

The Christian Visitor.

History for Young Persons.—Chap. XXX.

THE REIGNS OF CAMBYSES AND SMERDIS.

In the first year of the reign of Cyaxares, or Darius, at Babylon, Daniel told him that there should yet stand up three kings in Persia, and the fourth should be richer than they all; and by his strength, through his riches, he should stir up all against the realm of Grecia.

We have considered the history of the first of these kings, in the person of Cyrus; it remains for us to notice the others.

Cambyses, who is called Ahasuerus (Ezra iv. 4, 6), succeeded his father Cyrus, B. C. 529.

His reign was one course of mad and wicked actions; he caused the most dreadful murders to be committed, and even sacrificed his own brother, Smerdis, for fear he should disturb his kingdom. Other crimes, of which he was guilty, are too horrible to be named. He made war on the Egyptians without any cause; and though his ways were as wicked as theirs, he ridiculed their strange religion, and took advantage of their foolish superstitions in making himself master of the country. Amasis, the successor of Hophra, had reigned forty years, and was succeeded by Psammetichus. He came out with an army against Cambyses; but the latter, knowing that the Egyptians worshipped four-footed creatures, placed cats, dogs, and other animals, in front of his troops, so that the Egyptians dared not fling a dart, or shoot an arrow, for fear of wounding their gods. Psammetichus was slain, and all Egypt fell into the power of the conqueror. He robbed all their rich temples; and at Memphis, killed with his own hand, a bull which was worshipped as a god under the name of Apis. Cambyses then went forward in the hope of subduing the Ethiopians, who were at that time a strong nation; but many thousands of his men were buried in the sand of the desert, with which a violent wind overwhelmed them; and the rest were brought to such extremity through hunger, that after feeding on their beast of burden, they agreed that every tenth man should be killed for food! At this very time, the king, in his wicked selfishness, kept a number of camels for his own use, loaded with every delicacy. At last he returned to Thebes, having lost the greater part of his army in this mad expedition. There, the news reached him that Smerdis had been proclaimed king of Persia in his absence; and as he knew his own brother of that name had been murdered, he was sure the usurper must be one of the Magi, or priests, whose ears he had formerly caused to be cut off, and resolved to return home to expose him. However he was not permitted to do so; for in mounting his horse, his sword slipped out of the scabbard, and wounded him so severely that he died soon after. The Egyptians, in their attachment to their false religion, believed that this was a judgment upon Cambyses for the murder of Apis, which they considered the most wicked of all his actions.

The priests of Persia formed one tribe of the people, and had great influence through their superior learning; but all their boasted wisdom only increased the darkness of the people. It appears that they were established by Zoroaster the First about 1104 B. C., and of his doctrine I have spoken before. From the arts of the Magi arose the use of the term Magicians, usually applied to those who do wonderful things, which cannot be accounted for in any natural way; but when these arts are not merely tricks, we can only believe that they are practised by the power of the devil. These Magi taught, at least up to the time of Smerdis, that the Evil Spirit was to be worshipped as well as the Good Spirit. Smerdis concealed himself as much as possible in his palace, that it might not be known he was a Magian, and he did everything to win the affections of the people. He is mentioned, under the name of Artaxerxes (Ezra iv. 7, 24), as listening to the complaints of the Samaritans against the Jews; and forbidding them to proceed with the building of the Temple.

At the end of seven months the Persian nobles discovered that the king was not the son of Cyrus, by finding that he had lost his ears, he was put to death, and one of them contrived to make himself king. This was Darius Hystaspes, the fourth king mentioned by Daniel.

Darius Hystaspes began to reign, B. C. 522. Persia was at this time the royal city of Persia;

and immense treasures were collected there. The province around it was called Susiana. Before I give you the history of Darius we must consider the progress of other nations since the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Correspondence.

China, Considered as a Mission Field.

NO. II.

