

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

HARVEST HYMN.

Come, ye thankful people come,
Raise the song of Harvest Home!
All is safely gathered in,
Ere the winter storms begin:
God our Maker doth provide
For our wants to be supplied:
Come to God's own temple, come,
Raise the song of Harvest Home!

We ourselves are God's own field,
Fruit unto His praise to yield:
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joys or sorrow grown:
First the blade, and then the ear,
Then the full corn shall appear:
Grant, O Harvest Lord that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come,
And shall take His Harvest Home:
From His field shall in that day
All offences purge away:
Give His Angels charge at last,
In the fire the tares to cast:
But the fruitful ears to store
In His garner evermore.

Then, thou Church, triumphant come,
Raise the song of Harvest Home!
All are safely gathered in,
Free from sorrow, free from sin;
There, for ever purified,
In God's garner to abide!
Come, ten thousand Angels, come,
Raise the glorious Harvest Home!

—Dean Alford.

Missionary Intelligence.

Burmah. Bassein Mission.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM MR. DOUGLASS.

Bassein ten years ago.—Bassein, July 18, 1864.—I have now been here long enough, and have travelled sufficiently in every part of the Bassein province, to get a pretty definite knowledge of the state of things among the Burmans in this field. I entered on my work on returning here, quite differently situated from what I was when I arrived ten years ago. Then, the ravages and desolations of war were visible on every hand, as the English had been in possession of Bassein but a little time. Then, not a house had been erected by any foreigner; the officers and missionaries had all to find shelter in Burman kyoungs, (or monasteries,) the missionaries of course to occupy the worst and most exposed. Then, the city had little or no foreign trade, and the natives were for the most part in a poor, squallid condition, having been robbed of everything that could be made subservient to the interests of their conquerors. Then, and what was of most importance to me, there was not a Burman Christian in the Bassein province. Though thousands of the Karens had received the gospel, and professed faith in Christ, the Burmans were without an exception serving their idol gods, never having heard of Jesus as the Saviour of sinners.

Bassein as it is.—Now, we have a pleasant town, regularly laid out, with good roads, and containing about thirty thousand inhabitants; while there is in this district a population of about three hundred thousand; more than two-thirds of them Burmans. Now, all the officers, merchants and missionaries occupy good, substantial houses, and many of the natives have built houses as expensive and durable as those occupied by foreigners; while the city has a considerable foreign trade. Millions of bushels of rice are annually shipped from Bassein to China, England, and the continent of Europe.

The chief contrast.—But what forms the special item of contrast is the fact that on my return here I found a little church of forty-three Burman disciples and three native preachers, earnestly laboring to win their countrymen to Christ.

Welcome to Bassein.—One only, of those who were connected with the church when I left, died during my absence, and the members with one exception have continued faithful to their profession. I received, on my return, in person and by letter from the various missionaries, very kind cordial greetings; but

the expressions and salutations of these disciples were very much such as a parent would receive from fond children on returning from a long journey.

Baptisms—The Association.—Two weeks after I arrived, br. Crawley and sister Ingalls came down to Bassein to attend the meeting of the Association, and assist me in laboring among the Burmans, and remained three weeks. Br. Crawley preached almost every evening while here to congregations varying from one hundred and fifty to four hundred, and on Friday, and also on Sabbath morning, during the meeting of the Association. I administered the ordinance of baptism in the presence of about a thousand Burmans. On each occasion all were quiet, respectful and attentive, but no deep, religious impression appeared to be made on the multitude who heard.

There were present at the meeting of the Association about a hundred Burman disciples and delegates from Rangoon, Thongai and also br. Stevens and Ko En, the aged and venerable pastor of the church in Rangoon, were present. The meeting was one of deep and varied interest.

After the meeting of the Association, the mass of the people appeared to pass on, as heretofore, thoughtless and indifferent with reference to religious things. But a few made a more bold and determined opposition than I have ever known before, while some manifested a desire to know the truth, and to know what they must do to be saved. Especially have I found this to be the case with persons living in the villages. I have been travelling from village to village most of the time the past two months, and have baptized, within the past two months, fourteen Burmans and five Pwo Karens; which, with the six Burmans that I baptized during the meeting of the Association last January, make twenty Burmans and five Pwo Karens that I have baptized within the past six months since I returned. The five Pwo Karens are connected by marriage with some of the Burman converts, and will continue to live and worship with the Burmans. This is the reason why I baptized them.

