

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES. }  
Vol. III No. 42. }

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1858.

{ WHOLE SERIES.  
{ Vol. XXII. No. 42.

## Poetry.

### Poesy.

BY E. M. PHILLIPS.

I have a garden, hidden from the view  
Of all the busy world, a garden fair,  
With shady nooks and sunshine rippling thro'  
In golden waves adown the crystal air.

There merry blossoms greet me when I come  
With friendly smile, those bright, perennial flowers,  
And stinging bees fly, heavy laden, home,  
And store me honey in those hidden bowers.

And there are rocky paths and rushing streams  
That give diversitude to this retreat;  
And quaint and curious grottoes, where in dreams  
I hear strange elfin music, soft and sweet.

And there I gathered jewels, rich and rare,  
Or such in life's young morning light they seemed;  
And once I thought I saw the glitter there  
Of golden ore, but then, perhaps, I dreamed.

The world, I fear, my garden will deride;  
They'll count but worthless all the flowers I prize,  
And though a few, I've culled, and shown, I hide  
The tangled garden from their sordid eyes.

Thus many a one has treasures all his own,  
Beyond the busy highways of his brain,  
Hid in the valleys where he walks alone,  
Where none can enter to dispute his reign.  
Bloomington, Ill., 1858.

—Rural New-Yorker.

## Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

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

LETTER LIV.

#### The Quiet Period.

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

Continued.

#### MY YOUNG FRIEND,

Although the sufferings of Protestant Dissenters ceased at the Revolution, their position was far from satisfactory. The Toleration Act, passed in 1689, legalised their assemblies, under certain restrictions, presently to be mentioned; but the boon was very grudgingly granted. William III. did not grudge it; he would have removed all restraints, had not the bigotry of the age prevented him. In Queen Anne's time the high Tory party attained such power and influence that measures were taken to place the iron heel once more on the Dissenters. The Schism Bill provided—"That no person in Great Britain or Wales, shall keep any public or private school or seminary, or teach or instruct youth, as tutor or schoolmaster, that has not first subscribed the declaration to conform to the Church of England, and has not obtained license from the respective diocesan, or ordinary of the place; that upon failure of so doing, he may be committed to prison without bail or mainprize; and that no such license shall be granted before the party produces a certificate of his having received the sacrament according to the communion of the Church of England, in some parish church, within a year before obtaining such license, and hath subscribed the oaths of allegiance and supremacy." It was further provided that if any person so licensed should "knowingly or willingly resort to any Convènticle," or "teach any other Catechism than what is set forth in the Common prayer," his license should be void, and he should suffer three months' imprisonment. This iniquitous enactment passed both Houses, notwithstanding strenuous opposition, received the royal assent, and was to go into operation Aug. 1, 1714. On that very day Queen Anne died, the House of Brunswick ascended the throne, and a new policy was inaugurated. The Act was never allowed to be put into execution, and in 1719 was formally repealed.

But during all this period the Dissenters were excluded by law from office and employment under the Crown and in Corporations. Communion with the Church of England was a necessary pre-requisite. Several endeavours were made for the re-

peal of the Test and Corporation Acts, but always unsuccessfully. Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and Methodists were considered unworthy to share in responsibilities and honours with members of the Church of England. Nay more,—the Corporation of the City of London meanly took advantage of their position to filch money from them. As no man who was not a member of the Church of England could take any office in a Corporation, and as it was well known that Dissenters would not "qualify" (as it was called) by taking the sacrament, a bye-law was passed, imposing a fine of £400 on every citizen who should refuse to serve as sheriff when nominated by the Lord Mayor, or £600 when elected by his fellow-citizens. This being done, Dissenters were from year to year nominated or chosen, and then compelled to pay the fines, which were appropriated to the rebuilding of the Mansion House. The sum of £15,000 had been wrung from them in this manner; it was high time to put a stop to the unjust exaction. In 1754, three Dissenters, Messrs. Stratfield, Sheafe, and Evans, were elected to the sheriff's office. The Committee of Dissenters encouraged them to refuse payment of the fine, on the ground of the illegality of the bye-law. For this they were sued in the Sheriff's Court, and condemned. The Judges reversed the decision, whereupon the Corporation took up the cause, by writ of error, to the House of Lords, where the question was gravely and ably argued. By that time two of the defendants died, and the death of Mr. Evans, the survivor, who was in the 82nd year of his age, was daily expected. Lord Mansfield, the Chancellor, espoused the cause of justice, and nobly vindicated the rights of Dissenters, at the same time censuring the course adopted by the Corporation in terms of indignant severity. The House confirmed the action of the Judges, Feb. 4, 1767, and so the oppression ceased for ever. Mr. Evans, I may add, who had persevered for thirteen years in his resistance to wrong, received the news of the successful issue as he lay on his death-bed.

