

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

By REV. CHARLES TOPPER, D. D.

CHAPTER III.

CONVERSION, AND ENTRANCE ON THE MINISTRY.

(No. 18.)

Various circumstances have tended to produce in me a deep interest in the cause of Temperance.* Some of these have been recorded in the early part of my history. To these may be added the fact, that my life has been endangered, both by land and by sea, through the intemperance of my fellow men: An instance may be noticed here.

On Lord's day, October 15th, 1815, I held two meetings in the school house in Western Cornwallis. My heart was cheered and encouraged by learning that a young man awakened through my labors had obtained hope, and appeared to be savingly converted. (His subsequent deportment has furnished confirmation of this.) In the evening I attended a Methodist meeting in Upper Aylesford. Going to the house of a friend to tarry for the night, I travelled some distance on a causeway. While on it I met three men on horseback, rearing their horses violently, with boisterous shouting. It was evident that they had been desecrating the holy Sabbath by drinking at a tavern, and that they were now abusing their beasts, and endangering their own lives and the lives of others, under the influence of alcoholic liquor. I reined the beast which I was riding as near the side of the causeway as I could, in order to give them space to pass. She, however, threw herself partly across the road just as they came up to the place where I was. Thought sometimes moves very quickly. When I perceived that two of us were coming in contact, such an awful sense of the dreadful consequence that must result to one hurried into eternity in the midst of impiety, rushed upon me, that, if not entirely mistaken in reference to the exercise of my mind; it was my desire, should one of us be killed, that it might be my lot; as I trusted, through sovereign grace; for me to die would be gain. Our horses came into collision; and both they and their riders were instantaneously thrown prostrate. Through divine goodness, neither I nor my beast sustained any injury. The other party appeared to escape unhurt; but it was apparent that the horse was seriously lamed, and I was subsequently informed that he was ruined. While we were making preparation to proceed each on his way, I endeavored to give him a kind faithful admonition, remarking to him, that I was very sorry to see my fellow-creatures thus rushing to destruction. He made no reply; but evidently attempted to avoid hearing me by low ringing, or humming.

Happily, however, as my mind was exercised at that time, and under the trying circumstances in which I was placed, not long afterwards my spirits became exceedingly depressed. A sense of the depravity of my fallen nature gave me much disquietude. Though graciously preserved from immorality of conduct, yet a consciousness of the plague of my own heart almost overwhelmed me. My hope of salvation was nearly relinquished; and I was strongly tempted to abandon the idea of attempting to lead a religious life. But to this bold temptation grace did not suffer me to yield.

It is probable that physical indisposition tended to increase mental depression. The body and the mind are so intimately connected, that the state of the one naturally produces an effect upon the other. Grace does, indeed, in some instances raise the spirit above the depressing influence of bodily infirmity; but continued indisposition not unfrequently causes dejection and despondency. As, therefore, my health was at that time very feeble, it is not strange that my mind became greatly depressed.

In accordance with the erroneous views then prevalent—not yet wholly exploded—alcoholic liquor was regarded by many as a *panacea*, or remedy for all diseases. It was therefore recommended to me, for the recovery of my health, to add a pint of spirits to three pints of camomile tea, and to take a wine-glass full of these bitters every morning. I was never disposed to abandon any measure, or remedy, which had been commenced, without giving it a thorough trial. But before the whole of this mixture had been

*The writing of an extended Review of the Biography of Father Mathew, for the benefit of the cause of Temperance, has prevented me from furnishing this No. sooner.

used, I became so fully convinced of its injurious tendency, that I poured the remainder of it upon the ground. It would doubtless have been conducive to my health—as also to that of many others in numerous instances—if this had been done at the first.

Another remedy prescribed, probably with equal absurdity, was that of chewing tobacco. But the nauseous weed was so offensive to my taste, and seemed to me so evidently injurious to me, that it was soon discarded.

Undoubtedly many persons have been, under such silly pretexts and absurd notions, brought under the debasing and pernicious vassalage of using alcoholic liquor and tobacco. Grateful for my preservation, I would strongly recommend to the young and inexperienced to be upon their guard against such dangerous and ruinous snares.

