

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.
From Heidelberg, Germany.

THE OVERFLOW OF THE NECKAR.

Doubtless the readers of the *Messenger* have learned through its columns of the fearful inundation along the banks of the Rhine, which occurred during the first part of December. Every village and town on either bank of this historic river were flooded by its waters. The amount of suffering and the loss of property were fearful to consider. From that time until the present, notices were to be seen in the principal stores of the German towns, that contributions would be received for those who had suffered loss in these cities on the Rhine. Heidelberg had congratulated herself because she had escaped, and was foremost in her contributions for the aid of others. But her turn was yet to come.

This city is situated on the left bank of the river Neckar, just where its waters after struggling for many miles to gain a passage through lofty hills, at length find release and pour themselves into the valley of the Rhine. Far back among these hills a heavy fall of snow had taken place. The weather had then become much milder, and during the last week the snow had melted rapidly. The Neckar rose somewhat higher than usual, but this caused no uneasiness among the people who retired for rest on the night of Dec. 26th, with their customary feeling of safety. About six o'clock on the morning of the 27th, we were suddenly awakened by the loud cries of persons in the street. On going to the windows, we saw to our great surprise the water rushing through the town. So rapidly had it risen in the night that the horses could no longer be taken from the stables by the proper way, but were being urged through the house. With daylight, boats were to be seen plying to and fro, where on the previous evening waggons came and went.

Some of the people were now compelled to leave their houses, and very many had removed from the first into the second story. Throughout the day the water rose very slowly, and it was hoped that it would soon cease its upward progress. However, between four and eight o'clock, it again began rapidly to rise, and would soon enter the first story of the house in which we lived. No danger was to be apprehended from the undermining of the house, for from top to bottom it was solid stone. In this respect it was very different from the shells one often sees erected in American cities "to let." What however it was wisest to avoid, was the difficulty of ferrying at a late hour in the night in a boat; for as the waters kept rising and rushed rapidly through the streets, the poles used by the boatmen were of less avail, and in the centre of the river you might give yourself up to the mercies of the waters which did not appear to be in a tender mood upon this night. Thus we slept in peace in another house.

Another morning dawned. Throughout the entire night the waters had continued to rise. About ten o'clock they reached the highest point. Some, what later we proceeded on a tour of observation through the town. Above the city the hills approach so near the river that there is only room at their base for a carriage way and railroad. On the one side the water covered the road, and all traffic was suspended; on the other it was only possible to proceed by walking along the high embankment of the railroad. Entering Heidelberg through an ancient gate—the Karlsthor, we follow the Neckar in its course through the city. Through the centre of the town and parallel with the river runs the Haupt-Strasse, or principal business street of Heidelberg. The portion of the city between this street and the river is for the most part under water, the remaining portion between this street and the hills escapes. We walk along the Haupt-Strasse turning down every street which leads to the river. In the first cross-street we notice that the water is up to the glass of the street lamps. The gas is still burning, which serves to deepen the feeling that the affairs of men are not here following their accustomed order. The water rushing in and out through the broken windows of the houses, and sweeping to and fro the torn curtains adds to the mournful aspect of the scene. Down another street we turn, and here we find a group of people at the waters edge. In the windows of the upper stories are to be seen the people who dwell in these houses, looking out upon the waters which flow beneath. Boats, often manned by firemen, proceed backward and forward along the streets, and as they come under the windows, ladders are raised in order to carry up provisions, or to allow those to leave in the boats

who desire so to do. The next cross street leads to the Old Bridge which spans the Neckar. Along the centre of this street an elevated foot-path of planks is constructed. From the central way planks are laid to the doors and windows of the houses. We cross to the bridge. Here we observe that the heights above the ordinary level which the Neckar has reached on various occasions are painted on the first pier of the bridge. The highest is 31 feet, on the 27th Feb., 1784, when almost the entire city must have been flooded. On the 30th Oct., 1824, it rose 26 feet, 30th Jan. 1789, 24 feet, 22nd Oct., 1817, 22 feet, 28th Dec., 1882, about 22 feet, 30th Oct., 1834, 21 feet, 29th March, 1785, to 19 feet, 29th Oct., 1780, to 18 feet, 29th March, 1845, 15 feet, and on the 20th October, 1789, 13 feet. As on only four of these dates has the Neckar been as high or higher than at this time, the happy rarity of such a flood is very evident. In Mannheim, a city below Heidelberg, the Neckar was higher than in 1784. Strange to remark these inundations have seldom occurred in the spring when the amount of snow to be melted would be much greater than at present. The only apparent explanation for the present occasion was the unseasonable mildness of the weather.

