

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, MAY 28, 1856.

In all the great seats of Protestant Christianity, the opening of the season has for some years past been appropriated as a period for celebrating the progress of Christian truth in connection with Missionary labour. This is especially the case in England and the United States, where most of the great Missionary Anniversaries are regularly convened in April and May. Around these meetings, as a common focus, are congregated the piety, the talent and the various influences of the different Evangelical sections of the Christian Church, to hear the reports from heathen lands—to rejoice in the successes, or to mourn over the reverses, of their efforts to carry out their common object—the conversion of the world to God, as well as to organize means and stimulate exertions for the final triumph of their great and holy enterprise. Many of the London Meetings have just taken place, and of several connected with our own Denomination we have received the reports published in the English papers.

At the head of these may justly be placed the English Baptist Missionary Society. The Anniversary was held at Exeter Hall on the 1st inst., and appears to have been very numerously attended, and to have lost none of the interest which, as the Harbinger of Modern Christian Missions, is now universally accorded to it. The facts condensed in the interesting report of the committee are of the most important nature. A few of the leading and active friends of the Society have been called from their labours during the past year, among whom is the Rev. Eustace Carey. The finances of the Society shew a sound and healthy state, altho' it is much to be regretted that the exertions of the committee are very considerably cramped for want of means to meet the numerous increasing demands made upon them in almost every portion of the vast field of their operations. The income of the past year was £21,400 sterling, and they commence the present year wholly free from debt. Many of the addresses reported are exceedingly interesting as regards the facts bearing on past and future progress. Such especially is the case in reference to the large and rich Island of Ceylon, where 15 Baptist churches in a flourishing state, and some of them self-supporting, are now zealously extending the cause of the Redeemer. Indeed from present appearances we should be little surprised in a few years to see the mighty triumphs of the cross in Burmah, repeated in Ceylon. Throughout British India, as well as in many parts of the West Indies, the labours of the Society have been much blessed, and it is a highly satisfactory circumstance that almost in every missionary field the labourers of various denominations are more closely and cordially uniting in the prosecution of the great and mutual end in view. We believe this general desire to draw more closely the ties of Gospel fellowship, between the various sections of the great Christian host, to be the forerunner of a large effusion of spiritual blessings on the church—a foreshadowing of that millennial glory when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

The Home Missionary Society has for some years past been acquiring a stronger hold on the minds of our brethren in England. The annual meeting took place in London on the 5th inst., and was largely attended. The report is interesting. The funds of the Society are limited, not exceeding £4,500 sterling. This sum is, however, judiciously expended; as many as 215 preaching stations in the different villages throughout the country being efficiently kept up, while very considerable numbers have been added by their instrumentality to neighbouring churches. Still it would appear by the report that thousands of villages throughout England are almost destitute of any truly evangelical preaching, notwithstanding the efforts made to supply the want, by different bodies of Christians. There is no doubt a large number of truly pious and devoted men among the ministry of the Established Church, but we are led to the conclusion by all that we see on the subject, that the majority are but "blind, leaders of the blind." The poisonous leaven of Tractarianism, High Church principles, and other hindrances to sound doctrine, are widely prevalent, and go far to counteract the healthful influences of a pure gospel.

The Baptist Irish Society, held its annual meeting in London, on the 29th April. This society,

which for some years past, has been pursuing its useful but unostentatious course, by sending scripture readers into the cabins and hovels of the poor and ignorant of Ireland, has not been without cheering fruits. It is however by far too much restricted in its means, not enjoying an income of more than about £1,500 sterling. Urgent and telling appeals were made at the meeting to the sympathies and consciences of the friends of truth, which we sincerely hope may not be without effect.

The meetings of the Baptist Tract Society and Baptist Evangelical Society, completed the Anniversaries of the season, and we should judge from the general tone of feeling exhibited, that the prospects of the present year are fully as encouraging as any that have preceded. It will be remembered that the past year has been one of heavy national expense and retrenchment in consequence of the war, but yet the funds of the various societies have, we believe, upon the whole exceeded those of any former year. We rejoice to think that our English brethren have good cause to "thank God and take courage."