While laboring under physical debility at times my spirit became cheered, and my hope revived. At such seasons I sometimes felt "a desire to depart and be with Christ." The dread of wandering from the Saviour, running into sinful courses, bringing reproach upon the sacred Name, and casting stumbling-blocks before sinners to their ruin, made me desirous to leave this ensnaring world. Frequently the thought of going home to my father's house, and there pining away with consumption—to which I seemed predisposed—and dying, appeared to me the most pleasing thought that I could entertain. It is evident, however, that my work was not accomplished; but it pleased the Master to retain me longer to labor in His vineyard.

On removing to a new place to board, I was requested by the mistress of the house, whose husband was laboring from home, to lead in prayer with the family. Fearing that it would be displeasing to the young people, I declined. This produced a very painful trial. It was with me a day of extreme sadness. So deep was my conviction of the neglect of duty, that I could scarcely adventure to attempt to pray in secret. When the evening came, I felt that I could live in disobedience no longer; and therefore engaged in family prayer. This I continued to do, as requested, both morning and evening. Painful experience had taught me the evil of declining to engage in this or any other duty, in private or in public. Hence it has been my custom neither to refuse, nor to wait for urging, when invited to lead in any religious exercise. Every thing like *compliment* with regard to matters of this kind, has ever appeared to me quite inconsistent and improper.

For the Christian Messenger.

NOTES OF A TOUR.

No. I.

DEAR BROTHER,—

Perhaps a few notes of my late tour may be acceptable to some of your readers. I will endeavour to gratify them.

I left home on the 8th ult. Passing over the incidents of the passage from Windsor to St. John, and thence to Portland, which were of a somewhat discomposing character to the ladies, I may state that I left Portland on the morning of the 10th for Boston, and in the evening of that day travelled to New London, where we embarked on board the Steamship *City of Boston*, a magnificent vessel, capable of furnishing sleeping accommodation to 500 persons. On Saturday morning we landed on the New Jersey side, and at eight o'clock commenced our journey southward. We passed through the suburbs of Philadelphia, but saw very little of the city itself. In the afternoon we were at Baltimore. The land in the vicinity of the railroad appeared to be tolerably fertile and well cultivated. The growth of Indian corn will be very abundant this year. It is planted with such regularity that the rows appear in straight lines diagonally as well as in the direction of the furrow. Potatoes were in blossom, and here and there the hay season had commenced.

I was very desirous of hearing Dr. Fuller, but found on entering his church on Lord's day morning that he had gone to preach at some distance in the country. A Presbyterian minister, Agent for some benevolent societies, gave us an excellent sermon on "Christian zeal"—its nature, manifestations, and motives. Another minister, I know not of what denomination, preached well in the evening, from Acts xiii. 38, 39.

Dr. Fuller's church is a substantial, plain, brick structure, with a Grecian portico in front. There are three galleries. In the morning the side galleries were occupied by the Sunday School children, the boys on one side and the girls on the other. In the evening they were nearly empty. I should suppose that the con-

gregation is not large. The pews are lined and cushioned uniformly.

Baltimore is a large city, containing 218,000 inhabitants. I have before me some engravings of its streets and public buildings, but cannot give a description of them, as I did not think it right to spend the Lord's day, or any part of it, in the perambulations which would have been necessary to gain the requisite information. The places of worship are generally large. They are 161 in number, viz., Episcopalians, 22; Methodist Episcopal, 45; other Methodists, 14; Presbyterian, 15; Roman Catholic, 20; Baptist, 11; German Reformed, 3; Disciples, 2; Lutheran, 10; Independent, 2; Friends, 3; Universalist, 1; Unitarian, 1; Swedenborgian, 3; Jewish Synagogues, 6; Miscellaneous, 3.

