

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

LETTER FROM BURMAH.

MAULMAIN, January 14th, 1875.

Dear Brother Selden,—

Rev. Dr. Haaswell, of Maulmain, has just brought out a grammar of the Peguan Language. In his introduction he has given some interesting remarks on the Peguan—or, as they are more commonly called, the Taleing—people. No other man is so well qualified to speak on the subject as he. For more than thirty-eight years he has been among them—their only Missionary. I make a few extracts for our home friends.

Yours very truly,
W. F. ARMSTRONG.

THE PEGUANS.

The Peguans, so called from their old capital Pegu, called by themselves Mon, by the Burmese Taleings, were the ruling nation in southern Burmah when first visited by Europeans. They seem at one time to have been divided into several petty Kingdoms, as the Martaban, Thatong, Pegu, &c. There were continual feuds among themselves, as well as frequent wars with the Siamese on the one hand, and with the Burmese on the other.

FROM WHENCE DID THEY ORIGINALLY COME?

is a question I am unable to answer. On one occasion in questioning an old Peguan on the subject, he said he could obtain a history for me that would tell all about it. He accordingly brought me an old palm-leaf book which proved to be legends of a tour of Gaudama from Ceylon to Malacca, and thence through Tenasserim and Martaban, to Pegu, which is said, at that time, to have been covered with the waters of the ocean; but Gaudama prophesied that it would become solid land, and that on a sand bank on which he alighted there would be a great city built, the Kings of which for many generations would be zealous promoters of his religion. It is said that Gaudama, after leaving Malacca, having stopped at two or three places, proceeded direct to Tavoy, which at that time was the border of the Mon (Peguan) country. The book is abundantly interspersed with Pali; but consists in great part of statements that Gaudama, passing through the air from one place to another, (names of places generally not given), having preached to those by whom he was met, would at their request for some memento or relic of him, pass his hand over his head, and give them one or more hairs which they would hasten to enshrine in some Pagoda or cave. There are a few pages in the book which may with some propriety, be called history. The names are given of fifty-seven Kings of Thatone of one dynasty, and five of another—sixty-two in all. But little is said concerning any of them, excepting that they were owners of white elephants, or of horses that could pass through the air. The names of the queens are also given, but there is nothing to throw light upon the question, From whence did the Peguans come?

Dr. Mason thought they came from India and that they are allied to the Kohls. By references to the dissimilarity of language and complexion, Dr. Haaswell makes this view appear extremely improbable. He goes on to say:

"My own opinion is that the Peguans originally came from the East or North East rather than from the West. The Rev. Mr. Carpenter, who went overland from Maulmain to Bangkok, two or three years since, met a large company of people fleeing from Siamese territory, who called themselves Kwahs. A Karen, conversant with Peguan, who was of Mr. C's company, said, 'they are Taleings.' Ill health [Dr. H. has been an invalid for the past eight years, and is in daily expectation of death—W. F. A.] has prevented me from visiting these people, (who have long settled in British territory) to endeavor to learn something more about them.

From whatever part of the world the Peguans came, I think their words for North—signifying under the wind or low wind,—and South—high wind—may be taken as an evidence that they have long lived where the South West and North East monsoons prevail.

RELIGION.

The Peguans, like the Burmese, are Buddhists. The Buddhist Scriptures are said to have been translated into Peguan before they were into Burman. They have one book called the "Moola-Moolce" which the Burmese have not. It professes to give an account of things from

the very beginning, before there was a God or any living being.

The Peguans are much more addicted to demon worship than the Burmese. If a person is taken suddenly ill, they at once make enquiry as to where he has been; and offerings of rice, plantains, &c., are deposited near the places, especially if he have been in the jungle, hoping to propitiate the demon he may have unwittingly offended. They build small houses near their own dwellings in which they place offerings to demons. Soon after I came into the country, being in a village which had one of these little demon houses near almost every dwelling, supposing they were children's play-houses, I looked into one to see what kind of toys the children were accustomed to amuse themselves with; and the people who saw me came moaning, begging me not to go in, as the demon would be angry, and visit the family with sickness.

