

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. 52.

Poetry.

The closing Year.

BY JOHN SHEPPARD, ESQ., OF FROME.

Now the year's last hours are waning,
All its moments well-nigh flown;
Weeks and months elaps'd and vanish'd,
Gone—irrevocably gone!

Soon life's days will fill their number,
Soon its final sun must set!
Oh! my spirit, canst thou slumber?
Loiter, linger, trifle yet?

Dar'st thou still misuse the golden
Swift-wing'd minutes which remain?
Now, in health and peace upholden,
Lavish latest days in vain?

Soon thy torch of light must humble,
Soon be quench'd in cold decay;
Soon will mourning friends assemble,
Following slow the coffin'd clay.

Oh! my soul, God's love adoring,
Grateful own his mercies past;
Then, his richest grace imploring,
Seek to have thy best at last!

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER LIX.

The Quiet Period.

From A. D. 1688 to A. D. 1792.

Concluded.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

Daniel Marshall was a native of Windsor, Conn. He was born in the year 1706. Converted in his 20th year, he joined the Presbyterians, and was a useful member of their society till the year 1744, when the preaching of Mr. Whitefield, who was at that time on a visit to the New England States, so powerfully affected him and many more, that they literally "left all," and went forth to labour for God, whithersoever they might be guided. "Firmly believing," says his son, "in the near approach of the latter-day glory, when the Jews, with the fulness of the Gentiles, shall hail their Redeemer, and bow to his gentle sceptre, a number of worthy characters ran to and fro through the Eastern States, warmly exhorting to the prompt adoption of every measure tending to hasten that blissful period. Others sold, gave away, or left their possessions, as the powerful impulse of the moment determined, and without scrip or purse rushed up to the head of the Susquehanna, to convert the heathens, and settled in a town called Onnaquaggy, among the Mohawk Indians. One, and not the least sanguine of these pious missionaries, was my venerable father. Great must have been his faith, great his zeal, when, without the least prospect of a temporal reward, with a much-beloved wife and three children, he exchanged his commodious buildings for a miserable hut; his fruitful and loaded orchards for barren deserts; the luxuries of a well-furnished table for coarse and scanty fare; and numerous civil friends for rude savages!"—(Benedict, ii. 351.)

He remained among the Indians about eighteen months, and was beginning to reap the point of his endeavours, several of them being converted, when, on the breaking out of a war among their tribes, he removed into Pennsylvania. There, after a short residence, he proceeded to Opeckon, in Virginia. There he became acquainted with some Baptists, and after a careful examination of their sentiments and practice was convinced of their agreement with Scripture. He and his wife were baptized in the year 1754. He was immediately licensed as a preacher, and engaged in the work with great ardour. Removing to North Carolina, in connection with Shubael Stearns, he itinerated very extensively, and was everywhere blessed as the instrument of turning men to God. He was ordained pastor of Abbot's Creek church in 1758. Soon after, he baptized Samuel Harris, of whom I shall presently give you an account, and with whom he "made several tours, and preached, and planted the gos-

pel in several places, as far as James River." His next station was Beaver Creek, South Carolina, where a large church was the reward of his labours, and where, also, the whole surrounding district was evangelised by him. A similar blessing attended him at Horse Creek. As this place was on the borders of Georgia, he soon began a series of missionary journeys in that State, and in 1771 he settled at Kioka. There, too, surprising effects followed. A church was formed in 1772, which in the course of a few years became the mother of many other churches. There Mr. Marshall continued till his death. He was spared to a good old age. On the second of November, 1784, he "went home." "I have been praying," he said, "that I may go home to-night. * * * God has shown me that he is my God, that I am his son, and that an eternal weight of glory is mine."

