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A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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Poetry.

The Echo.

FROM THE GERMAN OF HEINE.

A rider through a valley passed,
And slowly picked his way;
"Ah, leads this to my loved one's arms,
Or to my grave to-day!"
The echo answer'd, "yea,
To your grave to-day."

Then farther rode that rider on,
His breast with gloom oppress'd;
"Ah, must I then so very soon
Fall—in the grave to rest?"
The echo said, "'tis best
In the grave to rest."

The rider then let fall a tear
Down from his brimming eye;
"If peace be only in the grave,
Then it is good to die."
Deep was the echo's sigh,
"It is good to die."

Winter Song.

If the winds blow
And the snows snow,
And the fire snap spite,
Love is alive on a winter night!

When the stars glisten,
Listen! O listen!
If the world be white,
Ho! there is fun on a winter night!

Let the winds blow then!
Let the snow snow then,
And the world wax white,
All is right on a winter night!

Beware.

A little theft, a small deceit,
Too often leads to more;
'Tis hard at first, but tempts the feet
As through an open door.
Just as the broadest rivers run
From small and distant springs,
The greatest crimes that men have done,
Have grown from little things.

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER XXXVII.

The Troublous Period.

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

Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

Under the Protectorate the Baptists were not only unmolested but prosperous. Some of them disapproved of the new government, preferring the Commonwealth; and some joined the fifth monarchy men, who held visionary notions respecting the kingdom of Christ. Hence the Protector was thought to look coolly on them, and to wish to lessen their influence, particularly in the army. But the main body were satisfied with the existing order of things and diligently improved their opportunities.

Crosby has republished a letter from some Baptists in the army to the Protector, in which they accuse him of designing to get rid of them; or, as they expressed it, "to purge the army of the Anabaptists." They were not very careful in the choice of words. These are some of the "queries" they put to "his Highness":—"Whether your highness had come to the height of honour and greatness you are now come to, if the Anabaptists, so called, had been so much your enemies as they were your friends?"—"Whether the Anabaptists were ever unfaithful, either to the Commonwealth in general, or to your highness in particular? And if not, then what is the reason of your intended dismissal?"—"Whether the Anabaptists may not as justly endeavour to eat out the bowels of your government, as your highness may endeavour to eat them out of their employments?"—"Whether the Anabaptists did not come more justly into their employments in the army, than your highness came into the seat of government?"—"Whether the Anabaptists will not be in a better condition in the day of Christ, that keeps his covenant with God and men, than your highness will be if you

break with both?"—"Whether an hundred of the old Anabaptists, such as marched under your command in '48, '49, '50 &c., be not as good as two hundred of your new courtiers, if you were in such a condition as you were at Dunbar in Scotland?"—"Whether your highness's conscience was not more at peace, and your mind more set upon things above, when you loved the Anabaptists, than it is now, when you hate their principles, or their service, or both?"—"Whether your highness's court is not a greater charge to this nation than the Anabaptists in the army? And if so, whether this be the ease which you promised the people?"—(Crosby iii. 231-242).

This is plain dealing. But Cromwell accomplished his purpose, as regarded his own regiment, the principal officers in which were dismissed, avowedly because they were Baptists. The probability is that they were strong republicans, and were afraid of the old tyranny. Their fears were groundless. Perhaps there was a feverish restlessness about them which made it necessary or prudent to deprive them of the means of doing mischief.

The discontents of the Irish Baptists, some of whom objected to the Protectorate, regarding the title of "Lord Protector" as "applicable to God alone," were allayed by a judicious letter addressed to them by Messrs. Kiffin and Spilsbury. It is inserted in the volume of "Confessions of Faith," published by the Hanserd Knollys Society.

