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"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS; FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXII. No. 30.

Poetry.

For the Children.

Moses in the Bulrushes.

Many years ago,
In far off Egypt's land,
Cruel Pharaoh
Gave a vile command,
To murder and destroy,
With a bloody hand,
Every baby boy
In the whole wide land.
A mother fond dwelt there,
Who had a little boy,
Ruddy, plump, and fair,
He was his mother's joy.
She sought to save her child;
Who could the mother blame?
For he was bright and mild,
And Moses was his name.
His hair was dark and curly,
His cheeks were red as roses;
He ne'er looked cross nor surly,
So sweet was little Moses.
A little ark was made,
Of rushes green and strong,
And Moses in it laid,
To save him from the wrong.
The ark was left to float
Along the flowing Nile,
And in his bulrush boat
Did little Moses smile.
A handsome lady came,
To wash her in the water;
I do not know her name,
But she was Pharaoh's daughter.
She saw him on the Nile,
And sent her maid to fetch him,
For fear the crocodile
Might find the babe and catch him.
She raised the little sheet
Beneath which Moses slept;
He raised his hands and feet,
Then hid his face and wept.
And through the big round tear
She saw the bright eye shine;
She kissed and call'd him dear,
And said "He shall be mine.
Who will the darling nurse,
Till he is two years old?
And she shall have a purse,
All filled with shining gold."
Then did his sister come,
And took her little brother
To her own happy home,
And to his own dear mother.
His mother nursed him well
Till he was older grown,
But no one did she tell
The baby was her own.
Then Pharaoh's daughter brought him
To her own palace grand;
And fruit and toys she bought him,
And led him by the hand.
Thus ends my simple story:
And now let all who can,
Tell who was Israel's glory;
Who was the meekest man?

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER XLIX.

The Troubles of.

From A. D. 1567 to A. D. 1688.

Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

Knollys, Keach, and Kiffin might be called "the first three" among the Baptist ministers of those days. Their talents and characters gave them influence, which appears to have been wisely exerted for the benefit of the denomination. They were honoured while living, and their "memory is blessed."

BENJAMIN KEACH'S sufferings have been detailed in a former letter. He was twenty-four years of age when he endured the pillory. Born in 1640, he was converted in his fifteenth year, and commenced preaching, at the invitation of the church, three years afterwards, though he did not undertake a pastoral charge till 1668, when he was chosen pastor of a church in the Borough of Southwark, London. He remained there till his death.

An occurrence during his journey to London illustrates the state of society and the deficiency of the police arrangements in England at that time. Mr. Keach, his wife, and three children were travelling to London by the stage coach. On their way they were attacked by a band of highway-

men, who robbed the passengers of all their money and valuables, leaving Mr. Keach, who had just sold his effects for the purpose of settling in London, and had the proceeds of the sale in his pocket, in a state of utter destitution. But friends relieved his immediate necessities and assisted him in bringing an action against the County for the amount of his loss, in which he succeeded. Such a procedure would be accounted strange in these days. Possibly the activity of the magistrates was stimulated by the knowledge that the counties would be answerable for any depredations committed on travellers.

Mr. Keach's labours were much blessed. For four years the church over which he presided met in private houses, often changing the place of assembly to avoid the pursuit of informers. In 1672, when Charles II. issued a "Declaration of Indulgence," a meeting house was erected for the church. It was enlarged several times, as the congregation increased, and at length was capable of accommodating nearly a thousand persons.

