

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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## Poetry.

### The Harvest Home.

"Bringing his sheaves with him."

The time for toil is past, and night has come—  
The last and saddest of the harvest eves;  
Worn out with labour long and wearisome,  
Drooping and faint, the reapers hasten home,  
Each laden with his sheaves.

Last of the labourers, thy feet I gain,  
Lord of the harvest! and my spirit grieves  
That I am burdened not so much with grain  
As with a heaviness of heart and brain;—  
Master, behold my sheaves!

Few, light, and worthless—yet their trifling weight  
Through all my frame a weary aching leaves,  
For long I struggled with my hapless fate,  
And staid and toiled till it was dark and late—  
Yet these are all my sheaves.

Full well I know I have more tares than wheat—  
Brambles and flowers, dry stalks, and withered  
leaves;

Wherefore I blush and weep, as at thy feet  
I kneel down reverently, and repeat,  
"Master behold my sheaves!"

I know these blossoms, clustering heavily,  
With evening dew upon their folded leaves,  
Can claim no value nor utility—  
Therefore shall fragrant and beauty be  
The glory of my sheaves.

So do I gather strength and hope anew;  
For well I know thy patient love perceives  
Not what I did, but what I strove to do—  
And though the full, ripe ears be sadly few,  
Thou wilt accept my sheaves. A. M.

## Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

### A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER LIII.

#### The Quiet Period.

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

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

I have named this the "Quiet Period," because it was not only a time of rest, persecution having ceased, but also a time of stillness—of slumber—of comparative inaction. The excitement had passed away. A season of exhaustion succeeded, in which there was little power or even will to engage in any religious enterprise. It seemed as if there must be an interval allowed for the gathering of strength, ere the churches could enter the field of labour which was opening before them. It is true that there had been displays, marvellous displays of moral force, that had startled and confounded the tyrants of the age, and brought to remembrance the best days of the old martyrdoms; and it might have been supposed that the power thus gained would be employed in the work of the Lord with success equally marvellous, after the obstructions were removed out of the way. But strength to endure is very different from strength to labour. If the conflict issues in death, the supernatural energy holds out to the end, and the triumph is complete. If, on the other hand, the struggle ceases, so that a calm succeeds to the storm, a sudden revolution takes place, and it has not unfrequently happened that a state of spiritual languor has followed a time of sore trial. Other considerations might be adduced, chiefly drawn from the history of the church, tending to illustrate and confirm the remark. But whether the explanation be admitted or not, the fact in the present instance is sufficiently obvious. The Baptist interest in England fell into decline after the Revolution. Liberty did not bring life. The sunshine had for a time a withering effect. At the lapse of more than sixty years after the close of the persecution the denomination was found to have decreased! "There is no reason to doubt," says Ivimey, "that our churches were far more prosperous and numerous at the Revolution in 1688, than at this period [1753], sixty years afterwards; so that prosperity had indeed slain more than the sword."—(History, iii. 279.)

A General Assembly was convened in London, at which ministers or delegates

from upwards of one hundred churches were present. The meetings continued nine days, from the third to the twelfth of September, 1689. The object was to unite the churches together, that by a combination of their energies certain useful purposes might be subserved, besides the benefit which might be expected to result from brotherly communications. It was particularly recommended to raise a fund, by "free will offerings," and yearly, quarterly, monthly, or even weekly contributions, the proceeds of which were to be devoted to the following objects, viz:—the assistance of such churches as were not "able to maintain their own ministry," so that their ministers might be "encouraged wholly to devote themselves to the great work of preaching the gospel;" the sending of ministers "where the gospel hath, or hath not yet been preached, and to visit the churches;" and the furtherance of the wishes of "those members that shall be found in any of the aforesaid churches that are disposed for study, have an inviting gift, and are sound in fundamentals, in attaining to the knowledge and understanding of the languages, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew."

Various questions were proposed at this meeting, and the opinions and advice of the brethren sought, from which it appears that commendable care was exercised in the matter of discipline. I will furnish an extract or two.

