

1863.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Physical Education of our Students.

No. 3.

MR. EDITOR,—

Probably no class of persons feel the need of stimulants more than students.—but certainly none more than students of poor physical Education. There is always much of nervous exhaustion attendant upon protracted brain work, which calls for some immediate increase of vital energy and strength of action, transient and abnormal though this increase be. Severe thought, absorbing passion, concentrated attention, all feed not only on the mind, but on the powers of the body. Especially is the drain upon the forces of the Student's physical organization most fearful when study is protracted or intense. Hence his lassitude, and weariness of body, after his day of honest mental toil is over. Hence, also, the morbid craving within, for something stimulating. Such stimulants, the History of our public schools tells us, are too often found in the use of tobacco, opium or some equivalent, and in the practice of vices fraught with still greater nervous exhaustion. Vigorous, manly exercise is the best—is the only sure restorative for the flagging energies of body and mind. It not only allays the sickly demands of wasted powers, but such acts as a tonic to the whole system, thereby banishing all debility as well as its accompanying morbid cravings. Dequincy says that Wordsworth made pedestrianism a substitute for wine and spirits, and Holmes thinks, that physical exercises give to energy and daring a legitimate channel; supply the place of gambling, licentiousness, highway robbery and office-seeking. Surely the mother who trusts her child away from her own vigilant eye, among the evils that sometimes peril the soul of the thoughtless boy in public schools, may wish for few better guarantees for his morals and health, than the existence there, of a strict physical training.

In developing every muscle of the body, the student, as well as every other person, approximates nearer the normal stature of man,—gets himself more into harmony with the universe; for even among all the *lusus nature* nothing seems more uncouth, than an ill-formed and undeveloped man. With no unbecoming vanity, should it be our aim to beautify and mould to symmetry these bodies of ours, till in strength they rival that of the wild man of the forest, and in grace the models of ancient sculpture. The statuary of Greece is a lasting memorial of a people's perfection in physical culture, for the artist chiseled from the living type. But the Greek carried into his athletic exercises, an enthusiasm wholly unknown to us. In the gymnasium, or down on the plains of Olympia, where the finest Athletes of Greece contested for the national garland, it was his ambition and his pride to be. Let no one, then, call the improvement of the human figure, a trivial consideration for the student.

But in following out these theories of muscular development, I would take heed to my steps, lest I fall into a pit, dug by ultra-minded men, and into which some have fallen. Not a few accomplished gymnasts—professing to have found in their darling exercises a panacea, have largely built thereon their ethics and religion.—They say, the best developed man is the healthiest, happiest, most moral and most fitted to worship his Maker. "Health finds joy in mere existence. Daily breath and daily bread suffice." But the bilious and nervous man is seldom at ease with himself, or the world,—looks too sullenly at all things mundane, to feel much reverence for their Dispenser;—is the last man to whom you would trust your good name—and in whose ill health the lawyer feels quite as much interest as the doctor. This is an old idea—one exploded too often to require a word in its censure. Neither let us the less value a Science, because some of its propagators have pushed its principles beyond their due degree of application.

March, 1862.

ALUNUS.

For the Christian Messenger.

Canada Correspondence.

DEAR BROTHER,

You recently published a communication relative to the First Baptist Church in this city. It might be interesting to your readers to know of the very cheering and hopeful auspices with

which the Baptist brethren have started in their new Church. The meetings, held every night since the opening of the building, for divine worship, conducted by the Rev. J. D. Walden, have been attended with the most gratifying results. The audiences have been large and evidently deeply interested. There have been many enquirers, and some have made an open profession of their faith. Seventeen persons were baptized yesterday (Sunday) afternoon, by the pastor, and more are expected to join shortly.—As you are probably aware, Dr. Goadby has recently lost his wife after a lingering illness, but in the midst of his domestic affliction, it must be a great source of comfort and rejoicing to see the Church under his care receiving so much increase to its strength and spirituality.

It has been my privilege, when in the States, to attend many Prayer and Conference meetings, and when they have been conducted and carried on in a simple, earnest spirit, the evidence of their practical good has been too marked to admit of a doubt. As a means to bring about a change of heart, and arousing the worldly and unthinking, the simple relation of experience, the brief exhortation, and the fervent prayer will, I believe, be more effectual than the most eloquent sermon. And this, I affirm, on reflection and from personal observation and experience, without, be it understood, implying any disparagement of preaching. But for the people, the Social Prayer meeting, sanctified by the presence of the Holy Spirit, is the place where we may most confidently look for conviction and conversion.

And why I dwell on and urge this point,—the truth of which is recognised by the majority of christians,—is because there are many excellent persons, also true christians, who are inclined to speak slightly and disparagingly of Prayer meetings, or rather to undervalue and undervalue their instrumentality for lasting good: To my mind it inspires one with admiration of the beneficence of the Creator, of His Fatherly goodness and consideration for the weakest of his creatures, that the poorest and the humblest can contribute something to another's well-being, it may be to another's regeneration and ultimate salvation, that each one, as he learns the simple lessons that Christ teaches, may, however ignorant and uneducated, be able to instruct an erring brother, and point the road to happiness and life eternal. No where is this, I think, so well and fully exemplified as at the Prayer meeting, no matter where it is held, whether in a Church, or in a barn, or in an upper chamber—wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there may the feeblest tribute of praise and thankfulness to Him who has redeemed us, be the means, by God's grace, of reaching the heart of some despairing sinner, and saving from destruction some one of God's erring children.

