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Religious Miscellany.

ONE BY ONE.

They are gathering homeward from every land,
One by one;
As their weary feet touch the shining strand,
One by one;
Their robes are inclosed in a golden crown,
Their travel-stained garments are all laid down,
And, clothed with white raiment, they rest on the mead,
Where the Lamb loveth His chosen to lead,
One by one.

Before they rest they pass through the strife,
One by one;
Through the waters of death they enter life,
One by one;
To some are the floods of the river still,
As they ford their way to the heavenly hill;
To others the waves run fiercely and wild,
Yet all reach the home of the undefiled,
One by one.

We, too, shall come to the river's side,
One by one;
We are nearer its waters each even-tide,
One by one;
We can hear the noise and dash of the stream,
Now and again through our life's deep dream;
Sometimes the floods o'er the banks o'erflow,
Sometimes in ripples the small waves go,
One by one.

Jesus! Redeemer! we look to thee,
One by one;
We lift up our voices tremblingly,
One by one;
The waves of the river are dark and cold,
We know not the spot where our feet may hold;
Thou who didst pass through in deep midnight,
Strengthen us, send us the staff and the light,
One by one.

Plant Thou thy feet beside us as we tread,
One by one;
O Thou let us lean each drooping head,
One by one;
Let but Thy mighty arm round us be twined,
We'll cast all our fears and cares to the wind;
Saviour! Redeemer! with Thee full in view,
Smilingly, gladsomely, shall we pass through,
One by one.

WHY JOIN A CHURCH?

The question is often asked sincerely, as well as in scorn or in scepticism. Now and then one who is called to meet opposition in confessing Christ publicly, or who shrinks from the criticism which a church member must encounter in an unchristian world, is tempted to think that he can do as well out of the Church as in it especially as many in it are no credit to the cause. Is this so?

The first thing that strikes a thoughtful mind on hearing such an assertion is, What a mistake Christ made, then, in establishing the Church! Did he understand the necessities of his people and of the world? If the Church was seen by Christ to be a necessity, and if even the objector whom we quote would shrink from the idea of abolishing it, why is the duty of maintaining its existence more imperative on others than on him? Has he a right to live in a neglect which, if adopted also by others, would destroy the Church? Can any private soul think that it would be the better for itself and for the world, if all should conclude it to be unnecessary to unite with the church, and should let it perish from among the institutions of society?

We must suppose that in instituting the Church, Christ had in view the highest good of His people. Nor is it difficult to see why he made this provision for their wants, or why the apostles, wherever they preached the Gospel gathered the converts into churches.

The very act of joining a church has an important effect upon character and experience. It gives one decision, courage, firmness, joy and hope. The convert takes open position, breaks visibly with the world, and identifies himself with Christ. The step is upward in moral character; it rids him of hesitation and doubt, and fills his soul with holy boldness. Now he has crossed the border, is a professed saint, wears Christ's name, bears aloft his banner. He feels a new sense of responsibility, and is deepened in his purpose of holy living. On the one hand tempters are less likely to assail him, and on the other, he is less liable to be influenced by them; just as a pledged total abstinence man is less liable to be asked to drink intoxicating liquors, and, if asked, is more certain to refuse.

Then he gains fresh confidence from his association with spiritual brethren and sisters. In union we have interior as well as exterior strength. We are interested in our convictions by companionship with others who share them. The public opinion of an unbelieving world is met by the counter public opinion of the Church. As a man misunderstood and pulgued in the community gains heart, and finds comfort and hope, the moment he passes the threshold of his door, and comes within the atmosphere of love and faith in his family, where none doubts him, so the tired and tempted saint finds solace and support in the fellowship of the Church as a Christian family. He meets sympathy, receives countenance, gets fresh stimulus, is revived in spirit, and steps out into the world again, full of peace and firm of purpose.

