

Christian Messenger.

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"Not slothful in business : fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

"FOR JESU'S SAKE."

"For Jesu's sake," I how much rest
Upon those words of power!
How very precious do they seem
In dark despair's lone hour!
Or when the weary soul is torn
With heart-distressing grief—
The grief of sin—O, how they calm
That soul with blessed relief!
Yea they can Satan's power quell—
And bring sweet peace, a holy spell.

"For Jesu's sake,"—the mighty prayer
That reaches Heaven's dome,
Sweet echoes from the angel harps
Ring forth—"Lo! all may come,"
Jesus who maketh peace with God—
Stands by His Father's side;
And all who trust His mighty arm
With Him forever abide.
For, safe upon that blessed shore
They wake to joy—and weep no more.

VIOLET.

Cornwallis, Oct. 12th, 1870.

Religious.

THE FUTURE STATE OF THE WICKED.

LETTER III.—ALLEVIATIONS.

THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN ONLY PART OF THE TRUTH—DIVINE LOVE AS CLEARLY REVEALED—GOD'S PUNISHMENTS ALWAYS QUESTIONED—WHAT SIN IS, AND HOW GOD REGARDS IT—ARE POPULAR VIEWS OF HELL ACCURATE?—MORE SAVED THAN ANY OF US KNOW—WHAT OF OTHER ALLEVIATIONS—UNIVERSALISM—"ANOTHER CHANCE"—ANNIHILATION OF ALL SIN?—DIFFICULTIES IN SUCH ALLEVIATIONS WHEN COMPARED WITH SCRIPTURE.

(Concluded.)

So of the heathen. Peter had no hope of the salvation of the Gentiles—even after he had studied under Christ for nearly three years and had received the anointing of Pentecost, he could touch "nothing common or unclean." Not he! Yet he learnt from the case of Cornelius—a man whose alma and prayers had come up with acceptance before God before ever he was a believer in Jesus Christ,—that in every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of Him. In the Epistle to the Romans the Apostle Paul affirms that when "Gentiles who have not a law do by nature the things of the law, they are a law unto themselves, since they show the work of the law written on their hearts." And he boldly asserts that "to those who in the way of patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor, and incorruption, God will give eternal life," whether they be Jews or Greeks. The family of the redeemed, we rejoice to be told, was even in the first ages, and before the marvellous victories which are spoken of in the later chapters of Revelation, a "multitude redeemed out of every kindred and tongue" (Rev. v. 9).

These are hints only. All may not feel that they justify the belief that many of the heathen are saved, or even that any are saved. But they give ground of hope, and they rebuke the assertion which aggravates the mystery of future punishment by affirming that all the heathen are doomed to it.

Of course this presupposes that there may be efficacy in Christ's work, even for those who have never heard His name; and that the Good Spirit has access to the souls of men in ways of which we know little. And both suppositions are rendered probable by the case of children, by facts in many countries and in both Testaments. My argument does not require, however, that I affirm these things as certain. But when men say that the heathen all perish, and that the members of the visible Church are all that are saved, I deny their right to make such assertions. There is nothing in Scripture to justify them; while there is much that gives hope that we shall ourselves be surprised at many crowns (each crown the symbol of a saved nation) which shall encircle the head of our

Redeemer, and that when He who has a heart of infinite love sees of the travail of His soul, even He who knew best what His travail was shall be satisfied. Not all nations, as if there were no ruin; but many nations at the least He is to claim. And here there is some relief.

If these facts are connected with another—viz., that half of the human family die before personal responsibility begins, they justify the conclusion that already Christ has the preeminence. More have been saved in every age by grace than have been lost through sin!

6. Are there, then, no alleviations besides? Is there not a purgatory for the Church, or better still, for the whole world? May not this consuming fire purify all? and may not this "second death" introduce all into a sinless and blessed life? Nay, more, may not the love of Christ and the zeal of redeemed men find fresh scope in this purifying work?

