

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXI. No. 30.

Poetry.

A Mother's Love.

BY EMILY TAYLOR.

Hast thou sounded the depths of yonder sea,
And counted the sands that under it be?
Hast thou measured the height of heaven above?
Then mayst thou mete out a mother's love.

Hast thou talked with the blessed of leading on
To the throne of God some wandering son?
Hast thou witness'd the angels' bright employ?
Then mayst thou speak of a mother's joy.

Evening and morn hast thou watched the bee
Go forth on her errands of industry?
The bee for himself hath gather'd and toil'd,
But the mother's cares are all for her child.

Hast thou gone with the traveller Thought afar—
From pole to pole, and from star to star?
Thou hast—but on ocean, earth, and sea,
The heart of a mother has gone with thee.

There is not a grand, inspiring thought,
There is not a truth by wisdom taught,
There is not a feeling pure and high,
That may not be read in a mother's eye.

And ever since earth began, that look
Has been to the wise an open book.
To win them back from the lore they prize
To the holier love that edifies.

There are teachings in earth, and sky, and air;
The heavens the glory of God declare;
But louder than voice beneath, above,
He is heard to speak through a mother's love.

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER XXIV.

The Reformation Period.

From A. D. 1516 to A. D. 1567.

Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

The history of our Denomination in the Netherlands from the year 1534 to 1567 is now to be placed before you. It is written in blood. While the government put forth all its strength to destroy Protestantism, the Baptist form of that Protestantism was persecuted with peculiar malice.

On the 10th of June, 1555, a furious edict was published at Brussels. Death by fire was the punishment of all Baptists who should be detected and should refuse to abjure. If they recanted they were still to die, but not by fire; the men were to be put to death by the sword, "the women in a sunken pit." Those who resisted the operation of the edict by failing to deliver up Baptists to the authorities were to suffer the same punishment, as accomplices. Informers were promised one-third of the confiscated estates. And all persons were forbidden "to claim or seek any grace, forgiveness, or reconciliation, for the said anabaptists, or re-baptizers, or to present, on their behalf, any petitions or requests;—it being understood," says the emperor, "that it is not our will, nor will we permit, that any anabaptists, or re-baptizers (because of their wicked opinions) shall be received into favour, but be punished as a warning to others, without any dissimulation, favour, or delay." Martyrology i. 138-140.

A similar edict was published in September, 1540. And a novel expedient was adopted. The portraits of the principal Reformers, Baptists included, were placed at the gates of the cities, and in other public situations, that recognition and seizure might be more easily made. Large rewards were also offered for the apprehension of the ministers. (*Ibid.*, p. 207).

The Inquisition was introduced into the Netherlands by Charles V. in 1550. Great consternation was excited, and some of the towns absolutely refused to publish the edict. So powerful were the remonstrances that the Emperor consented to modify the provisions of the edict in certain respects; but there was no relaxation of severity towards the Baptists. "Protestants and Papists united to oppress and persecute them" (*Ibid.*, p. 365).

When Philip 2. succeeded his father,

Charles 5., on the abdication of the latter, in the year 1556, he renewed the edict of 1550, with additional articles. The publication of Baptist books was prohibited, and the right of disposing of their property, by sale or will, was taken away. Nor were magistrates or judges to moderate or lessen the penalties in the slightest degree, (*Ibid.*, ii. 64-69). In 1560, and again in 1563, these edicts were renewed and still further extended, so that there might be no possibility of escape. An abstract of the proclamation issued in the last-mentioned year will serve to show you the perilous state of society in the Netherlands at that time. No persons were to remove from Flanders to Holland without certificates from the priests and magistrates. Every settler was required to furnish proof that his children had been baptized according to the rites of Rome. Midwives were to be sworn to secure the christening of every infant at whose birth they might be present, and in case of any neglect to report it to the magistrates. Conventicles were to be diligently sought out and repressed. Parents were ordered to send their children to church and to school. Bookseller's houses and pedlars' packs were to be searched for heretical publications. All the people were enjoined to attend mass every Sunday and holiday. A month's continuous absence was to be punished at the discretion of the judges. No persons suspected of heresy were to be placed in offices of trust. In addition, as before stated, all the former enactments respecting burning, beheading, drowning, and burying alive, remained in full force, (*Ibid.*, pp. 269, 342).

