

Letter From Burma.

I write this in my boat as I journey from village to village among the Karens in Mergul district. This is the most southern division of Burma, extending from Tavoy on the north, to the tenth degree of latitude in the south terminating in Victoria Point. On the coast is the Mergul Archipelago, a very large number of islands of all sizes, perhaps from a hundred square feet to a hundred square miles in area. The large ones are inhabited by both Burmese and Karens, and all are constantly visited by Celones, a wild tribe living entirely in boats and moving from island to island, to fish, or gather wild honey, or such leaves and roots as can be eaten. For the past few years quite a business has been done in pearl fishing. It was begun by a firm of firms in Australia, but not being very successful they sold out to natives who do a prosperous business. The shells in available depths are now nearly exhausted and the work must be given up for four or five years till new ones grow. Of course the government controls this like all else, and each boat, carrying one diver, pays a yearly tax of about one hundred and thirty dollars.

About twenty fathoms is the greatest depth a diver cares to attempt, and there have been a few accidents at that. The diver and the air tube pressed by the weight of water. The divers are all from the Philippine Islands. If they could go down in fifty fathoms it is supposed large quantities could be obtained. Of course the business consists in gathering mother of pearl, with the hope of finding real pearls between these large shells. These latter are of many sizes and qualities, some black and worthless, others of crystal purity and almost untold value. I was recently shown one about as large as a cherry that the owner is holding at ten thousand dollars. He has refused seven thousand. It will no doubt find its way to some Indian rajah, to be worn as an ornament or kept to exhibit his wealth.

Some of these islands are not islands, as my country would say, but great rocks with high perpendicular sides, and great caverns running far in that can only be entered by carrying ladders. In these caves and crevices edible bird's nests are found and during the dry season, the only time a boat can approach these rocks, many are engaged in gathering these nests. For this privilege the government obtains a revenue of three thousand dollars a year. It is a difficult and hazardous undertaking, requiring the use of ropes, ladders and staving. The bird that makes these nests is not unlike a swallow, and about the same size. No other place will it use for a nest but these rocks. As there are cliffs and crevices where even a Chinaman cannot go, enough young birds have been hatched to keep up the supply. No attention is paid to eggs or young birds if found in the nests. The nests must be taken. A pound of these nests sells here for ten dollars.

The mainland in the long ago was no doubt just what the Archipelago is now, a vast number of islands of all sizes. The sea has been filled up by soil and light matter brought down from the hills and mountains far to the east and great mangrove swamps have been formed. This filling up process still goes on, and the coast is changed into mud banks, and these into mangrove swamps. In the years to come, great rice fields will be seen where now the sea rolls in over shallow banks, sometimes considerably to my discomfort.

These swamps are covered with forest trees of the kinds that grow in salt water, and at spring tides are surrounded by it from a depth of two or three inches to as many feet. But every high tide leaves a deposit of mud by which the land is gradually raised till it becomes suitable for cultivation. If the trees are down and the trunks and branches left on the ground the progress toward a field is much more rapid. In some of these plains there may be a soil of fifty feet and downwards of the richest quality. One of the several services we try to render the Karens is to get grants of land in these swamps, with remission of taxes for several years. I am now getting grants with exemption for eleven years. Of course no Karen could by himself find his way through the various requirements necessary to effect this.

All over these swamps are hills or patches of high ground just like the islands on the coast. There are also high rocks without a handful of soil, corresponding to the rock islands in the sea. Instead of birds their dark caverns are inhabited by innumerable bats. From the roofs of some of these caves hang the most beautiful stalactites. How I wish I could get one down and send it to Wolfville. I may some day.

This great expanse of swamp is intersected by rivers or rather inlets swarming with fish and prawns, and a Burman prefers getting his living from the sea to the labor of cutting down trees and making a field. A Buddhist is not supposed to take the life of anything, even the smallest insect, but he argues that he does not kill the fish. He simply removes them from the water, and if they choose to die he is not responsible. Here is carried on the making of that vile thing, *gnapee*, the Burman word for putrid fish. Almost all Burmans and Karens eat this terribly offensive thing at every meal, and it is no doubt one of causes of so much sickness and so many early

deaths. This is the case among Karens particularly, as they have so many other injurious habits. The Burmans are a little more cleanly. How this strange custom ever originated seems to be a mystery, but some light is thrown upon it when it is known that it is never eaten, probably cannot be eaten, till it is plentifully mixed with red peppers. From these the drug capaicin, is extracted. Rotten fish only destroys the body, but red peppers are most injurious in other respects. No doubt the evil one had this in view when he introduced the custom. For many years we have not allowed it in our school and to this we attribute our almost entire immunity from sickness which is such a burden in other schools. Up to the present we are alone in this reform.

