

THE GOSPEL IN ITALY.

The following letter is from Mr. Wall, who has gone from England as an evangelist to Northern Italy:—

Bologna, North Italy, November, 1863.

"Dear Brethren in the Risen Saviour,—as you are deeply interested in all that concerns this Mission to the Italians, I will give you the result of my first observations in this city, in which its first efforts are put forth, and where we trust it will be owned of God by the baptism of the Spirit.

"Bologna is situated at the foot of the Apennines, which are seen rising in the distance, crowned with snow. It is girdled by a strong wall, and has twelve gates, which are guarded day and night. The city is more ancient than Rome. It has a university, 100 churches (I should say), about 1,000 priests and monks, some 5,000 or 6,000 soldiers, and 97,000 inhabitants. The population of the province is 396,000. The streets are narrow, crooked, and at this time very dirty. The houses are lofty, overhanging the pathway, and resting on columns, which stand between you and the narrow driving-way. This gives an air of gloom to the city, to which one just come from the light and spacious streets of English towns must accustom himself, or they will feel irksome, oppressive, and tyrannous, shutting him from the beautiful sky above. Against these houses you see dusty images and dirty pictures to represent the adorable Jesus! Before these the people offer flowers by day, and keep lamps burning by night. I do not wish to try these people by our logical standards, and I would not be to their minds what the racks were to the martyrs. I would not deny beauty and poetry to much they do; but when I see Christianity thus exhibited I cannot help feeling that this is how Satan would have it, and it is gratifying to him to see Christ's image perpetually marred among those who profess to be His friends. The whole system of the Romish Church is such. It is no honour to Christ to be worshipped in this way. This Church is not His diadem, it is His crown of thorns; not His holy robe, but the mocking purple His foes have cast on Him.

"In these long and narrow streets you see things nearly as they were in the time of Caesar, and perhaps as they were before the flood! The wagons are of the most primitive style, like those, I have no doubt, they used about the ark, four wheels and a few strong sticks, which go very slowly even when drawn by eight oxen and only loaded with straw. You meet with women without bonnets, with their hair exalted like the horns we read of in Scripture—men muffled up in heavy cloaks—the monk with shaven head and dirty face, with a cord round his waist, and a begging-bag in his hand—and the priest going slowly in dark robe and triangular hat, as if he had in his hands the keys of heaven and hell.

"The people do not seem to be so polished as they are in other cities, where the influence of other nations has been greater. Yet there is something in their manner which indicates greater sincerity, and an openness which seems full of promise for the future.

"They are courteous to strangers, and ready to converse. They speak a dialect which is the most puzzling and corrupt in Italy. A person in this hotel who has just come from Florence, and who speaks Tuscan, cannot understand them when they speak Bolognese. They have a dictionary of their dialect, and I have seen a translation of Dante, in the same, which I was unable to understand at all. This is important to the missionary, because language is the vase in which he is to bear the water of life. As far as I can find, they all understand Italian; the newspapers are printed in it, and the priests preach in it.

"At present I am giving all my attention to the language, and if the dialect is needed I shall learn that. The religious state of the people is deplorable. The churches are not the places where the soul is likely to be saved. If you enter when no one is there, they look like picture-galleries; when mass is being performed they are like concert-halls. They have brass instruments, professional singers, and popular music. When the church is being prepared for a festival it looks like a theatre, where the scenes are being exchanged for the next act. And when the priest comes in, in his mystical garments, with strange gesticulations, and unintelligible mutterings, you think you are carried either to the interior of a heathen temple in the past, or into the chamber of some modern necromancer. It is plain that the people look on the process as a kind of incantation. They count off their prayers on the rosary, and as the last bead drops, they hurry from the church.

"While they are working off their beads, their eyes are in the ends of the church, and the poor will stretch their hands for alms if there is the prospect of obtaining them. One woman, who looking round, saw one beside to whom she owed money, stopped and paid her. This was while on her knees, and it was the Sabbath-day.

