

Poetry.

"FAITH'S SILVER THREAD."

BY MISS M. D. BALFOUR.

[A little girl, when dying, was told by her mother that all along through the dark valley there ran a silver shining thread, which, if she would grasp and hold firmly, would bear her safely across the cold river, and, at length, land her upon the opposite shore of life and glory.]

When thy trembling feet are pressing, Jordan's cold and swelling stream, Yield thee not to fears distressing, Death is not the foe we deem. Cherished daughter! Light from Heaven shall on thee beam. Catch that silver thread and shining, Which thy struggling faith discerns; Let it now, thy heart entwining, Hold thee while the conflict turns. Dying daughter! How my spirit o'er these years! From a mother's fond embracing, Early thou art called away; Still that little thread be tracing, Till it leads to endless day. Oh! my daughter! Can I here consent to stay? Yes, my God, thy time abiding, I beneath thy cross will spend; Ever in Thy grace confiding, Watching always to the end. Thus, my daughter! Where thou'rt gone, my steps shall tend. —Ouse Branch.

THE WESLEYAN.

Halifax, Saturday Morning, October 26, 1850.

THE PRESENT LIFE PROBATIONARY.

Probation, from *probatio*, which from *probo* to try, signifies a trying, and a state of probation simply means a state of trial. Used in a religious sense the phrase, probationary state, is significant of a state of trial in reference to the future and eternal world. The question has been mooted, no little to our surprise, in these modern days by professedly evangelical men, whether or not the present life is, in the sense above described, one of probation or trial for eternity; and to our utter consternation it has been affirmed that it is not either to saints or sinners! We need scarcely say that we believe the negative of the above question includes an error of such magnitude, that its practical tendency cannot be otherwise than fatally injurious. The almost universal sense of mankind is against it; as, with few exceptions, and these of an infidel cast, the future state is acknowledged to be one of rewards and punishments. But if the future state of existence be one of rewards and punishments, then the present must be one of trial for those rewards and punishments—the terms themselves conveying this necessary idea. The Sacred Scriptures affirm the rewardable and punitive character of the future state, and therefore confirm so far the character of the present as one of probation.

The same truth may be concluded justly from the admitted premises that there will be a day of judgment, and that men shall then be judged, and acquitted or condemned, for the deeds done in the body. If the present state be not one of trial in reference to the future, then the inference cannot be honestly escaped, that the judgment of the last day must be only a pretence, without reason, and contrary to all sense of right. If the personal state of saints and sinners had been definitely and unalterably fixed from eternity—by the sovereign decree of the Almighty—irrespective of their individual conduct, or at least ere they were born, or during the period of their earthly being, we are inevitably conducted to the same conclusion. But the Word of God affirms that God will judge the world "in righteousness," and that "then he shall reward every man according to his works," "to them, who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, &c.; for there is no respect of persons with God." The truthfulness of this affirmation establishes the probationary character of the present life,—the theatre on which these respective characters act their parts, perform those acts for the which by the "righteous judgment" of God they will be treated as above represented.

If the actions of the present life have a necessary and an inseparable connection with the

character of the future state, then must the present state of being be one of trial. But the Inspired Oracles affirm that connection, and therefore justify our conclusion. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." In the language of Dr. E. PORTER, "the practical truth intended to be taught in this text, is, that the present actions of men bear a relation to their eternal condition, analogous to that which seed sown in a field bears to the harvest, that is to spring from it;" and from this just view of the case, this modern divine proceeds to illustrate and enforce the solemn truth, that "the present life is a state of PROBATION for eternity." In agreement with these sentiments, Dr. WATTS, in his "Caveat against Infidelity," tells us that "we must believe, as a necessary requisite to salvation, that the great God, the righteous Governor of the World, will call us to an account hereafter, how we have behaved ourselves here, and will sit as a judge upon our past conduct in this life;" and after referring to the discoveries of "the light of nature" respecting the rewards and punishments of the future world, he adds—"but the light of Scripture gives us much clearer and surer discoveries of a heaven and a hell, a state of rewards and punishments, according as our works shall be.—It is the voice of reason, and it is the language of revelation, that there is a future state to set all things right, and to account for the scenes of disorder in this present life."

