

The Berean.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—Acts viii. 11.

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TO-DAY.

Link by link the chain is made,
Pearl by pearl the costly braid,
The daily thread of hopes and fears,
Weaves up the woof of many years;
And well thy labour shall have sped,
If well thou weave'st the daily thread.

Christian Register.

MEDITATION FOR LENT.

All we like sheep have gone astray. Is. liii. 6.
"Like sheep." The figure, though simple, is very expressive. No animal is more prone to wander than the sheep; no animal is more exposed to danger while wandering; no animal is more unable of itself to find its way back, when it has wandered. See here a lively picture of our sinful wanderings from God. "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." Continuing with Him, we should have had guidance, protection, sweet and pleasant pasture, and every good thing. But we are naturally prone to wander from God. So corrupt is our fallen nature, that we are blind to our duty, our privilege, our safety, and our peace; and like sheep, surrounded by a fence, we look about for some way of escape, some by-path, some opening in the hedge, some opportunity of sin. Such opportunities are seldom long wanting. Oward opportunity and inward proneness to wander thus concurring, we rush through all the restraints of conscience, education, the fear of God, the dread of consequences; we follow our passions, and rotate the world around, just as one silly sheep quitting the fold is generally followed by the rest. Every sinful thought is a thought that wanders from God. Every corrupt desire, every idle word, every act of negligence, every transgression of God's law, is a wandering from God. Who can number his own wanderings? Who can tell how oft he offendeth? "Who can understand his errors? Who see, brethren, how like sheep he have been prone to wander, and have actually gone astray.

When wandered, the sheep is in imminent danger of perishing. Pits of snares abound. Cold and hunger assail. The light draws on. Wild beasts are roaming for their prey. The sinner wanders, and let me metaphorically speak as the prophet spake, "ourselves, when wandering from God, are in imminent danger. If sinners did but see their danger, they would surely inquire, 'What must we do to be saved?' There are pits and snares innumerable to entrap the wandering sinner. There are miseries beyond description awaiting the unpardoned sinner. There is the night, the long dark night of death approaching. There is the curse of the law impending. There is the devil going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. There are hell and brimstone yawning. And there is but a step, and a breath a moment, perhaps, between you and death. And yet, on it may be, are careless, pleased with your wandering, calling it liberty, or life, or joy. Let me tell you with pastoral affection,—"I may God bring every wanderer among you to understand and feel—that a state of wandering from God is a state of imminent and awful danger."

And think not with some, "true, we have wandered, but we can return whenever we will. For, alas! we go astray, like sheep; by this way of resemblance also. The sheep wandered has no sense, knowledge, or skill, to find its way back. The sinner cannot find his own way back to God. Thousands wander into sin, who never come back to God. We have one and all gone astray from God. Have we one and all truly returned to God? The truth is, we must be fetched back. The good Shepherd must seek after his lost sheep until he find it. No man cometh unto the Father, but by him. We must yield to his invitations, hear his voice, allow him to carry us back in a way which our ignorance would never have discovered, and our pride would never have chosen.

You see three points of resemblance between yourself and the sheep: (1.) prone to wander, (2.) the danger of wandering, (3.) the sheep unable to find its way back. Have you, let me faithfully ask, ever been seriously to heart your sinful wanderings from God? The sheep may be innocent, while wandering, but man is not. There is guilt and iniquity, there is perverseness, and love of what doth abhor, in our wanderings from God. You have all confessed very many times with your lips, "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep." Is it with seriousness, with contrition, with self-reproach, that you make this humbling confession? Is it with faith in the good Shepherd, with prayer for his restoring grace, and gratitude for his redeeming love in giving his life for the sheep? If so, we may address you in the encouraging words of St. Peter, "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."—From Sermons on Isaiah liii. by the Rev. John Hambleton, M. A., Boston.

WISDOM AND SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING.