"All is accounted for if we remember the people are without the Bible. The preacher takes no Bible into the pulpit, no Bible to the chamber of the dying. I have not met one who had a Bible, and some have never seen it, while some one or two could not understand what it was. So they live and so they die, and you see the state in which they died from a large inscription on canvas, painted in glaring colours, and posted against the walls of the church, that the passer-by may take pity on the departed, and implore peace for the peaceless spirit.

"The poor soul here begins life trusting to the priest; then he flies in his extremity to the saints; and at last he leaves all to the charity of the passer-by; and all this results from go-

ing from 'the only Name given under heaven whereby men must be saved.' I have stood in the streets and looked up to the invitation to pray for departed spirits; but I dare not. 'The tree is fallen, so let it lie.' 'He that is unholy, let him be unholy still.' If ever prayer for the dead would have been lawful, it was in the case of Abraham who looked on the rich man in the flames. But no, he was silent. He saw the gulf, but he dare not pray. One thing we can do, we can throw ourselves into the broad path of their life and tell of Christ.

"The Sabbath here is entirely set aside; they have so many saint's-days they have no time for God's days; they have so many saints to attend to that they cannot attend to Christ. Last Lord's-day was a sad day to me. I wandered among the ruins of a spiritual world. In each ruin I saw the shadow of an ancient truth. And as Jeremiah among the broken heaps on Mount Zion saw the fragments of carved work which reminded him of some gilded arch or stately column, so was I reminded of the days when the first Christians sang praise to Jesus. It was an important time at one of the churches, so I went. Bills invited men to come, indulgence was promised to all who came; the preacher was talented, the music select, yet I only found about 200 there. It was an exhortation to pray for the dead. I left, and returning home, entered the great square of the cathedral and palace. Seeing lights and a great crowd, I drew near, when to my disgust I found about two thousand persons listening to the rude jests and strange howling of one exhibiting Punch! Three hundred years since there was also a large crowd, red flames arose from the centre and lighted up the quaint reliefs of this sombre architecture. Men who feared God and preached His truth were in those flames; God's message was rejected and the messengers were burnt. The ages have continued to revolve, the tide of human life has hurried on, the hand has crept round the dial of three centuries, and the Gospel is come again to this city. The time is not far distant when it will be preached in the same square, the echo of the walls will respond to the voice of the same kingdom; but it is not in man to foresee the result.

"I have looked about the city for a Bible depot, but have not succeeded in finding one; neither have I yet seen any tract or evangelic publications of any kind.

"In my daily walks I have given portions of Scripture to different classes, rich and poor, soldier and monk, in church and out. I have met with no opposition; only two objected to receive them—the reason was their inability to read. Those who receive them generally express surprise that I give them freely, they thank me, and when we do not converse, they depart reading them. It will be some time before I shall be able to converse well with them, and at least a year before I preach. The Scriptures which I have I am giving away but slowly, because I use them as introductions to the people, and I do not want to give the last away until others come. I shall want a great number. I am making out a selection of passages which I think would be best for these cases. We want to set the simple Gospel before every mind. One of the cards is an excellent one. It wants enlarging, and then I think 10,000 could be sown broadcast.

"I have found one who would be able to help me in the language in some measure, but I hope to succeed in finding one more accomplished and more competent.

"Next month I will write you more. Brethren, be firm in faith, attempt all in Christ's name. Pray for me, pray for these precious souls.

"I am, very dear Brethren, yours in Jesus,
"JAMES WALL.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

By REV. CHARLES TUPPER, D. D.

CHAPTER III.

CONVERSION, AND ENTRANCE ON THE MINISTRY.

(No. 9.)

On Lord's day morning, February 19th, I awoke as if in Paradise. Enjoyed inexpressible delight in secret prayer. No consideration could have induced me to be deprived of the privilege of thus holding communion with the Father of spirits. All earthly possessions, honors, and pleasures appeared to me unworthy of notice.