And then joining the Church brings him under those means of grace which the Saviour has instituted as perpetual auxiliaries to the divine life in the soul. Perhaps no one is fully aware how much he is indebted to outward influences and helps, which, in a sense, surround and constrain him, as the encircling hoops the barrel. Hence the sad falls of so many church members when they emigrate from the churches. The worship of the sanctuary, the partaking of the ordinances, the hearing of the Gospel, are as bread to the hungry, or water to the thirsty. A man must have food, and drink, and pure air without, as well as healthy stomach, and heart, and lungs within. These two conditions of life are strong in natural connection, weak and useless in separation. When Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, and said, "This is in remembrance of Me," he had our spiritual growth as well as his own memory in view. He proposed a special channel of grace, which no one can undertake and neglect, even ignorantly, without serious damage and loss.

We never know one to try the experiment of leading a Christian life outside of the Church with success; that is, in the ordinary circumstances which allow one the opportunity of this confessing Christ. Such an experience is filled with doubt, often even to the abandonment of Christian hope, is weighed down with a sense of condemnation, is made lonely by want of full sympathy either with the church or the world, loses fellowship with the Saviour, falls easily into sin, becomes timid and restrained, and is devoid of spiritual power over others. No one can behold such a life, and see it in the beauty, the joy, the comprehensiveness, the proportion, the attraction, the silent instruction which go with a consistent, hearty profession of faith in Christ, bravely and lovingly maintained before friend and foe.—*Advance.*

THE DYING HEIRESS.

Alice was an only child, an heiress. Lovely and accomplished, she lived for this world, and this world offered her no ordinary attractions. Idolized by her parents, and beloved by an accepted suitor, she knew not the meaning of a wish ungratified. But an unexpected messenger arrived at the mansion. A pale messenger came to Alice. A hectic flush suffused her beautiful face, rendering it, if possible, more lovely still. The eye of affection soon perceived that Alice sank by degrees, and as she lay on her couch, surrounded with all the luxuries that wealth could procure, she began to think how sad it was to leave her loving friends and all her brilliant prospects, and to go—where? where?

She could not find an answer satisfactory to her soul. So she sent for the High Church clergyman. He came. The family were assembled. He produced a missal. They all knelt round the bed. He intoned the service for the sick. Having received her confession, and pronounced absolution, he with pen and genuflections, administered the sacrament, and placing his hand on her, blessed her, and pronounced her a good child of the church. He departed perfectly satisfied with his own performance, and assuring the parents that all was right. Was Alice satisfied? She had submitted to all. She had endeavored to join in the service, but in her inmost soul she felt a blank. "Father, said she, 'I am going to die. Where am I going?'"

"The father gave no reply.
"Mother, darling, can you tell me what I am to do to save heaven?"
"No reply, save tears."
"William, you who were to be the guide of my life, can you tell me anything of the future?"
"No response."
"I'm lost! I'm lost!" she exclaimed. "Am I not father? Is there any one who can tell me what I must do to be saved?"
"At length the father spoke.
"My child, you have always been a dutiful daughter, and have never grieved your parents. You have regularly attended the Abbey church, and helped in its services, and the minister has performed the rights of the church, and expressed himself satisfied with your state."
"Alas! father, I feel that it is not enough. It is not rest for my soul. It is hollow—it is not real. O! I am going to die, and I know not where I am going. O, the blackness of the darkness! Can no one tell me what I can do to be saved?"

Blank despair was depicted on her countenance. Mysteriously overshadowed the circle. They were overtaken by a real danger. Death was among them. Eternity was looming before them. They knew not how to answer the appeal of an immortal soul awakened to a sense of sin—to a dread of appearing before God, to the terrors of hell.

Alice was attended by a little maid, who in the habit of frequenting a meeting held in a barn in the village; where prayer and praise were offered up in simplicity, and where they sang the old hymn—
"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's vein,
And sinners plunge beneath that food,
Lose all their guilty stains;"
and where she heard words that reminded her of the good old pastor. She longed to tell her mistress that she might "wash and be clean," but felt diffident. At last she took courage, and just as the Israelite captive said unto Naaman's wife, "would God, my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy," she told her mistress, "There is a preacher in the village who proclaims salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and urges us to accept the forgiveness freely offered in the gospel."