Wide spread Religious interest.—I have now on my list the names of nineteen other Burmans who have renounced Buddhism, professed faith in Christ, and ask to be baptized. These are not all in one place, but in four different places, quite distant from each other; and in two of the villages where some of these individuals reside, there has never yet been a Christian baptism. There have been no special or unusual influences exerted to awaken and attract the attention of these converts and inquirers. I can only view it as accomplished by the plain, simple presentation of the truths of the gospel, accompanied by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is at work in these jungles, and scores, if not hundreds, are thinking, reading and making their souls interests their chief concern.

What is needed.—O for an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I feel how utterly insufficient the means are to carry forward the work to be accomplished here. "The harvest is great, but the laborers are" very, very "few."

The assistance of two or three well-trained, godly native preachers at this time would be invaluable; but such are not to be had. Those who are here are good men, but their advantages are limited. They studied with me during the months of March and April, but they very much desire and need additional instruction. Two or three of those recently baptized are men of talent and promise, and desire to devote themselves to study and the instruction of their countrymen, and will do so, if the means can be obtained for their support. I have some hope that funds will be found for their support, as I have recently received two letters from friends in America, saying that they had sent money to the Treasurer in Boston for the assistance of such men.

The right spirit.—I am residing all alone, in the house that I built six years ago. My situation is in many respects lonely, and there are many incidents of discouragement and trial; but I try to keep my head, heart and hands filled with my work. I have never once regretted that I have returned. I believe if there is a place on earth where I

am needed where I can labor successfully for Christ and for souls, it is here. I am therefore cheerful and happy in my work.

We take the above from the December No. of the *Missionary Magazine*. We learn from the same source that Mrs. Ingalls, a few days subsequently, suffered the loss of all her property and clothes by fire. We must defer an account of this sad calamity for a future number.

The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon on Personal Service.

The service of God among us has grown more and more a service by proxy. Judge ye what I say, and if there be but any measure of truth in it, let the truth come home to your soul. Do we not observe even in the outward worship of God, at times a great attempt towards worship by proxy? Do we not often hear singing the praises of God confined to some five or six or more trained men and women who are to praise God for us? Do we not sometimes have the dreary thought, when we are in our churches and chapels, that even the prayer is said and prayed by the Minister for us? There is not always that hearty union in the one great prayer of the day which there should be whenever we are gathered together. The thought suggests itself continually to the thinking mind, "Is not much of the devotion confined to the Minister, and to those few who pass through the service?" In fact, we have actually degraded ourselves by applying the term "performance" to divine worship. "Performance!" A phrase begotten in the theatre, which certainly should have spent its existence there, has actually been brought into the house of God, and the services are now-a-days "performed," and the worship of God is gone through, and the thing is called the "doing duty" of the Minister, and not the taking delight and the enjoying of a pleasure by the people. Do we not observe, too, that in all our Churches there is too much now-a-days of serving God in acts of benevolence, and acts of public instruction through the Minister? Your Minister is supported; you expect him to discharge your duty for you; he is to be the means of converting sinners; he is to be the means of comforting the feeble-minded; in fact, all the mass of duties that belong to the Church are considered to belong to the one man who is specially set apart to devote himself to the service of the ministry. What conqueror or mighty warrior could expect to win a campaign if his troops should vote that one in a hundred should go to battle? No, ye legions, you must every one of you draw swords. Every heart must be stout and every arm must be strong; the line must not be composed of here and there a warrior and an interval between, but every man must march forward, with the spirit of a lion and the strength of God, to do battle against the common enemy of souls. We shall never see great things in the world till we have all roused ourselves to our personal responsibilities.

The first Verse in the Bible.

