

For the Christian Messenger.

Review of Rev. W. Somerville's Remarks on "Impudence."

MR. EDITOR,—

My chief aim in commenting upon Mr. Somerville's "Remarks," is to point out their agreement in sentiment with "Baptist views." His first letter is principally taken up, like my own, with "introductory remarks," and calls for no particular comment. I had stated that if I rightly apprehended the matter, the Presbyterians claim that their church is the only authorised expositor of the Scriptures. Mr. S. takes exception to this, and wonders how it "could have entered my head." I reply that I did not intend to attribute the declaration of this sentiment to him, nor, in so many words, to any one else. But I considered it a fair deduction from what I have heard them avow. I am still compelled to say that I am not yet convinced that my deduction is unfair. But that it is a deduction that Mr. Somerville himself neither admits nor sees, I am convinced, and am most happy to record this conviction. In his second letter he meets this charge, and his remarks are, for the most part, so lucid and so thoroughly Baptist, that I shall request you to give the whole letter to your readers. I enclose it for that purpose. Were I to conceal one or two expressions which indicate the denomination to which the writer belongs, and also to omit the closing sentence, few of our Baptist friends would, I am persuaded, see anything in it to which they would object. I am not sure that I understand that closing sentence. It does not seem to come up to the writer's usual clear and lucid style. As a Baptist, and as an individual, I deny the right of any man or any body of men to propagate any extravagance, "against which the Divine Word utters its protest." But then we must, in my apprehension, carefully distinguish between "our rights" as subjects of the perfect law of God, and as amenable to His tribunal, and "our rights" as citizens, and as amenable to human laws. And we must still farther distinguish between "The Divine Word uttering its protest," and the declaration of a man, or a mass of men, civil or ecclesiastic, that such an utterance is made, by the Divine Word. Take an illustration. I believe, and "propagate" the sentiment that it is unscriptural and wrong to administer Baptism to unconscious infants. I claim the right to do so. I believe the Word of God amply sustains me. I cannot see how any man, examining the Bible in the manner so ably pointed out in the ensuing letter of Mr. Somerville's can come to any other conclusion. His views on this subject, however conscientious he made them, I consider an "extravagance," against which the "Word of God utters its protest." He takes the same view of my sentiments. He has no doubts, I presume, that the Scriptures teach Infant Baptism. Now, query, which of us would have the right, supposing we had the power, to prevent the other from propagating his "extravagance." I claim that neither would have the right; that that is a matter between each man's conscience, and his God. At His tribunal and not man's, we must answer for these opinions. I know of no Baptists who imagine that "conscience is above the written Word." Others may indeed hold to such a monstrous extravagance; but we never. But the claims of conscience and of the Word, are paramount to all human law. We ask no human authority or government to grant us the right to propagate error. But when the question is one lying out of their sphere, we do ask them,—just to mind their own business.

Yours truly, S. T. RAND.

The following is the letter referred to by Mr. Rand:—

"So far from Presbyterians claiming for themselves to be the "only authorized expositors" of the Bible, they allow "Tom Dick, and Harry," to be as well entitled to occupy the place as themselves. The place according to them, belongs to no man or association of men. The Bible does not need an authorized expositor, for the following reasons:

1. The Scriptures are a revelation from God of His will. It is full of mysteries from which the veil has been withdrawn, and is just as intelligent as any other communications made to man. We are happy to believe that the Spirit of God is just as competent to make himself understood as man is; and his infinite integrity is the pledge that nothing shall be wanting to meet the requirements of a revelation intended to make men wise. 2. The Scriptures were addressed to the masses, equally under the former and the present dispensation. Prophets and apostles spake to the multitudes, as did our Lord in the days of his humiliation. The words addressed to them are written for our learning, upon whom the seeds of the world are sown. If the common people have not the means of correct knowledge of the mind of the Spirit, the words of inspiration

must have been equally obscure to those to whom they are first addressed.