When a person has been long ill, they sometimes make feasts in which the women of the family dress fantastically, and dance one after another, until the demon who caused the illness is supposed to take possession of one of them, when she begins to shake like a person in an ague fit; and whatever she says, while in that state, is considered oracular, and any directions she may give with regard to food, or medicine, or offerings, are strictly followed. I once saw a woman dancing at a festival of this kind, dressed in an English frock coat, and high-crowned hat on her head. The sick often make vows that if they recover they will make a demon festival.

There are people among them who are supposed to understand the mind of the demons, or to have influence with them. Such persons are consulted by the friends of the sick.

Some of these demon people are shrewd enough to give directions for things to be done which will be likely to prove beneficial.

The superstitions of the Peguans with regard to demons are innumerable. Demon worship was undoubtedly their only religion previous to their reception of Buddhism; and though they are told in their books that if a man makes offerings to demons once, and afterwards performs works of merit a hundred times, it will be in vain, like pouring water upon the sand. Yet their fear of demons is so strong, that they are continually doing something to appease, or shunning something for fear of offending them.

DOCTORS.

Any one who chooses takes up the profession of doctor, of which there are two classes, the one giving medicine, the other feeding the patient with all kinds of food. The theory of this latter class is, that the body being formed of various elements, illness is caused by the excess or deficiency of one or another of these, and that some kinds of food go to replenish one element, and some another. They therefore feed the patient with every imaginable thing in hopes of hitting the right one, and thus restoring the equilibrium.

I was once called to see a child about two years old, that was ill of dysentery. I found it in a dying state. On inquiring what medicine had been given it, they replied no medicine had been given it, they had "fed the elements." I asked what they had fed it, they replied "a great many things." But what have you given it to-day? "Fowls flesh cooked with assafoetida." Thinking I had misunderstood I asked them to show it to me. They brought some, and I saw there was no mistake, it was "fowls flesh cooked with assafoetida," and the poor child who died while I was there had been forced to swallow that horrible mess.

DISPOSAL OF THE DEAD.

When a person dies the body is washed and laid out decently, excepting those who die in early infancy, or of some contagious or epidemic disease like small-pox or cholera, when the body is rolled up in a mat and buried with little delay or ceremony. With these exceptions, they burn their dead. Their coffins like the Burmese are very showy, covered with colored paper, the ends of peacocks' tails, and tinsel. They make a great parade at their funerals, especially those of elderly people.

EDUCATION.

Among the Peguans as among the Burmese the priests are the schoolmasters. Almost all the boys are put into the monasteries for a longer or shorter period, but the great proportion of them leave before they can read fluently, and seldom looking at a book afterwards, many of them forget all they have learned. There are no schools

for girls. It is a very rare thing to find a Peguan woman who can read excepting those that have been taught in mission schools. One reason for this, is the exclusion of women from their monasteries; but the principal reason is the perfect indifference of the people to their education. When urged to put their daughters into school, they often ask, "of what use will it be, they cannot become clerks, or hold government appointments. They can take care of children and cook rice just as well, if they cannot read, as if they could."

For the Christian Messenger.

LETTER FROM GEORGIA, U. S.

STONE MOUNTAIN, GEORGIA,
March 1st, 1875.

For a long while, until of late, the subject of baptism has been very little discussed from the pulpit in this immediate part of the country. The churches seemed to prosper, the fraternal bonds of christian unity to wax as strong, if not stronger, as when the perplexing subject was agitated and discussed by the ablest talents. Even now there is no real excitement or particular feeling on the subject in the churches, but from certain indications, heated discussions may almost at any time arise and ensue with bitterness and sectarian feeling. These discussions appear to be periodical, but never recur at regular intervals of time. When in the full enjoyment of religion, in times when refreshing comes from the Lord. Such discussions, if indulged in, have a beneficial rather than a contrary effect. They are conducted in the spirit of meekness. Just now the churches appear to be in a languid and lukewarm condition. Lately some of our Pedobaptist ministers have been preaching several sermons on the mode and proper subjects of christian baptism in which they have criticised their brethren of an opposing belief very freely, and thrown out the gauntlet, defying successful confutation of what they assume to be scriptural and correct.

