

anything at all was heard of these "manifestations;" many undoubted instances of conversion have taken place without any such physical effects: the number of conversions without them is far greater than that of cases attended by them. Instances are not wanting in which persons who have been "stricken" have resisted the sense of sin, as in the ordinary history of men, and have given clearest proof that conviction is not conversion; and, on the other hand, in some places where the physical manifestations have ceased, the work of conversion is still going on to an extent far surpassing that of any former period, and even exceed that which took place in the earlier part of the present movement, and when attended by the physical phenomena. These manifestations have been made to answer an important purpose in exciting the attention of the people; they are not essential to the work. We must not suppose because they lessen in number, or altogether disappear, that conversion ceases; on the contrary, we must be prepared to look for the spiritual still, although the sensible may be utterly withdrawn.

It was my privilege, during my recent visit, to witness this remarkable movement in different scenes. The house, the barn, the street, and the field have alike supplied material for observation. No sooner does one who is supposed to have a religious errand enter a dwelling than the people around will press into the room and crowd about the door, listening with an air of solemnity to the voice of prayer, or praise, or exhortation, that clearly testifies to the depth of the feeling that has been awakened. Let but the preacher of the gospel, or "a convert" who has recently been brought to God, stand forth in the street to warn men of their danger, and to point them to the refuge, then, though no extraordinary arts be used or expected, but the simple, earnest, heartfelt declaration of gospel truth, the gathering throng will soon show how welcome are the tidings of peace to them. An immense assemblage in the open field, the appointed place of meeting, was, to my mind, a most impressive and imposing spectacle. In Banbridge, where our mission had been almost suspended, and where for six months our zealous, self-denying, and laborious brother, Mr. Eccles, (of the Baptist Irish Society) had laboured in the midst of greatest discouragement, there I saw a vast congregation assembled in the field before his house, seated on the grassy slope, deeply solemn, listening as men hearing for eternity; and then as one after another was "stricken," and conducted by a company of people to some distant part of the field, from whence the voice of prayer or the cry of the stricken one told that the word had been attended by convincing power, the great body of the people yet remaining with even augmented solemnity, and when the darkness had caused them at length to withdraw, and fifteen such cases had occurred, I could but feel that it was a scene surpassing all that I had ever beheld, and all that I had anticipated even at the present time in Ireland. And yet another, though quieter assembly gave, only in a different form, equally conclusive testimony to the wondrous results of this awakening. On the morning of Thursday last it was my happiness, at Coleraine, to be present at a service that may be called the morning worship of the town. In the beautiful hall lately erected there, and which was to have been opened by a ball, but was inaugurated by a meeting for prayer instead, and in which I believe no other meetings have yet been held, there gathers every morning a large company for prayer and praise; and certainly as I entered the spacious room, thoroughly filled with earnest prayerful people, it was impossible not to think of the greatness of the work which had been effected in that town, exclaiming, "What hath God wrought!"

I must not increase the demand on your space by any detail of the several "cases" of conviction which I visited. Many of these are full of interest. I will, however, refer, and that but briefly, to one only. On Saturday I went with Mr. Eccles to see a young man who had been "stricken" at one of the services we held on the previous evening. He passed a night of severe spiritual agony; but when we saw him, he was full of joy, gratitude, and love. And yet that stalwart man, now standing up and pouring forth his gladness of heart, had said, but a short time before he went to that service, that "God could not put him down." Nor is that by any means a solitary case. Innumerable instances can be adduced in which, so far from any predisposition to obey, there has been a determined and avowed resolve to withstand the influence that had humbled others. One case was reported to me in which a man had said,

"Sixty Gods could not make him yield;" and one of the converts himself told me that, just before he was smitten, he had confidently declared that he should never "take it." "You will be the next," was the reply of the person to whom he spake; and so it proved. He is now one of the most earnest and successful of the men engaged in bringing sinners to the God and Saviour whom, only six weeks since, he so defied.

The future of Ireland is full of hope. What the permanent results of the present movement will be one dares not to predict. That there will be a measure of disappointment is highly probable; doubtless some who have been very near to the kingdom of God will be found not to have entered in; others who have been really converted to God may not answer to the sanguine expectations entertained; indeed, as two of the recent converts said to me, they will need great grace to keep them humble. It will be no occasion for surprise if, by the attention they now receive, some should be "lifted up above measure." Denominational rivalry will probably obtain; indeed, there are not wanting, even already, indications that large-hearted Christian zeal may yield to narrow sectarian eagerness. But even when all allowance is made for the evils which attend on imperfect human nature, there is enough to warrant the belief that great and lasting results will follow. Should this movement continue, and especially if it should spread, as there is reason to believe it will, to the South and West of Ireland, its influence on the Papacy will be incalculable. Already have Roman Catholics yielded to it, and then the priest and the crucifix have been abandoned for Christ and the cross. At Coleraine I met with two young men whose conversion was truly remarkable, and whose faith had been avowed the evening before by their baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. Great fear is shown by many Papists lest they should "take it;" some will not dare to approach the place of meeting. It is affirmed that charms and preventives are used to protect them from the dreaded influence; and certainly in many cases their conduct distinctly shows that they are convinced that there is a power at work which threatens to weaken, if it do not destroy, the Papal system.