Preaching was not all his work. Mr. Keach was a voluminous writer. Some of his works were "polemical" some, "practical" some, "poetical." The "polemical" treated of various subjects, then warmly discussed, including the laying on of hands, the lawfulness of singing in public worship, the authority of the christian sabbath, and baptism. On the last-mentioned theme he wrote frequently, and with great earnestness. The "practical" portion of his works comprised, besides minor productions; his "Tropologia, or Key to open Scripture metaphors," his "Gospel mysteries unveiled, or, an Exposition of all the parables," and his "Travels of true godliness," and "Travels of ungodliness." The first two were bulky books, which were rather distinguished for ingenuity than just criticism. They have been reprinted several times, but, however valuable in a devotional or experimental point of view, cannot be recommended as models of sound exegesis. The two other are somewhat in Bunyan's style. They are still prized by serious readers. The most important of his "poetical" compositions was "Zion in distress, or, the groans of the Protestant church," first published in 1666. This was written, as he says in the Preface, because "he perceived Popery was ready to bud, and would, if God prevented not, spring up afresh in the land." After the Revolution, his prolific pen produced another poem, entitled, "Distressed Zion relieved, or, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Wherein are discovered the great causes of the Church's trouble and misery under the late doleful dispensation. With a complete history of, and lamentation for, those renowned wretches that fell in England by Popish rage and cruelty, from 1680 to 1688. Together with an account of the late admirable and stupendous providence which hath wrought such a sudden and wonderful deliverance for this nation, and God's Sign therein." He also published a collection entitled "spiritual melody, containing nearly 300 hymns."

Mr. Keach's constitution was weak and his sickness frequent. In 1689 his life was despaired of; the physicians had exhausted their skill; and his relatives took leave of him, expecting his departure to be near at hand, when, as Crosby relates, "the reverend Mr. Hanserd Knollys seeing his friend and brother near to all appearance expiring, betook himself to prayer, and in an earnest and very extraordinary manner begged that God would spare him and add unto his days the time granted to his servant Hezekiah. As soon as he ended his prayer, he said, 'Brother Keach, I shall be in heaven before you,' and quickly after left him. So remarkable was the answer of God to this good man's prayer that I cannot omit it, though it may be discredited by some; there are yet living incontestible evidences of the fact. For Mr. Keach recovered of that illness, and lived just fifteen years afterwards; and then it pleased God to visit him with that short sickness which put an end to his life." He died July 18, 1704, in the sixty-fourth year of his age.

The historian Crosby was a member of the church under Mr. Keach's pastoral care. His delineation of the character of his pastor was the result of personal and close observation. It is manifestly a picture from life, and is worthy of preservation.

"To collect every particular transaction of this worthy minister's life cannot be expected at such a distance of time; nay even to collect all that was excellent and amiable in him is too great a task to be now undertaken. I shall only observe that he was a person of great integrity of soul; a Nathaniel indeed; his conversation not frothy and vain, but serious, without being morose or sullen. He began to be religious early and continued faithful to the last. He was not shocked by the fury of his persecutors, though he suffered so much from them for the cause of Christ. Preaching the gospel was the pleasure of his soul, and his heart was so engaged in the work of the ministry, that from the time of his first appearing in public to the end of his days his life was one continued scene of labour and toil. His great study and constant preaching exhausted his animal spirits and enfeebled his strength, yet to the last he discovered a becoming zeal against the errors of the day. His soul was too great to recede from any truth that he owned, either from the powers or flatteries of the most eminent. He discharged the duties of his pastoral office with unwearied diligence, by preaching in season and out of season, visiting those under his charge, encouraging the serious, defending the great truths of the gospel, and setting them in the clearest light. How low would he stoop for the sake of peace! And how would he bear the infirmities of his weak brethren! that such as would not be wrought upon by the strength of reason might be melted by his condescension and good nature. He was prudent as well as peaceable; would forgive and forget injuries, being charitable as well as cautious. He was not addicted to utter hard censures of such as differed from him in lesser matters, but had a love for all saints, and constantly exercised himself in this, to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. He shewed an unwearied endeavour to recover the decayed power of religion, for he lived what he preached, and it pleased God so to succeed his endeavours that I doubt not but some yet living may call him their father whom he hath begotten through the gospel. He affected no unusual tones nor indecent gestures in his preaching. His style was strong and masculine. He generally used notes, especially in the latter part of his life; and if his sermons had not the embellishments of language which some boast of, they had this peculiar advantage, to be full of solid divinity, which is a much better character for pulpit discourses than to say they are full of pompous eloquence and flights of wit. It was none of the least of his excellent qualifications for the ministerial work, that he 'knew how to behave himself in the house of God' in regard of the exercise of that discipline which is so necessary to a christian society. With patience and meekness, with gravity and prudence, with impartiality and faithfulness, did he demean himself in his congregation; and with prudence in conduct did he manage all their affairs upon all occasions."

