

The Christian Visitor.

History for Young Persons.—Chap. XXXV.

THE CHIEF MEN OF GREECE.

[CONTINUED.]

A few years after, the Athenians began to regret Socrates, and being convinced that he had been unjustly condemned, they caused all his accusers to be put to death, raised a statue in remembrance of him, and some even worshipped him as a demi-god.

About this time a dreadful contest took place between the Thebans and Spartans. Agesilaus, king of Sparta, had enslaved the Thebans by the help of Persian power; but they were set free by Epaminondas, who defeated the Spartans at Leuctra, and again at Mantinea, where he was slain as the battle ended. This warrior is much celebrated as a patriot, or lover of his country; but in supporting this character he was led to acts of cruelty and injustice.

The Grecian states seemed now to be getting weary of their bloody struggles, and were desiring a union which might enable them to direct all their strength against Persia. In this state of things the Macedonian people, feeling their need of a leader, chose Philip as their king, B. C. 360. From the commanding position of Macedon, it was very natural that a warlike, ambitious monarch of that country, should first fix his eye on the goodly possessions of his southern neighbours; and Philip could not rest satisfied till he obtained the command of Greece. He only waited till another war had weakened the States still farther. This began B. C. 356. It was called the Sacred War, as it arose from a dispute about a piece of land belonging to the Temple at Delphi, which was ploughed up by the Phocians. It was little less bloody or rational, than the sacred wars of modern times, the Crusades.

A person at this time appeared at Athens, whose power Philip dreaded more than that of the Grecian warriors. This was Demosthenes, the orator. It is said, that he had naturally an imperfect utterance and weak lungs; but he overcame the first defect by speaking with pebbles in his mouth, and the latter by exerting his voice in walking up hill, or by the sea-shore, as he well said, the roar of the waves resembled the tumult of a popular assembly. He obliged himself to study without distraction, by having an underground chamber; and as it was the custom to wear beards, he shaved his, that he might not be tempted to go out till it was grown. The public speeches of Demosthenes are preserved as models of eloquence, and those in which he exposed the views of Philip of Macedon (called Philippics) are particularly admired. It was through the force of his oratory that all the Greeks were persuaded to league together against Philip; but when they met his army at Chæronea, in Bœotia, they were completely defeated, and thus he obtained the power that he desired, B. C. 333. His next object was to conquer Persia; and the Greeks being willing enough to help him in such an undertaking, he was appointed general of their united armies. But before they were ready to set out, Philip was stabbed as he was walking in an idolatrous procession; and some say, presenting himself as equal with the twelve chief gods of Greece, B. C. 336. The Athenians danced for joy, and crowned themselves with wreaths of flowers when they heard of his death; but their joy at the expectation of freedom was of short duration, for his son Alexander, who succeeded him as king of Macedon, soon showed that he would be the master of Greece. We must also look upon him as the head of "the third kingdom."

CHAP. XXXVI.

THE MACEDO-GRECIAN EMPIRE.

"A third kingdom of brass which should bear rule over all the earth." (Dan. ii. 40). "The third beast like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl: the beast had also four heads, and dominion was given to it" (vii. 6).

Many stories of Alexander's childhood show how far the character is formed in early life; and how important it is that a young mind should be under right training. Olympias, his mother, was an imperious woman; and she and his father took pleasure in encouraging the high spirit of their daring boy. Once on hearing that his father had gained a victory he said sorrowfully, "He will leave me

nothing to conquer." On another occasion, when Philip was about to send away a fine Thessalian horse because he was so wild that no one could mount him, Alexander begged to be allowed to try; and seeing the animal had been frightened by his own shadow, he turned his face to the sun, soothed him with his voice, and then springing on his back managed him with the utmost ease. It is said that Philip exclaimed, "My son, seek another kingdom, Macedon is unworthy of thee." At the age of fifteen, the celebrated Grecian philosopher, Aristotle, was engaged as his tutor; and for five years he paid great attention to his instructions, and revered him as another father, saying, "To one he was indebted for living, to the other for living well." But we shall see how little he had learned that lesson. Aristotle instructed Alexander not only to speak with elegance, but to think and reason; but his favourite study was Homer's Iliad, a work which helped to form his character and nurtured his love of war.

Alexander had a taste for all the arts and sciences, and in one of his eastern expeditions employed a thousand men to collect specimens to help Aristotle in writing his work on natural history. Once, during his father's absence, some Persian ambassadors arrived at Macedon, and were astonished at the reception that they received from the young prince; for, instead of asking them such questions as they expected concerning the palaces and treasures of their king, which were the wonder of the world, he inquired the best road into Asia, the real strength of the kingdom, the character of the government, &c. On their return home they remarked, "That prince will be a wise king, our's will be a rich one." It seems that even then Alexander coveted the Persian empire, and made these inquiries to find out the probable success of endeavouring to obtain it. The account that he had heard of the retreat of the ten thousand Greeks, still more encouraged his hopes that even an inferior army might defeat the Persian host in their own country.

