

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger. From Heidelberg, Germany.

THE OYERFLOW OF THE NECKAR.

Doubleless the readers of the Messenger have learned through its columns of the fearful inundation along the banks of the Rhine, which occurred during the first part of December. Every village and town on either bank of this historic river were flooded by its waters.

This city is situated on the left bank of the river Neckar, just where its waters after struggling for many miles to gain a passage through lofty hills, at length find release and pour themselves into the valley of the Rhine. Far back among these hills a heavy fall of snow had taken place. The weather had then become much milder, and during the last week the snow had melted rapidly.

Some of the people were now compelled to leave their houses, and very many had removed from the first into the second story. Throughout the day the water rose very slowly, and it was hoped that it would soon cease its upward progress.

Another morning dawned. Throughout the entire night the waters had continued to rise. About ten o'clock they reached the highest point. Some what later we proceeded on a tour of observation through the town. Above the city the hills approach so near the river that there is only room at their base for a carriage way and railroad.

With another day the Neckar had retired within its natural limits and we could walk through the portion of the city which had been submerged. In every street mud several inches deep had been deposited. The scenes presented on either side are most deplorable to behold broken or mud covered furniture is often to be seen along the sidewalks.

who desire so to do. The next cross street leads to the Old Bridge which spans the Neckar. Along the centre of this street an elevated foot-path of planks is constructed. From the central way planks are laid to the doors and windows of the houses. We cross to the bridge. Here we observe that the heights above the ordinary level which the Neckar has reached on various occasions are painted on the first pier of the bridge.

From the middle of the bridge one looks down upon the waters, which ever swift in their flight toward the sea now rush with far more than their ordinary speed. Angered as it were by every obstruction they beat themselves into a seething foam in the vain endeavor to carry these old piers from their wanted bed.

Returning to the Haupt-Strasse, we proceed somewhat further, when turning into another cross street, we enter a boat in order to visit our former place of abode. Out of the cross street over the corner of the square where the soldiers drill and into a street parallel to the main one, the boatmen ply their way and bring us to the desired house.

We again enter the boat which is propelled by the long poles of the boatmen to the new landing place in the city. We pass several more cross streets, which during the day having been guarded by soldiers to prevent a rush of people to the waters edge, and come at length to the New Bridge. This leads to the village of Neuenheime, where scenes similar to those in Heidelberg may be witnessed.

During the entire day the water continued to fall. In the evening the streets which are overflowed are lighted by burning pitch. The flames swept by the winds throw a weird light upon the darkened waters. In the distance ever and anon there is seen the moving torch of the busy boatmen. Groups of people are collected in every street watching the retreating waters.

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B. R. Dec. 30th, 1822.

For the Christian Messenger. Letter from India.

There are in India two district educational parties representing respectively the missionary and the government interests. The "General Council on Education in India" may in a general sense be considered the representative of the missionary interest and the advocate of their system of education as opposed to that of the government.

The government party, on the other hand, asserts that the purely secular education given in the schools imparts a high moral tone to the students while it preserves that strict religious neutrality which is enjoined by the despatch; and that the present system of education in every way fulfills the conditions of that despatch.

The commission called into being by this contest has now completed its enquiries. It has taken the evidence of 230 men and women in various parts of India who have long been careful observers of the working of the Educational Department. There have been read before the commission 300 memorials and addresses signed by more than 200,000 persons.

The policy of the present government seems to be actuated by a desire to benefit the people at large greater than has characterized its predecessors. It has formulated and circulated for the approval of the various districts a scheme of self government. For the present an expression of opinion only is asked for by the government. Should that expression be favourable to the scheme, it will be put in force. But the general opinion seems to be that in such an event too much power and money would be placed in the hands of natives who in the majority of cases are not yet sufficiently educated either in patriotism or morality to govern themselves, much less their fellow creatures.

The Salvation Army has invaded India, a detachment, in native dress, landed in Bombay. They were headed by "Major" Tucker, an Indian ex-Civilian with a good knowledge of Hindustani. The day after the arrival, the detachment, consisting of men and women, attempted to march through the town singing songs in the vernacular accompanied by the sound of cornet and drum. The police had received instructions beforehand and speedily lodged them in the nearest station.

The movement will meet with a flagrant success in India; not because the natives are particularly struck with the "Army" idea which seemed so well adapted to the tastes of the lower classes in England, but because of the processions, display, music and din which are with them important ingredients of religious enthusiasm. What the permanent results will be can be better determined by those who know the Hindu mind than by the Salvationists.

For the Christian Messenger. The Uncertainties of Science.

