

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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WHOLE SERIES.
VOL. XXIV.....No. 10.

Poetry.

Speak no ill.

Nay, speak no ill,—a kindly word
Can never leave a sting behind,
And oh! to breathe each tale we've heard,
Is far beneath a noble mind.
Full of a better seed is sown
By choosing thus a kinder plan,
For if but little good be known,
Still let us speak the good we can.

Give us the heart that fain would hide,
Would fain another's faults efface;
How can it please e'en human pride,
To prove humanity but base.
No! let us reach a higher mood,
A nobler sentiment of man,
Be earnest in the search of good,
And speak, of all, the best we can.

Then speak no ill; but lenient be
To others' failings as your own;
If you're the first a fault to see,
Be not the first to make it known.
For life is but a passing day;
No lip shall tell how brief its space;
Then oh! the little time we stay,
Let's speak, of all, the best we can.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

Christianity and Popery.

LETTER IV.

DEAR SIR,

Before I proceed any further with the argument it appears desirable to place some facts before your readers. This may be partly done in the form of a chronological table.

A. D.

- 31 Day of Pentecost, Christian church constituted.
- 34 Martyrdom of Stephen.
- 36 Conversion of Paul.
- 38 Paul's first visit to Jerusalem, after his conversion.
- 41 Conversion of Cornelius.
- 42 Church at Antioch formed.
- 43 Gospel of Matthew published.
- 45 Paul's visit to Jerusalem, with Barnabas.
- Peter's imprisonment.
- Epistle of James.
- 48 Paul's first missionary journey.
- 50 The (so-called) council at Jerusalem.
- 51 Paul's second missionary journey.
- 52 First Epistle to the Thessalonians.
- 53 Second Epistle to the Thessalonians.
- 54 Paul's third missionary journey.
- 57 The Epistles to the Corinthians, and the Galatians.
- 58 Epistle to the Romans.
- Paul imprisoned at Jerusalem.
- 60 Paul's voyage to Rome.
- 61 His arrival at Rome.
- Gospel of Luke.
- 62 Epistles to Colossians, Ephesians, Philipians, and Philemon.
- 63 Acts of the Apostles: Epistles of Peter and Jude.
- Paul released from imprisonment.
- 64 Gospel of Mark.
- Persecution of christians at Rome.
- 67 First Epistle to Timothy, and Epistle to Titus.
- Martyrdom of Peter.
- 68 Paul's second imprisonment.
- Second Epistle to Timothy, and Epistle to the Hebrews.
- Martyrdom of Paul.
- 70 Destruction of Jerusalem.
- 96 The Revelation.
- 97 Gospel of John.
- 98 First Epistle of John.
- 99 Second and Third Epistles of John.
- 100 Death of the Apostle John.

As Christianity spread, believers would be naturally anxious to obtain authentic accounts of the Saviour's history. The insecurity of oral tradition was soon felt. Many tales were abroad, some of which were indeed reduced to writing and published, but others floated along, gathering fresh matter as they proceeded. They were all replete with absurdities and follies, and their tendencies were decidedly injurious. It was not long before a remedy was found. The Holy Spirit directed certain men to compile memoirs of their Lord's life, each from his own stand-point. The divine work was quickly recognized, for the style and manner of inspired writings differ from all others. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John superseded all merely

human productions of the same kind. And it is important to observe that these Gospels (John's excepted) were in the possession of the churches before the deaths of Peter and Paul, and were probably authenticated by them as genuine and divinely-originated histories.

As the Apostle Paul visited Jerusalem in the year 45 (see Acts xi. 27-30) he had the opportunity of obtaining a copy of Matthew's Gospel. It was no doubt of essential service to him in his missionary journeys.

His views of the design and import of the facts of the gospel history, and of the purposes of God, generally, in regard to the salvation, were acquired "by revelation of Jesus Christ," Gal. i. 11, 12. They came down from heaven to him; in what manner, we know not and it is useless to inquire. May we not suppose that the members of the Churches which he founded were desirous of possessing the substance of his teachings in a written form? Their wishes were gratified. His Epistles contain a comprehensive summary of christian doctrine, and a complete system of christian ethics.

The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude, with the Gospel and Epistles of John, furnish important additions, while they confirm all that the three other Evangelists narrated and Paul taught. The prophecies of the Book of Revelation enable us to look through the long vista of future ages, and to see at its termination the glimpses of triumph and glory.

