

FROM ITALY.

ROME, December, 1873.

What can be the spell which chains one to this curious city, making one postpone the hour of departure from day to day? It cannot be its network of narrow streets of high houses, which shut out the sun and compel you by their tortuosity to go generally double the direct distance from one point to another; it cannot be its situation, partially on a few eminences which, before the valleys were filled with ruins, might have been hills, but chiefly on a marshy plain below the level of the Tiber, which rolls upon its ever accumulating yellow mud; nor, though different physical constitutions may have different sentences to pronounce on this point, can it be what Shelley calls "this divinely climate," which swings, in the course of a few hours, from the enervating, "sirocco" or south wind from the African sands, to the cutting "tramontane," or north wind from the bleak Apennines,—finishing with six months of a fever breathing heat which cures it of all foreigners and of every native who can quit the spot. What is it which brings back this sacred flock like doves to their windows as soon as the autumn rains have drenched the soil and restored coolness to the torrid air: so that just now, wherever you wander, within or around its walls, you catch the ring of nearly every European language? Is it the ruins? Other cities have ruins. Such ruins? No, not such ruins. Here, then, we get a step nearer. What distinguishes these ruins? Why do they affect one as they do? Why, when you stand on the top of the Capitol, with the colossal twin-brothers and the genial Aurelius on the one hand, and the Forum, the Sacred Way, the Imperial Palace, the Arch of Titus, and the grim walls of the Flavian Amphitheatre on the other, do you hold your breath and listen as if you heard some far off voices which you ought to recognize? They are voices which you do recognize. They are all familiar. They come from the days of boyhood, stripped of whatever was irksome, and clothed in all that is buoyant and joyous: they come from later reading which has brought into fuller acquaintance the men who once peopled these desolations; they come from the very language of one's daily life, every sentence of which bears traces of the vanished race which once held our island as their own, and when they turned their backs upon us left behind them their arts and laws. When to all these associations are added those which belong to Christian times—from the day on which Paul came up from the Bay of Naples along the Appian Causeway to some spot beside the Tiber, down through the ages of martyrdom which still hang their memories like mists upon those brown stones, to that long struggle of truth and error in the system, more Pagan than Christian, which still rules in the Vatican—who can wonder that every civilised man should have something like the feelings of a son when he looks upon this "lone mother of dead empires"?

It was this undying interest in Rome which led to an outburst of Christian zeal on her behalf as soon as the present King of Italy established her religious freedom. The thrill occasioned by her liberation was so sudden and universal that it is not surprising that it should have led to courses of action marked, in some instances, more by enthusiasm than wisdom, by romantic ardour rather than adaptation to Italian character. Nor ought it to surprise anyone that labourers representing so many different constituencies suddenly poured into one city, without, in many instances, the ability to speak a syllable of the language, should sometimes get into each other's way, and differ in opinion as to each other's measures and conduct. There has been perhaps as much "sweetness" as could fairly be looked for at such a crisis; and already improvement is beginning to appear. More work is done with less feverishness. The people are becoming better acquainted with the objects of their teachers, and fall in with a style of public worship very different to that in which they have been trained, with singular readiness. Various classes of work, too, are getting tested, some of which will probably have to be abandoned, while others will be prosecuted with increased power.

The Government, it is well known, have taken up the subject of popular education with vigour. It found, on inquiry, that out of the twenty-five millions of people whom it received from the hands of the Roman Catholic Church, seventeen millions were unable to read or write. It was but reasonable that a steward who had proved

so unfaithful should be turned out of office. The priests, therefore, are everywhere dismissed from the work of elementary education, and lay teachers, bearing certificates of efficiency, have been put in their place. The conventual buildings, from which obsolete brotherhoods have been driven, have been already converted into schools, and, as education is gratuitous, and in some degree compulsory, they are well filled. Whether it is necessary for Evangelical churches to establish schools, side by side with these, does not appear to me to be yet clearly made out. Several such schools have been opened, and are now maintained at very considerable cost. The Government offers no objection to these institutions, provided the teachers have obtained the proper certificates; but there can be no reason for their existence apart from the religious instruction which is given in them. At present, as far as I could ascertain, there is no religious instruction whatever given in the national schools. If at a later period such instruction is prescribed it will no doubt have a Roman Catholic colour, and in that case would necessitate private schools, of a different complexion. But what seems to be of immediate importance is to encourage such Christian men as we would employ in our own schools if we had them, to qualify themselves for appointments in the national schools, and to work there as long as nothing contrary to their conscience was demanded of them; in addition to which every possible effort may be put forth for the establishment of Sunday schools and week day classes for religious instruction, in which a most interesting beginning has been made, showing, not only on the part of children, but of intelligent young men, a strong desire for information.

