

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
VOL. X. No. 18.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 1865.

WHOLE SERIES.
VOL. XXIX. No. 18.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

Notes of a SERMON on occasion of the death of the late President of the United States.

Preached in the Baptist Meeting House, Wolfville, on Lord's day morning, April, 23, 1865.

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KNOW YE NOT THAT THERE IS A PRINCE AND A GREAT MAN FALLEN THIS DAY IN ISRAEL? 2 Samuel iii. 38.

So spake David when Abner, Ishbosheth's prime minister and commander-in-chief of his army, was brutally murdered by Joab.

These words may be fitly applied to Abraham Lincoln, late President of the United States. True, he was not a man of noble birth; he could not boast of a long line of ancestry, rendered illustrious by chivalrous deeds, or resplendent in wealth or power. But he was one of nature's noblemen. His was the nobility of character. He had worked his own way upward. He had fairly earned his distinction,—not so much by commanding talent as by diligence, earnestness, persevering industry, uprightness, and honesty of purpose. His administration was distinguished by directness of aim, sagacity, and firm resolve. His one object was the restoration of the Union, at whatever cost. He pursued it with unflinching determination, keeping within constitutional limits at first, going beyond them when necessity seemed to require it or the policy of war rendered it expedient. Obstacles and dangers of no common magnitude were encountered, but he overcame them all. The people generally sustained him, or they believed in his integrity and patriotism. Hundreds of thousands responded to his call, and thus placed overwhelming forces at his disposal. Skill was gained by experience or taught by defeat. Then—victory followed victory. The armies of the insurgents gradually melted away, till at length the surrender of their greatest leader virtually finished the war. While all this was going on the President uniformly displayed moderation and gentleness, tempered with a conscientious estimate of the high trusts committed to his charge, and an honest determination to guard the sacred deposit. And he acknowledged God. The closing sentences of his recent Inaugural address will be read by succeeding ages with admiration.

"The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offences,' for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern there is any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away.

Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, that the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in, bind up the nation's wound, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

These are the words of "a prince and a great man." We know that he was unlike some great men. He wanted polish, it was said;—he wanted dignity. He was too homespun in his style and manner. Nevertheless, he won the esteem of his countrymen and the respect of foreign nations, and many, who had ridiculed the rail-splitter, learned to honour the President.

He has fallen,—fallen by the hand of the assassin—fallen, too, just in the hour of tri-

umph. His wishes seemed on the eve of full accomplishment. The restoration of his country appeared to be secured, its wounds on the point of being healed. A generous amnesty, it was reported, was about to be proclaimed, and peace promised returning prosperity. But his eyes were never to behold it. Struck down by the murderer he was hurried, unwarned, into the presence of God.

This is a time for the expression of deep sympathies. We think of her who was sitting by his side, and of the anguish which pierced her when her husband was slaughtered before her eyes. We invoke on her behalf the merciful regards of the "Father of the fatherless and judge of the widows," praying that she may receive support and consolation in this her day of sore trouble. We condole with the bereaved country, thus suddenly deprived of its head, and at such a time. The breach is indeed nominally repaired, and a successor already occupies the vacant chair; but thoughtful men contemplate the future with fear and trembling, and anticipate new and perplexing difficulties, with which an untried hand will be called to grapple. May God in mercy save the land, endue all its statesmen with wisdom, and thwart the purposes of those who would perpetrate the reign of bloodshed and desolation!

The present is a fitting opportunity for a brief review of the events of the late Presidency, and an inquiry into the lessons of instruction which they convey.

Those events may be contemplated in a twofold point of view—as we see in them the hand of man, and the hand of God.

Viewed on the human side they present to our notice great calamities and great crimes. The calamities were the necessary adjuncts and consequences of war. The statistics would form a horrible array. Who can think without shuddering of the homes that have been made desolate—the childless men—the sorrowing and destitute widows—the maimed, crippled, and helpless beings, to whom life is now a burden—the devastations which have swept over wide districts, converting fruitful fields into deserts? These calamities have been aggravated by crimes, which are also the concomitants of war. The battles of the four years past have been contested with the fierce hate which always characterises civil conflicts. Friends, relatives and countrymen have fought each other much more savagely than if they had all been professional soldiers. Prisoners have endured privations and sufferings under which thousands have sunk into the grave. Corruption and knavery have held high carnival, and cheating contractors have amassed heaps of ill-gotten wealth.

