

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXII. No. 5.

Poetry.

The Dying Hymn of Musculus,

A CELEBRATED GERMAN DIVINE AND REFORMER, PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY AT BERN, WHERE HE DIED, AUGUST 30TH, 1563.

The vital flame shall burn no more!
The blood around my heart is cold!
But thou, O Christ, my soul shalt warm,
With life of more than mortal mould!

Why then, my soul, why tremble thus,
To wing thy flight to seats of rest?
Behold thy guide, thine angel, waits
To lead thee there among the blest.

Leave then this wretched mansion, leave,
In ruins it around thee lies;
For God's right hand is faithful still,
And thou shalt see it fairer rise.

But thou hast sinned! and hence thy fear.
Sad truth! But yet believers know,
That crimson as the stain may be,
The blood of Christ doth cleansing flow.

Does death a face of horror wear?
Most true, my soul; but life is nigh!
That life to which thy Saviour calls,
By grace so sure thou canst not die.

Victor o'er Satan, sin, and death,
Yonder thy Lord in triumph reigns;
Stretch, O my soul, thy joyful wings,
And fly to those celestial plains!

Religious Miscellany.

For the Christian Messenger.

Christian Correspondence.

LETTER FROM A DEPARTED MINISTER.—REV. R. W. CUNNINGHAM.

The Rev. J. C. Morse has sent us the following beautiful letter he received some time since from the late Rev. R. W. Cunningham. It is a fine illustration of the brief remarks we made in our last issue with reference to his mental characteristics. We know nothing more pleasing than to find our ministering Brethren interchanging such communications with each other. It may be said of them in such cases, they "have meat to eat which the world knoweth not of."

The following note from Mr. Morse expresses feelings in which many will sympathize with regard to the departed:—

To the Editor of the Christian Messenger.

SANDY COVE, Jan'y. 22nd, 1858.

Dear Brother,—You will have heard, ere this reaches you, of the death of my most worthy brother, and fellow-labourer in the Christian ministry, the Rev. R. W. Cunningham. I feel that I have experienced an irreparable loss in his death. His words of cheer and counsel I shall hear no more. During his last days he wrote me many precious letters, one of which I herewith forward to you for publication. I hope that you will give it a place in your valuable paper.

Yours in Christ,
JOHN C. MORSE.

ROSE COTTAGE, April 1, 1854.

Dear Brother Morse,—How I long to see you. When shall I enjoy that privilege? Perhaps never. My health is going down I fear. I cough—have spit blood at three different periods of late—am very hoarse and quite weak, and have lost a considerable share of the small stock of muscle that I formerly had. The doctors speak cautiously and look sage things.

Well here I am. In view of the present and the future what am I to do? Let us hear the counsel of the philosophers (so called) the wise and knowing ones of this world. Let me listen to their prescriptions. What do they tell me? One says I am only an oyster improved, and leaves me to guess what I shall be when I quit my shell, or whether I shall then exist or not. Another that death annihilates me. Another that "I am going to take a leap in the dark." Another that I may inhabit a toad or an elephant, or "the human form divine." But ah! these are "miserable comforters." I want something more certain—more consoling. Here it is then—"Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." This I cannot do. I am sick—have neither the inclination nor the ability. I feel that there is a something within me that reasons and