Since I began this trip, almost a month ago, I have seen a good deal to encourage. We have never had so many pupils in our jungle schools. After the meeting of our Association in January we sent out twenty-seven of our best boys and girls to teach during vacation. Some of these have more than fifty pupils, scores of them from heathen families. The books we use are catechisms of Scripture teaching and so these children learn much of the vanity of idolatry and of our duty to serve God. I have baptized sixteen, all bright, young people and all abstainers from tobacco. Indeed some have never used this injurious thing, no more than children of clean families at home. The two last villages I have visited were entirely heathen when we came to Burma. The same can be said of the village in which our Association was lately held. Now there is a fairly large church and able to entertain nearly six hundred visitors from Thursday till Monday with lack of nothing. What has God wrought?

A Sabbath on tour is a very busy day. Indeed the services begin Saturday afternoon when every Karen church has a meeting. Saturday is often called "preparation day." Early Sunday morning a meeting is held for prayer and conference, usually led by a Karen, but the missionary is supposed to take some part. About ten the preaching service by the missionary followed by examination of candidates for baptism and other matters and often continues three or four hours. At about five, baptism service and later the Lord's Supper. Quite often my boat, where I sleep and take my food, is two miles from the chapel, and this distance in the heat is quite an item.

I get a good deal of time to read as I go from place to place, all depending on the weather and on having some one to pilot on board. I have stood five hours at the helm without rest. One little book has so greatly interested me that I want to recommend it particularly to our pastors and students for the ministry. It is *Extempore Prayer*, by Rev. M. P. Telling, Ph. D., Toronto. It is highly recommended by many whose opinions are valuable, among them our own O. C. Wallace and Chas. A. Eaton. Brethren you cannot afford to do without it. Read it and it will do you good.

H. MORROW.

Mergul, Burma, March 3.

Dr. Dowie and Zion City.

BY REV. D. O. PAKKRE.

Rev. Dr. John Alexander Dowie, the Divine Healer, and founder of the Christian Catholic church in Zion, and the self styled Elijah the restorer, is a small man of three score years and ten, hale and vigorous as a youth, bald headed, with bandy legs, a high brow and pleasant face, mustache and luxuriant whiskers, and pictured in his clerical robes reminds one of the famous picture of the prophets of Israel. If measured by his achievements he is one of the most remarkable men of this or any past age, eclipsing Mahomet and the founders of Mormonism. The press, the pulpit and the people with one accord are in battle array against him, and in many respects misrepresent him. He is denounced as a false prophet, a base and unscrupulous imposter, seeking only his own aggrandizement and enriching himself with the tithes and offerings exacted from his followers. In this he is only reaping what he has sown, for in vulgar abuse he scandalizes every one outside of Zion, and in turn is paid back in his own currency. For want of space it is not my purpose, now, to write much of his religious doctrines.

Forty-two miles north of Chicago, on the west side of Lake Michigan, in about two years he has built a city with a unique population of twelve thousand, and rapidly increasing every day. It has several fine buildings that are gems of architectural neatness, of which I may name, the college, the Elijah Hospital, a grand fire proof hotel of 600 rooms, Zion City Lace Factory, and the Shilo Tabernacle. He does a large banking business, and has a flourishing department store with a post and express business all over the country. Not a foot of the city is owned by any one except Dowie who is "monarch of all he surveys." The land is leased in lots for eleven hundred years, expiring January 1st, A. D. 3000. In the dream or prophecy of this remarkable man, Zion City is only the first of such to be planted all over the world, and culminating with their capital in Jerusalem. At this date of 3000 years he prophesies that the Christian Catholic church will be the one church of the world, wicked-