3. The people are constituted, with the word of God in their hands, the judges of the character and message of those who came to them in the name of the Lord. They are commanded to try the Spirits, to prove all things, and are commended for searching the Scriptures for that purpose. An inspired Apostle can say, "I speak as unto wise men, judge ye, what I say." Lofty as is the position, occupied by men, sustained by miracles, tongues, and signs, they allow that their teachings, or in other words the New Testament, must be attested by the Old, or its inspiration cannot be recognized. Let the people know and exercise their rights, and the Toms, Dicks, and Harrys, who choose to set themselves up as demagogues will soon disappear. The triumphs of Presbyterians, in the days of Covenanting are not to be traced to their assumption of the place of "authorized expositor," but to the submitting of their claims to the word of God in the hands of their hearers.

4. The only cause of misunderstanding and perversion is resolvable into man's natural aversion to the doctrine of God's word. Men are given up to a reprobate mind, because they do not like to retain God in their knowledge. Those who did not understand our Lord's speech, are those who could not hear his words. The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, not because they are not clearly enunciated, but because they are foolishness in his estimation.

In men's professions of a readiness to admit evidence of Divine truth when furnished, there is a good deal of disgusting hypocrisy. They will lie, cheat, swear (about which there is no room for doubt) and gravely assure you that all they want is sufficient evidence of some scriptural truth or duty, to recognize it with all promptitude and heartiness. The Jews make a solemn appeal to Jehovah, that they will do according to all things for which the Lord would send Jeremiah to them: "Whether it be good or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we send thee." But when he delivered the Lord's message, because they did not like it, they told him that he lied, and that Baruch had set him against them. (Jeremiah chaps. 42, 43.) Nothing would seem more liberal and candid than the address of their children to our Lord. Just let them have an unequivocal statement. They want no more. "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." He told them.—They take up stones to stone him. The real obstruction to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God is the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in weight to deceive. Every error proceeds from the Father of lies, by whatever means he operates on men's minds.

"Impudence" says—"I gather from all this that while they (Presbyterians) disavow the right to enforce" (by physical appliances, I understand) "on the consciences of others what is not taught in the Scriptures, they do claim that the Scriptures are binding, and that no man has a right to disbelieve or disobey God! and both the Church and the State are bound to see that God is obeyed." After making the statement he almost expresses his acquiescence in it. The whole subject seems somehow new to him, and his frankness inspires me with hopes that a closer application of his mind to it will lead to views at once clearer and correct. To the first part of the sentence I have no objection but to the insinuation, perhaps unintended, that we claim a right to enforce what is taught in the Scriptures, I think I can speak for every Presbyterian that they never claimed any such right. They know that it would be as absurd to propose to convince or convert a man by force, as to take his life by a syllogism. No law in its most rigorous application, can make a man honest. The province of force is to restrain by a Divine, as by a human constitution.

But what does "Impudence" mean by italicizing do and putting a note of exclamation after the second member of the sentence? Is it an extraordinary and intolerable claim "that the Scriptures are binding, and that no man has a right to disbelieve and disobey God?" Most fully do I recognize the sentiment that the Scriptures are binding, universally and absolutely binding, binding upon me in the darkness of the night, in the family, in the pulpit. I claim, with respect to myself and others, for Christ speaking in his words, uncompromising obedience. To me the pulpit is a place of awful responsibility where men propose and declare the mind of Christ: and the longer I occupy it, I arise to speak with greater fear and trembling. Christ himself is by to see, to hear, and to utter the still small voice to the heart, "Proach the word." If we would learn the inflexible character of God, and the absolute character of his word, let us follow Jesus from the manger to the sepulchre and ask whether he must be obedient unto death that the Scriptures be fulfilled to secure liberty for us to treat them as a thing that can be accommodated to what we think they ought to teach. "We are as rigid as Roman Catholics" though not in connection with what immediately precedes; and in what? In claiming for the word of Christ that it is a perfect and therefore an unchanging rule. What God has uttered, none but God can repeal or modify. If, then, that the Scriptures are the word of God, and an infallible rule, will be generally received as a doctrine, with me it is an ever present fact.

Man possesses no authority in opposition to that word. We must obey God rather than man. If man claims what belongs to God, commands what God forbids, forbids what God commands, we must refuse to conform, and—take the consequences, poverty, reproach, imprisonment or—death.

