

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. III. No. 34.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 1858.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXII. No. 34.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

THOUGHTS

ON MEETING WITH THE BEAUTIFUL EXPRESSION—
"HOMESICK FOR HEAVEN," IN HARBAUGH'S "ABODE
OF THE SAINTED DEAD."

I am "Homesick for Heaven"—Oh! I long to be there
With Jesus my Saviour and King—
I long in its blessed employments to share,
To behold its bright scenes so surpassingly fair—
The white robe of righteousness humbly to wear,
And Immanuel's praises to sing.

I am "Homesick for Heaven"—my soul would arise
From the weights that encumber it here,
And soar to that mansion of bliss in the skies—
Where no sin shall be found—no sorrow—no sighs,
Where God shall wipe off every tear from my eyes,
And Jesus for ever be near.

I am "Homesick for Heaven"—while I sojourn below
And tread this dark valley of tears;
How sweet to my travel-worn spirit to know
That when in the grave this frail form is laid low
My soul to a home of bright beauty shall go—
Where Jesus in glory appears.

I am "Homesick for Heaven"—for there I shall meet
The loved ones who cherished we here,
Whose friendship and love made life's bitterness sweet,
Who there my glad spirit will joyously greet,
And with me the sweet song of the Saint will repeat
In that glorious and love-lighted sphere.

Yes I'm "Homesick for Heaven"—Oh! what is there
here
To fill our unbounded desires?
The soul that has tasted of Heavenly food—
That has come to the fount of Immanuel's blood,
And has plunged all its sins in that soul-cleansing flood
To pleasures immortal aspire.

But tho' "Homesick for Heaven"—let me patiently
bide
Till the Holy Refiner shall see—
That the silver which long in the fire has been tried
At length from all dross and dross purified—
Reflects His own image—and set it aside
A sanctified vessel to be.

Yes—tho' "Homesick for Heaven"—yet while I am
bound
In this perishing prison of clay,
May my steps in the pathway of duty be found,
My life to the praise of my Jesus abound,
And my soul be prepared when the summons shall sound
To rise and soar gladly away.

Lower Stewiacke, July, 1858.

J. B.

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER I.

The Troublous Period.

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

Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

A portion of Mr. Kiffin's domestic history is thus narrated:—

"It pleased God to take out of the world to himself my eldest son, which was no small affliction to me and my dear wife. His obedience to his parents, and forwardness in the ways of God were so conspicuous, as made him very amiable in the eyes of all who knew him. The grief I felt for his loss did greatly press me down, with more than ordinary sorrow; but in the midst of my great distress, it pleased the Lord to support me by that blessed word being brought powerfully to my mind, Matthew xx. 15—'Is thine eye evil because I am good? Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' These words did quiet my heart, so that I felt a perfect submission to his sovereign will, being well satisfied that it was for the great advantage of my dear son, and a voice to me to be more humble, and watchful over my own ways.

"My next son being but of a weak constitution, and desirous of travelling, I sent him with the captain of a ship, an acquaintance, who was bound to Aleppo. Fearing that in his voyage and travels he was in

danger of being corrupted by those of the Popish religion, I sent a young man, a minister, with him, to defend him from any thing of that kind. But I was greatly prevented;—for this minister left him and the ship at Leghorn, and went to Rome, by which means I was to my sorrow disappointed. On my son's return home, when at Venice, he met with a Popish priest; and being forward to discourse with him about religion, the priest, to show his revenge, destroyed him by poison. As to the minister's name, I forbear to mention it, he being yet alive;—I pray God that this sin may not be laid to his charge."—(Life, p. 56).

Here is a fine trait of the good old Protestantism. William Kiffin would not have acted like some of the moderns, who send their children to Roman Catholic schools! So solicitous was he for his son's preservation from the insidious error that he was content to incur a double expense for his tour rather than risk his spiritual safety. All honour to him! And honoured let him be for his forbearance. The name of that minister, who so unaccountably deserted his charge, will never be known on earth. Kiffin would not expose him to obloquy, though he richly deserved it. Kiffin was a disciple of the "meek and lowly" One.

