

The Christian.

ST JOHN, N. B., MAY, 1889.

A SAD NECESSITY.

This is a world of strife. No truth can make headway without a constant warfare with other things that claim to be truth. No man can defend what he believes to be true without constant strife with those who contend that something else is true. Those who are the friends of truth by profession are constantly at war among themselves, for no man is by profession the friend of error, and all errors are propagated under the name of truth. Even the real friends of truth cannot live altogether at peace, for differences will arise, and differences produce conflict. While this conflict goes on the real enemies of truth stand off and cry out, Agree among yourselves before you talk to us.

This is nothing new under the sun. It has always been so, and Jesus foretold it ere He laid the foundation of His church. He said to His earliest disciples, "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth. I come not to send peace but a sword." It was His expectation, and must we not say for this very reason, it was His intention, that His disciples should live and propagate His cause, the cause of love and peace in the midst of constant strife? This was His own history. Wherever He went the words of peace and love which fell so richly from His lips were intermingled with those quick and flashing exposures of hypocrisy and false teaching which made Him hateful in the eyes of the Pharisees, and made His own disciples at times approach Him with the gentle admonition, "Know you not that they were offended at this saying?" There was nothing pleasant to the heart of Jesus in all this; neither was there anything attractive in it to the mere looker on. The heathen could have stood by and said, You, Jews, who profess to know a better God than those we worship, must be at peace among yourselves, and show us a more peaceful and loving example, ere you ask us to accept your religion. Only those who studied closely and impartially the respective positions and conduct of the parties, and were well informed in the Jewish Scriptures, could decide that Jesus was right and the Pharisees wrong. To all others the strife appeared but an unintelligible wrangle.

The same was true of the apostles in their conflicts, first, with the Jewish leaders; second, with false teachers within the church; and third, with one another. Lysias, the heathen chiliarch, acted as arbiter between the Jews and their brother Paul, and after witnessing two interviews between them learned no more than that Paul was not worthy of death or of bonds. The more distinguished and intelligent Festus, when he heard the same issues discussed, could see no more between them than "questions about their demon-worship;" and when he sent Paul to Rome knew not what to say were the charges laid against him. When Paul and Barnabas on one side, and teachers from Jerusalem on the other, disputed in Antioch about the circumcision of the Gentiles, the brethren could not decide between them, and when similar teachers followed him to Galatia, the disciples who had once received him like an angel of God, and would, if possible, have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him, were turned away from him and counted him almost an enemy. In Corinth, too, where "in weakness and in fear and in much trembling" he had planted a church, men arose, claiming to be apostles and denying that he was one, placing the multitude in doubt whom to believe and whom to obey. Besides all this, and what was still more perplexing than all this, an open conflict between Paul and Peter occurs at Antioch, where the latter is publicly charged with dissimula-

tion; and in the same city so severe a quarrel breaks out between two bosom friends and fellow laborers, that Paul and Barnabas, who had hazarded their lives together, are parted asunder. These all were sad and painful incidents. They were the gashings of that sword which Jesus came to send on the earth, the scorching of the fire He came to kindle.

The same sword is still on its mission, the same fire is still burning. The friend and defender of truth still finds himself in the midst of conflict, "fightings without and fears within." Let us not think strange, then, of the fiery trial which shall try us; but seeing that the sad necessity is laid upon us, let us study the entire example of our Master and follow Him. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Lord. If we escape without being called Beazobub, we are not like Him, we are above Him. What, then, was His example, and what the approved example of His inspired apostles? They spoke the truth with freedom, with boldness, even with sharpness. They spoke it always with freedom, varying the tone to suit the person and the occasion. Whether friend or foe stood in the way the truth was spoken. It was spoken with justice always; at times with severity, at other times with great tenderness. All the tones between these two extremes were employed, but what was spoken was always the truth. God help us to speak this way; and then, if pleasure results to ourselves and others, we will enjoy it; if pain results, we will patiently endure our part of it, and not wantonly increase the part which falls upon others. If friends, at times, can not see to do us justice, and if foes look and mock our misfortunes, we will remember the sad necessity under which we live, under which our Master lived; and for relief we will look to that blessed land where conflicts are all over, where sin and error shall never be known. There the parted paths of Barnabas and Paul will meet again, and many will meet there whose hearts and lives have been true, but whose weak judgment and weaker flesh have kept them asunder while the conflict of life was raging.—*M., in the Apostolic Times.*

Original Contributions.

