

Correspondence.

All Letters containing personal allusions will appear over the signature of the writer.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for the opinions of our correspondents.

THE BIBLE.

SIR,—Now that the political cyclone has blown over and subsided, we may venture to say a few words about the selections from the Bible for the public schools. When I was a boy in Newfoundland, we used the Irish National school books, in which were large selections from the Bible used as school lessons, with which no fault was found. The whole Bible, however, was read as well. John Wesley says there are things in the Bible "not fit to be put into the mouths of a Christian congregation." And I have myself always omitted certain verses in the Old Testament lessons of the Church of England, because they are not nice to read to the public congregation. The Douay translation has been circulated by the British and Foreign Bible Society for many years in France. The Roman Catholics do not object to the reading of the Bible. What they object to is, the reading and circulating the *Protestant Bible*. In every French house I have visited between Montreal and Quebec, particularly in the country parishes, I found the Roman Catholic Bible—large and elegantly bound and appeared to have been well read. I found every Roman Catholic book store well stocked with Bibles. Some years ago, I was sent for to see a woman belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, who was supposed to be dying. The priest was thirty miles distant and inaccessible. I told her I could not give her the absolution she required, extreme unction, etc., that God alone could absolve her from her sins, that "He pardoneth and absolveth all those who truly repent and unfeignedly believe His Holy Gospel." The woman recovered. I found in the house a Roman Catholic New Testament, translated by a Cardinal over two hundred years ago, and strongly recommended by the Pope of the day, all of which was referred to in the preface. But I forget the name of either the Cardinal or the Pope. I read several chapters from it to the family and assembled friends. Two of them, I think, were from the 3rd of St. John and the 8th of Romans. I looked through a portion of the book and found it differed very little from our own, except in some places *penance* was substituted for repentance.

The fact is many who believe in the Bible as divine, do not love it. They see no special attraction in it, they read it from a sense of duty now and then, but their favorite authors are not those whom God selected and inspired. This is the case with many who call themselves Christians. I believe the principal reason is that few people study the Bible enough to appreciate it.

It is a fact apparent to all that abroad as well as in this country, the materials for a great religious disturbance are being accumulated, that a terrible conflict will arise, it may not be in our time, but all is preparing. The hope of every Roman Catholic in Europe and America is, not to enjoy his faith in peace, but to see it supreme in Church and State, and his endeavour is towards that consummation. The battles of the Reformation will have to be fought over again.

Mr. Gladstone says:—"Rome has substituted for the proud boast of *semper eadem*, a policy of violence and change of faith, when she has refurbished and paraded anew every rusty tool she was fondly thought to have disused."

Who can look upon Great Britain and Ireland without alarm, as the eclipse of her Protestantism goes on casting a denser darkness over her liberties and her religious life. We all feel that if England ever gives up her reverence for the Bible, the blindness of decay will strike her, falsehood will eat away her judgment and undermine her strength, and she will stagger on madly to her overthrow.

It is wonderful that so much bitterness should be entertained by opponents, or that any difference of opinion should excite private hate. Nearly all the secondary movements of party are guided by personal hostility, and sustained by feelings which if we could see, we should disown instantly. Still they burn in us, are widespread, follow us as we hear speeches from friends and opponents, colour the ink with which we write, and necessarily hurt our own happiness. To avoid all discussions on the Bible, the Church of England should agitate, agitate, agitate, until the Government place her on an equality with the Roman Catholics, in conceding the right to establish her own schools.

December 29th.

PHILIP TOCQUE.

From the black river-bottom rises the white water-lily; and every blossom that crowns the earth with beauty springs from the despoiled dust.

SKETCH OF LESSON.

2ND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS. JANUARY 2ND, 1887.

The Strong Man Armed.

Passage to be read.—Exodus v. 1-9; vi. 1-18.

In this lesson a series of contrasts is presented, pride, ignorance, obstinacy, on one hand, hopeless misery and dejection on the other.

Yet a Promise and a Name given as encouragement.

1. *The Strong Man in his Palace.* Picture Pharaoh in his splendid palace at Zoan surrounded with great luxury, a retinue of servants to carry out his wishes, none daring to cross his royal will. No wonder he thinks himself so strong that no one can disturb him or take his goods. But who are these two old men, meanly clad, who enter his presence; one bowed with toil, having been a slave all his life, the other accustomed to all this pomp in his earlier days, but who for forty years has led the life of a shepherd. What does this intrusion mean? Moses and Aaron bear a message to this proud king, sent by a stronger than he. Listen to the message, ch. v. 1. How was it received? verse 2. Defiantly. Pride.—"Who is the Lord?" Ignorance.—"I know not the Lord." Obstinacy.—"Neither will I let Israel go." He will hear nothing of God's claim, he scorns Him as well as His people.

2. *His Slaves in the Brickfield.* The work of the Israelites was very hard, toiling all day under the lash of "task masters,"—Egyptians who set the daily task, a certain number of bricks. It seemed as though there could be no worse fate in store for them. Yet see verses 7, 8. In consequence of withholding the supply of straw it was impossible for them to finish the daily work. Then the Israelitish officers in charge are beaten unjustly. In despair they make a piteous appeal to Pharaoh, verses 17, 18. Coming forth in despair they meet Moses and Aaron, whom now they accuse of being the cause of all this fresh misery, verse 21, whereas only a few days before they had hailed them as deliverers. Even Moses' faith seems to stagger, verse 23. See a similar instance in the case of David, 1 Sam. xxx. 6, and Hezekiah, 2 Kings xix. 14. Observe how in both cases recourse was had to prayer. Well for us if in times of trial we flee to God, Psalm lxi. 2; lxix. 1.

