

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. II. No. 50.

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1857.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXI. No. 50.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

LINES.

THESE few lines were suggested by the following interesting incident, which occurred during the last days of a deaf mute, who was brought up by "Charlotte Elizabeth," and whose memory is enshrined in her beautiful "Chapters on faded flowers." A holy bough, thinly scattered with its ripened berries, being brought into his room, he gazed upon it with evident signs of heartfelt emotion, and said, "those berries were put there to remind him of the drops of blood which stained his Saviour's brow when crowned with thorns."

Gentle spirit, early meetened,
For thy happy home above;
How thy blessed Saviour sweetened,
Thy brief journey with his love.

Nature's simplest beauties charmed thee,
As they met thy raptured gaze;
Each new scene, an open volume
To thy great Creator's praise.

When thou saw the crimson berries,
On the prickly holly bough;
Quickly flashed on thy remembrance,
Thy Redeemer's blood-stained brow.

Yes, that sanguine studded bramble
Brought to view that solemn hour,
When on Calvary's lonely mountain
Jesus conquered Satan's power.

Where extended, bleeding, dying,
See him meekly sorrowing bow;
With a lacerating garland,
Wreathed around that holy brow.

Though earth's myriad songs and voices,
Fell on an unheeding ear;
Though thy tongue refused to whisper,
Thoughts which daily grew more dear;

Yet that scene was ever present
To thy trusting spirit's eye;
And thy inner voice sang praises
Which with angel's songs might vie.

Blessed boy, what seraph harpers,
Met thee, as thou fled'st above,
Far from earth-bound scenes and sorrows,
To the radiant world of love.

Oh! how sweetly must have fallen
On thy newly opened ear;
Thy blest Saviour's glorious welcome,
Where is shed no mourner's tear.

Then methinks thy heaven-taught chorus
Makes the lofty arches ring;
And thy cry of holy, holy,
Ever on the ceaseless wing.

Clearly mingles with the anthems,
Of the blessed blood-washed throng;
Who with powers, that never weary,
Sing the never ending song.

Onslow.

Religious Miscellany.

A day or two with our German Brethren.

[From the Baptist Magazine, Nov.]

HAVING learned that the Conference of the Union of Continental Baptist Churches was to be held at Hamburg the week previous to the Conference of Evangelical Christians of all lands at Berlin, the writer found it would be practicable to gratify his desire to be present at both—at the latter to witness how far English and German Christians could unite in practical effort for the religious liberty of Europe (for this, after all, was the real object of the conference); and at the former to verify, as far as a stranger could, the impressions he had received of the apostolic zeal and primitive simplicity which seemed to characterise this youngest and most successful of modern missions. He accordingly found his way to Hamburg on the first week of September last. The conference had already begun its sittings, and a public meeting on the second evening, to receive the deputation of the English Baptist Union, was the first at which he was present. At this meeting, however, there was little peculiar; but the necessity of having the addresses of our English brethren done into German reminded us that we were among a people of a strange tongue. The hymns and tunes, too, were not familiar to us; the metre of the former being as irregular as a Greek chorus, and the latter

too deep and solemn for most English congregations, but sung in a style that might be expected from those instructed in music from their earliest years.

Next morning, at an early hour the conference met for business, which, however, was not entered upon till, twice by prayer and praise, and a short address from one of the brethren, their minds were prepared for it. The chapel where they met was an old warehouse, which accounts for its odd shape, so long and narrow. There is a raised platform at one end, occupying the whole breadth, on which stands the desk or pulpit for the chairman, a table in front, at which sat two secretaries, taking down the proceedings of the conference, and several seats on each side occupied by a few brethren and the visitors from this country, whose knowledge of what was passing was kept up by two young friends, who sat near, taking notes in English and kindly communicating them. The front seats in the body of the chapel were filled by seventy or eighty very plain-looking men, simply, and some of them even coarsely dressed, but courteous and affectionate in their intercourse with each other, and deeply interested, earnest, and cheerful, in their long, long sittings, even to the last. The features in some, were expressive of great intelligence, in others, of benevolence, and in a few of sternness; but in most there was nothing at all peculiar. The great majority of them were pastors of churches; the others being missionaries and *colporteurs*, with a few private brethren; yet the freedom of debate was unaffected by the position of the speaker. There were occasional differences of opinion, and fervour enough in the statement of them, but none of the bitter zeal which sometimes embitters our discussions. The Danish brethren, to be sure, sometimes got rather too warm.

