

Correspondence.

LETTER FROM CHATTANOOGA.

Chattanooga, December 31st, 1863.

Rev. J. W. MEARS:—On the 23d ult. I left Philadelphia as Delegate of the United States Christian Commission, en route for the Western army, and in less than three days I sat down and mingled with the genial, earnest brethren of the West, in Nashville, Tenn. As before I left I had many urgent requests made to me by friends to write, and finding it absolutely impossible to respond, but in this way, to be read in common, I hope I shall be justifiable in turning "correspondent." At Nashville I found about 11,000 sick and wounded in hospitals and convalescent camps, together with large numbers of prisoners, and but five or six of the "Commission" to labor there. Sixteen of the number altogether, were there and farther South, in the army of the Cumberland. A few more came in, in a few days, and we were permitted to push to the front. The distance is but 190 miles, but it took us a day longer to travel it, than the thousand miles from your city to the capital of this State. We had a variety of conveyances in our transit, alternating in passenger and open cars, rounding up the trip on vehicles that nature provided for us. We tarried at Murfreesboro the first night—twenty-three miles south of Nashville—and here we found more desolation than we had yet been prepared to see. It had been a place of perhaps 3,500 inhabitants, and one of the most beautiful towns of "the sunny South." It had many natural advantages of beauty and comfort, in the fine groves, gentle knolls and swift, beautiful stream—the Stone river. It was the seat of a fine college and seminary, and many splendid suburban residences. But the ruthless hand of war has made sad havoc with the town and its grand surroundings. Houses by the scores demolished, and often without a trace of their foundation remaining. Groves have been mercilessly laid waste. The present population are certainly very catholic in their practical notions, for they have broken down all "partition walls," all lines and fences have been liberally obliterated.

Here we met two excellent brethren, Rev. Messrs. Orr and Davis from Western Pennsylvania, of the Presbyterian Church, greatly in need of laborers and stores. About 1200 sick and wounded are there, and more constantly being brought on from the front. A large body of troops were stationed here, in command of Gen. Van Cleave, a most excellent and Christian officer, and deeply interested in the work of "the Christian Commission." As an instance: the General wished to be represented in this good work, and not being able to devote time personally, he said he wanted them to take his boy, a son of thirteen or fourteen years, with them into the hospitals, to become interested and work with them. He was soon very much pleased with his new labors, and the soldiers have become quite attached to him. Major Johnson, of his staff, is an elder of the Presbyterian Church, and also aids and encourages our cause very much by his warm interest and active effort in its behalf.

Next morning we passed on, and dined at Tullahoma, two or three days too late to receive the compliments of the great raider Gen. Wheeler with 5,000 cavalry; and by night reached Bridgeport, Ala. Here we found several thousand of our troops, and the 15th Corps just coming in to winter-quarters. This became a necessity on account of the starving rations for man and beast issued below this point. No one knows how soon an army can be starved out in a territory foraged and fed upon by the enemy, after the railroad communication is so effectually broken up.

CHATTANOOGA.—WANT OF SUPPLIES, AND SUFFERING IN THE ARMY AND HOSPITALS.—FIDELITY OF THE COMMISSION'S AGENTS.

We reached Chattanooga, once the stronghold of the rebellion in the West, Dec. 6th, and found 5,000 soldiers in the hospitals, 2,000 of whom still remain. These of course are mostly of the severest cases—such as cannot be removed. There has been great suffering here and much mortality. There have been as many as seventy interments in one day, a short time after the battle. This is now very greatly diminished, but think of the sad tidings that still go from here day by day, to carry sorrow and gloom into many households of the land.

The suffering of these wounded and sick, of course, have been greatly increased by the want, not only of proper diet, but of scarcely any diet at all. The army has not had more than half rations, and some part of the time not that, since the battle of Chickamauga. The hospital supplies were nearly as meagre, and only sufficient for ordinary wants. And it is astonishing that destitute as the hospital commissary and our "Commission" have been, that the wants of these suffering patriots have

