

The Provincial Wesleyan.

Published under the direction of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Eastern British America.

Volume XXI. No. 20

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 1869.

Whole No. 1032

Religious Miscellany.

The Divine Order.

Not first the true and then the beautiful,
Not first the beautiful and then the true:
First the wild moor, with rock, and reed, and pool,
Then the gay garden, rich in scent and hue.
Not first the good and then the beautiful,
Not first the beautiful and then the good,
First the rough seed sown in the rougher soil,
Then the flower-blossom, or the branching wood.
Not first the glad and then the sorrowful—
Not first the sorrowful and then the glad;
Tears for a day—for earth of tears is full,
Then we forget that we were ever sad.
Not first the bright, and after that the dark,
Not first the dark and after that the bright;
First the thick cloud, and then the rainbow's arc,
First the dark grave, then resurrection-light.
Not first the night—stern night of storm and war;
Long night of heavy clouds and veiled skies;
Then the fair sparks of the morning-star,
That bid the saints awake and dance in air.
—Horatio Bonar.

Saved Without Knowing It.

Saved without knowing it! Is it possible?
Some say it is not. If we are hungry or in pain,
don't we know it? If we are sick, or if we are
in good health; if we are happy, or miserable;
if we are on shore, or at sea; if it is dark night
or bright day, don't we know it? Generally,
but not always. We may need food, and not
feel hungry; and pain may be defied by opiates,
yet the wound remain. We may be very ill, and
know nothing of it; or we may have a serious
disease, and not be aware of it. Many a
suspicion is hurrying to the tomb fancy
themselves convalesced. Many are in circumstances
which should render them happy, but, owing to
perverted ideas or depressed nerves, they are
miserable; while others are hilarious with delirious
mirth in the midst of danger and disaster.
Some voyagers have been lying in their berths
when the vessel has anchored upon some quiet
river, and they have dreamed they were still at
sea; and some, after landing, have felt as if they
were still reeling with the waves. The day may
dawn so cloudily, or the sun may be so eclipsed
that morning may seem like night; while the
night may be so bright with meteors, or the
moon, or artificial lamps, that revellers may mistake
it for day. We cannot be sure of our spiritual
state merely by our feelings. Many fancy they
are safe for Heaven, while rapidly going to
the other way. Many shut their eyes to the
danger of sin, and in their enjoyments; and,
because they will not look at the abyss beneath
them, refuse to believe it is there. Do not
many say they are "rich and increased with
goods, and have need of nothing;" while they
are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and
blind, and naked?" Just so there are many
saved upon Salvation's sun arose amidst
the thick mist of doubt and fear; and because
they do not know exactly when it rose, and
because the sky is not clear, they fancy it is
not day-time with them, but night still. Many
a patient is getting well of a disease who still
feels that he is worse. His notion that he is
better does not alter the fact of his recovery.
Certainly his ignorance of the moment when he
began to amend cannot falsify the reality of his
"renewal."
I was summoned a few days ago to the bedside
of an intelligent young woman far advanced
in consumption. She looked at me with intense
agerness and at once urged me to listen to her
anxiety. She had read that it was necessary to
have the "inward witness of the spirit" in order
to be saved. She showed me the passage in
a very excellent book, which she had just
perused. The book was "The Christian's Guide
to the Kingdom of Heaven." The idea she
was in, of lively gratitude to Christ, of joyful
hope of eternal life, was the witness of the spirit
in the heart, without which she could not have
been saved. She told me that she was a great
sinner, and that she had long been looking out
to Jesus to save her; but she had not those deep
feelings of penitence and hope, therefore she
supposed she could not be saved. Through the
words of the author justified her interpretation,
I was able to assure her that was not his meaning;
I still more I assured her it was not the
meaning of the Bible. I tried to convince her
that Jesus came to save those who had no good
ness at all—those who had no sorrow for sin,
and no love to God, and no hope of heaven;
that the most just try to get these first and then
come to Christ, but that the most to come to him
first that he might give them to her; and that
whether she felt that she had them or not, if
she came to him he would be sure to save her.
But my words seemed to have no effect. An
illustration suddenly occurred to me suggested
by her occupation. She had been for several
years engaged in a telegraph office, and I several
times to her: Suppose a man came to you and
wrote a message quickly and paid for it, and
only asked if it was all right, and you told him
it was all right, and he went away. Suppose
there came afterwards to your office a very timid
old lady, who had never sent a telegram before,
and who was full of fears about everything.
She wrote her message, and said "Are you sure
this will go?" "Oh, yes." How long will it
take?" "Not more than an hour." "What? go
two hundred miles and get delivered in an
hour? Are you sure?" "Quite sure." "But
will it go as I send it?" "Yes." "Are you
sure they'll understand it at the other end?"
"Quite sure." After many such questions, she
wrote a message quickly and paid for it, and
went away, but came back again and again to
repeat them, unable to feel satisfied that her
message would be delivered. Now, said I, would
her message be any slower in going, and would
it be delivered with less accuracy than the
message of the man who had no fear at all? The
poor girl's face lighted up with such a smile!
She seemed to be at ease at once. So I
went on to say that Jesus himself is at the other
end of the wire. He receives all the messages
himself. He watches the index. He reads all
the petitions that go up from sinners. He takes
notice of every sigh. The fears and the doubts

