

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. 1. No. 9.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1856.

WHOLE SERIES
Vol. XX. No. 9.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

Fides Christiani.

When man looks doubting o'er the sea
Of dim and vast faturity,
What star may pierce the fearful gloom,
What seer reveal his future doom?

The Crescent's light wanes dim and pale,
The Shastras' bloated fables fail;
The Delphic whisper thrills no more,
The ancient sages lose their lore.

But o'er the dark unknown abyss,
This leads alone to realms of bliss:
The only chart, the only guide,
The Volume of the Crucified!

Avaunt, ye idle creeds of men!
Be dumb, ye dreamers of the pen!
Incline the knee; cease futile strife.
This only is the chart of life.

London, 1856.

S. B. BEAL.

Religious.

Bible Colportage.

THE following extracts from *The Colporter* of Oct. last, furnish a pleasing view of the zealous and useful labours of the American and Foreign Bible Society in this important department of Christian effort. They afford encouragement to those who are laudably aiding this excellent society in its beneficent work.—ED.

At the Anniversary of the Society, last May, the following resolution, introduced by Rev. J. G. Warren, now Home Secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union, was unanimously adopted:

"Resolved, That the wants of the American population demand that this Society enter more fully and vigorously upon the work of circulating the Scriptures in the English, German, and other languages in North America, and that it secure the establishment of auxiliaries to the American and Foreign Bible Society, employing COLPORTERS and other agencies for this purpose."

The Board of Managers therefore have not felt at liberty to procrastinate in carrying out their instructions. Accordingly, on the 21st of June last, at their monthly meeting, they passed the following resolution by a unanimous vote:

"Resolved, That we greatly enlarge our operations of BIBLE COLPORTAGE, particularly among the millions of foreigners sent by the God of the Bible to our shores. And that we will employ every person well qualified for this work who may be to us properly recommended, so far as the state of our treasury will permit."

The great work, therefore, of this Society is BIBLE COLPORTAGE. We have entered upon it "fully and vigorously," and we intend, by the grace of God, to prosecute it "fully and vigorously," and we expect to reap in due time, if we faint not.

The Colportage of the American and Foreign Bible Society has this prominent feature peculiar to itself. By the consecrated Christian teacher, whose heart is full of the Holy Ghost, and deeply penetrated with the love of souls, and whose business it is not to migrate but to dwell among the people of his charge, visiting them from house to house as often as once a month, reading to them the Word of God, praying in their dwellings, and conversing with them in regard to the great facts of God and the soul as revealed in the Bible; we seek so to interest men in the Sacred Scriptures as to bring them to Christ, and we leave the Word of Life with those only who are interested to read it. Thus, for all practical purposes, we make the Bible Colporter

the pastor of that class of people who do not worship God in the sanctuary; a class comprising three-fourths of the people in our large cities, and more than one-half of the population of the United States, among whom are six millions of foreign extraction. In a word, therefore, the idea of the BIBLE COLPORTER, as understood by us, is one who carries the Word of Life to his fellow-men, and by it persuades them to believe in God through Jesus Christ, to the salvation of their souls. It is in such a Colportage that the American and Foreign Bible Society proposes "to aid in the wider circulation of the Word of God in all lands."

While we do not mean to withdraw any part of our patronage from the foreign field, and at some points intend to strengthen our labours there, we do mean greatly to increase our operations here at home—here in our own country, both in the cities and out of the cities, and at the East as well as the West. Three quarters of our labourers are now in North America, and a very considerable portion of them in the Atlantic States. They are all Baptists, and the majority of them converted foreigners, labouring among their own people.

And what a field opens before us for our distinctive labor of Bible Colportage here at our own doors! What multitudes among whom we dwell, neither read the Bible nor attend the worship of God in our sanctuaries, and who, if they hear the gospel at all, must hear it at the mouth of the Bible Colporter in his household-visit! Carefully collated statistics reveal to us the terrible fact, that the masses among us are not only without God, but also without the ordinary means of grace. We will give a few facts for example.

In the State of Ohio, there were recently fifty-two towns, with an average population of eight hundred souls each, almost entirely destitute of any kind of preaching; and throughout the territory occupied by the States of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa, more than two-thirds of the people are without any direct evangelical instruction.

But we need not go West for facts of this kind. Even in New England, where the people are proverbial for church-going habits, it is stated on competent authority that fully one-third of the people neglect the sanctuary. The *Congregational Journal*, speaking of Concord, N. H., asserts that of its ten thousand inhabitants, three thousand seldom, if ever, enter any place of evangelical worship on the Sabbath, and that too, while it contains a larger proportion of meeting-going people than the average of its neighboring cities and rural districts. Boston, with its eighty-seven thousand people of "foreign extraction," and seventy-five thousand Americans, has not more than one-fourth part of its population in the house of God on the Sabbath. This no one will deny; and the same may be said of New Bedford, and Fall River, and Lowell, and Worcester, and Springfield, and of Providence, and of a host of others of our rapidly growing communities in New England.

But in some of our larger and more populous districts, facts, alas! are still more alarming. Statistics carefully prepared fully demonstrate that more than three-fourths of all the people of Philadelphia habitually absent themselves from divine worship on the Lord's day. And of the one million of people in the city of New York and cities adjacent, there must be more than eight hundred thousand who are in the same condition; of these more than four hundred thousand are foreigners. What sin, what iniquity, what vice, is not here rampant! Here infidelity boasts of her fifty thousand

men among the Germans alone. Here intemperance has her six thousand houses for the sale of rum, and here two hundred thousand drinkers, from among whom thirty thousand are annually arrested for crimes by the city police.