been so generally reached though very scantily satisfied. I do feel that the Christian Commission, with as little material and as few faithful workers, (not half-a-dozen on an average since battle,) did as much effective service for the suffering heroes, as it ever could possibly have done elsewhere under like straitened circumstances. And let it be remarked also, to the credit of "the Christian Commission," that I believe no station to have practised more rigid self-denial than that of Chattanooga. Nor have they made it a virtue out of necessity, but purely for the sake of our dying soldiers. We have had delicacies and luxuries all along, though in small quantities, but there has been the most studied care to avoid using any article of food that would benefit our dying and wounded men. Such things as beef, butter, bread, milk, potatoes, &c., no delegate until a very recent date has had set before him. Hard tack, bacon and coffee, twice a day, and for a time, I am told, but coffee and crackers alone, were the scanty articles of fare. We have thus far paid very much attention to the temporal as well as spiritual comfort of the sufferers. We would have been delighted, could we only have done more. The great difficulty is, that until a week or ten days ago, almost no goods scarcely could be obtained, although there is great abundance of some kinds, at Bridgeport, Ala., twenty-eight miles back by rail, and sixty by navigation. The only facilities for transportation open to the public, is one boat, (flat,) on an average daily, and you will know what amount of forage, crackers and hospital stores could, by that means, be furnished for the army camping here and in the vicinity. And then, after there was some little improvement in the means of transportation afforded for sanitary stores, the partiality of the medical director gave the benefit of it exclusively to the U. S. Sanitary Commission; that we got anything at all was owing to the charity of that Commission. I cannot help saying, it was a somewhat humiliating condition for our Commission.

But we have now a special order from Major General Grant, allowing us every facility consistent with the interests of the army, to carry on our work. So hereafter, we expect stores amply sufficient for our use, and enough to send on to Knoxville. Mr. Miller, agent of Christian Commission at Knoxville, has just arrived, and states that there is considerable suffering there in our army. Our hospital has sufficient sanitary supplies on hand for the present, but no reading matter, nor any delegate of Christian Commission except himself, and a loyal Pastor, is at hand to attend to the spiritual interests. There are about 1,800 sick and wounded there, who are being in part removed slowly this way. We are now sending delegates from this place to Knoxville.

To give you an idea of our work, allow me mention that Mr. Young, of Cincinnati, O., and myself, endeavor to attend to General Hospital No. 4, in which there have been as many as 300 patients lying. In the morning, we pass up and down the wards, minister spiritual comfort, distribute reading matter, write letters, seek out their various special wants, and then, returning to our rooms, we prepare and carry back such little delicacies as we have to give them. In the evening, we hold short services, sometimes four or five in one evening.

The great happy feature in this work is the growing religious interest which is manifest. Men are naturally serious in suffering; they become sensible of their weakness and frailty—higher feelings are awakened, and they long for higher strength and blessings. Hence, men are inquiring what they "must do to be saved?" Many have been anxious and successful seekers of salvation, and have died in perfect peace in Hospital No. 4, and a number yet live to serve their Lord. Daily do we meet new cases of interest and anxiety. We trust the good work will deepen and spread until all become savingly interested. We hold as many as six services on the Sabbath in the different wards. O, what a delightful task too, is it to preach to these minds who esteem a sermon as a favor! Many had not heard a sermon for months, and one man said to me the other day, "I have not heard a sermon for three years." "How is that," inquired I, "had you no chaplain?" "No, I belonged to a battery." Three-fourths of the regiments are without chaplains, and they are sending in for us, and begging us to come out and preach for them. Entire brigades I know to be without a chaplain.

I would be glad to give you instances in my experience, but must defer until "a more convenient season."

Yours truly, J. L. L.

SKEPTICISM about Christ is also skepticism about history itself; unbelief in him is unbelief in the controlling ideas by which men have been inspired, and in the chief objects for which men have hitherto lived.

ON HEARING THE WORD.

NO. IV.

BY W. M. CORNELL, LL. D.

The gospel should be heard without partiality.

Partial hearers are principally of two classes; those who are partial to particular subjects, and those who are partial to particular preachers.

Some have a partiality for doctrinal preaching. They are so attached to this kind of preaching, that unless it is visible on every occasion; they are offended. Let the minister dwell on the doctrines of the Bible, and they are in raptures. On such occasions they feel very much as Peter did "on the mount of transfiguration." They wish to hear them forever; and, at the same time, they are often as neglectful of their practical application, as Peter was of the world below, when he wished to build tabernacles upon the mount. Let the minister, as the prophets, Christ, and his apostles did, when they had inculcated some of the great doctrines of the Bible, proceed to draw the inferences that flow from them, and show their practical bearings, and they hang down their heads and exclaim: "this is not preaching, it is mere exhortation; such talk will never indoctrinate the church." They expect one sermon to contain the whole Bible; and would be pleased, doubtless, with such a young man as Dr. Emmons asked, after hearing his first sermon, if he ever expected to preach again? and assigned as a reason for the question, that he thought the young man had preached about every thing in that first sermon.

Now, heaven forbid we should say a word against doctrinal preaching in its proper place; and it is not often preached as much as it should be; but when the leading idea of every sermon is the doctrine of election, as was said to be the case with the good old Rev. Dr. Woods, of Boscawen, N. H., and people crave such preaching, they have need to learn the first sentiments of the gospel.