I have mentioned the remarkable readiness with which many Italians have passed from the Romish ceremonial, with its scenic processions, evolutions, mutterings, and pantomimes, to the simple manner of worship prevalent among ourselves. This transition implies some independence of mind which it is not likely they will part with at the bidding of a new master. Yet we have sent them our own denominational systems, sharply defined, and just as they have been crystallized under the heat of local controversies and struggles, requiring them to take them as they are or to forfeit our support. We expect them, on opening their eyes after the long night of Romanism, to be charmed with churches under the title of "Waldese," an evil name on their annals, "Metodista," which seems to offer only a new form of worship, and "Luterana," which looks as if it promised nothing but the performance of the initial rite. When an interesting congregation in Tuscany has found its way out of the form of church government which was first given to it, it must be cast off: its minister and the support still needful for it are about to be withdrawn. When another congregation in Northern Italy, consisting of persons who had extricated themselves from the idolatry of the mass, were required by instructions sent from England to return to the practice of kneeling before the bread and wine, what should follow but disruption and dispersion? Our missionary adopted for his people the designation of "Apostolic Church" ("Chiesa Apostolica"), which I thought, when in England, just a little presumptuous, but, on becoming acquainted with all the circumstances, it seemed to me, on the whole, a wise choice. He has been, at all events, supported by the committee in his purpose to act simply the part of an evangelist, bringing men to Christ, and referring them to His Word for further instruction. The anxiety of the people is to find out what the Church was in the days of those Apostles whom the Papacy professes to honour so much, but whose doctrines it has overwhelmed with superstition. They believe that that inquiry can be best answered in the New Testament, and, at all events, that that only is authoritative. Hitherto a very large number have fallen naturally into the views of order and ordinance held among ourselves, but if in the course of such an investigation they come to some conclusions within the range of vital Christianity, which we have never reached, we have no power, and ought to have no wish, to prevent them.

I should like to say that I found Mr. Wall to be highly respected among his fellow-labourers in Rome. His command of the language and his acquaintance with the Italian character—the result of eight or nine years quiet work in Bologna—gave him every personal advantage when called to this more conspicuous place. In other

respects he has not been so well equipped. He has been compelled by influences, which can be easily guessed to quit one house after another until he found himself, as I mentioned in my first letter, in very inferior quarters. Within the last two or three weeks, however, he has removed his own dwelling to a house much more in the face of day, and yet not too public for the Roman Nicodemus who so frequently seeks him out at night. The church still meets in the rooms he has vacated, and the American Sunday-school Society's tent, pitched in the cortile or back garden, must shelter the evening congregation for the present winter. But the generous gifts now coming in for a permanent building, to serve at once for home and chapel, will enable him to secure a standing which he has never yet had. The selection of such a house has been a very anxious matter, although the delay which has taken place is likely to prove an advantage in the end; and if the fund which Mr. Booth applies for, and which may be demanded on any day now, is ready, that indispensable condition of progress may be regarded as attained.

There is only one other thing, of even more importance, which I must be allowed to mention—the necessity of supplying a fellow-labourer to Mr. Wall. The Italian churches must, no doubt, look for pastors to Italians, but it is little less necessary in Italy than in Hindostan to have the aid of English Christian culture during the period of their infancy. It such men are to be sent they must be prepared. It is great injustice to any man, whatever his zeal and ability may be, to send him to this country before he has learned the language, and to require him to superintend missions from the first hour of his arrival. This course may possibly have been unavoidable in some instances in the first stages of the work, but it may be hoped that it will not often be repeated,—and it need not be repeated if reasonable foresight be used. It is of course not particularly difficult to acquire a scantily serviceable knowledge of the Italian at any time, but to use it with idiomatic accuracy and purity, as a minister of Christ to such a people ought to use it, one must master it in early life. If two or three men now in our colleges, or otherwise well educated, and not over five-and-twenty years of age at the most, were sent to pursue their studies for a winter at any of the Italian universities, speaking nothing but Italian, and living only with Italians, and then going to Rome to spend another six months with Mr. Wall, they and others would be in a position to judge whether they had been honoured by a call to this work, one of the greatest and most interesting in the world. I pray that some noble young hearts may take in and revolve this suggestion.