The present population of China has been estimated by the most reliable authors, at 362½ millions, a number exceeding that of one third of the population of the whole world; and making, on an average, upwards of 72 human beings to the square mile. These swarming myriads of immortal beings are for the most part sunk in the lowest state of superstition and idolatry. Buddhism, which was introduced into China shortly after the Christian era, is sadly prevalent, particularly among the lower classes, while the literati and persons of rank are to a great extent, Confucians, or followers of Confucius, a celebrated Chinese Philosopher that lived about 500 years before Christ. There are, however, very many forms and degrees of idol worship. In fact, so numerous are the varieties of idolatries existing among the Chinese, that the following has become a familiar proverb concerning China:—"The Gods are in number like the sand of the Havy River." An eloquent writer thus graphically remarks respecting the mournful prevalence of idolatry in that remarkable country:—"The idolatry of ancient Canaan, of Egypt, of Greece, of Rome, of Chaldea, and of India, are all to be found there, though with some slight variations. China has her Diana, her Arolus, her Ceres, her Esculapius, her Mars, her Neptune and her Pluto, as well as the Western Pagans had. She has Gods celestial, terrestrial and subterraneous; gods of the hills, of the valleys, of the woods, of the family, of the shop, and of the kitchen! She adores the Gods that are supposed to preside over the thunder, the rain and the fire. She worships the host of heaven, the sun, the moon, and the stars. She addresses prayers and offers sacrifices to the spirits of departed kings, sages, heroes and parents. Her idols are silver and gold, wood, and stone, and clay—carved or molten, the work of men's hands." Such is the religious condition of these extraordinary people, who claim for their country the appellation of the "Celestial Empire." The moral state of a nation thus worshipping almost every object, save the "living and true God," may be more easily imagined than described. It is sufficient to observe that vice and degradation, the legitimate consequence of idolatry, prevail to an alarming degree.

From time immemorial, until very recently the Chinese government has never permitted the Missionaries of the Cross to enter that benighted land. It is true, that during the last two centuries, the Roman Catholics have been at work in China, but their efforts of course, have been designed to gain proselytes to Popery, rather than to the "truth as it is in Jesus." Since the late war between the Chinese and England, which resulted in important privileges and concessions being granted to the latter, several of the principal ports of the Empire have been considered open to European commerce, and a good number of the heralds of salvation have resorted thither, both from England and America, and laboured with encouraging success in disseminating the saving truths of the Bible.

The political movement now going forward in China, must be regarded by all who closely mark the motion of the wheels of Providence, as of a deeply interesting and momentous character. All are no doubt aware of the insurrection that has been in progress there during the last five years. In 1850, the insurgents became regularly organized, and resolved upon the complete overthrow of the present dynasty. Since that time, they have rapidly increased, both in numbers and power, until they now assume a most prominent and aggressive position, having already obtained possession of several of the largest cities, and the latest intelligence informs us that they are continuing to gain new accessions to their strength and influence. The promoters of this great movement, circulate books and pamphlets containing a strange commixture of the truths of christianity, and the errors of superstition, and it is said they

manifest a favourable disposition towards Protestant Missionaries.

There is every probability of the present revolution in China advancing, until the Tartar dynasty, which has held tyrannical sway for the last five or six hundred years, shall be demolished, and a new order of things established, in which still further privileges will be granted to the messengers of peace, and thus a wide and effectual door be thrown fully open, inviting the churches of Christ to enter and engage in the glorious work of evangelization.

W.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

DEAR BRETHREN,—I received the original of the inclosed from brother Oncken, in reply to a letter addressed to him a little before our recent Convention. It did not come to hand until after I had left home for Nictaux; but it will do a good work yet, if circulated through your columns, and those of the *Messenger*.

The Germans are becoming enlightened, even within the pale of their State churches, in regard to the question of religious liberty,—"the Baptist question" as they call it, as having been raised in connection with the late progress of the Baptists. In Prussia and Hamburg, much has already been yielded to the right in this matter. Practical hinderances to the labours of our brethren will still be removed, though it will take time to secure the general acceptance of our theory. That theory, however, seems to me to have two advantages among the Germans. First, it is not a mutilated theory, such as the Puritans brought with them to New England, and which led them to demand liberty of conscience for themselves, but refuse it to others, it was not until 1827 that Massachusetts emancipated conscience from every fetter. The German Baptists, with the true Baptist instinct, have begun where the posterity of the Pilgrims so lately ended, surely it will not take them two centuries to reach their consummation. It cannot be so. Which is the other advantage enjoyed by our German brethren, in face of the tolerated liberty of Britain, and the finished liberty? The "soul freedom" taught them by Roger Williams, of the United States! Suffer they may, but they must conquer soon. Let us give them the benefit of our prayers.

Brother Crocker is jealous of "improvements," falsely so called. And is he not right? The fathers "improved" most woefully, and Popery is the fearful development of their "improvements." Give us New Testament simplicity, zeal, love, prayer, and hope, and the provinces are ours; and Germany and the world, in spite of doctors, bishops, state churches, popes, and "Old Nick himself," as brother Crocker has it.