But the crowning crime was the closing act. That foul deed of assassination—so abhorred in all civilised countries—the offspring of cruelty and cowardice—will cover the perpetrator with everlasting infamy. Were it not that the claims of justice demand to be satisfied, we could wish that the villain had not been discovered, so that the disgrace attached to his name might not fall on his family or descendants. Here again we see one of the peculiar curses of civil war; it blunts all moral sensibilities, and changes the man into a demon, petrifying the very heart. Its hate is "set on fire of hell."

Yet there have been redeeming qualities and circumstances. At the beginning of the contest some foretold universal ruin and disaster, a collapse of the whole state of Society. They did not know the force of republican energy, nor did they consider the vast resources of the United States. The efforts that have been put forth during these four years have been of the most astonishing character on both sides, involving, in the South, self-denial and sacrifices painful to contemplate, but which were cheerfully borne in the hope of securing independence. That in such a short time armies so large and so effective should be raised, and that the United States should thus suddenly spring up into a great military and naval power, well provided with all the appliances of warfare, and of the latest and best construction, is a phenomenon unexpected and inexplicable. There is nothing like it in the world's history.

It was not unreasonable to expect that such efforts would be followed by great achievements. The lessons of war were quickly learned, and the education was carried on all the time. Theory and practice went hand in hand together. Men grew up into generals by fighting their way, and a short probation served as a test. They had not to wait for opportunities of displaying their powers, for they saw service continually, and lived in the field. Men of mature military judgment confessed their astonishment at the results. What the effects of this new development will be, as regards this continent or even the world at large, and whether for weal or woe, it is not easy to predict.

There is another form of this manifestation of energy, as admirable as it is novel. We all know how much the British army suffered in the Crimean war through a defective commissariat and imperfect hospital arrangements. In the

present instance, the vicinity of the seat of war, coupled with the fact that the combatants were not soldiers by profession, and therefore a distinct order, but their own neighbours and friends, roused the sympathies of the people, and formed the whole nation into a vast benevolent society in aid of the government. The United States Sanitary Commission, recognised and encouraged by the government, though independent of its control, kept the armies well supplied with such material comforts in food and clothing as no ordinary commissariat could furnish, and took the wounded and sick under their special charge. There can be no doubt that great numbers of lives were saved by this Institution, and that relief and help invaluable were administered in cases which could not have been overtaken in time by any official arrangements. The Christian Commission worked in harmony with them, directing its attention to the spiritual as well as the physical wants of the soldiers. Ministers of various denominations, with other christian men, repaired to the battle fields and hospitals under the auspices of this organization, to shew "brotherly kindness" in every possible form. More than two thousand Agents were thus employed, at different times, in each year. They preached—they prayed—they ministered to the sick—they gave cordials to the dying man, smoothed his pillow, and directed him to the "Sinner's Friend." They scattered abroad in vast numbers copies of the Scriptures, useful religious tracts and books, and other publications. They were like ministering Angels among the tents, and their visits were hailed with grateful welcome. The contributions of the people to those objects, in money and stores, amounted to twelve millions of dollars—a truly patriotic and magnificent offering! All this presents a new feature in military affairs, and will be suggestive in many respects to future leaders of armies.

It was hardly to be expected that such a series of events should not be signalled by manifestations of human weakness and folly. On the northern side we may reckon the boastsings at the commencement of the war. The movement which they thought to crush easily in three months has cost them four years of the fiercest conflict the world has ever seen, and subjected them to a pressure of pecuniary burden which will be painfully felt for many years to come. On the southern side we place the manifesto of the Southern clergy in defence of slavery—a document most offensive to all true friends of freedom, and which greatly damaged the cause it was intended to serve. It was indeed an evil omen when christian ministers intruded on the civilised world an apology for a system so utterly alien to the spirit of Christianity, and sought to enlist the Bible on the side of human bondage.

Let us now contemplate the history of Abraham Lincoln's presidency as furnishing unmistakable evidence of divine intervention. That distinguished man entered on his government with a full determination to carry out the principles of the party which placed him in power. Though earnestly desiring the downfall of slavery, he knew that it was only by indirect measures the system could at that time be touched, and all that was then intended was to prevent its extension. Abolition was but dreamed of as in the far distance. There was an honest resolve to abide by the constitution as it was,—waiting the progress of events.

Gradually, however, the conviction forced itself on the minds of the people that the war was not so much a Union-war as a slavery-war. When they began to fight, the object was the preservation of the Union. It was not long before they came to the conclusion that the Union was not to be saved if slavery was permitted to remain, and that the establishment of a slave Republic in the South would be imminently dangerous to peace and freedom in the North. The whole subject was thus presented to them in a new connection and pondered on with deep anxiety. Liberty and equality gained converts in every direction, and the friends of universal emancipation, who had been hitherto a small minority, increased and multiplied. A better state of feeling towards the coloured races sprung up everywhere. It came to be believed that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth." The assertion of the Apostle Paul that in christianity "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all"—was better understood, and its weighty truth more generally admitted.

