

## Our Contributors.

### Acts 26 : 18.

"Should anyone ask, 'What does Christianity want to do in the world?' point the enquirer to the twenty-sixth chapter of Acts and at the eighteenth verse. That is our answer. We do not attempt to amend it; we simply accept it just as it stands there.

So wrote the late Joseph Parker and his commentary on that verse is well worth reading. That verse is an epitome of all Paul preached and wrote. It was a clear cut comprehensive message that the apostle received when stricken down by the heavenly light at the gate of Damascus. No great Christian doctrine is omitted. Man ruined by sin, in a state of darkness, under the power of Satan, redeemed, forgiven, sanctified, made ready for service, and an heir of heavenly glory. The great agency in the redemptive work, is, faith in a personal Redeemer Jesus Christ.

Well might Parker add concerning the words of this verse, "Write them at the head of every sermon; write them with gold brightened with diamonds around every pulpit."

### The Ministry of Song.

BY UNCLE WILL

"They chant their artless notes in simple guise  
"They tune their hearts by far the noblest aim :  
"Cotters Saturday Night"—Burns.

There is truly a ministry in song, a help and inspiration to those who sing with the understanding. The experience of Augustine has been that of many hearts. He is referring to the Ambrosian Psalmody of the fourth century. "How much" he says "did I weep at thy hymns and songs, Thou blessed Lord : Deeply moved was I by the voices of Thy softly sounding church. These voices flowed into my ears : and Thy truth melted into my heart. Thus my affections were enkindled, and my tears ran down, and it was well with me then.

No one would accept Dr. Milligan as a musical critic, whatever they might do as a Biblical. I remember him protesting against the singing of anthems, and again some two years ago, he stated he did not know the difference between "Auld Lang Syne" and "God Save the King".

Yet he was fain to admit at the last meeting of Synod, in his admirable address on "The best form of evening service."

That he was completely carried away a few Sabbaths ago with the simple rendering at an evening service in Old St. Andrews of "There were ninety and nine that safely lay" he said, "It was with considerable effort he pulled himself together to begin the service. It affected him so much that he expressed the wish that the solo had been sung at the end instead of the beginning of the service. He did not mention which musical setting was used on that occasion but I must express my preference for the second tune by A. Cecil Falconer. Yet we are indebted to Mr. Sankey for making the hymn famous. In Scotland in 1874 while on a train on his way to the Highlands, together with

Mr. Moody to address a meeting largely comprised of shepherds, looking over the hymn book in search of something suitable, could find nothing. Taking up a paper, *The Christian Age*, that had been left by some former passenger, and glancing over it idly he came upon "The Ninety and Nine" copied out of *The Children's Hour*, and that evening sang it, the tune coming to him as he went on. Its beauty is mainly owing to the simple chant form of the composition. One of the most thrilling incidents connected with its use, is the effect its distant singing produced on the heart of an impenitent man. Clear and sweet the song rose up : "I go to the desert to find my sheep," and the man on the hillside heard and was saved.

The author of this beautiful hymn, Elizabeth Cecilia Douglass Clephane, daughter of Andrew Clephane, Sheriff of Fife was born at Melrose in the year 1830, and died in the year 1890.

As a child she was fond of poetry, and exercised her imaginations in relating stories to her sister of "moving incident by flood and field."

The Editress of a child's magazine *The Children's Hour* having asked her for a contribution, she wrote two or three hymns that she thought would suit. This was published under the title of "The Lost Sheep." It was republished along with seven others in the *Family Treasury* 1872-4. Then edited by the Rev. William Arnott, under the title "*Breathings on the Border.*"

### A Few Pertinent Reflections.

(The Editor DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN.)

Sir,—How many "tons of talk" there has been in the past in discussing "how to reach the masses"? And nearly all of it ends in talk. It is said that about the only time that Joseph Livesey got excited was when he came across the report of a meeting to discuss "how to reach the masses." He used to exclaim, "How to reach them! Why, the question is absurd. Go to them; there is nothing in the world to hinder any one reaching them. I have reached them every Sunday for above half a century. I have not far to walk before I reach them, and every one that is willing may reach them at once without let or hindrance, and every visitor will be welcomed." Existing temperance societies very, very largely neglect visiting, indeed in most of them visitation has vanished entirely! Mr. Livesey wrote : "It is a question for temperance people to consider seriously how greatly behind they are in love, compassion, pity, kindness, and self-denial their great Teacher, who went about doing good. We want more practical religion, more feeling for the sufferings of others. We should seek out and save, if possible, those who appear to be lost. The 'want of sympathy,' said a late Judge, 'is the sin of this age.' The temperance people should be pioneers in this work of universal charity. There should not be a drinking man untaught, uncared for, unlooked after, nor a drinker's house unvisited." Speaking of the results of visitation at Preston, one writer says : "Through it hundreds of poor people were led to change their course of

life and become Christians." The late Rev. John Clay, chaplain of Preston Gaol, wrote : "The efforts of these early reformers have been the means of converting the ignorant and drunken infidel into a serious and sober Christian."

But besides the visiting by temperance associations there ought to be extensive visiting by every religious denomination. I hope they are awakening to their need of this and their sad shortcomings as regards it. A recent editorial article in the "Christian World" includes the following : "It is indeed a welcome sign of the times that Non-conformist ministers are realising perhaps more than ever before how much they lose if they neglect visiting. Strong as Non-conformity has been made by its preaching, it would be altogether stronger if it made fuller use of its pastoral opportunities." Now, what hinders visitation by the various religious bodies? As regards the pastor it is said to be the terrible time he takes in his "study," in what "the man in the street" designates "sermon making!" He might have added, "and life shortening," for I verily believe many good men have shortened their lives by being shut up in their "study," while they might have lengthened their days if they had varied their work by intervals of visiting. In "Great Thoughts" in a review of a work, "The Gospel and Social Questions," by the Rev. Ambrose Shepherd, I find the following : "Preaching has become the slavery of the average ministry, and one serious weakness of our churches. We have far too much preaching for the sake of preaching. Had we but half of what we have, and that half of what it should be, the pulpit would become the most powerful throne in Christendom."

Many of the churches of to day are merely meeting places, while all about them in the towns and cities the ignorant and the suffering and sinning are most grievously neglected. Let the reader read verses 36 to 41 of the 25th chapter of Matthew, and he will have some fearfully serious thoughts as to neglect of visitation. I specially commend his attention to verse 40 : "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these, ye my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto Me. Even the least."—Yours, &c.,

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

### Is This a Materialistic Age ?

From some points of view it looks as though it were. Material progress is the dominant fact of our time. Discovery and invention, industry and commerce, capital and combination, are exploiting the material resources of the planet with wonderful results. Wealth is being created in shining heaps, and a magnificent material civilization is being built up, compared with which the barbaric splendors of ancient empires are thrown into the shade. Comforts and luxuries are multiplying beyond any dream of former days. Much of our life is nursed in ease and softness. Along with this material growth has grown the passion for wealth. Money has become a popular idol or god, and many men serve it as slaves, or consecrate to it their very souls. Life is thought by many to consist in the abundance of things that a man possesses. Out of this rich soil of wealth grows a harvest of fashion and pleasure and pride. The whirl of social excitement draws in to its vortex multitudes who have little other thought than what they shall wear and how they shall please or be pleased. As one looks on the swift stream of