(To be Continued.)

THE POWER OF THE PRESS.

We are being continually reminded of the power of the Press. Men of the first minds have expatiated on the subject, and exhibited the most satisfactory illustrative proofs. But whilst the abstract principle is conceded, it should not be forgotten that this power is for good or evil, according to the principles and character of those who direct and control the operations of this mighty engine. When rightly and honourably conducted it is a blessing to the community—when prostituted from its legitimate use to purposes of private malice, personal slander, ridiculing religion, sneering at pious God-fearing men, countenancing and encouraging impiety and garnishing vice, it is a curse. Unhappily for the well-being of social life, this potent instrument, in not a few instances, is employed in pandering to the depraved appetites and base passions of unprincipled men. The world is teeming with productions calculated, if not expressly designed, to unsettle the foundations of good order, morality, and religion. Infidelity and the worst features of communism are openly avowed and advocated, and the great evangelical organizations of the age are made the objects of ribald jeers and bitter attacks. These pernicious prints find, alas! many patronizers, who imbibe their demoralizing principles, and are influenced by their injurious representations. None can truthfully deny that these emanations from the Press whether in book, pamphlet, or newspaper form, are plague spots in society, spreading abroad a moral infection, and tending to corrupt the body politic in the fountain-head, and to circulate the malignant poison through its various and far-reaching ramifications. It is impossible adequately to describe the extent of infidelity and immorality secretly nurtured and openly abetted by this prostitution of the Press.

It is well however there are in vigorous and extensive operation counteracting instrumentalities. Portions of the Press are at least moral in their tendencies; and another part, by no means small, is decidedly evangelical in principle and religiously beneficial in influence. In some instances the conductors of the latter, are men of distinguished talents, high literary attainments, and unquestionable piety. Their energies and varied qualifications are devoted, through the powerful agency of the Press, to the regeneration of mankind, to the inculcation of truth and the subversion of error, to the promotion of a healthy tone in politics, morality and religion, and to the advocacy of schemes which promise to be of real utility to the world. They are to be classed among the best benefactors of our race; and if judged of by the amount of evil they prevent and the amount of good they are the means of effecting, they should stand high in the estimation of all true patriots, and of an enlightened, christian public.

Whilst therefore the Press is so powerful an agency for good or evil, christian parents, and all who wish well to the morals and religious principles of their families and to the safety of society generally, should, as a solemn duty, scrutinize very closely the character of the periodicals they admit within the domestic enclosure. We repeat our previously expressed conviction that those prints, which embrace all opportunities, and when none lawfully exist, make them, to ridicule and sneer at religion, a subject which lies near the hearts of thousands,—to speak contemptuously of the philanthropic efforts of christian people,—and to slander and defame men whose only fault is that they are zealous and persevering in promoting objects of real utility, and cannot be turned aside from their benevolent purpose and patriotic course by arbitrary dictation,—are a sore evil to any community; and as such, should receive but little, if any, encouragement from the wise and good. This principle acted out would produce a most salutary effect on the moral tone of the press, rescue it from its downward and vicious tendencies, render it a handmaid to virtue, preserve the sacredness of private character from being ruthlessly invaded and cruelly violated, and would teach the parties transgressing that, if they have no respect themselves for what is good and excellent, they cannot pursue the malevolent course of maligning it in others altogether with impunity.

LITERARY NOTICES.

1. PROPOSAL PLAN of a Wesleyan Supernumeraries' and Ministers' Widows' Fund, for the Nova Scotia District, pp. 12. Halifax, N. S. Printed at the Wesleyan Office. 1850.