The historical tract entitled "the Acts of the Apostles" is an invaluable fragment. We should have been pleased and grateful if it had been the will of God to preserve records of the labours of the other Apostles, as well as Paul, by the hand of some inspired penman. The brief notices of Peter and John contained in the "Acts" leave much to be desired; and the blanks are very imperfectly and unsatisfactorily filled up by the ecclesiastical historians. We must be content to remain in ignorance till we see the Apostles themselves, and hear each relate his own history. May we not indulge that expectation? Is it unreasonable or unscriptural? Dr. Watts says—

"There, on a green and flow'ry mount,
Our weary souls shall sit,
And with transporting joys recount
The labours of our feet."

Is that nothing but poetry?

Christian writers were not numerous in the first ages. The few treatises which were composed, however valued, were held in only secondary esteem. Those which now form the New Testament, and none but they, were acknowledged as divine. The churches saw in them the "signs of an Apostle," and thankfully confessed that they were all written by men who were "moved by the Holy Ghost."

Thus the Gospel, like the Law, was "written in a book." The work was gradually executed. The writers differed in talents and qualifications. A systematic arrangement was not adopted. Many facts were not narrated at all; see John xx. 30, 31; xxi 25. Some truths were only hinted at—not fully discussed. Christian duty, in not a few cases, is to be inferred from facts and principles. There is no minute detail. Many questions both as to doctrine and duty, cannot now be answered; we are bound to believe that the information which the answers would have contained is not essential to our religious life. Once more—there is not the slightest vestige of a ritual. The method and order of christian worship are almost wholly free. With the exception of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, the mode of observing which is pretty clearly laid down, there is no explicit direction for carrying on divine service. So that we have the essence, the outward form and the sequence of exercises are of small account. What matters it whether we begin with singing, reading, or prayer—or how often each shall be attended to?

Such is the New Testament. Man would not have written it in that way. He would have built up the system according to his own ideas of plan and order. The want of that plan and order is, under the circumstances, a striking indication of the divinity of the work.

The primitive christians saw it. They said, "It is the book of God." And they jealously guarded its honours

These are very noticeable facts. Their bearing on the argument will be seen hereafter.

Yours,
Feb. 27th 1860. TYNDALE.

Woman in Burmah.

The following extract of a letter from Mrs. Mason, in the February number of the Baptist Missionary Magazine, will shew the importance of efforts for elevating the character of Burmese women.

"In this country, where there is no gallantry or respect for woman, it is in vain to think of educating the two sexes together. I know by experience that the young men are sure to get the lion's share of attention, and the poor girls—the great mass of them—can simply read and write, and that indifferently. Reports show that while the boys are blessed with the instruction of the missionary by fifties, girls receive it only by fives and tens. Now, I rejoice to see there is a little movement in behalf of girls at one or two of the stations: for if the women of a country are to be left in ignorance, then the young men may as well be left so too; for it would be all the same a hundred years hence.

It is the women who fill their children's heads with witches, ghosts, and all manner of superstitions. It is the women who won't believe they are rolling in the air, or holding on to a ball. It is the women who are pitiless and will not raise a hand to save the motherless babe from death. It is the women who crave change and finery, make the preachers restless, and the people discouraged. Yet there is probably no land east of the Levant, which offers so great encouragement to efforts in behalf of female culture as this free land of Burmah. But alas, freedom without heart training! Instead of that grateful reverence which woman owes to man for lifting from her the crushing burden of seclusion,—and which the truly refined delight to give,—Burmese women are haughty, insolent and supremely selfish.

You know women in Burmah—her unbounded influence, yet deplorable degradation; her strength of character, yet almost utter ignorance of letters; her persuasive grace and courtesy, yet most corrupting morals, most ungoverned passions. No goddess of mercy to kiss away the tear from the eye of the unfortunate, is the woman in Burmah; but the chief supporter of all revellings, the chief wrangler in all gambings.

It is true, Karen women are not usually bold, proud and stubborn like the Burmese; still, within the jungle *chevaux de frize*, or in metropolitan halls, it is the same,—woman is the teacher of Burmah. She has but to say, "Go, bring us slaves, or eat not," and the Pant Bghai Highlander rushes to the work of destruction, to kidnap, plunder and kill. So at the Ava capital, when a single woman had only to say, "Give me gold, jewels or costly attire," and her agents brought a war between England and Burmah.

