

The Provincial Wesleyan.

Published under the direction of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Eastern British America.

VOLUME XIV. No. 17.

HALIFAX, N. S., WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 1862.

WHOLE No. 667.

Religious Miscellany.

April.
Sparkling waters flowing,
Music in the air,
Skies with roses tinted glowing,
Welcome April fair.

Like a timid maiden,
Blushing, fearful, smiling,
With youthful life's odors,
Every heart beguiling.
Comes she bearing treasure
For the waiting earth;
With a thrill of pleasure
Flowers spring to birth.
As'er winter she is weeping,
Fearing Winter's frost,
Wakes the sun from sleeping,
Claims them for his own;

Sends his legions glowing
With flashing weapons forth,
Drives rude Boreas blowing
Back to his native North.

Joyful notes are ringing
From valley, wood, and hill;
The stream in tune is singing
With the click-clack of the mill.

Echoes sweet are waking
In the hearts of men;
Winter's chains are breaking,
Life's renewed again.

The chords of life and feeling,
Touched by the Master's hand,
His wondrous love revealing,
Swells forth with anthem grand.

The coming seasons listen,
And haste to join the strain,
As Hope's bright pinions glisten
Above the expectant plain.

With harmony unbroken,
May every willing heart
Discern the gladsome token
And bear a willing part.

—Mary's Museum.

Skill in Soul-saving.

A proud, passionate sinner once moved into the neighborhood of a devoted minister, and began a career of sin which grieved the good and increased the corruption of the wicked. His avowed purpose to insult any clergyman who should presume to address him, kept the minister from calling upon him at once, but did not prevent him from prayerfully watching for an opportunity.

This came sooner than he expected. The blaspheming sinner was struck down by severe sickness.

"I will see him," said the minister.

"If you do he will thank you," said the friend who had informed him of the man's sickness.

"I will see him, nevertheless, and look to God for guidance and blessing," replied the minister.

Accordingly he called, and was shown into a parlor, where he found the sick man lying on an old sofa. With great kindness he asked after his health, and received curt, almost unkind replies. Then, without saying one word of his own respecting religion, he opened his Bible and said:

"If you please, I will read to you."

"Without waiting for a reply, he proceeded to read the words of Jesus in the fifth chapter of Luke, after which he offered a short, simple prayer, bade the man farewell and left.

The next day he called again, read the fifth chapter of Isaiah, prayed and left as before. This was repeated several days. Kindness, appropriate selections from the Word of God, prayer, in which the minister carefully chased himself with the sick man as needing mercy, and secret prayer for God's blessing, were the only weapons employed. Now mark the result:

After two weeks the sick man broke down, grasped the minister's hands, wept, confessed himself a sinner, and said he was a wanderer in sin.

"It is of God," replied the minister; "I have not spoken a word. God has spoken. He has done this."

"Yes," said the man, "I see it now. If you had spoken a single word of your own to me when first you came, or for some time after, I would not have borne it. Weak as I was I should have tried to turn you out of my house. I was astonished at your daring to come to me. You took me by surprise. I could not be angry when you asked such kind words after my health. You read me the word of God, and I knew they were not your own words, but God's own words, and I was silent. You shut the book, and I thought you would begin to reproach me and tell me what a sinful wretch I was, and then would be my time to speak; but I looked up and saw you on your knees, and heard you praying for me, and then, without another word, you were gone."

It is enough to add that this Amakim among weeks of beautiful devotedness to Jesus, passed through the gates of the grave crying victory through the blood of the Lamb.

That this sinner was pulled out of the burning by the skill as well as by the fidelity of the minister is placed beyond all doubt by the testimony of the man himself. Faithfulness alone would not have succeeded, but faithfulness joined to skill did the work. Let the worker for souls study this case carefully as illustrating the philosophy of soul-saving. Perhaps it may give him light on the cause of his own lack of success. He has, it may be, a desire to do good, he labors with sinners patiently, he utters truth in their ears, he depends on the Spirit for success. Why? He lacks skill, tact, wisdom. He is not wise to win souls. He needs to study human nature more closely. Give him skill in addition to his present qualities, and he would "slay his thousands" for the Lord.