You are now prepared to expect a melancholy narrative. The records of this period are truly heart-sickening. It is wonderful that any Baptists survived. And yet it is a fact that they were becoming stronger and stronger. Menno Simon, whose public labours commenced in 1537, preached, baptized, formed churches, published books, and travelled extensively, often exposed to great peril, as will be hereafter related; nevertheless, though a price was set on his head, the designs of the enemy were defeated, and Menno died in peace. Many other ministers were indefatigable in their zeal, among whom Dirk Philips and Leonard Bouwens deserve most honourable mention. The latter baptized more than ten thousand persons, (*Ibid.*, p. 107).

The Baptist Martyrology contains distinct notices of about four hundred brethren and sisters who were barbarously put to death in Holland and Flanders under the operations of the aforesaid edicts. The misery and ruin which befel their families cannot be described. Numbers more suffered, of whom no account has been preserved. It was a season of "great tribulation."

Tjaert Reynerson, "a godly farmer," was beheaded at Leenwarden in 1539, because he had "from compassion and brotherly love secretly harboured Menno Simon in his house in his great distress." He was frequently examined by torture before his execution, but would neither betray his minister nor deny the faith (*Ibid.*, i. 207).

Jan Claeson had forwarded the printing and publication of Menno Simon's works. For this he was condemned: "to be executed by the sword; his body to be laid upon the wheel; the head set on a stake." Bestevaer, an aged brother, suffered with him. "The beloved brother, Jan Claeson, confirmed the word of God with his crimson blood, and was afterwards given for food to the birds and wild beasts. * * * The aged Bestevaer, numbering eighty-seven years, likewise willingly resigned his grey head and beard to the stroke of these tyrants' sword for the truth of Jesus Christ. They now rest together under the altar, (*Ibid.*, p. 262).

A number of Baptists met in secret at Rotterdam, in 1544. "to speak to each other for mutual edification, and establishment in the truth of the holy gospel which they had received; likewise, with one mouth and lowly hearts to the great God of heaven and earth for the forgiveness of their sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit,

and also with one accord to praise and thank his most adorable name." They were betrayed, apprehended, tortured, and then put to death: the men, by the sword; the women were "thrown into a boat, and thrust under the ice till death followed." One of them was "a young female only fourteen years old. She composed the hymn which is found in the old hymn-book, beginning

"To the wide world Immanuel came,
His Father's Kingdom left." &c"

(*Ibid.*, p. 263).

Richet Heynes was martyred in 1547. When the officers were sent to the house, her husband escaped. "But her they severely treated and cruelly bound, without any pity or compassion, although pregnant, and so near her confinement that the midwife was already with her. Notwithstanding all this they led her away, regardless of the tears and screams of her little children, to the prison at Leenwarden, where, after three weeks imprisonment she was delivered of a son. * * * They afterwards inflicted great torments on this sheep of Christ, and tortured her to such a degree that she could not raise her hands to her head. Thus was she treated in the inhuman rack, chiefly because she would not give evidence against her brethren. For these wolves were in no wise satisfied, but still thirsted for more innocent blood. But the faithful God, who is a refuge in time of need, and a shield for all those who trust in him, guarded her mouth, so that no one suffered through her. After all means had thus failed to separate her from Christ, she was condemned at the place above named, and like a brute beast was put into a sack, and plucked under water until life was extinct, (*Ibid.*, p. 292).

The torture was constantly resorted to, either to force a recantation or to procure the discovery of the hiding-places of the brethren. The victims were stretched on the rack,—or suspended by the hands, heavy weights being attached to the feet,—or the thumb-screws were employed,—or a similar instrument, applied to the ankles. The demons who inflicted these tortures paid no regard to sex, station, or age. The delicate maiden, the honoured minister, the venerable confessor of three score and ten and upwards, were alike subjected to the brutal test.

In the year 1551, Jeronimus Segerson and another were burned at Antwerp. Segerson's letters written while in prison breathe a spirit of exalted piety and manly endurance. "I had rather," said he, "be tortured ten times every day, and then finally be roasted on a gridiron, than renounce the faith I have confessed."

