

The Christian Visitor.

History for Young Persons.—Ochap. XXXV.

THE CHIEF MEN OF GREECE.

As some of the most extraordinary characters arose in Greece, from the time that the Persians were driven out of that country till the fall of the empire, I shall notice a few whose names are most familiar.

Athens was rebuilt, after it had been burnt by the command of Xerxes, and became the most splendid city of Greece; but it did not attain the height of its prosperity till the age of Pericles, about 449 B. C.: for as he had then the chief power, he resolved to employ the public money in adorning the city; and in this, Phidias, the most celebrated Grecian sculptor, was his greatest help. Under his direction those beautiful buildings were erected, whose ruins still attract the admiration of travellers, as the finest in the world. The materials were found on the spot, and within a few years these works of art were completed. It is said that the Acropolis, or citadel of Athens, six miles in circumference, was filled with statues and paintings, celebrating the chief persons and events in Grecian history; but the Odeum, or musical theatre, and the Parthenon, or temple of Minerva, were the most elegant edifices. As I have observed before, in speaking of the Egyptian pyramids, these buildings were worse than useless. The beauty of the statues and temples caused the city to be "wholly given to idolatry;" and the performances in the theatres, of which the people were excessively fond, led to the grossest evils. Theatrical representations, still so common in our land, first began in Greece.

Thespis, the inventor of Tragedy, lived in the days of Solon; he composed verses descriptive of past events, which were to be sung by a set of actors, who imitated that which they described. Solon, upon seeing one of these plays performed, angrily struck his staff upon the ground, asking the performers how they dared to tell so many lies before such a company: and added that if they were pleased with falsehoods in jest, they would soon be careless about truth in serious matters. If such were the opinion of a heathen lawgiver, shall those who profess to know the God of Truth, be less wise!

The chief tragic poets were Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; their great aim was to stir up all the passions of the human heart, and especially terror and pity, by the representation of mournful and terrible events. Aristophanes introduced upon the theatre the opposite subjects, and tried to make everything appear ridiculous or amusing; he was the inventor of Comedy, and the foolish and wicked compositions called by this name, only increased the mischief. The manner in which the multitude were excited at the theatres, was one cause of the swift ruin even of the temporal prosperity of Athens. But whilst we need not be astonished that those living without God in the world should find pleasure in such things as amuse the eye and ear, it is surprising that any Christians should be found taking delight in the theatre; and it can only be when the soul is so little occupied with the things above, that its desires are unsatisfied.

Pericles having adorned Athens, and raised it so high, tried to form all the Grecian states into one commonwealth, of which this city should be the head. But the Spartans were too proud to consent to such an arrangement, and the disputes that arose led to the Peloponnesian war, which lasted twenty seven years! The general suffering during this period was immense. In the second year of it, the plague broke out at Athens in such a violent manner, that the best physicians used their skill in vain. The very temples were filled with dead bodies, and the dying lay in the streets. The citizens soon became hardened, and lived in the most abandoned manner, careless of the sufferings of their nearest relations, or of approaching death.

Pericles, having lost all his family, was attacked with the disease; many stood round his bed praising his justice as a statesman, and relating his victories as a commander by sea and land. The dying man exclaimed, "You forget the best part of my character; no action of mine ever caused a fellow-citizen to wear a mourning robe." These much admired words resemble the self-righteous cry of many a perishing sinner now-a-days, "I never did any body any harm;" as if a holy God could pass over their enmity against Him,

and save them on account of that righteousness which he has declared to be as filthy rags.