Conscience is entitled to prefer no claim, has no right, in opposition to the word of God. Its claims, in opposition to that word, are not to be

recognized. "God is the Lord of Conscience." The compilers of the Confession had too much good sense to say that "God is Lord of Conscience," and grant to any man or body of men the right to believe and propagate error, however conscientious they might be about it.—Would any sane man say that Conscience has a right to disregard its Lord? It so, then let us have it clearly and unmistakably enunciated, that Conscience is above all law, human or divine, that its claims may be urged in bar of judgment, before a human tribunal and before the judgment seat of Christ; and that Claverhouse was only half instructed in his Christian liberty when proposing to take God into his own hands, he acknowledged that to man—he was responsible. The celebrated "Oxford Essays," in which conscience is represented as holding a place superior to the written word, have stirred the depths of British hearts and called forth numerous defences of the claims of an objective revelation. They are not, however, a root of bitterness springing up to trouble the Church. They are the ripe fruit, falling from the tree, growing in a rich soil. The root was springing long ago. The public mind had been so long accustomed to hear the right of private judgment, and "Liberty of Conscience" eulogized, without a solitary reference to the Lordship of Christ over the understanding and the heart, that we are not surprised to hear of the rapid sale of the "Essays" and their cordial reception. When I hear of one extravagance among ourselves, whose right to propagation, the Divine word uttering its protest notwithstanding, is denied, I shall believe the upas has not been transplanted into our soil.

Excuse the length of this. I hope to trouble you only once more on this subject.

Yours, &c., WM. SOMMERVILLE.

W. Cornwallis.

Religious Intelligence.

From the Missionary Magazine, June.

Banner for the Karens.

The Missionary Intelligencer contains a letter from Sau Quala, the native preacher in Burmah, in which he represents the general desire of the Karens for a banner, representative of their Christian as well as national unity. The banner which may be borne for ages as the national emblem, has the device of a Bible and sword, with the motto—"The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." The Intelligencer says:—

The Karens have lately resolved to adopt a national banner, and they have appealed to the American Bible Society to furnish them with one. A writer in the New York World, of August 8th, describing the presentation of this banner in the Mariners' church, in Cherry Street to Mrs. Mason, for the Karen churches, remarks, speaking of the Karens,—

"This strange, wild people are being rapidly christianized, and they have sent to America for a national flag to commemorate their exodus out of heathenism!—the most curious and exhilarating request that we have ever heard of from a new nation."

The letter conveying their application was written by their chief native pastor, Sau Quala; it was printed in "The Star," a newspaper in the Karen language, published monthly; and we are assured that our readers will be interested in its perusal. We therefore give it, only slightly abridged:—

"To all the churches in Tavoy, Maulmain, Rangoon, Bassein, Henthada, Kyoukyee, Shwaygyee, Toungoo, Prome, Thayet, greeting!

"To the great teachers, small teachers, men and women, Tsetkays, Terays, Goungyouks, Tsayas, Poens yong women deacons, elders old and young, men and women, one and all, greeting!

"I, a son of Tavoy, teacher Quala, trust you all know and understand the Word of God, and can speak of the things pertaining to the truth and light which God has given us.

"In order that we may be able to conquer our enemies, and escape from every evil hand, God has given us a weapon. What is it? What kind of a weapon is it?

"It is best that we should now rise an ensign, something to let our children know, and the nations, down to the remotest generation, that hereafter they may speak of these things, and desire to follow us.

"Behold! the children of Judah, when they escaped out of the hands of the Egyptians, in order that their children might understand how they were delivered out of their hands, erected banners with emblems of the hawk, the lion, the bear and ox.

"Again, the English nation, when they escaped out of the hands of the idolatrous Romans, erected a standard of the cross as a national emblem; and when their king went to rescue Jerusalem from the Moslem invaders, took back Judah's lion, so that future generations might do the same.

"Again, the Americans, when they declared independence, erected a national emblem of the eagle, also some stars and stripes. This was to inform every nation that they would rise heavenward, triumph over every enemy.

