

Christian Mirror

NEW SERIES.

WEEKLY.]

"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED."—DANIEL XII. 4.

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POETRY.

IN THE SILENT MIDNIGHT.

HE STANDETH AT THE DOOR AND KNOCKETH.

In the silent midnight watches,—
List—thy bosom door!
How it knocketh, knocketh, knocketh—
Knocketh evermore!
Say not 'tis the pulse's beating:
'Tis thy heart of sin;
'Tis thy Saviour knocks, and crieth
'Rise and let me in.'

Death comes down, with reckless footsteps,
To the hall and hut;
Think you death will tarry knocking,
Where the door is shut?
Jesus waiteth, waiteth, waiteth—
But the door is fast:
Grieved, away thy Saviour goeth;
Death breaks in at last.

Then 'tis time to stand entreating
Christ to let thee in;
At the gate of heaven beating,
Waiting for thy sin:
Nay! alas, thou guilty creature!
Hast thou then forgot?
Jesus waited long to know thee,
Now he knows thee not!

CHILDREN.

'Speak to a child—any child—in a calm, positive, clear voice, and he will be sure to obey you, if you speak once and only once.'—*Mrs. Sigourney.*

'This is true: and if it were observed in family government there would be few disobedient children. Every parent has one particular tone—one peculiar voice, which every child, if it be not entirely spoilt, will obey. Let any child cry for the moon, to any parent. He will be refused always with that voice. What is the consequence? The child stops crying. A child cries for a razor—a looking-glass—or a teapot of boiling water. He will be generally refused in such a voice—with such a peremptory look, that he will not venture to ask again. It is a pity parents do not observe this and profit by it. Let them refuse any thing precisely as they refuse what is impossible—as they refuse the moon, the mirror and the water, in the same voice, in the same way,—and they will have little or no trouble with a child. Nature is full of these delicate, sweet intimations for the heart of a parent.

Truth is a diamond which should always glitter in the crownpiece of every door, like the blood of the passover on the lintels of Hebrew doors. The destroying angel is commissioned to honour that token.

She who considers herself immortal will act from high and inspiring motives; while she who lives only for time, must be grovelling and limited in her plans of benevolent enterprise.

He is happy whose circumstances suit his temper; but he is more miserable who can suit his temper to any circumstances.

"The day closes in darkness, the year fades in desolation and man sleeps in the dust: but there is a morning and a spring time for all. Youth that is cut down in its loveliness, like a morning flower, shall bloom afresh in the garden of God; and age, that shines in righteousness, till it sinks beneath the sod, shall rise again in glory, like the sun in the firmament."

Though Fortune frowns, and the dealings of Providence seem mysterious, Hope whispers there is a brighter day, and prosperity will succeed adversity.

GENERAL LITERATURE.

THE PRIVATE MANNERS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS.

(Concluded from page 19.)

THE next point to which we shall advert, in the private manners of the primitive believers, is

DIET.

In this point they were frugal and sparing—never indulging in those luxuries of the table which were so commonly in use among the pagans. And the manner in which they partook of their meals was characterised by that piety and spirituality of mind, which may well lead the Christians of our age to blush and be ashamed.