Lysken, Segerson's wife, was drowned. The narrative of her examination and death is so interesting that I will transcribe the greater portion of it for your perusal.

"Lysken, our sister, having long lain in bonds, has at last finished the period of her pilgrimage, remaining perfectly steadfast in the word of the Lord even to the end; the Lord be for ever praised. She very boldly and undisguisedly confessed her faith at the tribunal, before the magistrates and the multitude. They first asked her concerning baptism. She said, 'I acknowledge but one baptism, even that which was used by Christ and his disciples, and left to us.' 'What do you hold concerning infant baptism?' asked the sheriff. To which Lysken answered, 'nothing but a mere infant's baptism, and a human institution.' On this the bench stood up, and consulted together, while Lysken, in the mean time, confessed, and explained clearly to the people the ground of her belief. They then pronounced sentence upon her. Lysken spoke in the following manner to the bench: 'Ye are now judges; but the time will come when ye will wish that ye had been keepers of sheep, for there is a judge and Lord who is above all; he shall in his own time judge you. But we have not to wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world.' The bench said 'Take her away from the tribunal.'

"The people then ran earnestly to see her, and Lysken spoke piously to them:

Know that I do not suffer for robbery, or murder, or any kind of wickedness, but solely for the incorruptible word of God."

She was then re-conducted to the prison, where two monks visited her, and endeavoured, but in vain, to turn her from the faith. Next morning she suffered.

"On Saturday morning we rose early, some before day, some with the daylight, to see the nuptials which we thought would then be celebrated; but the crafty murderers outran us. We had slept too long, for they had finished their murderous work between three and four o'clock. They had taken that sheep to the Scheldt, and had put her into a sack, and drowned her before the people arrived, so that few persons saw it. Some however saw it. She went courageously to death, and spoke bravely; 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' Thus she was delivered up, and it came to pass to the honor of the Lord that, by the grace of God many were moved thereby."

"When the people assembled, and heard that she was already dead, it occasioned a great commotion amongst them, for it grieved them as much as if she had been publicly executed. For the people said, 'Thieves and murderers they bring publicly before all men; but their treachery is thus more manifest. Some simple-hearted people asked, 'Why must these persons die, for many bear a good testimony concerning them?' Some of the friends were present, and spoke openly to the people,—'The reason is, that they are more obedient to God's command than to the emperor's, or men's; because they have heartily turned to the Lord their God, from lies to truth, from darkness to light, from unrighteousness to righteousness, from unbelief to the true faith, and have accordingly amended their lives, and been baptized, seeing they were true believers, according to the command of Christ and the practice of the apostles.' They further showed the people, from the word of God, that the papists are they of whom the apostle Paul prophesied, namely, the seducing spirits who teach the doctrines of devils; and moreover, that the righteous have had to suffer from the beginning, from the time of Abel to the present; that Christ also suffered and entered into the glory of his Father, and left us an example that we should follow in his footsteps; for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution,' (*Ibid.*, p. 487-431).

A further account of the sufferers in the Netherlands will be given in my next.

Yours truly,

From my Study,
July 28, 1857.

MENNO.

Tears of Luxury.

"What is the matter with that young man?" was the thought of many, one Sabbath at the Mariner's church, as a well appearing young man wept much during the service.

"What was the matter?" O, they were tears of joy! Joy! for what?

He shall tell his own story: "I am steward of a ship; I am on my way home to Baltimore from Boston; I have not had the privilege of meeting with the people of God for twenty months; I feel that it is good to be here."

How does this correspond with the feelings of those who live alongside of a church, and seldom, if ever, visit it?—*Christian Observer.*

ANDREW FULLER called one day on a celebrated clergyman of the Church of England, and asked, without telling his name, for a subscription for the Baptist Missionary Society. The clergyman refused, and spoke in slighting terms both of the movement and of the body from whom it emanated. He added, however, "There is one great man among you, and his treatise entitled the 'Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation' is one of the most masterly productions I know." The following colloquy ensued.—A. F. "For all the faults in that work, sir, I am responsible."—C. jumps from his chair, with eager apologies, and ultimately pressed a subscription.—A. F. (in his own deep bass) "No, sir, not a farthing!"