feels—that asks a thousand questions to which I receive no answer. I instinctively feel that I am in a sort of chrysalis condition—that I am in a state of immaturity. If death ends my existence, my Creator has acted towards me with less kindness than he has towards the brutes. I am susceptible of intense suffering which the meanest reptile cannot feel. The end of my being is a mystery unsearchable—a thorough failure. At best only a splendid attempt. How shall I obtain a solution of these difficulties? with scores of others akin to them? Answer me Voltaire, Hume, Shaftesbury, Paine, and all ye infidel brood. Your philosophy fails to do it. Ye are only half of half sincere yourselves. Let me ask the heavens—they declare God's handy work—they proclaim the Eternal power and God-head of their Maker, and here they end their mission. Still where shall I go for a solution of the mighty mystery? I feel myself to be a dying man. I was formed for something to which I have not yet arrived—that something—perfection—I long for it, I pant for it. It has always eluded my grasp. I also feel that I am guilty. I dare not—I cannot gaze on Purity. I shrink from contact with a Holy Deity. I sink in the very element which habit has made congenial. To whom and to what shall I look for the desired light and aid? Here is the floating light! Here is the life boat.—The Bible. God's Bible,—the ship of salvation. God's great gift to man—man's Bible. This is just the thing wanted. Does it solve these problems? Does it raise the curtain which screens from mortal vision the future? Does it answer that question, of all that ever were propounded the most important,—How shall man be just with God? Man—the rebel—the alienated—the lost? Ah, yes, blessed for ever, blessed be Jehovah. His book of light reveals man's cure as well as narrates the history of his disobedience. Here I am welcomed to the very bosom of my God, from whose presence I just sought to hide. I am led to the "tree of life." And the fiery cherub and flaming sword become a ministering angel and a staff of life. The gates of Paradise are re-opened, and the exile again becomes a lawful occupant. All the holy beings in God's universe rejoice that a rebel is freed, and the inflexible law of the Almighty in all its requirements in the meantime honoured by means of which an aspect of Jehovah's character appears that fills legion-numbers of hearts with wondering joy for ever and ever. Here I am furnished with a key which either does or will unlock the mystery of my being—the mystery of Providence and the mystery of grace. Now I can afford to suffer and to die—die, did I say? O there is no dying, my brother, to the believer in the bible. It's only falling asleep in Jesus. O my poor head it is almost distracted with pain. I almost grow blind, but when home is reached there will be no more pain. I long sometimes for the realization of those apocalyptic visions of glory which are to be brought unto the church "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Then "the former things shall have passed away." "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

My doctors, Bent and Syds., put their veto on my attempting to preach until, as they say, the weather becomes warm. The fact is, that unless I become very much better than I now am, I never shall be able to make the attempt. O how I wish it, were in the power of my dear brethren occasionally to give my poor flock a sermon. I think they would prize the favour. I bless God to hear that Revivals are in progress in several churches. Assured am I that if these seasons of mercy once pass away from our hemisphere "the glory will have departed."

* * * * *

How surprising it is, men read the Bible and love it too, and yet seem to think that much of it has no meaning, or has become antiquated. In this most precise and unerring book we are told that God "taketh the wise in their own craftiness,"—takes "things that are not to bring to nought things that are," and "weak things to confound the mighty," for this very pur-

pose "that no flesh should glory in his presence."

Ah brother, this spirit, and this fleshly wisdom is doing bad business. I fear for not a few of our churches. O for that child-like simplicity of faith that takes God at his word, and lays us at his feet—the feet of a sovereign God.

Yours truly,
R. W. CUNNINGHAM.

For the Christian Messenger.

Exposition of Scripture.

"And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme."—Acts xxvi. 11.

MESSRS. EDITORS,

This language seems to convey the idea, that "the saints" of whom Paul is here speaking, "blasphemed." As this supposition is inconsistent, it has been suggested, that the word must have another meaning in this passage. The Greek word *blasphemeo*, is derived from *blapto*, to blast or hurt, *pheme*, fame. Strictly it denotes *blasting the fame*, or injuring the reputation. When the object is a human being, it may be properly rendered *defame*, *speak evil of*, *rail at*, or *revile*.—(1 Cor. iv. 13; Titus iii. 2.) But when it relates to Deity, it signifies *blaspheme*; for speaking evil of God, Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, is *blasphemy*.—(Mark iii. 28, 29; Matt xii. 32.)

It has been proposed to render the word (*blasphemein*) in Acts xxvi. 11, *to rail*. But this will not solve the difficulty. The question at once recurs, At whom can the saints be supposed to have *railed*? Certainly not at the unbelievers; for this would have exasperated them, and Saul among others, the more. It is not to be imagined that they would rail at other saints; nor would this by any means have satisfied their persecutors. It is evident that nothing short of reviling Christ, which is *blasphemy*, would have secured the deliverance of those arraigned, from punishment.

How, then, it may be asked, is the difficulty to be solved? In Scripture, one who attempted to do a wrong deed, is sometimes spoken of as having done it; since he was as culpable as if he had effected his purpose. So it is said, "Why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"—(Gal. iii. 14.) It does not appear that this was carried into effect; but a course was adopted which evidently required it. John says, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you."—(1 John ii. 26.) It is obvious, however, that the persons to whom he refers had not succeeded in seducing the faithful Christians addressed; but they had attempted it.—(Verses 19-27.)

In like manner it appears that Saul of Tarsus had endeavoured to compel the disciples of Christ to blaspheme, or revile Him. Such was the practice of persecutors in the early ages of Christianity. They apprehended those who were called Christians, and required of them that they should reproach Christ. Those who did so were released; but the true disciples, who refused to vilify their Master, were punished.