Others are all for practical preaching. They never want to hear the doctrines discussed in the pulpit. It is a vexation to them to hear doctrines. They grow restless at the very mention of a text which seems to involve any of the doctrines of grace. Give us practical discourses—something that will stir us up. Doctrinal sermons only put us to sleep.

The fact is, both these classes of hearers are diseased. It is a mark of a diseased appetite, when a person relishes but one kind of food, and is ever hankering after that. To feel an habitual disrelish for instruction, unless it is confined to a few particular topics, is a sure indication of a diseased mind, or a bad heart, or both.

It is difficult to conceive how such hearers can love the word of God as his word, and yet wish to hear a part only of the sacred truth. As "every thing is beautiful in its season," so all the Bible is necessary, as a great whole, to the full development of the Christian character. As "the church of Christ is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into an holy temple of the Lord," so the Christian graces are nourished and sustained, not by a part, but by all the truths of the Bible. If we examine the preaching of Christ and his apostles, we find a due proportion of the doctrines of the Bible interspersed with practical remarks, and such reflections as naturally flow from them. In their preaching, there was nothing superfluous, nothing disproportioned, nothing defective.

Where the minister declares "the whole counsel of God," there we find Christian character moulded into exquisite, beauty, and symmetry, and "published after the similitude of a palace."

It is generally the case that, if there be any particular doctrine which men do not like to hear, it is precisely the part which they most need. A partiality for a particular kind of preaching generally arises from ignorance.

Others have a partiality for particular speakers, and are prejudiced against others: To say the least, such hearers ought to cultivate a candid spirit, when the preachers are equally qualified as to character and piety. This class of hearers set too much by the minister to whom they are partial; especially is this apt to be the case upon the selection and settlement of a new pastor. They are so enthusiastically carried away by him, that they think he has no equal on the face of the earth. Every thing he says is exquisitely beautiful. The very form of the man, the gracefulness of his gestures, the turn of his eye, the nod of his head, the shaking of his beard, all surpass any thing they ever witnessed; and, if he seems to imitate a favorite minister who has been removed from them by death, or by some richer parish, they are in ecstasies. There never was his equal; and all their neighbors soon know what they think of him.

This is fraught with two evils to him; first, unless he is eminently pious he is "exalted above measure, and puffed up with pride to fall into the condemnation; of the devil;" and secondly, to them, that in

the shadow, they lose the substance; in the messenger, the message is forgotten. No greater curse can befall a people than this: and yet, oh! how often do they say, "so would we have it." If such a congregation realized their true state, they would cry out as Job did, "Pity us, oh ye, our friends, for the hand of God hath touched us." They famish for the bread of life. Who that has lived long has not been reminded, by such cases, of our Lord when he rode into Jerusalem. Oh! how ready they were to welcome the Messiah! The trees were stripped of their branches, the multitudes, before and behind, shouted hosanna. And the same multitude cried, "away with him! crucify him!"

No better motive often actuates such hearers than did the Jews on that occasion; and that was their pride. It behoves those hearers who are proud of their minister as the Jews were of Christ, when they thought he had come to set them on high above other nations to "take heed how they hear."

Others are so prejudiced against particular preachers, that they can never bear to hear them; and this, often, without any real cause. They have taken some dislike to them; or, they have heard something about them; "some tale-bearer who scatters fire-brands, arrows, and death," has said something of them which, in nine cases out of ten, is false. But this matters not. They believe it, and that's enough for them. Often, the reason they do not like him is best known to themselves, for they can name none. Such hearers are guilty of despising the gospel, and the great day will reveal to them their lost opportunities of profiting by a preached gospel. Would not Christ say to all these hearers, "take heed how ye hear?" Oh! what a responsibility rests upon him who hears the gospel and does not profit by it. The heathen in the day of judgment will condemn him.

SHIRTS 'A SEERMONS.

