

Christian Messenger.

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"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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Poetry.

"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thy heart."

COURAGE! courage! heart of mine,
After showers sunbeams shine;
After darkness cometh light,
After storms the rainbow bright.
Heed not every cloud on high,
Onward pass, they soon will fly.

Cheerful faith has mighty power
To illumine life's darkest hour;
Simple trust, with earnest prayer,
Maketh all things true and fair.
Happy be, for God above
Gives to thee a gift of love.

Courage! courage! heart of mine,
Droop not in the winter time;
Underneath the drifting snow
Buds are formed for summer's brow.
Sure 'tis needful thus to bear
Chilling blasts and frosty air.

Thou art training for the skies,
Therefore 'midst thy tears arise;
Discipline must prove the well,
Sorrow work her secret spell;
Tremble not, for heaven will be
Calm and bright, through tears to thee.

Courage! courage! heart of mine,
Flowers amidst the thorns entwine;
Leave thy fears, and strive to make
Others blessed, for thy sake;
Life has many a mission fair,
Up! forget thy secret care.

Bravely seek the good and right,
Dwell 'midst truth's celestial light;
By thine own example blest,
Lead poor sinners into rest;
By thine own sweet gift of love,
Win them, for thy God above.

Courage! courage! heart of mine,
See thy mission is divine;
Sorrow's winter brings the spring,
That can know no withering.
Shrink not from heaven's trainings blest,
Heart, thou must be formed for rest.

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER XXV.

The Reformation Period.

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

Continued

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

I resume the notice of Baptist sufferings in the Netherlands.

Gerit Hase-poot lived at Nymegen. During the heat of the persecution he fled to another place. After a time he returned to fetch his wife and children, but was seen by one of the sheriff's officers, who gave information to his master, on which he was taken into custody and condemned to die. "After his condemnation," says the historian, "his wife came to the Town Hall to speak to him once more, to take her leave of him and to say adieu to her beloved husband, carrying a little child on her arm, which, for sorrow, she was scarcely able to support. When wine was presented to him (according to the custom of giving wine to those who were sentenced to death), he said to his wife, 'I desire not this wine, but hope to drink new wine, and to receive it above in my Father's house.' With great sorrow they were separated from each other, bidding each other adieu in this world (for the wife could no longer stand, but became faint from grief). He was then led to death. On being taken from the waggon to the scaffold, he raised his voice, and sang the hymn—

'Father of heaven, on thee I call,
O strengthen thou my faith.'

He then fell upon his knees and made his earnest prayer to God. When fastened to the stake, he threw the slippers from his feet, saying, 'It were a pity to burn these, for they may be of service to some poor person!' The strap with which he was to be strangled coming loose, not having been properly fastened by the executioner,

he again lifted up his voice and sang the rest of the above hymn:—

'Farewell, ye saints, farewell!
What, if I meet this end,
Ere long the Lord shall come,
Our only leader, friend.
Joyous I wait the glorious day,
With you to walk in white array.'

The executioner having adjusted the cords, this witness for Jesus fell asleep, and was then burnt." (Martyrology, ii. 93).

At the martyrdom of Jorjaen Simons and Clement Dirks, at Haarlem, in 1557, there was a great burning of books. Jorjaen was a colporteur, and had circulated a large number of Baptist works. "But when it was observed that the books began to blaze, such a tumult arose among the people, that the magistrates hastily departed. The people then threw the books amongst the crowd, who most eagerly caught them. Thus, through the providence of God, instead of the truth being extinguished, as was intended, it was the more spread by the reading of so great a number of these books." (Ibid, p. 108).