Then came the President's celebrated proclamation, declaring the freedom of the slaves in the insurgent States, followed by the employment of negro soldiers in the armies of the Union, and the deliverance of thousands from the yoke as those armies penetrated the Southern domain. The recent action of Congress is known to you all. As soon as the requisite majority of the States shall be obtained the Great Republic will be constituted a nation of free-men.

Who could have anticipated all this four years ago? It is manifestly the hand of God, who is

"wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." It reminds us of the ancient prophecy respecting the Messiah, that he should "judge the poor of the people, save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor." We hail with grateful joy the prospect of emancipation. It will remove a foul blot from the escutcheon of a powerful people, and increase their power amazingly. It will restore millions to their just rights, elevating them to their proper rank in the human family. It will prepare the way for the evangelization of vast regions now lying under the ban of ignorance, superstition, and their attendant vices.

It has been customary to indulge gloomy apprehensions of the results of general and immediate emancipation. Nothing, it has been argued, could be more dangerous than to set free, without preparation, so large a number of human beings, wholly unfit as they are for the responsibilities of self government. Granting that the measure may require to be discreetly guarded, and that much wisdom will be called for in adjusting the details, due weight should be given to this consideration—that the religious element is extensively diffused among the slaves in the South. Very many of them are members of Baptist, Methodist, or other churches. We must believe that as "the Lord's freemen" they will be able, in a good degree, to exhibit a conversation "becoming the gospel of Christ," and to exert a powerful influence over their associates. Christianity will preserve from the excesses to which their sudden emergence into liberty might otherwise expose them. "If thou mayest be made free," said the Apostle to the christian slave of his time, "use it rather:—and it is implied that he would know how to use it."

What a glorious prospect will be now opened up for Africa! Hitherto our missionaries have but skirted the borders of that vast continent. It has proved the grave of white men. There seems little hope of evangelising that part of the world unless by the aid of coloured missionaries, who will be able to live in a climate which is so fatal to European and American constitutions. Here, then, is a field for the christian negro to labour in. The Colonization Scheme, once so highly lauded, is wild and impracticable. But let emancipation be connected with liberal and well-adapted educational plans. Let the school-master be sent all over the South. Select from the coloured churches such young men and young women as give promise of talent and industry;—train them for missionary work;—assign them to suitable stations in Africa;—and then may we not expect that God will give "showers of blessing?" Christianity will be the civiliser of that dark and barbarous region. Christian churches will be green oases in the desert. Ethiopia will "stretch out her hands unto God," and millions will praise him for the revolution which took its rise in Abraham Lincoln's presidency.

Already there are encouraging indications. The Church of England has sent out the Right Reverend Dr. Crowther, a full-blooded negro, lately ordained by the Archbishop of Canterbury, as bishop of Sierra Leone. The Republic of Liberia is a bright spot on the western coast. Dr. Livingston, the celebrated traveller, is appointed British Consul for all the kingdoms of the interior of Africa unto which he may penetrate. Flourishing christian churches have long existed in the territory of the Cape of Good Hope. Religious movements have begun to appear in Algeria. German missionaries have commenced operations on the eastern coast. Thus Africa is assailed on every side. It may be added, that Dr. Ripley, long known as one of the Professors in Newton Theological Institution, has proceeded to Georgia, to train coloured young men for the Baptist ministry in that state. If, now, the christian army shall be largely reinforced, as we may confidently hope, from the churches in the South, the problem of Africa's salvation will be solved, and there, too, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

The hand of God has also been seen, during these four years, in another respect. At first, the usual vices of an army life threatened the ruin of thousands. By the labours of the Agents of the Christian Commission a powerful check was interposed and great good accomplished. May who had fallen were restored. The influence of religion began to be extensively felt. The seed that had been sown at home, with prayers and tears, and had been long "buried in dust," spring up and bore "fruit unto holiness." Some who had formerly professed religion but had wandered back unto the world were reclaimed, and many who went to the war careless and profane, were brought under deep concern for their souls and became christians. "in deed and in truth." There has been a manifest work of grace in the army, whereby God has been glorified, even amid "the battle of the warrior, with confused noise and garments rolled in blood."

It remains to inquire into the lessons to be learned from the whole.

Let us cherish confidence in God—holy, sub-