

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XVII., No. 16.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, April 17, 1872.

{ WHOLE SERIES. }
{ Vol. XXXVI., No. 16. }

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

LIFE IS LOVE.

I'm groping in the dark
For Thee, my God for Thee;
Of light the faintest spark
O Lord give unto me.

Thy way I cannot trace,
Thy path I cannot tell;
But Love is in Thy face;
It must be wise and well.

Shed light upon my path,
A ray of light divine;
All cleared of mists and wrath
Till in Thy light I shine.

I only ask Thy love,
Plain to my soul to make;
And how I best shall prove
Thy work for my poor sake.

Christ Jesus is my Lord,
My mediator—He—
Be sin henceforth abhorred
And lost in love's deep sea.

Forth unto work I go,
A peace within, around:
Blessing for all below—
A bliss supreme, profound.

Blessing on all around,
Blessing beneath, above!
God's grace a sinner found
And henceforth life is Love.

I drink deep of life's spring,
(Oh, waters pure and free!)
In gratitude I sing—
To Thee my God to Thee!

MARCH 1872. B. McL. P.

Religious.

(From the Methodist Recorder.)

PUBLIC DISCUSSION IN ROME.

ROME, Feb. 11.—Last Thursday week Sig. Sciarrelli, our own Methodist Italian minister in Rome, delivered a discourse in the hall in Via de Barbieri to prove "with arguments drawn from the Bible and the Fathers, that St. Peter had never been at Rome." Thus the lecture was announced the day previously in one of the most widely circulated of the Roman journals; and, together with the announcement, a challenge was thrown out to any priest who might desire publicly to discuss the subject. Many such invitations to public discussion had been previously given by the Italian evangelist in Rome; but hitherto the subject proposed had, I imagine, been of such a nature as to deter the priests from the venture. Or it may be that the taunts of the Liberal press had at length goaded them to save their honor by taking up the glove that had lain so long under their eye in the arena. It was determined that on Friday evening, Feb. 9, at the hour of seven, the discussion should commence; that the disputants should be three on either side; that the discussion should be regulated by four presidents, two from each party; that the audience should be admitted by ticket in equal numbers according to the capacity of the hall; that the debate should be rigorously limited to the question propounded by Sciarrelli; that stenographers should be admitted on either side, and when all was finished should draw up and consign to each party a full report in exact duplicate, duly signed and authenticated.

These determinations were zealously and speedily carried into effect. The hall selected was that of a certain Catholic Literary Society, called the *Accademia Tiberina*, capable of accommodating about 330 persons. The presidents, elected by our opponents were the Prince Chigi di Campagnano, brother of the well-known Papal Nuncio at Paris, and a distinguished Roman advocate, the Commendators de Domenicis Tosti; the Protestants were represented by Dr. Hermann Philip, missionary to the Jews, and myself. The champions on our side were Sig. Sciarrelli, Ribetti, the Waldensian minister in Rome, and Gavazzi. The

names of the Catholic disputants were kept secret up to the evening of the discussion.

Meantime, as was natural enough, the affair got wind, and the interest excited was immense. Allowing space for the presidents, the disputants, and the reporters, the hall did not admit of the issue of more than 130 tickets on either side. If there had been, instead, a thousand, the demand would not have been met. It was the high tide of Carnival; there was a masked ball that night at two of the principal theatres; Salvini, the greatest tragedian of modern Italy, was performing at another; yet the palm of public interest was carried off by the Evangelico-Catholic controversy. On Friday evening the hall filled rapidly and to overflowing; not a ticket was wasted. On the side of the Catholics, for the audience sat to the right or left of the hall according as they entered with the yellow tickets of the Papal party, or the red ones for the Evangelicals, were many distinguished members of the clergy and aristocracy of Rome.

It had been agreed that Sciarrelli should read his opening thesis, and then deposit the manuscript on the presidents' table, to provide against all possible misunderstanding of his words. The production did him great credit, and set forth lucidly and convincingly the arguments against the presence of Peter in Rome to be derived from the silence of Scripture, from the life of Peter as far as traceable in the Acts, from the respective commissions of Paul and Peter, the one to the Gentiles, the other to the Circumcision, and from the silence and implicit counter-evidence of the Apostolic fathers, while it anticipated the reasoning of the opposite side by estimating at their true value the patristic authorities of a later epoch. The discourse was well written and well read, and made an evident impression on the audience. The faces of the Evangelicals were radiant with triumph; while the Romanists sat with knit brows and looked anxiously towards their champions. But their turn came next. In reply to Sciarrelli rose a priest of about sixty years of age, of name not unknown in Europe. A profound archaeologist and orientalist, whose whole life has been spent in grubbing amongst the monuments of Rome and the records of the early Church, and withal a man of robust intellect, and a powerful Lent-preacher, the Romanists could hardly have found through all their ranks an abler protagonist on such a question than Don Fabiana. He has, moreover, written recently on the very subject in hand, and had, therefore, all his arguments at his fingers' ends. I believe that no better cause could have been made out on the Romanist side of the question than was set forth by Fabiana that night in his long and eloquent speech of nearly an hour and a half. Yet it was no reply to Sciarrelli. The scriptural arguments and those from the Apostolic fathers, which formed the strength of Sciarrelli's reasoning, were passed lightly over as "*le solite cose*," the old story; and we were overwhelmed with citations from a later antiquity, with the consent of tradition, and with the great fact of the existence of the Romish Church, which as an effect presupposed its only adequate cause, the presence, the pontificate, and the martyrdom of Peter in Rome.