Woman is not here the languishing, facile, unknowing thing of the Zenana, but the physical woman fully developed, strong to will and to do. There is, therefore, hope in laboring for her future improvement and usefulness; for she can, and must rise. And from being the votary of self, the fosterer of crime, she may, by timely instruction, become the renovator of Burmah,—arching every threshold with the roses of virtue, peace and love, and inspiring her sons with the holiest purposes.

May I not then work on for these poor women of Burmah; and will not the Board give at least a small portion of sympathy to this work? And, if their means will allow, will they not help me to establish one or two, at least, of these Female Training-schools for the Union?

I know I need not have written all this; for you do not forget that it is the young women of a country who are to train up its farmers, its soldiers, its statesmen and its missionaries."

An extract from the journal of Mr. Douglas gives a vivid illustration of the truth of the above statements:

"After prayer with the company, we repaired to the centre of the village. Here we

witnessed a sight we shall never forget. A poor woman's son had been taken ill. The idol must be worshipped. The priest of the village, followed by a large company, with music, passed up the street on which the sick boy's house was, went into the yard in front of the house, a man bearing on his shoulder a basket of fruits, vegetables and flowers, walking under a sheet held over his head by four persons. From the house they came to the stone god, a foot and a half in height, where we were standing. The priest bows before the idol; after which he rubs it over with saffron, and spots it with other red powders. The basket, the offering, is placed before the idol; the flowers are wreathed about the stone after various other manoeuvrings, the priest calls out, "Who will bow down?" The mother of the sick boy calls out to another son to fall down and worship. Going in front of the idol, he prostrated himself at full length, his face to the ground and his hands stretched toward Mahtutehmiah, (the name of the goddess, "our sight,") and the ceremony closed. The mother stood near me, and, as the boy prostrated himself, an expression of horror escaped my lips. She observed it and said, "You don't believe in this." I then tried to warn them to flee idolatry and to embrace Jesus. One woman, after hearing some time, said to me, "This is the religion of our fathers; for many, very many generations we have done so; you do otherwise. But you are great people; we poor Pariahs." We went away, feeling more than ever that heathenism is a most cruel and heartless affair, and praying for the enthronement of Christ in the hearts of this degraded people."

The seen and the unseen.

Consider how, with all their glare and show, things seen are paltry, passing, the least of things; and that grandeur and endurance belong to the unseen. The soul is unseen; precious jewel of immortality, it lies concealed within its fragile fleshy casket. Hell and heaven are unseen; the first sinks beneath our sight; the second rises high above it. The eternal world is unseen; a veil impenetrable hangs before its mysteries, hiding them from the keenest eye. Death is unseen; he strikes his blow in the dark. The devil is unseen—stealing on us often unsuspected, and always invisible. And as is our deadliest foe, so is our best and truest, our heavenly friend. Jesus is an invisible Saviour; Jehovah is an invisible God.

"No man hath seen God at any time;" yet why should that be turned into a temptation to sin? I think it should rather minister to constant watchfulness and holy care. How solemn the thought, that an invisible being is ever at our side watching us, recording with rapid pen each deed and word, every desire that rises, though it be burst like an air-bell, every thought that passes, though on an eagle's wings. We cannot shake off the presence of God; and when doors are shut, and curtains drawn, and all is still, and darkest night fills our chamber, as we are left alone to the companionship of our thoughts, it might keep them pure and holy to say, as if we saw two shining eyes looking on us out of the darkness, "Thou God, seest me." The world called him mad who imagined that he saw God's eye looking on him out of every star in the sky, and every flower of the earth, and every leaf of the forest, from the ground he trod upon, from the walls of his lonely chamber, and out of the gloomy depths of night. Mad! it was a blessed and holy fancy. May God help you to feel yourself at all times more in his presence than you are at any time in that of your fellow-men!

THE LOOKING-GLASS.—Clement, of Alexandria, thought that a Christian woman should not look into a mirror, "because by making an image of herself she violates the commandment, which prohibits the making of the likeness of anything in heaven above, or on earth beneath." You smile! but might you not well sigh over the probability that many Christian (?) women, in their eagerness for "outward adorning," look oftener and longer into the mirror than into the Bible?

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