

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

EUROPE'S FIRST CONVERT.

About seven or eight years after Barnabas and Saul were sent forth as missionaries by the Holy Spirit from the church at Antioch, the latter carried the gospel into Europe. Many were the obstacles he met in his onward march. His burning anxiety to preach Jesus in Jerusalem and tell his own conversion and the love of Christ to his countrymen was not gratified. He was now even forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, and when he attempted to go into Bithynia the Spirit suffered him not. What was he to do? Every door seemed closed against him. But he found by experience that as high as heaven is above the earth, so are God's ways above his ways. His will and wisdom and ways failed that God's might triumph. His defeat in Asia was but a prelude to his victories in Europe, where he was to light the lamp of life, never to go out till it shone into every corner of the earth.

Neither time nor space permits a notice of the interesting history of Paul's call to preach the gospel in Europe. We hope the reader will carefully consider it. Its truth is stranger and infinitely grander than fiction.

We find the apostle in Philippi. Not even a synagogue is there in which to speak to the Jews on the Sabbath, but on this the only day in which Jews meet, he speaks to a small company of women by the river side. The men of the place were somewhere else, but Paul and his companions spoke to the women. Lydia, a merchant lady, heard them, and the Lord opened her heart so that she attended to the things spoken. It does not say that the Lord opened her heart before she heard the gospel, or that he inclined her heart to give the apostle a hearing, but he opened her heart so that she did some thing or things. Although words without knowledge have been multiplied to make her case a mystery, nothing can be plainer than the simple narrative. While Paul was preaching the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every believer, the Lord opened her heart so that she attended to the things, or did what Jesus requires every believer to do when he said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Attending to the things which were spoken of Paul is coupled with "when she was baptized and her household, she besought us to come into her house," etc. This makes plain the things which she attended to. She first gave herself to the Lord and then to the ministering of the saints and every good work. The Lord opens the heart of every one who honestly and earnestly hears the sweet, sweet story of Christ and him crucified. Lydia was one of these. Preachers should be earnest in prayer for God to open the hearts of their hearers and thankful when it is done.

A woman was the first in the transgression and generally is the first to receive him who was made of a woman, made under the law, etc. His is the only system which removes from woman all shame and sin, and exalts her to stand at the side and near the heart of honorable manhood. How significant the fact that a woman was the first in Europe to receive the salvation of God! We live at a time when a woman is not inferior to any mortal in morality, in authority, and in the affections of the human race, and one that has reigned long enough to see the gospel spread over the earth as no other has ever done.

Many have tried to prove infant baptism from the baptism of Lydia's household. We remark, 1st. Infants and household are not the same; 2nd. There is no hint of infants being in Lydia's household. No hint of her having either husband or children, young or old. 3rd. To show who made up her household we read verse fortieth: "And they (Paul and Silas) went out of the prison and entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the BRETHREN, they comforted them and departed."

Original Contributions.

CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE.

T. H. BLENNIS.

Of all the virtues of the human character there is none more exalted and noble than that of benevolence. The man whose feelings are alive to the sufferings and misfortunes of his fellow beings, whose heart is ready with its sympathy, and whose hand is prepared for its succor, has a redeeming spirit within him whose influence will aid in purifying his soul from many of the errings incident to human frailty and the weaknesses so natural to moral depravity. It is the filtering stone of the imperfections of our nature, which suffers all the purer principles to pass onwards with the current of our life, but throws back the grosser and more selfish passions; and he that possesses the true spirit of benevolence, though he may have wandered from the straight path of moral duty, is not, and cannot be the irreclaimable, lost and forsaken being spoken of in the Holy Scriptures. He is still thousands of moral miles ahead of the being whom it would be sacrilege to call a man, and flattering to designate as a brute, whose whole existence from the helplessness of infancy to the feeble tottering of decrepitude, from the cradle to the sepulchre, has been passed without the offering of a single sympathy, or the boon of a single comfort towards his fellow travellers on the road to eternity. What though he may have worshipped no false gods, committed no murder, borne no false witness against his neighbor, nor taken from him that which belonged to him, still he has neglected those duties imposed upon him alike by the precepts of Holy Writ and the principles of human morality.

I am writing of the true spirit of benevo-

lence, that which finds its way into the chamber of the dead and dying, which lurks amid the by-ways of human existence—which comes amid the watches of the night and under the veil of darkness, which letteth not the left hand know what the right hand doeth—which "does good by stealth and sighs to find it fame"—not that illegitimate and purse-proud spirit, which is to be found vaunting itself in the highways and most frequented places at high-noon, with the trumpet of ostentation sounding its approach and the criers on the housetops proclaiming, "Look, he giveth!" It is the secret, yet consecrated hidden gift, the kind, honest, heartfelt offering, the fostering and unpretending sympathy: *these* are the attributes of that virtue, which stand first on the list of human perfections.

How brilliant, how permanent, how lasting is the fame, the character, the reputation of the spirit of benevolence. The man whom this heaven-born grace has adopted as her own child never blasts by the operation of a malignant passion the hopes and prospects of a fellow, he never knows or practices the subtleties of an intrigue which may dash with gall the cup of a friend, because perchance that friend is an obstacle in the path of his ambition. He, in short, has no recollections to agonize his heart or to disturb those placid and lasting enjoyments which spring, Minerva-like, armed, full-grown and enlightened from the head of charity. He can step forward from the rank of his fellow citizens in the possession of the grandest gift a human being can aspire to—the love of his fellow-man, and we see his brow encircled with an honor the most dazzling that a human being, accountable to his Maker, can wish for—a wreath woven by the hand of charity.

This noble passion of our nature is calculated, in the excellency of its original purity, to assimilate men to angels. It is that feeling of the heart upon which the Almighty smiles with complacency, and which being subject to no mutations, neither the obliquities of education, nor the vacillating opinions of men, can change, nor mar one feature in its heavenly aspect.

IS IT TRUE?

H. MURRAY.

We noticed in reading the last number of THE CHRISTIAN a deficit in our mission fund. Why is this? Is it true that the Disciples in our provinces are not sufficiently interested in the cause of missions to devote their offerings for its support? We are slow to believe this. We have no reason to suppose that the Disciples in our provinces are any the less willing or any the less able to support the cause of Christ than our brethren in other places where the mission cause is successful. Why then is it that there is such a paucity of funds, if not for a lack of interest?

Let us seek the cause of success of others. Why is it that the American Home Mission Board has been so successful in the last year or two, in squaring the old accounts? Because they have a live man who is giving his time to this work, constantly presenting and agitating the claims of missions. He is filling the homes with letters and cards and envelopes in all shapes and forms, besides making a personal canvass among the