This unpretending, but really valuable and important pamphlet has been laid upon our Table; and from the subject on which it treats as well as from its intrinsic worth, we strongly recommend it to the serious attention and thoughtful perusal of the persons to whom it is especially addressed—viz., "The Ministers and Members of the Wesleyan Church and Congregations in Nova Scotia." It has been drawn up with great care by our respected CHAIRMAN and GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT, whose mature experience, practical wisdom, and business talents, have eminently qualified him to propose a plan, at once feasible and efficient, for the establishment and successful working of the Fund in question. The reasons for such an effort are clearly set forth in the pamphlet itself, with which we heartily concur, but to the cogency of which we can scarcely hope to add any thing by any remarks of our own. If it be true—and we believe it is—that "the Church is under obligation to make suitable provision" for Ministers "when providentially unfitted by age or infirmity for the active duties of the ministry, and, when removed by death, for their surviving families,"—then a strong case is made out for the establishment of a Fund similar to that under our present notice; and when the appeal is made in behalf of the one now proposed we unite with the Reverend Author in expressing the conviction, that the "obligation" above referred to, "will, doubtless, be cheerfully and practically recognized by the WESLEYAN COMMUNITY in Nova Scotia, whose spiritual interests have been so long cared for and promoted by those who have distributed among them the word of life."

The Ministers of this District, it will be seen, will themselves contribute largely to the Funds by entrance subscriptions in proportion to the time they have travelled, in some anticipated cases by entrance fees, and in every instance by regular annual subscriptions. The design is not to throw the entire burden of commencing and sustaining the Fund on the members of our Church and Congregations, to the entire relief of our Ministers; but to solicit and secure such supplemental aid as is within the average ability of our members and congregations, and also necessary to realize the object on the scale of provision proposed.

We conclude this notice by intimating that all that is now required to ensure the establishment and prosperity of *The Wesleyan Supernumeraries' and Ministers' Widows' Fund for the N. S. District*, is the prompt and hearty co-operation of our Ministers and people in the good work. "Their united efforts will, through the blessing of God, be successful;" and to that blessing we cordially commend the undertaking.

We are authorized to state, that John H. Anderson Esq., of this City, having kindly consented to act in connexion with the Chairman of the District as a joint Treasurer, remittances may be made to either of those parties.

2. The Forty-Sixth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society; 1850, with an Appendix and a List of Subscribers and Benefactors. London.

An abstract of this interesting Report of one of the most important and useful Societies of the day, was read at the public Meeting of the B. & F. B. S., at Exeter Hall, London, May 1st of this year. The Bible in whole or in part is now printed in 144 Languages or Dialects; in these, the Society has promoted the distribution, printing, or translation of the Scriptures in whole or in part, directly, 85, indirectly 59. The number of Versions (omitting those which are printed in different Characters only) is 166. Of these 114 are Translations never before printed. In connexion with this Society, there are in Great Britain, Auxiliaries 428, Branches 351, Associations 2,408, Total 3,187; in the Colonies, other Dependencies, &c., Auxiliaries 63, Branches 302, Associations 190, Total 496, which added to those in G. B., makes a grand total of 3,678. Foreign Bible Societies, formerly or at present assisted by the British and Foreign Bible Society, have issued an aggregate number of 15,410,113 copies of the Scriptures. The total issues of the B. & F. B. S. have now amounted to Twenty-three millions, one hundred and ten thousand and fifty copies; of which One Million one hundred and thirty-six Thousand, six hundred and ninety-five copies were issued the last year, being 29,177 more than in the preceding year, viz.—from the Depot at home 783,203—from the Depots abroad 583,492, showing an increase from the Depots abroad of 48,107 copies. This is a very gratifying circumstance. During the forty-six years of the Society's existence it has expended a gross sum of Three millions, six hundred and forty-eight thousand, and twelve pounds, four shillings, and three pence; of which Ninety seven thousand, Three hundred and forty-six pounds, One shilling and two pence were expended during the last year.