3. *The Stronger than He.* Now a stronger than Pharaoh comes upon the scene, ch. vi. 1. "Man's extremity, God's opportunity." When they were perfectly helpless God's arm brought salvation, Isaiah lix. 16. Two things given for their encouragement. (a) *His Name*—JEHOVAH, "He which is." Not like the false gods of Egypt whom the Egyptians believed to have power, one over the sky, another over the River Nile, another over the earth, and so on; but the one true God who is above all and rules all. Now they were to know more fully what that Name meant. (b) *His Covenant*, verses 4, 8. Remember God's three-fold promise to Abraham, Gen. xii. 1-3. Refer to lesson 1. What could Pharaoh's puny strength avail against this?

Bad as was the state of the Israelites, there is a worse bondage, even that of those who, living in sin without God are slaves to Satan, see St. John viii. 34; 1 John iii. 8. They toil and get no real happiness; they despair of ever getting free; but then, thank God, there is a stronger than Satan, even He whose birth we have lately been celebrating; He who came down from heaven to deliver us, St. Luke iv. 18. Two things assure us of this. His NAME, Jesus. Saviour. His PROMISE, St. John vi. 47; St. Matt. i. 21.

Are any prisoners of Satan? Christ is able to save to the uttermost the vilest sinner. Are any free from Satan yet harassed by his frequent assaults? Christ can keep them, St. Jude xxiv. 25; 2 Tim. i. 12; Heb. iv. 16.

Family Reading.

A VIEW OF HUMAN LIFE.

Human life is a journey which commences for each of us the moment we enter the world, and which terminates at the grave. We are like those who, passengers on the ocean, are wafted by the winds towards the port whilst they are asleep in the vessel, and who, insensible of the progression of their course, arrive there before they are aware. It is the same with the whole of life. It runs on, impelled by a continual current, which carries us on unconsciously along with it. We sleep; and, during our sleep, our brief space of time flies silently over our heads; we wake to a thousand cares; and, while struggling with them, life pursues its rapid course at the same rate. We are here below only as travellers; everything rapidly recedes from our view; we leave everything behind us; we throw a passing glance on the enamelled meads, or the

purling brook, or whatever other object may charm our sight; we feel a pleasure in contemplating it, and, before we can analyse it, we have already lost sight of it. To charming prospects and a smiling country often succeed rocks, ravines, precipices, and rugged paths, sometimes infested with ferocious animals or venomous reptiles; or perplexed with thorns which lacerate the flesh; these things annoy or afflict us for a moment, and the next we are beyond their reach. Such is life; neither its pleasures nor its pains are durable, nor does the road we traverse belong to us, any more than any of the objects with which it is diversified: other travellers have preceded us on it, others are coming along it at the same time with ourselves, and countless multitudes will follow us.—From the writings of St. Basil.

THE SWEETS OF VICISSITUDE.

"Before I was troubled, I went wrong; but now have I kept thy word."—Ps. cxix. 67.

Within this leaf, to every eye
So little worth, doth hidden lie
Most rare and subtle fragrant.
Wouldst thou its secret strength unbind?
Crush it, and thou shalt perfume find,
Sweet as Arabia's spicy wind.

In this dull stone, so poor and bare
Of shape or lustre, patient care
Will find for these a jewel rare.
But first must skillful hands essay
With file and flint to clear away
The film which hides its fire from day.

This leaf? this stone? It is thy heart!
It must be crushed by pain and smart,
It must be cleansed by sorrow's art,
Ere it will yield a fragrance sweet,
Ere it will shine a jewel meet
To lay before thy dear Lord's feet.

—The late Bishop Wilberforce.

CHRISTIAN UNITY.

It is a question compassed about with tremendous difficulties. It cannot be reached by resolutions or declarations. It is one of the things which "cometh not with observation." Our chief dependence must be, as in the attainment of all desires and difficult ends, upon the power of prevailing prayer. I believe the old common sense rule applies here too, that when two people are looking for each other, one of them had better stand still. And I believe the Church is the one to stand still; not in arrogance, indifference, inactivity; but to stand in her lot to the end of her days: not boasting ourselves, for we bear not the root but the root us, and we have nothing that we have not received; and striving by wealth of good works, by consistency to our high and holy lineage, by consuming zeal and controlling love, to commend the Church, as primitive not in order, doctrine and worship only, but still more in holiness and faithfulness of life and in consecration to the service of our Lord. In addition to this declaration, the General Convention has appointed a commission charged to communicate this re-statement of our position to all who will receive it, and to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian bodies who desire, not the amiable delusion of *union among*, but the divine intention of *unity instead of*, the unhappy divisions of Christendom; the organic unity of the Church.—Bishop's Doane's Convention Address.

NEATNESS INDISPENSABLE.

A woman may be handsome or remarkably attractive in various ways, but if she is not personally neat she cannot hope to win admiration. Fine clothes will not conceal the slattern. A young lady with her hair always in disorder, and her clothes hanging about her as if suspended from a prop, is always repulsive. "Slattern" is written on her person from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet, and if she wins a husband he will in all probability turn out an idle or a drunken ruffian. The bringing up of daughters to be able to work, act, and talk, like honest, sensible, young women, is the especial task of all mothers, and in