

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. X. No. 8.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1865.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XXIX. No. 8.

Religious.

Remarkable Conversion.

(Extracted from Coleman's "Facts and Incidents in the Life and Ministry of the late Rev. T. N. Toller, of Kettering, England.")

"That man had been living at the greatest distance from anything good. In his early days he had been left very much to himself, without anything like a religious education. When young, he entered the army; there evil propensities were indulged and strengthened. He became addicted to all kinds of vice, gave the reins to the worst passions of depraved nature; was a profane swearer, a constant Sabbath-breaker, a neglecter of all public worship, never attending the ministry of the Gospel; he became a scoffer at everything holy, gave way to the most violent and ungovernable temper, and seemed to be going on with rapid strides towards final ruin.

"The appearance of such a man, very seriously listening to the ministry of Divine truth must have excited attention, and have called forth many remarks among the people. From that first time, Thomas Law, for that was his name, became a constant hearer, and a truly improving hearer of the Gospel through all his future life. He was soon noticed by an eminent Christian in the congregation who was constantly on the watch for opportunities of doing good. He mentioned the case to Mr. Toller, at first with great surprise, and soon afterwards with grateful admiration of what God was doing for him. It was a most favourable circumstance in his state of mind that he was brought into the company of one of the most excellent, devoted, wise-hearted Christians then known in the place, who took a deep interest in his case, and became of great service to him in his subsequent course.

"But how comes this man at first to enter this sanctuary, and at length to discover this remarkable change? We will present the account in the words of the pastor, as it was given in the sermon preached years after, on occasion of his death:—I will state now the extraordinary means adopted by Divine grace, by which this vessel of wrath, apparently fitted fast for destruction, becomes a vessel of mercy, claimed and fitted for eternal glory. We have instances recorded both in Scripture and more modern history, of surprising and eminent conversions, brought about by extraordinary means; but then for the most part they have been extraordinary means, calculated and adapted to answer the purpose. The conversion of Peter's hearers on the day of Pentecost was a surprising conversion, but brought about by a most pungent, awakening, convincing address to them. The jailer's conversion was a remarkable one, but so far as means went, brought about by the alarming providential event of an earthquake. Saul's conversion to Christianity was wonderful, but brought about by the miraculous appearance of Jesus Christ. So Colonel Gardiner's was a very remarkable conversion, but brought about by either a miraculous vision, or some vivid, awakening, heart-harrowing dream, which had all the appearance to him of a miraculous vision. But what appears to me to make the conversion of our friend the most extraordinary that I ever heard of in my life, is that the immediate original instrument had nothing extraordinary in it, but was merely a casual accidental thought, which came from nobody knew where, nor what cause, and might have passed through his mind, or a hundred minds, a hundred times without any effect at all. The substance of what I have heard him relate is this. That while at work at home in his loom, his wife on some common errand went into the town, and stayed longer than he expected or intended, upon which his passion rose to a most ungovernable height, and on her return he poured out upon her most profane and abusive language. During the course of the same day, she had occasion to go out again, and again he thought she stayed too long, and he became greatly excited, working up himself to a most violent rage, ready to break out upon her most furiously on her return. And when he was in the height of this dreadful state of feeling, suddenly and powerfully the thought came

across his mind, "Ah! you had more need to go on your knees and cry for mercy than swear at your wife." This came with the force of a cannon-ball, and its effect was so great, and so sudden, that his passion fell at once, he received his wife with great mildness on her return, and was soon constrained indeed to go and cry for mercy.

"After this he had a terrible heartrending view of his tremendous guilt and danger.

He was filled with anguish, and went about seeking some light and guidance. In this state of mind he attended the preaching of the Word, went from one place to another to see if he could hear anything that would meet his case, point out his sin, show the depravity of the heart, and discover a way of relief to his soul. It was under these circumstances that he was at length seen in this house of God; the subject suited his case, came home to his heart, and fixed him here for life. Most happily, in these circumstances, he happened to be noticed by, and to fall into the company of, a most wise, judicious, and serious friend, admirably qualified to converse with a person in this state of mind, who was one of the greatest ornaments of this church I ever knew, who might be said to be always upon the watch for souls, and has been an instructor and helper of many, and I believe was a great blessing to him. He mentioned him to me with tokens of surprise at first seeing him under this roof, and then with rejoicing astonishment at the great things the Lord seemed to be doing for him.