Samuel Harris, a native of Hanover County, Virginia, born in 1724, was one of the most useful men of his day. He held a higher position in society than most of those who joined our denomination at that time. He was "Churchwarden, sheriff, a justice of the peace, Burgess for the County, Colonel of the militia, captain of Mayo Fort, and Commissary for the Fort and army." He became "serious and melancholy without knowing why," till at length "by reading and conversation he discovered that he was a hopeless sinner, and that a sense of his guilt was the true cause of his gloom of mind. While on one of his military tours of inspection, he "ventured to attend Baptist preaching," and obtained relief by faith in the Saviour. Daniel Marshall baptized him. From that time his life was one act of devotedness and zeal. Practising rigid economy in his house he employed his whole surplus income in advancing the cause of religion. At the time of his conversion he was engaged in erecting a large mansion for the accommodation of his family, in a style suited to his rank and station;—it was turned into a meeting-house, and he continued to reside in the old building. Immediately after his baptism he commenced preaching, and travelled far and wide, proclaiming the great salvation. There was scarcely any place in Virginia where he did not sow the gospel seed." In the course of his ministry he met with many rebuffs, and some injurious treatment, but nothing diverted him from his object. He was "bold as a lion" for Christ. Benedict says that "his excellency lay chiefly in addressing the heart, and perhaps even Whitefield did not surpass him in this. When animated himself, he seldom failed to animate his auditory. Some have described him, when exhorting at great meetings, as pouring forth streams of celestial lightning from his eyes, which, whithersoever he turned his face, would strike down hundreds at once. Hence he is often called 'Boanerges.'" In common with the New Light preachers of these times, he was extremely impulsive. "If he began to preach, and did not feel some liberty of utterance, he would tell his audience he could not preach without the Lord, and then sit down."

So highly esteemed was he by his brethren, that at Associations and other public assemblies he always occupied a prominent place, and was usually requested to preside. The universal confidence reposed in him was shewn in a singular manner in the year 1774, when the Association, having come to the conclusion that all the offices mentioned by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4. ii. should be kept up in the church, resolved to appoint an "Apostle." The lot fell on Samuel Harris, and he was ordained to the office; "the hands of every ordained minister were laid upon him." The work assigned him was to visit the churches, "for the purpose of performing, or at least of superintending the work of ordination, and to set in order the things that were wanting." The success of the experiment was not sufficiently encouraging, so that the operation of the new arrangement soon ceased.

The good brethren evidently mistook the New Testament meaning of the word "apostle." The phraseology employed by

them—"Messenger or Apostle"—indicated that their design was to establish a general superintendency, in fact, a kind of modified episcopacy. But Baptist democracy would not endure it. The General Baptists of England appointed Thomas Grantham to the office of "Messenger," in the year 1666; I do not find, however, that he had any success.

And yet Samuel Harris was truly "the Apostle of Virginia," in the sense of which that word is not unfrequently used, since, as has been stated, he preached the gospel "throughout all that region." He died in 1794.

These three, Shubael Stearns, David Marshall, and Samuel Harris, were the principal founders of the Baptist interest in the South. They were "the first three;" and their names should be held in everlasting remembrance.

John Gano, born at Hopewell, New Jersey, in 1727, and ordained to the ministry in 1754, was privileged to spend half a century in his Heavenly Master's service. At the request of the Philadelphia Association he undertook a missionary tour in Virginia and the Carolinas, which issued, shortly afterwards, in his removal to Jersey Settlement, North Carolina, where his labours were abundantly blessed. In the year 1762 he became pastor of the first Baptist Church, New York, over which he presided, with much acceptableness, till 1787, the period of the American war excepted, during which many churches were scattered abroad, that at New York among the number. Mr. Gano was one of the chaplains in the army, in which capacity he was respected and useful. At the close of the war he resumed his pastorate. The fragments of the dispersed church were gathered together, and in a very powerful revival, which shortly afterwards took place, forty persons were added at one communion season.

In 1787 Mr. Gano removed to Kentucky, in which State the remainder of his life was passed. A paralytic affection partially disabled him; but he recovered sufficiently to preach, during "the great revival," in 1802, "in an astonishing manner."

"As a minister of Christ," said Dr. Furman, "he shone like a star of the first magnitude in the American churches, and moved in a widely extended sphere of action. For this office God had endowed him with a large portion of grace, and with excellent gifts. He believed, and therefore spoke." Having discerned the excellence of gospel truths, and the importance of eternal realities, he felt their power on his own soul, and accordingly he inculcated and urged them on the minds of his hearers, with persuasive eloquence and force. He was not deficient in doctrinal discussion, or what rhetoricians style the demonstrative character of a discussion; but he excelled in the pathetic, in pungent, forcible addresses to the heart and conscience."