From the middle of the bridge one looks down upon the waters, which ever swift in their flight toward the sea now rush with far more than their ordinary speed. Angered as it were by every obstruction they beat themselves into a seething foam in the vain endeavor to carry these old piers from their wanted bed. Whatever is not most firmly held they sweep away in an unquitting fury. Fences, lumber, boat-houses, and even furniture out of the houses are borne off as if to satisfy a terrible wrath.

Returning to the Haupt-Strasse, we proceed somewhat further, when turning into another cross street, we enter a boat in order to visit our former place of abode. Out of the cross street over the corner of the square where the soldiers drill and into a street parallel to the main one, the boatmen ply their way and bring us to the desired house. We enter through a window and find the water several feet deep in every room of the lower story. Many of the upper rooms of the house are in confusion from an over-supply of furniture. The owner had not closed his eyes during the previous night as the waters were then steadily rising. The anxious watchers of that night must have counted a very large number.

We again enter the boat which is propelled by the long poles of the boatmen to the new landing place in the city. We pass several more cross streets, which during the day having been guarded by soldiers to prevent a rush of people to the waters edge, and come at length to the New Bridge. This leads to the village of Neuenheime, where scenes similar to those in Heidelberg may be witnessed. The bridge trembles from the force of the water, but proved of sufficient strength to withstand the force of the water. We here reach the lower end of the town.

During the entire day the water continued to fall. In the evening the streets which are overflowed are lighted by burning pitch. The flames swept by the winds throw a weird light upon the darkened waters. In the distance ever and anon there is seen the moving torch of the busy boatmen. Groups of people are collected in every street watching the retreating waters.

With another day the Neckar had retired within its natural limits and we could walk through the portion of the city which had been submerged. In every street mud several inches deep had been deposited. The scenes presented on either side are most deplorable to behold broken or mud covered furniture is often to be seen along the sidewalks. In the lower storey of the houses the walls of the rooms are everywhere soiled, the plaster has often fallen from its place, the boards are even lifted from the floor, the chairs and tables are totally or partially destroyed, the curtains are torn, the pictures which remain upon the wall are ruined by the muddy waters. Some of the people are pumping water from their cellars, others are collecting their furniture, others are endeavoring to refit their homes. The loss and suffering to the poor are terrible to contemplate. When one reflects that to Heidelberg, the beauties of whose surroundings are perhaps unsurpassed in Germany, and whose castle attracts thousands of visitors every year, there has suddenly come this fearful inundation, one is led to think that the advantages and disadvantages, the gain and loss, the joys and ills of life are more evenly distributed in this world than we are accustomed to suppose.

B. R.

Dec. 30th, 1822.

For the Christian Messenger.
Letter from India.

There are in India two distinct educational parties representing respectively the missionary and the government interests. The "General Council on Education in India" may in a general sense be considered the representative of the missionary interest and the advocate of their system of education as opposed to that of the government. This Council consists of about a dozen noblemen, besides bishops, directors of various missionary societies, and other leading Christian men in England. In 1881 this body addressed a memorial to the Indian Government asking for an inquiry into the working of the Education Despatch of 1854. As a result of this memorial the present education commission was appointed. The report is current that the appointment is due largely to missionary influence, and that the action of the various missionary bodies is prompted by a desire to obtain government funds for the prosecution of their school work. The Council deny that in this movement "any one missionary society as such has taken part, but they have no wish to conceal the fact that the movement originated with men of pronounced Christian convictions who desire that all men should share with them the blessings of the Christian faith." The two main principles guiding the action of the Council are the facts that Government Colleges give an education which cannot be complete without some form of Christian teaching, and that these colleges violate the principle of religious neutrality by teaching the Hindu religion. They urge that the Bible be introduced into the schools, since the present system of purely secular education tends to foster indifference to all religious creeds and restraints and spreading infidelity. They urge the encouragement of primary education, the diversion of funds from the education of the higher castes to that of the lower, and an equitable share of government funds for missionary educational institutions.

The government party, on the other hand, asserts that the purely secular education given in the schools imparts a high moral tone to the students while it preserves that strict religious neutrality which is enjoined by the despatch; and that the present system of education in every way fulfils the conditions of that despatch. To the leading terms of that despatch both parties claim the closest adherence. It is but just to say, however, that it is best interpreted by the Council at whose head is the framers of the celebrated document, Lord Halifax.