At length, even magistrates and executioners grew tired of the work, and disgusted at the cruelty of the bloodthirsty inquisitors. An instance of this occurred in 1558. Joris Wippe was a burgomaster at Menin, in Flanders. When he became a Baptist he was obliged to leave that place. He settled at Dort, in Holland, engaged in business as a fuller, and was much esteemed by his fellow-citizens. When the magistrates were informed of his being a Baptist, and were compelled to take proceedings against him, they did all in their power to prevent his death; but the higher authorities overruled them. "When Joris was sentenced to die, the executioner lamented, with weeping eyes, that he must put a man to death who had often fed his wife and children, and would rather be discharged from his office than execute a man who had done him and others so much good, and never any harm. Joris was finally drowned in the prison by night, in a cask filled with water, by one of the thieves, who, at the magistrate's direction performed the office of executioner, and threw him backwards into the water. Thus he offered up his body to the Lord on the 1st of October, in the forty-first year of his age. The next day his body was suspended by the legs on a high gibbet, at the place of execution, for the sport of the people. Like his master, Christ, he had to be numbered with the transgressors. The day following some malefactors were whipped and banished. The executioner, after executing justice on these, said, 'They crucified Christ, but Barnabas they released.'" (Ibid, p. 143).

Sometimes the execution took place privately, within the precincts of the prison. Andries Langedul and two others were beheaded at Antwerp in 1559, "not publicly, but in the prison. The other prisoners (of whom there were then many) could see it through the windows of their cells. When Andries knelt to receive the stroke of the sword, he put his hands together, saying, 'Father, into thy hands I commend'—but 'I commend my spirit' was not perfectly uttered, the rapid stroke of the sword preventing it." (Ibid, p. 250). Several were drowned in the same city, the year following. "Peter Gomer the mason and Jacot the goldsmith, for the name of Christ, were drowned together in a tub." (Ibid, p. 271). Lenaert Plovier and two young females "were thrust into sacks, put into wine casks, and drowned by night in prison." (Ibid, p. 272).

Jos Verbeek, "a minister of God's word and his church," suffered at Antwerp in 1561. He was racked twice in four days. He was scourged till the blood flowed. His right hand having been "lamed by torture" his last letter to his wife was written with his left hand, "with great difficulty." He was burned in a straw hut, as was the common practice towards the end of the persecution. It was probably adopted to prevent bystanders from witnessing the manner in which the servants of God met death, and thus to repress all manifestations of sympathy. The martyrs were fastened to stakes inside the

huts, and strangled, after which fire was applied, and the huts and the bodies were burned together. (Ibid, p. 304).

Thirteen brethren and sisters who were apprehended at Hallewin, on information given by a priest, and committed to prison at Lille (then called Ryssel), were shortly afterwards all burned alive, at three separate times. Jan de Swarte, a minister, his wife, and four sons, were of the number. "When Jan de Swarte was apprehended, the two youngest sons were not at home, but came in during the time. As they were approaching the house, the neighbours warned them, and told them who were in the house, and that their father and mother were arrested. The one said to the other, 'Let us not run away, but die with father and mother.' Meanwhile Jan de Swarte was led out of the house a prisoner, and seeing his sons said to them, 'Children, will you go with me to the New Jerusalem.' They said, 'yes, father, we will'; and they were led captive with them. All these were conducted prisoners together to Ryssel, and there strictly guarded in the castle. Jan was placed by himself in a dungeon called Paradise. It was so small that he could not stand upright in it, nor lie down at full length.

"It happened one day, that several brethren and sisters (moved by love and compassion) came from outside the town, and stood over against the castle, calling out over the fortification, and comforting the prisoners. Amongst them was a brother named Herman. Being observed by one of the city officers, who had gone out secretly, he also was apprehended.

After ten days' imprisonment, Jan de Swarte, his son Klaes, and four others, were executed. "While going to death the clock struck. Jan asked what it was o'clock? He was told, 'Four.' On this he comforted himself, saying, "By five o'clock we hope to be in our lodge, or rest."

A few days afterwards, Klaesken, Jan de Swarte's wife, with her three sons, and Herman, were burned alive. The remaining two suffered a year's imprisonment, when they also were "cast alive into the fire, and burned to ashes."

The priest who had betrayed them "was very severely punished. For his flesh became so putrified, that pieces fell off from his body, or were sometimes cut off, and no cure could be found for it. * * * While he was lying ill, a man came to visit him. When the priest complained of his great misery, the man said to him, 'It is the coals of the fire at Ryssel. This greatly displeased the priest; but he was obliged to endure such scoffing, as well as the punishment with which God had visited him. He at last died most miserably, as was if old the case with Antiochus and Herod.'" (Ibid, pp. 338-341).