Or if this may not be, may we not restrict the final doom to those who, with light and knowledge, reject Christ and live and die loving sin? Is there not another chance—say, between death and judgment—for those who never heard the Gospel, who sinned without law, who knew not their Lord's will, in whom the "tares" had not ripened for burning, who died young, and who in their lifetime, had excited the love of the Master and of His servants, though they stood not the test of the Gospel—almost Christians, "not far from the kingdom"? When God gives an absolute threat (Jon. iii. 4) is there not always implied a promise and hope of pardon, as Jonah in his anger complained (Jon. iv. 2)? Is there not a "harrowing of Hades" that may yield some harvest? Does not Peter speak of Christ "preaching to spirits in prison"? Does not Jude tell of men reserved under chastisement till the judgment? Does not the very announcement that there is a sinful state that will never be forgiven in that future world—"a sin unto death,"—suggest that there are sinful states and sins that may be forgiven? Surely this would be a blessed alleviation, especially in relation to those whose case creates most sympathy.

And may we not even go farther? Admitting that for some there is no forgiveness and no fresh offer of mercy; that even in Hades men to whom forgiveness is offered will still prefer the sin that has brought them there to deliverance on the condition of holiness and submission,—may not "everlasting destruction" mean sin and misery lasting as long as the soul lasts? And may not the time come when it will be announced that all sinners and all sin have ceased out of God's universe,—not through penitence, but through the annihilation of all who would not repent? Admitting that "everlasting punishment" is against this view, may not everlasting destruction support it? And would not this be some alleviation?

They are Christian men who suggest these alleviations. They do not mean to deny inspired teaching. They profess to interpret it. They desire to vindicate the Divine benevolence, to lessen the mystery that is involved in the continued existence of sin, to get rid as they think, of a grievous scandal.

Nevertheless I can accept none of the suggestions they offer. The first suggestion—of universal salvation—is contradicted by the explicit teaching and general tenor of the Gospel. The second—of a further chance for some—is not revealed. And the third—of annihilation—seems contradicted by the meaning of "destruction" and by the terms that define it. I cannot believe the first; I have no sufficient reason to believe the second; and the third is opposed to the natural and plain meaning of Scripture. All the suggestions aim to vindicate the Divine benevolence. But it may really need no vindication, or there may be other methods. When we have waited "the Great Teacher, Death," have learnt what sin is, who are saved and what "few stripes" mean, I believe that either our present conceptions will justify the Divine dealings, or God will give us such further light consistent with the teaching of

His Word as will justify them. And with this belief I am content.

Let me briefly explain:—

(1.) Of universal restoration Scripture gives me no hope. The mystic and fanciful interpretations by which in all ages the doctrine has been sustained, the real meaning of plain passages quoted in support of it when these passages are examined in their context, the silence of Scripture where explicit teaching would seem so essential, if this "truth" is "our safeguard against infidelity," its clear and strong language on the punishment of sin, the solemn assurance that there is a sin—itsself the expression of a sinful state—that is never forgiven, and that there are men who "shall not see life" and others who "cannot be renewed to repentance"—all forbid.

(2.) Of conversions between death and judgment Scripture says nothing. Jude's "chastisement under which men are kept," is punishment, as we have seen. Peter's words on "preaching to spirits" now "in prison" may have the meaning given to them; but that meaning neither suits the context nor is in itself probable. In any case the passage stands alone, and tells nothing of any agency for saving the dead. That one sin is never forgiven either in this world or in the world to come does not teach that other sins are to be forgiven there, nor does it justify men in announcing that they will be forgiven. And this is all. While on the other hand the Parable of the Rich Man tells us plainly that even in Hades there is a great gulf fixed which none can pass. Again and again moreover, "doors are shut," and slothful servants are sent away, and men who had what seem natural excuses for neglecting a Divine call are excluded from the feast in tones and amid silence which themselves forbid hope. No doubt there are many over whose ruin we should tenderly yearn. If they perish, it is "without law," it is "with few stripes." "Another chance" might relieve that perplexity.

