

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES.

History of the City of New York.

New York: A. S. Barnes & Co.

Part I., Vol. II., of this popular, illustrated work, deals with the history of the great commercial capital of the United States in its connection with the earlier events of the Revolution. Mrs. Lamb's animated paragraphs impart additional attractiveness to a record intrinsically interesting.

The Preacher and Homiletic Monthly.

New York: The Religious Newspaper Agency.

Among the preachers or writers whose names appear in the November number of the "Preacher and Homiletic Monthly," we find Revs. Dr. Peabody, of Harvard University; Dr. S. A. Ort, Lutheran; Dr. S. V. Leech, Methodist Episcopal; G. F. Pentecost, Baptist; Dr. John Hall, Presbyterian; Dr. J. M. Manning, Congregationalist; Dr. E. A. Washburne, Episcopal; G. M. Peters, Baptist; F. E. Clark, Methodist Episcopal; Dr. Noah Schenck, Episcopal; Dr. Deems, Dr. Storrs, etc. There is a synopsis of a sermon by the Rev. Joseph Elliott of Cannington, Ontario. The title of it is "Wealth in Both Worlds," and the text, Genesis xiii. 2. "And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold." It is well worthy of a place even in such a publication as this. The Rev. W. M. Taylor, D.D., continues his papers on "Expository Preaching." The fifth of the series appears in the present number. The branch of the subject dealt with is "The Prosecution of a Series of Discourses on some Book or Character."

The Princeton Review.

New York: 37 Park Row.

In the November number of the "Princeton Review," President Porter of Yale appears as the writer of a lengthy criticism of Professor Huxley's Exposition of Hume's Philosophy, in the course of which he convicts Huxley of inconsistency in giving any place to Metaphysics in his thoughts or in his writings while holding the opinion that Physical Science covers the whole ground of possible knowledge; of ignorance of his subject-matter; of having, at best, but a very superficial acquaintance with the writings of those metaphysicians whose theories he undertakes to discuss—even with the writings of Hume; and of performing certain feats requiring a mental dexterity analogous to the manual kind practised in "thimble-rigging." The second article is by Professor Goldwin Smith. Its title is "University Questions in England." That is all the reader bargains for; but the Professor generously throws in a considerable quantity of information on a variety of other subjects, such as New York walking matches, Pittsburg labour riots, and a large prospective standing army for the United States. After Mr. Smith's article comes some more Philosophy—there is, even for the "Princeton," an unusual quantity of Philosophy in the present number. This time the scientific martyr is Professor Tyndall; and it is Mark Hopkins, ex-President of Williams College, that piles the fagots and applies the torch. The matter in dispute is "The Origin of the Cosmos." Having finished the ex-President's paper, the reader is at liberty to relax his over-strained intellect, and, coming down to every-day matters, take, with the help of Mr. R. P. Porter, of Chicago, "A Comparative View of American Progress." This article contains an accumulation of statistics very valuable to the political economist. In the next article Dr. Atwater of Princeton brings us back to Philosophy and controversy. He heads his paper "The *A Priori* Novum Organum of Christianity;" and it is written in opposition to an article contributed to the July number of the "Princeton" by Rev. W. J. Irons, D.D., Prebendary of St. Paul's, London, which he sums up as "a strange complex of Kantian *a priori* Rationalism, Hierarchical Sacramentarianism, Anglo-Catholicism, pre-Reformation Christianity resting on tradition, historic creeds, and the Scriptures—all being kept in due subordination to the *a priori*." The currency question is then discussed, under the heading "Bimetallism," by Professor Sumner of Yale. Principal Dawson of Montreal contributes an article on "Points of Contact between Science and Religion"—a subject for the treatment of which he is eminently qualified. The number closes with a masterly critique on Herbert Spencer's "Data of Ethics," by Dr. McCosh. We cannot name another periodical that can present, in one number, so much that is calculated to command the attention of thoughtful persons.

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

LESSON XLVIII.

Nov. 30, 1879. } THE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCHES { Rev. iii. 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."—Rev. iii. 11.

HOME STUDIES.

M. Rev. iii. 1-6.....Sardis.
T. Rev. iii. 7-13.....Philadelphia.
W. Rev. iii. 14-22.....Laodicea.
Th. Matt. xxiv. 42-51.....Watchfulness enjoined.
F. Matt. x. 32-42.....Confessing Christ.
S. Rev. vii. 1-17.....White robes.
Sab. Rev. xix. 1-16.....The righteousness of saints.