"Therefore, my brethren young and old, mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, nieces and nephews, uncles and aunts, cousins and friends, children, and grandchildren, we the uncivilized, the children of the forest, barbarians, without books or understanding, without a king or a name in the earth, we, the nation in thick darkness, God has compassionated, and sent his own Son Jesus Christ to take us up out of our darkness and bondage. "We, in the year of the world five thousand

eight hundred and thirty two, received books from the hands of the teachers, the children of America. We received the Holy Bible, the word of God, and the ten commandments, which He gave to his people, the children of Israel, by the hand of Moses.

"This was a treasure more precious than all the books of the earth, the best of and above all books; the chief among books.

"My brethren, think; those who formerly had books, had also rulers of their own and a country of their own. They had preachers and schoolmasters, and could devise and execute, with knowledge and skill, both for the mind and for the body. They had wise men and rich men, very many. But we, the Karens, were like wild beasts of the mountains, like the wild speckled fowl of the jungles. We had no knowledge, no understanding, no power. But now we have received instruction indeed.

"Now to us, the Karens, God has given books and teachers, and now we too have schools and school-houses, all our own. Therefore it is well, if we rejoice with exceeding great joy; and now let us erect a national banner, as other book nations have done. Let us erect it over our school-houses, and let us choose for our emblem, not a lion or any beast, but the weapon which God has given us by which to subdue our enemies, even the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit."

"Now, teachers and teacheresses, friends, the children of God among the Karens everywhere, what think you? Will this be good, or will you differ from me? Instruct me, I pray you, if there is a better way.

"Dear friends, let us think of what our mothers taught us, 'Dogs go in troops; they catch the deer.' Villages united conquer enemies."

"Dear friends, let us look at Luke xii. 14, 15. I saw a letter—Karen teachers asking support of the foreign teachers, and I was greatly ashamed.

"Brethren, teachers, churches, all, consider, I pray you. The white foreign teachers are our father and mother; but first they had to be instructors for their curry and rice. They did not ask their teachers to feed them.

"Let us follow the white teachers, and learn of them till we can make clocks, and glass, and swords, and cannon, and telescopes, and fire-carriages, till we know the earth's boundaries, and all nations and medicines; but let us support our own schoolmasters and preachers.

"Do we not know? Do we not understand? Birds build nests; the young ones learn. Fathers die; sons take their seats."

"Mothers die; daughters take the mothers' places; and think, I pray you, of king Solomon's words: 'A wise son is the joy of his father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother.'"

"Friends, let us think of our old sayings what the elders taught their children:

"Try, try, and you will do; Do, do, and silver will flow; Can't do—never grow."

"And let us not seek for ourselves alone, but seek, plan, and devise for our posterity, down to the remotest generation. Therefore let us erect a banner for our whole nation, and glory God that the surrounding nations may know that we have come out from heathenism, and are determined to be a Christian people. QUALA."

American and Foreign News.

Latest from the States!

The reiteration of such telegrams from Boston as "Nothing of importance from 'the seat of war,'" "Washington safe," &c. &c. are now become of such common occurrence that we cease to expect any thing further. After the meeting of Congress, to-morrow, we shall look for something more positive, so as to indicate more definitely the course intended to be pursued by the Government.

Table with 3 columns: Year, \$1,888,452, \$1,238,600, \$215,330. Row 2: Since January First: \$50,412,513, \$47,591,293, \$29,586,736.

LATE FROM THE SOUTH.—The following is an extract of a letter published in the Boston Traveller. The information is obtained from a Northern gentleman who had been employed for the past five years on a Southern railroad:

"At Pensacola there were many planters occupying the position of common soldiers. The troops, both federal and rebel, are in a state of health.

There has been no sickness of consequence in the rebel camp. The soldiers have plenty of food, but the great trouble was in regard to uniforms, &c. He heard of no scarcity of ammunition at the South. They had now several powder mills in operation, and he knew of his own knowledge of five car-loads of powder carried to Pensacola. He also stated from the best authority that eighty thousand Enfield muskets from Havana were received at New Orleans, just before the Brooklyn reached the Gulf to commence the blockade.

In regard to the important matter of how large a number of Southern troops have been sent to Virginia, he says he has not the least doubt from what he has seen and heard that full eighty thousand men have been forwarded to that State by the South.

The next question was as to the efficiency of these men. They are all well equipped, but not