

Christian Messenger.

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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Religious.

THE BAPTIST UNION.

The Autumnal Session of the British Baptist Union, was held last month at Cambridge. The *Freeman* says in reference to the Session being held there:

Hitherto it has been thought that the autumnal sessions of the Union could be held only in very large towns. How could places of fewer than a hundred thousand inhabitants find accommodation for the guests? It was admitted that there might be ample generosity for the honourable work in smaller towns, but would not the limited number of houses in which hospitality could be shown to strangers present a difficulty which no large-heartedness could overcome? When Cambridge was first spoken of as a probable place of meeting there were not a few who counted the thing impossible, for they knew that the Baptist Churches in the university town are very few, and that the town itself though truly great in its past history and present influences, is not numerically large. More than four hundred delegates have been provided for in a way that leaves nothing to be desired. Our friends could not have accomplished this but for the help which, in an unusual measure they have received from members of the Episcopal Church and of all other Christian communities in the town. Two of the colleges are entertaining several guests, and by the authorities of one other college an offer of similar service was made. We should not under ordinary circumstances make lengthened reference to these acts of Christian kindness; for it seems to us that the excessively eulogistic strains in which such things are often spoken of, constitute, in reality, a severe satire upon christian people. These practical expressions and interchanges of esteem and sympathy between Christians of one community and another ought to be considered too natural, and they ought also to be too common, either to occasion any surprise or to call for any great commendation. Still, in the present case, we cannot forbear saying that the facts we have recorded are highly honourable, alike to those who have rendered the help and those to whom it has been rendered. The Baptists in Cambridge, with Mr. Robinson as their leader, have never concealed their Nonconformity, and they have never shrunk from a full exposition and a firm defence of it on all fitting occasions. They have taken a foremost place in the ranks of those who have assailed what they believed to be ecclesiastical monopolies and political wrongs, but it is evident they have done this in such a way that they have gained the respect of those whose opponents they have been. The lesson is very obvious, and is well worth learning. We commend it especially to the study of those Nonconformists who are too prone to think that silence about their own principles is the best, if not the only way, of winning confidence and kindness from Conformists.

BRIEF ADDRESSES BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

LAYING THE CORNER-STONE OF A NEW CHAPEL.

The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon recently officiated in laying the corner-stone of a new, free and open chapel in Liverpool, G. B. After the preliminary parts of the services had been attended to Mr. Spurgeon proceeded to the laying of the stone, before doing so he read the narrative of our Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria. I read this, he said, as a protest against the idea that any place is holier than another, apart from the use which is made of it, and lest the idea should crop up that we are performing a sort of consecration. I gather from this narrative that it is not the holiness of bricks and mortar and stones which has anything to do with the Christian dispensation; but the holiness of the everlasting God, who

dwells everywhere, and the holiness of the heart that loves, and seeks and trusts Him.

Where'er we seek him He is found,
And ev'ry place is hallowed ground.

"Why, then," it may be asked, "do you build places for worship at all?" We reply that we are almost sorry that we are compelled to do so. We would prefer always to worship out of doors, but we live in a climate where that is not possible, and you live in a region where it so constantly rains that I suppose you would very seldom have a dry service. (A laugh.) We must therefore have buildings, but we hope the having buildings will never draw us into the consecration of them. Brethren to-day we lay the first stone of a barn in which my beloved friend, the sower, will, I hope find room for the harvest that God will give him. I believe much of Christian effort has failed to produce permanent manifest results for the want of the ingathering which ought always to follow the sowing. This day we lay the first stone of a barrack in which Christian soldiers shall be drilled for battle, in which they shall be gathered together to be trained for spiritual conflict; and God grant they may be brave soldiers, good men and true. May they have the red cross on the white ground which means war against war, war against oppression, war against sin, war against misery, war for God and his Christ in every place. I wish our friends therefore God speed in the erection of this place; and I earnestly beg the men of Liverpool who make the money to give the money that is required for it. This is for the working classes who work for you. The least you can do for them is to provide them with the means of grace. In olden times people spoke very differently of working people from what they do now. Abraham had a number of servants in his employment, and what do you suppose he called them? Why, he called them souls—the souls he had gotten in Aram. Now the gentlemen in Liverpool and Manchester, what do they call their workpeople? Hands. (A laugh.) That's all. What do they care about your souls, some of them? You would be better without souls to work for some people. If you could manage to put your souls in a cupboard, and do your work only as machines, there are some who would like it; but Christian masters ought to remember that their hands are also souls and I challenge them to prove to-day that they believe in souls by contributing towards this provision which is made, and which will be used by so worthy a brother as my dear friend Mr. Lockhart, and by paying at once for this tabernacle, so that there may be no debt upon it. I am very glad that I lay this stone with a mason's trowel. I have laid two within the last fortnight. Silver trowels look like sham. Your workmen's trowel looks as if you meant it; and one thing I can say is I mean it, and Mr. Lockhart means it. The brethren, I hope, mean it.