HELPS TO STUDY.

In the last lesson we found that John was commissioned to write this Book of Revelation, including a message to each of the seven churches of Asia, situated respectively at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

These messages are contained in the second and third chapters. They describe the spiritual condition of the various churches and convey to them admonitions, rebukes, warnings, threatenings, commendations, encouragements and promises, suitable and profitable to them and to other churches and individuals.

Our lesson is limited to two of these messages—that to Sardis and that to Philadelphia—but the endeavours of teachers and scholars to understand these two will be much aided by a careful study of the whole seven.

There are four things common to the seven messages:—

1. Each message is introduced by a description of the Sender—the Saviour—specifying some of His characteristics.
2. Seven times—once in each message—are the words repeated, "I know thy works."
3. Seven times also, we meet with the words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," rendering each particular message applicable to all churches, and to all individuals, situated in circumstances similar to those of the church primarily addressed.
4. Seven promises, or clusters of promises—one in each message—are made to "him that overcometh."

The two messages which form the subject of our present lesson present a striking contrast, suggesting the following division: (1) *Nominal Christianity—Profession without Practice*, (2) *Real Christianity—Profession and Practice*.

1. **NOMINAL CHRISTIANITY—PROFESSION WITHOUT PRACTICE.** Vers 1-6. The stern rebuke contained in the message to the Church of Sardis is prompted, not by hatred or ill-will, but by love. To the Church of the Laodiceans, rebuked with at least equal severity, the Saviour says (ver. 19), "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten."

Even the false professor of religion, instead of being stripped of his borrowed garb and told to be a worldling in name as he is in reality, is invited to retain his profession, come to Christ, and be a Christian in reality as he is in name. The gracious invitations of the Gospel are extended even to the hypocrites, the formalists and the pharisees of Sardis and Laodicea.

And unto the angel in the church of Sardis write: Each message is addressed to the minister of the church for which it is intended, in order that he may read it to his congregation. "Angel" means messenger, and ministers are the messengers or ambassadors of Christ.

These things saith He that hath the seven Spirits of God: The language is figurative. Of course it means the one Spirit, the number seven being introduced to indicate the completeness and all-sufficiency of the powers of that Spirit. The seven stars: ministers again (See last lesson).

I know thy works: There is no harshness in the language. It is guilt that gives the sharp edge to the words. These very words, that carry condemnation to the church of Sardis, bring comfort to other churches. The world knows our profession; Christ has more than that to judge by; He knows our works—knows their true character and motive—knows whether or not they spring from living faith.

That thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead: It would seem that the church of Sardis had fallen into formalism, accepted a mere profession as sufficient qualification on the part of its members, and did not insist on their life being conformed to that profession; hence, with the exceptions referred to afterwards, its religion was vain, its works were not works of faith, its labours were not labours of love, it was spiritually dead.

There is no harm in having a name to live; the whole evil is in being dead. We ought to be Christians in name, and we ought to be Christians in reality also. No one can justify himself by saying that he makes no profession. "Consistency is in many cases not much of a jewel." There is no merit in being consistently bad.

Be watchful: a rousing command, difficult to translate without diminution of force—"become watching," or "wake up and watch."

Strengthen the things which remain: There was at least the framework of religion. That was not to be cast aside, but strengthened by faith, prayer, activity, and watchfulness over the membership. Works not perfect: not springing from faith and love—worthless.

Remember how thou hast received and heard: Perhaps the Christians of Sardis had at first received the word "with joy" (See Parable of the Sower, Luke viii. 13). Hold fast: the truth which you recall to memory. Repent: turn from your sin to God with full purpose of new obedience. I will come on thee: for the infliction of judgment. As a thief: suddenly and without further warning.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, etc. Compare 1 Kings xix. 18. In white: denoting purity—the

righteousness of Christ. For they are worthy: not in themselves, but in Christ.

He that overcometh: no matter what he may be now—saint or sinner; hypocrite or open, unabashed evil-doer; inconsistent with a good profession, or consistent with a bad profession—if, by faith in Christ he gains the victory over his sinful nature, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot, etc. The "Westminster Teacher" says, "Christ does not either say or imply here that names once entered in the 'Book of Life' will ever be actually blotted out. It is implied that they will be, if those who wear them do not get the victory over sin. But the very warning may be a part of the means by which the Lord makes the victory sure and the loss impossible."

