

THE CHRISTIAN.

"FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD."—Paul.

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ITEMS FROM H. MURRAY.

Home again, after an absence of seven weeks. I will not say the time spent and the work done have been profitless, because it is possible that time may develop some good accomplished. I will say, however, that I never had worse weather to contend with in all my life. We were treated and tried with every kind of a storm, all the way from a June drenching rain to a January blizzard. One day the mud would be over your rubbers and the next day the snow would be knee deep. And last, but not least, we were "gripped" and held for two weeks, and, in fact, we are not yet released. We went to Westport and Tiverton to assist Bro. Cook and Bro. Devos in their work in those two churches. But the only one who received any assistance was myself. I was fed, and cared for, and then doctored, and watched, and tended, and carefully bundled up and sent home, for all of which I am profoundly grateful. Bro. Cooke and Bro. Devos are holding the "fort." They need encouragement. They are working hard to sustain the cause on those islands, and the brethren in those churches are working hard to sustain them, but to do their best they cannot do any more than keep a preacher's soul and body together. Let us not forget these brethren, but stand by them and let them know that our hearts are with them to lend them all the help in our power, both in word and deed. I am sorry that I failed to assist them, and that I have nothing in the history of my visit that is prophetic or propitious. It was very pleasing to me to renew old acquaintances and to recall some of the most sacred memories of my life. We have some as true and devoted brethren in those churches as we have anywhere. But I was pained to see some with whom we had mingled our hearts and voices in the sacred delightful worship of God, forsaking the Lord and His cause. May the Lord help them to see their sin and their position in their true light; and may they return to Him who is ever kind and gracious, and who is so earnestly and tenderly saying, Come. How can we refuse the love and mercy of one so good whose love is so great!

Wheat and tares. Some suppose that because the Saviour forbid the disciples taking up the tares from among the wheat, we are not to have any church discipline; that we must let the wicked remain in the church among the good. A careful reading of this parable will show that there is no such idea in the passage. The Saviour is dealing with a certain kind of evil ones, those who are like the wheat. You will notice that the tare resembles the wheat. "It was not till the blade sprung up and brought forth fruit that the tares appeared." It is the one who seems good, who appears like the good ones, and who is generally supposed to be good, but who at heart is not good. It is easy to understand why such a one should not be disturbed. There are so many who think he is good, that the good ones would be injured in taking such an evil one out from among them. The Saviour therefore said not to take away the tare lest they root up the wheat also. This cannot be applied to all wicked persons for two reasons. 1. Because a wicked person who is profane, or drunken, or who takes no interest in the work or worship of the church, cannot be a tare; he bears no resemblance whatever to the wheat, he better resembles a brake or a briar than a tare. He does not seem or appear in any way like the good, and cannot therefore be considered a tare. 2. Because such wicked persons will destroy the good if they remain among them, and must therefore be taken up. The same reason why a tare should remain is the reason why a thorn should be taken up. If a tare is taken up it destroys the wheat, but if a thorn remains it destroys the wheat, as in Matt. xiii. 7, "The thorns sprung up and choked the word." This teaches us that we must get rid of the thorns and briars and brakes in the church or it will be destroyed. Any church that allows those to remain who do not take any interest in the cause whatever, must see sooner or later the destruction of the church. The wheat cannot grow among the thorns.

I saw in a late paper, published in the city of St. John, a statement like this: "We baptize those who we believe are already saved . . . never except they are convinced they are saved." According to this, baptism is because of salvation. They would say: "He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized." In this case baptism comes after salvation. But Christ said (Mark xvi. 16), "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." In this case salvation comes after baptism. Some one is mistaken. If we are saved before we are baptized, then the Saviour made the mistake. But this we cannot admit for a moment. We must therefore conclude that the mistake is with those who say that we are saved first and baptized afterward.

On our way home from Tiverton we remained one night in Sandy Cove, at the home of Bro. and Sister Eldridge. Their hospitality is so free and unstinted that they make their friends always feel at home. They take a number of our papers and they read them. They are consequently well acquainted with the success and advancement of the Disciples. We regret that there are so few who read our papers and who know so little about the success of the greatest religious movement of the age. If our brethren were posted in the success of the current reformation it would wonderfully inspire them to increase their labors.

We remained a day and a night with our Bro. William Murray, at Kempt, in the family of Bro. and Sister Cushing. We are very thankful that Sister Cushing has been spared to us and is again enjoying her usual health. We could ill afford to lose her from the work in Kempt. We enjoyed the family worship while there very much. They each one, Brother and Sister Cushing, Brother and Sister Wilson and Brother William have their Bibles, and read a verse in them till the chapter is read, and then a hymn is sung and then one leads in prayer. The worship is thus made mutual and interesting. Moral, "Go thou and do likewise." Bro. William Murray is doing all the work one man ought to do. He drives to Grafton on Tuesday, visits the friends, and in the evening has a meeting in the school-house. He drives back to Kempt on Wednesday and has a meeting there in the evening. Thursday he drives up to Northfield, visits the friends, and has a meeting there in the evening, and so on till Sunday, at which time he preaches in Grafton in the morning, at Kempt in the afternoon, and either in Northfield or Harmony in the evening. These make six meetings he holds every week. The interest in all these places is increasing, and if he remains, success, by way of accessions, must follow.

I was able, notwithstanding the "Grippe," to attend our prayer-meeting here in Milton, Saturday evening. I do enjoy a good prayer-meeting. I can't understand how a Christian can live without the aid of the prayer-meeting. Well, this was a good meeting. The time was well occupied for an hour and a quarter. No time lost. If the prayer-meeting is an index of the condition of the church, which I believe is true, then our church is in a good working condition. And if I can prognosticate it is going to be still better, for I can see a spirit of hopefulness that warrants still greater prosperity.

A friend asked me not long since what the difference was between the prayer-meeting and the "Christian Endeavor Society." There is the same difference as there is between ought-to-be-done and shall-be-done. We talk in the prayer-meeting about what we ought to do and what is our duty to do, which is certainly good in its place. But the "Endeavor Society" says what must and shall be done, and goes to work and does it. There is a great work to do and the failure to do it is the cause that gave birth to the "Endeavor Society." If the "Endeavor Society" is wrong, the failure of the church to do the work is a greater wrong. So of two evils we must always choose the least.

This reminds me of the objection raised against missionary societies, i. e., they are not right because the plan is not scriptural. One brother asks the question: "Which is better, an unscriptural plan, carrying the Gospel to the world, or a scriptural plan, keeping the Gospel at home?" Anent to this is the question of Charles A. Briggs. "Who are the most guilty, those who need the Gospel and have it not, or those who have the Gospel and do not give it to those who can't be saved without it?" May it not be more tolerable for China and India than for us. Conundrum! Why is an anti-mission man like an objector to Christianity? Because he hates what he don't practice.