About three years after the last-mentioned affliction the good man lost his wife, who died Oct. 2, 1682. He records the event in his usual strain. "It pleased the Lord," he says, "to take to himself my dear and faithful wife, with whom I had lived nearly forty-four years; whose tenderness to me, and faithfulness to God, were such as cannot, by me, be expressed, as she constantly sympathized with me in all my afflictions. I can truly say, I never heard her utter the least discontent under all the various providences that attended either me or her; she eyed the hand of God in all our sorrows, so as constantly to encourage me in the ways of God: her death was the greatest sorrow to me that ever I met with in the world."—(Life, p. 58).

I have given you a full account in a previous letter of the affliction that befel Mr. Kiffin in the death of his grandsons, the Hewlings. That wound was never healed. It smarted till his dying day.

In 1687, James II. published a "Declaration of liberty of conscience," assuming for that purpose a power to dispense with the laws of the land by an exercise of the royal prerogative. Some of the Dissenters, and among them a few Baptists, were so delighted at the prospect of freedom and equality that they gratefully accepted the proffered boon, and presented addresses to the king on the occasion, expressing in strong terms their sense of obligation to him. But Mr. Kiffin and the majority of his brethren were not beguiled. They said that the measure was wholly unconstitutional, since laws can neither be made, repealed, nor suspended, but by the united legislature; and they were convinced that James's real design was to bestow political power on the Roman Catholics, and ultimately to make Popery rampant. They abstained, therefore, from any demonstration, and waited the issue of events.

When the king deprived the city of London of its charter, and displaced its magistrates, Mr. Kiffin was appointed one of the new aldermen. His account of the transaction is as follows:—

"A little time after, a great temptation attended me, which was, a commission from the king to be one of the aldermen of the city of London. I used all the means I could to be excused by some lords near the king; and also by Sir Nicholas Butler, and Mr. Penn, but all in vain. They said that they knew I had an interest that would serve the king; and although they knew my sufferings had been very great, by the cutting off my two grandsons, and losing their estates, yet it should be made up to me, both as to their estates, and also, in what honour and advantage I could reasonably desire for myself.

"But I thank the Lord those proffers were no snare to me, being fully possessed in my judgment that the design was the

total ruin of the Protestant religion, which, I hope I can say, was, and is dearer to me than my life. I remained without accepting the office, from the time I received the summons to take it, above six weeks, until the Lord Mayor, Sir John Peake, in court said, I ought to be sent to Newgate; and in a few days after, I understood it was intended to put me into the Crown Office, and to proceed with all severity against me. Which when I heard, I went to the ablest counsel for advice, (one that is now a chief judge in the nation,) and stating my case to him, he told me my danger was every way great; for if I accepted to be an alderman, I ran the hazard of five hundred pounds, [that being the penalty for taking office without first receiving the Lord's Supper according to the forms of the Church of England]; and if I did not accept, as the judges then were, I might be fined by them ten, or twenty, or thirty thousand pounds, even what they pleased. So that I thought it better for me to run the lesser hazard of five hundred pounds, which was certain, than be exposed to such fines as might be the ruin of myself and family. Yet did I forbear taking the place of alderman for some time, when the aldermen then sitting agreed to invite the king to dinner on the lord mayor's day, and laid down fifty pounds each alderman to defray the charge; which made some of them the more earnest to tell me I did forbear [in order] to excuse my fifty pounds. But to prevent any such charge against me, I desired a friend to acquaint my lord mayor and the court, that I should deposit my fifty pounds with them, yet delaying accepting the office—

which I accordingly sent them. When the lord mayor's day came, and the dinner prepared for the king, I the next day understood that there were invited to the feast the Pope's nuncio, and several other priests, that dined with them, which, had I known they had been invited, I should hardly have parted with my fifty pounds towards that feast; but the next court-day I came to the court and took upon me the office of alderman. In the commission I was also a justice of the peace and one of the lieutenancy; but I never meddled with either of those places, neither in any act of power in that court, touching causes between man and man, but only such things as concerned the welfare of the city, and good of the orphans, whose distressed condition called for help, although we were able to do little towards it. * * * Having been in that office about nine months, I was discharged from it, to my very great satisfaction. * * * My reason for giving this brief account of these things is, that you all may see how good the Lord hath been to prevent those designs, then in hand, to destroy both our religion and our liberties, and I heartily desire that both myself and all others concerned may acknowledge the great goodness of God therein, that he may have the glory of all our delivering mercies."