In concluding the subject we would call our reader's attention to the abstract on our first page of the report of the meeting of the American and Foreign Bible Society in New York. We have of late referred to the labours of this zealous and active body, which by an efficient system of Colportage is widely extending the sphere of its truly evangelical usefulness. We feel especially interested in that branch of its efforts which is connected with the spread of the scriptures in New Mexico. By this inlet, if by any, the pure Word of God is most probably to be introduced among the ignorant and misguided millions that people Southern and Central America. Among them the influence of Popery is daily losing its hold, and it seems far from improbable that it will be the great mission of our American brethren ere long, to "go up and possess the land."

Prohibition and Anti-Prohibition.

WE are glad to see that our friend, J. Bent, Esq., has re-published in pamphlet form the excellent articles on the prohibitory law, which appeared in our pages some time since from the pen of the Rev. C. Tupper, and as they are accompanied by replies, styled on the title page "Anti-prohibition," they will no doubt induce examination of the subject and thus ultimately serve the cause of temperance. If they are the means of restoring but one drunken husband and father to society and his family, that will be worth more than all the cost of publication.

The letters in reply were originally sent to us for publication. We may just remark by way of explanation of our declining to publish them, 1st, that they came to us in the first place through a third party without the proper name of the writer. 2ndly they were so long that the first one would have filled nearly a page, and no intimation was given how many we might expect to follow, so that to have given them insertion we must have excluded other important communications; and lastly, the settled policy of all temperance organizations, and indeed the whole christian world is professedly prohibition of the sale of intoxicating drinks. No question exists on the propriety of this. The only question is, what are the best means for accomplishing it. Even our present license law and every other barrier to its sale is a partial prohibition, and we could not give currency to sentiments opposed to prohibition without doing violence to the feelings of our readers generally.

Our Churches and people will doubtless rejoice in Brother Arthur Crawley's escape from the imminent peril to which he has been exposed, just previous to the date of his letter which appeared in our last. In a land where we are hedged about with the blessings of law and order, we cannot rightly apprehend the cares and anxieties that attend the daily life of the missionary situated as is Bro. Crawley. We believe with him that on the present occasion his own life and safety as well as those of his companions depended under God on the calmness and prudence with which he acted. The extensive portion of Burmah in which his Mission lies, on the great river Irrawaddy, and which has lately come into British possession, has long been infested with bands of dacoits or robbers, but there is little doubt that the new Government will speedily introduce a system that will ensure to the inhabitants the blessings and comforts of civilized life. Such has been the case in those parts of Burmah hitherto in possession of the British, and where such signal triumphs of the cross have been achieved by the Baptists of America.

CHURCH MUSIC.

Church Music has been the subject of communications from our correspondents, "Hint" and "Omega." We think this question demands a much larger share of attention from Christians generally than it has hitherto received. The improprieties which have been referred to, have arisen from the want of a proper appreciation of its importance. If members of churches were accustomed to cultivate a correct taste in the harmonious expression of praise, and to connect this with a profession of religion, in the same manner as they do the ability to read the Word of God and the habit of prayer; we should be less likely to hear of such causes of reproach as those mentioned in connection with this department of public worship. It is one of the most important and delightful exercises of religion.

A beautiful harmony exists in the three parts of the Worship of God.

By *preaching*, and the reading of the Word we have made known to us, the way of life, and salvation—and are instructed in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Our condition is made known to us, and our necessities are described.

By *prayer*, we ask for, and receive those blessings from Heaven, which change our condition and our relation to our Heavenly Father.

By *expressions of praise*, the feelings which arise in our hearts as a consequence of receiving those blessings, are given out, in humble imitation of those sinless beings who surround the throne of God—so as to render the church below a feeble representation of that above.

The harmonious blending of these exercises are the means by which the christian life is maintained, and which distinguish the spiritually minded from those who despise the service and worship of the Divine Being.

The *song of praise* in christian worship is supposed to be the united address of the whole assembly, whether all join in it or not,—the same as the *prayer* offered either by the minister, or in the social meeting, is the united address of the whole, for blessings needed by all; and in like manner the *word* spoken by the minister, may be considered the invitation of the whole church to the world, to partake of the blessings of the Gospel.

While he stands forth as an ambassador from God, he at the same time represents the truths held by the whole body. Thus the church may be considered as engaged in the exercises of preaching, prayer and praise; and by that means shows itself to be "the pillar and ground of the truth,"—"the body of which Christ is the head."