The stone having been laid, Mr. Spurgeon delivered a sermon from Hosea x. 12: "It is time to seek the Lord." The sermon was followed by a prayer, and the doxology having been sung, the proceedings terminated.

HOW TO FILL UP A CHURCH.

Mr. Spurgeon, in an address delivered in Music Hall, Edinburgh, said: Sometimes as the President of a college, I have letters sent to me asking for ministers, in something like these terms: "Dear Sir,—Our chapel is very empty; our last minister was a very excellent man but an unpopular preacher, (I may say by way of parenthesis that I suppose he was of those men who would make good martyrs,—so dry that they would burn well,) and our congregation is very small; can you kindly send us a minister who will fill the chapel?" On one occasion I replied that I had not a minister large enough to fill a chapel. Of course there came an explanation that they did not expect him to fill it corporeally, but to fill it by bringing others to listen to him and retaining them as seat-holders. Then I wrote, and to gain this opportunity my first joke was perpetrated, reminding my

friends that it was quite enough for a pastor to fill the pulpit well, and that the filling of the pews depended upon the zeal, the earnestness, and diligence of those with whom he commenced his ministry; if they would support him by their earnest co-operation, the meeting-houses would soon be full. I remember when I came first to London, preaching to eighty or ninety in a large chapel; but my little congregation thought well of me, and induced others to come and fill the place. I always impute my early success to my warmhearted people for they were so earnest and enthusiastic in their loving appreciation of the "young man from the country," that they were never tired of sounding his praises. If you, any of you, are mourning over empty pews in your place of worship, I would advise you to praise up your minister. There can be no difficulty in discovering some points in which your Pastor excels; dwell upon these excellencies and not upon his failures; talk of the spiritual benefit which you derive from his sermons, and thus you will enjoy him the more because you have thought and spoken kindly of him. Believe, then, that the filling-up of the church is not alone the Pastor's work.

WORKS OF FAITH.

Mr. Müller holds no anniversary at Ashley Down Orphanage, never sends out deputations to plead the cause of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, and obtains help from men only by prayer to God. But happily he issues every year a "Brief Narrative of Facts," a report of the gifts received and the work done by him. We have just read this wonderful story for 1869—1870. It is full of interesting incident, and ought to provoke very many to deeds of liberality and works of faith. We are glad to note that the orphanage is flourishing. On the 26th of last May there was a balance on the right side of £12,837 8s. 11³/₄d. The missionary fund was also well supplied. At the same date Mr. Müller held the sum of £2,383 9s. to be devoted to the maintenance of schools and missions. This state of things implies large and many gifts. Towards the educational and missionary objects £13,556 8s. 8d. was sent during the year. Donations received for the orphans within the twelve months amounted to £20,262 17s. 1³/₄d., so that the total incoming from gifts was £33,819 0s. 9³/₄d. And this large sum was contributed without canvassers, or collecting cards, or public meetings!