It is these masses of depraved humanity without God that the American and Foreign Bible Society have determined to reach with our colportage. We carry them the gospel, and we point them to the Saviour of sinners as revealed in his Holy Word. And will any one wonder that we are doing this work at the East as well as at the West? The masses who attend meeting nowhere, must have the gospel preached to them from house to house by Colporters of the American and Foreign Bible Society, if they have the gospel regularly at all. In but a part of the field which we are occupying here at home, forty thousand families have been found the past year entirely destitute of the Word of God.

In presenting a Summary of our Colportage-work since our last anniversary, it should be borne in mind that many of our laborers have but recently entered upon service, while the statistics of those laboring in foreign fields have not yet reached us. The work we are accomplishing will, however, be seen in part in the following statement. In preaching the gospel from house to house, twenty thousand three hundred and eighteen visits have been made; one hundred and twenty-nine prayer-meetings held; sixty-two sermons preached; two hundred and seventy-eight children gathered into Sabbath Schools; two hundred and eighty-six persons induced to attend church; two thousand five hundred and twenty-one visits to vessels made for religious conversation and prayer; and twenty-eight persons hopefully converted to God.

The results of our Colporter-labor manifest clearly the hand of God and his gracious benediction; and the work commends itself to every man who loves Christ and the souls of his fellow-men. It is a very cheering indication to us that a door has been opened to the Society for extending our labors to the colored population at the South, who hitherto have had so few facilities for reading the Word of God.

Hitherto the Board have been able to appoint every person well qualified for the work of a Colporter who has come to us properly recommended. The applications for some time past have been at the rate of one person a week. Meanwhile the cry is coming up from every quarter, "Send us a Colporter." Seven will be before the Board for appointment at the monthly meeting in December. Christians! what shall we do? Shall we send forth these laborious and self-denying men to the millions among us who know not God, and for whom no other provision for preaching to them the gospel regularly is made? Or will you withhold from us the means for their support, and so compel us to reject their application? Five of these seven applicants are converted Germans, and asking us to allow them to carry the glorious gospel of the blessed God to their impenitent countrymen, dwelling by hundreds of thousands here among us. Say! Christians; what shall we do? Shall we commission them to go; or shall we say to them, No? Your contributions must answer this question.

Good News for the Aged.

BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

"And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle."—MATT. XX. 6.

In coming to the end of another year, we have some solemn things to talk about. We take this for our subject; and may God

make it both solemn and profitable for the winding up of the old year of grace, 1855: "And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle." We shall note in our text two things; first, the sovereignty of Divine grace, secondly, the mercy of God;

I. First, in our text, we have DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY very prominent. When we say Divine Sovereignty, we mean that God has the same rights which an absolute monarch has; that just as a sovereign under the old Jewish laws, or under the Medes and Persians, had a right to do just as he willed with his subjects, and there were none that could "stay his hand, or say, What doest thou?" even so, God, only in an infinitely higher and a more righteous sense, is absolute monarch in this world, and has an absolute right to do with every one of us just whatever he pleases.

This parable shows the sovereignty of God with regard to the calling of certain persons. Did he find them waiting, expecting? No; he found them "standing idle in the market place." They were not working, nor doing anything. He found them standing idle; and so, just as he pleased, he said to some of them, "Go and work in my vineyard." There is such a thing as Divine Sovereignty, with regard to the choice of persons.

Again: Divine Sovereignty is exhibited in the time when the householder called his people. Some are called early in the morning; some at the third hour, some at the sixth, some at the ninth, some at the eleventh. The man that was called at the eleventh hour did not grumble and say, "Why did not you call me in the morning?" The man who was called in the morning, though it is said here that he afterwards murmured because he did not have more, yet, if he had been in his right mind, would have been thankful to the householder that he had given him the honour of working in his vineyard, and had called him so early.

And once again: there will be Divine Sovereignty in the ultimate reward. The householder gave to every man a penny. Your man that was hired at the eleventh hour came in fresh to his work, and just did a little job of hoeing, or something of that sort, and there was a penny for him. In comes a man, who wipes the sweat from his brow and says, "Ah! I have been at work these twelve hours;" there was a penny for him; neither more nor less for one or the other; the same penny for all who came to work. Now God shows his sovereignty in this. He says, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine evil, because I am good? The last shall be first and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen." Those who came last received just as much as those who came first. I am not quite sure whether that doctrine is true, which is called the doctrine of degrees of glory. I have heard it preached very frequently; but I never yet saw any Scripture warrant to back it up. The only one that the advocates of this doctrine bring forward is the passage, "One star differeth from another star in glory." But any one who can read English, in turning to that passage, will see that the apostle is not speaking of degrees of glory in heaven; but of different kinds of glories in the sidereal heavens; and besides, stars may differ without varying in degree of glory, for one may be red, another green, &c., and yet all alike bright; even so all the saints will differ in personal appearance; but why in degrees of glory?

"There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek," between one man and another, for "the same Lord over all is rich unto all them that call upon him in truth."