

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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{ WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

Dawn.

BY H. BONAR.

Light of the better morning,
Shine down on me!
Son of the brighter heaven,
Bid darkness flee!
Thy warmth impart
To this dull heart:
Pour in thy light,
And let this night
Be turned to day
By thy mild ray!
Lord Jesus, come;
Thou day-star shine;
Enlighten now
This soul of mine;

Streaks of the better dawning,
Break on my sight,
Fringing with silver edges
These clouds of night.
Gems on morn's brow,
Glow, brightly glow,
Foretelling soon
The ascending noon,
Wakening this earth
To second birth,
When He shall come
To earth again,
Who comes to judge,
Who comes to reign.

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER XLVI.

The Troublous Period.

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

Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

Under the Protectorate Mr. Jessey was appointed one of the "Triers." He officiated also at St. George's Church, Southwark, every Lord's day morning, preaching to his own people in the afternoon, and at other places during the week.

Being an unmarried man he was able to gratify his benevolent disposition to a large extent. His charities were very liberally bestowed. About thirty families were chiefly sustained by him. Applications for aid pressed upon him daily, and if they were deserving he seldom refused them. On one occasion he interested himself in behalf of the poor Jews resident in Jerusalem, who had fallen into great destitution through the failure of customary remittances from Europe. He succeeded in enlisting the sympathies of London Merchants and others, and remitted upwards of £300 for their relief.

On account of the high esteem in which he was held, and his well-known learning and admirable judgment, his opinion was frequently sought: on a great variety of subjects. Such demands on his time were thereby occasioned, that he affixed the following notice to his study door:—

"Amice, quisquis huc ades;
Aut agito paucis, aut abi:
Aut me laborantem adjuva."

"Whatever friend comes hither,
Despatch in brief, or go,
Or help me busied too."

By Henry Jessey.

At the Restoration Mr. Jessey was quickly ejected from St. George's Church. Twice he suffered imprisonment. But he did not live to see the "great and sore troubles" of the times of Charles II. and his brethren. He died Sept. 4, 1663, and was followed to his grave by thousands of mourners.

"He spent his last days and nights in searching his heart, humbling his soul, extolling free grace, and exhorting all about him to keep close to God, to persevere in faith, and prepare for trials; adding for their encouragement the long experience he had had of the goodness of the Lord in all times and conditions. The last evening but one before his departure, having a mind to walk, he was led about the room, and often repeated this expression, 'God is good; he doth not lead me whither I would

not, as he did Peter: good is the Lord to me.' Being soon tired he sat down on his bed, and one who sat by him said, 'They among whom you have laboured can witness that you have been a faithful servant of Christ, making his glory your utmost end, for the good of their souls.' But he replied, 'Say no more of that; exalt God, exalt God.' He spent the first part of his last night in blessing God, and singing praises to his name, and fell asleep about eleven o'clock. Waking again between two and three, he fell into a wonderful strain of abasing himself, and admiring the love of God, 'that he should choose the vilest, the unworthiest, and the basest,' which last word he repeated many times, and then cried out, 'Oh the unspeakable love of God, that he should reach me, when I could not reach him!' And when the cordial ordered for that night was brought, he said, 'Trouble me not; upon your peril, trouble me not.' He was then as if he had seen some glorious vision, or had been in a rapture. * * * "The last words he was heard to speak were these,— 'He counted me worthy.' And when the sound of his words ceased, his lips were observed still to move, and he seemed to be inwardly adoring that God whom in his health he served, feared and praised, and made his boast of continually; whose law he preached, and whose goodness he proclaimed. Such was his habitual sense of the goodness of God, that when he met an acquaintance it was a common thing for him, (after the usual salutations) to say, 'verily God is good, blessed be his name; stick to him.' * * * He was so great a scripturist, that if one began to rehearse any passage, he could go on with it, and name the book, chapter, and verse where it might be found. The original languages of the Old and New Testaments were as familiar to him as his mother tongue."—(Palmer's Nonconformists' Memorial, i. 133.)

