

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

{ NEW SERIES. }
{ Vol. XVII., No. 48. }

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, November 27, 1872.

{ WHOLE SERIES. }
{ Vol. XXXVI., No. 48. }

Poetry.

UNDER THE CROSS.

I cannot, cannot say—
Out of my bruised and breaking heart—
Storm-driven along a thorn-set way,
While blood drops start
From every pore as I drag on,—
"Thy will, O God, be done!"

I thought but yesterday,
My will was one with God's dear will;
And that it would be sweet to say,—
Whatever ill
My happy state should smite upon,—
"Thy will, my God, be done!"

But I was weak and wrong,
Both weak of soul and wrong of heart;
And pride alone in me was strong,
With cunning art
To cheat me in the golden sun,
To say, "God's will be done!"

O shadow, drear and cold,
That frights me out of foolish pride,
O flood, that through my bosom rolled
Its billowy tide,—
I said, till your power made known,
"God's will, not mine be done!"

Now faint and sore afraid,
Under my cross—heavy and rude—
My idols in the ashes laid,
Like ashes strewed,
The holy words my pale lips shun,
"O God, thy will be done!"

Ply my woes, O God!
And touch my will with thy warm breath;
Put in my trembling hand thy rod,
That quickens death;
That my dead faith may feel thy sun,
And say, "Thy will be done!"

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE LETTER OF C. PLINY TO SABINIUS, AND THE LETTER OF PAUL TO PHILEMON, COMPARED.

The authors of these two epistles belonged to the same age; and were peers in gifts, learning, culture and high earthly distinctions and relations. It is true that the change of character, had necessitated a change of social and civil relations with Paul, but the advantages of what he once enjoyed and esteemed still remained with him. Pliny enjoyed the literary friendship of Tacitus, the distinguished Roman historian, and had also enjoyed senatorial and gubernatorial honours in the Roman commonwealth. Upon the young Saul also had been placed the highest distinctions in every relation of life.

While the letter of Paul is in every house, very few may have in possession that of Pliny. It is therefore inserted that the comparison may be made by every reader of this article.

For the gratification of those who can read Latin, the original of Pliny's epistle, is here given in case any of them may not have it in their possession:

"C. PLINIUS GABEINIANO SUO S."

Libertus tuus, cui succensere te dixeras, venit ad me, advolutusque pedibus meis, tamquam tuus, haesit. Flevit multum, multumque rogavit; multum etiam tunc; in summa, fecit mihi fidem poenitentiae. Vere credo emendatum, quia deliquisse se sentit. Irascaris, scio; et irascaris merito, id quodque scio: sed tunc praecipua mansuetudinis laus, cum ira causa iustissima est. Amasti hominem, et spero amabis: interim sufficit, ad exorari te sinas. Licetbit rursus irasci, si meruerit, quod excusatus excusatus fueris. Remitte aliquid adolescentiae ipsius, remitte laetitia, remitte indulgentiae tuae; ne torseris illum, ne torseris etiam te. Torqueris enim, quum tam lenis irascaris. Vereor, ne videar non rogare, sed cogere, si precibus ejus mea iustitia. Jungam tamen tanto Plinio et effusio, quanto ipsum acris severiusque corripui, destitit minatus nunquam me postea rogatum. Hoc illi, quem terri oportebat, tibi non idem. Nam fortasse iterum rogabo iterum impetrabo; sit modo tale, ut

rogare me, ut praecare te decaat. Vale."

A translation is also inserted for those who may not be able to read the Latin.