Personal observation renders my own conviction deep and strong, that evangelical effort in behalf of Ireland ought to be vastly increased, and would be abundantly repaid. Oh, that we could throw in reinforcements somewhat adequate to the demands!

May the churches of Britain hear the call, and meet the demands of the Irish people, "assuredly gathering that the Lord hath called them for to preach the gospel unto them!"

I am, dear Sirs, yours faithfully,
C. J. MIDDLEDITCH.

September 5th, 1859.

We have several other articles which give the fullest confirmation of the above, one in particular, from Mr. Grant, Editor of the *London Morning Advertiser*, also the result of a personal visit to Ireland. He closes his long article with the following.

"It may startle those who are only imperfectly acquainted with the details of this marvellous movement, when it is stated that in Coleraine—and probably the same may be said of other places—there have been more cases of conversion during the last three months, than there had been for the previous fifty, perhaps, we should say, hundred years.

"But the question will, no doubt, be asked, How do the cases of conversion, as they are regarded, turn out? The question is a very natural one. It is, too, a very important question, and necessary to be answered before the true character of the revivals can be understood. It was among the first questions which the writer asked when he was in the locality inquiring personally into the nature and extent of the movement. Well, then, the friends of religion will be rejoiced to learn that, tested by their permanent fruits, these revivals are no less remarkable and gratifying. Out of the great number of conversions which have taken place in Coleraine and its neighbourhood, only three have turned out badly. And in these three instances the parties had belonged to that depraved class which in England are known by the name of 'unfortunate females.' Other three cases in the same category have turned out all that could be desired. The parties are thoroughly reformed, and the consistency of their conduct as Christians might well put to the blush many of those who have all their lives long been professors of the Christian faith.

"But in a purely secular paper it is im-

possible to go into this movement either at the length, or in the religious spirit which, in a more appropriate medium of publication, it would be a delight to do. We repeat, that it is our full conviction, that, taken altogether, the history of the Christian church contains no parallel to these revivals in the north of Ireland. And when we witness their blessed effects, morally and socially, as well as spiritually, we can well imagine what a happy world this would become—how it would, in at least a moral and social sense, be transformed into a perfect Paradise.—were the same principles universally adopted and embodied in practice, as have produced and are producing such a marvellous reformation in the north of Ireland."

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, SEPTEMBER 28.

We find in the *Provincial Wesleyan* of the 21st inst. a long editorial on the dangers of Popery, chiefly made up, however, of extracts from a late number of the *Methodist Magazine*. Its object appears to be to institute a contrast between Methodism and Romanism, and to show that the former is more especially adapted than any other form of Protestant Christianity to withstand the aggressions of superstition and error embodied in the doctrines and practices of the Romish Church. The general tenor of the Editor's remarks are sound and orthodox, although we considerably differ with him in the high estimate which he has formed of the character and mission of the Methodist System as opposed to Popery. We do not believe that any church or combination of churches, having in effect the character of secular corporations, whether Episcopal, Presbyterian or Methodist, can ever compete, to very great advantage, with a body from which they have all unquestionably derived the pattern of their own polity. We think independent churches of Christ, whose only exemplar is sought in the Divine word, are those alone which can successfully meet and subdue the errors and assumptions of the great Roman Apostasy. This organ of the Methodist body asserts that "Popery finds nothing like itself in Methodism wherewith to make a beginning; no point on which to rest a foot and go from less to more. But it does find there a method, an ingenuity, a knowledge of the human heart, a practical wisdom, and a perseverance, in no slight degree resembling its own, and applied to the maintenance and spread of the principles most antagonistic to its own. Against Popery nothing can be very successful, but that which at once adopts its wisdom and repudiates altogether its principles." We quite acquiesce in the assertion that Popery finds in Methodism "an ingenuity, a knowledge of the human heart, a practical wisdom, and a perseverance, in no slight degree resembling its own," but we by no means think these the safest or best weapons for "the maintenance and spread of principles most antagonistic to its own." We feel satisfied that no system so strongly characterized by the principles of human policy, as we think some parts of Methodism are, can maintain a conflict which requires spiritual weapons, and those only, with which to war successfully with any antagonist however subtle. We say this with the kindest feelings towards our brethren of the Methodist Communion, which undoubtedly contains many of the excellent of the earth, but we do not think that they, any more than other bodies of professed Christians, have arrived at so great an amount of perfection as the tenor of the article referred to would seem to imply. We also think that they and many other sections of the Christian Church have too much in common with Rome to enable them to enter the lists with her with any prospects of entire success.