COLOSSIANS, i. 9. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."
Spiritual understanding stands opposed to the carnal efforts of the merely rational powers however acute—it is the result of the light of the Holy Spirit shining upon the heart by means of the written word and prayer. It distinguishes false from true claims, specious errors from solid truth, plausible and interested schemes for promoting the glory of Christ, from sound and scriptural labours to that end. By wisdom and spiritual understanding the Christians at Colossae would be led to "distinguish things that differ;" to detect the sophistry of new teachers; to discern the dangerous bearings of ingenious but seducing systems; to keep close to the letter and spirit of Scripture; to look upon the whole compass of truth and all the methods of God's dispensations, before they committed themselves to any new opinion; to use every word of divine revelation for the purposes, and in

Psalm c. 3. † Ps. xix. 12. † I Pet. v. 8.
John xiv. 6. † I Pet. ii. 25.

the proportion, and according to the order, and in the spirit, of the divinely inspired record.

In this view, next to a devout and evangelical ministry (for the want of which nothing can compensate) a learned ministry is of great moment. Principles of sound logic imbibed; a mind trained and exercised to reasoning by the exact sciences; a thorough knowledge of the languages from which and into which the Bible is translated; the rules of the grammatical interpretation of human speech understood; stores of ecclesiastical history laid up in the memory; chronology, manners, and customs of the times and people referred to in the Bible, and the writings of ancient and modern divines and commentators well studied; a humble enlightened and cautious criticism, built up of all these materials: such are the ordinary means, now that miraculous inspiration has ceased, of attaining to wisdom and spiritual understanding in Scripture truth.

In this way a truly valuable and faithful ministry is received, if only there be added to all this furniture, heartfelt, personal piety, fervent prayer for divine aid, deep humility, and holy love of Christ and souls—for, without these right dispositions, a mass of undigested theology can only furnish arms for self-conceit, new inventions and sophistry, as we have seen in the case of the Schoolmen and Jesuits for so many centuries.—Expository Lectures on St. Paul's Epistle to the Colossians by the Right Rev. Daniel Wilson, D.D., Bishop of Calcutta.

PROTESTANT COLLEGE, ST. JULIAN'S, MALTA.

FAREWELL VISIT OF THE BISHOP OF JERUSALEM.

On Friday, the 11th Dec. an interesting Meeting took place at the above Institution, of the parents and friends of the young persons receiving their education there, at which the clergy of our National Church in the island assisted, to hear a farewell Address from the Bishop of Jerusalem, late Vice-Principal of the College, and now, *ex-officio*, one of the Patrons, previous to his departure for Palestine. His Lordship embarked forthwith in H. M. steam-vessel Hecla for Jaffa or Beyrout, with Mrs. Gobat, his family, and suite, the Government having placed this vessel at his disposal for that purpose. During his residence in the island since his consecration to the bishoprick, the Right Rev. Prelate has preached on several occasions, and leaves behind him a deepened conviction of his peculiar fitness for the sacred duties of the office in the Church to which he has been called; as his amiable spirit and Evangelical principles have long endeared him to a numerous circle in this island, by whom this distinguished servant of Christ is much beloved and respected.

We are most happy to state, that the school at St. Julian's has since its opening (only nine months ago), continued steadily to increase in the number of its pupils; and that the English residents on the shores of the Mediterranean are gladly embracing the opportunity of a seminary, offering in this central spot the advantages of our foundation and grammar schools in England.

Pupils, we believe, have been collected in the Institution, besides the sons of English residents in this island, from Naples, Tunis, Greece, Algiers, Syria, &c., the children of merchants, consuls, &c. and a large number will be added so soon as existing local engagements for education are dissolved.

We were happy in witnessing the Meeting of Friday last. The Address of the Right Rev. Prelate was marked throughout by that earnest perspicacity, sound judgment, and deep feeling, which characterizes Dr. Gobat as an ambassador of Christ. His reference to the fact of his coming again to the island twelve months ago, expecting to pass the remainder of his life in the midst of the family before him; (the pupils of the College) his natural indisposition to public life, and the call of Providence to his present office and work, awakened feelings in all present, and striking reflections on the mysterious way in which the great Head of the Church disposes of events and calls out his chosen instruments for labour in the vineyard of his planting.