"O, that I could see him!" exclaimed the dying girl.
Alice besought her father to invite the strange preacher to her house; though he thought it extraordinary, her wish was law.
Again the family were assembled, and the man of God entered the room. The dying girl, raising herself, appealed to him.
"Can you tell me what I must do to obtain rest for my soul, and die in peace with God?"
"I fear I cannot."
Alice fell back. "Alas! said she, 'and is it so? Is there no hope for me?'"
"Stay," said he, "though I cannot tell you what you can do to be saved, I can tell you what has been done for you. Jesus Christ, the Saviour God, has completely finished a work by which lost and helpless sinners may be righteously saved. God, who is love, saw us in our lost and ruined state. He pitied us, and in love and compassion sent Jesus to die for us. 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' He shed his precious blood on the accursed tree, in the stead and place of sinners, that they might be pardoned and saved. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, a thought shalt be saved.'"
"And have I nothing to do?"
"Nothing but to believe. No doing, working, praying, giving, or abstaining can give relief to a conscience burdened with a sense of guilt, or rest to the troubled heart. It is not a work done in you by yourself, but a work done for you by another, long ago. Jesus has completed the work of our redemption. He hath said, 'It is finished. Through faith in him you have pardon. It is impossible for a sinner to do ought to save himself. It is im-

possible to add anything to the perfect work of Christ. Doing is not God's way of salvation, but ceasing from doing, and believing what God in Christ has already done for you. 'God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.' 'I do believe that Jesus died on the cross for sinners; but how am I to know that God has accepted me?'"
"Jesus, the God-man, has ascended into heaven. He has presented his blood before God, and has been accepted for us; and when you believe, you are accepted in him."
The awakened sinner listened with breathless attention. She received the word of God, which revealed Christ to her soul. The glad tidings fell as balm upon her wounded spirit. Her face was lit up with heaven's sunlight. Looking upward she exclaimed, "O, what love! what grace!"
"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness."
"My heavenly air, my glorious dress."
"And in a few days she departed to be with Christ."

Reader, were you in similar circumstances, were you on your death-bed—could you die happy, believing in Jesus? Are you now resting on his finished atoning sacrifice?—*British Herald.*

THAT YOUNG MAN WANTED.

A great contest is going on in reference to him. There are two great competitors for him. The young man has given scarcely the slightest attention to this great fact. But there is a game of fearful import in progress, in which he is the stake, and the issue is getting nearer every hour.

The competitors are Satan and the Saviour. Satan wanted Peter; but he lost that prize. But he often succeeds, and if he does in this case, why does he want that young man? what will he do with him?

1. He will make him abuse, and so far as possible, destroy all the noble powers God has given him. That is just what Satan has done with his will; he has been in total opposition to the will of God in this regard. Not one of his great endowments is used to glorify the Infinite Giver. And he will have a complete inhibitor in that young man, if he succeeds with him. Not one hour's service shall the blessed God have of all those noble powers.

2. Nor shall the young man taste, for one moment, the noblest of all pleasures—the friendship of God. His abuse of his powers will make such an abomination between him and his Maker as will turn him away from all selfish joy, or seeking of any pleasure in his Master's service, and he will seek pleasure anywhere else than in the Infinite fountain of good.

3. And Satan gaining him for a prize, that young man will turn his own influence in the direction of involving others in the same condemnation. His bad example; his false opinions and errors, his words—contemptuous of good and seductive to evil—in a word, his whole character will come into agreement with the great deceiver, and co-operate with him in drawing others into as deep guilt and misery as that in which he is himself involved.

In short, Satan wants that young man, so as to make complete a wreck of him as to all goodness and happiness, as he has made of himself, involving the issue, that his victim shall know, and that forever, all that is terrific in the fact of being a companion of the devil and his angels!

All this Satan has done with countless numbers of young men, and he is playing at the dreadful game of entrapping and ruining thousands more.