As is generally known to the Literary and Religious world the Rev. James W. Dale, D. D., pastor of the Wayne Presbyterian church, Delaware County, Pa., has just completed a series of works on baptism: "Classic," "Judaic," "Johanic," and an "Inquiry into the usage of Baptizo," comprehending two vols., "Christic" and "Patristic." These tomes make a display of much learning, and a great deal of research, and to the minds of some clear away all mist and every knotty difficulty in rightly understanding the correct import of Baptizo from a Pedobaptist standpoint. The author no doubt is learned, and his reading comprehends a wide scope in both ancient and modern literature. Does that make even his judgment infallible? Has he suffered his learning in riper years to have the influence of molding his judgment and correcting early impressions? At any rate, in the mind of your correspondent, his conclusions do not logically harmonize in some instances so well. But it is not my purpose to write a critique. These volumes are furnishing a stock of material for the make up of sermons or discourses on the subject of baptism. Some ministers, no doubt, feeling an enthusiasm on the subject, that so much has been gained are ready to expatiate freely thereon. It is not enough to let the quiet "country pastor" of Pennsylvania have the credit, in his own way, of telling us what baptism is in its different phases and applications is, but his stock of ideas, right or wrong, are eagerly caught up and promulgated not as his, but their own for the instruction of congregations.

We are taught of sacred scripture that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Would the reader desire to be correctly informed of the nature, purpose and signification of baptism, as well as its scriptural mode? If so, it is not necessary to read Dale or any other work. Far more plain, explicit and satisfactory information can be gained simply by reading the scriptures. The scriptures best interpret themselves. They tell how the Saviour of the world was baptized, and where; they also tell us how the Apostles baptized. No such plain information can be gained by visiting the catacombs of Rome, or looking on certain pictures of an uncertain date and origin carved out on rocks, or reading certain detached quotations from some of the Patristic writers who flourished some centuries after the Apostolic age, where superstition and ignorance were brooding in the minds of many. Read the Bible. It is the source of light—revealed for our instruction.

P. L. H.

For the Christian Messenger.

"CHURCH DISCIPLINE."
SINGING.

"One thing at a time," saith the old proverb, and however old it may appear to some, it is proposed in this article to discuss the subject of the Service of song as connected with church discipline. That it has not been usual to consider it in that light is not a sufficient reason why it should not be. Singing is held to be an important part in the regular public worship; it is indispensable in special and revival services; hence it follows that all church members should sing to the best of their ability. It is not enough to say that, that is what is done; the question is—is that that is done, the best that can be done?

In ordinary congregations what numbers there are that have no hymn books. If the church has resolved that singing of hymns shall form one exercise in the worship of God, she should also determine to supply each member with a hymn book. If that one is necessary so is the other; yet neither hymn books, nor a corresponding number of tune books will produce this essential element in worship; there must be vocal effort. In general, Baptist congregations are not "led in singing" by a salaried precentor, but by common consent, one is accorded the privilege of starting the tunes; a duty simple and pleasant enough if he know how to do it. It not unfrequently happens however that he indulges in a half suppressed monotone at the outset, and suddenly breaks out somewhere near the middle of the line; too often even then the tune is raised just high enough to be beyond every one's reach; or pitched so low as to render its salvation almost hopeless. It would seem too that, of those who do sing, very few indeed have any idea of singing in "parts;" basses, tenors, and altos, all endeavour to sing the "part" which properly and exclusively belongs to the sopranos; failing of mounting so high, they fall into a fit of despondency, and grumble away at an octave lower, and all are satisfied that they are doing their best.

There is no intention in this paper of harsh criticism upon sincere devotion; but as it is not responsible for the facts, so these facts will come unbidden and unwelcome. There is no difficulty in finding tunes suitable to every hymn, if the leader only know how and what to select. Yet it is unquestionably bad taste to sing a tune in a minor key to "Come let us join our cheerful songs;" and unwise to try to crowd a long metre hymn into a tune of eights and sevens; and doubtful judgment to start a tune with a fugue, when all (as above shown) are resolved to sing one "part." Ought such inconsistencies to be allowed to pass as tolerable on the plea that "the congregation does the best it can?"

Many attempts have been made to improve psalmody: organs and harmoniums obtain the greatest favour among church members to this end; by the vote of the church the instrument is placed in the sanctuary, which fact proves that what is contended for is a part of church discipline. In the next degree of favour ranks a choir of singers, which too frequently exists as a separate and independent section of the congregation; between it and some members of the church there is an understanding of settled antagonism; and of others of a reciprocal feeling of indulgence. Still the church claims to be the arbiter of its own ceremonies, requires the minister to supply the choir with the list of hymns, and so far the choir is subject to church discipline. But a word about the capacities of the choir: how few of its members can sing a clear, pure tone without harshness or breathiness—their own "part" with assurance—by music—and with such modulation that no voice shall be heard prominent from the others; and yet all, so far they know "doing the best they can;" and still further as a remedy many (but as many abortive) attempts have been made to secure practice meetings for the whole congregation.