The fixed and deep attention of the pupils to his Lordship's thoughts, as he pointed out to them the object of education as respects the intellectual and moral character; and the end in view as to temporal and spiritual things, with especial reference to the word of God as the alone sure and infallible guide of the young, (taking as the basis of his remarks the words of the Psalmist, "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way, but by taking heed thereto according to thy word,") evinced the power which a truly spiritual mind has of seizing on the profounder properties of our nature, and persuading even the listlessness of youth; leaving an impression that remains to the latest period of existence.

The Address will not be soon forgotten by the parents, pupils, or friends who had the privilege of hearing it.

The Bishop addressed a warm congratulation to the pupils, and the founders of the Institution, on the choice of his successor, called to the important office of Principal by the unanimous vote of the Council in England, and enjoying the full confidence of that body; adding the testimony of his full confidence and satisfaction in leaving the family before him in charge of his Reverend and dear brother; and, though leaving them in person, he should never cease to remember the Institution in his prayers to God; commending, in a feeling way, himself and the work to which he was called to the prayers of all, and especially of the youthful disciples of Christ before him.

The Rev. G. H. Hadfield, Principal of the College, addressed his Lordship, returning thanks; expressing his obligations for the words which had been spoken to them, which on his own part, and that of the pupils of the Institution, he could answer, would not soon be forgotten; trusting that the Divine blessing would follow the Bishop and abundantly rest upon him in his apostolic labours.

After prayers by the Rev. W. G. Tucker, of H. M. Dock-yard, the pupils of the College sang the Hymn,

How beautiful are their feet,
Who stand on Zion's hill;
Who bring salvation on their tongues,
And words of peace reveal."

Malta Times.

THE PEOPLE OF NAPLES.

The Neapolitans are a gay, laughter-loving people, very licentious, as all travellers affirm, and they themselves admit,—religious enough in their way, but caring little for what is serious, except in the form of it, and that only on some particular occasions, such as the celebration of high mass, and the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius. Pleinary indulgences, placarded on all the churches, and promised for all times and occasions, affecting the past and the future, and reaching from time into eternity, can be had by those who choose to pay for them, and submit to the requisite ceremonies; and hence their religion sits easy enough upon their conscience, and allows them all the latitude which they can desire, either for this life or the life to come.

Naples literally swarms with priests. It is said there are at least five thousand ecclesiastics of every kind; others put them at ten thousand, including the noviciates. Indeed, priests and soldiers seem to be the controlling powers of the place. The lawyers number four thousand, and are a wealthy and highly influential class, having peculiar privileges, and, in consequence of the extreme length of law-suits, holding a large portion of the real estate in their hands. The nobles are opulent, and fond of display; and the king is as complete a despot as ever sat upon the throne. But it is the priests and friars especially, which attract the attention of a traveller, for you cannot take a walk of half an hour in any of the principal streets of the city, without meeting forty or fifty of them in their peculiar costume. Multitudes of friars, in their brown gowns, and black cowls, girdled waists, and sandalled feet, may be seen gliding along the streets, particularly in the morning, and collecting from the shops and stalls their daily revenue of charity in the shape of eatables, money, and other things. Some of the priests are good-looking men. The higher ecclesiastics especially have quite a respectable appearance. A very few look ascetic. Some are evidently good-natured, easy, jolly souls, who belong rather to the race of King Cole, than of Saint Anthony; while the great mass of the lower clergy are gross looking, lazy, good for nothing fellows, who are as much lazzaroni and beggars as any of the lowest and leanest of the rabble.

But there are some good institutions in Naples, and the clergy and particularly the nuns are not without their use. Several hospitals for the poor and sick are connected with the monasteries, and something is done for the education of orphan children. A common school system of course there is none; and not one half of all the people can read or write. The ignorance of the mass is immense; and we cannot therefore expect them to be very religious or virtuous. It is a wonder, perhaps, they are not worse. One thing, at least, is in their favour; they are not intemperate. The perfection of the climate, and the vivacious character of the people, supply the place of intoxicating drinks, or they have no money to procure them. Generally speaking, they are good natured, and by no means suspicious and revengeful as they have been represented. They love music and shows, and live much in the open air. The great body of them have not, and cannot have, any just conception of what Christianity is.

"Pietro, what do you worship when you go to church?"