Look well to this point, dear fellow-laborer for Christ, and may the Holy Ghost make you wise to win souls!

The world, though rough, is, after all, the best school-master; better than study, for it makes man his own teacher.

Rational Theology.

Attempts have often been made by persons, professing a great respect for charity, to construct a religious creed by human reason; sometimes using 'reason' in the larger, looser sense, to stand for all the intellectual powers, together with the moral faculty, and sometimes confining it to the mere logical understanding. It is not proposed to discuss the Bible, but to found the doctrine behind it on a rational basis; and most commonly all tenets are rejected, or at least omitted, which cannot be thus supported. In this country (Britain) this theology is usually borrowed from Locke, and appealed much to experience and man's desire to seek happiness. In Germany it proceeded on the fundamental principles of the critical philosophy of Kant, and especially on certain *a priori* notions of the sufficiency of virtue. Its opinions are many and glaring.

1. While professing to enfold human nature, it has commonly overlooked some of the deepest intuitions of the most characteristic feelings of soul, such as the sense of sin and terror of a sinning and sin-punishing God.

2. There have been not a few gaps and flaws in the structure reared. These have proceeded from the determined purpose of builders to erect a system of theology without accepting aid from Divine authority. They have been triumphantly pointed out with a sneer by the skeptic, who shows that objections can be taken to many of the pretended demonstrations of religious truths, as, for example, to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and all that depends on that doctrine in regard to the world to come. By all means let the analogies and illustrations which may be drawn from nature in favor of such doctrines be urged, but the truth rest, after all, most securely on the authority of God. The rational theology which would move them from this foundation is in every respect most irrational.

3. It errs most egregiously in casting aside the truths of the Word, which are most suited to the deeper wants of man, such as those which tell us of reconciliation through the Son of God, of the work of converting grace, and of restoration to communion with God. These doctrines cannot be discovered by human reason in its highest or deepest researches, yet they are the truths which, when revealed, commend themselves most forcibly to the heart of man.

4. It has been powerless in calling forth deep feeling, in rousing the soul to enthusiasm and devotedness, or in urging it to deeds of heroism and self-sacrifice. The heart of man, especially when it is saved by a sense of the mercy of God, or purged by a sense of his sinfulness, or elevated by aspirations after a holier state, has ever turned away from it with abhorrence and scorn.—McCook on Institutions.

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Religious Intelligence.

From Ningpo to Shao-Hing:
A TOUR IN THE REBEL TERRITORY.
(From the London Westman.)
SHANGHAI, February 24, 1862.

DEAR SIR,—A month ago I forwarded you some notes of a visit to Ningking. My stay there was so short that, although I accomplished one main object of my visit, it left me under the impression of seeing more of the Rebel party. I proceeded, therefore, to Ningpo, where I had both the opportunity of seeing them myself, and of gathering the opinions of the Missionaries thrown into close contact with the force occupying that city. From Ningpo, by the aid of an excellent clergyman of the Church Missionary Society, and in his company, I journeyed directly through a district they occupy, to Shao-Hing, a prefectural city within a dozen miles of Hang-chau.