"After a time he was received with great satisfaction to the communion of the church; and from that time, during the subsequent twenty years of his life, he maintained a most consistent, honourable, exemplary course; attending under a ministry which he most highly prized he attained to great eminence in the Divine life.

"The pastor used to observe that it was one of the most remarkable and satisfactory cases of conversion he ever knew. The change was most decided; he was manifestly a new creature; old things had passed away; all things had become new.

"He became remarkable for the exercise of those very graces which were most opposed to the sins in which he had formerly indulged. There was a wonderful ardour and piety in his devotion; his whole heart seemed wrapped up in devotion when addressing the Divine Being, Himself, or joining with others; and there was a fixed and settled attention in hearing the Word, which would have the appearance of an affection of sanctity to a stranger, but which to them that knew him appeared all reality. In connection with this, there appeared to me always uncommon attainments in the amiableness and excellency of the Christian spirit, and temper. How did he use to pray and breathe after the mind that was in Christ, and dwell in prayer and conversation on the sweet and charming excellencies of the blessed Jesus, and long to transcribe and make them his own; and his attainments in His Spirit were of no common kind. His hope, his heart, and his purse, might be said, in a sense, to be the resort of the poor and needy. There was a mildness, and meekness, and candour about him truly exemplary; a harsh censure, an unjust reproach never issued from his lips. He was not one of those professing Christians that talk about Christ and His righteousness, and salvation by Him, but experimentally and practically make light of His spirit and precepts; but the Gospel seemed to go down to the bottom of his soul, and carry its salutary influence through all the branches of his character. He was perfectly fair and honourable in all his dealings, seeking not his own but the good of others; his supreme aim in this respect was to act upon the golden rule. In this view he had a good report of all men. One who had considerable dealings with him, and knew him well, said, "that he that knew him best would value him most."

"With this devotional, amiable, and conscientious excellency was united all the depth of Christian humility. How deeply did he lament over former sins, and bitterly deplore the remains of sinful habits and unsubdued corruptions!—almost envying the purity of early Christians; and he would speak with uncommon earnestness of the importance of being truly religious betimes. And if there was a man that felt the necessity of a Re-

former, or that carried with him a constant sense of his obligations to Him, this was the man. He was one of the most eminent instances," said the pastor, "I ever knew of humility and holiness, grace and duty, dependence and practice—deep humble dependence connected with the most earnest efforts, and aims to attain every branch of the Christian character, and to stand complete in all the will of God."

Against Procrastination.

Felix, alas, is the prototype of many persons in our own day. Thousands, whose understandings are enlightened by the truths of the Bible, whose judgments are convinced, and whose consciences are more or less alarmed, in a word, who feel the necessity of a preparation for death and judgment, are in our Christian country deliberately, and with their eyes open, putting off the day of repentance and salvation to what they deem a more "convenient season." This, perhaps, is the sin of modern times—the sin of multitudes who frequent places for Christian worship. They cannot deny the truths of the Gospel—they admit the force of those truths; in the prospect of death, they feel uneasy; under the faithful preaching of the word of God they are seriously impressed, and in their hearts know that it is both their duty and their interest to yield themselves to God and obtain the forgiveness of their sins through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ—yet they wilfully defer making their peace with God, and thereby risk the loss of their precious souls! Folly, how great—infatuation, how awful! Millions have gone from Christian ordinances down to the regions of eternal pain, simply because they yielded to this dangerous and reckless spirit of procrastination! O could we but read their hearts now, how bitter would we see their self-recriminations—how excruciating would appear their accusations of conscience! Damned, eternally damned, prospects blighted, hope extinguished, black despair felt, souls forever lost, because the present to them was never deemed a convenient season for seeking God and securing salvation! And thousands upon thousands more in Christian lands are now pursuing the same course, are living in the same neglect, are passing by present for the sake of future opportunities! Lord, have mercy on procrastinating sinners! They risk their all for this strange delusion. Every hour, every moment they are in danger of "hell fire," yet they put off the evil day, or rather the good day of repentance! They will not act on conviction, will not make up their minds to serve God, but hazard all for the sake of a more convenient season! What will be the reflections of souls who in this world knew their Master's will, but did it not, when they wake up in the pit of hell, when they are made to feel that the "door is shut" forever! O, if the eye of any procrastinating sinners should rest on these words, let me beseech him to halt no longer between two opinions, but now, at once, without one moment's delay, to seek the Lord while he is to be found, and call upon him while he is near—to wrestle, to agonize, to enter in at the straight gate, and decide "for God to live and die!"