As an invaluable aid to all classes of men, from the highest to the lowest, as a help and support in every day life, many evidences and testimonies could be adduced, of the beneficial effect of Prayer meetings.

I remain,

Yours truly,

J. F. NASH.

Montreal, C. E., March 10th, 1862.

For the Christian Messenger.

A Letter of Sundries about the American Civil War.

I intend this to be my last communication to the Messenger (at least for some time to come) on this subject, and shall, therefore, while endeavoring to be brief, otherwise allow my pen considerable license.

First, in regard to the propriety, which some of the readers of the Messenger may have questioned, of treating the present subject so largely in its columns, I beg leave to extract from a religious periodical the following: "We have uniformly withheld the pages of the Christian Review from political discussions. * * * Nor do we at all depart from our rule in devoting a portion of our space to the great issues which are now before the country. These questions have assumed an extent and vastness of proportion which raise them entirely above the sphere of party politics. Involving, as they do, the very elements of our national life, they are of a weight and magnitude which claim for them the most anxious attention of every Christian patriot, and cannot properly be passed over by a journal which claims to keep in any sort of relation to the great moral movements of the age. * * * We await the turning of the leaf of our nation's destiny with trembling anxiety, and while as yet the Muse of History delays to transcribe its contents into her own record, we turn our gaze to the conjunctions in the political heaven, where the blood-red planet now rules the ascendant, and not with the gibberish of heathen Astrology, but with humble christian divination, seek to cast the horoscope of our country's future." The sentiment embodied in

this quotation must, I think, commend itself to both religious journal-ists and journal-readers.

The closing sentence suggests an inquiry put to me the other day: Suppose the North succeeds in crushing this Rebellion, what will be gained? This question, in general terms, is forcibly answered in the following remarks:—"We solemnly believe that this unhappy conflict comes to us as a minister of mercy, as a source of political regeneration; that this is one of the moral tornadoes which clear the political heavens, and leave behind a greener earth and a brighter sky. The South will come forth from it, we believe, humbled yet exalted, with a deeper sense of the majesty of Law and the sacred nature of political obligation; the North with a purer patriotism and a clearer vision of its duties to the Republic; and that the country, enjoying a peace which has not been purchased by false concessions and unworthy compromises, and drawn into a closer and truer union, will rise to a higher flame of national virtue, and be better prepared to work out the glorious destinies which God may yet have in store for it."

But it is still replied by some: "The South can never again be brought back to allegiance to the Federal Government." What, therefore will be gained, should success crown the present efforts of the North?" The inquiry might be answered by asking what would be the result of success to the Southern Rebellion. My pen refuses to attempt to draw that picture. But read the following reply from the pen of an intelligent, liberal-minded Northerner: "Earnest and determined as are the South, they will yet come, we believe, to a better mind. When fully satisfied where lies the strength, they will by and by come to see where also lies the right.—In the new movement which they have inaugurated, and in such times as ours, of even temporary success. Its ostensible ground is the protection and perpetuation of slavery. It proposes to redeem the institution from the stigma which the moral sense of the world has affixed to it, and legitimate it as a proper basis of a Republican commonwealth. The experiment will assuredly fail. It is too glaring and frightful an anachronism; it is in too palpable hostility to all the better principles and tendencies of the age. The good of slavery is but incidental and transient; its evils are radical and abiding, and any attempt to incorporate it as a congenial element into the highest forms of civilization, will meet with inevitable defeat. The stars in their courses will fight against such a movement. The moral sentiment of the civilized world will blast it.—There is no principle of the Divine government, and no law of national prosperity, which will not pronounce its condemnation. And when a Southern divine argues that slavery is the normal, freedom the exceptional, condition of the race; and the Vice-President of the new Confederacy tells us that this is the stone which the builders rejected, but which they have made the head-stone of the corner, they but shock the most solemn convictions of mankind. * * * We expect our brethren still to be our countrymen. We do not intend to let them go. We cannot thus sever the union of almost a hundred years. We must try to conquer them by deeds of valor and by deeds of mercy. If we disarm their hands by the might of our soldiery, we must disarm their hearts by the heroism of christian kindness. If our arms compel them to fear, deeds of holy beneficence, following in the fiery path of war, must compel them to love us. * * * Blessed be the Gospel, the herald of infinite mercy, which spans with a bow of heavenly promise the sullen and retreating clouds of war, and through their riven folds opens a realm of divine peace and the light of an everlasting day."