Owing to the representations of foreigners, and their presence before the walls of Ningpo, the Rebels have inflicted fewer injuries there than in any other city they have known to capture; but there is proof enough that the "tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." In the suburbs there was a vast destruction of houses by the Imperials; and the Rebels arrived, within the walls the houses are not much damaged; everywhere idols have been demolished, but the temple buildings remain intact. The houses have been pillaged, and the broken fittings and furniture lie in disorderly heaps about the floors. The terror-stricken citizens, as usual, abandoned the place on a moment before the attack, and gloomy solitude now reigns in the once crowded streets, which is only relieved by the dingy batches of idle and graceless Rebels, or the coarse laughter which proceeds from their messes. Their iconoclastic vengeance has upset the idols, and scattered their dismembered limbs with unparrying hand. Many parts of the city are left in a state of abominable filth, and here and there you may see a ravaging bird or hungry dog feasting on a despoiled and unburied corpse. Such are some of the external aspects of Ningpo in the hands of the Rebels. I saw three of their officers. Wong, one of the two leaders who hold the place, is an uneducated Kwangnan, who has been an adherent from the commencement of the movement in that province eleven years ago. He is a coarse fellow, but has proved himself a good leader, and exhibits an energy and ability of manner which impress me quite as favorably as did any of the "fraternal kings" I saw at Ningking. Lo, their so-called Prefect, is an impressed officer. He was enjoying a fortune realized in trade with foreigners at his native town. On the approach of the Rebels, the citizens deputed him to offer the allegiance of the place; and cruel slaughter was committed amongst them, and Lo was appointed a Tai-ping officer. He was brought to Ningpo, on account of his former connection with foreigners, but possessed only the title of official, who enjoy the fan of branding a sword, and bedecking themselves in the gay and comfortable spoils of a rich man's wardrobe. Being taken young, they are indiscoverably bound to the movement; they know no other home or associations, and their characters must be formed under the demoralizing influences of battle, plunder, and slothfulness. All the soldiers are well-dressed and clothed, but it is difficult to find a man amongst them who can read. Many of them know the orthodox doctrines expounded at Ningking, and the names of "Heavenly Father," "Heavenly Brother," and "Heavenly King," but nothing like pure and undefiled religion has been discovered among them. The majority of those I saw are in complete ignorance of any element of true Christianity. Gambling, opium smoking, and other vices, are prohibited under penalty of death, which, being sometimes cruelly put into execution in Ningking, represses such practices openly in that capital; but I have witnessed them every day in the other Rebel cities I have visited, though they are much less common than in ordinary towns of China.

The advent of these so-called Rebel-Christians has brought calamity on Missions, as on all other interests in Ningpo. The excellent men of the Church Missionary Society, who resided within the walls, and remained there during the capture, have since vacated their houses, and with all the other missionaries have closed their chapels.—They have actively employed themselves in conversing with and instructing the Rebels, but their leaders nor followers care for these things; and those among them who are best acquainted with the pretensions and tenets of their Heavenly King, appear to be least willing to listen to the distresses of the missionary. The native members share the distresses of the other populations, and the Missionaries must confine their labors to the refugee Chinese of the foreign settlement, and to villages within easy reach of Ningpo.

In boasting along to Shao-Hing, we passed many deserted villages, found the usual traffic and manufactures stopped, and saw very few, if any, of the well-to-do classes; but large plots of farm-land covered with winter vegetables, and dotted over with busy agriculturalists, gladdened us on either side of the road. The people complained of being compelled to forego their tithing, and describe the tribute levied by the Rebels as grievously heavy. The terror of depredation appeals them, yet to a foreigner they do not hesitate to express their abhorrence of the Tai-ping power,—nor have I yet conversed with a Chinese, nor of their adherents, that approves their revolution. We were stopped at three Custom Houses, where our passes were examined. At the landing place of one of these Custom Houses a man had been beheaded a short time before we called, and his head hung there as a terror to the villagers. They told us he was an impressed man, and had been executed for an attempt to join his family. At one place we stood for upwards of half an hour, whilst an ex-

Religion on the Battle-field.

A young man from Chicago who was at Cairo on the arrival of the wounded from Fort Donelson, related a number of interesting incidents at the Cincinnati Business-men's prayer-meeting. A captain of a company came to the camp prayer-meeting one day. He had been a very wicked man—and now he felt and acknowledged it—resolved, by the help of God, he would change his course. That man became a Christian, and through his influence his entire command became happily converted. In the battle of Fort Donelson, that captain fell. As he was dying, a friend asked him "What message do you wish to send to your friends?" He answered—"tell my wife, there is not a cloud between me and Christ!"