WILLIAM KIFFIN is the last of the Baptist worthies of this period. His is a truly honourable name. He was one of the merchant-princes of London, and had won his wealth by honest industry. He sought also to win souls, with wisdom and earnestness answerable to the greatness of the undertaking. Like Mordecai of old he was "accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed."—(Esther 10, 3.)

William Kiffin was a native of London. He was born in the year 1616. When he was nine years of age he lost both his parents by the plague, which at that time raged violently in London, and was himself "left with six plague sores" upon him, so that "nothing but death was looked for" by his friends. It pleased God to restore him and to bless him with long life. His

conversion took place in early youth. The instructive and powerful ministry of those times was the means of implanting conviction in his soul, and ultimately of establishing him in the faith. An extract from his autobiography may be here cited:—

"At the end of the year 1632 it pleased God to bring Mr. John Goodman to London. I attended upon his ministry and found it very profitable. Delivering his judgment about the way of God's dealings in the conversion of sinners, he showed that the terrors of the law were not of necessity to be preached to prepare the soul for Christ, because in the nature and tendency of them they drove the soul further off from Christ; answering very many objections and scriptures produced by other ministers to prove the contrary. This was of great use to me, so far as to satisfy me that God hath not tied himself to any such way of converting a sinner, but according to his good pleasure took several ways of bringing a soul to Jesus Christ. I had for some time seen the want of Christ, and believed that it was by him only I must expect pardon; and had also seen the worth and excellencies that were in him above all other objects; so that I now felt my soul to rest upon and to trust in him."—(Ivimey's Life of Kiffin, p. 9.)

Again:—"About this time [1634] I became acquainted with several young men that diligently attended the means, to whom it had pleased God to make known much of himself and his grace. These being apprentices as well as I, had no opportunities of converse but on the Lord's-days. It being our constant practice to attend the morning lecture, which began at six o'clock, both at Cornhill, and Christchurch, we appointed to meet together an hour before, to spend it in prayer and communicating what experiences we had received from the Lord to each other; or else to repeat some sermon we had previously heard. After a little time, we also read some portion of scripture, and spake from it according as it pleased God to enable us. In these exercises I found very great advantage, and by degrees did arrive to some small measure of knowledge, finding the study of the scriptures very pleasant and delightful to me; which I attended to as it pleased God to give me opportunities."—(Ibid. p. 13.)

The young man became an independent inquirer, prepared to follow the leadings of truth, regardless of consequences. Observing that some excellent ministers had gone into voluntary banishment rather than conform to the Church of England, he was induced to examine the points in dispute between that church and her opponents, and this issued in his joining the Nonconformists. He had been five years a member of the Independent church then under the care of Mr. Lathorp when, with many others, he withdrew, and joined the Baptist church, the first in England of the Particular Baptist order, of which Mr. Spilbury was pastor. Two years after that, in 1640, a difference of opinion respecting the propriety of allowing ministers who had not been immersed to preach to them (in which Mr. Kiffin took the negative side,) occasioned a separation. Mr. Kiffin and those who agreed with him seceded, and formed another church, which met in Devonshire Square. He was chosen pastor, and held that office till his death, in 1701—one of the longest pastorates on record.

Mr. Kiffin was extensively engaged in mercantile pursuits, trading chiefly with Holland, and acquired large property. His standing in society, and his well-known integrity of character, gave him influence, and he often exerted it for the protection and relief of sufferers. It was much in his favour, too, in those changeable and stormy times that he stood aloof from all political agitation. He never troubled himself with party disputes, nor interfered in the intrigues and cabals of politicians. He was a good citizen of the Commonwealth; he submitted to the Protectorate; he honoured the King. His policy was, and so he advised his brethren, to yield obedience to the existing government, in things civil, whatever might be the form of that government. Hence he was held in high esteem by all parties, and great deference was shewn him.