

Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business : fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

for the Christian Messenger.

FAREWELL TO THE OLD YEAR.

Farewell, dear year that is passing away;
Farewell to the old dying year;
Thy life has seemed brief, but thy days are full;
And the last of thy moments are near.
Thou hast come, thou art gone, with thy lights
thy shades
With thy storms, with thy sunshine and showers
With thy winter and summer, thy autumn and
spring
Thy morning and calm evening hours.
With thy weeks of hard toil and thy Sabbaths
of rest
The day we love best of the seven
A blooming oasis in life's desert wilds
When earth holds communion with heaven.
All thy scenes have departed like a fast-fading
dream
Thy sorrows and moments of bliss.
On the swift wings of time thou hast borne them
away
To eternity's boundless abyss.
And many who watched for thy coming with joy
And hailed thee with jubilant glee.
Their cheeks like the roses first kissed by the dew
And step that comes bounding and free.
The halls then so gay with the sound of their
mirth
Have been hushed into stillness and gloom
For the feet that stepped lightly thy coming to greet
Now quietly rest in the tomb.
Ah! methinks that the echo has since died away
From the hearts left so desolate here.
Of the fond words of greeting from voices of love
Ringing out a glad Happy New Year.
Yes! then thou wert new thy paths all untrod;
Thy future a book that was sealed.
But time's busy fingers thy pages unfold,
And thy life's hidden mysteries revealed.
List ye! for the sound of soft footsteps I hear
On the threshold of time now they stand,
Just waiting to enter. Lo! a stranger is here
Tis the New Year from the far unknown land.
Throw around thee thy mantle of night thou Old
Year,
Pass out through the wide open door.
Bid a hasty adieu to old Father Time
His face to behold, never more.

River Side.

Religious.

LAYARD'S CONFIRMATION OF SCRIPTURE.

After all the attention which has been given to Layard's discoveries among the ruins of Nineveh, we doubt whether the public mind is fully aware of the nature and extent of the confirmation which they bring to the truth of Scripture. It may be useful here to set out, in the briefest form, a specimen of some of the general results of these discoveries.

They show, in conformity with the tenor of Scripture, that the earliest ages were not, as many think, barbarous ages, but that the race of men, originally enlightened from a divine source, had, at first, a high degree of knowledge, which they gradually lost through their defection to idolatry. It has been demonstrated by these excavations not only that a high state of the arts existed in Nineveh a thousand years before Christ, but also, that in the earliest ages of that city, dating but a few centuries from the flood, their sculptures were the best. In this remarkable result, the Egyptians and Assyrian antiquities also agree.

It is also proved, contrary to the general impression, that idolatry was introduced when men had better knowledge of the true God than afterwards prevailed; that it did not grow up as a religion of nature, but by the ineffectual attempts of men to find the true God. But it was introduced as an expedient of men in order to obscure what knowledge of God they possessed, because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. This is shewn in the fact, that the earliest representation of God found in these sculptures, are the best, and immeas-

urably exceed everything of the kind existing in after ages; especially in their approach to the true idea of God. So that idolatry came in not for want of light, but by an abuse of light. Men, knowing God, became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

The Scripture accounts of the great antiquities of Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire, agree with these records dug out of the ruins of Nineveh. The Scriptures date the building of the city not long after the flood; and by the fact that the same materials have been used in successive structures, and that ancient buildings have been placed on the ruins of those still more ancient, and other unmistakable indications, the conclusion is made clear, that they had all the antiquity which the Scriptures ascribe to it.

These monuments also bear upon them records of the fulfilment of prophecy. A prophet prophesied that the city would be plundered of all its treasures so that none could be left. Layard has found, in all excavations, nothing in the form of gold or silver; a fact which is remarkable, if the city had not been thoroughly plundered before it was burnt. The prophet foretold that the invaders would obtain easy access to some portions of the city; and that wherever the inhabitants should resort to a stronghold, these should be burnt. Now the ruins show just this result; that the parts of the city were destroyed by fire, and others escaped.

