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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

Old folks.

Ah, don't be sorrowful, darling,
And don't be sorrowful, pray;
Taking the year together, my dear,
There isn't more night than day.

'Tis rainy weather, my darling,
Time's waves, they heavily run,
But taking the year together, my dear,
There isn't more cloud than sun!

We are old folks now my darling,
Our heads are growing gray;
But taking the year all round, my dear,
You will always find the May!

We have had our May, my darling,
And our rose long ago,
And the time of the year is coming, my dear,
For the silent night and the snow!

And God is God, my darling,
Of night as well as of day;
We feel and know that we can go
Wherever He leads the way.

Ah, God of the night, my darling,
Of the night of death so grim;
The gate that leads out of life, good wife,
Is the gate that leads to Him.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

The Interval between the Old and New Testaments.

(Concluded.)

BY REV. JOHN MILLER.

But while the Jews met with kind treatment at the hands of Alexander, it was not so under all his successors. Under Antiochus Epiphanes, they endured the most cruel persecutions. He repeatedly slew many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and sold great numbers into captivity. He entered the Holy of holies in the temple, profaning it with his presence, and robbed the house of God of the most valuable parts of its furniture, which were composed of solid gold. In order to suppress the Jewish religion entirely, he issued a decree, that all his subjects should forsake their own gods, and adopt those of their king which were Grecian. This edict produced a degree of dissatisfaction and some opposition among his subjects generally. The heathen, however, found it comparatively easy to comply; with the Jews it was very different. The systems of idolatry, prevailing throughout the dominions of Antiochus, were of human origin, but the religion of the Jews was from God, the living God, the true God, the Creator of the ends of the earth; and the law, which regulated every act of their devotion, was stamped with his high authority. It was therefore no easy matter for the people of God to comply with this mandate. Ministers were sent into every part of his dominions to see that the new edict was carried into execution, one was sent into Judea. By many he was received with melancholy silence; and some were base enough to comply. He came to Modin, where Matathias, the descendant of Asmoneus, resided with his five sons. He assembled the people, and placed before them the edict of Antiochus. He addressed Matathias particularly on account of his age, respectability, and priestly office, setting before him a variety of inducements to comply. But he was no time-server—he was one who feared God, and was prepared to sacrifice property and life itself rather than become an idolater. One individual in the assembly stepped forward to shew his conformity to the new law. Matathias rushed on him, and slew him. His five valiant sons and many others of a similar spirit rallied around him, and from that moment formed a determined band of opposition to the law of the king. Antiochus, when he heard of this proceeding, was exceedingly provoked, raised large armies, and determined to extirpate the Jewish people, and plant others in their place. An army of 47000 was sent to Jerusalem to begin the work of extirpation. The king was so resolute in his purpose and sanguine in his ex-

pectations, that notice was circulated in the neighbouring countries, that a vast number of slaves would be sold at a very low rate. A thousand merchants came together from various places for the purpose of purchasing.

In this trying emergency, Judas, the Jewish general, had only 6000 men to oppose to the mighty host of the enemy. Notwithstanding, he proceeded according to the law; he announced to the army, that all, who had that year built a house, or married a wife, or planted a vine, or was afraid, was at liberty to retire. The announcement reduced the army of Judas from 6000 to 3000. Here we see the Jewish general had only 3000 to oppose a well-prepared, and well-supplied army of 47000. But the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. The two armies encamped against each other on the night previous to the intended engagement. Judas learned that in the course of the night, 6000 of the enemy had been detached from the main body in order to attack him in his camp. He resolved to take advantage of this movement of the enemy. He raised his camp, and moved towards the main body with all his baggage. He attacked them in their camp, slew a great number, and put the rest to flight. He then went in quest of the detachment, which had been despatched to attack him in his camp, and when he found them they were so dispirited by the fate of their companions, they threw down their arms and fled. The Jewish army pursued, and slew a great number. Judas, having slain many of his enemies, and scattered the rest, was at liberty to seize their camp with all its booty.

