

MISSIONARY MEETINGS

We are reminded by the season of the year, when the roads will soon be at the best in the rural districts, that the time has come round when the annual missionary meetings should be held in all the congregations of the Church.—Such meetings have been tried with excellent effect. Some of our Presbyteries have made regular systematic arrangements for carrying them out, and have reaped the benefit in the interest which has been awakened in the various schemes of the Church, and the additional means that have been furnished for carrying them out. We believe that no contribution is more cheerfully given than the free-will offering at such a meeting. Other denominations have availed themselves of such assemblies, and have been indebted to our ministers for assistance on these occasions, without having it in their power to return the service. It is both pleasant and seemly for brethren, holding the same faith and the same hope, to mingle in the missionary meeting.—Heart beats responsive to heart—the Christian feeling is excited, and where the love of God has a place, it flows out in love to mankind. An opportunity is afforded for becoming acquainted with the operations of the Church. The auditory are carried over the field, and are made acquainted with the progress and the prospects of the schemes of Christian benevolence, for which their support has either been given, or will be solicited.

A public missionary meeting has the effect of bringing together professing members of different communions, making them better acquainted with each other, and with the measure of success that has crowned the labors of their respective churches, and so far, of diminishing the prejudices that will naturally arise.

There are congregational meetings of a more private nature which are productive of the happiest results, in bringing into closer contact and intimate acquaintance the members of the congregation. Much of the Christian sympathy which, if called forth, would bind a congregation firmly together, is left unemployed by the isolation that prevails in the Church. In the business of life, men are drawn together by the interests which they have at stake, and are often in each other's company, consulting how they may best promote them. It has been the distinguishing characteristic of those that fear God, to speak often one to another, on the things that intimately concern them; and kindred spirits will be attracted to each other. But what we desiderate is not so much the secret alliance of a few devoutly pious persons, nor the affinity of persons of the same grade and station in society, but the meeting upon common Christian ground, of the members of the visible Church, where the believers of deepest experience in the divine life, may diffuse an influence among the younger Christians and weaker brethren, and where the artificial, though necessary distinctions of social rank, shall not intrude to mar the fellowship of those who hope to dwell together in heaven. The members of each congregation should be knit together by a bond not less enduring, nor less strong than

the family tie. The family of the redeemed united to Christ, their living Head, are all one in Him. The solemn enquiry is suggested to the mind, can a congregation be in a prosperous condition, when the individual members are scarcely personally known to each other? Or can the oversight of a people, professedly united in Church fellowship, be either scriptural or salutary, where the members are not known to the office-bearers?

The social principle has been implanted by infinite wisdom in our natures. It seeks for gratification in every class of mankind, from the most degraded to the most pure and elevated characters. It is this principle which leads masses of mankind to meet for the indulgence of sinful appetites; from this proceed the balls, the vain and sinful assemblies, the midnight revels—riot and wantonness—but it is just the same principle under a gracious influence, that leads the reflecting and well-disposed to seek the society of the wise and the good, that they may profit thereby.—Christians are bound to love all men—to desire their welfare, but there is a love to the brotherhood—the household of faith—which cannot be extended to those which are without—a brotherly love, which only brethren, in this higher sense, can feel toward each other. The first, in the language of Dr. Brown, is the love of benevolence, the latter of complacency and esteem, a sentiment of which non- but a Christian can be either the object or the subject. Acquaintanceship is at least necessary to the cherishing and maintaining this best of affections. In order to give it full scope and play, the brethren, not only meet together in the public ministrations of the sanctuary, but should not forsake the assembling of themselves together in a more private manner. When the members of a Christian Church are isolated, they may be brethren, it is only when knit together in closer bonds, participating in each other's joys and sorrows, that they enjoy the privileges which the endearing relation confers.

PSALMODY.

Several sections of the visible Church use, in the worship of God, hymns of mere human authority, taking as their warrant, Eph. v. 19, and Col. iii. 16, as if the Book of Psalms did not include hymns and spiritual songs, given by the pen of inspiration, and adapted to the circumstances of the people of God throughout all time. One of the first steps in the defection of those churches which have departed from the faith once delivered to the saints, has been the superseding of the words of the Holy Ghost and substituting the words of man in the worship of God. There is cause for alarm, for the purity and stability of the Church, that discards scriptural worship. We do not enter upon the inquiry, whether other portions of Scripture than the Book of Psalms, might not be rendered into verse and used in praise. We object chiefly to the use of Dr. Watts' imitation, or any other caricature of the songs of Zion. It is well known, that it was in the darkest days of the declension of the Kirk of Scotland, that the Paraphrases were

"collected and prepared in order to be sung in churches;" and it is perhaps an evidence of the return of the spirit of her better days, that she is now returning to her simple worship. We have the authority of Dr. McCrie of Edinburgh, that a very general preference is now given to the Psalms of David, in Scotland, and that there is still good reason to hope that the Presbyterian Church in England will re-consider their grounds before adopting a hymn book. We believe that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has never allowed anything worse than the paraphrases to be introduced into her worship. We have heard it stated of one of her most distinguished living ministers, who never uses the Paraphrases, that he has caused that appendix to the Psalmody to be stitched fast to the board of his Pulpit Bible, to prevent less scrupulous and less experienced ministers from using them in his congregation. And we know that the Pulpit Bible used in his former colonial charge, by a minister of the Irish Presbyterian Church, now in this city, still bears the evidence of the like precaution. The Rev. Dr. McCrie, under date of September 17th, 1852, thus writes on the subject of Psalmody to the Rev. Dr. Cooper, editor of the *Evangelical Repository*, from which we quote:—

"With regard to psalmody, it is certain that though some ministers still use the paraphrases occasionally in public worship, they are gradually falling into desuetude, and the Psalms of David are generally preferred. Many congregations will not submit to the use of paraphrases. For my own part, though satisfied with the psalms, as sufficient for all the purposes of Christian worship, I must confess that I shall ever regret that our good fathers, in the time of the second reformation, did not find time for carrying out their design of preparing "other scripture songs," by which I am persuaded they meant, not paraphrases of scripture prose, but translations of other poetical pieces of scripture suitable for private or public devotion. Had this been accomplished at that time,—from 1647 to 1649,—when the church was in its palmy state of purity, it is highly probable that the church in our land would never have been troubled by the introduction of hymns of human composition, which, in my opinion, are wholly unsuited for public worship, inasmuch as they cannot be sung "to the praise and glory of God," or presented on the Christian altar as worthy of God to receive. Unfortunately, however, the committees appointed for the purpose failed to satisfy themselves with the fruits of their labours; and persecution coming in, the work was never finished, till the days of semi-Arminianism, when the poor, trashy, false affairs, called paraphrases, was brought forth, which has justly given everybody, possessed of true taste and of reverence for scripture, a disgust at all sorts of hymnology. I may add that many in the English Presbyterian Church feel in the same manner, and the question is far from being settled among them. One of their leading ministers wrote me lately,—I am an anti-hymnologist to the very top of your bent, and from the first have offered all opposition to the movement. The thing is not yet done, and I am in hopes we shall be able to defeat it yet."

WESTMINSTER REVIEW.

Written for our December Number.

The number for October has come to hand, and evinces considerable improvements. There are no articles such as the "Creed of Christendom," containing semi-infidel attacks on Christianity.