JOHN CANNE was another worthy champion of the truth. The known incidents of his life are few. He was born about the year 1590, and for a short time ministered in the English Church. In 1621 he was chosen pastor of a church which afterwards met in Deadman's Place, Southwark, and which had been formed but a little time before. The church met at first stealthily in private houses, to avoid persecution, which at length became so fierce that Mr. Canne found it necessary to withdraw from England for a time. He fixed his residence at Amsterdam, where he was chosen pastor of "the ancient English church." In that city he published, in 1634, his work entitled, "The necessity of separation," justifying dissent from the Church of England, and enforcing that duty. During a visit to England in 1641 he formed the church at Broadmead, Bristol. He returned to his pastoral duties at Amsterdam, but visited his native land again after the death of Charles I., and probably spent several years, wholly or partially, in England. In some of his publications he exposed in a faithful manner the iniquity of Presbyterian intolerance, as he had long before denounced that of the Episcopalians. It appears that he was dissatisfied with the Protectorate, and as he was a man whose influence might be dreaded, he was not suffered to propagate his opinions undisturbed. He was banished from Hull, where he had been preaching for some time, and after some wanderings fixed his residence at London. Having embraced Fifth Monarchy principles, although he had no sympathy with the political schemes of their advocates, he was apprehended, in April, 1658, at a meeting held in Coleman Street, and committed to prison, but acquitted on his trial. Once more he sought refuge at Amsterdam, and in the year 1667.

Although Mr. Canne was "a baptized man," as he is styled in the records of the Broadmead church, he maintained and practised open communion. The Rev. Charles Stovel, of London, who edited "The necessity of Separation" for the Hanserd Knollys Society, says, in a letter to me, recently received,—"I see nothing in his works to indicate a very decided baptistical zeal. I should judge that he was,

separating from all hierarchies, a free communionist in the widest meaning of that designation that could comport with fellowship in vital religion."

Believing that "Scripture is its own best interpreter," he prepared an edition of the bible, with marginal references, judiciously selected, and excellently adapted to assist thoughtful inquirers in the search for truth. It was first published at Amsterdam in 1644, and afterwards, repeatedly, both in that city and in England. The Rev. Christopher Anderson says,— "The first English Bible, with Scriptural references on the margin throughout, was prepared and printed in that city [Amsterdam,] by John Canne. He proceeded on the principle, that 'Scripture was the best interpreter of Scripture,' and his parallels, therefore, are parallels of sense and not of sound, as too many have been since his day * * * A good reprint would prove a very valuable and saleable book."—(Annals of the English Bible, ii. 559.)

VAVASOR POWELL has been not inappropriately termed "the Whitefield of Wales." That excellent man was born at Knocklas, in Radnorshire, in the year 1617. He received a good education, and was well skilled in the learned languages; but he was such a wild youth that even his young associates called him, *dux omnium malorum*—leader in all mischief. Nevertheless, he was considered in those times good enough for a clergyman, and was accordingly ordained, and admitted to a curacy, although, as he afterwards confessed, he "sighted the scriptures, was a stranger to strict and spiritual prayer, and a great profaner of the Sabbath." But he did not long continue in that state. God "called him by his grace." The books and sermons of puritan ministers were blessed to his conversion. Having left the established church and joined the nonconformists, he engaged in ministerial labour with great zeal. He was an eloquent and popular preacher, and had the honour to be persecuted with no small malice. On one occasion, when he had been preaching at a house in Brecknockshire, he was seized, together with sixty or seventy of his hearers, by a rude mob, who placed their prisoners in the church, as it was too late at night to take them to a magistrate. Mr. Powell improved the opportunity, and preached in the church at midnight from Mat. 10. 28. Next morning they went to the magistrate, who was not home when they arrived. Mr. Powell thought that time ought not to be wasted, and therefore preached again, greatly to the chagrin of his worship, who found his house so unceremoniously turned into a conventicle. His daughter had been impressed by the sermon, and interceded for the release of the prisoner, which was reluctantly granted.