When dinner had been served, and the family had taken their seats at table, the master of the household, with a grave and solemn voice, and in a prayer of considerable length, acknowledged their dependence on the care of their common Father, expressed their gratitude for the past tokens of his bounty, and invoked him to bless, for their health and comfort, the provisions of which they were about to partake. During the progress of the meal, some member of the family in houses of the lower class, or some hired reader in those of the richer orders, entertained the company with select portions of the Scriptures; for so strong and insatiable was their appetite for spiritual food, that they could not rest satisfied without providing suitable refreshment for the soul at the same time that they were enjoying the comforts of the body. The viands being removed, the family circle was drawn more closely together,—for now were unfolded, and put into the hands of all, the precious scrolls in which, in those days, the Scriptures were written. Previous to this, however, each was expected to put himself in an attitude of becoming reverence; the hands were carefully washed, that not a stain might fall on the Sacred Volume, and, while the men remained with their heads bare, the women covered themselves with a veil, as a token of respect for the Book of God. The head of the family then read aloud a few passages, both from the Old and the New Testament, accompanying them with some plain and simple admonitions of his own, or recalling to the memory of his audience the public exhortations which, on the preceding Sabbath, had been founded on them in the church; or he taught the younger branches of the house to repeat after him the beautiful prayer which was dictated by the lips of the Saviour; and told them, in simple phrase, of the love which God bears to the young, and of the blessedness of remembering their Creator in the days of their youth. These readings and exhortations were always short, and diversified, at intervals, by sacred music,—of which the primitive Christians were passionately fond. Sometimes one, distinguished by taste and talents for spiritual songs, sung some favourite piece of sacred melody; at other times, the shrill voices of the women and the children were blended in full chorus with the deeper tones of the men,—till, as the hour set apart for refreshment drew towards a close, the venerable parent, whose look and attitude called for momentary silence, gave thanks to the Giver of all good, for the enjoyment of their natural and spiritual comforts, and prayed that his presence and his blessing might be with them during the succeeding period of labour and duty. And not only at meals, but at other times, the early Christians employed themselves in reading the Scriptures and in prayer. This leads us to advert to a most important point in their private manners—their regular and devout observance of

FAMILY WORSHIP.

It may easily be supposed that at a time when Christians were not contented with "a form of godliness," but sought earnestly to feel its power, an ordinance so refreshing and elevating to the soul as the worship of God in the family, was not likely to be neglected. Accordingly, we find Mr. Jamieson thus describing their regular and devout attention to this duty:—

At an early hour in the morning the family was assembled, when a portion of Scriptures was read from the Old Testament, which was followed by a hymn and a prayer, in which thanks were offered up to the Almighty for preserving them during the silent watches of the night, and for his goodness in permitting them to meet in health of body and soundness of mind; and, at the same time, his grace was implored to defend them amid the dangers and temptations of the day,—to make them faithful to every duty, and enable them, in all respects, to walk worthy of their Christian vocation. During the day they had, like the Jews, stated seasons, at the third, sixth, and ninth hours; (corresponding respectively to nine, twelve, and three o'clock, according to our computation,) when those who had command of their time, were wont to retire for a little to engage in the exercises of devotion. In the evening, before retiring to rest, the family again assembled, when the same form of worship was observed as in the morning; with this difference, that the service was considerably protracted beyond the period which could be conveniently allotted to it in the commencement of the day. Besides all these frequent observances, they were in the habit of rising at midnight to engage in prayer and the singing of psalms; a practice of venerable antiquity, and which, as Dr. Cave justly supposes, "took its origin from the first times of persecution, when, not daring to meet together in the day, they were forced to keep their religious assemblies in the night."

But it must not be imagined that the Christians of the primitive age observed only stated seasons of devotion. Prayer was the element in which they lived and breathed, and every occupation in which they engaged was habitually sanctified by prayer. They "prayed without ceasing;" and not only so, but they were diligent, nay, unweary, in their perusal of the Word of God. It was, in fact, a marked peculiarity of their private manners, that they abounded in

READING THE SCRIPTURES.

At a period when the Bible was only to be found in manuscript, and at a very high price, it is no slight evidence of the importance which was attached to the Sacred Volume, that it was so extensively and minutely known. On this topic we quote the following observations:—

Those of the men who could read, never went abroad without carrying a Bible in their pockets,—while the women wore it hanging about their necks; and by frequently refreshing their memories by private perusal, and drawing little groups of anxious listeners around them, they acquired so familiar an acquaintance with the lively oracles, that there were few who could not repeat those passages that contained any thing remarkable respecting the doctrines of their faith, or the precepts of their duty. Nay, there were many who had made the rare and enviable attainment of being able to say the entire Scriptures by heart! One person is mentioned, among the martyrs in Palestine, so well instructed in the Sacred Writings, that, when occasion offered, he could, from memory, repeat passages in any part of the Scriptures as exactly as if he had unfolded the book and read them; a second, being unacquainted with letters, used to invite