The commission called into being by this contest has now completed its inquiries. It has taken the evidence of 230 men and women in various parts of India who have long been careful observers of the working of the Educational Department. There have been read before the commission 300 memorials and addresses signed by more than 200,000 persons. The whole proceedings will cover, when printed, 5000 folio pages. The body sits at Calcutta in December, when, it is believed, the most points between educationists of opposite views will be considered and judged impartially; while it is hoped that the result of the inquiry will be an Education Act which will place public instruction in India on a basis more favourable to the lower classes and their well-wishers the missionaries.

The policy of the present government seems to be actuated by a desire to benefit the people at large greater than has characterized its predecessors. It has formulated and circulated for the approval of the various districts a scheme of self government. For the present an expression of opinion only is asked for by the government. Should that expression be favourable to the scheme, it will be put in force. But the general opinion seems to be that in such an event too much power and money would be placed in the hands of natives who in the majority of cases are not yet sufficiently educated either in patriotism or morality to govern themselves, much less their fellow creatures. So wide a margin would be left for bribery and corruption of various kinds that the effect upon the country would be speedily disastrous. No Bible in our schools; and the government, after spending hundreds of thousands of rupees each year to educate the native without it, cannot trust him to handle the funds except under the strictest supervision. This is the outcome of the so-called "morality" taught in the schools; and if you but remember that the Hindu saint makes a first class sinner, you will understand how this morality teaches the native to respect neither God nor man; and how he who respects not man will have but little regard for man's rights.

The Salvation Army has invaded India, a detachment, in native dress, landed in Bombay. They were headed by "Major" Tucker, an Indian ex-Civilian with a good knowledge of Hindustani. The day after the arrival, the detachment, consisting of men and women, attempted to march through the town singing songs in the vernacular accompanied by the sound of cornet and drum. The police had received instructions beforehand and speedily lodged them in the nearest station. They were fined by the Parsi Magistrate, who interrupted Mr. Tucker in his defence on the ground that the time of the court could not be wasted, and afterwards made a long speech himself in the course of which the Parsi undertook to explain to the Christian how he ought to carry on his work. The High Court when appealed to declined to take any action. The Salvationists thereupon declined to pay the fine, and the amount was recovered by distress on their goods. The next day the Salvationists went and did it again. This time they were brought to trial and, whether because the offence was not so great as before or because the magistrate had received instructions to this effect, were dismissed with a caution. The Salvationists contend only for that religious freedom which the law of India grants to all sects. Through popular prejudice this was denied them. It is not difficult to determine what course they will pursue. Undoubtedly they will fight until India gives them such a victory over unlawful opposition as England gave. They claim the right which is granted to Hindus and Mohammedans of having their processions protected, not stopped, by the police. The common sense of the masses, and their own pluck will gain them the day; for the pluck of the Salvationists is only equalled by their earnestness and surpassed by their insensationalism. During the trouble in Bombay a large and influential meeting was held in Calcutta at which resolutions were passed condemning the unjust action of the Bombay authorities. Last year the Calcutta missionaries fought a similar battle with the authorities about street preaching, and won the day. The detachment of the Army that has just gone to Calcutta is likely, therefore, to meet with a cordial reception; and it is reported that the Methodist missionaries there have joined them in the campaign.

The movement will meet with a flagrant success in India; not because the natives are particularly struck with the "Army" idea which seemed so well adapted to the tastes of the lower classes in England, but because of the processions, display, music and din which are with them important ingredients of religious enthusiasm. What the permanent results will be can be better determined by those who know the Hindu mind than by the Salvationists. If I mistake not, the various missionary bodies will look upon the movement with but little favour. There is too much of the unsettled element in it. Missionary methods and Salvation methods of reaching and converting the heathen are very different. The one is noisy and superficial, the other quiet and deep. The one uproots everything in its irregular course, the other runs in well defined channels. The one seeks to carry away the whole fabric of Hinduism as with a flood; the other undermines and saps the foundations slowly and yet so surely that the giant structure must fall. There exists between these two methods all the difference between possibility and certainty. The one may succeed, the other must.

INDIA.

For the Christian Messenger.
The Uncertainties of Science.

Mr. Editor,—I enclose an extract from the "Montreal Family Herald," which illustrates finely the *certainities* of Natural Science, as compared with the *uncertainties* of Revealed Religion, as these are sometimes boastfully put forth by sceptics and unbelievers. The extract is from an article on the Transit of Venus, and clearly shows how utterly impossible it is to arrive at absolute certainty, when we go peering up among the stars to find out how far off, how big, and how heavy they are.