Ancient Estimation of the Mistletoe.

One popular observance, belonging to Christmas is more especially derived from the worship of our Pagan ancestors—the hanging up of the mistletoe. In the religion of the Druids the mistletoe was held in the greatest veneration. It was the custom on the sacred anniversary for the ancient Britons, accompanied by their priests, the Druids, to sally forth with great pomp and power to gather this mystic parasite, which was supposed to possess wonderful curative powers. The ceremony appears to have been of a somewhat imposing character. When the oak was reached on which the mistletoe grew, two white bulls were bound to the tree, and the chief Druid, clothed in white, as an emblem of purity, ascended, and with a golden knife cut the sacred plant, which was caught by another priest in the folds of his

robe. The bulls—and often human victims—were then sacrificed, and various festivities followed. The mistletoe thus gathered was divided into smaller portions, and distributed among the people, who hung up the sprays over the entrances to their dwellings, as a propitiation and shelter to the sylvan deities during the season of frost and cold. The mistletoe was supposed to have very mystic associations connected with it. It is believed to be propagated in its natural state by the mistle thrush. It was thought that it could not be grown artificially; but this object has been obtained by squeezing the berry into the bark of fruit trees, where it readily germinates and takes root. In some of the orchard districts of England a vast quantity of this plant is grown, and sent to the London market, and our readers will know to what use it is put in the present age.

The King of Abyssinia's Matrimonial Proposals.

A correspondent of *The London Morning Post* writes:—England has been honoured by overtures for a royal alliance after a somewhat novel and startling fashion. Letters from officers of her Majesty's ships at Aden convey the intelligence that King Theodore, in the plenitude of his wisdom, and certainly with a taste that few would be ungrateful enough to gainsay, has made proposals of marriage to her Britannic Majesty, through her Majesty's consul at Massowah (the port of Abyssinia) on the African coast. But that functionary having declined to submit the Royal offer to the Queen of England, has, with other Europeans, been seized, placed in irons, and sent from Massowah to his sable Majesty's capital at Guada, there to be detained in durance vile for his refusal to transmit the offer of King Theodore for alliance matrimonial with the Crown of England. Her Majesty's ship *Victoria* proceeded from Aden the end of November, to relieve her Majesty's ship *Dulhouse*, which ship had taken up the political resident at Aden to Massowah, to do what he could to obtain the release of the British consul and other Englishmen who have become the victims of Abyssinian treachery. Up to the last date, November 28, the efforts of the political officer had been unsuccessful. It is, however, to be hoped that the consul, with the other English prisoners, will not come to grief at the hands of this sable Majesty, but it is incumbent on the Government, no matter at what cost, to make an example of this African potentate for the insult offered to the British flag, and the indignity of placing in irons her Britannic Majesty's consul and his fellow prisoners now in the power of this Abyssinian Lothario. The *Dulhouse* keeps her guns shotted and all hands armed, as the natives, in emulation of their sovereign, are very treacherous. The *Victoria* has shipped additional guns, with an extra complement of small arms, preparatory to relieving the *Dalhouse* in the Red Sea. As no regular mail is established between Massowah and Aden, it may be some weeks before we can learn the result of the political resident's journey. Meanwhile, however, it behoves Government to take prompt measures for redress of such a nature as to prevent the repetition of a similar occurrence for the future.

AN INTERESTING SCENE.—Once a year at Brussels, medals are presented to those who, in the course of a year, have exhibited remarkable acts of courage and devotedness, by which the lives of others have been saved. This year the recipient of a medal, who was most heartily cheered by the spectators, was Joseph Napoleon Tasset, of Tabize, a child five years of age, who had been left alone with a little brother six months old in a house in Tabize which took fire. On seeing the flames this little boy at first was frightened and ran out of the house, but after having escaped, with a presence of mind wonderful at his age, he retraced his steps through the fire and smoke until he reached the cradle of his infant brother, when he laid hold of him and carried him away in safety; thus rescuing him from certain death.

A gentle person is like a river flowing calmly along, whilst a passionate man is like the sea, continually casting up mire and dirt.