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"Not slothful in business : fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE FOUNTAIN OF BIMINI.

It is related in the early history of the New World, that Juan Ponce de Leon, a renowned Spanish cavalier, having heard of a remarkable fountain on one of the Bahama Islands, which restored youth to all who bathed in its waters, fitted out three vessels and started on an expedition of many months' duration, in search of this chimeric of the imagination.

"Blow! favoring breezes, waft me on,
Bear, swiftly bear my fleet along;
Let our white canvas all be spread,
Our farewell words be quickly said,
On! on! my eager soul would fly,
Through years of toil and danger lie
Before me, though through sufferings dread,
White locks should sooner crown my head.
For, should I find when all are passed,
The object of my search, at last,
The priceless treasure will repay
For all that I may cast away."
What sought this cavalier of Spain?
A place within the rolls of fame?
That heroes brave their arms might yield,
To him on many a battle field?
Did he go forth to seek a shore,
That man had never known before?
Where bright, Elysian prospects rise,
To charm the gazer's wondering eyes?
Did he thus tempt the treacherous seas,
Attracted by some odorous breeze,
From luscious fruits and scented flowers,
And spices, in Hesperian bowers?
Say! did he go to search the mine,
For gems which in its caverns shine?
To seek for pearls in ocean caves,
Whose cells have made ten thousand graves?
Or did he wish to lead his train,
To distant Mecca's holy fane?
O'er Grecian vales and mountains go,
Or where Italian rivers flow,
To view with awe their proud remains,
Scattered over storied hills and plains?
Or through dark Minsters, old and vast,
For treasured relics of the past,—
To roam in classic lands that lie
Far distant 'neath an orient sky?
Not these, which like the shifting scenes,
On which the magic lantern gleams,
Have swiftly passed before our view,
Did brave De Leon thus pursue;
Thousands have sought them all before,
And found what'er they sought, and more.
But for Bahama's clustering isles,
Around whose shores broad ocean smiles,
Where, on its breast, they calmly slept,
His steadfast course De Leon kept.
The dauntless knight had oft been told,
A prize more rare than stores of gold,
A wondrous fount of magic power,
For which he thirsted every hour:
Where trees, with fadeless verdure waved,
Where mortal form had never laved,
On one of those fair islands, burst,
And he would there allay his thirst.
Its waters bathed in, would restore
The tottering frame to strength once more.
The locks no more be tinged with grey,
And youth should never know decay;
The rose of health would brightly bloom
On pale cheeks waiting for the tomb.
'Twas this for which De Leon sought,
The burden of his every thought;
For this he wandered o'er the main,
For this he passed through toil and pain;
Tempted full many a dangerous shoal,
O'er which fierce billows wildly roll;
Plunging in every pool and stream,
To realize his waking dream:
The thirst of an immortal mind,
For what it never thus can find;
A spirit struggling in the dark,
Imagination's fitful spark;
Like a wild meteor in its play,
Luring his footsteps thus to stray.
He bathed in many a fount and rill,
Yet age crept on, strength wasted still,
And voices whispered, Hence! Away!
Vain dreamer, know thou must decay!
He heard, and hastened to depart,
While bitter sorrow filled his heart;
With shattered hopes and ships he came,
And an overworn, wasting frame;
No more Bimini's waters rise,
In dreams, before his longing eyes.
That fabled fountain's joyous play,
Had from his vision passed away.
And Disappointment's heavy cloud
Around his soul had cast its shroud;
For those dread ills, he sought to shun,
Were all his toilsome voyage won.

"Canst tell? oh fading child of earth,
What clime, to such a spring gives birth?
Were these blest waters take their rise,
In what far region, 'neath what skies?
Speak, minstrel! on what holy ground
Is youth immortal to be found?
Teach me what course my bark to steer,
And I will laugh at every fear;
And see no more my native land,
Till first I reach that glorious strand.
I will through every winding thread,
Until I gain the fountain's head.
Then tell me where those waters lie,
That I may hasten, ere I die.
There lave my bent and tottering frame,
Till blooming youth is mine again;
Youth that will never know decay,
And strength which will not pass away."