ALPHA BETA.

ASTRONOMY ON A SMALL SCALE.

The magnitude of astronomical calculations renders them as difficult to grasp mentally as the infinites of time and space. Professor Proctor, however, in his popular style, in an able apology for the discrepancies of astronomy, has reduced the figures to something like appreciable proportions. He says: "But in truth, if we consider the nature of the task undertaken by astronomers in this case, we can only too readily understand that their measurements should differ somewhat widely from each other. Let us picture to ourselves for a

moment the central sun, the earth, and the earth's path, not as they really are, for the mind refuses altogether to picture the dimensions even of the earth, which is but an atom compared with the sun, whose own proportions, in turn, mightily though they are, sink into utter insignificance compared with the enormous scale of the orbit in which the earth travels around him. Let us reduce the scale of the entire system to one five hundred millionth part of its real value; even then we have a tolerably large orbit to imagine. We must picture to ourselves a fiery globe three yards in diameter to represent the sun, and the earth as a one inch ball circling round that globe at a distance of about 325 yards, or about 350 paces. The diameter of the earth's orbit would on this scale, therefore, be somewhat more than a third of a mile. If we imagine the one inch ball moving around the fiery globe once in a year, while turning on its axis once in a day, we find ourselves under a difficulty arising from the slowness of the resulting motions. We should have found ourselves under a difficulty arising from the rapidity of the actual motions if we had considered them instead. The only resource is to reduce our time scale, in the same way that we have reduced our space scale but not in the same degree; for if we did we should have the one inch ball circling round its orbit a third of a mile in diameter, sixteen times in a second, and turning on its axis five thousand times in a second. Say, instead, that for convenience we suppose days reduced to seconds. Then we have to picture a one-inch globe circling once in rather more than six minutes about a globe of five three yards in diameter, one sixth of a mile from it and turning on its axis once in a second. We must further picture the one inch globe as inhabited by some 1,500 millions of creatures far too small to be seen with the most powerful microscope—in fact, so small that the tallest would be in height but about the seventh millionth of an inch—and we must imagine that a few of these creatures undertake the task of determining from their tiny home, swiftly rotating as it rushes around a large globe of fire, 325 yards from them, the number of yards really intervening between that globe and their home. If we rightly picture these conditions, which fairly represent those under which the astronomer has to determine the distance of the sun from the earth, we shall perceive that the wonder rather is that any idea of the sun's distance should be obtained at all, than that the estimates obtained should differ from each other, and that the best of them should err in measurable degree from the true distance.

THE COMET AGAIN.—Mr. Proctor says that the comet which has so long been an object of interest in the early morning sky is probably the comet of 1880 which was probably the comet of 1843, which was probably the comet of 1668. Now if it once had a period of 175 years, which was suddenly shortened to 37 years, and then to 2 years and 8 months, a very rapid approach to the sun is indicated, and Mr. Proctor remarks that if it should return again in nine months, then in three, then in one, then in a fortnight, then in a week, three days, one day, half a day—all these put together would make up less than fourteen months, within which time it will probably fall into the sun, and we will have the opportunity to ascertain what the effect will be. He quotes Sir Isaac Newton's opinion, that whenever the comet of 1680 should fall into the sun it would increase its heat so much that the earth would be burnt up and no animals in it could live. If the first part of Newton's statement is correct, the last may readily be admitted. Mr. Proctor does not, however, anticipate any such serious results from the dropping of the present comet into the sun, but thinks it fair to assume that, although the encounter between the two bodies, will be a serious affair for one of them it will not be, the sun that will suffer.

A young St. Louis housekeeper, who had read in a Paris letter that four-poster beds were again in fashion, started in search of one of them the other day. She finally found what she desired in the house and under the person of a sick Hungarian, whose wife was painfully supporting him by sewing, and who valued it as an heirloom, but was willing to supply his necessities by selling it. The next day she took a dealer to fix the price, and, having been purchased for a liberal sum, it was sent to his shop to be fitted with new ropes. It was in fact, a mahogany four-poster of admirable workmanship, and the dealer was examining the carvings with delight when he accidentally pressed upon a carved rose which yielded and disclosed a secret receptacle, in which was tightly wedged a leather bag containing Italian coins worth several thousand dollars. The money was promptly handed to the poor Hungarians, whose amazement was so great that in all probability they have not yet recovered from it.

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