"San Gennaro and the holy virgin, signor!"

"And of all things in the world what do you love best?"

"To dance the Tarantola, and eat macaroni."

"Well, but you love the service of religion, don't you?"

"O yes, signor, but we poor fellows don't know much about it, and the priests, you know, manage all that."

This is about the amount of the religion of the common people. The educated classes are mostly indifferent or skeptical. But skepticism is a little inconvenient at times, and so it is often kept in the background. The Neapolitans of the *Caffe* houses, those who have seen the world, and pretend to any enlargement of mind, will sometimes talk freely with strangers, of the corruptions of their government and religion, but much of all this is mere smoke, and comes to nothing. To hear some of them, you would think they were on the eve of a revolution, but it is *vox et profanae nihil*, breath, and breath only. Some of the priests are doubtless intelligent, some, I hope, are pious; but a large proportion of them know little except their breviary; and for my part I would rather take my chance of heaven with the lazzaroni, than with the priests. But another is their Judge, not I; to their own Master they stand or fall; and we leave them to Him "who knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust."

One newspaper only is published in Naples, a poor looking quarto, subject exclusively to the control and censorship of the government. A single university, not largely attended, is endowed by the State, and exerts but little influence. The Jesuits have two colleges: of course mechanical affairs, fitted only to make the mind of a willing pupil *quoad baculum*, as a staff, in the hand of another, to use the words of their founder, Ignatius Loyola. How, then, can freedom,—how can religion flourish in such a city, or in such a state? But, among the desolate scoria of Mount Vesuvius, you see spots of green herbage, and a few solitary flowers, so, doubtless, there are pious, noble-hearted and beautiful characters, amid the corrupt and superstitious elements of Neapolitan society. Everywhere, under Christian influences, more or less perfect, God has his chosen ones; and everywhere, therefore, we ought to cherish a spirit of charity and hope.—*Family Visitor*.

ONE WAY OF SPENDING RELIEF-MONEY.

From Correspondence of "Evangelical Christendom."

A scandalous affair, which is not yet ended, has been brought to light by some of the journals. The inhabitants of the village of Monville, near Rouen, Normandy, were overwhelmed, about two years back, by a great catastrophe. Several houses were

destroyed, and a crowd of poor creatures were left without homes or the means of subsistence. A public subscription was got up for their relief. Now of the amount thus collected, the sum of 10,400 francs (upwards of £400) was placed in the hands of the Episcopal Chapter of Paris. You doubtless suppose that these priests hastened to distribute this money to the inhabitants of Monville. This was, as we thought, an inviolable duty; because what is given to the poor, belongs to the poor. You are mistaken: the Popish clergy sometimes understand the principles of morality after another fashion. The archbishop and the *cures* of Paris allowed the money to remain in their chests for more than twelve months. And now they have deliberated, and resolved that "half the sum shall be devoted to the saying of masses for those who died by the catastrophe!"

What do you say, gentlemen, to such a proceeding as this? This money—money which was sacred—money which was destined to relieve the sufferings of the unfortunate—money which had been solicited on behalf of the distressed; this money the priests quietly lay their hands upon, declaring that they will employ it in saying masses for the dead. This is no invention or exaggeration. The minutes of the Chapter, drawn up by these very priests, have been published, and the affair has been referred to the decision of Government. Happily, the indignation of public opinion will prevent this act of fraud and spoliation from being tully consummated. It is not possible for the cabinet to consent to become an accomplice in such an iniquitous conduct.

THE FAMINE.

Appeal on behalf of Ireland, by the Rev. Hugh McNeill, to the Merchants, Bankers, Gentry, and Trading Classes of the Town of Liverpool.

[After quoting the testimony of the Dean of Cork, and the Rector of a parish in the South of Ireland, he concludes thus:—]

These are not exceptions, I grieve to say, but rather specimens, of what has pleased God, in his mysterious visitation, to inflict upon our unhappy country. Be not impatient under the distressing reiteration of Ireland's miseries. Do not look upon her as a stranger—even yet as a stranger, a troublesome stranger, if you will—you cannot as Christians listen to the history of her wretchedness with unmoved apathy; but rather receive her as a sister, an unhappy sister, whose sorrows should excite the sympathies of her brethren, and whose wants should animate their self-denying efforts to procure for her without delay the needful measure of relief.

