not. Paul had the sympathy and smiles of the Father and the Son when he suffered. But Christ trod the wine-press alone, and was forsaken even by His Father in His suffering. In His sufferings He was made a curse, and that for us. How could Paul think his own otherwise than light when looking at the affliction of his blessed Saviour? How can we ever think our affliction severe when we stand near the cross and see the Son of Man dying that awful death that we may live?

Affliction events sometimes occur which, viewed through the things seen, are most crushing and discouraging. Noble men and women, just as they are entering upon a life of usefulness to fill important places for which they appear eminently fitted, are suddenly cut down by death and all hopes respecting them are thus cut off. Why is it that such persons as Garfield and the first Mrs. Judson were not spared for their high and important work on earth? Why is it that many young men so promising and so anxious to preach the Gospel of Christ are cut down just as they are entering upon this work? Looking at the things that are seen we have no answer for these questions, and feel as Jacob did when he exclaimed, "All these things are against me." Gen. xlii. 36. Jacob was permitted, like Job, to see the end of the Lord in his case before he went hence. We may not now understand these things, but by looking to Jesus and waiting for the proper time it will certainly appear plain that He doeth all things well, and that He is "too wise to err and too good to be unkind." While walking by faith we are permitted to appropriate the words of the Saviour to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Our loved ones are passing from our sight. "We shall see their faces never more." Their spirits are in the unseen with Christ. Let us look to Jesus, their Saviour and ours, remembering that His WORK takes away our sins and fits us for heaven, that He makes all things work for our good, and kindly engages us to work in His vineyard, looking forward to that exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

## Original Contributions.

## "I WILL ARISE AND GO TO MY FATHER."

The parable which contains the words at the head of this article is from the lips of Jesus. It, doubtless, is an expression of His mind, and His mind was the mind of God the loving Father.

Were this reality and not parable, and were the words the language of the prodigal arising from a heart brought to the verge of despair through sorrow and privation, we might doubt the privilege of the wayward son returning to the father and finding acceptance. But Jesus supplies the language. It is all from His unerring lips—it is all from His loving heart. It was given either as a rebuke to the Scribes and Pharisees or to teach them a lesson of pity, tenderness and love, above anything which had ever come under their observation or entered their self-loving hearts. The great Teacher knew very well their selfishness, self-righteousness and exclusiveness.

They, in their own estimation, were holy, and they only were holy. They were the favored of God, and they only were the favored of God. They did not understand that God was the God of the sinner as well as of the righteous, that He was the God of the Gentile as well as of the Jew. They did not understand that God loves all—loves the world—and that the Messiah's work was to benefit all. Perhaps they had no desire that God's love should extend to all.

Jesus rebuked them by a word-picture; such as could never before find expression on the canvas of the painter or in the song of the poet. Why? Because no such grand ideas of love and forgiveness had ever found a lodging-place in the minds of men. Truly, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

In that picture are presented to us a comfortable home, "plenty and to spare," and an apparently happy family. But one little seed of discontent drops in, and the younger son desires independence. "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." He asked and received. It was not for his well-being. He was mistaken. Independence was not with him the way to happiness. He leaves home. He is on a new road. His own hand is on the lever. He allows the steam to go on in full force. He is on a down grade. The descent is rapid from a happy home to the lowest condition of loneliness, wretchedness and want. In his lonely condition he thinks. His mind goes back to the days of yore. How vividly the old home is pictured on his mind; but, while he thinks of plenty and comfort in the home of his childhood, he thinks no longer of his right to anything there. He has cut himself off. But to remain where he is is death. A resolution is formed. He will go to the old home—not now as a son, but as a suppliant, to cast himself on his father's bounty and ask for the place of a servant. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say," etc. So he returns: the spendthrift, the bankrupt, the degraded, the outcast. Not much hope in his heart; for has he not forfeited not only the father's love, but also his pity?

But now, the Divine Teacher presents the strong part of the picture; that is, the father's love which has never changed, never grown weak, but hung around the "wandering boy" even when he thought him lost—dead from his own fault. He thought not of the loss of property. He thought not of the disgrace to the family. He thought of the boy. Now he comes. The father sees him a great way off, runs to meet him, falls on his neck and kisses him.

"Father, I have sinned," said the boy. "Bring the best robe," said the father; "a ring for his hand, shoes for his feet, and bring the fatted calf kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

The pharisaic thought in reference to the love of God was not very expansive. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance," "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost," "Doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which was lost till he find it," "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," etc., were thoughts which found no corresponding sentiment in the minds of the chief men among the Jews. They could look on the utter ruin and loss of a human being with the utmost indifference. There was a religion of selfishness and pride; degrading, not elevating; corrupting, not purifying. The lesson: God is always ready to do good to men in every station of life. However low and degraded, he is ever ready to receive the returning prodigal. The door is always open. The robe is always ready. The feast of love and peace is always prepared, and the song of rejoicing angels, "The dead's alive, the lost is found," is ready to announce the return to the Father's house of every wandering child."

While in the city of Charlottetown some time ago, it was my fortune to go into a place of worship where there was what is sometimes called a revival meeting. At a certain stage of the meeting the "clergyman" gave an unscriptural invitation. It was to any who might be anxious about salvation