This is evident from Pliny's Letter to Trajan. He says of some who were brought before him, "They declared that they were not Christians then, nor ever had been, and repeated after me an invocation of the Gods and of your image . . . (et Christo maledixerunt) and execrated Christ; none of which things, I am told, a real Christian can ever be compelled to do. On this account I dismissed them." So we are informed in the Martyrdom of Polycarp, (Section 9th). "The Proconsul urged him, saying, Swear [by the Gods], and I will release thee; (I did not) revile Christ. Polycarp answered, Eighty and six years have I served Him, and he has done me no injury; and how can I (blasphemous) blaspheme my King who saves me?"

These cases clearly illustrate the import of the Apostle's statement in reference to his conduct while he was persecuting the followers of the Lord Jesus. Those who were such in reality could not be induced to blaspheme, or, in other words, to ex-

crate Christ; but he frankly confessed that he had been guilty of using his utmost endeavours to compel them thereto, and of condemning numbers of them to death for their steadfast adherence to the adorable Redeemer.

Yours in gospel bonds,
C. TUPPER.

Aylesford, Jan. 7th, 1858.

The Liberty of the Gospel.

THE REV. ARTHUR MURSELL'S LECTURE AT THE FREE TRADE HALL, MANCHESTER.

My friends, you and I were born beneath the shadow of an overhanging mountain, and alas! too many of us still linger in our native place! The caverns of that mountain ever and anon burst forth with forked tongues of flame, and from the clouds which gather round its brow the hoarse and hollow thunder-peal is heard. And now, if you will raise your eye aloft, up to the frowning summit, you may see a stern and dark-robed figure slowly rise out of the sable cloud, and scowl with angry countenance upon the earth. With his left hand he coils a ponderous chain around the limbs of every human being, while, with his right, he fiercely lashes all mankind with a flaming and a two-edged sword. Anon he pauses in his work of retribution, and points his finger to the broken tablets of God's holy law. But just as he is about again to bring down the uplifted sword, and coil the heavy chain once more, a bright and beaming messenger withdraws the folded curtains of the clouded heaven, and alights with airy footstep on the mountain top. She smiles, and as she lifts her lustrous eyes up to the stern face of justice, it glistens with a tear of joy, and even the avenger's frowning brow is softened to relenting. Mercy—for she it is extends her hands, and clasps the uplifted sword, and stretches out her fingers to a streak on the horizon's verge. The dark eye of Justice follows the fair index, and he can see another mountain, and another scene enacting on its brow. A cross is there, and on it hangs a victim crucified. A crown of thorns enwraths the victim's head, but a halo of ethereal effluence—invisible indeed to mortal eyes, but palpable to the eye of the amazed spectator from the other mount—a halo of ethereal effluence quivers about his brow. A voice is heard in agonizing prayer to Heaven; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and Sinai's thunder lull their pealing blast, and rumble dimly and more distant till they die away. Another cry goes forth, and floats into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth—"It is finished;" and as the words escape the lips of the expiring Saviour of the world, all Sinai's playing lightnings sheath their flames; the blackening cloud that rests upon its top disperses; and Justice drops the sword and weeps upon the neck of Mercy. The galling chain untwines its folds, and all mankind may now be free. Freedom to the prisoner in the labyrinth of lust. Freedom to the victim in the charnel house of guilt. Freedom to the miser with his golden chain, and his argentine fetters. Freedom to the hoarse blasphemer, whose watchword is the *Shibboleth* of death. Freedom to the drunkard whose tyrant has immeshed his soul, and lorded it long over his immortal spirit. Freedom to all—for all have been too long enchained.

"Fling wide the casement! Blessed air
That bear'st the Godhead's gifts above—
Now! while the spirit lingers there,
Which can thy fragrance feel and love,
Come to my brow, and cool my lips,
And soothe these eyes in their eclipse."

Oh, yes, my fellow sinners! you and I have been too long enslaved. The heavy door has been too long shut up against us, and the dungeon walls have been too long unlighted. Full often has the tramping footstep sounded along the echoing corridor without, and as the wicket of the dungeon door has been withdrawn, the question has been asked by Conscience—"Whence dost thou come?" And the stern accents have responded, "from Sinai, with another long account for payment, and another satisfaction to exact." Another morning brings another visitor, and still the answer is,