All the other states had joined with Sparta to overthrow the power of Athens; and at length that city was besieged and taken by Lysander, the Spartan admiral. He caused the walls to be destroyed at the sound of music; thus can man rejoice over the sufferings and losses of his fellow-creatures. Thirty ferocious men became the tyrants of Athens, and in a short space put to death and banished some thousands of the citizens; blind to their own character, they caused Alcibiades, the Athenian general, to be destroyed, saying that he was a lion to be feared. Thrasylus at length stirred up the citizens to expel the Thirty; and the republican form of government was re-established. Soon after this, Socrates, the wisest of the Grecian philosophers, was condemned to death upon a false accusation. Such was the darkness around him, that the little light he held forth was hated, and his many enemies determined to put it out. He had been teaching in Athens for forty years; and took every opportunity of instructing youth, in the streets, in public walks, and in every company. From his example we learn, that even the natural mind may arrive at many truths, such as the unity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the principles of morality; but we see also that the natural mind cannot use these truths rightly. Though Socrates knew there was but one God, he went through all the ceremonies of idol-worship, and professed to hold the common creed of gross polytheism; and it is said, his moral conduct was not unblameable. There appears also in his conversations, which were written by his disciples, Plato and Xenophon, such an entire self-satisfaction, and such an assurance of winning eternal blessedness by his righteous actions, that the difference is plain between the weakest believer in Christ, and the best of the heathen philosophers. He spent his last days in prison, in instructing and comforting his friends. His sayings were carefully preserved, and certainly showed that his thoughts were far beyond all that passed through the minds of any of his countrymen. His friend Crito having asked, where he would be buried? he replied, "Where you please, if you can lay hold of me;" and turning to the others, said, "Crito imagines that the Socrates with whom he now converses, is the same as he whom he will soon see lying dead: he confounds me with my carcass." His unjust judges had sentenced him to die by poison. When the cup of hemlock juice was brought him, he drank it cheerfully, whilst all his friends were weeping bitterly around him. He took a few turns, seeking to comfort them and when one of his friends lamented that he should die innocent, he said, "You would not have me die guilty." On feeling the poison begin to affect his frame, he laid down on his bed and covered his face; but just before he died he called to Crito, "We owe a cock to Æsculapius, do not forget to pay it;" thus showing, by his last words, that he either believed in their false deities, or what was as bad, would not confess that he honoured one God. Socrates died at the age of seventy, B. C. 400.

ONE VACANT CHAIR.

We were talking a few days since with an esteemed friend of ours, who was reared after the good old New England fashion, and with whom "Thanksgiving," as a matter of course, is an institution, a day of family reunion, of domestic and social rejoicing. He is a man of noble sympathies and a big heart. In speaking of the coming Thanksgiving day, a cloud passed over his features, and a tear gathered in his eye. "I have," said he, "for many years gathered my family around me on that day. All my children have sat with me at my annual feast, and it never occurred to me that it could ever be otherwise. We ate, drank, and were merry, without thinking that a change must one day come. At our annual banquet this year there will be one vacant chair."

It was a sad, sad thought. Sorrowful memories come clustering around the heart at the mention of that "one vacant chair." The pleasant features, the happy smile, the cheerful voice of the loved and lost, come like a vision of sweetness from the sorrowful past. The pale still face, the marble brow, decked with the garlands of the grave, follow, and the eye dims with tears as the vision vanishes away, and the palpable presence only is left of that "one vacant chair."

And so it is, and so it will be always. Year by year those that we love drop from around us.—Some are snatched away by death, going down in the bloom of their beauty to the city of the dead. Some swing out into the great world, and are borne by the currents of life far away from us.—

The day of annual re-union comes; we gather around the yearly banquet, we look for the cherished faces, we listen for the loved voices; but the heart swells, and the big tear trembles on the eyelids; for there, in the midst of that cherished circle, in the very place where one who nestled fondliest in our affections used to sit, is "one vacant chair."

We who sit at the head of these family feasts should never forget that one day we shall be absent from the banquet. The time will surely come when we shall cease to occupy a place there. We know not when the vacancy may occur, but as surely as time rolls on, as surely as human destiny is sweeping onward and onward, always towards eternity, so surely will the day of our departure come; and struggle as we may, resist as we may, as all the aggregated energies of nature may, we must pass from among the living, and leave behind us for the next gathering "one vacant chair."—*Albany Register.*

Correspondence.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

Temperance Supper at Gagetown.

DEAR BRETHREN,—Before the mail closes this morning, I hasten to give you an account of our Supper that came off last evening. At six o'clock, the doors were opened, and we found four tables set the whole length of our splendid Hall, loaded with good fat turkeys, geese, and a variety of other fowls, &c. &c., which, together with the nice style in which the Hall was fitted up for the occasion, presented a tasty and graceful appearance. About 7 o'clock, these tables were pretty well filled with ladies and gentlemen, who, after "grace" feasted to their hearts content in a very sociable and agreeable manner. The seats were then arranged and the platform taken by the Hon. Col. H. Peters, D. G. W. P., G. W. A. and other gentlemen, the former of whom called the meeting to order by introducing the choir, who gave us one of their temperance songs. The Col. then gave us an interesting speech with much pathos—he felt deeply interested in the subject, and failed not to make others feel. As we had none of our popular lecturers present, and were disappointed in help from Canning, we were thrown on our own resources for speeches, and we failed not to do the best we could. The meeting was entertained by speeches from the writer—brethren Bonnel, young Cottle, from Canning Division, and Phillips, interspersed with singing until 10 o'clock, when we separated, much interested and encouraged in our enterprise.

The Supper was got up by Queen's Division, No. 21, S. of T., which was clothed in regalia, as was also the Section of the Cadets.