He spoke of a company, every man of whom, except three, were Christians. That company were in the thickest of the battle, and fought bravely—and yet but five of them were wounded. He spoke of a lad of about 14 or 15 years whom he had also known at Chicago. He was a devoted Christian and took a leading part at the camp prayer-meeting. He had enlisted as a drummer. In the battle his arm was shot off close to his shoulder. He was sitting, leaning against a tree, and as the tide of life was ebbing, from the loss of blood, his countenance was radiant with joy, while he sang the hymn commencing,

"Nearer, my God, to thee,"

The leader stated that he had a conversation with the Chaplain of the 18th Ohio Regiment, Gen. Mitchell's Brigade. He told him that in his regiment he had organized a church of three hundred and fifty members. During the last four months not a pack of cards was to be found in the regiment, nor any drinking of liquor. When he entered the regiment both card playing and drinking were prevalent among them.

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General Miscellany.

New Chapel, Mildmay Park:
THE REV. WILLIAM M. PUNSON'S LECTURE.
On Thursday evening last, the Rev. Wm. M. Punson, M. A., delivered a Lecture on Science, Literature, and the Bible, at the Liverpool Road Chapel, in aid of the funds necessary for the erection of the above place of worship. The audience was by tickets only, at 2s. and 1s. each, and the chapel was completely filled. The Rev. Theophilus Woolmer occupied the chair.

After the usual devotional preliminaries, the Chairman having briefly announced the object of the meeting.

The Rev. W. M. Punson proceeded to deliver his Lecture, and commenced by observing that it was impossible to do justice to his subject in a single Lecture; and all he should therefore propose would be to indicate some thoughts which might excite in his hearers habits of investigation, and specially impress them with the value and wisdom of their holy religion.

"That the soul be without knowledge is not good," was the saying of the wisest of men, and all human experience justified the conclusion that "ignorance," instead of being "the mother of devotion," was the prolific parent of all infidelity and crime. The mind of man was never formed for rest; his pinnacles were never made to drop, nor his energies to die. Even in the present fallen state, its volitions were still noble and like the eagle soaring towards the sun; it sought in the beams of the morning to replan its wings and renew its vision. There seemed forced upon it an obligation to investigate and inquire. Indeed, it was acknowledged that it was the duty of all, as opportunity served, to make themselves acquainted, as far as in them lay, with the works of Creative Powers, though some seemed to represent Science and Literature as antagonistic to Christianity. But this is contrary to what very readily be proved to be the truth to the fact. The voices from the waves, the steadfast sky, the green earth, the whole temple of nature, testified to Christian revelation; and revelation and the material system derived their origin from the same Source, true religion and true science could not be antipathetic to each other. Instead of fettering the understanding religion smilingly watched it; and most advantageously issued the command—"Stand still and consider the work of God." It was the complaint of the Author of revelation—"They regard not the work of the Lord, nor his operation of His hand."—"Lift up your eyes on high and behold who created these things, that bringeth out their hosts by number?" Christianity snatched up fragments the fictions that surrounded the universe, and led man forth amid the wonders of universal nature that he might study, glorify and adore. Astronomy, as a science which was conversant with the loftiest objects, claimed the first attention; and the avowment might be made that it afforded no ground of objection to revealed religion. The law of gravitation, as a principle of action, gave key to the theory of the universe, otherwise inexplicable. This discovery had long been celebrated as the highest achievement in philosophy. It pre-supposed the existence of masses poised in orbit; and supposed also, permanence of influence and perfection of design. Was anything made known by that amazing discovery which did not harmonize exactly with what the Bible told us of God's goodness, wisdom and power? The perfection of design in the material universe had, it was true, in one celebrated instance been denied; and Laplace was the individual to whom he referred. Laplace thought that a mass could be found, which the universe were the more could be more beneficially put; where it would be always full its perturbations less irregular, and its attractive influences on our planet more genial. Laplace's model would have been sixteen times less than ours; the light would have been proportionally smaller, its influence in the elevation of the tides would have been greatly lessened, and that wondrous principle which restrained the mighty floods from overflowing would have been seriously hindered. The results, therefore, observed, of that the universe was better as it was. Their proposed alteration was but a clumsy dislocation of the work of God. Then again, these came the celebrated Indian tales, which caused so much discussion at the close of the last century, which professed to record observations made during millions of years, and were supposed to extend back to three hundred years before the creation of the world. These imposed on the generally correct mind of Dr. Halley, of Edinburgh, and the initials were in every; but what was the

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