"RETURN."

We see, by the April number of THE CHRISTIAN, "that our Brother McDougall has given us a loud call to 'return' to primitive faith and practice." We unite our hearts with our brother's in this earnest call. This is the great plea of the Disciples, "the return to the faith and life of the apostolic church." But while we are in full sympathy, heart and tongue, with this plea, we must not forget the fact that this cry for a "return" is more than a return in word and in tongue. It is a return in deed and in truth that we need. But while we plead for this return, we also rejoice, and doubtless our brother rejoices with us, over the gratifying progress we are making toward primitive Christianity. When we consider the fact that within the last decade the Disciples have sent over forty missionaries into foreign fields, we see at once that we are rapidly returning to primitive practice. The progress of mission work in our own provinces shows us that we are not slow in this march towards the old landmarks of faith and practice. It has been but a few years ago when little or no interest was taken in mission work in these provinces. Now we have nearly all our churches here manifesting quite a commendable interest in this primitive work.

Our hearts were made glad by reading in THE CHRISTIAN, not long since, the beginning of a system of mission work in Hants Co., showing clearly that they are also returning to apostolic

practice. We sincerely hope that it may not be only a beginning, but that the primitive spirit of mission may so actuate them that all the county may hear, see and feel the power of the gospel.

This progress in mission will conflict with the idea of stagnation. We are compelled to admit the progress of the cause in the provinces, hence, impossible to be "stagnation." Our personal observation must be very limited to see stagnation in our provinces now. Instead of "no increase in the churches the last decade" we have had the increase of three new churches and at least eight new meeting-houses. There has been over two hundred additions in Digby Co., N. S., and at least two hundred more in Queens Co. In Charlotte Co., N. B., the cause has been wonderfully prospered, four new houses erected and hundreds added to the churches. Bro. Gates reported one hundred baptisms in Charlotte Co. in one year. If this is stagnation we hope we may keep on stagnating. Let us look a moment at the work of the preachers and ascertain how far they are "housed up in the home churches." There is Bro. E. C. Ford in Kings Co., he has a radius of twelve or fifteen miles. He preaches in five or six different communities. He will preach in three different localities every Lord's day. Last Lord's day he attended church in Port Williams, and after the "Lord's supper" he drove ten miles and held a meeting, then came back home and attended to baptism and then attended meeting again in the evening. This is about the way he is "housed up" in his home church. In his visiting he is "housed up" about the same way. He made six visits one day which necessitated twenty miles of travel. It is gratifying to see what a "stagnation" he is creating in this county. The brethren are coming up to the work nobly. A home for the preacher is being finished. Many who were wandering away are getting back to their places, and souls are being saved, etc. If our brother's health and strength permit, we shall see a strong church in this beautiful valley. We notice the same kind of "stagnation" in Queens Co. Since the preacher's residence there, one hundred and fifty have been added to the church in Milton and a church organized in Summerville. Much of the time the preacher has labored in nine different places in the county. Besides this he has labored, more or less, in very many places in the two provinces. And what shall we say of our preacher in N. B.? Where hasn't he been? It would be hard to measure the amount of labor he has done in N. B. and N. S. outside of his home church. The fact that the cause in the City of St. John has been wonderfully blessed is apparent to all.

That the cause in our provinces is stagnating or that our preachers are "housed up" in their "home churches" is the last thing any observer would ever suppose. While we are not doing as much as we would desire and as we hope to do; yet we are not idle. The cause we love is progressing. Churches are being established, souls are being saved. Our young men are coming up to the work. Only very recently our two provinces have given nine young men to the ministry of the gospel. Our mission work is increasing in interest, and has come to stay. While we earnestly pray for still greater success we will thankfully acknowledge the hand of the Lord in the good work that is being accomplished among us.

H. MURRAY.

THE Foreign Missionary Society of the church of Christ was organized in Louisville, Ky., 1875. To-day it has missionaries in Scandinavia, England, Turkey, India, China and Japan. It has 50 missionaries in all—24 males, 12 females and 23 native helpers. The whole number of conversions from the first is 4,316. The number last year was 798. Schools have been opened in Turkey, India, China and Japan.