

Christian Visitor.

A Family Newspaper—Devoted to

Religious and General Intelligence.



BAILEY & DAY, Proprietors.

“BY PURENESS, BY KNOWLEDGE—BY LOVE UNFEIGNED.”—St. PAUL.

{Rev. E. D. VERY, Editor.

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“AS THY DAY IS, SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE.”

Pilgrim! treading feebly on,

Smitten by the torrid sun—

Hoping for the cooling rain,

Looking for the shade in vain;

Travel-worn and faint at heart,

Weak and weary as thou art,

Let thy spirit not repine,

Shade and shelter shall be thine.

Friendly hands to thee shall bring

Water from the cooling spring,

And the voice thou lovest best,

Call the wanderer to his rest.

God hath said, to comfort thee,

As thy day, thy strength shall be.”

Christian! toiling for the prize,

Kept for thee beyond the skies—

Warring with the powers of sin,

Foes without and foes within—

Breathing now in rapture's air,

Verging then upon despair—

Trembling, hoping, filled with pain,

Yet rejoicing once again;

Shrink not from life's bitter cup,

God shall bear thy spirit up—

He shall lead thee safely on

Till the ark of rest is won—

Till thy spirit is set free—

“As thy day, thy strength shall be.”

BUNYAN.

Bunyan and his time.

We meet in the life of Bunyan some of the most remarkable illustrations to be found anywhere on record, of the manner in which God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; to abase the pride, and rebuke the pretensions of all human glory. Bunyan's preaching, which was the means of the conversion of so many souls, how utterly despised and counted like insanity was it, by all the wise, the noble, the esteemed of this world! And Bunyan's Allagory, when it first appeared, with how much contempt was it regarded, as a sort of story or ballad for the vulgar, by the lords, gentlemen, and ecclesiastics of the age. If any prophet in those days could have gone to the bishop and justices, under whose jurisdiction Bunyan was thrust into the common jail, and left twelve years in prison, and could have said, My lords, there is one John Bunyan, formerly a tinker, and now a tagged lace-maker in a cell in the prison of Bedford, imprisoned by your lordships for preaching the Gospel, who hath composed and published an allegory which shall work more to the accomplishment of God's councils, and to the establishment of sound piety and morality, and to the usefulness and glory of the literature of this kingdom, than all that your lordships, with all the preachers and authors in this civil and ecclesiastical circuit, shall have accomplish-

ed in your whole life-time; he would have been regarded as void of understanding, if not imprisoned for contempt of the higher authorities.

And yet, such a prophet would have spoken but the simple truth; for into how many languages this book hath been translated, no man can tell, and how many editions it has passed through, still less may any man enumerate, nor how many souls it may have guided to eternal glory. It has gone almost wherever the Bible has gone, and has left the stamp of the best part of English literature, where neither Milton nor Shakespeare were ever heard of. Indeed, it may doubtless be said of Bunyan as of that woman of sacred memory in the New Testament, Wherever this Gospel shall be preached in all the world, there shall that, which this man hath done for Christ, be told for a memorial of him. The alabaster-box of very precious ointment, which that woman poured upon the Saviour's head was an unutterably precious offering, because her heart went with it; but this alabaster-box of genius and piety, the fruit of these twelve years' imprisonment, was the work, both the offering itself and the feelings with which it was offered, equally of Bunyan's heart, filled with love to the same Saviour. And wherever the Bible goes, doubtless, in all time, this book will follow it.

As the book itself is an illustration of this great principle of God's administration, so was his own selection of Bunyan as his instrument to do so mighty a work. Disregarding the claims of great establishments and mighty hierarchies, passing by the gorgeous state religions of the world and all their followers, passing the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the See of London, and the great consecrated shrines of applauded genius and piety, even the genius of Milton, and the pulpits of Jeremy Taylor, and Howe and Usher, and the wise and mighty and noble together, he entered the prison cell in Bedford, and poured this unction of his Spirit upon John Bunyan, and touched his lips alone with this hallowed fire, and dipped his pen alone in these colors of heaven. There were as great boasts, if not of the apostolical succession, at least of the Ecclesiastical Establishment, in those days as this; and God saw that a lordly hierarchy, and many a lordly bishop, were proclaiming to all the world this lie, that there could be no lawful worship of God, and no true church of Christ, without a prayer book and prelatical consecration, without episcopacy, confirmation, and a liturgy; but all this was as wood, hay and stubble; and Divine Providence selected, to make the brightest jewel of the age as a Christian, a minister, and a writer, a member of the then obscure, persecuted, and despised sect of Baptists. He took John Bunyan; but he did not remove him from the Baptist church of Christ into what men said was the only true church; he kept him shining in that Baptist candlestick all his life-time; for what is it to Christ whether a man be Baptist, Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Independent, or Episcopalian, so he lord it not over God's heritage, nor be guilty of schism in consigning to God's uncovenanted mercies, in defiance of all Christian charity, those whom the Saviour holds as dear as the apple of his eye? What are these sectarian shibboleths to Christ, if his people will but walk according to this rule, which was a text of favorite note with Bunyan. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another. My disciples, not members of this or that sectarian persuasion, be it Episcopal Baptist, Presbyterian, or what not. My disciples, not Church-men, nor Paul's-men, nor Rome's men, but my disciples.