It is pleasant to record that no Protestant Dissenters were implicated in the rebellions of 1715 and 1745. During the first there were riotous proceedings in various parts of the kingdom, when those who were friendly to the exiled dynasty raised the ecclesiastical war-cry that "the Church was in danger," and wreaked their fury on Dissenting meeting-houses and other property. The Baptists lost two places of worship on that occasion. The breaking out of the second rebellion was the sequel for loyal and patriotic demonstrations. The Dissenters took up arms in defence of their king; several of their distinguished men received commissions; and it was confessed that the vigour displayed by them tended powerfully to repress the discontented and embolden the friends of the royal house. But they had incurred the penalties of the law by presuming to serve the king without first going to church and taking the sacrament; and, ridiculous as it may appear, it was absolutely necessary to pass an Act of indemnity, graciously releasing them from the penal consequences of their loyalty and zeal!

I have stated that freedom of worship was granted to Dissenters "under certain restrictions." They might worship when and where they pleased, but it was necessary to register their meeting-house at the Quarter Sessions, and their ministers were required to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and subscribe the doctrinal articles of the Church of England (but the Baptists were not called on to subscribe the 27th article, which treats of infant baptism. The latter requisition was peculiarly offensive to them, not because they did not, generally, believe the doctrines enunciated in the articles, but because they repudiated the authority of the State to demand subscription. In addition to this, Dissenting schoolmasters were still subject to penalties (notwithstanding the repeal of the Schism Bill) if they taught school without first signing a declaration of conformity to the Church of England. These grievances remained unredressed till the year 1779.

An attempt to remove them was made in the year 1772, and a bill for that purpose passed the Commons, but was rejected by the Lords. Only one bishop voted for it. Another attempt was made the next year, with a similar result. On that occasion the Archbishop of York charged the Dissenting ministers with being "men of close ambition." "This is judging uncharitably," replied Lord Chatham, "and whoever brings such a charge without evidence defames." His Lordship paused for a moment, and then added—"The Dissenting ministers are represented as men of close ambition: they are so, my Lords; and their ambition is to keep close to the college of fishermen, not of cardinals; and to the doctrines of inspired apostles, not to the decrees of interested and aspiring bishops. They contend for a scriptural and spiritual worship; we have a Calvinistic creed, a Popish Liturgy, and Arminian clergy. The Reformation has laid open the scriptures to all; let not the bishops shut them again. Laws in support of ecclesiastical power are pleaded, which it would shock humanity to execute. It is said religious sects have done great mischief when they were not kept under restraints; but history affords no proof that sects have ever been mischievous when they were not oppressed and persecuted by the ruling church."

"Christian liberty!"—exclaimed Robert Robinson—"thou favourite offspring of heaven! thou first-born of christianity! I saw the wise and pious servants of God nourish thee in their house, and cherish thee in their bosoms! I saw them lead thee into public view; all good men hailed thee; the generous British Commons caressed and praised thee, and led thee into an upper house, and there—there didst thou expire in the holy laps of spiritual Lords!"

In 1774 Mr. Robinson (he was pastor of the Baptist church at Cambridge) published a work which probably influenced the public mind on this subject, and prepared the way for the repeal of the obnoxious enactments. I refer to his "Arcana, or, the Principles of the late petitioners to Parliament for relief in the matter of subscription." The book was written in the form of letters, and the subjects discussed were—Candour in controversy—Uniformity in religion—The right of private judgment—Civil magistracy—Innovation—Orthodoxy—Persecution—Sophistry. Incomparable wit sparkled in this work. No churchman could read it without being ashamed of the intolerance of his spiritual rulers.