"Question. Whether when the church have agreed upon the keeping of one day, weekly or monthly, besides the first day of the week, to worship God and perform the necessary services of the church, they may not charge such persons with evil that neglect such meetings, and lay them under reproof, unless such members can shew good cause for such their absence?"

"Answer. Concluded in the affirmative, Heb. 10. 25.

"Q. What is to be done with those persons that will not communicate to the necessary expenses of the churches whereof they are members, according to their ability?"

"A. Resolved, that upon clear proof, the persons so offending, as aforesaid, should be duly admonished; and if no reformation appears, the church ought to withdraw from them, Ephes. 5. 3; Mat. 25. 42; 1 John 3. 17.

"Q. Whether it be not necessary for the Elders, ministering brethren, and messengers of the churches to take into their serious consideration those excesses that are found among their members, men and women, with respect to their apparel?"

"A. In the affirmative:—That it is a shame for men to wear long hair, or long periwigs, and especially ministers, 1 Cor. 11. 14, or strange apparel, Zeph. 1. 8;—That the Lord reproveth the daughters of Zion, for the bravery, haughtiness, and pride of their attire, walking with stretched-out necks, wanton eyes, mincing as they go, Isa. 3. 16. As if they affected tallness, as one observes upon their stretched-out necks; though some in these times seem, by their high dresses, to out-do them in that respect. \* \* \* \* We earnestly desire that men and women whose souls are committed to our charge may be watched over in this matter, and that care be taken, and all just and due means used, for a reformation herein; and that such who are guilty of this crying sin of pride, that abounds in the churches as well as in the nation, may be reprov'd; especially considering what time and treasure is foolishly wasted in adorning the body, which would be better spent in a careful endeavour to adorn the soul; and the charge laid out upon those superfluities, to relieve the necessities of the poor saints, and to promote the interest of Jesus Christ. And though we deny not but in some cases ornaments may be allowed, yet whatever ornaments in men or women are inconsistent with modesty, gravity, sobriety, and prove a scandal to religion, opening the mouths of the ungodly, ought to be cast off, being truly no ornaments to believers, but rather a defilement."—(Ivimey, i. 496-7.)

Similar meetings were held in London for several successive years. The difficul-

ties of transit in those days, with other considerations, led to an alteration, by which Bristol was substituted for London every alternate year. At length those general gatherings were discontinued, and Associations of a smaller kind were instituted, similar to those now held; but I am inclined to think that the arrangements were not of a permanent character. The Western Association was an exception. That body has remained till the present day. The others gradually ceased to exist, and new Associations were afterwards organized. A large majority of those now existing were constituted or revived in the present century.

The churches in London and its vicinity were larger and wealthier than those in other parts of the kingdom. It is pleasing to observe that they were liberally disposed, and that the country churches were indebted to them for very valuable assistance. They originated the Particular Baptist Fund, which was established in 1717, and still exists. Its objects were, the relief and aid of ministers, whose incomes were insufficient for their support, and the encouragement of candidates for the ministry, by helping them to purchase books or to pursue their studies. Large sums were contributed for the establishment of the Fund, both by the churches and by individuals, and considerable additions have been since made by donations and legacies. The interest of the funded money constitutes the income, which is further increased by the proceeds of annual collections. Last year the income was £2540. This Institution has rendered most important service to the Denomination. The General Baptists established a Fund of the same kind in 1726.

The ministers living in London and its vicinity formed themselves into a society in 1723-4, which has continued till now. The original purposes of the society are thus adverted to by Mr. Ivimey:—"They gave their opinion and advice in any matters of difficulty in the churches that were referred to them by both parties; they received applications from the country ministers to assist them from the Baptist Fund; they sanctioned and recommended cases of building and repairing meeting-houses in the country, and to be collected for in London; they watched rigorously over the purity of the members composing the board, whether it related to charges of immoral conduct, or of erroneous principles; they received to their friendship ministers upon their being settled as pastors in the churches, and young ministers who were introduced by the pastors of the respective churches which had called them to the ministry; and they appear to have generally acted in a body in assisting destitute churches, and at the ordination of ministers,—to have very strictly discouraged separations in the churches,—and to have affectionately supported each other against traducers."—(iii. 179.) The society is now called "The Baptist Board."