Frail fellow-mortal! wouldst thou know
Where those celestial waters flow?
Then to the earth no longer cling,
For no such blessed fountains spring

In this death-haunted, sin-cursed sphere,
His search is vain who seeks them here.
They are from earthly vision sealed,
To eyes of faith alone revealed;
Save once, long ages gone, they passed—
A wondrous panorama, vast—
Before him who, on Patmos' Isle,
Was cast by man, a lone exile.
They rise upon a brighter shore
Than earth hath known; here search no more.
And wouldst thou know the onward way,
That so thy footsteps may not stray?
There is a bright celestial guide
Will lead thee to the fountain's side,
Will lead thee to the very brink,
That there thy thirsty soul may drink,
And bathe till endless youth is thine,
Which will with fadeless glory shine.
But thou art here, far, far away
From where those mystic waters play;
There rolleth many a stormy sea
Between that happy shore and thee;
There riseth many a mountain high,
There low'roth many an angry sky,
There spreadeth wastes of burning sand
Between thee and that hallowed strand;
Thy feet must tread through chilling vales,
And thou must face tempestuous gales;
And foes and fears and dangers blend,
Until thy toilsome journey's end.
One darker vale than all the past,
Thy feet must enter at the last;
There with drawn sword, the monster Death,
Awaits thee: 'tis "the last of earth."
'Tis dread, but fear not, for thy guide
Is Conqueror, and is at thy side.
Death, at his coming, is afraid,
Thou wilt but meet the monster's shade;
That blessed friend will cheer the gloom,
And light thy passage to the tomb.
Then the bright land beyond the skies
Will burst upon thy raptured eyes,
As on the storm-tossed wanderer's gaze,
The lights from some safe haven blaze.
There thou shalt hear the river's chime,
Proceeding from its source divine;
Ay! thou wilt see it with thine eyes,
And all its virtues realize;
Shalt mingle with the angel throng,
Who on its margin glide along;
Who there their sounding wings unfold,
And wake sweet strains from harps of gold;
'Midst flowers which Eden never knew,
Which ne'er on tropic islands grew.

Onslow.

I.

* And he showed me a pure river of water of life,
clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God
and of the Lamb.—Rev. xiii. 1.

Missionary Intelligence.

MADAGASCAR.

The following, from the Rev. W. Ellis to the London Missionary Chronicle, indicates a favorable state of things in this large island:—

Turning from various disturbing causes in the political state of Madagascar, it is encouraging to observe the steady increase of the Christians. In every department of our labor, the blessing of God appears to attend the promulgation of the gospel of Christ. The congregations in the city, that on the outbreak of the late disturbances were sensibly diminished, have not only regained their former numbers, but have all greatly increased; and what affords greater cause for thankfulness is, that this increase is not from persons who had at any former time been associated with the Christians, so much as from among those who have heretofore been indifferent, or devoted to the superstitions of their country. Many of them also are young men and women, and not a few connected with classes exercising influence over their countrymen, or connected with the families of the nobles of the land. Our largest chapels are all crowded, while at some, numbers stand outside around the doors and windows rather than remain away, while accessions are made every month to the number of communicants. At Amparibe, a larger and more substantial building than the former, which would contain 1400 people, is nearly completed; at Ambotankanga, the walls of one are nearly completed; we want also, and hope soon to obtain, a new chapel in the neighborhood of Ampamarinana, where the martyrs were thrown from the rock.—Schools, some of them especially efficient, are connected with each of the places of worship; and next week we hope to open our Central Normal or Training School, under the care of Mr. Stagg. In this school, which is admirably situated, we hope many industrious and able teachers will be trained to spread the blessings of a solid Christian education far and wide over the country. Notwithstanding the liberal supply of books sent out from England, the productions of our press are in growing demand; the first edition of our Children's Catechism will be exhausted within three months after its completion, and we are only waiting for

materials to employ additional labor in the production of books. What gives greater prospect of stability and permanency to these efforts, is the readiness of such of the people as are able to pay for the instruction of their children, and to purchase their books. Our charges are small, for it was the principle giving permanency to the labors of the press and the schools, and not profit, that caused us to endeavor to render them self-supporting; and there is every prospect of their ultimately becoming so. Of course there are children needing instruction, and persons in want of books, who cannot pay for them. We take care that no child shall fail to gain entrance to our schools, and that no person capable of reading and desirous of possessing a book shall remain destitute, though unable to pay for the one or the other, while those not so circumstanced, very readily pay.

These signs of improvement and progress are not limited to the means of education and spreading the knowledge of Christ among the people. Evidences of the work of the Spirit of God on the hearts of the people are no less numerous and satisfactory. Among the conversions, I have been particularly impressed with that of the officer who, during the last persecution, discovered and apprehended one of the leading preachers in the capital. He discovered him by thrusting his sword through the rush partition of the room in which the preacher was concealed by the owner of the house; his sword pierced the body of the concealed fugitive, who, startled by the pain, was discovered, bound, and led to prison, and ultimately to Fiaduna, where like Stephen before him, he was stoned to death for his testimony of Jesus! Two of the companions of this officer on the above occasion, died suddenly soon after; two are still living, both subjects of convictions in favor of Christianity; and one, with the whole of his family, declare themselves believers in Christ.