I close these roughly written notes, which, if you print them, I hope no one will suppose to contain anything more serious than the provisional impressions of a bird of passage, by repeating what I said in your columns seven years ago, that it is well worth an effort for any man to go to Rome, provided only he is tolerably prepared to understand what will fall under his eyes. There is no place which more demands previous study in order to the development of its charms; but few places, I imagine, will more requite such labour. The fatigue and expense of the pilgrimage are now much less than they were; though the inconvenience yet remains that it is not the place for a summer holiday. It is tolerable only for the five months included within November and March, with a variable margin at each of these extremities; but this is the moral harvest time of active men in England.—C. M. B. in Freeman.

Fruits of Missions.—According to Dr. Mullens, Secretary, since the commencement of this century, the gospel has swept heathenism entirely away, in more than three hundred islands of Eastern and Southern Polynesia. The missionaries have gathered 400,000 people under Christian influences, of whom a quarter of a million are living still, and 50,000 of these are communicants.

It may be interesting to the admirers of the Rev. John Howard Hinton to know that his last issue from the press was the funeral sermon preached by him at Manser street Chapel, Bath, on the death of the late Rev. David Wassell. The subject of the discourse is "The Entrance Ministered."—Freeman.

In Brasenose College, Oxford, a foreign missionary Association has been recently formed with forty members. They have resolved to take up the Lahore divinity school, and to assist it by maintaining students, or otherwise.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

HIGHLY IMPORTANT.

Several questions of weighty importance, are now agitating large portions of the civilized world. Some of the questions take deep hold upon the heart and mind of united Christendom. There is the ever-important concern of penetrating the vast wilds of heathendom, that the many millions thereof, may have a true and saving knowledge of a precious Redeemer. Then, there is the grand problem of reaching the masses of our own christian country, who are not wont to tread the aisles of God's sanctuary. Upon this point, there is being concentrated a growing anxiety by such as have broad hearts and deep designs, and wish to make Christ known to every one. The question, too, of educating for the ministry those sons of Africa whom God has lately called out of American bondage, is awakening wider interest among the people, and receiving attention more proportionate to the magnitude of the necessity, than formerly. These, and other great religious concerns, are daily manifesting their true importance. But, there is one question, though not at all new, whose importance in some localities, is not regarded as it should be. That subject is the toleration of members in our churches, who habitually use intoxicating drinks. We are glad that this is not generally the case. But, it is too frequently so in certain regions. It is said to be true, of certain portions of the "Sunny South." And our attention is called to the unpleasant fact, from localities in Nova Scotia, where of late, at the session of a certain Baptist Association, a "resolution" was passed, whereby those given to intemperance, should not be allowed to represent churches as delegates to their Association. Now, this resolution is good, so far as it goes. But, it does not extend far enough. There should be a resolution, recorded in every "church book," utterly discountenancing the reception of any person into the church who indulges in intoxicating drinks. And, where the practice obtains after one has joined the church, then let the resolution prohibit farther connection with the body. Why, the principle and practice is perfectly startling to the sense of any true christian! What right have we to receive to the membership of our churches those whom God has not received into his kingdom? What fellowship hath Christ with drunkards? Doth not the scripture say that drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God? But, say some: "We are not drunkards, we are only moderate drinkers." And this reminds me of my attendance at a temperance meeting not long since, where this question was discussed: "When does the moderate drinker become a drunkard?" Some argued one view, and some another. A few thought that one must be so addicted to his cups that he could not let liquor alone, in order to be constituted a real drunkard. So long as a man could sip the beverage, at his own option, and quit it when he chose, he was not a drunkard they said. Others could not define the dividing line between the two named states or experiences. But, after all, what does the Bible position show? Does it allow any such distinction? Does it say, "Those who do not get very drunk, may enter God's kingdom?" The truth is, God makes no distinction between the moderate drinker (so called), and a confirmed drunkard. It is drunkenness in any degree, that the Bible denounces. The "moderate drinker," is a little drunkard, and the sot is a big drunkard; and the wrath of God abideth upon such, for they have not the spirit of Christ truly formed within them. If a person be regenerated there is enough grace and power connected with it to enable the soul to resist all temptations to drunkenness. The "new man" doesn't love rum; and strength is given to him, whereby he may overcome the "old man," in all of his attempts at debauching himself. Of course one who has been forewarned by the power of intemperate habits finds himself even after conversion, still under peculiar constraints, in the direction of returning to his former indulgences. None but those who have been under the control of such a terrible habit, know the force of those subtle temptations, which seek to drown the soul in utter perdition. The world, the flesh, and Satan, seek by everything in their power, and ingenuity to renew the old bondage. All this is not to be lost sight of by those who speak against such a practice under any circumstance. We, who know nothing experimentally of