Who can fail to see in these events the hand of God? Who would have expected that 3000 would have put 47000 to flight? Here we are strongly reminded of the striking deliverances experienced by the people of God on a variety of occasions. Gideon was required to attack the host of the Midianites with only 300 men, and was victorious. It was the design of God to shew his people that their deliverance was from himself.

The Jews were attacked in a short time by another of the generals of Antiochus, at the head of a still larger army than the former, and were again successful in defeating and scattering them. Antiochus, who was then in Persia, hearing of the defeat of his armies in Judea; and that the Jews had cleansed their temple, and re-established the worship of the God of Israel, became dreadfully enraged, vowed to make Jerusalem the grave of all the Jewish people; and gave orders to convey him with all possible speed to Judea, that he might effect his wicked purpose. In the midst of his blasphemies and threatenings, the judgments of God overtook him—he was seized with violent disease, which terminated his existence. In this way God defeated all the purposes of the persecutor—struck him down in the midst of his career—and gave deliverance to his people, the objects of his special care.

The achievements of the Asmonean family are of the most striking character; and will compare advantageously with many of the events in the preceding part of the history of the people of God; and indicate in the clearest manner, that God was with his people, that he fought their battles, and gave them deliverance.

Another event, in the portion of time under consideration, which is prominent, and bears in an important manner on the cause of God is the extension of the Roman power. The beginning of the Romans, as represented in history, was small. They are set forth as little more than a banditti, under the leadership of Romulus and Remus. They were, however, the subject of prophecy, and in the Divine purpose, were destined to wield a greater power, and to embrace a more extensive territory, than any people who had preceded or would succeed them.

The ancient Romans contrast very strongly both mentally and physically with the modern Italians. The former appear to have possessed great vigour of body and mind; the latter have not distinguished themselves in either respect. But perhaps the contrast is to be accounted for entirely by the difference of circumstances. The ancient Romans were a free people, and for centuries, they were strangers to those luxuries which afterwards rendered them so like their posterity of the

present day. In their wars they evinced great energy of body and mind, and the most indomitable courage and perseverance.

The Roman power, although the most extensive which ever existed, has nothing miraculous in its increase; it was extended by ordinary means, adapted to the end. Like mankind universally, they quarrelled with their neighbours, and were generally successful in their wars. They first made encroachments on those in their immediate vicinity, and as their territory extended, they came into juxtaposition with other tribes originally more remote. With them they quarrelled, and succeeded in subduing them.

The first notable encounter of the Romans was with Pyrrhus, the King of Epirus in Greece. He was celebrated as a warrior; and was sent for by a colony of Greeks in the south of Italy, to aid them in their quarrel with the Romans. Pyrrhus brought troops with him, celebrated like himself for bravery. The Romans were defeated in the first battle; but they inflicted such a loss on Pyrrhus, that he declared another such victory would ruin him. He found after a short time, that he could not cope with the Romans, and quitted Italy. The Romans next extended their warlike operations into Sicily; and there they came into contact with the Carthaginians, a people, like themselves, aiming at universal dominion. History informs us of their different wars with the Carthaginians; each of which lasted a number of years; in all of them, the Romans were successful, and in the last, Carthage was razed to the ground. The Carthaginian wars were the greatest in which the Romans had yet been engaged; and their completely subduing that people, raised them in their estimation, and in the estimation of all the civilized world. Other nations began to regard them as superior to all others, and as invincible in war. The consequence was, their favour was courted; they were often employed as arbiters in the disputes of kings and states; kings in their minority were placed under their guardianship; and in some instances kingdoms were bequeathed to them by their dying monarchs.

Weak states often entered into alliance with them for the sake of protection from their more powerful neighbors. In consequence of this varied intercourse with the rest of the world, Rome was often brought into collision with other nations, and almost invariably subdued them. It is easy to see that Rome in these circumstances could not fail to extend her dominions, and become the most prominent power on earth.