Say not the Government should do something more. I know it, but men are starving to death!

Say not landlords should interfere, each for his own tenants. I know it, but many, very many of them have not the means, and in the meantime men are starving to death!

Say not the clergy should do it. They are doing to their power; yea, and above their power—still men are starving to death!

Say not you are feeling the poor Irish in your own streets, and must pay the enormously increased poor-rates incurred thereby. I know it; but men, women, and children are starving to death!

This is a fact before which an army of excuses must take to flight. They are perishing of hunger; and you have enough and to spare. Look round your tables; see your precious little ones in all the rosy brilliancy of health and strength; hear them asking papa for more bread; take up your loaf upon leaf, and help them with a ready hand and happy heart. Help yourself also, till craving nature is fully satisfied; and when you lay down your knife and fork, remember, men, women, and children, are starving to death!

Men and brethren, meet together and form a Committee of competent men of business, to send food or money, or both; or, if you deem one Committee in the town sufficient, send your contributions, promptly and liberally, to our treasurer, Mr. H. J. Webster, Ramford-street.

On inquiry, we find in many districts local agencies at work, such as that described in the above-cited letter. Our plan is to enable such men to continue and increase their supplies; to keep their barrel of meal from wasting, and their cruise of oil from being empty, till the season of famine shall be mercifully overpast.

I need not add that all our friends so occupied on the spot, and so aided by us, feed men, as men, without reference to creed or party. There is a time for everything—a time for fair and earnest argumentation between truth and falsehood, when men are all well fed; and a time for feeding without any argument, when men are in want.

Again entreating you to allow the dire necessities of the case to excuse the unprecedented boldness of my intrusion upon you, I have the honour to be, men and brethren, your faithful servant in the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

HUGH McNEILL.

Aigburth, Jan. 5, 1847.

UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF GIFTS.

A tale from the German.

John, the wise teacher, gazed with delight, at harvest-time, upon the busy stir and bustle, the reaping and gathering upon the fertile fields, and he spoke thus to his scholars:

The harvest is like a festive meal which a father prepared for his children. And on the day of the banquet, he gave to some of them rich gifts, and he gave them so abundantly, and with such love and kindness, that tears of gratitude and of joy came into their eyes. But some of them he sent away without gifts. The poor children departed, and tears came into their eyes also; yet they were not tears of joy, but such as are called forth by grief.

Their happier brothers saw this, and were greatly moved, and with one voice they cried, "No! no! it cannot be the will of our kind father that you should mourn on the day when we rejoice in his goodness. And how can we rejoice so long as we see you mourn? Come, and receive your share of the blessings which our kind father has given us!"

Thus they spoke, and gave of their gifts with liberal hands, and the faces of those who received grew cheerful, and still more cheerful grew the faces of those who gave.

The father then looked with delight upon them all, and said, "Blessed be ye, my children! Ye have divined my thoughts, and acted after the desire of my heart. Think not that I had forgotten one among you. How could I do this? Ye are all my children! But I thus distributed my gifts with purpose, that the bonds of fraternal love might be strengthened by mutual giving and receiving, and that some among you might be enabled by charity and the others by gratitude. Ye have divined my thoughts, and acted after the desire of my heart, therefore blessed be ye, my children!"—*Mrs. St. Simon, in the Mother's Magazine.*

An English Story, written from recollection—strict accuracy cannot be vouched for.

The Rev. Samuel Wilks, a well known dissenting Minister in London, now dead, was called upon by a very poor labouring man under his pastoral charge, who had a large family already and who informed him that his wife had that morning been delivered of one more child—"and," said poor John, "the bread is done, and I have no money to buy more." Mr. Wilks was disposed to try how the man would bear a disappointment; so he said to him with a careless air: "Well, John, I have always heard that when God sends a mouth, he also sends bread to put into it, and I suppose you will find it so." "Yes, Sir," answered John with perfect good temper, "I am sure of it; and as God has sent the mouth to me, I am come to see whether he hasn't sent you the bread to put into it." And John found that God had done so.