As a Division, we have been struggling along through opposition and discouragement—rather on the retrograde—and therefore felt it necessary to make some strenuous effort to revive the cause, which is generally done in proportion to the well directed efforts that are made by its friends.

Next month, (D. V.) will be one of importance and interest to Gagetown. The Court comes off here. We anticipate a County Convention and Tea Soiree. These, with the circulation of the Petitions in favour of a prohibitory law on intoxicating liquors, will call into active service the two contending parties—temperance and intemperance.

Indeed, the Devil, the chief agent in the cause of Bacchus is in the field—marshalling his army and preparing for the contest. Activity, on our part, is only necessary however, we are sure of victory. Our cause is the cause of God and all mankind, and it is sure to succeed, even in Gagetown, where the enemy has waved his banner in rapturous triumph.

Yours, as ever,
T. H. PORTER.

Gagetown, Dec. 22d, 1853.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

DEAR EDITORS,—Owing to circumstances which have recently occurred, I wish to make a few remarks upon the subject of death.

We often see notices, in the news of the day, of the death of some of our fellow beings; and how often do they pass unnoticed by us. We scarcely reflect that an immortal spirit has passed into the eternal world—that a kindred being has left the shores of time. How many thus pass away almost unnoticed, and seemingly uncared for by us! How seldom do we, even in our imaginations, enter into the bereaved family and

there see the vacant seat of some of its beloved members! How seldom does the enquiry arise in the breast of the generality of mankind, whether they are prepared to meet a God of Justice! How many of them are unprepared to enter upon the realities of the untried future! Oh! should we not make earnest intercession for such, while opportunity permits.

Of late we see that many of the most promising youths of our land have been taken away from us. May God sanctify to all afflicted families, the dispensations of his providence, and may such be assured of a glorious meeting beyond the confines of the tomb and there unite in singing anthems of praise to our Redeemer.—May we all be prepared, and await with pleasure, that glorious change that awaits all the children of God.—May our affections be set upon things in heaven and centered on Christ—for all things here are passing away and will soon disappear, and "like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind."

Yours, &c.,

St. John, Dec. 16.

SPECTATOR.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

The following lines were written on the death of JOHN C., youngest son of A. SIME, Esq., of Indian Town, who died Nov. 25th, of Scarlet Fever:—

Perfect his form, his features noble were,
Bright were his eyes, his temper truly rare;
Loved was the Boy, and lovely he in death,
Call'd in life's morn, to yield his gentle breath.

Oft have our eyes, gazed proudly on that brow,
Watching his jetty locks, carelessly flow;
Oft we with pride, have watch'd his manly tread,
Oft we in thought, to his manhood were led.

But now alas! all our bright hopes are fled,
Tho' so beloved, he's now low, with the dead;
No more we'll hear his sweet voice full of mirth,
No more he'll mingle with us 'round the hearth.

But why thus morn, when our loss is his gain,
Free is he now, from all sorrow and pain;
But let us live, that we'll meet him in Heaven,
Where friendships ties, ne'er asunder are riven.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

OBITUARY.

DEAR BRETHREN,—I have recently been called to attend three funerals—two in Canning, in the absence of their beloved pastor, and one in the vicinity of Gagetown. The first a child of two years old, youngest daughter of Deacon J. Estabrooks, when I exchanged pulpits with brother Foshay.—This is the third breach that has been made in that dear family by death in a few months.—May the Lord in mercy sanctify the solemn visitation.

On Sunday morning, the 4th inst., I was called to preach on the occasion of the sudden death of Sophia, daughter of Elijah and Jane Brooks, of Canning, an amiable and interesting little girl who died on the 2d inst., at the age of 12 years. I do hope that this touching dispensation of Divine Providence may be so over-ruled, that the mourning parents and family may be prepared by the grace of God, for future trial and duty. I returned to Gagetown in the afternoon, and preached in the evening to an attentive congregation.

Died on Saturday evening, in the vicinity of Gagetown, Mr. David Murrey, in the 56th year of his age, after a severe illness of three weeks. He has left a disconsolate widow to mourn the loss of an affectionate husband, and two worthy daughters, who will long cherish, with feelings softened with grief, the remembrance of one of the kindest of parents. I sincerely trust that the bitter cup of affliction that is poured out for these bereaved and lonely ones, may be daily sweetened with the consolations of religion.

The community at large has sustained a great loss, in the death of Mr. Murrey. He was an industrious, kind, honest, and obliging neighbour, as far as I can learn. But more than all this, he was a christian believer in connection with the Free Baptist Church,—hence, we mourn not as those who have no hope. He attended our meetings—we frequently received kindness and hospitality from him, around his own domestic hearth, where he was always cheerful and agreeable; and