But the record of work is more satisfactory than is the balance-sheet. Sixteen day-schools, with 1,165 children under instruction, have been entirely supported, and twelve others partially assisted, by Mr. Müller. Sunday and adult schools are aided to some extent. A suggestion is made which ought to be adopted. "Since March 1834," says Mr. Müller, "there have been 10,619 children in our day schools. In the adult schools there have been 3,693 persons. The number of Sunday scholars amounts to 4,463. Thus without reckoning the orphans, 18,775 souls have been brought under habitual instruction." Mr. Müller asks his readers to pray "That God would be pleased to work mightily in the hearts of those who were formerly under our care in bringing to their remembrance the truth which was then set before them." How about the other hundreds of thousands which have passed through Sunday-schools during the last half century? In many counties well-nigh the whole population come under the "habitual instruction" of the Sunday-school. Are the former scholars forgotten? With Mr. Müller we suggest that they should be remembered at the throne of grace. Might not some well considered attempt be made to recover such of them as are lost to the churches? In the circulation of the sacred Scriptures Mr. Müller has been especially active. He reports that 186,747 copies (in whole or in part) of the Divine Word have been sold or given away since 1834. Home and Foreign missions receive a large share of Mr. Müller's attention. During the last year 179 labour-

ers have been sustained. China, Spain, and Devonshire appear to be the principal scenes of these missionary toils. The extracts from the letters of the brethren employed produce the impression that Mr. Müller has secured the services of men like-minded with himself. Certainly he does not bribe them. The highest amount sent to any missionary was £150, and several labouring in China received but £75. They go forth in faith, and Mr. Müller evidently keeps their faith in active and constant exercise. The orphanage, however, is the best of all the institutions sustained through Mr. Müller. On the 26th of last May there were 1,722 orphans under his care. The girls, it appears, generally remain in the orphanage till they are about seventeen years of age, when they are sent out, for the most part, to domestic service. The boys are apprenticed to some trade when they have passed their fourteenth year. What a testimony is this alike to the power of prayer and to the liberality of Christians. "Without any one having been personally applied to for anything by me," writes Mr. Müller, "the sum of £323,692 7s. 9³/₄d. has been given to me for the orphans, as the result of prayer to God, since the commencement of the work, which sum includes the amount received for the building funds for five houses."

The record of the receipt of gifts affords a singularly clear insight into the principles and motives of the givers. Some believers are apparently moved to renounce "the pomps and vanities of this world," as the Prayer-book hath it. Thus one of the donors sends "a gold watch, a gold watch-guard and ornaments, two gold brooches, three gold rings, a silver tooth-pick, a jet chain, two jet bracelets." A page or two further we read—"Received for missions and the Bible fund the following valuable trinkets:—Five gold rings; four gold rings set with diamonds; two silver rings; one hair ring, gold mounted; a gold bracelet set with rubies and diamonds; a gold necklet with locket; another gold bracelet; a gold brooch set with a carbuncle, a pair of gold ear-rings, &c., &c." We cannot withhold at least this other instance of Christian self-denial. A visitor brought to Mr. Müller "one thousand pounds for the orphans." He "had intended to buy and furnish a house with this money; but the Lord directed him to give the money to me instead," says Mr. Müller; "to which he joyfully replied: 'Lord, all I have and am is Thine. I will gladly take the money to dear brother Müller.'" The report before us shows that systematic beneficence is gradually making way among Christians.

We take almost at random a few illustrative facts, and allow them to tell their own tale to the provoking, we trust, of very many:—"June 30.—From a Christian merchant who contributes as the Lord prospers him, £40 for missions, £40 for the school, £40 Bible and tract fund, and £40 for the support of the orphans." "July 1.—From Bedfordshire, £5 from a little shop keeper and baker, who contributes as the Lord is pleased to prosper him, and who has sent me many five pounds donations since he first began to contribute." "August 9.—From Hampshire, £5 18s." This was from a worthy couple who many years ago resolved "that they would give the tenth part of all the Lord might send them" to the orphans at Ashley Down. And so out of the small income of £59 this good man, "a preacher of the gospel," devotes to the support of orphans £5 18s. This systematic giving is a strong point with Mr. Müller. He urges, "Give as the Lord prospers you. Really do it, do it faithfully, do it habitually, do it in bad times also, according to the little of your prosperity; and you will find it the best remedy against heavy bad debts, against other losses in your business, and against bad times." Notwithstanding our hearty endorsement of the principle of giving as the Lord prospers, we somewhat question the soundness of the reason assigned for its adoption. In the narrative which lies on our table, Mr. Müller cites an instance seemingly for the purpose of inducing his readers to give, and to give an increasing