And are these the men who have excited so much ill-feeling and alarm in almost every principality in Germany? Everywhere are they spoken against, and eyed askance, not only by the rationalistic clergy, but even by members of the Evangelical Alliance, who publicly endorsed Stahl's dictum that the Baptists "have not yet achieved for themselves an ecclesiastical position to justify the state in conferring on them full toleration;" that is, they have not yet, like the Catholics, in the Prussian states, risen to that numerical strength that would render it impolitic to suppress them; or sunk, like the Mennonites, into that insignificance that would make it beneath their dignity to harass them. But these are the "troublers of our Israel," dangerous to the state by their "offensive proselytism;" parties, "on account of whose presence, many had come to the conference (at Berlin) with a kind of half conscience," whose churches "would have been recognised by the state had they not been guilty of so manifold attacks on the church." If, among the 7,000 converts of the Union in Germany, there are found some indiscreet persons who are anxious to convince their Lutheran neighbours of the error of baptismal regeneration, and of infant baptism, as leading to, if not involving it, who can wonder? But the fact as stated at the Berlin Conference, by brother Lehmann, that not one in twenty in their churches had been Christians in other communions, and the rule, as stated by brother Kobner at the same place, that "every one who carried on an offensive proselytism, using improper means for the spread of his opinions, would, *ipso facto*, be excluded from communion;" and the circumstance that brother Mollerward, before he was generally known to be a Baptist, preached in many of the parish churches in Sweden, and was only denied the use of them when it was discovered that he was a Baptist, not that he preached believer's baptism—are sufficient proofs that proselytism, in the offensive sense of the word, cannot with justice be laid to the charge of our brethren. The disturbance of the "peace of those at ease in Zion" has arisen simply from the faithful preaching of the gospel wherever Providence opened a door for the brethren's ministry; and the only proof of the charge of proselytism is the divine success which has attended their labours.

But if these are the men whom the ecclesiastical rulers of Germany affect to despise, but really dread, they are the men whom the Lord has delighted to honour. And now, after three years' absence, they have come from their fields of labour, to tell of their toils and trials, of their hopes and joys, of their straits and obstructions, assured they will meet sympathy and encouragement from their fellow-labourers. These two brethren who sit far down on the right, hard-wrought looking men, are co-pastors of a large church in Memel. Twenty years ago, in that town (for the writer knows it well), there were but two families in which the grace of God was experimentally known. The Baptist church, founded in 1843, has now 250 members resident in the place, and nearly as many more scattered through its thirty stations at various distances of from ten to ninety miles, along and within the Russian frontier; these stations requiring an amount of labour in supervision and extension which the pastors cannot overtake. That brother down on the left, so quiet and unassuming, and who has some practical acquaintance with the inside of a German jail, has the oversight of a church which, through the divine blessing on his labours, has had a very large increase, more than 100 having been added during the summer. He pleads for aid to enlarge the place where they meet, which, at present, will not accommodate the members alone. That young man with the knit brow on the near right, so plebeian in his appearance and dress, but free and earnest in discussion, presides with his co-pastor, who is old and blind, over two churches, each of them having upwards of 200 members, scattered over forty towns and villages, at great distances. This good brother on the platform, and sometimes in the chair, a Dane by birth, a son of Abraham by descent, though a German by adoption, is the pastor of a church in one of the Rhenish provinces, much respected by the neighbouring evangelical clergy, who are more numerous there than in other parts of Germany. The Lutheran correspondent of the *News of the Churches* bears record that the Baptist church near him "flourishes under the care of a most faithful pastor." Sage in counsel and amiable in general intercourse, he is reputed to be the most eloquent preacher of our denomination, some would say, of any other, in Germany. He is a lyric poet too, of no mean order; his hymns forming not only a large proportion of the Baptist Hymn-book, but finding an honoured place in popular selections of German lyrics. That brother down yonder is from the mountains of Silesia, where the Man of Sin reigned with little disturbance from Lutheran zeal: the Baptist church which has been formed there, consists entirely of converted Romanists. These brethren are from the Low Countries, on the border of Holland, and these from the fens and flats of Denmark. These are from Wurtemberg and Switzerland, on the south; and that noble-looking youth at the foot of the chapel, is an evangelist from Sweden, on the north, where God has blessed him and his fellow-labourers with all but pentecostal success—where persecution, worn out by the patient endurance of the sufferers, now offers only a sullen and passive resistance, while the word of God continues to grow and multiply.