I have corrected none of our brother's mistakes. He places us in Canada. He is a manager, and writes in haste. His hint about \$40,000 for Baptist Meeting Houses in Germany, will not be overlooked. Whether that hint calls forth any help from among us, or not; however, his statement will show the importance of continued Bible distribution in Germany, and of continued co-operation with the American and Foreign Bible Society, that they may let our brother have his \$10,000 a year for his father-land.

Last Lord's day week, I baptized a converted Catholic, of Italian and Irish parentage. He promises to be useful among his former co-religionists. There is encouragement for brother Knight in his warfare. I should like to hear from him through the columns of the *Visitor*.

Yours in the Gospel,

J. DAVIS.

Nov. 15. 1853.

Letter from Rev. J. G. Oncken.

Boston, 7th Sept., 1853.

MY DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD,—

I regret that it has not been in my power to comply with your request before now; and I fear this will not come to hand before the meeting of the Association (Convention), for whose benefit you make the request to furnish you with some statements in reference to the German Mission. I have only returned to this a day or two ago, more dead than alive; so that the Physician has ordered me to rest for three or four weeks for the recovery of my health.

The Mission in Germany, so feebly com-

menced in 1823, when single-handed, as the Agent of the London Continental Society, I entered the field, and which has been incessantly exposed to ecclesiastical and civil opposition and persecution, has now, by the Divine blessing, assumed so interesting and important a position, that all who can see must acknowledge the hand of the Lord in this movement. I am, myself, overwhelmed, when I look back on all the great things which have been achieved, in the conversion of thousands, the restoration of apostolic Christianity, in the formation of churches, and the administration of the lost ordinance of the New Testament. The result of our various labours, at the close of 1852, was, that we had forty-two churches, with 4,215 members, 356 stations for preaching; that upwards of 410,000 copies of the Holy Scriptures had been circulated, and 6,237,951 religious tracts; and that the good seed had been scattered far and wide, in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Holland, Prussia, Poland, Switzerland, and parts of France, amongst at least 50,000,000 of our fellow-sinners.

We have at present upwards of seventy brethren engaged as Missionaries and Colporteurs. But though these have performed a great work, and we cannot do without them, the most important labour has been done by the churches. But for their active co-operation, not a tenth part of the success would have been experienced. We expect every member to share in the honour and happiness of being engaged for Christ; and I judge such members as will not act on behalf of their risen Lord, and for the benefit of the perishing multitude, had much better either quietly leave the churches, or else be excluded. For surely such as will not take part in so glorious a cause, must prove the greatest hindrance to the spread of the gospel, and cannot possibly believe what they profess.

Let me just give you an example of one mode by which the truth is annually presented to between twenty and thirty thousand sinners in Hamburg. According to the most recent intelligence from Hamburg, not less than sixty-four of the brethren had, two and two, visited during their last quarter's labours upwards of 2,100 families. A rich blessing follows these efforts, and many are by it constantly added to the church. Many of the more gifted brethren are, at the call of the church, appointed to aid in preaching the gospel. We have, in connection with the church at Hamburg, not less than thirty stations. The above brethren supply these, and thus thousands hear the gospel constantly. Our sisters are not less active both among Jews and Gentiles; and thus the perishing millions are constantly brought into contact with the truth. Then there is another most interesting class of young unmarried brethren, travelling journeymen, who traverse the length and breadth of the land in pursuit of work, among them many converted Romanists. These, when well established in the truth, leave us; and wherever they go the truth, both by word and print, is scattered. Not a few of the churches owe their rise to the valuable labours of these beloved brethren. You must not give way to the impression, as if the churches in Germany were as yet fully imbued with the spirit of their Lord. Alas! this is not the case. But a good beginning in the right direction has been made, and I hope and pray that it will be fostered, that so these churches may discharge the work for which, in part at least, churches are intended.

The blessing which thus has come upon thousands, is, by the events which are transpiring in God's providence, not to be confined to Germany and the adjacent countries, but as it appears more and more to me, is to be extended to the vast multitude of Germans pouring into the United States. A considerable number of our members have already immigrated to this country, (some of whom are engaged in Missionary labour) and large numbers will follow.

Our prospects in Germany are most encouraging, notwithstanding that in some of its States, persecution is raging at this very moment; and brethren and sisters are incarcerated in prisons, and suffering the loss of their goods. We are advancing—so much so, that the ministers of the State Church are hard at work to stay the progress of the heresy; but in vain. If we are kept from making our own improvements on the instrumentality of God has thus far so signally blessed, and we go forward still in entire dependence on Divine aid, we shall do well enough, though all our learned doctors, professors and pastors, combine against us; yea, even if old