Thus wrote the christian patriot. We see here the meek dignity of religion. I must give you one more specimen. It is the concluding part of his auto-biography, written in 1693, when he was in the seventy-seventh year of his age.

"I leave these few instances of the divine care to you, my children, and grandchildren, and great-grand-children, that you may remember them with thankful hearts, as they must prove to the praise of God, on my account. I leave them also, desiring the Lord to bless them to you; above all, praying for you, that you may, in an especial manner, look after the great concerns of your souls; that you may know God, and Jesus Christ, whom to know is eternal life. Endeavour to be diligent, to inquire after, and to be established in the great doctrines of the gospel, which is of absolute necessity to salvation. I must every day expect to leave this world, having lived in it much longer than I expected, being now in the seventy-seventh year of my age, and yet know not what my eyes may see before my change. The world is full of confusions; the last times are upon us; the signs of the times are very visible; iniquity abounds, and the

love of many in religion waxes cold. God is, by his providence, shaking the earth under our feet; there is no sure foundation of rest and peace, but only in Jesus Christ, to whose grace I commend you."

Mr. Kiffin lived eight years after writing the above. He died Dec. 29, 1701, in the eighty-sixth year of his age.

Although he was pastor of the church in Devonshire Square upwards of sixty years, it is not probable that he devoted much of his time to its interests. His mercantile pursuits, and the numerous public duties which were imposed on him, both civil and religious, engrossed his attention, and prevented him from fulfilling the requirements of the pastoral office. This deficiency was supplied by the labours of an assistant or co-pastor. Mr. Thomas Patient was his first colleague; he had been some years pastor of a church in Ireland. On his death, in 1666, Mr. Daniel Dyke, A. M., was chosen. He was a learned man, and an excellent minister. He was one of the "Triers." He died in 1688, and was succeeded by Mr. Richard Adams, who survived Mr. Kiffin.

Mr. Kiffin was generally regarded as the chief man in our denomination. That is, his excellent character, and the position which he occupied gave him influence among the brethren, and rendered his advice and co-operation desirable. His name is connected with all the public proceedings of the Body for half a century. If the Court wished to conciliate the Baptists, application was made to Kiffin. If country churches required aid or counsel, they seemed naturally to ask his interference, and fully confided in his discretion and integrity, knowing that he would honestly endeavour to do right.

He was an eminently good man. We cannot but admire the quiet composure and filial submission of soul with which he recorded even the most painful events of his life. "It pleased the Lord"—such was the habitual expressions of his views and feelings. Whether the reference was to mercy or judgment—to manifestations of blessing—to persecuting malice—to domestic sorrow—to storms and perils—or to joyful deliverance—still, the language was the same—"It pleased the Lord." Thus he possessed his soul in patience, and "endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

I might tell you of other excellent men whom God raised up in the "troublous period," and by whom the churches were edified. There was John Gosnold, Joseph Wright, George Hammond, Samuel Tavorner, Henry Forty, Benjamin Cox, Nehemiah Cox, D. D., William Collins, Hercules Collins, and many more. But "time would fail me." I must bring this period to a close.

Our historians have preserved some interesting anecdotes, illustrative of the times. I will transcribe a few.

George Hammond was pastor of a church at Canterbury, and preached frequently in the neighbouring villages. He was once overtaken by a storm, and took shelter under a tree. While there, another person joined him, who, in the course of conversation said that he was an informer, and that he had heard there was to be a conventicle in the neighbourhood, at which he meant to be present. "I am a man-taker also," said Mr. Hammond. "Are you so," replied the informer; "then we will go together." They reached the house and sat some time among the people. "Here are the people," said Mr. Hammond, "but where is the minister? Unless there is a minister we cannot make a conventicle of it, and therefore either you or I must preach." The informer declined of course, and Mr. Hammond preached, much to the man's astonishment. The sermon was blessed to him, and he became a christian.

In the early part of his ministry Nehemiah Cox lived at Cranfield, Bedfordshire. He was committed to prison for preaching the gospel. When brought to his trial he pleaded in Greek, and on examination answered in Hebrew. The judge called for the indictment, and found him described as "Nehemiah Cox, Cordwainer," at which he expressed his astonishment, no doubt thinking it exceedingly strange that a shoe-