On Monday-morning the 13th ult., we left Baltimore at seven o'clock for Washington, 40 miles distant. Our party consisted of the Hon. S. L. Tilley, Provincial Secretary for New Brunswick, four other gentlemen of that province, Messrs. P. Monaghan and Heenan, of Halifax, and myself. The journey to Washington, through a less cultivated country than that which we traversed on Saturday, occupied two hours. Our first care was to seek an interview with the President of the United States. At ten o'clock we repaired to the White House, and after waiting a little while were introduced to the Ruler of the Great Republic. He received us with his accustomed courtesy, and in the course of conversation illustrated his remarks by a jocular anecdote which I do not repeat, because I think that it is neither wise nor kind to retail the sayings of public men, unless there is some indication of their being intended for publicity. I may avail myself of this supposed exception by observing that the President expressed himself in the following manner (I do not remember what led to the observation):—"When a man is down, we should not trample on him, nor do any thing to prevent his rising; all our care and endeavour should be to lift him up." I thought that the remark might be appropriately applied to the Temperance mission in which we were then engaged, and to the work of the Christian church. It is not sufficient to hold and enunciate sound principles—or to devise plans of action, for others to execute—or to establish exercises and services which may be attended by the morally destitute, if they are inclined to do so—or to institute and maintain organizations, however well adapted and complete. The reform of mankind will never be effected on a large scale till Christian agency is far more generally employed in direct efforts for the help of the fallen, and God's servants go among them, under the influence of holy sympathy and zeal, acquaint themselves with their thoughts and habits, and expend their best energies in labouring to "lift them up."

We visited the Smithsonian Institute and spent some time in its admirably arranged Museum of Natural History. The collections are very extensive, and the classification is scientifically correct. There is a large hall for lectures, a room well filled with paintings, and a library stored with the accumulations of ancient and modern wisdom. I cannot commend the exterior of the building, which presents an ill assorted combination of different styles of architecture. In every other respect the Smithsonian Institute is entitled to unqualified praise. It owed its foundation to the liberal bequest of an Englishman, and in assuming the trusteeship and management of the government of the United States has evinced impartiality and displayed munificence which cannot but be admired.

Washington is beleaguered, if I may so speak, by twenty-two military hospitals, where as many thousand sick or wounded soldiers are under attendance. We visited one of them, the Armoury Hospital, so called because the Armoury building is now employed for hospital purposes and filled with patients. It is surrounded by other erections, some wooden, some canvass, being in fact huge tents, in the shape of the roof of a house. There were 1305 patients in the hospital that day. Twelve had been buried the day before, and we saw about as many more waiting for interment. Some of the beds were canopied by muslin, to shelter the inmates from flies and mosquitoes. Volunteer nurses were observed, rendering kind attentions, and in some instances the sorrowful countenances of those who stood or sat by the bedside intimated that relatives were administering to those who were dear to them, and from whom they feared that they should ere long be separated. One noble form lay in the last agonies. The glassy eyes, the scarcely perceptible breathing showed that the hour of departure was just at hand. We were told that the sufferer's name was Davis, and that he was a captain in one of the

Massachusetts regiments. He had been shot in the knee, and amputation was declared necessary but he would not submit to it, and so he must die. Altogether it was a sad, sad sight. How blessed will be the time when men "shall learn war no more!"

The Capitol, to which we next repaired, is a very splendid building. Here, republican magnificence shines in all its glory. The site is excellently chosen, commanding a view of rich scenery, on which the sun shed its glowing radiance, and made it look like an enchanted land. The structure is yet in an unfinished state, and is therefore hardly a fair subject of criticism. When completed, it will be a fine specimen of architectural grandeur. The expenditure has been enormous. Our neighbours have "lavished gold out of the bag," and exhibited a love of the grand and the gorgeous which some would deem incompatible with the simplicity of democratic institutions, and a degeneracy from the habits of the Washingtons and Franklins of the earlier and better days. I cannot attempt to describe the massive stone-work—the marble pillars—the groups of statuary—the mosaic pavements—the historic paintings—the bronze folding doors (cost 36,000 dollars)—the frescoed ceilings—or the silk and velvet, the gilding and glare of the rooms specially appropriated to the use of the President and Vice-President. I will not call it "barbaric pearl and gold"—but it smacks of royalty, or of an imitation of it. The Halls of Congress are well arranged and fitted up, and there is ample accommodation for the public in the galleries, to which there is free access. We sat a short time in each, listening to the debates.

A ride to Georgetown, which adjoins Washington, occupied the afternoon. We were reluctantly compelled to forego the pleasure of visiting the Naval Yard and other objects of interest. In the evening we returned to Baltimore.

Here, for the present, I must close.

Yours truly,

J. M. CRAMP.

Montreal, July 1, 1864.

For the Christian Messenger.

BARRINGTON MEETING HOUSE.

MR. EDITOR,—

Please allow me on behalf of the Barrington Baptist Church, to acknowledge, through your paper, the receipt of the following contributions towards the erection of our Meeting House:—

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*Materials.

W. H. RICHAM.

Barrington, June 20th.