But there is another competitor for that young man. The Saviour wants him. What for?

1. To repair all the damage sin has already done him, and secure all his noble powers for the uses for which they were bestowed. They were bestowed by a real danger. Death was among them. Eternity was looming before them. They knew not how to answer the appeal of an immortal soul awakened to a sense of sin—to a dread of appearing before God, to the terrors of hell.

2. And thereby would give that young man the noblest and sweetest pleasures of which his soul is capable—causing a constantly ascending progress to higher enjoyment as he advances in the knowledge of God, till that joy becomes perfect in heaven.

3. And he reaches the grandest of all possibilities of good—viz.: complete likeness to Christ, and companionship with Him forever in glory.
This is what Christ wants of that young man.
Now let him think of these two powerful competitors for his soul—comparing their characters and designs—how would he fare in the hands of the one or the other, and then decide who he would have successful in the game of which his soul is the stake. Satan wants him! The Saviour wants him! Which will win?—*Pittsburg Advocate.*

THE BEST SERMON.

How do the most genuine sermons come? They come from the trees. They grow. The winter and the summer, rain, sunlight, starlight, all enter the tree. The tree is the result of ten thousand influences brought up into growth. So it is with a true sermon. "How long did it take you to prepare that sermon?" asked a theological strippling of the venerable Luther Beecher. "Twenty years," replied the veteran. "But a tree is worthless without the root—and a rootless sermon is like such a tree, fit only to be burned. No sermon is worthy the name—it may be an essay, but it cannot be dignified into a sermon—which does not strike itself into the Scripture, and draw out of that its meaning and its life. A sermon should be evolved out of a scripture, like a tree out of its root. An address ready made, which goes mouthing about the Bible, seeking a text which may be used as a motto," or "by way of accommodation," stays an address forever, and cannot become a sermon. To preach is to declare the Word of God, and the Word of God is the Bible, and the Scripture must always sustain an organic vital relation to the sermon. The impulse to the sermon should come from the Scripture, just as the impulse to the tree originates in the seed.

Patient, thoughtful, study of the Word is, then, the first duty of the man who would really preach. The seed of the sermon should be in the text, and then all varying influences of experience and reading, and the needs of the congregation, should foster and minister to it, just as air and rain and light serve the tree. And it is marvellous—the freshness and variety of these suggestions of the Scripture to a man that keeps his heart sensitive toward the Bible, and his eyes open toward life. I remember once climbing a mountain in Connecticut. Several were with me; among them an old man who had lived all his life at the foot of the mountain. His father was a kind of doctor, and much of the medicine he administered was made from herbs growing on the mountain. He had taught the son the healing properties of the various herbs, and his son, in his old age, had not forgotten. We clambered up the sides, urged our way through thickets, over and around rocks, through ravines, interested in this thing or the other. But every now and then the old man would stop and pluck some herb. He found them everywhere: buried beneath leaves, nestling close under the shade of rocks. This was for scrofula; that for asthma; that for cough; that for rheumatism. And so, after a little, the old gentleman had his pockets filled with all sorts of remedies. And there they were growing right under our feet, as well as his; only we knew nothing of them. So do many of us go through the Bible, just as the rest of us were climbing the mountain. But sometimes it comes to pass that we find some old saint who has stopped to attend to what grows in it, and who utterly astonishes us at the wealth of healing of all human distresses it contains, where we expected the least. Now the man who preaches the Bible should know it—before all other things, and in just this intimate way. And the man so knowing it will be full of genuine sermons—fresh, various, helpful, fascinating.

Every preacher should preach these words of Robertson: "Do not be dismayed or discouraged at the reading of the Scriptures does not suggest as yet. Receive, imbibe, and then your mind will create. But our mistake lies in thinking we can give out before we have taken in. In all things this is the order; poets are creators before recipients. They open their hearts wide to nature, instead of going to her with views ready-made and second-hand. They come from her and give out what they have felt, and what she said to them. So with the Scripture—patient, quiet, long-revering, listening to it—then suggestiveness."—*Preaching.*

OUR HELPER.

