

Poetry.

WHAT SHALL I ASK?

A BENEDICTION FOR A BABE.

BY JAMES MONTGOMERY.

What blessing shall I ask for thee,
In the sweet dawn of infancy?
—That which our Savior at his birth
Brought down with him from heaven to earth.

What next, in childhood's April years,
Of sunbeam smiles and rainbow tears?
—That which in Him all eyes might trace,
To grow in wisdom and in grace.

What in the wayward path of youth,
When falsehood walks abroad as truth?
—By that good Spirit to be led,
Which John saw resting on His head.

What in temptation's wilderness,
When wants assail and fears oppress?
—To wield like him the Scripture-sword,
And vanish Satan by "the word."

What, in the labor, pain, and strife,
Combats and cares of daily life?
—In His cross-bearing steps to tread,
Who had not where to lay his head.

What in the agony of heart,
When foes rush in, and friends depart?
—To pray like Him, the Holy One,
"Father, thy will, not mine, be done."

What, in the bitterness of death,
When the last sigh cuts the last breath?
—Like Him your spirit to commend,
And up to paradise ascend.

What, in the grave, and in that hour,
When even the grave shall lose its power?
Like Him, your rest awhile to take;
Then at the trumpet's sound awake,
Him as He is in heaven to see,
And as he is yourself to be.

CHRIST THE BLISS OF HEAVEN.

I think not of the starry crown,
Or robes the saints in glory wear;
'Twere heaven enough to bow me down
Before my Saviour, Jesus there.

I think not of those harps whose notes
Swell sweetly o'er the heavenly plains;
The Saviour's voice in music floats,
In richer, sweeter, dearer strains.

I think not of those golden streets,
Where arches rise o'er pearly gates;
Or mansions in whose blissful seats,
Rest for the weary pilgrim waits.

But O, the Saviour's face to see,
The blest Redeemer's voice to hear;
To be from sin for ever free,
The tempter's wiles no more to fear.

To feel immortal vigor fill
My soul, and quicken every power;
On angel's wing to do His will,
And with a seraph's love adore.

—American Messenger.

EPIGRAM.

When Egypt's king God's chosen tribes pursued,
In crystal walls the admiring waters stood;
When through the desert wild they took their way,
The rocks relented and poured forth a sea.
What limits can Almighty goodness know,
When seas can harden, and when rocks can flow?

General Miscellany.

NUNNERIES.

From the British Correspondence of the M. Star.
ENGLAND, MAY 30, 1853.

The alarming and rapid increase of Nunneries in Great Britain has led to a movement for their being placed under the inspection of constituted legal authorities. It is noticeable that Italy, Spain and Britain, are the only three countries in Europe where nunneries are closed against the law. In Russia, no novice can take the veil without previous legal examination as to her motives. In Bavaria, the civil authorities visit all convents every quarter. While in France, the Mayor of an arrondissement can visit any convent when the civil authorities deem it necessary. These *spiritual Bastilles* are rapidly augmenting in this country; there are at the present moment seventy-five Popish nunneries, and twenty-five Anglo Catholic, or Puseyite nunneries among us, containing at least three thousand inmates. The object contemplated is not to release nuns from their vows, if they choose to make them and keep them, but to restore those to personal liberty who desire to possess it, yet who cannot have their freedom on account of the coercion used by the conventual authorities. The subject has been brought before the House of Lords by petition, Archbishop Whately powerfully supporting it.

And last week Mr. Chambers brought a Bill before the House of Commons, proposing that the Government should have the power of appointing one or two persons, who, upon reasonable grounds for believing that improper coercion was exercised in respect to any inmate of any nunnery, should have power to visit the place, in company with a justice of the peace, in order to ascertain the facts; upon which the ordinary process of law would be put in force. For the sake of liberty and religion, I rejoice that it passed by a majority of 23.

Lord John Russell apprehended that the measure, if carried out, would lead to restrictions on religious liberty; but there never was a grosser misrepresentation of any question. A woman, for example, when she enters a convent, loses the right of property, of personal security, and the loco-motive faculty; and both body and soul are under the dominion and at the disposal of an absolute and irresponsible authority. It is conceded that she has the power to surrender all her rights; but she may afterwards discover that she has been entrapped into her vow, or she may come to regard it as unlawful, and she may wish to recover her rights. The existing administration of conventual houses in England is a manifest encroachment on the liberty of the subject, and a clear violation of a fundamental principle of British law. Hence the necessity for a specific enactment to meet the case such as is now proposed. True, it may interfere with certain plans and projects of the Romish church; but all who desire the advancement of civil and religious liberty must regard it as the duty of the State to protect the persons and property of all its subjects. The Papists themselves are not to be trusted with the management of these houses; for whatever they may say about the rights of man and the rights of property, all history proves that they are perfectly ready and willing to sacrifice their domestic affections, and to trample upon their own liberties and that of others when they come into collision with the interests of their church.

STATE OF RELIGION IN FRANCE AS A NATION.