Above and foremost of all other organizations, churches should promote singing, and should frown down and into oblivion that monstrous and stereotyped libel upon the character of God, viz., that He has formed a large proportion of the civilized human family without the capacity for singing. It is pitiable folly for a Hindoo to keep his limbs fixed in any given position until that they have become rigid and useless; but it is worse for christians, under the excuse of having no ear nor voice for music, to allow the faculties which God has given them for praising Him to lie

dormant. Specially should the church "mark that man" who, boasting that God "hath put a new song" into his mouth, deliberately says "I can't sing."

Great progress has been made in late years in removing the mysteries which surrounded music; it is no longer the privilege of the favored few. The notation in which musical ideas have formerly been written, is as unintelligible as a doctor's prescription in Latin, and will never become popular, nor supply the want so universally deplored; (peace to its shade) while in the system which was founded by Miss Glover, and elaborated by Mr. Curwen, the greatest demands and severest tests have been satisfied on the one hand, and on the other tens of thousands of children in Great Britain alone justify the truth of its motto—"easy cheap and true;" it is called the Tonic Sol-fa system.

There is no reason why churches should not adopt Tonic Sol-fa singing; on the contrary, upon every consideration of pleasure, harmony, and sanctified song, it should be adopted. In these later times of the nineteenth century it behoves Baptist churches to promote everything which may be employed "to the use of edifying;" speaking with one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; to be no longer satisfied with present attainments, much less to tolerate the dreadful abuse of sacred words, the strangulation of beautiful tunes, and destruction of those delicate organs which God has placed in everyone for each others benefit, and with which to sing His praise.

PASTOR.

For the Christian Messenger.

To the Editor of the Christian Messenger,

DEAR SIR,—

One of the results of the establishment of Free Common Schools in any country is the increased attendance upon Superior Private Schools, Academies, and Colleges. Such has been notably the case in these Provinces. A statement, which has just appeared in a leading newspaper, shows that the Sackville institutions have enjoyed great prosperity of late. A less formal statement in regard to those established at Wolfville proves that the same is true of them. In the latter, a still larger attendance would have been reported, were it not that the boarding accommodations are not adequate to the demands. It is pleasant to be able to record such a manifestation of interest in the important matter of Education. If there is also evidence that efficiency in management and instruction is as unquestionable as is largeness of attendance, than we have all we can legitimately require. On that point I do not hesitate to say I am not incredulous.

I lately had an opportunity of seeing some of the work of the Horton Institutions, more particularly in the Academy and Seminary, and of testing the validity of my conclusions and the worth of my theory. The exercises on the occasion of my visit happened to be History, Algebra, Arithmetic and Greek, embracing a class in the College, one in the Seminary and two in the Academy. As it is not my object in this present writing to laud the teachers or to "puff" the Schools, my report may be very brief.

The exercise in History was a Lecture by Professor Tufts before a class in College, with a representation from the Seminary. One of the Algebra classes consisted of young ladies belonging to the Female Department. The class in Arithmetic was composed of members of the Academy, and that in Greek contained pupils from both schools. Of the exercises thus witnessed I shall only say that I was highly gratified at what I saw and heard. There is the less need of making a more lengthy statement as any one has the same opportunity of becoming acquainted with the condition of things, as I had. The doors of the Institution are open to all, as inclination may prompt, or leisure permit. Not only are the teachers willing that the schools should be visited, but they desire it; not however, as I believe, in any vain-glorious spirit, but because of the beneficial influence which they consider such attentions exert upon those under their instructions. I have heard them express themselves to that effect.

A circumstance casually glanced at in the above remarks may be recalled, as it will serve "to point a moral." It is that the Horton Institutions are now no longer the heritage of our sex alone. Even the classes in college are at length open to young women. Thus one after another of the doctrines of "old fogysim" is being exploded, and the world is gradually yielding to the claims of reason and common sense.