Men often linger, and wait, and doubt, and reason about all this for years. They say that they are waiting to be drawn, and they feel the drawing but cannot come. What they say that faith is the gift of God, and till it is given they cannot believe. They say their heart is withered, and till restored they cannot stretch it. I suppose they said the same concerning the poor man in the gospels. He was bid to stretch out his hand by the Lord of life. "Stretch out his hand," the bystanders may have said, "how can he? it is withered." But he stretched it out, and it was restored even as the other. The will and the power came, as they always come, together. Christ must be taken "even as He is;" and His word must be obeyed without gaining anything. We are responsible for obedience, not for results. When we want healing, we may leave mysteries; for they will often solve themselves. What we have to say when Christ says, "My son, give me thy heart," is, "Lord, take it," and what we have to do when Christ asks for the heart is "to give it." When once we have closed with Christ's offers, and taken Him in His word, what we want doing in us He will do. When we feel inclined to evil, He will give us more grace.

When our feet slip, He will hold us up. When we are in trouble, He will stand by us. When we are sorrowful, He will comfort us; refresh our souls; ignorant, He will teach us; weak, He will strengthen us; sinful, He will sanctify us. United to Christ by a saving faith, your hand once set to the covenant, you yourself sealed unto the day of redemption, the mark upon your forehead, the white seal of membership in your hand—all that you want doing in you as a child of God will be done. Many wait for it to be done first. They wait for health before going into the infirmary. They wait to put on beautiful garments before entering Christ's presence. They want more power and might of their own before they apply for His. This is all wrong. The beautiful hymn man is right—
"Just as I am—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou biddest me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God I come."

All must come to Christ first, and he will give the grace and power they need; He will infuse strength; He will correct the motives; He will purify affections; He will put on the robe; he will work in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

HALF BELIEVERS.

There are many such; and this is every way deplorable. It is to be deplored because half believers dishonour God. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten and well beloved Son. There was nothing half-hearted in Christ. He was His choicest treasure. He meant to provide eternal redemption for us. He did provide it. He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. It can not, therefore, please Him that you should take up with anything less than full salvation, immediate salvation.

My dear friend do not be deceived with any representation that full salvation, immediate salvation, is not for such a one as you; that it were modesty in you to be content that you shall by and by be saved, when you become better than you now are. "This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you." In other words, an enemy hath instigated this; it is not God's teaching. He says: Come unto me; and ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give ye rest." He says: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." He says that it does this; not that it will do it at some fu-

ture day. If you do not fully take Him at His word you are but a half believer. Do not beguile yourself with the notion that it becomes you, conscious as you are that you are still very sinful, not to assure yourself of being received into full favor. For consider, it is not your repentance, not your obedience, letter or sacrifice, that procures the favor, but the atoning sacrifice of Christ. With Christ, and what he has done and suffered our God is entirely pleased. He tells you so, and warns you not to seek in some improved condition of yourself that ground of justification which He finds in Christ alone. You are indeed sinful, more sinful than you think; but sinfulness is no excuse for delaying for an instant to accept the full forgiveness tendered to the penitent believer.

Half belief is deplorable, because it makes a weak, vacillating character. Christ and His church are calling for strong Christians, whose strength is joy in the Lord. Half belief excludes this joy, and leaves the soul gasping and made ready for an army of doubts and fears, and miserable forebodings.—*Congregationalist.*

CONFIDENCE IN DEATH.

Mr. James Martin, of Liverpool, was convicted of sin under a sermon preached by the Rev. V. Ward, and soon afterwards he found peace with God. He was appointed a leader in 1811, and held that office for forty-five years. In 1831, he was a passenger on the *Rothway Castle* when she was wrecked between Liverpool and Beaumaris, when ninety-three persons perished, and only twenty-one were saved. When he was floating on a plank from off which several had been washed, as the waves were washing over him, he exclaimed—
"The God that rules on high,
That all the earth is full of,
That rides upon the stormy sky,
And calms the roaring seas, &c."