And for what have they intermitted their labours and come so far? They have come to state the difficulties of a practical kind which have arisen in these as yet young and inexperienced churches, and to obtain advice and direction from those older and wiser than themselves; they have come to suggest, or hear the suggestions of others, on means of improvement in carrying out the schemes of benevolence; they have come to arrange matters concerning the support or extension of the mission, and thus be their own committee. It must be remembered that not one of these seventy or eighty churches was in existence twenty-four years ago, and fifty of them not more than half that time. Their pastors are mostly young men, zealous and devoted, but comparatively inexperienced; of independent spirit, but feeling their need of fraternal counsel. And here they have it, kindly given, and

received as kindly. From Hamburg, it is presumed, most of them went out; the church there was the school in which they were trained, the model on which their churches were formed; and with the New Testament in their hands, they could not have had a better. Of its senior pastor, so honoured and beloved, from whose labours the whole Union has sprung, we say nothing here, as perchance this paper may fall into his hands. The church, like himself, has been baptized into suffering and labour for Christ, and it is on their pledge to be some way or other missionaries to the perishing sinners around them that members are received into its communion. Hence its evangelists go out prepared to suffer and resolved to act, impressing on the heart of their converts the same principle which was early instilled into their own.

Dr. Guthrie in his recent volume has given the following striking testimony to the labours of the brethren:—

"See what the Church in Hamburg did! Twenty years ago, five Christian men met there in a cobbler's shop; they also, when they beheld the city, wept over it. They resolved to form themselves into a church—a missionary church—with Hamburg and its environs for the field of their labours. What their particular creed was, to what denomination of Protestants they belonged, I am not careful to inquire. High above the regimental colours of that little band floated the royal standard of the cross. They fought for the crown of Jesus. They toiled, they watched, they laboured for the salvation of souls. One article of their creed, one term of their communion was this—that every member of that Christian church should be a working Christian. So, in the afternoons and evenings of the Lord's-days they went forth to work, to gather in the loiterers by the highways and the hedges. Every member they gained was more than an accession to their numbers—he was an accession to their power. And with what results were their labours attended? These should encourage all other congregations and churches to 'go and do likewise.' That handful of corn is now waving in the golden harvests of many fields. That acorn is now shot up into a mighty oak, that nestles the birds of heaven, and braves the tempests, and throws a broad shadow on the ground. The church which was at first constituted of these five men, who met in an obscure and humble shop, has, in the course of twenty years, been blessed of God to convert many thousand souls, and bring some fifty thousand people under the regular ministrations of the gospel."

The writer's knowledge of German is too imperfect, and his notes from the translator too slight to allow him to give even an outline of any of the discussions without risk of misrepresentation: nor would it be profitable.

The difficulties and discouragements of our brethren there are similar to those we meet with here, except in some forms which arise from the state of society in the remote parts of Germany. It may only be added, that a conversation on the means by which the sad deficit of their pecuniary supplies from America was to be made up, brought out some touching instances of self-denial and exertion to meet this difficulty, with many shrewd, yet kindly given suggestions as to how they might increase and economise the missionary fund among themselves. Weekly contributions were recommended, as at once most scriptural and most efficient. An impression was left on the minds of the English visitors that by none could means devoted to the cause of God be more faithfully or judiciously applied than by those who have the oversight and direction of this interesting mission.

The writer's visit was brought near to a close by the services of the Lord's-day. Though the conference had been carried on with much spirit and Christian regard to each other's feelings, debates began to be wearisome, when the "sweet day of rest" came round and was never more "welcome." The communion of so many, from fields of labour so distant, with each other and with the Lord in his ordinances, was very delightful. Men who spoke at least five different languages were present, and though the curse of Babel—confusion of tongues—weighed heavily on our enjoyment, the Lord's Supper was a symbol which all understood, and all seemed to feel. Many were deeply moved, and tears of joy in profusion were shed. It was a solemn season, full of blessed anticipations, and long to be remembered. When and where