Between the discourses of the two protagonists nearly three hours had elapsed; so that the other speakers of the evening were taken somewhat at disadvantage, owing to the lateness of the hour and the weariness of the audience. They were on our side Signor Ribetti, on that of the Catholics a certain Monsignor Cipolla, a parish priest of Rome, and if report speak true, of no very savory reputation. Neither of them showed very good fight. It was no easy matter to reply to Fabiana's powerful speech, without time for premeditation, and Ribetti, therefore, took refuge in generalities, and in generalities now and then a little too pungent for the occasion. As for Monsignor Cipolla, being afflicted with a great thick-

ness of utterance, he so chewed and mumbled his own words that the very stenographers gave him up in despair.

It was already eleven o'clock, and neither Gavazzi nor the corresponding third on the other side had spoken, so it was agreed that the discussion should be resumed on the following evening. I confess that I retired from the meeting a little downcast and discontented; not that I thought our opponents had really had the best of the argument, but the last profound impression had been made by one of their disputants, and it had not met with any adequate reply.

But all was redeemed by the result of the second evening. The audience was as large as before, and pretty much identical in its constituents. Gavazzi restored the interest in the discussion by the vigour and life of his discourse. Returning upon the arguments of Sciarrelli, he gave them fresh point and force, turned inside out the sophisms of his opponents, met erudition with counter-erudition, while the wonderful vitality of the man infused itself into the driest facts and hardest logic, making attention a necessity and a delight. Many had feared that Gavazzi's vehemence might betray him into expressions inconsistent with the urbanity desirable in such a debate; but these fears were proved by the event to be utterly without foundation. Nothing could have been more Christianly courteous than his treatment of his opponents personally, though nothing could have been more unsparring than his demolition of their arguments. All Protestants the world over owe a debt of gratitude to Gavazzi for his speech of this evening, for it was a great triumph won for them on a great occasion.

The replicant on the Catholic side was a young priest of the name of Guidi—a fluent and able speaker, but not the man to follow Gavazzi. Nor were his arguments of any intrinsic value. Indeed, it was plain that they were intended not for the Protestants, but for the Catholics; to save the sheep from seduction, not to bring the heretic goats into the fold. The main point was a reiteration of the reasoning of the previous evening. The Romish Church exists; exists as a stupendous fact; it must have had its origin in a cause equal to so vast an effect; that cause, as attested by all antiquity, is the Pontificate and martyrdom of St. Peter in Rome. Good, perhaps, for those who admit the underlying assumption of Peter's primacy; but for the Protestant a *petitio principii*. With this reply the discussion came to a close. The stenographical report will be published as quickly as possible, and, if I can find time, I hope to enable your readers to peruse it in an English version.

The event has been the talk of the city for the last few days, and the public journals have not failed to note the significance of the fact. If my letter has occupied too large a space in your columns, let this significance be my justification. That a Roman Prince and a Methodist preacher should sit side by side to preside over a religious discussion in the city of Rome—a discussion between elected dignitaries of the Papal Church and Italian native evangelists—a discussion sanctioned by the express authorization of the reigning Pontiff (for such I have heard to be the case since I began this letter)—a discussion to prove the *yes* or *no* of St. Peter's very presence in Rome; that such a discussion should have been conducted with the utmost amity and decorum, for so it was; that it should have terminated in a very demonstrative shaking of hands on the parts of presidents and disputants, for so it did; that its results, caught verbatim by stenography, should be committed to the press for free circulation throughout Christendom, is an event so passing strange that, had a prophet from God foretold it ten years ago, he would have had to make his credentials very plainly out indeed before the most sanguine amongst us could have "received his report."—I am, yours very truly,

HENRY J. PIGGOTT.

STATE OF MEN AFTER DEATH.

BY REV. ALVAH HOVER, D. D.

Objections to the Doctrine of a Middle State.

The other passage which has been thought to be irreconcilable with the doctrine of an intermediate state, followed by a general resurrection of the dead, is found in the second epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (5: 1-8), and may be translated as follows: "For we know that if our earthly, tent-like house be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we also groan, longing to be clothed upon with our dwelling which is from heaven; seeing that we shall be found clothed, not naked. For we who are in the tent do also groan, being burdened; since we do not wish to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life. Now he that wrought us out for this very thing is God, who also gave to us the earnest of the Spirit. Being therefore always confident, and knowing that while present in the body we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight; we are confident, I say, and well pleased rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord."