The prodigious activity of Antichrist throughout Europe amounts to something like desperation. In France, during these two years past, the power of the Romish clergy has fearfully increased. That country rejoices in from fifty to sixty thousand priests having regular charges; while a cloud of monks, numerous and dark as that which fell on Egypt of old, has descended on the country. Convents are rising up from their ashes in hundreds. The filthy Capuchin jostles you in the street. Holy vails, rotten bones, and bits of dead saints, who flourished 700 years ago, are imported from other countries; and the sons of the Encyclopedists, and of the disciples of Voltaire, fall prostrate before these relics. The Minister of Public Instruction has ordered a crucifix to be placed in all the class rooms of governmental colleges and lyceums. The doctrine of burning the heretic is openly taught by the editor of the *Univers*, the most authoritative expounder of modern Popery in France. The Pope offers indulgences to every one who shall pray to God to put it into the hearts of Christian kings to extinguish heresy. And we all know what that means. A Bartholomew is confidently looked forward to, which shall not be restricted to France, as of old, but which shall cover the whole European Continent. Looking abroad upon the nations of Europe, what do we see? Why, spiritual infallibility and arbitrary power drawn to one another by common dangers and objects, renewing their ancient bonds, and plighting their former faith. The church gives her spiritual thunder to the State, and the State gives the church her sword; and this ill-omened pair walk hand in hand over Europe, trampling under their feet, wherever they come, conscience, liberty, manhood. Their hatred of the Bible grows every day more intense. During three years past, four millions of the Scriptures have been circulated in France; and in Italy, and in Rome itself, the Bible is sought for by the people, notwithstanding that Papal tyranny has suspended a halter above the head of every man who shall dare to read it. Atheism may be tolerated; Socialism may be tolerated; but there can be no tolerance for the Bible. They know that if that book enter, tradition will fall, and not alone. If the Bible have supremacy, the Papacy, like other phantoms of darkness, will pass away; and with it will depart all those forms of government which, inheriting the spirit and breathing the air of Rome,

have only been one degree less absolute and irresponsible than the papacy itself. In Tuscany, in Rome, in Venetian Lombard, Bible-readers are doomed to the dungeon and the stake; and so it will be ere long, there is reason to fear, in France and Austria. This enormity is perpetrated by men termed "*Holy Pontiffs*," and "*Most Christian Kings*." Even the Inquisition is a "*Holy Office*." And why should not the Prince of Darkness one of these days honor the title by assuming it, for, when it serves his purpose, he is very devout, and, as one of the early Reformers, Hugh Latimer, states, keeps his chaplain, whose diocese lies not far from the seven hills?—*Id.*

AFRICA.

WESLEYAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY, (ENG.)—It was mentioned in the last Journal, that there was a wonderful movement in Sierra Leone against idolatry. It commenced in November, on an island called Aberdeen, with two individuals, and rapidly spread to others. Great effort had been used with the same individuals before, without success; but now, as soon almost as they were spoken to, they were ready to give up the objects and implements of their worship, and wished them taken away at once. One of them became so alarmed at the thought of keeping his any longer, that during the night he threw them into the sea. The attention of the people having become aroused by what was going on, many were led to inquire after God. Upwards of 20 have since been added to the church, and there are others on trial, among them a Mohammedan and his wife. When what was going on became known at Murray-Town, a place near by, the same scene was witnessed, only the movement was more general and rapid. The people began immediately to throng the house of God, and a work of grace commenced, as the result of which nearly 60 individuals are already "on trial for membership." Within a week, the reformation broke out in Freetown; the second day it became general, and "many thousands" were going from house to house in search for whatever was connected with idolatrous rights. The people being anxious to see the "things," they were put on exhibition for ten days, and multitudes came fourteen and even twenty miles to see the sight. Mr. Beale, of the Church Missionary Society, attributes this renunciation of idolatry to the spread of the knowledge of the Bible among the people.—*Journal of Missions.*

SYRIA.

REMARKABLE DROUGHT, AND PUBLIC SUPPLICATION FOR ITS REMOVAL.

A remarkable drought has reigned during the three winter months, at which the populations of Syria have been greatly alarmed. All our religious sects, by the advice of the authorities, temporal and spiritual (the Mohammedan included), have unanimously and unitedly lifted up their voice of prayer in the fields surrounding the cities, imploring, at the hands of the one God, the blessing of which the country so greatly felt the need: for you know that, without the winter rains, no harvest of any kind can be obtained in Syria, whilst even water fails for common use. The Lord has answered the prayers of those who trusted in Him, for, two days later, rain fell copiously, and continued, with thunderstorms, for forty days. The crops are, generally, in a promising condition; even more so than were last year's. I have attended the public prayer of the inhabitants of our city. Assembled, under the large sycamore trees, near the Gate of Yacoub (Jacob), to the Gate of Deshe, were seen large numbers from all sects, with their ecclesiastical chiefs, the Pacha, and all the city dignitaries and public officers, uniting their voices, in great simplicity of worship (each sect according to its respective form of prayer), to supplicate for the Divine mercy and the blessing of rain. Our little Protestant congregation, with the Bible missionaries, joined this solemn meeting: the feeblest believer must have been edified. The religious leaders, each of whom, in general, presumes his own worship to be most acceptable before the Lord, laid aside their respective formalisms, and joined in one common prayer to the same God, whom they believed to have been, and to be, the only one able to hear and to grant them the favours of which they felt their need in common. When these prayers were answered, the sensation was equally strong, and thanksgivings have been offered up everywhere. At present, all is gaiety, and we are enjoying a bright and magnificent season in the midst