It is very probable that Olympias had some hand in the murder of Philip, with the wish to establish her son as king of Macedon; for as Philip had taken another wife, she feared she might lose her influence over him. Alexander, on coming to the throne, was only twenty years of age; and the northern nations, as well as the Greeks, thought it would be easy to overcome such a youthful monarch. But they were mistaken; with wonderful speed he subdued all the tribes between the Strymon and the Danube, and even conquered a barbarous people beyond that river. In the meantime, the Greeks excited by Demosthenes, took up arms; and the Thebans were the first to revolt from the Macedonian power. Alexander was soon before the gates of Thebes; stormed the city, levelled it with the ground, and slew or led captive all the inhabitants. In his love for poetry, the descendants of the poet Pindar, who lived there, were alone spared.

The other Grecian states were terrified, and sought for peace, which he easily granted, that they might forget his cruelty to the Thebans. Having thus become master of Greece, he called an assembly at Corinth, one of the most wealthy and powerful cities, and there he was chosen to lead the united Greek forces to take revenge on their old enemies the Persians. It was at this time that Alexander visited the famous philosopher Diogenes, who was the chief of the sect called Cynics. They taught that the perfection of wisdom was in wanting nothing; and to prove themselves wise, went without any of the comforts of life; their dress neglected, their beards long, their persons dirty, and ridiculing all who valued money or any other possession. The king found the philosopher sitting in the tub which was his only dwelling place, as he thought such a shelter as he could carry about on his head was all that was needful. Alexander asked if he could do any thing for him. "Get out of my sunshine," was the only reply. Alexander, who wanted the whole world, was so struck with the state of one who wanted nothing, that he exclaimed, "If I were not Alexander I would be Diogenes. In these two characters, indeed, we see opposite extremes of folly, wise as they accounted themselves."

A Watering-place is a harbour of refuge, that we poor weak vessels, after having been tossed about for nine months in the year, are obliged, during the other three, to put into for repairs.

Correspondence.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

Editorial Correspondence.

Dear Brother and Friends,—

Having through God's providential care over us, been preserved to see the opening of another year, our thoughts naturally revert to the flight of time, (as the Roman said, "*Tempus fugit*," Time flies;) and the flight of our mortal lives along with it, so that we cannot, perhaps, more profitably employ a few of its passing moments, than in pausing to reflect on the position we now occupy, and the privileges and duties connected therewith.

In this imperfect state, we are accustomed to view the subject of time in three aspects, viz., as *past, present and future*, which though indefinite, may serve for the purpose of mutual improvement; for though these almost imaginary periods are perpetually dissolving the one into the other, so as to elude our grasp, yet soon will but one remain, upon which we must look back either with joy or sorrow. It is this consideration which stamps the subject with importance—"what will ye do in the end thereof?" or "know, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Seeing, then, that we stand in intimate relation to the past, present, and future, of that portion of time of which our earthly lives are composed, may we not inquire, what are our duty and interest respecting those ever changing phases of our existence? or, under what obligation do we lay to them severally.

The duty we owe to the *past*, is that retrospection, in order to humble and chasten our minds. Yes, the life of a Christian is one of moral discipline, which is aided by a daily retrospection of our conduct.

We have been the recipients of God's favors for many years—what have been our returns? Have we enquired "what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" Have we been humbled under a sense of our deep obligations and inefficient services? Has our usefulness in the church and our love to God and our fellow-men increased?

There are no scholars so incorrigible as those who derive no improvement from the lessons of experience, as was the case with the *Jews as a nation*, of which we have many striking instances in their history (read cvi. Psalm.)

Another year has passed silently over our heads, and what has been its report to HEAVEN concerning us? Let retrospection make a faithful and diligent inquiry, in order to an impartial self-examination. We cannot stand still in the ways of God—so not to progress is to retrograde.

With most of us, the *past* constitutes by far the largest portion of our brief span, even could we secure the protracted lease of three score and ten. But, as we have not done with the *present*, we may pause to enquire under what obligation we are laid with respect to it? or what does *time present* require at our hands? We reply in *one word*, service. Yes, it is not sufficient to be the Lord's nominally (See Matt. vii. 21.) We must be prepared to say with Paul, before a world of witnesses, "whose I am, and whom I serve." (See Ecclesiastes ix. 19.) "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might"—or, whatsoever is a *present duty*, do not defer it; because there is no opportunity for work, or device, or obtaining knowledge in the grave. (See I Cor. vii. 29-31.) Soon will the brief but comprehensive sentence of the Jewish historian apply to each of us, "The time draws near that Israel must die." To this period, we may look forward with CERTAINTY. That enemy which sin introduced into God's fair world will never leave it, until he has made a full end of fallen humanity. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." But yet—

"There is a death whose pang,
Outlasts the fleeting breath."