Now I am ready to grant that, if this was the only passage in the New Testament treating of a resurrection, it would be right for us to expect that event immediately after death. But I am not at liberty to forget the elaborate discussion of this great topic in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, an epistle in the hands of the very Christians to whom he was now writing. Nor am I at liberty to assume, with certain German expositors, that the apostle had obtained new light on the time and circumstances of the resurrection, since writing his former letter; for such an assumption illy accords with his claim to apostolic authority and knowledge. But he had said in that letter: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ will all be made alive; but every one in his order; Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's, at His coming;" and also: "We shall not all of us sleep, but we shall all of us be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." With these words before them, it would never have entered the minds of believers in Corinth that Paul meant to teach the resurrection of every Christian instantly after death; much less could it have occurred to them that one who had put forth such claims to inspiration in a former letter (1 Cor. 2: 12, 13.) was now correcting an error taught in that letter. The longer one reflects upon this point the more evident will it become that the darker language of the apostle's second letter, in respect to the time of the resurrection, must be so explained as to avoid all conflict with the clearer language of his first letter.

I am also ready to admit that Paul speaks of existence without a body as less desirable in itself, for a human being, than existence in a body. He did not wish to migrate out of the body, merely for the sake of living as a pure spirit. He had no contempt for the material universe and no desire to be separated from it forever. No intimations that matter is evil, or the source of evil, appear in his writings; no traces of asceticism are found there. He recognizes the greatness and glory of the invisible world without despising the visible. And in the passage under examination he assumes that the soul of man was made for vital union with a body, and supposes the final state of believers to be rendered perfect, partly, at least, by the glorious bodies which they will possess. All the references of the apostle to that state agree in this particular; the resurrection is necessary to the full redemption and highest good of man.

Can it then be surprising that, in a

passage contrasting present affliction with future and eternal glory, he should fix his eyes steadfastly on the final state, and glance but now and then, with less interest, at the intermediate state? With the radiant summit of the mountain which he is climbing in full view, does the eager traveller pay much attention to the lower heights which he must pass in reaching that summit? Does not the distance seem near in proportion to its magnitude and brightness? So to the apostle his life without a body, in the period between death and the resurrection, appears, like "the light affliction" of which he had just spoken, to be "but for a moment," when compared with the endless life beyond. Yet he does not wholly overlook the intermediate state, but rather, in the last verse of the paragraph, expresses a lively preference for that state over the present, because in that he will be at home with the Lord, while, so long as he is in the body, he is absent from the Lord. Nay, in his letter to the Philippians he declares that it would be far better for himself to depart and be with Christ than to live longer in the flesh. He must, therefore, have looked upon "being at home with the Lord," though in the form of a disembodied spirit, as a life far in advance of this, a life in which "the spirits of the just made perfect" have direct converse with the Lord and rejoice in the vision of His glory. This communion with Christ and freedom from sin will make the period of waiting for the resurrection one of great peace, however inferior it may be in some respects to the consummate glory of the eternity beyond.

Hence the words of the apostle, in 2 Cor. 5: 1-8, may be paraphrased thus: For if this earthly house or body, in which we dwell as in a tent, be taken down, we have in prospect, as our sure abode hereafter, a building formed by the act of God Himself, a house not made with hands, and therefore not frail and perishable, but rather eternal in the heavens. Such a house we surely have in prospect, for in this tent, our present body, we even groan while contrasting it with the future body and longing to be clothed upon with our dwelling which is from heaven—even as the dying acorn is clothed upon by the living and enduring oak; since indeed it is certain that we shall at last be found clothed and not naked, provided with a body and not left without a body. Such a dwelling I repeat, we have in sure prospect, for we who are in the frail tent, our mortal body, do groan, being burdened with a sense of its weakness and imperfection when compared with the far better one of the future; for we have no desire to be unclothed—that in itself is something not to be coveted—but we do desire to be clothed upon, in order that what is mortal, to wit, our present body, may be swallowed up by the life of heaven, which embraces body and soul forever. And this change we shall certainly experience; for He that has prepared us by His grace for the same is God, the faithful and omnipotent, who also gave us, at the time of our regeneration, the Holy Ghost as a pledge of the heavenly and perfect life for which we long. Being therefore always full of courage by reason of this earnest of the Spirit, and knowing that while we are present in the body we are absent from the Lord,—an absence proved by the fact that we are consciously walking by faith and not by sight,—we are full of courage, I say, and are well pleased to migrate out of the body and dwell, as disembodied spirits, with the Lord, whom we long to see in His glory. Such appears to be the substance of the apostle's teaching in this passage, and it agrees with his doctrine elsewhere.

Finally, I would ask the student of this passage to weigh carefully the following considerations. In the first place, it is preceded by a contrast between the light affliction of this life, which is but for a moment, and the eternal weight of glory in store for