Three Baptist ministers, (John Tombes, Henry Jessey, and Daniel Dyke) were appointed "Triers," that is, they were members of a Committee so called, constituted by the government for the examination of candidates for church livings, and the removal of "ignorant and scandalous" clergymen. The ministers above mentioned, and several more, accepted the charge of parishes. I do not vindicate their consistency, in consenting to receive tithes and other payments, by which parish ministers are supported in the church of England; but the impartial reader will give due weight to the considerations which have been alleged in their defence, viz:—that the scarcity of qualified ministers warranted them in taking this step, as they were thereby put in a position to preach the gospel to thousands who would have been otherwise destitute of the means of grace; that they were bound to no forms and ceremonies, and allowed to conduct worship in whatever manner they pleased; and that some of them retained their own churches, and continued to minister to them, occupying the parish pulpits on only one part of the Lord's day.

Statistics were not much thought of in those days. I am unable to furnish an exact account of the number of Baptist churches in England at the time of the Restoration. It may suffice to remark that there were churches of our denomination in about thirty English counties, and that they were numerous in Wales. The principal churches in Ireland were at Dublin, Waterford, Kilkenny, Clonmel, Cork, and Limerick.

I will here introduce some passages of a letter written by Mr. Thomas Patient, who was then preaching at Kilkenny, and addressed to "the Lord General Cromwell." It is strikingly characteristic of the spirit of the times.

"It is great honour to be made use of in the hand of God, to do him special service for church and commonwealth, to have a spirit like unto Christ, which is a public spirit. He came not to be served, but to serve, and to lay down his life a ransom for many. Oh! therefore, my beloved in the Lord, still let this be the joy of your heart, in all your difficulties and great undertakings, that you are in such a work and service, which I know God hath made you sensible of, hath tended much to the preservation and peace of his church, and free passage of the gospel, and I hope at last will appear to be for the public good of the Commonwealth.

"My constant prayers are at the throne of grace for you, that you may be kept upright with God, and in nothing left to sin and dishonour God, his name being so much concerned in it. Therefore, as God hath formerly given you the experience of

the benefit of a humble walking with God, I beseech you in the bowels of Christ, still keep a close watch over your own heart, and labour to walk under the sense of that body of death and your daily infirmities, and to see a need of godly repentance daily, and humiliation, and fresh strength from Christ by faith, by which you may be kept and preserved in a fresh, sweet, and comfortable communion with God; for his presence will be all your happiness.

"Be sure to prize God's holy word, and all the rest of God's holy ordinances, and in so much as may be, neglect not to practise them, that you by your constant godly example may provoke others to holiness and the fear of the Lord."—"Confessions of Faith;" p. 311-315).

We are now entering upon a dark time. The reigns of Charles II. and James II. were inglorious in all respects. Those kings were despicable as men, despotic as rulers. In religion, the first was a hypocrite, the second a bigot. The former was traitorous to British interests, for the sake of his pleasures and his pride; the latter was willing to offer up British freedom on the altar of the papacy. Martyrdom, in various forms, gained fresh laurels while they occupied the throne of which they were utterly unworthy.

Charles II. had pledged his royal word at Preda, before his restoration, "that no man should be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which did not disturb the peace of the kingdom." Like a true son of his father, he broke his promise. It was doubtless given with an infidel reservation which a Jesuit would applaud.

To save appearances, the king called a Conference, as James I. had done before him, and with similar views. On each occasion, the design was first to cheat, and then to insult.

The Conference took place at the Savoy, London. Twelve bishops, with nine clergymen, denominated their "assistants," appeared on the Episcopalian side, and the same number of divines (including Dr. Reynolds and two or three other Episcopalian who were favourable to alterations, for the sake of preserving unity) on the other. Several meetings were held, but they were unproductive of any good result, since the case was already prejudged. The Conference was opened April 15, 1661, and closed July 25.