Mr. Gano was prompt at reply and retort, and evinced admirable tact in adapting remarks to circumstances. I will give you an instance or two:—

"While in the army, Mr. Gano had frequent opportunities of administering reproof in his skilful and forcible manner. One morning, as he was going to pray with the regiment, he passed by a group of officers, one of whom (who had his back towards him) was uttering his profane expressions in a most rapid manner. The officers, one after another, gave him the usual salutation. 'Good morning, Doctor,' said the swearing Lieutenant, 'Good morning, Sir,' replied the chaplain; 'you pray early this morning.' 'I beg your pardon, Sir,' 'O, I cannot pardon you: carry your case to your God.'"

"In one of his journeys, he was informed that there had been a revival of religion at a certain place, which lay in his route. He arrived there in the night, and called at a house of which he had no previous knowledge. A woman came to the door, whom he addressed as follows:—'I have understood, madam, that my Father has some children in this place; I wish to inquire where they live, that I may find lodgings here to-night.' 'I hope,' replied the woman, 'I am one of your Father's

children; come in, dear Sir, and lodge here.'—(Benedict, ii. 319, 320.)

Lewis Lunsford began to preach when he was so young, that he was called "The wonderful boy." He possessed good natural talents, which he improved by assiduous study, and became a public speaker of the first order. In 1774 he engaged in a mission in the lower counties of Virginia, and was astonishingly blessed. Great numbers were converted in many places. Attempts were made to stop him: on one of those occasions, the constable who was sent to apprehend him waited till he had done preaching, and then declared that "he would not serve a warrant against so good a man."

Mr. Lunsford became pastor of a church in 1772. His stated labours were as successful as his itinerancy. There were two revivals under his ministry, during which he "preached incessantly." "Certain it is," says the author to whom I am indebted for the materials of those notices, and whose description, in this case, savours somewhat of the thapsodical, "that during several of the last years of his life, he was more caressed, and his preaching more valued, than any other man's that ever resided in Virginia. Lunsford was a sure preacher, and seldom failed to rise pretty high. In his best strains he was more like an angel than a man. His countenance, lighted up by an inward flame, seemed to shed beams of light wherever he turned. His voice, always harmonious, now seemed to be tuned by descending seraphs. * * * So highly was he estimated among his own people, that there were but few preachers that visited them, to whom they would willingly listen, even for once, in preference to their beloved pastor."—(Benedict, p. 343.)

So earnest was he in his work that sometimes, after having retired to his chamber on account of being too ill to preach, he would rise from the bed, repair to the place of meeting, and pour out his soul in impressive exhortations and appeals.

The flame was too powerful to last long. He blazed out. At the age of forty he was called to his rest, in the year 1793.

"Swearing Jack Waller was a native of Spottsylvania, Virginia, and served Satan faithfully for many years. It was said "that there could be no devilry among the people unless 'Swearing Jack,' was at the head of it." They called him "the devil's adjutant." To debauchery, gambling, and other vices, he added intense hatred of the Baptists. He was a member of the Grand Jury which presented Louis Craig, a Baptist minister, for preaching the gospel. Mr. Craig's meek and serious address to the Grand Jury sunk into Mr. Waller's heart, and produced deep conviction of sin, which drove him to the brink of despair. He was seven or eight months in that state, and for some time after he obtained peace he walked in much fear and trembling. At length he gave himself to Christ in baptism, and then entered on a career of zealous and successful labour. A church was constituted in his neighbourhood, of which he became pastor. He preached the gospel in all the adjacent counties, journeying often and extensively for that purpose. The enemies of religion raged against him, being the more infuriated on account of his defection from their ranks. He was four times imprisoned, and suffered much for the cause in various other ways. But the Lord strengthened him, so that he rejoiced in tribulation.

For a few years his usefulness was diminished in consequence of his embracing Arminian sentiments, and separating from his brethren as "an Independent Baptist preacher." During that time he established camp meetings, and drew immense multitudes together; but it does not appear that much good resulted from these experiments.

In 1787 Mr. Waller resumed his former station. A great revival commenced almost immediately, and lasted several years, embracing the whole district in which he laboured. He baptized "many hundreds" during that time, and his church or churches (for he presided over five churches) increased to thirteen hundred members.