Certain other organizations from which the Baptists derived benefit were composed of the various bodies of Protestant Dissenters, with whom they united on those occasions.

The General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the three Denominations was constituted in the year 1727. It consists of all approved ministers of the Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist Denominations, resident within ten miles of the cities of London and Westminster. The objects for the promotion of which they are associated are not very strictly defined, but may be said to embrace whatever affects the welfare of the Protestant Dissenting interest, in its general or political aspects. Many advantages have resulted from this association. It is the privilege of this Body to present Addresses in person to the sovereign on important occasions, such as the accession, royal marriages, deliverances from danger, great victories, restoration of peace, and the like. At such times the king or the Queen is seated on the throne, attended by the great officers of state. The first opportunity of the kind was the accession of King William and Queen Mary. Mr. Ivimey has preserved in his "History"

copies of the Addresses presented in the period now under review, and up to the year 1820, with the royal replies.

When the General Body was formed, in 1727, forty five Baptist ministers joined it; the present number is fifty-five.

Another association, formed in 1732, has proved exceedingly useful. I refer to the Body of Deputies, appointed to defend the civil rights of Dissenters. Two gentlemen are sent by each congregation of the three Denominations in and about the cities of London and Westminster. They meet annually, and at such other times as may be needful. An Executive Committee is chosen from the Body once a year to manage its affairs. The objects of this combination are, the maintenance of rights and privileges, the prevention of encroachments on the same, the redress of grievances, and the removal of restrictions and burdens incompatible with religious freedom.

The Widows' Fund, established in 1733, principally by the exertions of Dr. Chandler, a Presbyterian minister, was designed for the assistance of "the families of such ministers of the Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist Denominations, as at their death stood accepted and approved as such by the Body of Ministers of the denomination to which they respectively belonged, and died so poor as not to leave their widows and children a sufficient subsistence." Large sums have been contributed for this purpose, and the utmost impartiality has been uniformly exercised in the distribution. The widows and families of Baptist ministers have been liberally aided. The amount of capital now invested is £58,861, and the income last year was £2597.

Another society in which the Baptists united with other Denominations was the "Book Society," originally called "The Society for propagating religious knowledge among the poor." It was instituted in 1750. The object of the society is stated to be "the gratuitous distribution and sale of Bibles and Testaments, and other books of established excellence, and the publication of original and standard works, adapted to promote religious and moral instruction." It combines the purposes of the Bible and Tract Societies; but was formed before either of them, and continues in useful operation.

It was stated in a former letter that Mr. Terrill had bequeathed considerable property for the purpose of providing for the education of candidates for the ministry by the pastor of Broadmead church. Possession of the property was not obtained till some years after his death. The Rev. Caleb Jope was the first minister employed under this arrangement. He entered on his duties in 1710, but his services do not appear to have been satisfactory. He was succeeded in 1720, by the Rev. Bernard Foskett, who held the office nearly forty years. On his death, in 1758, the Rev. Hugh Evans became Tutor, who was followed by his son, Dr. Caleb Evans, with whom, during the last seven years of his life, the Rev. Robert Hall was associated as assistant. Dr. Evans died in 1791, in the fifty-fourth year of his age. His father and he (and the same may be asserted of Mr. Foskett,) were eminent men in all respects—as christians—as ministers—and as theological tutors,—and were held in high esteem throughout the Denomination. The wishes of good Mr. Terrill were abundantly realised, and the advantages derived from his liberal bequest greatly extended, by the establishment of the Bristol Education Society, founded in 1770, chiefly by the exertions of Dr. Evans. Bristol College, as it is now called, has furnished a large number of excellent ministers and missionaries. Two hundred and twenty-nine persons have received instruction there since its establishment.

Dr. John Ward, a learned Baptist, Fellow of the Royal Society, and Professor at Gresham College, placed in trust, in the year 1754, the sum of £1200 Bank Stock, the interest accruing therefrom to be yearly applied, after his decease, "to the education of two young men at a Scotch university, with a view to the ministry, preference being given to Baptists." Dr. Ward was