The connection between benevolence and devotion is not at first sight apparent to an unconverted man; nor in all cases even to Christians. The power however of benevolence to excite a favorable opinion of the benefactor is well-known. Hence, it has often been used as a proselyting agency. The argument is, that an opinion which leads a man to do good must be true, that the religion which impels a man to relieve suffering must be divine. And the argument gains strength by noticing that, for the most part, benevolence is the fruit of true religion, and that He who commands us to love God with all our hearts, places next in importance the command, to love our neighbor as ourselves. The Jewish poor law was as much a part of that religion as the sacrifices; and the first great out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on the Christian Church, not only blossomed in doxologies and sermons, but ripened into a general distribution of goods to the needy; whence to this day, membership in the church receives the name of fellowship. Following this precedent, in the early ages of Christianity, every church employed the active services of a number of deacons caring for the poor, and had its hospital for the sick; and every monastery, in later times, distributed alms to the poor, and various brotherhoods and sisterhoods devoted themselves to teaching the ignorant, nursing the sick, burying the dead, and feeding the hungry. One bishop sold the golden vessels of the church to redeem slaves, and another to relieve the victims of famine. The general and fundamental idea of all this was, that no worship could be more acceptable to our Father in heaven than relieving the wants of His children on earth. The Romish Church taught that such offerings were so acceptable as to make atonement for the sins of the offerer; quoting in support of that opinion, Daniel's advice to Nebuchadnezzar "Break off thy sins by righteousness and thy iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility."

In the revulsion of the Reformation against the merit of good works as atonement for sin, Protestants acquired a habit of thought which permitted them to view benevolence as distinct from religion. Faith and works were regarded as distinct and even separate things. A nominal faith prevailed in Protestant Christendom which was very willing to be orthodox at the expense of some angry words, but cared not for the expenditure of deeds of charity. Membership in state churches did not necessitate fellowship with the needy and suffering. A few living Christians ever showed their faith by their works, but the great mass considered religion as a thing of confessions and creeds and prayers, and sermons, and Sundays; and benevolence as a wholly different affair, demanding a society, and committee, and week-day work. I have known the elders of a church scandalized at the proposal to take up a charity collection on the Sabbath, and astonished when I should them, from the Confession, that it was a part of the public worship of God. Scores of churches have never dreamt that they

had any need for deacons, or any work for them to do.

Taking advantage of this apostasy from true religion, ungodly men now-a-days, with considerable success, plead for a divorce between religion and relief. The usual form of the proposal is, that as we are all agreed in the propriety of relieving our poor, suffering fellowmen, but are greatly at variance in our respective articles of belief regarding God, we shall all unite in ignoring our theology for the sake of benefiting humanity. The practical effect however is, to get Christians to put their alms into the hands of infidels, and pay them for distributing them, with commendations, direct or implied, of the irreligion of the donors. "Here, soldier, is a comfortable shirt for you. We have no sulphuric literature to give you along with it. This is our religion." The object then plainly is, to combat Christianity with its own weapons, and oppose Christian faith with deeds of benevolence.

It would be safer to employ Universalists to administer the Sacraments, than the charities of the church. R. P.

THE WORK OF GOD IN NEW ALBANY, IND.

[The following is the letter with good tidings from the 3d Church in New Albany, referred to in our last.]

We have been visited with a gracious outpouring of the blessed Spirit of God, and many dear friends for whose conversion to Christ we have long labored and prayed, are rejoicing in a good hope that they have submitted to Him. About sixty persons, I think it safe to say, give evidence of having "passed," during the last three months, "from death unto life."

Encouraged by various indications which I will not stop to note particularly, we commenced daily meetings for prayer and the preaching of the Word, at a point in the country, 3 miles from the city, the latter part of September; and continued there over two weeks. The Holy Spirit was present in marked power from the first. Twenty then came out on the Lord's side, making public profession of their faith; leaving others in that neighborhood who propose following their example on the first opportunity.

The 15th of November, we began like meetings at our Church, in town. Ardent prayer had gone up from many a closet that the Master would deign to bless the means employed, for the quickening of all His people, and to the salvation of sinners. The Rev. Mr. Little, a brother deeply beloved through all our churches in this section, was with us for more than three weeks. And these days that have followed the beginning of our meetings have been characterized by scenes over which we cannot doubt, angels have rejoiced with us. Sabbath before the last, 13th inst, was a "high day" in the brief history of the Third Church. For on that day, thirty-four entered publicly into covenant with us, and sat down around the Table of the Lord, now their loving Lord and Saviour, to join with us in celebrating His dying love. Nineteen of these were men, an unusual number of our own sex being subjects of this revival; and 19 of the 34 heads of families. About twenty remain, some of them under care of Session, who will come forward probably at the next Communion.

I should love, dear Brother, to dwell on some particulars of this, to us at least, interesting work of divine grace, did space allow. The Power of Prayer received signal illustration in many cases. But I regret that I must close.

Soldier's Scrap Book.

SEVENTH SCRAP.—UNBELIEF THAT IS NOT UNBELIEF.

During the Virginia Peninsula campaign of the Army of Potomac, under McClellan, a soldier with an anxious countenance, accosted a gentleman with the inquiry, "Do you belong to the Christian Commission, sir?"