With these principles as the foundation we are at liberty to use such measures for conducting the praises of the Sanctuary as are best calculated to accomplish the object proposed, according to the size of the congregation, the construction of the place of worship, and the vocal abilities of those composing the church.

The general tenor of the Word of God would lead to the conclusion that it is a Christian's duty to sing. Some, as a matter of course, are more able to do so, than others; and it is to be expected that those most capable will be anxious to see that part of worship conducted in the best possible manner; and will render such aid as they can, to accomplish this object; but it is no less the duty of others to endeavour to render themselves more efficient in its discharge.

We know it is held by many that we may be just as good christians if unable to distinguish one note from another, as if we are able to sustain the most difficult solo. On the same ground, it may be said, that one who is unable to read a word of the Divine Record, which brings to us the words of eternal life, may be able to perform all the duties of religion; and, one who could not put together two sentences of prayer, or even offer in the presence of others the words of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," might still go down to his house justified, rather than the most eloquent Pharisee, yet we think if the christianity of a believer does not aim at something beyond this, it falls far below the requirements of true religion, and he would but imperfectly represent his Lord and Master.

The best singing is only accomplished by the cultivation of natural powers, and if this has been neglected in early life, we should at

least embrace the opportunity afforded by the exercises of public worship, and endeavour to join in the song of praise.

The whole structure of Modern Psalmody (which we think is a near approach to the most appropriate vehicle of praise, when the tune is adapted to the sentiments of the hymn) is of such a character as to become more effective when performed by a large number of voices, than when only a few are engaged in its performance. We offer no opinion at present on the question of Congregational or Choir Singing, as we think there are indistinct and often very erroneous ideas attached to both of those terms. We may recur to the subject on some other occasion and give what appears to us the correct definition of the terms, with some suggestions that may assist those who are disposed to give it their serious attention. We must however, postpone further remarks to another opportunity, and will do so, with the injunction of the Psalmist—"Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord."

OUR contemporary the St. John's *Christian Visitor*, asks, Shall our ministers leave? and says in reply,—

"We happen to know that several of our best men are pondering this matter now very seriously in their own minds, and unless some influence can be brought to bear upon them to detain them, they are off to find a post of usefulness in the far West or somewhere else."

We trust that what our brother fears may not be realized, but that his exhortations may arouse to fresh exertion and so avert the calamity. These provinces present a wide field for christian labour. The only feeling on the subject in this Province is, we believe, that more devoted men are required. Several important fields are languishing for want of faithful labourers, and amidst the revivals which are being experienced amongst us, prayer is being presented from many hearts that "the Lord would send forth more labourers into his harvest."

It will be seen by the Proclamation of His Excellency, a Public Holiday is recommended for the purpose of celebrating the Peace. It would be well if any use could be made of this to promote the cause of Temperance, and thereby advance the permanent happiness of families. It is matter of regret that such occasions usually interfere with all other industrial occupations, except those engaged in the sale of intoxicating drinks. A harvest is commonly reaped on such days by those engaged in that business.

We have been somewhat startled within a few days past, by a report that the United States Cabinet were about to give Mr. Crampton, the British Ambassador at Washington, as well as several of the principal British Consuls, notice of dismission, in consequence, it is said in the American papers, of the English Cabinet declining to recal them, upon the ground that they wholly deny the charges of having broken the United States laws in the matter of the Foreign Enlistment affair, and there being no proof of their having done so, but the assertion of one or two Germans of worthless character. We can hardly believe the American Cabinet would venture on a measure that would certainly peril the friendly relations of the two countries, and shall wait with some anxiety to learn further particulars. No doubt a war with America would be more injurious to the trade and prosperity of England than any that could occur, but surely the United States have a still deeper interest at stake. There is without doubt a vast mass of restless, rolling population in that country, who would rejoice in war and tumult of any kind, that might afford them an opportunity of gain—men who would delight in tumult and confusion in any shape, but especially in a war with England—we cannot believe however that the wealth, the respectability or the good sense—much less the morality and religion, so widely diffused over the union, would suffer their rulers to hurry them into an unnatural war with Great Britain without a loud and effective appeal to the country at large. When interests so momentous as those which hang on the pacific relations of England and America are at all in danger, it is deeply incumbent on Christian people everywhere to lift up their hearts in supplication to God, to avert an evil, the extent of which no human calculation could reach.