All gorgeous and prelatical establishments

God passed by, and selected the greatest marvel and miracle of grace and genius in all the modern age from the Baptist church in Bedford! If this be not a rebuke and a refutation of that absurd mockery, “the apostolical succession,” and all pretensions like it we know not how Divine Providence could construct one. It is just as clear as the Saviour's own personal rebuke of the same intolerant proud spirit in his day; and the feeling with which its application is received by the pretenders to the only true church in our day is remarkably similar. “I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue when they heard these things were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong!” Why, what mighty evil hath our blessed Lord done to awaken this dreadful hell of wrath and malignity in this synagogue of Satan? He hath simply told them that their church was no longer to be the only true church of Christ on earth, but that he was going to preach to the gentiles! And the wickedness of this Jewish hierarchy is but a specimen of the wickedness which this pretence of being the only true church inevitably sets in motion and brings with it, wherever such a pretended true church can get the power to enforce its excommunications. It will lead our blessed Lord himself to the brow of the hill, and cast him down headlong, if he visit this earth in a conventicle, if he come to any other than an Established Church.

The same principle thus marvellously illustrated in the life of Bunyan, was that by which God passed by the many thousands of Israel of loftier genealogy and prouder claims, and fixed upon David the son of Jesse, the keeper of his father's flock in the wilderness, and anointed and crowned him King of Israel; passed by also the great towns and beautiful cities of Judea, and Jerusalem itself, and fixed upon Bethlehem as the birth-place of our Saviour; passed by also the learned and excellent, the princes and scholars of the land, when he would found a new spiritual kingdom to last for ever, and took the fishermen and the tax-gatherers; and to step out of sacred history once more, into common, in a case in some respects of great similarity to Bunyan's own, passed by the godliest learned men of honor, title and rank, and chose a chaplain in Oliver Cromwell's parliamentary army to write the Saint's Rest. The two greatest, most important, most efficacious spiritual works the world has ever seen, written by men cast out, persecuted, imprisoned, as not being members of the true church, as not conforming to the will of the Established hierarchy! The world is full of these blessed instances of God's wisdom to cast down the pride of man, and abase his pretensions, that no flesh may glory in his presence. And as to these hierarchical arrogancies, it would seem that Divine Wisdom itself could resort to no expedient more sure to put them to shame, than when the Holy Spirit takes up his abode, and displays his glory, in beings cast out, persecuted, imprisoned, and burned, by such bigotry and violence. The great overshadowing, remorseless, hierarchical unity of the Church, when it is any thing else but unity in the possession and exercise of the Spirit of

Christ, becomes a destructive unity of evil, a unity of ambition, consecrated under the name of religion, a unity of earthly power and aggrandizement, in which the passion of universal conquest, that like a chariot of fire whirled a Nimrod or Napoleon over the world, kindles in the bosom of church-men, and makes out of the church itself the most perfect, awful form of despotism. It is such a dreadful unity, that has anathematised and destroyed some of the brightest temples of the Holy Ghost, out of which God has shined in this world of darkness. It was indeed this remorseless, despotic, persecuting unity, to which our blessed Lord himself was sacrificed, to prevent a schism in the Jewish hierarchy. But under whatever form, save that of love to Christ, and participation in his spirit, this unity is vaunted, it becomes an unhallowed, worldly, vain, ambitious boast; and powerfully, indeed, are its pretensions shown to be vanity, when God raises up, beyond its precincts, such men as Baxter and Bunyan, Owen and Doddridge, Calamy and Howe, Brainard and Edwards, Payson and Dwight. Rather let every Christian be in himself a separate sect, than the church of Christ a compulsory despotism.

And how may we suppose the great Head of the church regards such daring presumption, whether under pretence of apostolical succession or prelatical consecration, that shuts out such men from the church of Christ on earth, and gives them over even to God's uncovenanted mercies in Heaven? Merely the statement of such pretensions is enough to show how opposed they are to the spirit of the gospel. If a desire to spread that gospel, and to bring all men into the fold of Christ had prevailed, or were now prevalent, we should hear nothing of such pretensions; if that unity of love existed, which our blessed Lord requires, and without which all other unity is worthless, there would be the kindest charity and piety, but no pride; Christians would, as Paul requires, receive one another, but not to doubtful disputations; and all sects would be found vying with each other, not to spread their own name, but the knowledge of the gospel; not to eject each other from the missionary field, but to fill the world with love and mercy. We trust in God that this spirit shall prevail over every other, and when it does, then will be the time, when there shall be nothing to hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain.—Dr. Cheever's Lectures.

DO YOU REMEMBER CHRIST.—I know you cannot help thinking of Christ, sometimes.—His story is too extraordinary to be heard once and never again remembered. But do you remember him practically? Do you do anything in remembrance of him? It is customary not only to remember, but to commemorate great benefactors; and that not merely by speaking of their benevolent exploits, but by some appropriate acts. Do you do this with respect to Christ, that greatest best of benefactors? Perhaps you answer: “I do many things out of regard to the memory of Christ. His precepts generally I endeavour to obey.” That is all very well; but do you that which he appointed, or requested to be done in remembrance of him, on that same night in which he was betrayed? Some do not; even some who profess respect, and indeed love for Christ do not. It is strange, but so it is. They remember Christ in their own way, but not in his way. They do something in remembrance of him, but not that which he said, “Do.” I wonder they do not adopt his way. I cannot help suspecting their love when I see they do not. It always appeared to me that such a benefactor as Christ, ought to