this evil are called upon by the voice and spirit of Christianity, to show love and pity towards such unfortunates. But, at the same time, we must in duty to God and his cause cry out loudly and boldly against the course pursued by such as maintain a position in the visible church, and still continue to indulge in the use of spirituous liquors as a beverage.

And we claim that no church can prosper which tolerates such persons in their membership. Certainly it cannot meet God's approval. And, more than this, what an example to the world! What occasion it gives "to sinners to despise the religion of Christ!" What advantage it affords the Devil to hinder the truth and help his own cause! O my brethren, do not continue such loose discipline. For the sake of "holding on" to men who have property, that the church may be helped to "run," by them, do not thus debase the character of religion. Do not thus dishonor your Master. Never mind about the money you may get by keeping intemperate members in church fold. Do that which is right in the sight of God, and your visible support will always be at hand, prompt and sufficient, and much greater prosperity will surely follow the discharge of every such duty.

C. H. WETHERBE.

For the Christian Messenger.

"He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."—John xii. 25. See also Math. x. 39, xvi. 25. Mark viii. 35. Luke ix. 24; xvii. 33.

Will some brethren having experimental knowledge of the truth stated in the above passage, favour us with their views of the meaning of the words 'loveth' and 'hateth', as may occur therein; say, in what they agree with, and in what differ from their general acceptance, also, of the points of agreement, and of difference, between the life lost and the life kept; and of the things each necessarily includes; and how the whole passage accords with "My yoke is easy and my burden light."

It appears to the writer that the things above referred to are among the deep things of the kingdom, surrounded by the solemn realities of death and the glories of immortal life, and therefore he hopes, though it may cost some labor to comply with his requests, it will yet be complied with.

ONE INTERESTED.

For the Christian Messenger.

CANNING.

TEMPERANCE DOINGS, AND SIGNS OF A REVIVAL.

There are some prospects of better days in the village of Canning. Last Saturday morning February 14th, the ladies in a body called on the seven men who have been selling intoxicating drinks, contrary to law, read and presented written remonstrances, respectfully yet earnestly urging them to desist from the traffic, giving them till the 25th of the month to consider and reply, and threatening them that unless they comply, legal and other measures will be adopted to enforce their compliance. These noble women are conscious of divine assistance, and are determined to carry their point. I believe God will help them. He is evidently working in the minds of the community.

Some startling deaths occurred in the Methodist congregation, which are being improved with effect, and numbers connected with them are bowing to the Saviour.

The Baptist Church have not as yet held any special meetings. But the Sabbath School, the only one in the place this winter, is greatly increased, and several members of the School on the last Sabbath evening requested prayers, among whom is the daughter of the pastor. The waters are troubled. There is a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry trees. We hope all the friends of Zion will pray for us. We are glad to hear of the outpouring of the Spirit in other places, and of the blessed work in our beloved institutions in Wolfville.

COMMUNICATED.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE LUNENBURG AND QUEENS CO. MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE.

Met at Milton on Tuesday the 3rd inst. Owing to storm the only brethren present were March, Ballentine, Gates and Durkee. Organized by the choice of Bro. March for President, and Bro. Durkee for Secretary. It was arranged that future meetings of the Conference be held on the Tuesday after