ness be no more, and that Christ in his second coming will be here and give eternal blessings to all. In his purchase of the land, in the drafting of the charts of incorporation, and the development of every department of the city of which he is general manager, he has availed himself of the services of the shrewdest and most competent specialist he could secure. The laws of the city are iron clad, and so fixed that no change can ever be made in them, even by the State Legislature, and by these laws, these four articles of commerce are for ever prohibited; pork, tobacco, intoxicating liquors and medical drugs, gambling dens, breweries, distilleries, houses of ill-fame, dance halls and lodge rooms for secret societies are also prohibited. He denounces sickness, drugs and doctors as the works of the devil, and preaches that all secret societies, have the same parentage, and that all the ministers of the world outside of Zion, belong to the same fraternity. Recently in this village with two venerable ministers sitting at my side, in a Dowie meeting, I heard one of his distinguished preachers call all the preachers of the world outside of Zion liars and scaly-wags. I will quote a few lines from Dowie sermons, entitled, "Secret Societies Exposed and Condemned," preached in the presence of thousands in his great Auditorium in the city of Chicago, which may give an idea of the style and spirit of the man.

There is not any use fighting over these old battles in old Jerusalem; we have got to fight them in Chicago. (Amen) Ministers preach eloquent sermons about Paul fighting with beasts at Ephesus. I wish they would fight with beasts at Chicago. (Amen).

Lots of beasts here to fight. There is the Roman beast and the Secret Society beast; there is the tobacco beast and whiskey beast; there are all kinds of dirty beasts round about Chicago—not to speak of the pig (Laughter). Again, "Nobody comes into Zion who brings medicine with them, or if they do, either the medicine go or they go, and no body gets into Zion who smells—you know how. (Laughter) You s\*\*\*kpot! You dirty s\*\*\*kpot! There is one house you can't get into. No beerpot or s\*\*\*kpot can enter Zion home anyhow. You have to go somewhere else." For the sake of decency, the stars in place of letters are mine. With all his faults multitudes are following him in South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia, and I learn there are a few in my own homeland of Nova Scotia. Two large families went from here last week—devout followers of the prophet—and now have their hearts and home in Zion.

I will close with an extract from a letter just received from a friend of four score years in Nova Scotia, who for some time has followed the doings of the Prophet of Zion. She writes: "Dowie is to my mind one of the strangest characters of our time. I really take more interest in his financial schemes than his religious ones, but he must be possessed of almost superhuman powers to sway and control such masses of men and women both physically and mentally."

North Springfield, Vermont, April 23.

Hamilton Echoes.

Since there has been no notes from the Seminary in your paper this year, a few lines may not be out of place.

The Seminary year opened September 11th with an entering class of sixteen. The attendance at the Seminary is somewhat smaller this year owing to the number who have dropped out of the present senior class; but an average class in the fall will bring us up to our regular number.

There are seven provincial boys in the Seminary this year: Rev. J. B. Champion, formerly of the Sussex Baptist church, in the senior class; F. O. Erb, W. B. Smith, and E. V. Buchanan in the middle class; A. C. Horsman, H. J. Perry and the writer in the junior class.

During the year we have listened to a number of lectures given before the Seminary. Those of especial interest to the writer were one on "Crisis of Evolution" and a second in the same course, "Man and Christianity," delivered by Prof. John M. Tyler of Amherst College; also three lectures on "the Sunday School," by Rev. A. H. McKinney, Ph. D. of New York.

The Patron's day address for this was delivered by Pres. Hyde of Bowdoin College on "Elements of Personality," in which he set forth the Epicurean, Stoical, Platonic, Aristotelean and Christian (Love), types of character that go to make up a strong personality.

Pres. Rhee of Rochester and Pres. Needham of Columbian University, Washington, D. C., were present as guests of honor at the Patron's Day.

We were very glad to receive a visit from Rev. J. H. Balcom of North Brookfield, N. S., who has been visiting J. C. Whitney of the class of 1905. Mr. Whitney, by the way, though not a Province boy, yet we may almost claim him, since he is known there, having served with much acceptance the church at Port Hawkesbury; resigning only because he felt necessary to pursue a further course of study.

Your paper is a welcome visitor to our Reading Room every week. I regret you have not been able to record a pastor for Port Elgin; it is a promising field for an energetic man and I trust something may be done soon.

Yours sincerely,  
C. P. CHRISTOPHER,