I will only add one more case. Christian Langedul, with three others, was burned at Antwerp in 1567. In his letters to his wife he gives an account of the manner in which they were tortured:—

"We were all four, one after the other, sorely racked, so that we have at present little inclination to write. * * * Cornelius was the first taken; then Hans Symons * * * It was next my turn. You may conceive how I felt. As I approached the rack near the gentlemen, I was ordered to strip or to say where I lived. I looked sorrowful, as you may suppose I said, 'Will you ask me any more questions besides that?' They were silent; I then thought, 'I know how it must be; they will not spare me.' I therefore undressed, and gave myself up to the gentlemen, fully prepared to die. They now cruelly racked me. I think two cords fastened on my thighs and legs broke. They so drenched me with water, pouring it into my mouth and nose. After releasing me they inquired if I would now speak. They treated me; then menaced me; but I did not open my mouth. God had shut it. They then said, 'Give him another bit of it.' This they did, calling out, 'Way, away; stretch him another foot.' I thought, 'you can but kill me. While thus lying stretched out, drawn by cords to my head and chin, and on my

thighs and legs, they said, 'speak, speak.' They now chatted with one another about the account which J. T. had prepared of my linen, which amounted to six hundred and fifty founts, the sum it would fetch by auction. * * * Again I was asked, 'Will you not speak?' I kept my mouth closed. They said, 'say where you live, and where your wife and children are.' But I said not a word. 'What a dreadful thing!' said they in French; but I replied not, for the Lord kept the door of my lips. After they had long tried to make me speak, they at last released me.

"Matthew was tortured after me. He named his own house, and the street where we live. He also said that we lived in a gateway, and I think there is no other gateway in the street but ours. You had better therefore immediately remove if you have not left, for I think the magistrates will go there. Let no one go to the house who is in any danger of apprehension. He also mentioned the house of R. T., and the street in which F. V. lives. Do immediately the best you can in this matter. He is very sorry that he did so. Cornelius and Hans did not disclose anything."

"We were afraid that the margrave would come to torture Cornelius once more, and we also feared that we should again be tortured. We tremble much at the prospect, for the pain is frightful; we do not fear death near so much. Cornelius was so racked and scourged the second time that it required three men to carry him upstairs, who say that he could scarcely move a limb, only his tongue. He sent to us to say that if they come to him again he thinks that he must sink under it. As the margrave did not come yesterday, we expect him here to-day. The Lord help us! for the pain is excruciating!" (Ibid, pp. 426-438).

While these horrible scenes were enacted, the Baptists of the Netherlands persevered in the faith. Neither fires nor floods appalled them. Menno Simon and other bold-spirited men risked their lives continually in the service of the gospel. They were always travelling from place to place, and by their itinerant labours an immense amount of good was accomplished. Converts were baptized and added to the churches in every part of the country. The servants of God were confirmed in the faith, useful publications were scattered abroad, and anabaptism, as it was called, like the bush which Moses said, though it was "burned with fire, was not consumed."

Yours truly,
MENNO.

From my Study,
August 11th, 1857.

Review of Books.

Central Africa, ADVENTURES AND MISSIONARY LABOURS IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES IN THE INTERIOR OF AFRICA—from 1849 to 1856. By T. J. Bowen, Seventh Thousand. Sheldon Blackman & Co., New York. Price \$1.

Central Africa, after being for ages enveloped in darkness, appears of late to be receiving some faint glimmerings of a brighter day.

The descendants of Ham have been shut out from the great family of mankind, except as the curse which was pronounced upon them by Noah, in Gen. ix. 25, has been receiving its fulfilment, by their being captured and sold into slavery, by the more crafty and unprincipled among themselves and by civilized Europeans.

The glances we are enabled to take at their condition by the communications of such men as Park, the Landers, Campbell, the famous Dr. Livingston, and the author of this work, reveal to us such a condition as would be past hope, were it not for the heroism displayed by brave Christian men such as these Missionaries.

Although attempts at civilization as a precursor to Christianity have signally failed, yet efforts employed to carry the gospel and to plant by its side the arts of civilization and commercial relationship with other countries, are shown to be as fully successful here as in other lands.

Mr Bowen laboured in various parts of