The religious condition of the kingdom was very peculiar. "Ignorant and scandalous" ministers had been ejected by wholesale during the Commonwealth and under the Protectorate. Their successors were a motley group. The majority were Episcopalian, but there were many Presbyterians, some Independents, and a few Baptists. A large number of the Presbyterians would have submitted to the restored establishment, if they had been allowed to retain discretionary power with reference to portions of the ritual. They particularly objected to wearing the surplice; to the sign of the cross in baptism; to kneeling at the Lord's supper; to the indiscriminate administration of the Lord's supper to sick persons; to the form of absolution; to the language of the burial service; and to the declaration required of all clergymen that there was nothing in the Common Prayer Book, the Book of Ordination, or the thirty-nine articles, contrary to the word of God. But the temper of the times was rigid and fierce. The hierarchical party, flushed with victory, and confident of complete success, refused all consideration. They would not abate a jot, except in matters of the most trivial importance. A few verbal alterations were made in the Liturgy; a new edition of the Prayer Book was published, containing forms of prayer for the 30th of January and the 29th of May, with other additions; and the Parliament, subservient to the wishes of the king and the priesthood, passed the "Act of Uniformity," which went into operation Aug. 24, 1662. I shall give an account of that Act hereafter.

You are now prepared for a tale of woe. The history of our denomination from 1660 to 1688 is not so much a history of progress as of endurance. Persecution

commenced immediately after the king's return. The clergymen ejected during the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, with the exception of such as had "justified the late king's murder, or declared against infant baptism," were restored to their livings by Act of Parliament. Though the High Commission Court was not re-established, it was presumed that the old laws of Elizabeth were in force again, and magistrates in every part of the kingdom were eager to execute them.

The Baptists saw the storm coming, and took measures accordingly. They asked for no indulgence, no emoluments. They sought no office. All they wanted was freedom of worship. They recognised but one course of action in things civil: They were prepared to be obedient subjects. With these views they approached the throne. First, a petition was presented to the king July 26, 1660, setting forth the sufferings inflicted on the churches in Lincolnshire. "We have been much abused," they say, "as we pass in the streets, and as we sit in our houses; being threatened to be hanged if but heard praying to our Lord in our own families, and disturbed in our so waiting upon him, by uncivil beating at our doors and sounding of horns; yea, we have been stoned when going to our meetings; the windows of the place where we have met have been struck down with stones: yea, [we have been] taken as evil-doers, and imprisoned, when peaceably met together to worship the Most High in the use of his most precious ordinances. * * * And as if all this were too little, they have to fill up their measure very lately indicted many of us at the sessions, and intend, as we are informed, to impose on us the penalty of twenty pounds [each] for not coming to hear such men as they provide us."—(Ivimey, i. 276). Accompanying this was a Confession of Faith, drawn up by Thomas Grantham, said to be "owned and approved by more than twenty thousand." Another petition, entitled, "The humble petition and representation of the sufferings of several peaceable and innocent subjects, called by the name of Anabaptists, inhabitants in the County of Kent, and now prisoners in the gaol of Maidstone, for the testimony of a good conscience," dated Jan. 25, 1661, not only represented the case of the prisoners, but of their brethren in the County of Kent, who were already suffering severely.—(Tracts on Liberty of Conscience, pp. 297-308). You will not be surprised to hear that these petitions produced no favourable results. The king, indeed, replied to the first. "That it was not his mind that any of his good subjects who lived peaceably should suffer any trouble on account of their opinions in point of religion," and he made fair promises. But the work of violence went on. Some of the principal Baptist ministers were lodged in prison during the year 1660. In November of that year John Bunyan entered Bedford jail, which was destined to be his abode for twelve years. In every part of England power was leagued with cruelty and lawlessness for the extermination of freedom.

The ridiculous affair called "Venner's Rebellion" occurred on the 7th of January, 1661. A proclamation was issued the day after, prohibiting all meetings of Baptists, Quakers, and Fifth Monarchy men, for religious worship, unless in the parish churches, or in private houses, and then limited to "the persons there inhabiting." The reason assigned was, that the parties abovementioned had met under religious pretences, but reality for treacherous purposes; and the insurrection gave a plausible colour to the proceeding. But the proclamation, though not issued till after the rebellion, had been ordered five days before; and the rebellion was eagerly laid hold of in justification of the act, which was manifestly an unauthorised stretch of power. That, however, gave little concern to Charles II. or his unscrupulous advisers. The document was a characteristic specimen of Stuart knavery and audacity.—(Documentary Annals, ii. 302. Tracts on Liberty of Conscience, p. 313-316).

The Baptists hastened to disclaim all sympathy with Venner. A "Humble