With great cheerfulness and pleasure I walked five or six miles to hear Mr. White, who preached that day at the late Mr. William Downey's, on Stronach Mountain. My heart was filled with admiration and joy in the contemplation of the wisdom and goodness of God, as displayed in creation and providence, as well as in redemption. On entering the house a little before the commencement of the service, and being asked by the preacher how I was in health, I replied, "I am well; for 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.'" This announcement evidently produced a thrilling effect on the persons assembled.

Being requested to speak at the close of the sermon, though naturally bashful and diffident,

I arose without the slightest degree of embarrassment or timidity, and spoke freely of the infinite mercy of God through Christ; and remarked, that if He had been only merciful, I must have perished; but that He was also powerful, for He had bowed my stubborn will, overturned all my plans for getting to heaven, and would take me thither in His own way, quite contrary to my natural inclinations and carnal views. After the public exercises, I retired to return thanks to the Most High for the happiness enjoyed: and reflected on the vast difference between the unsatisfying pleasures of time and sense, and the substantial joys of true religion.

In the evening, however, while attending public worship again, my mind became depressed. The great danger of apostasy, and the lamentable consequences of it, involving not only my own ruin, but also the dishonor of God, great injury to the cause of Christ, the deep grief of Christians, and a destructive stumbling-block in the way of the unconverted, pressed heavily upon my spirit. In my imagination it seemed to me probable, that in less than six weeks I would be a ring-leader in follies and vices in which I had never taken any part, as dancing, horse-racing, drunkenness, &c. It appeared to me a lamentable thing that I had, in effect, made a public profession of faith in Christ; but it could not now be recalled. Being requested to pray in the meeting, I felt some hesitation; but concluded that as I had spoken publicly, it would make the matter no worse to pray in public also, and therefore complied with the request. In the bitterness and anguish of my spirit I most sincerely and earnestly prayed, that rather than live and bring a reproach upon the cause of vital religion, and be a stumbling-block in the way of perishing sinners, I might be immediately called away by death, even if I should be lost. After some time, however, my mind became much more calm and cheerful; and I retired to rest in a happy frame, feeling entire safety in committing myself, both soul and body, for time and eternity, to the gracious keeping of the Lord Jesus.

On Monday, the 20th, I arose in a pleasant state of mind, and continued so through most of the day; but at times fearful temptations, and strange apprehensions of the things of the spirit world, filled me with deep distress. In the evening Mr. White held meeting at Mr. Nathan Randall's. As we were going thither in company, he suggested to me the propriety of telling my experience to the nearest Baptist Church, and joining it. I very honestly replied, that "I had no experience to tell;" for it seemed to me that all I had passed through was as nothing, save that I had now learned to rely implicitly on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to commit my everlasting interests into the hands of my heavenly Father, in dependence on His grace to guide me in safety to the mansions of endless bliss.

At the close of the sermon I addressed the congregation. It was my intention to speak to the Christians; but when I looked around upon unconverted sinners, in the broad road to unending woe, my bowels yearned over them, and I immediately proceeded to exhort them very earnestly to flee from the wrath to come, and to embrace the glorious Redeemer. Though I noticed several persons present who would probably ridicule me, yet neither their presence, nor the prospect of being the object of their diversion, affected me in the slightest degree. It was a season of unusual solemnity.

The next morning, however, I began to reflect deliberately on what had transpired; and was much alarmed by fears that I was taking up with something short of a sound conversion. It seemed to me that I had come to Christ, but was not actually in Christ. From this disquietude my mind was relieved by the statement, (Mark vi. v. 6.) "As many as touched Him were made whole." Subsequently the language of an inspired Apostle, (2 Cor. v. 17.) "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," removed all doubt and fear. It was evident to me, that, through the infinite goodness of God, this change had been really effected in me; and consequently that I was vitally in Christ.

While going to a funeral this day, my mind was so much engrossed with heavenly contemplations that I rode about a mile beyond the place of meeting, without noticing it! The evening was delightfully spent in my school house in the exercises of reading, prayer, and meditation on divine things. It might have been said by me in truth, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul."

For the Christian Messenger.

A CHRISTMAS-EVE MEDITATION.