of those who seek his mercy never hinder their
prayers reaching him. The more they need his
help the more ready is he to help them.
The gospel is so very free that we find it
difficult to receive it on this very account.
People who are invited to a banquet must go in
a suitable dress; but to the banquet of Divine
Love we may go in our rags. The King himself
will give us the wedding garment; we cannot
provide it for ourselves. When great offences
are forgiven, the culprit gives some indication
that he is worthy of it; there is something
which is a set off to his badness. But God
shows his love to his enemies, and receives them
into the honors of his own family, if they will
but return to him. We want to qualify ourselves
as a plea. Some think that church ceremonies
—that fasting and penance will avail; that acts
of benevolence will be of some account; others
that their tears and prayers will be meritorious;
and others who disclaim all trust in their own
merits seem to think it necessary to have certain
religious feelings of sorrow and love and peace
before they can be of acceptance with Christ.
In fact we are apt to try to be saved first; and
then coming to Christ, instead of coming to be
saved. We are not to be holy in order
to salvation; but we are to receive salvation
in order to be holy. We can do nothing
right, feel nothing right, till Christ makes
right. Therefore we are to trust in him in
the utter absence of all goodness of our own.
And every sinner, the most guilty, the most help-
less, may thus trust in him, and be sure of sal-
vation; for he said that they who come to him
shall in no wise be cast out.
But will not those who thus come to Christ
have an inward evidence of it; and, if they do
not receive this evidence, may they not reason-
ably fear that they have not been received by
him? It is not always the case that the assurance
of salvation follows immediately after faith
in the Saviour, as was observed in the beginning
of this letter. I knew a very eminently
holy woman—humble, devout, zealous in all
good works, a true Christian—who during twenty
years suffered the greatest depression of spirit,
feeling she was not saved. Her temper was
unpleasant, she was something to do with these
exceptional cases. Mistaken views of some pas-
sages of Scripture, and early and ineradicable
fancies and errors interfere with the peace of
faith. Satan sometimes seems to be suffered
greatly to tempt and distress some who are
truly seeking Christ. But all who know their
need of him, who are seeking his mercy, and who do
not cease to walk in his ways, may be sure of
acceptance in spite of their deep sense of unworthi-
ness. The more needy they are the more suitable
for them is his fullness. He came not to
call the righteous but sinners to repentance.
But, while he was not saved, we should not be
satisfied with a condition of doubt. The assurance
of salvation is a privilege which Christians
may enjoy, an attainment they ought to seek.
All who are in the life-bath are equally safe;
but it is much happier for those who are sure of
getting to shore than for those who are over-
whelmed with fear. This "joy in the Lord"
we should seek to attain. The happier we are,
the more attractive our religion will be. The
happier we are the more at leisure we shall be
from the self-absorbing quest of our own salva-
tion, to attend to the necessities of others.
Anxiety is selfish; Christian joy is generous and
diffuse. The heart that is sure of the love of
God is full of love to his neighbor. It is
difficult to believe that God will save those
who do not believe that he will save them. It
is better to believe that God will save them
than to believe that they will save themselves.
Let Christians, then, seek to "know whom
they have believed," and to rejoice in the
full assurance of hope. There is too much of a
faint piety, which contents itself with first ex-
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orthodox belief, and a vague, indefinite idea of
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