An earnest attention to prayer, in connection with the extension of the gospel, is, also, we hope, increasing. On the first Monday in the present month we held our first united missionary prayer meeting, in which the five city churches joined. It was held at Analakely, one of our largest chapels. Long before the appointed hour, the building was completely filled, and by the time fixed for commencing, at least 1500 persons, perhaps more, were seated on the grass outside the doors. The pulpit was brought just outside the door, so that those within and without might hear. Europeans and native pastors took part in the service, and the entire multitude, certainly not fewer than 3000 persons, appeared to experience unusual gladness in uniting to pray for the conversion of the world. The only regret they expressed was, that the hour of meeting had not been earlier. This proceeding has been spontaneously followed by the congregations in adjacent villages to the north of the capital, where the native churches have themselves established a united missionary prayer meeting. We thank God for this favorable sign, and are more than ever anxious to do with all our might whatsoever our hands find to do, hoping and trusting that God will use our instrumentality to accomplish his purposes of love towards this people.

PRAYER, A TEST.

The following, as related by Hugh Miller in his work on the "Headship of Christ," is a fine illustration of the effect of habitual prayer on the mind of an individual, in moulding his thoughts and habits. It shews too that the word of one accustomed to visit the mercy-seat is more reliable than the oath of the profane. "Behold he prays," is a guarantee of character no less now than it was when this was said of the apostle Paul.

A Scotch Highlander, who served in the first disastrous war with the American colonies, was brought one evening before his commanding officer, charged with the capital offence of being in communication with the enemy. The charge could not well be preferred at a more dangerous time. Only a few weeks had elapsed since the execution of Ma-

jor Andre, and the indignation of the British, exasperated almost to madness by the event, had not yet cooled down. There was, however, no direct proof against the Highlander. He had been seen in the grey of the twilight stealing out from a clump of underwood that bordered on one of the huge forests which at that period covered by much the greater part of the United Provinces, and which, in the immediate neighborhood of the British, swarmed with the troops of Washington. All the rest was mere inference and conjecture. The poor man's defence was summed up in a few words. He had stolen away from his fellows, he said, to spend an hour in private prayer.

"Have you been in the habit of spending hours in private prayer?" sternly asked the officer, himself a Scotchman and a Presbyterian.

The Highlander replied in the affirmative.

"Then," said the other, drawing out his watch, "never in all your life had you more need of prayer than now; kneel down, sir, and pray aloud, that we may all hear you."

The Highlander, in the expectation of instant death, knelt down. His prayer was that of one long acquainted with the appropriate language in which the Christian addresses his God. It breathed of imminent peril, and earnestly implored the Divine interposition in the threatened danger,—the help of Him who, in times of extremity, is strong to deliver. It exhibited, in short, a man who, thoroughly conversant with the scheme of redemption, and fully impressed with the necessity of a personal interest in the advantages which it secures, had made the business of salvation the work of many a solitary hour, and had, in consequence, acquired much fluency in expressing all his various wants as they occurred, and his thoughts and wishes as they arose.

"You may go, sir," said the officer, as he concluded, "you have, I dare say not been in correspondence with the enemy to-night."

"His statement," he continued, addressing himself to the other officers, "is, I doubt not, perfectly correct. No one could have prayed so without a long apprenticeship; fellows who have never attended drill always get on ill at review."

THE CONSECRATION.

BY REV. JOHN GRAY.

"I am the Lord's." The prodigal is returned, the lost is found, the dead in sin is made alive, and with his whole uplifted heart, the convert says, "I am the Lord's." This is the outspoken language of his heart's heart, the leap of his soul into the embrace of his reconciled God and Father. "I am the property of no one else—every one must know it, shall know it, that I am not the world's, nor Satan's, nor my own; but 'the Lord's'—the Lord's now, the Lord's wholly, the Lord's forever. And

"Where the whole realm of nature mine,
It were a present far too small."

The consecration is prompt and spontaneous, the immediate leap of the soul out of the embrace of all and everything that would keep it back or apart from God. It is the shout of the new-born spirit when parting from all its former idols, "Hinder me not!" "I am the Lord's!"

"All that I am, all that I have,
Lord, I devote to thee."

There is no hesitation, no putting off to a future day, or "more convenient season." The consecration is immediate, full, unreserved, and forever. "I am the Lord's"—not, I will be the Lord's, or I trust one day to be the Lord's. No! but "I am the Lord's."

The consecration is personal, cordial, and immediate—reasons not with flesh and blood, sits not down to calculate loss or gain, but at once and forever says, "I am the Lord's." And

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where he goes;
Hinder me not, shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose."

Reader, Are you consecrated to God? Had you, Abraham for your father, you cannot be saved except you have said, or now say, "I am the Lord's." Religion is personal. "I am the Lord's."