"C. PLINIUS TO HIS FRIEND SABINIUS, GREETING:

"A freedman of yours, whom you had said you were angry with, came to me, and, prostrating himself at my feet, as if at your own, clung to them; he wept much and begged much; much of the time, too, he was silent; in fine he gave me a confidence of his penitence. I believe him to be truly amended, because he is sensible that he has been delinquent. You are angry, I know; and you are angry with reason; that, too, I know; but the glory of clemency is greatest, when the cause of anger is most just. You have loved the man, and I hope will love him; meanwhile it is sufficient that you suffer yourself to be entreated. You shall be at liberty to be angry again, if he should deserve it; which having shown yourself excusable, you will the more excusably do. Remit somewhat to his youth, remit somewhat to his tears, remit somewhat to your own indulgent disposition; do not torture him lest you torture also yourself; for you are tortured, when lenient as you are, you are angry. I fear lest I may seem, not to ask but to compel, it to his prayers I add my own. Nevertheless I shall add them the more fully and freely, inasmuch as I have sharply and severely reproved him, having strictly threatened never hereafter to intercede with you. This (I said) to him whom it was proper to alarm, but not the same (do I promise) to you (viz. that I will not ask again.) For, perhaps, I shall again ask and again obtain; let it be only such as it may become me to ask, and you to grant. Farewell.

This letter and the one to Philemon, are both in the opinion of competent judges distinguished for literary excellence. They are vigorous and elegant. In the author of the one we have the representative Roman and idolater; in the author of the other a representative Jew and Christian. For the cultivation of their distinguished talents, they had enjoyed the most unlimited advantages. They had mastered the learning of their age. It is very interesting to have a letter from each of these men both written on the same subject and for the same immediate end.

In the opinion of competent judges the polished Roman has been outdone in elegance of style, dignity of thought and varied and masterly expression by the refined and astute Jew. While it is granted that Pliny has produced an exquisite specimen of epistolary literature, remarkable for the taste displayed in its conception, and for its chaste and vigorous style; yet Paul shows himself superior in the skill with which he considers all the contingencies and conflicting interests, in the delicate and difficult undertaking as well as in his inimitable use of language. In the comparison about to be made of some of the points in these letters, it must be borne in mind that Paul wrote under the control and guidance of inspiration, while Pliny wrote simply as a scholar, but still a heathen, and ignorant of that influence which operated upon Paul's spirit.

The point where the comparison now begins is that at which the skill of the two writers may be seen in securing access to the hearts of the masters, whose servants they would become instrumental in restoring. Paul would have Philemon receive back to his heart his penitent slave Onesimus; Pliny would induce Sabinianus to extend the same favour to his freedman. Pliny introduces the subject at once and abruptly. "A freedman of yours has fallen at my feet weeping and begging." Not a word is uttered to predispose the heart favourably for such a request. No art is displayed in producing a benevolent state of mind before drawing on the heart for the exercise of that sympathy.

Paul adopts another method. Kindly salutations from himself and Timothy and the benedictions of the Tri-

ty are sent ahead to prepare the way for the request to be made. After this Paul pours out the thanks of his heart for what Philemon was in his faith and love towards Christ, and in his kindness and benevolence towards saints. The hearing of this noble spirit and christian conduct Philemon is informed, had changed the oppressive monotony and bitterness of prison-life into heavenly joy and consolation.

Here it would seem that Paul concluded that the heart of his old friend was well conditioned to hear the request he was about to make. But the act in preparing the heart for the favour does not surpass the delicacy and ingenuity displayed in making his final application. Never was a request better cast for carrying the heart than the one made to Philemon by Paul. He reminds the master of the penitent slave that he foregoes Apostolic authority for love's sake that he may use the power of kind entreaty. He will not dictate although clothed with authority to do so, but he will beseech. This final request is so cast as to carry a far less susceptible heart than that which beat in the bosom of the kind Philemon. As yet the matter is kept out of sight. The name and case of Onesimus has been advisedly concealed, while Philemon is ignorant of the person for whom Paul approaches him the chains upon the enfeebled limbs of the prisoner and the grey locks falling down over his venerable brow, speak to the heart of the master for a son in the faith begotten in the confinement and sufferings of imprisonment. At this juncture we can fancy that Philemon was startled at the mention of the name—"Onesimus, my son." This is a remarkable display of skill and delicacy in touching the chords of the human heart.