II. **REAL CHRISTIANITY—PROFESSION AND PRACTICE.**—vers. 7-13. Our lesson, after dealing with the message to one of the worst of the seven churches, now brings before us the message to one of the best. Of the seven, the church of Smyrna and that of Philadelphia only are spoken of with entire approval. To the latter Christ reveals Himself as

He that is Holy, He that is true: In claiming absolute holiness, Christ proclaims Himself to be God. King of David. Christ is the promised Messiah—the King that was to occupy the throne of David forever. Openeth and no man shutteth, etc. (See last lesson).

I know thy works: Terrible words to the people of Sardis, but a message of joy to those of Philadelphia. Whoever may mistake motives, Christ cannot do so.

An open door: a prospect of usefulness and extension. Thou hast a little strength: more literally *thou hast little strength*—weak in numbers and resources. The Church is commended, not for being strong, but for making a good use of the little strength it had. Hast kept my word, etc.: proved faithful even in weakness.

Synagogue of Satan: The adversary has his own places of worship and his worshippers in this world. The name specially applies to anti-Christian organizations. Say they are Jews but are not: not of Israel in the spiritual sense, though Jews by birth. Worship before Thy feet: The church would be enabled to wield such an influence that opposers would be compelled to acknowledge that the Lord was with her.

I come quickly: As used here the word does not necessarily mean *soon*, but *suddenly*—without warning.

Him that overcometh will. I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: Are we Sabbath school scholars, teachers, writers of lessons, etc., to be like the scaffolding or temporary supports of a building in course of erection, destined to be removed before the building is completed; or are we to be pillars that "shall go no more out"? If Noah employed any carpenters to assist himself and his three sons in building the ark, theirs was a peculiarly sad fate.

CHALMERS ON THE MESSAGES TO SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA AND LAODICEA.

The following is from Dr. Chalmers' "Sabbath Scripture Readings," written shortly before his death. He did not intend these private meditations for publication. They were found among his papers and published after his death.

"My God, how descriptive this, regarding the Church of Sardis, is of myself—a name to live, while I am well-nigh if not altogether dead. O, my God, strengthen for me, or rather strengthen by me, the things which remain—give me to be more watchful than hitherto. My works are not perfect, and to instance but in one thing, has patience had its perfect work in me? I would renew, O God, my repentance before Thee, and at the same time hold fast my faith, or the rejoicing and confidence of my hope, lest sudden destruction come upon me. Give me to confess Christ before men, that He may confess me before the Father and his angels. Give me, O Lord, of the blessings and the promises which Thou here holdest forth to the Church of Philadelphia. Mine is indeed but a little strength if any at all. I have adversaries, and I pray for charity towards them. In as far as I am right and they are wrong, give them to see, and if Thou thinkest meet, to acknowledge their error, I will not pray for their humiliation, but for their amendment. Bring forth my judgment unto light, and my righteousness as the noon-day. Save me from the trials that are too heavy for me, and give me to overcome. Prepare me for the land of blessedness and everlasting peace—where enemies cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. And my closing prayer from these verses, my prayer to Him who is unchangeable and true—to Him who is not the beginning but the beginner, not the first created but the Creator, not the first originated but the Originator—for though to Him is ascribed a Sonship, His is an Eternal Sonship, and without Him was not anything made that was made—my prayer to this high and holy One is that He would save me, both from the character which is here denounced, and the curse which, if not reformed, will most assuredly be fulfilled upon it. Save me, save, O God, from the lukewarmness of the Church of Laodicea. I have a zeal about things pertaining to God, but where is my zeal for God Himself? I may be a zealous asserter of the doctrine that has come out of His mouth; but where is my zeal for God as a being—for the living God? And I am actuated by the strong conviction that nothing will make society right but a diffused Christianity—yet where, alas! is my warm and zealous affection for human souls, or for Christ, the real personal Christ, who is the alone Saviour? It may be that I am not cold; but assuredly I am not hot. My only comfort is that I do not say of myself, and most assuredly do not feel of myself, that I am rich and have need of nothing. I will cry unto Jesus. May the chastenings that are now upon me yield this peaceable fruit, ever taking unto Him both as the Lord my righteousness, and the Lord my strength—my righteousness wherewith to be clothed, my wisdom also by which I may see. O the blessed universality of the saying—If any man open. Lord, I would open my heart, and welcome with outstretched arm Thine admittance there. Enter into convivial friendship with me, O Christ. Give me to overcome as Thou hast overcome. And let all these warnings be not only heard by the ear but sink deep into the heart. Amen, amen."