

## Messenger and Visitor

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### The Cleveland Convention and the Volunteer Movement.

The Students' Volunteer Convention meets once in four years. The first meeting was in Cleveland, O., in 1891; the second in Buffalo, in 1894, and the third was held in Cleveland again, Feb. 23-27 ultimo. The recent Convention is said to have surpassed the preceding ones not only as to the numbers in attendance, but also in respect to the interest and apparent value of the discussions. About 1800 delegates were present, besides many Seminary professors, pastors, missionaries and directors of missionary boards. Nearly all the States of the Union and Canada were represented. The Cleveland Grays' Armory, a building which seats 3,000 persons, was crowded at the regular sessions of the Convention and there were overflow meetings, hardly inferior in interest, it is said to those held in the Armory.

The object of the Convention, like those which had preceded it, was to unify, strengthen and inspire the forces of the Volunteer Movement and to deepen the channels already made for the missionary spirit. The Movement, as is well known, aims especially to promote the spirit of missions in the institutions of higher learning, and the efforts put forth in that direction are achieving remarkable results. In 839 such institutions, in the United States and Canada, more or less is being done to promote thought and effort in reference to the evangelization of the non-Christian world. The educational work which is being undertaken in this connection is important. A Volunteer's Course of four years, requiring from the student but a small portion of time daily, has been organized. Twenty thousand dollars worth of missionary literature has been placed in missionary libraries, in colleges and seminaries, and many students who are not yet "Volunteers" are studying this literature. Several institutions have introduced the study of missions as a part of their regular courses. During the past year students contributed \$40,000 as compared with \$5,000 eight years ago. There is now, it is said, at least four thousand students enrolled as "Volunteers," one-third of whom are women, showing a five-fold increase in the colleges and a two-fold increase in the theological seminaries as compared with the number contemplating missionary work ten years ago. Up to the beginning of the present year, 1173 volunteers had gone forth under the appointment of forty-six missionary societies to fifty-three different countries, and a large majority of these, it is said, were led to go by the "Movement." One hundred institutions are each supporting a missionary, either wholly or in large part. These facts show that much has already been done by the Volunteer Movement and that it continues to exert a powerful and growing influence in arousing and promoting interest among the educated young men and women of the country in this most important subject of world-evangelization.

Among the speakers who addressed the Convention were men of several nationalities, experienced missionaries from the mission fields, professors from colleges and theological seminaries, prominent ministers and laymen and young men from the institutions. Mr. John R. Mott, who has recently returned from a world tour and visit to the mission fields, presided. His little book, "Strategic Points," is much commended for the fresh information which it gives in respect to missions. The young men received commendation for the excellence of their

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speaking. "They got at the heart of their subject sooner and gave more information on the topic assigned them than men twice their age seemed able to do." It would seem that the missionary cause must feel very widely the beneficial effects of the Cleveland Convention.

### The Wheat and the Tares.

In studying the parables of our Lord it is important to remember that each parable was spoken with the purpose of setting forth in broad outlines some particular phase of truth relating to the kingdom of heaven among men. It is as if one wishing to give us an idea of the main features of a city or a country, should present to us photographic views, saying, "This is as it appears from such a point, and this, and this, as it appears from other points of view." No one view gives a complete idea of the place, but by taking each for what it is meant to represent and combining all in our minds, we obtain a more or less adequate conception of the whole. We should not therefore expect to find in every parable the whole of the truth respecting the kingdom of heaven, and in interpreting the parable we are not to proceed by a minute parallelism, expecting to find in the interpretation something answering to every person and thing and their relations in the story. In so doing we are likely to confuse our minds over matters which the parable was not intended to illustrate, while we fail to grasp clearly the main truth which it was intended to set forth. What has been here said is applicable to the parable of the wheat and the tares, which is the subject of next Sunday's Bible lesson. It appears evident that what this parable was intended to throw light on is not the relation of a Christian church to unworthy members who may obtain a place in it, but the broader question of the existence of evil and the relationship of good and evil men in the world. As Dr. Maclaren has said, our Lord's explanation of the parable points to two facts—"that the kingdom of God on earth is developed in inextricable mingling with the kingdom of evil, and that the perfect form of the kingdom hereafter will be purged from all admixture."

In this parable Jesus recognizes, without any doubt or question, the existence of evil in the world. Its origin he leaves in mystery, only intimating that it is the work of an enemy. It is hard to see how anyone can harmonize the teaching of this parable with the theory that sin is a merely negative thing and that evil is only good in the making. A man with malice in his heart, sowing evil seed, the growing tares, the children of the evil one, all these seem distinctly positive in character. The tare or the darnel is not a stalk of wheat in the making which only requires favorable conditions for natural development in order to grow into the beneficent grain. The tares seem as positive in their nature as the wheat. Both in the story and in its interpretation, the two are distinctly and radically different, in nature, in fruit and in the end which awaits them.