Much would depend upon the state of the penitents. Sorrow and reformation would be required of them by their respective masters. It will be interesting therefore to compare the accounts given by the interceders. The repentance and reformation of the servant of Sabinianus are graphically and touchingly sketched by Pliny. His tears were abundant, his prayers hearty, and the signs of genuine contrition were all that could be desired.

At first it might appear a grave omission in Paul's plea that no mention is made of the grief and tears of Onesimus, and of his earnest entreaties to be sent back to his old master. But all this is implied and much more; for repentance that needs not to be repented of includes contrition for all sins and transgressions. And more than this, it was unnecessary to give an account of the sorrow that had rent the heart of Onesimus, for Philemon had learned this in his own case when he came to Christ. Paul states the grand result. The servant had been lifted up to a level of christian fellowship and brotherhood. Now that he enjoyed the dignity of a servant of God, it mattered little what he had suffered or said in arriving at this relation. Here are secrets of human relations into which the astute, and polished Pliny never penetrated. Paul is more remarkable for what he did not say than Pliny is for what he did say.

Next, let the confidence reposed by Pliny in his penitent be compared with the confidence Paul had in Onesimus. The Roman advocate had his fears and misgivings. To improve the state of his client he had applied sharp reproofs and terrible threats. Never again would he intercede for him. If he should abscond a second time Sabinianus might indulge in anger. What thought Paul of Onesimus? No such fears were upon his heart. The repentance was genuine, the reformation was thorough. No fear is entertained of the future fidelity of the beloved brother saved in slavery. His reform is radical and well grounded. His faithfulness was unquestionable. Such is the difference in reforms, the one resting on christian morals, and the other on the morality of the religion of Ancient Rome.

The complimentary aspect of the

letters may next be held up together. Paul and Pliny have each much to say in praise of his friend. The eulogy is in profusion. The letters are both alike remarkable for the absence of censure. Sabinianus and Philemon could scarcely have been free from wrong in treating two servants who had absconded. But the eulogy of Pliny is essentially different from that of Paul. Sabinianus is praised for a kind and indulgent disposition. Philemon is commended for obedience to Christ in faith and love, and for fulfilling a law of the Master, which required the servants to bear one another's burdens. It is for what he is in Christ, that he is approved and praised; but the friend of Pliny is extolled for what he is in his nature and in his life. In this respect, therefore the inspired letter outshines the uninspired one.

It is not less interesting to view, by way of comparison the grounds in which the two interceders respectively rest their pleas in seeking the restoration of the run-aways, to their masters. Pliny pleads that Sabinianus should consider the youth, the tears, penitence and prayers of his servant, together with his own indulgent disposition and the request of the writer. These reasons, together with the good opportunity of exhibiting mercy in a case where the cause of anger was the greatest—are the sum of the considerations by which Pliny would persuade his friend to receive back his unfaithful servant. These are surface inducements. The case is no where rested on the principle of justice or right.

Grounding his request in love, the affections of Philemon are moved by many touching considerations, but in connexion with all that is said it is suggested that in receiving back his servant Philemon would be acting in harmony with God, who brings good out of evil. In love then, and the purpose of God does Paul establish his intercession for his client. In bringing the points of these letters together we see how far the inspired epistle transcends the uninspired one; and so far as Paul's letter eclipses Pliny's, so far, does Christianity throw into the shade the best that could be done by the wise of the ancient world when human learning and philosophy had done their best in the triumphs of civilization. Paul compares most favourably with the learned Roman in the generous impulses of his benevolent nature. He volunteers to reimburse Philemon for any loss that he may have sustained in the elopement of his slave. Pliny hints at no such offer, nor does he take into account that any loss had been sustained.