The Rev. Dr. Murphy, Professor of Hebrew in Belfast, has recently issued a Critical Commentary on the book of Genesis, from a notice of which, by Dr. Thomsen, we extract the following:—

By adhering to his own judicious canons of interpretation laid down in the introduction, and to his sphere as an interpreter of the Hebrew text, Dr. Murphy makes the books of Genesis intelligible and self-consistent under all the lights of modern science and criticism. His style is singularly compact and pregnant. Take the following comment on the first verse of Genesis:

"This simple sentence denies Atheism—for it assumes the being of God—it denies polytheism; and, among its various forms, the doctrine of two eternal principles, the one good the other evil; for it confesses the one eternal Creator. It denies materialism; for it asserts the creation of matter. It denies pantheism; for it assumes the existence of God before all things, and apart from them. It denies fatalism; for it involves the freedom of the Eternal Being.

"It assumes the existence of God; for it is he who in the beginning creates.—It assumes his eternity; for he is before all things; and as nothing comes from nothing, he himself must have always been. It implies his omnipotence; for he creates the universe of things. It implies his absolute free will; for he begins a new course of action. It implies his infinite wisdom; for a *kosmos*, an order of matter and mind, can only come from a being of absolute intelligence.—It implies his essential goodness; for the sole, eternal, almighty, all-wise, and all-sufficient Being has no reason, no motive, and no capacity for evil; it presumes him to be beyond all limit of time and place; as he is before all time and place."

Hypothetical Virtue.

Poverty and woe are unfathomable problems of human life. I have always believed this, and every fresh example that comes under my observation deepens the conviction. Long ago I abandoned the idea of reconciling these sad elements of history with the goodness of God. Philosophy staggers in the very vestibule of this research, and faith must bring her lantern, else all is impenetrable darkness. So I mused the other day, as I was walking from our happy fireside to hold a funeral service in a garret. If God would only ordain obtuseness of sensibility to the poor, I have sometimes thought it would be a merciful dispensation. Deprived of many of those artificial alleviations of sorrow which wealth can purchase, why should they not have in compensation a less delicate and sensitive organization of soul? Mayhap they have, as regards some aspects of misfortune; but in respect to others, the arrow enters as deeply into the heart of a slave-mother on a Carolina plantation as if she was born in the lap of affluence and luxury.

In this garret was almost every possible aggravation of misery. My pen hesitates even to attempt its setting forth. A husband and father lying in his coffin, the widow clasping to her bosom a dying child, trying vainly to still its little wail while we read God's promises of comfort, and around the room all the signs of comfortlessness and desolation inseparable from the extreme conditions of want.

As I led the little procession to the grave, I fell into a sort of pseudo-pious reverie. All the fountains of pity were stirred, and some other fountains besides; for I found myself running both into misanthropy and self-adulation. And somewhat thus I soliloquized: "Why do these rich people, whose splendid mansions we are passing with this pine coffin, permit all this woe at their very door sills? If I were wealthy, surely I would set them an example of liberality. If, for instance, I had a net income of ten thousand a-year, I would go down that alley with my carriage daily, distributing benefactions. I would put a loaf and a joint into every cupboard. I would put a coat on the back of every shivering child. I would have relays of nurses for the sick, and a commissariat of soups, broths, jellies, cordials, and every other sanitary solace. Yes, I am not sure but I would build a capacious house, with every appointment of comfort, and put all my poor friends into it, and support them as my own family." So I went on musing, as we took our long, slow journey to the poor man's grave, when all of a sudden, a voice seemed to speak right over my shoulder: "Tut! tut! you imaginary saint, stop all this romancing; if the Lord should credit you on his ledger with all this hypothetical cash paid into his treasury, what a marvelous specimen of magnanimity you would present at the day of final judgment." I had a feeling as if several skewers were thrust into my vanity, and inflations were experiencing a painful, though mayhap wholesome collapse. Our arrival at the graveyard and the services of burial gave a brief respite to this castigation of conscience, which continued for many a day afterwards.

Not long ago I revived the topic of hypothetical virtue in our usual conversation at the weekly prayer-meeting; and, if you will credit me, people thought my description of it quite original! Original! nothing less so. This sort of sentimentalism is one of the commonest developments of poor, weak human nature. People are all the time getting out