But a more striking confirmation is found in the fact that inscriptions on the ruins of palaces give the records of the military career of Sennacherib, with just such a casting of them, as the Scriptures ascribe him. For instance, the Bible tells us that Hezekiah rebelled against the King of Assyria; that in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took from Hezekiah three hundred talents silver, and thirty of gold. Now compare this with the historical inscription on Sennacherib's palace: "Because Hezekiah of Judah, did not submit to my yoke, I took and plundered forty-six of his strong fenced cities, and numerous smaller towns, I left him Jerusalem his capital city; and because Hezekiah still refused to pay tribute, I attacked and carried off the whole population which dwelt around Jerusalem, with thirty talents of gold and eight hundred of silver." This agrees with the Bible account, except in respect to the quantity of silver. As to this, the one account may describe what was delivered by Hezekiah, and the other the whole product of his plunder.

One chamber of Sennacherib's palace presents, in sculptures and inscriptions, the life of the Jewish city of Lachish. The king is sculptured in royal pomp, on his throne, and over his head is this inscription: "Sennacherib the mighty King, King of the country of Assyria, sitting on his throne of judgment before the city, Lachish; I give permission for slaughter." The Scriptures, the destruction of the city of Lachish is represented to have been a most difficult work; and, of course, it is a victory on which he would most plume himself, as these sculptures show that he did.

Another coincidence appears in this, that the historical sculptures there are marks of a sudden and final interruption of the work, such as would naturally follow from a violent death of the King, as is described in the Bible.

In the ruins of Babylon there is no sculptured marble. The city was built all of brick. Yet the bricks often have characters stamped upon them. In one instance a huge palace is formed of bricks thus stamped; and the same characters exhibit the name of "Nebuchadnezzar." The principal characteristic of Nebuchadnezzar was his pride—such as was revealed in that speech: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Now these ruins of the palace, in every brick of them give just the echo of that boasting speech. Yes, after so many centuries, God has brought forth, from the ruins of the cities,

voices in response to what the inspired penman had recorded so many centuries.

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

has been under discussion in our English contemporary the *London Freeman* for several weeks. A letter on the subject in the number received by our last mail gives the following very sensible remarks:—

I am the minister of a chapel, built some twelve years ago, at a cost of about £4,700. The architect, so styled, was one of the cheap articles to which you refer. His capacity was fairly exhausted in planning four walls and a roof, which have been well and solidly put together. The chapel will seat about six or seven hundred people. As to style, it would probably be pronounced a hybrid between Greek and Italian, descended, as the author of "Rab and his Friends" would say, through a dubious ancestry. It is a thoroughly respectable looking building.

But as to the purposes which a chapel is intended to subserve, it is a painful and costly failure. It is of such unusual height that one almost wonders whether the extra space, unavailable for any congregational use, was intended to accommodate a larger company of angels than are commonly present at our seasons of worship. Then instead of taking care to have smooth surfaces in the building for the unobstructed flow of sound, what with pilasters on the walls and huge beams to form diamonds and triangles in the ceiling, everything has been done as though the intention were to break up the sound in every direction. This at least has been the result. Distinct speaking and pleasant hearing have been alike rendered impossible. The preacher, whoever he may be, has to strain his voice so as to destroy all its better tones, while the singing is confused and in companies, coming from the different parts of the building, one succeeding another. So that if we sing a hymn of six verses we always succeed in singing the last just as slow again as the first. We have tried upstairs and down as a place for the choir with the same result.

Three years ago we purchased an excellent organ with the hope that it would improve our singing. The organ, however, only produces another body of sound, contending with those already present, and we find our singing worse than before; and this notwithstanding we have a good share of musical ability, and no squabbles of singers; thus in spite of all we have done, our singing is a discomfort to ourselves and the opprobrium of the neighbourhood.