"Yes, my friend, can I do anything for you?" was the reply.

"I have a comrade very sick in the regimental hospital yonder. I wish you would go and see him, for I don't think he has long to stay, and I am afraid he is not prepared to die."

"Certainly I will go. You have talked with him concerning his preparation for death, have you not?"

"No sir, I have not."

"Perhaps then you have prayed with him?"

"No sir, I am not a praying man."

"My good fellow, I am sorry to hear this of you—very sorry indeed. You came out to look for some Christian friend to visit your poor comrade, because you are afraid that he is not prepared to die. Did it not occur to you that you have yourself quite as much need that some friend of Christ should pray with you, and strive to lead you to the Saviour?"

"No sir, it did not. It is a long time since I have had any thought of religion on my own account. I would not be disrespectful sir, especially when you are doing

me the favor to go and see poor Clem; but, to be honest, I don't believe in religion, and don't think I shall ever have much to do with it."

"You surprise and grieve me. Still I am glad you are frank; and I wish you would go farther, and, in your candor, tell me exactly what you do think of religion."

"Well sir, if you will know, I think it is part superstition, and the rest clap-trap."

"And yet you are alarmed for poor Clem; you are afraid that he is not prepared to die, and you want some Christian man to go and see him. My good fellow, what am I to make of all this? Do you wish him to die on superstition and clap-trap, or do you really think he needs religion in the hour of death?"

"Talking about him, sir, I don't quite know how to take it. If I choose to risk myself on my notions about religion, it's nobody's business but my own."

"My dear friend—"

"Never mind, sir: I know what you would say, but I shan't ask anybody else to stand in my shoes. But when it comes to Clem's care, you see sir, he belongs to my mess, and I have often told him what I think, pretty much as I have told you now. He was a good deal qually at first, but of late he fell in with me. If it should turn out that there is anything in religion, then I don't think he is prepared to die, and I shouldn't quite like to have him die so, and I'd means of it."

The above is but the commencement of a conversation carried on during the walk to the hospital where Clem was lying, and at subsequent times during the delegate's continuance on the field. I am not now able to tell what reply was given to those last frank statements from the lips of the soldier, but it is easy to tell what might have been said, and what, in substance, probably was said. While, for himself, he claimed to have no wish for religion, and no belief in it, he was sincerely desirous that it should be brought to the relief of his dying comrade. Why was this?

First.—Though he had been bad enough to make that comrade as nearly an infidel as possible, yet when he came to see him face to face with death, he had not enough of the devil in him to help him to "die game."

Second.—He had an involuntary comprehension of this striking distinction between religion and irreligion. It should in the end be found a delusion, no disaster will attend the breaking up of that delusion; but if the last then proves a lie, the mistake will be awful and irreparable.

Third.—As long as a possibility remained that religion might be true, he felt that Clem, not being a Christian, was not prepared to die. Religion was the thing needed to prepare him for death. As just stated, in no conceivable event, could it be any injury; and even he, the would-be unbeliever, could think of possibilities of the future, which would make it the all-in-all. Even he had the good sense to judge that one who is not well guarded against all those possibilities, is not prepared to die.

Fourth.—Conscience upbraided him with his own guilty part in Clem's present unpreparedness for death. He had successfully striven to harden a heart which he had found—to use his own term—qually on the subject of religion. In truer phrase, Clem first came into his company tender in conscience, and susceptible of religious emotions. He had diligently worked this out from him, not by any manly reasoning, but by the use of scorn and epithets, such as superstition and clap-trap. Now that he saw his too-yielding pupil seemed about to test the awful experiment of what it is to die without religion, he stood aghast before his own work. He sought Christian help to undo that work, before the opportunity should be gone forever.

Fifth.—His own heart stood self-convicted of dishonesty in professing to regard religion as of no account. God often crowds men to a point where they are compelled to face their own systems; and learn their exact work. His friend was dying without religion, and for him he was alarmed. But everything awful in the thought of that friend's dying out of Christ, was just as awful in the thought of himself dying thus. It was in vain that he trimmed his speech so as seemingly to evade this most rational deduction. His bravado about not fearing for himself, but only for his friend, did not disguise the real apprehension now awakened in his soul, that religion is the only preparation for death.

Whether there was enough moral sensibility left within him, to secure his acceptance of these solemn convictions; and whether, with a soldierly manliness, he made retraction of his past awful wrong towards his dying comrade; and whether, as the issue of this strange adventure, that Christian worker, and those patriot soldiers, will by-and-by stand together on the mountains of everlasting peace, and look back from thence to those dark days on the Chickamauga—these are things of which we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. B. B. H.