After he was rescued, his life was devoted to God. He became a leader of three classes, and worked with untiring energy in the cause of God. In his last hours of consciousness he said, "I know nothing about doubts and fears." Thus calmly resting on the everlasting arms he entered into life.—*The Methodist Hymn-book and its Associations.* By G. J. Steenson.

THE BIBLE OUR STANDARD.

Here, fellow-Christian, is the point of the battle for to-day. Around the Bible you are now called to rally as to a banner. For thirty years the life and character of Jesus have been the centre of attack. Infidels begin to own defeat on that ground. They admit that Christ is the greatest of men, the nearest to divinity. He did live, and was man's Saviour. We are now called to defend the authority and truth of His words—for His words imply and assert, demand and confirm the truth and authority of the whole Bible. This Bible must be our standard. We must defend it, use it. Never let us belittle its authority or destroy its power or silence its voice in any degree by consenting that it shall be the only book forbidden to be used in our public schools. We may not compel a teacher to read it, nor a scholar to hear it. On the other hand, we must not deny the teacher the right and the privilege to carry it to his school-room, and at suitable times to say—
"This is my authority, I bow to this, it is greater than all men, and better than all books, and I worship its wisdom. Obey its laws."—*Rev. R. Allen, D. D., in Central Christian Advocate.*

LETTER FROM BISHOP KINGSLEY—CHINESE MISSIONARY ANNIVERSARY. FOOCHEW, CHINA, Nov. 23, 1869.

In the hope of affording a better inside view of Chinese Methodism by this means than by any other at my command, I have determined to furnish as accurate reports as I could obtain of just what was said and done by the native Chinese themselves during our late annual meeting.

We had three anniversaries, one of the Bible Society, one of the Missionary Society, and one of the Anti-Opium. These were all most spirited meetings, and would have done credit to any Conference in the Connection. The gracious influences of the Holy Spirit were most manifest in all these meetings.

In the hope, also, of awakening a more general interest, I have divided these reports among different Church papers, and earnestly request that each paper will copy them all. I do not ask this for anything I myself, but for what converted Chinamen say.

Brother Sia Sek Ong presided, and opened the services by announcing the hymn commencing—
"From Greenland's icy mountains,"

which was sung with spirit by the audience after which he led in prayer. After prayer he read the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, adding some appropriate expository remarks.

Brother Hu Sing Mi then read the report of the Treasurer, from which it appears that the native societies had raised during the year about three hundred dollars for the support of the Gospel.

The Chairman then called on Brother Ling Ching Ting for an address, and he spoke as follows—
LING CHING TING'S ADDRESS.
I am not able to speak very plainly in the Foochow dialect, and at best I am but an indifferent speaker. It is not because I think myself a good speaker that I now appear before you; the Church calls upon me, and I must obey. You have noticed that at every annual meeting this subject of missions is discussed. Why is this? It is because Christianity contains the word or doctrine by which men are saved.—Where is this word found? In the Bible. See 1 John. i. 1: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." This Word is Jesus, the Saviour referred to in the Chapter of Isaiah read by the Chairman this evening. This doctrine is most precious.—Money cannot buy it. Western nations have many beautiful and precious things, but nothing so precious as this doctrine. It is so precious that Christ came into the world to preach it; then he sent His disciples to proclaim it everywhere. The people received the word joyfully; they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every one had need; they had all things common." But one Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, tried to deceive the Church, and were struck dead at the word of Peter.

It was not easy to preach the Gospel in those days. Stephen was stoned to death; but in his dying agonies he saw heaven opened and beheld the Saviour. When Stephen was killed the enemy seemed to triumph! "We have crushed the Christians, we have now extirpated the doctrine." But no! the doctrine survives, it spreads. Man cannot stop it. Stephen dies, and they who stood him laid down their clothes at the feet of the Lord. Half belief excludes this joy, and leaves the soul gasping and made ready for an army of doubts and fears, and miserable forebodings.—*Congregationalist.*

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