It is God's purpose that good and evil—the children of the kingdom and the children of the evil one—shall for this age or dispensation remain in this world side by side. There are reasons for this which it is no part of the purpose of the parable to declare. Men have very foolishly sometimes endeavored to improve upon God's plan in this matter. They have sought sometimes on the one hand to separate the Christian community entirely from the life of the world, seeking in the seclusion of the monastic life security from the annoyances and dangers which come from contact with evil men. This is like pulling up the wheat to transplant it into a place where no evil seeds have been planted. The attempt has not been a success. The transplanted wheat has had for the most part but a stunted and sickly growth, and it has also been discovered that no walls, of monastery or convent, could be built so high that the enemy who sows evil seed could not scale them. Then also, in strange ignorance or disregard of this teaching of Jesus, men acting in his name have sought by the cruel hand of persecution to extirpate evil from the world, and thereby have proved their inability to distinguish between wheat and tares, persecuting often to the death in the name of God the truest and noblest of his saints.

One other thing especially the parable makes plain. The presence of evil in the world, so perplexing to Christian faith, is not forever. It belongs

to this present world or age, and, at its end, the kingdom of God shall be cleansed from evil. The world is Christ's wheat field. A cunning enemy has found means to intrude, he has sowed the world with evil seed and the crop from that evil sowing is abundant. But it is still God's world, and the Son of God has redeemed it from the thralldom of Satan. The purpose of God cannot be thwarted by the malice of an enemy. The world defiled by sin must be cleansed, and that cleansing involves separation. Again and again this prophecy of separation is heard in the parables of Jesus. From the solemn and repeated emphasis, with which he dwells upon it, must we not conclude that it is of tremendous importance. There must be separation of tares from wheat, of chaff from grain, of the worthless fish from the good, of the goats from the sheep; everything that offends and all that work iniquity are to be gathered out of the heavenly kingdom, that in it the righteous may shine forth as the sun. It may be said that when Jesus spoke of the burning of chaff and of tares, of outer darkness, of everlasting fire, and the undying worm, he was making use of figurative language. But if so, what then, does saying it was figurative take away all its meaning and its terror? Jesus certainly did not deal in extravagant or unmeaning speech. He did not use words like these except to express profound meaning. Do his words not mean this at least, that no fate can befall men so terrible as to be rejected of God, to be separated from his children and cast out of his kingdom?

### Editorial Notes.

—As Dr. Saunders is making a study of the Baptist history of these provinces and has familiarized himself with its sources, we make no doubt that he is correct in what he says in another column respecting Shubael and Daniel Dimock—that neither the father nor the son was a regularly ordained minister according to Baptist usage. It was very natural, however, that Daniel Dimock at least should have been regarded as a regularly ordained minister, since, in the article republished in last week's MESSENGER AND VISITOR from the Baptist Missionary Magazine of 1336, Rev. Joseph Dimock says of Shubael Dimock that he was baptized "by his son [Daniel] who had been previously ordained as a Baptist minister." This ordination, according to Dr. Saunders' explanation, was conferred by Henry Alline, and not by a council of churches or on the advice of such a council. The matter is one of some historic interest and the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR will feel obliged to Dr. S. for his statement of the facts.

—"I have had a singular privilege, for which one might travel far and wait long," writes Ian Maclaren to the British Weekly, from the Riviera, "for I have been with George MacDonald in his home. He is 'stepping westward' and looks frail, but he is not ill, and grows more saintly every year. It is to him a great joy that the two 'poets of our day,' as he called Browning and Tennyson, had both declared their faith before they died, the one in the 'Pilot' and the other in 'Asolando.' He holds that 'In Memoriam' will, as time goes on, be considered Tennyson's masterpiece and that in 'Saul' Browning touched the height which he says was the poet's own opinion. Of his own work George MacDonald likes 'Robert Falconer' best, but I gathered that he loved his verse more than his prose. It may be that he also will give us a swan song before he goes to see those things whereof he has written. May the peace of God and every good be with the most Christ-like man of letters of our day."

—The farewell social held in the Germain Street church last Tuesday evening to give opportunity for a general handshaking between pastor and people on the eve of Mr. Gates' departure for the Orient, was a very pleasant affair. An address was presented to Mr. Gates, on behalf of the members of the church, expressive of their great appreciation of his labors, their loving regard for himself personally and for Mrs. Gates, and their desires that the contemplated visit to the old world might prove rich in enjoyment and blessing. The pastor made a suitable reply, speaking very tenderly in respect to his relations with the church, and outlining briefly the trip upon which he was about to start. There were a large number present including some of other congregations and all the Baptist pastors of the city.

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