It is impossible to describe the vast amount of benefit which must have accrued to our world by this immense circulation of the Word of Life; and as time advances, and persons wake up to a sense of duty and of privilege, the British and Foreign Bible Society, already so honoured of God, will continue to increase its issues in a ratio that we can contemplate only with feelings of admiration and unmingled delight. May God still speed it in its onward course of benevolence to our fallen world, until the copies of the pure Word of God shall be as numerous as the inhabitants of the earth.

3. Cunnabell's Nova Scotia Almanac, and Farmers' Manual for the year of our Lord 1851. Halifax, N. S. Published by W. Cunnabell, No. 8, Corner's Wharf.

This is No. 1 of a New, being the Third, Series of this popular Almanac. As far as we have examined it, it appears to have been judiciously compiled, and calculated to answer all the purposes for which it is intended. It contains an account of the Celebration of the Centenary Anniversary of the settlement of the City of Halifax, on the 8th June 1849, with the Oration delivered on the occasion by Beamish Murdoch Esq.—Chronological Summary—Astronomical Notices—Agricultural Items—Random Readings—the usual, but enlarged, Lists of Departments, Religious and Benevolent Societies—Courts—Army and Navy—Post Office—Various Associations, &c., &c., &c., with a copious Index. We direct attention to the Advertisement on our last page.

DR. DIXON AND THE ITINERANCY.

Methodism is regarded, it appears, by many of the conductors of the Press, as an object worthy of especial attack and misrepresentation, as if its polity and evangelically Arminian creed—things by a certain class peculiarly hated—outweighed all the good it has done and is still doing in the world. Hence every opportunity is seized upon, both in original and selected articles, to aim a blow at it, and, if possible, to damage it in public estimation. The parties know their own motives, which, judging from the overt act, are every thing but commendable. These remarks are of general application. We notice, among other things, our cotemporary, the *Christian Visitor* of St. John, N. B., has copied an article from the *London Patriot*—a paper which has taken a violent part against the Wesleyan Conference in the recent agitations—in which Dr. Dixon is represented as existing among the Wesleyan Methodists. Our cotemporary might have judged the Doctor more charitably, ere he spread abroad so unfavourable a representation. We find a correspondent even in the *Wesleyan Times*, a paper whose aim appears to be to undermine the

whole system of Methodism, and to produce the following effect:—

"I do not think that under stood as speaking, wishing to have it altered when he was enjoying his course among a few years he had felt so his removal to another situation, he (no gave free and unrestrained personal constitution all. All who are acquainted with the Doctor's habits and manner, will be surprised, that, in quietness—especially indulge in such sentiment

Of course if our cotemporary in question were true to his readers, he and profit them; but of those articles only a disparaging character promote brotherly nominations, at the disposal to overlook polity and church discipline present day. Repeatedly if we wished to hear respecting other give the following question himself a Baptist—Munition Baptists:—

"The right of religiously holy men, on persons of opinion, is sect or community in opinion of the major while they are at va on a point of such nature their brethren presumed to resist t on a subject of no p an obscure and neg while their singular consequences, de church, and pronou nination on the whole

This statement by bert Hall places on obvious light—but th red ones, has been never never re-publi now to convince who live in glass b they cast stones at are confident, that its alleged faults, ce own body, with a communication on t

The Itinerancy l ces, to which Wes tinghished by talen less favoured breth ed advantages, whi ficial effects, great The Stationary ch posed to a regular frequently only in acting on the sam place to place, as t calls of churches n inconveniences, w of a systematic itin

In common with fellow citizens gen favourable answer to the application assistance in beha American Railwa it to pass through readers to our si: repentence whic Harvey and the ject. The reply fessedly by surpr dental policy, if to encouragement Home Governme of "Annexation the refusal. Th imagined that th plated Railway, iron rails, the Provinces with nately lead to the links of th without the aid would not be fo of the British G