At length, even the bishops were mollified. One of their number, Dr. Ross, bishop of Exeter, in a sermon before the House of Lords on the 30th of January, 1779, expressed his wish that relief might be afforded to Dissenters. The hint was taken. A bill was speedily introduced, which passed through both Houses without much difficulty, by which subscription to the Articles was abolished, and instead of it ministers were required to sign the following declaration:—"I, A. B., do solemnly declare in the presence of Almighty God, that I am a Christian, and a Protestant, and as such that I believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as commonly received among Protestant churches, do contain the revealed will of God; and that I do receive the same as the rule of my faith and practice." Dissenting schoolmasters also obtained the desired relief.

I have narrated these transactions, in all which the Baptists were concerned in common with other Protestant Dissenters, in order to put you in possession of some facts which ought not to be lost sight of. Persecution in its violent forms existed no longer; but there were men still to be found, and the race is not yet extinct, who gladly embraced every opportunity of venting their spite against those who chose to think and act for themselves in matters of religion. Let us be thankful that this ill-conditioned tribe is dwindling away.

A sad degeneracy had taken place among the General Baptists, who, as you are doubtless aware, adopt Arminian views, the Particular Baptists being denominated Calvinistic. Arminianism had crept in among

them, and with it certain kindred errors, usually accompanying that speculation. The loss of life followed the obscuration of light. Anti-evangelical sentiments and practices prevailed to such an alarming extent, that the sound-hearted of that denomination felt the necessity of withdrawal. They peaceably withdrew in the year 1770, and formed the "New Connexion of General Baptists." The blessing of God followed the movement. The new Body thus constituted is now the General Baptist Denomination, the Arianised churches having for the most part fallen into Socinianism, or become extinct.

The communion controversy was revived. Nothing had been published on the subject since the time of Charles II, when Bunyan advocated free communion, and Kiffin replied to him. In 1771 Robert Robinson wrote a pamphlet entitled, "The general doctrines of Toleration applied to free communion." Messrs. Ryland of Northampton and Turner of Abingdon, men of note and power, published Essays, maintaining the same views. They were answered by Abraham Booth, whose "Apology for the Baptists" was the most masterly production that had yet appeared on that side of the question. No other publications on the subject were issued for many years.

I have remarked that the Denomination had evidently fallen into a state of religious declension almost immediately after the restoration of freedom. The statistics prove this. To whatever other causes the condition of affairs may be ascribed, there can be little doubt that, the paralyzing influence of the doctrinal sentiments entertained by many of the ministers must be regarded as mainly contributing to the result. John Brine and Dr. Gill were chief men in the Denomination for nearly half a century. They were Supralapsarians, holding that God's election was irrespective of the fall of man. They taught eternal justification. Undue prominence was given in their discourses to the teachings of Scripture respecting the divine purposes. Although they themselves inculcated practical godliness, and so were not justly liable to the charge of Antinomianism, there is reason to fear that numbers of those who imbibed their doctrinal views kept out of sight or but feebly urged the obligation of believers to personal holiness. And this is certain, that those eminent men, and all their followers, went far astray from the course marked out by our Lord and his apostles. They were satisfied with stating men's danger, and assuring them that they were on the high road to perdition. But they did not call upon them to "repent and believe the gospel." They did not entreat them to be "reconciled unto God." They did not "warn every man and teach every man in all wisdom." And the churches did not, could not, under their instruction, engage in efforts for the conversion of souls. They were so afraid of intruding on God's work that they neglected to do what he had commanded them. They seem to have supposed that preservation was all they should aim at; they had not heard enough to seek for extension. No wonder that the cause declined!

The backsliding and coldness had affected all religious communities in England. Had it not been for the merciful revival which accompanied the labours of Whitefield and the Wesleys, evangelical truth would have well nigh died out. Those extraordinary men were raised up for a glorious purpose. The effects of their ministry were felt by all Denominations. The churches began to arise and shake themselves from the dust. A new order of things may be dated from the commencement of their itinerancy, indicating a gradual return to apostolical simplicity and fervour. Christian ministers preached differently; if they uttered the same truths, there was more affection and power in the utterance. Some of them found that an addition to their creeds was necessary, to bring them into accordance with the heavenly standard, and christian churches said that there were duties incumbent on them, which they could not neglect without incurring guilt.

The restorative process did not take effect among the Baptists so soon as in some