Mr. Editor,—I enclose an extract from the "Montreal Family Herald," which illustrates finely the certainties of Natural Science, as compared with the uncertainties of Revealed Religion, as these are sometimes boastfully put forth by sceptics and unbelievers. The extract is from an article on the Transit of Venus, and clearly shows how utterly impossible it is to arrive at absolute certainty, when we go peering up among the stars to find out how far off, how big and how heavy they are.

The magnitude of astronomical calculations renders them as difficult to grasp mentally as the infinities of time and space. Professor Proctor, however, in his popular style, in an able apology for the discrepancies of astronomy, has reduced the figures to something like appreciable proportions. He says: "But in truth, if we consider the nature of the task undertaken by astronomers in this case, we can only too readily understand that their measurements should differ somewhat widely from each other. Let us picture to ourselves for a moment the central sun, the earth, and the earth's path, not as they really are, for the mind refuses altogether to picture the dimensions even of the earth, which is but an atom compared with the sun, whose own proportions, in turn, mighty though they are, sink into utter insignificance compared with the enormous scale of the orbit in which the earth travels around him.

Let us reduce the scale of the entire system to one five hundred millionth part of its real value; even then we have a tolerably large orbit to imagine. We must picture to ourselves a fiery globe three yards in diameter to represent the sun, and the earth as a one inch ball circling round that globe at a distance of about 325 yards, or about 350 paces. The diameter of the earth's orbit would on this scale, therefore, be somewhat more than a third of a mile. If we imagine the one inch ball moving around the fiery globe once in a year, while turning on its axis once in a day, we find ourselves under a difficulty arising from the slowness of the resulting motions. We should have found ourselves under a difficulty arising from the rapidity of the actual motions if we had considered them instead. The only resource is to reduce our time scale, in the same way that we have reduced our space scale but not in the same degree; for if we did we should have the one inch ball circling round its orbit a third of a mile in diameter, sixteen times in a second, and turning on its axis five thousand times in a second. Say, instead, that for convenience we suppose days reduced to seconds. Then we have to picture a one-inch globe circling once in rather more than six minutes about a globe of fire three yards in diameter, one sixth of a mile from it and turning on its axis once in a second. We must further picture the one inch globe as inhabited by some 1,500 millions of creatures far too small to be seen with the most powerful microscope—in fact, so small that the tallest would be in height but about the seventh millionth of an inch—and we must imagine that a few of these creatures undertake the task of determining from their tiny home, swiftly rotating as it rushes around a large globe of fire, 325 yards from them, the number of yards really intervening between that globe and their home. If we rightly picture these conditions, which fairly represent those under which the astronomer has to determine the distance of the sun from the earth, we shall perceive that the wonder rather is that any idea of the sun's distance should be obtained at all, than that the estimates obtained should differ from each other, and that the best of them should err in measurable degree from the true distance.

THE COMET AGAIN.—Mr. Proctor says that the comet which has so long been an object of interest in the early morning sky is probably the comet of 1880, which was probably the comet of 1843, which was probably the comet of 1668. Now if it once had a period of 175 years; which was suddenly shortened to 37 years, and then to 2 years and 8 months, a very rapid approach to the sun is indicated, and Mr. Proctor remarks that if it should return again in nine months, then in three, then in one, then in a fortnight, then in a week, three days, one day, half a day—all these put together would make up less than fourteen months, within which time it will probably fall into the sun, and we will have the opportunity to ascertain what the effect will be. He quotes Sir Isaac Newton's opinion, that whenever the comet of 1680 should fall into the sun it would increase its heat so much that the earth would be burnt up and no animals in it could live. If the first part of Newton's statement is correct, the last may readily be admitted. Mr. Proctor does not, however, anticipate any such serious results from the dropping of the present comet into the sun, but thinks it fair to assume that, although the encounter between the two bodies, will be a serious affair for one of them it will not be, the sun that will suffer.

A young St. Louis housekeeper, who had read in a Paris letter that four-poster beds were again in fashion, started in search of one of them the other day. She finally found what she desired in the house and under the person of a sick Hungarian, whose wife was painfully supporting him by sewing, and who valued it as an heirloom, but was willing to supply his necessities by selling it. The next day she took a dealer to fix the price, and, having been purchased for a liberal sum, it was sent to his shop to be fitted with new ropes. It was in fact, a mahogany four-poster of admirable workmanship, and the dealer was examining the carvings with delight when he accidentally pressed upon a carved rose which yielded and disclosed a secret receptacle, in which was tightly wedged a leather bag containing Italian coins worth several thousand dollars. The money was promptly handed to the poor Hungarians, whose amazement was so great that in all probability they have not yet recovered from it.

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