The following in reference to the future of the South also claims a careful reading. "The real purpose, underlying all their movements, and reaching back of all irritating antagonism, is to destroy the heritage of Freedom which our fathers left us, and erect, in its place, a Slave Despotism, the vilest and most abominable that ever cursed mankind. For this they have struck at the very pillars of social order, and plunged the nation into all the woes of intestine war. And shall such transcendent villainy succeed? Shall this 'throne of iniquity' be established? Will a righteous God permit it? Will He ally himself with a scheme so at war with human happiness, so abhorrent to his justice and benevolence? Will He suffer the blood-stained miscreants that now rule the South to cut short our national career? * * * No, no, we cannot believe it. Every attribute of God, every unfolding of His will in His Word and in His providence, assures us that He is on our side in this awful exigency, and will bring to our aid the succors of His omnipotence. The wheels of His chariot may tarry. He may try us by delay. He may humble us by temporary defeats and reverses, in order to deepen our feeling of dependence upon Him, and to render us more obedient to the leadings of His hand. But He will not forsake us. Our cause is His cause,—the cause of civilization, the cause of humanity, the cause of true Religion,—and must triumph. His arm is bared against the oppressors, and their doom is certain. He will make their own horrid sin, and the insane fury with which they cling to it, the means of their punishment. Into the pit which they have dug for the Union, the rebellion shall go down and slavery with it. On the gibbet which they have reared for Liberty, they themselves shall hang, and with them the broken fetters of the last bondman. Such is the awful retribution prepared for slavery and the slave-holder."

What will be gained, then, if the North arrest such base designs by subduing the South?—

Why African slavery will be early, perhaps speedily, eradicated out of the American Union; and African slavery done away, the South will come back to the Union,—redeemed from an enslavement more fearful than African bondage. What will be gained in the event of triumph to the North? The life of the American nation will be saved. Are not all, or any of these ends worth fighting for, worth the sacrifice of time, money, and human life? More than these results will follow victory to the Northern cause and arms. A grand impetus will thus be given to the cause of Freedom throughout the world, as truly as that Southern Rebellion, if successful, would deal a most inglorious blow to universal Liberty. But I see I must divide this letter into two parts, and reserve the dish of *Varieties* chiefly for the next part.

A. C.

For the Christian Messenger.

Horton Academy Exhibition.

MR. EDITOR,—

The Quarterly Examination of the classes, and the "exhibition" at our academical Institutions at Wolfville, took place this week. We attended the latter, and although it required some planning and some self-denial, owing to the recent snow storms, we succeeded, and were well repaid. Entering the tall house, and enquiring for our little girl, we learned that she was at the "Gymnasium." What she was doing there, we learned on arriving at the spot. She was helping to prepare for the exhibition. All appeared to be bustle and confusion. Queer looking things were being taken down and tumbled out, and benches and ectetras were being tumbled in, and we noticed many busy hands and smiling countenances, we did think that if they got the building prepared by seven,—it was now near four,—they would deserve some credit. We took the hint from our active friend the village druggist, and was on hand by 1/2 past six, so as to secure a seat,—our spiral column not being sufficiently strong to sustain our corporation in an erect position for three hours without muttering complaints. The building had been transformed as by the wand of a magician, into a splendid Lecture-room. We felt somewhat disconcerted at the smallness of the congregation. But on elevating our luminaries a few minutes after, we saw people crowding along and anxiously looking for a seat. The place was soon filled to overflowing. A large number could not find sitting accommodation, and things looked and sounded as though a still larger number had been debarred even of standing room.

Operations commenced by music, followed by an appropriate and brief prayer, quite in Father Harding style, from Dr. Cramp. I cannot begin to criticise the performances nor even to give a programme. We had a rich variety of talent both in matter and mode. We had original essays, read and delivered, by both boys and girls. We had dialogues by boys alone, and by boys and girls together. We had high things and low things, things solemn and grave, and things funny and ludicrous, as the taste or the fancy of the essayist seemed to have dictated. We had an essay on the "American war," another on "Graves," another headed "Out from thyself," if we remember correctly, another on "Writing for March," another on the "Gold diggers" and others whose titles we cannot remember, (we never could remember names well,) all showing research, originality, and talent.

With the exception of the Essay on the "War," we heard no sentiments advanced that could we not approve. Happening to be, we are happy to say, a stern Northerner in our sympathies we could not of course be expected to approve of what sounded to our prejudiced ears like an echo of the usual misrepresentation and abuse so fashionable in our provincial papers, religious and secular, at the present time. This disrelish of ours we are willing to admit, was not the young essayist's fault, as there was no law or precedent requiring him to consult our idiosyncrasies.

We must be permitted to say, we thought the girls beat the boys in the composition of their essays. But in the delivery, so far as the volume of sound was concerned, the latter bore off the palm. Had our seat not been very near the fair readers, we should not have been any wiser for their remarks. As it was we heard nearly all. They will acquire confidence by practice. We were forcibly reminded of our own first attempts at public speaking, and felt no disposition to blame our young friends for not being able to speak louder. We remembered to have once spent a week or more upon a short address on temperance, which was committed verbatim.—