But there may be other facts that give relief or show that none is needed. What if the young man whom our Lord loved grew strong in the thing he lacked? What if his sorrow when he went away were the turning-point of his life, and he grew hopelessly selfish? What if no single transgression of law has ever ruined any man eternally, but is always followed by penitence or by aggravated guilt? What if God reads character in its germs as easily as in its development, and sees unfaithfulness in what is least as clearly as in much? What if "few stripes" be the explanation of some mysteries, and not "another chance"? In short Scripture does not authorise us to believe it, still less to announce it in any case; and our duty is to trust and hold our peace!

(3.) But may we not say, or hope, that, after all, "everlasting" is restricted, and that "destruction" is literal? Under the law, the death and kingdom of Christ, the conversion and worship of the Gentiles, are described in terms which our Lord's own disciples did not rightly understand, and on which even we, with the experience of centuries and the teaching of a completed Bible, divide. So may it be under the Gospel. Is there not in revelations of hell, as of heaven, an intentional mystery, an obscurity designed to inspire awe and hope? The very death at first denounced against sin needed subsequent comment to explain how much was literal and how much figurative. As did also the first promise, "Surely we are living under the same rule. May we not say it, or, at least, may we not hope?"

I look again at the passages given in my first letter and at the statements in the second, and I cannot but answer, We may not say it, if we are to speak in God's name; nor can we hope it, if hope is to rest on a Divine announcement. Every form of expression used in Scripture to describe the everlastingness of the blessedness of the righteous is applied to the condition of the lost; and the "destruction" to which men are doomed is set forth in terms that describe moral disorder and

misery, not annihilation. Fair interpretation, apart from general notions of God's benevolence, can get no hope from these descriptions. Scripture gives us no warrant for believing in annihilation, still less for proclaiming it. In our present mood of feeling, such a consummation may seem a relief, just as it might have seemed a relief had there been no sin. But I distrust these moods. Men at least as tender and as holy as we distrust them. And above all I distrust their competency to decide this question. If further relief is given us in this form we shall be thankful. If it is given in some other form, still illustrating the awful evil of sin, and the overruling grace of God, we shall then be thankful; as we shall be, if with a juster appreciation of things already revealed, we find that we need no further relief at all. In any case our exclamation will be, in the language of the Book that contains the most vivid descriptions of the coming wrath and of the coming glory, "Thou hast done all things well!" Just as true are Thy ways Thou King of Saints! What alleviation need we more?

JOSEPH ANGUS.

ACADEMICAL EDUCATION.

We find the following in an article in *The Standard*, (Chicago), on the papers presented at the Educational Meeting in Brooklyn last April. Some of the observations bear directly on some of the questions now pending in connection with our educational enterprises:—

"The topics suggested in these 'Proceedings' for comment, are very numerous and very interesting. One, in particular, much concerns us in the West—that of academies, their importance, the best method in organizing and conducting them, their relations to colleges, and to improved popular education in general. Somewhat singularly, the tendency in the newer and more recently settled portions of our country has always been to begin, in the founding of educational institutions, at the top, rather than at the bottom. One might almost say that the university is thought of and provided for before even the common school. In founding a new town, in colonizing a new settlement, the announcement of a university has seemed to be thought as essential as that of an hotel or railway depot. One would imagine, too, that the originators of such schemes have supposed the creation of a Brown, a Harvard, or a Yale, almost as easy a matter as that of the depot or the hotel. We must be pardoned for saying that there has been, and still too much is, a tendency to look upon academies as quite below the mark of true aspiration for originators of things in the Great West. The practical result has been the multiplication of colleges out of all measure, and the comparative neglect of a class of schools which are of almost infinitely greater present moment to a community in the earlier period of its history.

We quite agree with those who in the debates of the Convention took the ground that academies have two very important ends to serve: that of preparatory schools for colleges, and that of schools for higher education in general. Their function in the first of these particulars is very important, and it is desirable that in this view they should be kept in as close relation with the colleges as possible, in order that their work of preparation may be in the line, and have more or less of the characteristics of the more advanced collegiate course. It is well when these schools can be brought into organic connection with the colleges themselves, and be to a greater or less extent under the same general supervision. But they have a