This Scripture truth should never escape our memory, viz.: that where there is but *one birth*, two deaths must follow; while all who have experienced two births will die but *once*.—John iii. 1-5. Before we close allow us to remind you of what the Lord says.—Matt. vi. 19-34. If we are found faithfully attending to *present duty*, we shall find little time for fruitless anxiety, which will neither benefit ourselves nor others. Let all our thoughts be directed, and wishes aspire, and

all actions tend—that we may be found of God in peace—in those mansions above which the Lord is now preparing for us.—John xiv. 1, 2, 3:—

"There is a place, beyond the flaming hill,
From whence the stars their thin appearance shed;

A place beyond all place; where never ill
Nor impure thought was ever harboured;
But saintly heroes are for ever said
To keep an everlasting Sabbath rest."

Wishing you, dear friends, all a happy new year, I am, as ever, yours faithfully in the Lord,
R. THOMSON, A. M.

January 1st, 1854.

Miscellaneous.

GOING DOWN HILL.

OR, THE WORLD'S FRIENDSHIP EXEMPLIFIED.

"That looks bad," exclaimed Farmer White, with an expressive shake of the head, as he passed a neglected garden and broken down fence, in one of his daily walks.

"Bad enough," was the reply of the companion to whom the remark was addressed.

"Neighbour Thompson appears to be running down hill pretty fast. I can remember when everything around his little place was trim and tidy."

"He always appeared to be a steady, industrious man," rejoined the second speaker. "I have a pair of boots on my feet at this moment of his make, and they have done me great service."

"I have generally employed him for myself and family," was the reply; "and I must confess that he is a good workman; but, nevertheless, I believe I shall step into Jack Smith's this morning, and order a pair of boots, of which I stand in need. I always make it a rule never to patronise those who appear to be running behind hand. There is generally some risk in helping those who won't help themselves."

"Very true; and as my wife desires me to see about a pair of shoes for her this morning, I will follow your example and call upon Smith. He is no great favourite of mine, however,—an idle, quarrelsome fellow."

"And yet he seems to be getting ahead in the world," answered the farmer, "and I am willing to give him a lift. But I have an errand at the butcher's. I will not detain you."

At the butcher's they met the neighbour, who was the subject of their previous conversation.—He certainly presented rather a shabby appearance, and in his choice of meat there was a regard to economy which did not escape the notice of Farmer White. After passing remarks, the poor shoemaker took his departure, and the butcher opened his account book with a somewhat anxious air, saying, as he charged the bit of meat—

"I believe it is time that neighbour Thompson and I came to a settlement. Short accounts make long friends."

"No time to lose, I should say," remarked the farmer.

"Indeed! Have you heard of any trouble neighbour White?"

"No. I have heard nothing; but a man has the use of his own eyes, you know; and I never trust any one with my money who is evidently going down hill."

"Quite right; and I will send in my bill this evening. I have only delayed on account of the sickness the poor man has had in his family all winter. I suppose he must have run behind a little, but still I must take care of number one."

"Speaking of Thompson, are you?" observed a bystander, who appeared to take an interest in the conversation. "Going down hill, is he? I must look out for myself then. He owes me quite a snug sum for leather. I did intend to give him another month's credit, but on the whole I guess the money would be safer in my own pocket."

Here the four worthies separated each with his mind filled with the affairs of neighbour Thompson, the probability that he was going down hill, and the best way of giving him a push.

In another part of the little village similar scenes were passing.

"I declare, exclaimed Mrs. Bennett, the dressmaker, to a favourite assistant, as she hastily withdrew her head from the window, whence she had been gazing on the passers-by; 'if there is not Mrs. Thompson, the shoemaker's wife, coming up the steps with a parcel in her hand. She wants me to do her work, I suppose, but I think it would be a venture. Every one says they are running down hill, and it is a chance if I ever get my pay.'"

"She always paid us promptly," was the reply. "True; but that was in the days of her prosperity. I cannot afford to run any risk."

The entrance of Mrs. Thompson prevented further conversation.

She was evidently surprised at the refusal of Mrs. Bennett to do any work for her; but as great pressure of business was pleaded as an excuse, there was nothing to be said, and she soon took her leave. Another application proved equally unsuccessful. It was strange how busy the village dressmakers had suddenly become.

On the same day the poor shoemaker's wife met the teacher of a small school in the neighbourhood where two of her children attended.

"Ah, Mrs. Thompson, I am glad to see you," was the salutation. "I was about calling at your