The opposition was so violent that in 1642 Mr. Powell went to London, where he preached to many congregations with much acceptance. Next year he settled at Dartford, in Kent, and was "blessed with great success in his labours, being instrumental in bringing many souls to Christ, and gathering a congregation in that town." After remaining there nearly three years he was strongly urged to return to Wales, the number of faithful ministers in that country being then very small. He went accordingly, in 1646, and spent fourteen years in his native land, travelling from place to place, preaching incessantly, and planting churches. "He frequently preached in two or three places in a day, and was seldom two days in a week throughout the year out of the pulpit; nay, he would sometimes ride an hundred miles in a week, and preach in every place where he might have admittance, either night or day; so that there was hardly a church, chapel, or town-hall in all Wales, where he had not preached, besides his frequent preaching in fairs and markets, upon mountains and in small villages. For if he passed at any time through any place where there was a concourse of people, he would take the opportunity of preaching Christ, and recommending to them the care of their souls, and another world."—(Crosby, i. 376.)

In 1649 he was appointed one of the Commissioners, under authority of an Act

passed "for the better propagation and preaching of the gospel in Wales, for the ejecting of scandalous ministers and schoolmasters, and redress of some grievances." He discharged his duty in that office honestly and conscientiously, though it occasioned him much ill-will. The good effects were apparent in every part of the principalities.

At the Restoration Vavasor Powell became a marked man. Such representations were made against him that in August 1660 orders were issued by government to suppress his congregations. In the following January, immediately after Venner's insurrection, he was thrown into prison, with many more, and continued there nine weeks, when, at the coronation, a general pardon was granted, and he was released.

But the term of freedom was short. Preach he would, notwithstanding all prohibition. It was impossible to stop him unless he was shut up in jail, and there was no difficulty about that, in the days of Charles II. Upon a vague charge of "Sedition, rebellion, and treason," preferred by the high sheriff of Montgomeryshire, he was arrested. The sheriff had no evidence to produce, and the prisoner ought to have been released at the Sessions, but a pretext was found for retaining him, because he refused to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. Soon after, he was taken to London, and appeared before the King and Council, by whom he was committed to the Fleet prison, where he remained nearly two years. For twelve months he was not allowed to leave his chamber, under the window of which was a dunghill. His health was so impaired by the noisome effluvia that he never thoroughly recovered. Thence he was conveyed to Southsea Castle, near Portsmouth, and was confined there five years more. At the end of that time he obtained his liberty by a writ of *habeas corpus*. Grosby remarks that this took place "upon the removal of Chancellor Hyde" [Lord Clarendon,] implying that the imprisonment was altogether illegal, and that the Chancellor had illegally prevented the victim, as well as many others, from regaining liberty.

Mr. Powell repaired immediately to Wales, and recommenced preaching. He was not permitted to labour long. One George Jones, an episcopal clergyman, and a man of infamous character, lodged a false information against him, to the effect that several of his congregation went armed to their meetings, as if for the purpose of resisting the authorities. This was levying war!! Again the minister of Christ was shut up in jail. The charge could not be substantiated. Then they tendered the oaths. He refused to take them, and offered to give bail for his appearance at the next Sessions. His request was denied, and he was remanded to prison. A writ of *habeas corpus* was obtained, and he was taken before the Court of Common Pleas, at London: yet, although the Court unanimously decided that "the return was false and illegal," they committed Mr. Powell, in defiance of all law and justice, to the Fleet prison, where he lay till his death, Oct. 17, 1670.

The Lord was with him there, and gave him "songs in the night." Nor was he wholly useless. He had opportunities for intercourse with his brethren, and he could use his pen for the advancement of the cause. One of the last acts of his life was a correspondence with the Broadmead church respecting Mr. Hardcastle, who afterwards became their pastor. It was singularly illustrative of the hardness of the times. Vavasor Powell, a prisoner, recommends to the church a ministering brother, himself a prisoner! An extract from his letter will be interesting to you:—

"I rejoice greatly to hear of your courage and care, and of the gracious providence and preservation of Jehovah towards you hitherto. Our safety is in the Lord, and in doing our duty and cleaving close to him. Such have the promise of preservation from the hour of temptation, Rev. iii. 10. We are appointed and commanded to be partakers of the afflictions of the gospel, 1 Thess. iii. 3. To be some of the forwardest therein is an honour, which I