And then as to spiritual results as affected by the construction of the building, why, just this, that when I have succeeded in putting in a good deal of feeling into a sermon as conceived in the study, and strained effort that is necessary to make the sermon distinctly heard, and a certain indefinable sense of unmanageableness in the place absolutely prevent the expression of any pathos in its delivery, and as a consequence, renders it very incapable of producing feeling in others. This, to a man caring to do good, and with a voice as easy and usable as is common, is excessively annoying and discouraging.

And now our only remedy, after a large and comparatively recent outlay, is either to reconstruct the chapel, or to adopt a liturgy where hearing is of little moment, and hire a professional choir to sing to us, and not with us, which however, we are too stiff Nonconformists to consent to.

To all intending chapel builders I would say most earnestly, beware of cheap architects, and take special care of two vital requirements, that the chapel be well constructed for hearing and seeing.

A WEEKLY SUFFERER.

Another writer suggests the following questions:—

1. How is it that a gentleman with a weak voice can be distinctly heard by all in a theatre seating five or six thousand

persons, and not so in a chapel or church?

2. How is it that ministers preach with perfect ease in the former places, but with great difficulty in the latter?

3. How is it that there is not to be found in Britain one place of worship erected in perfect accordance with the science of sounds?

4. How long are we to be favoured with such erections merely as advertisements for architects?

5. How long are we to remain far behind the ancients in this matter of building with acoustics in view?

6. How long are pastors and evangelists' throats to suffer, and powers to be paralyzed by these defects?

7. How long will it be said that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light"?

THE OECUMENICAL COUNCIL.

A SCENE IN ST. PETERS.

The scene at St. Peter's on the 7th ult., made various impressions, and the truth lies, says the *Times* correspondent, in a fair comparison of them. In brilliancy, and in all that constitutes a fete or a show, it was far short of the canonization of the Japanese martyrs. Of course it was. On this occasion the object of interest was in a Council-hall, out of the principal line of vision, and only half revealed to the most fortunate of the spectators, those under the dome. The Council was an object of supreme interest, but far from showy; for what is there in 700 old men, dressed in white and wearing tall paper caps. As these were laid aside on entering the church, and as all the bishops stopped at the Chapel of the Sacrament, through which the Pope made his way to the Council-hall, there was hardly any procession, and what there was of it could not be seen. There was no procession at the end; only two streams of departures, indicated by a succession of tall mitres, made with two sheets of cardboard. Certainly this is a sight one does not see every day, but when there is a procession for everything, why not for a General Council? The day was most unfavorable for seeing this spectacle in the Hall, being what they call here a fasting day—that is, a dull one. But what was seen was significant, and therefore impressive. Seven hundred bishops, more or less, representing all Christendom, were seen gathered round on altar, and one throne partaking of the same Divine mystery, and rendering homage, by turns, to the same spiritual authority and power. As they put on their mitres, or took them off, and as they came to the steps of the altar, or the foot of the common spiritual Father, it was impossible not to feel the unity and the power of the Church which they represented. The sight was impressive to those prepared to be impressed, though it must have disappointed those who came to see a show, and would hardly have satisfied the crowds who flocked into Rome to see the triumph of their sovereign. What reached the ear could not but be imperfect. There were long and tedious intervals of silence. The sermon was injudiciously long they say; and, of course, sound, and nothing else, to the outer world. The Pope delivered his allocution with much emphasis and gesture, but was interrupted by a cough, and probably did not say all he had on paper. "He said nothing political," so I am told, though I don't see how he could avoid it. As to the singing, it was necessarily under difficulties. There could be no rehearsal or concord. The verses of the *Vini Creator* were sung at long intervals, but very impressive. The choir was there in one place, and the responses, with the chief volume of sound, in another. Where I stood I could not make out whence either came. The Pope was to chant the Litany and the people about me said he was chanting it; but the voice rung so loud, so clear and so musical that I could not believe it to come from so old a man. The truth is he chanted three petitions made for the occasion, not the rest; but I suppose he put