Pliny resorts to a device to confirm the servant of Sabinianus in his good intentions to remain with his Master should he receive him back again. Know you said his interceder, that I will never use my good offices for you again, should you prove unfaithful and elope a second time. Then he tells Sabinianus that this was simply an expedient designed to operate well upon his unfaithful servant. In Paul's letter there is the entire absence of strategy. The intercession is based on the soundest principles and the pleading is free from all disingenuousness.

It is but fair to infer that Pliny was conscious of pleasure when he learned that his intercession succeeded; but it is impossible that his joy was the same in degree or kind as that of Paul's. Paul's was joy in the Lord. It was the joy of triumph and fellowship in the new life to which Pliny was a stranger. It was grace that distinguished Paul from Pliny.

Viewed generally by comparison the letter of the polished Roman although a model epistle falls far short in many respects of the inspired letter of Paul to Philemon. There is a stateliness and power in the latter which is altogether wanting in the former. The difference is that between the conceptions of cultivated talent unaided and cultivated talent inspired by the Spirit of God. EDWARD MANNING.

AN INSTRUCTIVE REVIEW.

The Rev. Dr. Halley, who has recently retired from public life (he was Theological Professor at New College, London) was presented with an address on the occasion, accompanied with a cheque per £3100 sterling. He spoke as follows in reply:—

In the review of my life how much rises up before me. What changes I have seen, what vast progress in the arts of civilised life! But now my deliberate opinion is—and old men are not too fond of taking such a view, that the progress in the morality and in the religion of this country in the last sixty years has been quite equal to the progress in the arts, sciences, and conveniences of life. (Cheers.)

That is a great deal for an old man to say who can remember London without a gaslight, the Thames without a steamboat, and the country without a railroad and even young ladies without photographs. (Laughter.) You have lighted up your towns with gas, you travel to all parts of the country by rail, and you have made the sun take likenesses without a particle of that flattery by which the old artists used to displease the young ladies. With all this I believe the progress of religion and morality has been quite equal to the progress in the arts, and sciences, and conveniences of life. I remember, when I was a boy, coming to London, country people were disgusted, or rather, perhaps I should say, considering the difference of taste in those times, delighted with seeing human bodies hanging on gibbets, food for dogs and carrion birds at Hounslow-heath and Finchley-common. Foreigners sailing up the Thames saw what would shock Hindoos, pirates dropping to pieces on their gibbets on the banks of the Thames. I have seen nine persons—men and women—hung from Horsemongerlane Gaol in one morning for crimes committed in the county of Surrey—not a specially wicked county you will say. On Sunday morning I have seen prize-fighting on Blackheath, and the attendants not confined to the lower classes, but carriages waiting, and many of those who came in them deeply concerned as to the event. In a place as public as Greenwich-park I have seen the British soldier tied up to the triangle and flogged, in the sight of persons going to church. Sunday morning with our gentry was a great time for duelling, and many a gentleman on Sunday morning was sent to give his final account—thus unprepared. Nearly all dinner parties were scenes of disgusting intoxication. It was not surprising that other classes followed the example which was set by the princes of the royal family. Profane swearing was common; the gentleman swore at his butler; the coachman at his horses; the huxster at his donkey; the poor blind fiddler at his dog. And now what a change has taken place in the morals of this country as to religion. Our forefathers looked out of dim and hazy windows on crowds for whom they felt they could do nothing; and now no man or woman in the courts of this great city is regarded as utterly hopeless or out of the reach of our City missionaries. You have expended a great deal of money in Sunday-schools and in town and city missionaries, and you have been abundantly compensated in the elevation of the whole moral character of this country. In the last fifty years the change is wonderful. As to our own denomination the progress is remarkable. We have done noble work for others, and we are improving ourselves. Don't tell me that our preachers are not what they once were. I believe they preach better, and they are better men. We are not the sort of men who met at the Congregational Board at the Globe Tavern for an evening's enjoyment when every member was expected to spend twopenny for the good of the house. (Laughter.) I believe that our preachers preach the Gospel more directly, more earnestly, more affectionately, more freely and not less usefully than they did. The men of that