The *Presbyterian Witness* takes exception to a remark we made last week expressing "our antipathy to Popery," and appears displeased because we pronounced it "from first to last,—from infant sprinkling to extreme unction,—unscriptural, unchristian, and worldly." The Editor of that journal appears very tender on that subject, and remarks:—

"It is characteristic of the *Messenger* to attempt to throw ridicule on an ordinance which five-sixths of the most intelligent and pious Christians in the world firmly believe to be appointed by God. Nothing but gross ignorance and bitter bigotry could enable the *Messenger* to write in this style. Infant 'sprinkling' never was practised in the Papal Church! Yet the *Messenger* frequently asserts to the contrary."

Our neighbour doubtless includes Roman Catholics in his five-sixths of the most intelligent and pious Christians in the world. This may be an important consideration with him, but it is not with us. If "five-sixths" believed any other Roman Catholic dogma it

would matter but little to us or to any one who feels that his present and future happiness depends on his believing the gospel, and obeying its precepts as taught in the Divine Word.

We shall not retaliate on our contemporary for applying to us the very choice terms and charitable expressions, "gross ignorance and bitter bigotry." His opinion, in that respect, will not seriously trouble any body—learned or unlearned. It would have been better if he had made a little more enquiry before indulging in such a sweeping assertion as that "Infant Sprinkling never was practised in the Papal Church!"

The history of baptism does not appear to have occupied much of his attention, or he would not have exposed himself to such castigation as we might administer. We forbear, however, hoping he may yet discover for himself his error with regard to "sprinkling." Were his daring assertions true, it would spoil the claim to antiquity often urged by him and his friends for that mode of administering the ordinance. If what he says were indeed a fact, it would undermine all the churches which have come out from Rome.

The creeping in of one error with regard to the object of the rite, and making out of it baptismal regeneration, made way for another error with regard to the subjects to whom it should be administered, and introduced infants to membership in the church. This made it necessary for some change in the mode of administration, and resulted in sprinkling being substituted for immersion.

Leaving the statements of the fathers which, by Pede-baptists, have been supposed to refer to some other mode of baptism than immersion, we find in the 8th century that the question was put by the French clergy to Pope Stephen II., "If in certain cases pouring or sprinkling might not be considered as valid baptism?" Having a political end in view, he gave them such an answer as they desired, that "If such a baptism were performed in such a case of necessity, in the name of the Holy Trinity, it should be held valid."—*Robinson's History*, p. 429.

550 years after this, in the year 1311, the Council of Ravenna (the Papal Church) declared "dipping or sprinkling indifferent," (of equal value). *Basnagii Mon. Praef.*, c. v., sec. 4.

In the Church of England baptismal service no mention is made of anything but "dipping" or, "in case the child is weak, it shall suffice to pour water upon it," but we all know that the pouring is done from the tips of the clergyman's fingers. So in the *Papal Church* it is professedly pouring, but in reality only sprinkling.

Moreover, we have the express declaration of the Roman Ritual that "it recognizes aspersion as one of the modes of baptism."

Our contemporary may have had more to do with Roman Catholic infant baptisms than ourselves for aught we know, and is therefore satisfied with such small carpings upon a word, the difference being simply whether the drops fall from the palm of the hand or from the ends of the fingers.

We are quite aware that England and Scotland had the honor of receiving the practice of sprinkling from Geneva, after the Reformation,—before which it was not known there.

We have devoted more space to this matter than we intended, but our friends must not suppose that it can be disposed of by a paragraph. We have given as brief a notice as possible. Much more might be said upon it. We, however, prefer devoting our space to such subjects as occupy a large portion of our present number on the first and second pages.

The R. M. Steamer *Arabia* arrived with the first September mails on Tuesday last.

We do not gather much of importance from our English papers more than was contained in the brief notice we gave in our last. Unremitting activity is going on in England to construct defences on every part of the coast were they may possibly be needed. Louis Napoleon still talks largely of his pacific disposition and especially in reference to England. He is no doubt considerably reducing his land forces, but continues to increase and strengthen his naval resources. Unfortunately England cannot forget the difference between his professions and his practice in the means he took to achieve his present position, and are compelled to act accordingly.

The Queen is at Balmoral, her Highland residence, where she will remain for some weeks.

The sailing of the *Great Eastern* had been postponed until the 29th inst. As she had first to make a short trial trip, it is not probable she will leave England before the beginning of October. She had dropped down the Thames, and has all the appearance of fully meeting the expectations of her proprietors and the public.