In reviewing the history of Rome, the patriotism of her people stands out prominently, as a means of the extension of her empire. Her soldiers were most devoted, and her statesmen vied with each other in their efforts to promote her prosperity. Every member of the state was ready to make any sacrifice to secure the same end. A striking instance of Roman patriotism is presented to us in the conduct of Regulus, the general. He was taken prisoner by the Carthaginians, who had obtained a considerable victory over the Romans. The Carthaginians were desirous of peace, and sent a deputation to Rome to negotiate on the subject. Regulus was sent with them, on condition that he would endeavour to procure peace. He was told he would obtain his freedom if peace was secured; but if war continued, he would be brought back to Carthage, and treated in the most cruel manner. Such, however, was the patriotism of this individual, that when he came to Rome he refused to enter the city, or to see his wife and children. And when the conference took place on the subject of peace, he urged his countrymen to persist in the war, he argued that the continuance of the war was for the glory of Rome. At the same time he refused to make the slightest effort to obtain his freedom, and willingly returned a captive to Carthage. Regulus on his return, as might have been expected, found the Carthaginians greatly exasperated against him; and he received from them the most cruel treatment. It is said his eyelids were cut off, and in this state he was exposed to a burning sun. Other cruelties were inflicted, which soon terminated his existence. Patriotism like this could not fail to operate powerfully in favour of any nation.

Another trait in the character of the ancient Romans, which contributed largely to

their advancement, was their indomitable courage and perseverance. Amidst all their prosperity, they had occasional reverses, reverses which would have excited anxiety and even despondency in the minds of many; but with the Romans such events were only the means of calling forth their courage. One remarkable instance of this we have: when Hannibal with his army were at the gates of Rome,—instead of giving way to fear and despondency, while the Carthaginians lay at one gate, the Romans were busy sending an army out at another, not to attack Hannibal, who was at their very walls, but to invade Africa and to besiege Carthage itself. Who would have dreamed of such courage and daring under such circumstances? And who but Romans could have evinced such a spirit, and pursued such a course. This undaunted courage carried them forward, and enabled them to succeed where many would have failed.

As the result of a combination of causes, the Roman Empire extended until it embraced almost the whole of the civilized world. The whole of civilized Europe, all of Africa that was known to the ancients, and a large portion of Asia were embraced within its limits.

This enlargement of Rome took place gradually and chiefly in the 400 years between the Old and New Testaments. In the enlargement of Rome, God, in His providence prepared the world for the reception of the gospel. At the time when the commission was given to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," almost the whole of the civilized world was under the control of one individual. The apostles, being subjects of the Roman emperors, were at liberty to visit any part of their dominions, and to publish salvation. The great extent of the Roman empire undoubtedly facilitated the diffusion of the gospel. Had the world been divided as it is at the present day, they would certainly have been prohibited from preaching in many places. The same thing would have occurred which takes place at the present day. The gospel cannot be introduced at present into Spain, nor till very lately into Madagascar; and but for the great extent of the Roman empire the same impediments would have hindered its progress in the days of the apostles.

Like all the other events in providence the extension of the Roman empire was no contingent occurrence; it was the work of God, for the accomplishment of a great design viz.—the diffusion of the gospel, and the establishment of his kingdom. The fulfilment of God's designs of mercy is the great object he has in view in providence, and to this end every event and every creature must contribute.

"Your dying hour."

"I have just been to the funeral of a very dear friend," said I to a merry looking man, whilst waiting for the train. "And it is no small comfort, when a friend departs, to know with absolute certainty, that that friend is gone to be with Christ, which is far better."

"I should think," said he, "there are very few that die who have that certainty. At least not many would like to chance it, if it were put to them to-day; I mean, if the question was put, Are you so sure of heaven, that you do not mind dying to-day?" I replied, "I fear even amongst those who profess to be Christians, too few would stand that test. But it was very different with my departed friend. She had only been ill a few days, and on the day before her death, knowing there was no human possibility of recovering, she calmly said, 'I would not exchange places with the Queen.' Not the shadow of a doubt passed over her happy soul. She rested not in anything she had done, but in the finished work of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. Precious Jesus! thy blood and righteousness never fail in the hour of death. Nothing can be so certain as that which God has said, 'that whosoever believeth on him, shall not perish; but have everlasting life.'"

"Well," said he, "it is a happy thing when a person has such confidence; but I fear there are very few who have the happiness to enjoy it. Man is so given to sin, he has such strong inclinations to sin."