Hast thou never grown weary, O Time? Dost thou never, never wish to loiter on thy destined way? Methinks I hear thee answer from afar: No; Time never grows weary; but on, on he moves in his ceaseless march, forever unmindful of the change of systems, or the revolution of worlds. But we will allow pleasing fancy to take her gentle course, and roam on golden wings far back into the dim and shadowy Land of the past, and dwell upon scenes ever dear to the imagination, which should tend to awaken the slumbering impulses of our better nature, inspiring the mind with pure and lofty sentiments, and calling forth the tenderest emotions of the heart. Let fancy picture out that beautiful land; stretching away farther than the eye can reach, covered with rich verdure, and diversified with hill and dale: the moon rolls peacefully along in heaven's high dome, shedding her liquid light on all around. Here and there are rich groves of beautiful trees, whose interlacing branches are slightly stirred by the gentle breeze, wandering among their foliage, hispering softly and mournfully, as if they would woo some hovering angel to repose in their solitary retreat. There runs the beautiful stream, its banks overhung with rich flowers of every hue and shade, all spangled with the evening dew, beautiful trees wave to and fro, the moonbeams darting here and there among their branches fall softly upon its fair bosom like the shadow of an angels' wing.

This is the land where shepherds watched their flock by night. Do you not see those men so quietly reclining upon the greensward? Listen to that sound of thrilling music that falls so sweetly on the ear. The stream comes nearer, still nearer; a celestial being has left the realms of light, as this messenger approaches they move silently back with awe and wonder. O hear his words of sweet assurance. "Fear not, I bring glad tidings." How they listen to the touching story! But see, he has performed his mission, and he must hasten to the land of light, to join the heavenly choir. But even while we linger on scenes of the past, Time is still moving on with rapid strides.

LALIAH CLARKE.

Margaretville, Wilmot.

For the Christian Messenger.

OBITUARY NOTICES.

MRS. MARY STEVENS.

Wife of Mr. Richard Stevens, died at Digby in the 75th year of her age. Mrs. S. was one of the first persons who united to form the Baptist Church in this town, in the year 1840, and was baptized some time previously by the Rev. Dr. Wilson, of Portland, U. S., who having been attending one of our Associations, spent a Sabbath in Digby. Sister S. for several years had been suffering from diseased lungs, which often rendered her unable to attend public worship, whenever her health would permit, was a constant attendant on the public means of grace. She loved the doctrines of the Bible, and the cause for which her Redeemer died. In the yielding up her earthly possessions she left one hundred pounds towards the erecting a Baptist Parsonage.—Communicated.
Digby, Jan. 4th, 1864.

MRS. JANET KELLY.

Wife of Mr. Edward Kelly, died in Lower Horton, Nov. 30th, 1863, in the 68th year of her age. Mrs. K. was a worthy member of the Baptist Church of Hantsport; but for several years had been confined at home from rheumatism, and was therefore deprived of the privileges of Church Worship and ordinances, which she highly prized when in health. But as her heart was right towards God in these things, the loss of outward means was more than made up by a large measure of grace and strong faith, so that she was enabled to hold on the re-icing of her hope, firm unto the end. A husband and a large family, justly mourn their loss, while her redeemed spirit is released from suffering body, to join the society of the holy in the world of eternal rest.

MRS. ZIPPORAH HORTON.

She beloved wife of Mr. Robert Horton, Salmon River, Guysborough, unexpectedly, to herself and friends, departed this life on the 31st of October, aged 65 years. She has left a husband, 6 children and a numerous circle of relatives and friends to mourn their irreparable loss.

She made no public profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, but I believe for many years she has known the grace of God. Having often conversed with her upon the subject of her interest in Christ, I have been delighted with the free relation she has given of her experience. A feeling of unworthiness kept her back. Mrs. Horton was ever ready to entertain the Lord's messengers, and her house was the ministers' home. Her illness was short, but very painful, and was borne with christian fortitude. A few moments before she breathed her last, she said to her husband, "I wish to love my dear Saviour more."—Com.