A MOTHER'S CLAIM TO PERVERT HER CHILDREN'S FAITH.—In the Matter of the Petition of Arabella Frances North and Others.—*Habeas Corpus*.

This case was recently argued in London, before Vice-Chancellor, Sir Knight Bruce, upon a motion for the return to a writ of habeas corpus to bring up the bodies of the four infant children of Mrs. Dudley North, the widow of Capt. North, formerly in the East India Company's service, but who died in January 1845, and upon a petition presented by the children by their aunt, as next friend, for the appointment of a proper person or persons as a guardian or guardians.

It appeared from the petition that Capt. North married his present widow in Australia, where three of the children were born, the youngest being born in Oct. 1842, after the return of the family to England. The petition stated that the father was a Protestant, as also was his wife, and until lately they and the children had attended a Protestant place of worship; that from the time that Arabella Frances, Sarah, and Dudley were of age to be taken to any place of worship they were accustomed to be taken to a place of Protestant, and not of Roman Catholic worship, to which also they had been taken latterly by the grandmother and aunt; that the four children had been taught to read the Bible, and the Catechism of the Church of England; that the children had been removed, upon the complaint of Mrs. Wilson and the aunt, they having considered that as the mother had recently become a convert to the Roman Catholic religion, and associated with persons of that persuasion, she was not a proper person to have the custody of the children. It was stated that the mother was desirous of having the custody of them, and bringing them up in the Roman Catholic faith, whilst the grandmother and aunt were desirous of having them, and bringing them up according to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, and of being appointed their guardians, maintaining them and educating them at their own expense.

The petition prayed a reference to the Master to approve of some proper person or persons as guardian or guardians. On the other side, Mrs. North, the mother, made affidavits which, in substance, stated that she and her late husband were nominal members of the Church of England, but that he was of latitudinarian tenets, and irregular or infrequent in his attendance at church, as was also she herself; that she was not a zealous member of the Church of England, and from religious scruples, never received the sacrament according to the rites of that Church. Mrs. North proceeded to say, in her affidavit "I further say that I firmly believe that, at the time of my said husband's death, he was not a Protestant, but what is called a catechumen, that is to say, an uninitiated and an unrecognised Roman Catholic; and further, that but for his untimely death, produced by the accident aforesaid, he would have been reconciled to, and would have been a reconciled member of the Roman Catholic Church."—The Vice-Chancellor gave judgment. Upon the petition the registrar will let the usual order go, according to the ordinary form of the court, and with the ordinary directions and provisions when an order is made, upon a petition to appoint a guardian or guardians.

I must, upon the evidence, take it, that the father did not become a Roman Catholic, but that, either from curiosity, or latitudinarian notions, or otherwise, he did for some weeks attend the place of Roman Catholic worship, without changing his religion. I must assume that, having been bred a Protestant, he continued a Protestant to the end of his life. My opinion is, that unless this case can be varied by subsequent evidence, it is the duty of the Court to direct that these children should be brought up as members of the Church of England. That is an obligation, however, which does not dispose of the interim custody. Recollecting, however, that Mrs. North, of whom I desire to speak as I feel, and as every one in this case has spoken, and as every one in this case appears to feel, with the highest possible respect, I cannot avoid recollecting that she is a recent convert. Speaking again of her most respectfully, I cannot avoid being strongly impressed with the opinion that, consistently with the most conscientious, kind, and best motives upon her part, the children, if placed with her, may receive an inclination and a disposition towards that religion in which, in my view of the duty of the Court, it is the duty of the Court to see that they should not be educated. His Honor then directed that, in the interval, Mrs. Wilson (Mrs. Wilson consenting), Mr. Frederick North, and Miss Arabella North, should have the care of the four children, and to reside at Hastings, where the mother is to have access daily for two hours, in the presence of one of these parties, and wholly abstaining from religious conversation. The return to the habeas corpus to be enlarged, with liberty to any of the relatives to be proposed as guardian, and to the mother to propose herself either with them, or as sole guardian, if she should be so advised.