

Correspondence.

LETTER FROM HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

Huntsville Ala., Feb 18th, 1864. Have you any objections to lay before your readers a few lines from a delegate of the Christian Commission? Trusting that you have not I send you the following for publication. Three weeks since we entered upon our work as a delegate. Our introduction to it was in Louisville, Ky. Detained there one evening on our way to the front, we spent it, under the direction of the agent at that point, among the soldiers of Barracks No. 1. At Nashville we were more fully made acquainted with the work. Here, however, it lay not so much among the soldiers as among the refugees; Bro. Smith, the field agent, assigning us these as our particular charge. Upwards of five hundred of them we found collected together in one building. They were of both sexes, and of all ages—from the newly born to the grand-father and grand-mother of four score. It was a Sabbath morning when we first went among them. Going from room to room, and from family to family in each room, we conversed with them freely. We found that they were mostly from eastern Tennessee and northern Georgia, and in the greatest destitution—in no case scarcely having more than the tattered clothes that covered them and some little bedding. "When I asked them 'did you hear a sermon last?' 'Law! mister,' they would say with their southern drawl, 'we don't know when.' 'It's so long ago we have forgotten, long, afore the war, anyhow.' 'Well, what would you say to hear one this morning; this is Sabbath morning, you know?' 'Oh! mighty glad, mister—mighty glad; it would do us a power of good.' 'Very well then, come over into the large room at the end of the building, and we will try to give you one.' So, over they came, near to two hundred of them, and we tried to preach them a sermon suitable to the occasion. In the evening also, they came together, and we preached to them again, only this time, the audience was nearly twice as large as it was in the morning; the shades of the night being favorable to hiding their torn and faded garments. Numbers of them I found to be real Christians, and "oh!" they would say, "it is grace alone that has enabled us to keep up until now; without that we would have sunk under our afflictions long ago." As fast as they are able to go, the Government is sending them north. And right gladly do they go; the cheap land and free schools of the north presenting the strongest attractions to them. And as to the schools, badly do they stand in need of them; for fully one half of their number, I should think, were unable to read. Distributing tracts and papers, constantly was I met with the reply, "I can't read, Sir." Hearing the reply from old men and women, was bad enough, but when it would come from the mouths of boys and girls between twelve and eighteen years of age, oh; how sore it would make my heart! After four days labor in Nashville, in company with two other brethren, we were started off to the city of Huntsville. We came here as pioneers, the Commission never before, on account of the scarcity of laborers, having been able to reach this point. Our first care on arriving was to get the office under way. And now with a short account of this part of our work, I will bring my present letter to a close. The office is a large store room in the most business part of the city. Along one side of the room we have a writing table, running from end to end, and so, capable of accommodating from a dozen to twenty persons at a time. Over this table hangs the following notice: Soldiers' Writing Table. Paper and Envelopes Free. Sit down and send a few words home. Your friends want to hear from you. The consequence, as may well be imagined is, that from morning till night, the table is lined with soldiers writing letters to their homes. Oh! how those homes, made more bright and cheerful by these letters, ought to thank the Christian Commission for its noble work! On the opposite side of the room, we have files of the Cincinnati, Louisville, and Nashville daily papers; also, copies of the various literary magazines of the country, such as the Atlantic, Continental, Eclectic, and Harper's Monthly. These of course are all free to the soldiers, and right heartily do they enjoy the reading of them. Still further, on this side of the room, we have a circulating library—a few of the books of which circulate well, whilst the vast majority rest quietly on the shelves. And why? Because of their utter worthlessness—being worn out Sabbath School libraries. What do men care for such books as these, books that are in-

tended and fit only for children? Men want mental food that is suitable to them, strong meat and not infant's milk. Please remember that, will you, my reader, the next time you contribute to a soldier's library! ROBT. McMILLAN. THE PROVINCE OF SCIENCE IN PUBLIC PREACHING.—NO. 1. Science in the pulpit; what place should science have in public preaching? is a question which thoughtful ministers and Christians have often asked themselves and each other. At the risk of being classed among "unlearned and ignorant men," I shall answer the question, with capital emphasis, NO PLACE! I do not here inquire what is the proper place of science, or whether modest investigations into physical and metaphysical phenomena, are profitable in their place and within proper limits, or how far it is best to push our "guesses at truth," which in our pride we call science. I speak only of "the province of science in public preaching," and of that pride of intellect which scientific pursuits engender—a pride so unbecoming in a minister of Christ, and so ruinous to simple faith in the divine testimony. I know, indeed, with what contempt those who have eaten of the tree of knowledge, and suppose themselves to have "become, as gods knowing good and evil," look down upon men who are content to get all their knowledge of divine things from Holy Scripture. I would willingly take my place among those who are "fools for Christ's sake," knowing that the greatest of the apostles has said, "If any man thinketh himself to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."—He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.—"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain." Men glorify science, philosophy, wisdom, and pride themselves in it, because by it they seem to be more and more independent of God. How godless is all this glorying in our science and civilization, which are separating us wider and wider from God,—putting God further away from us, until a child-like faith in God has well nigh vanished; and even christened men have more faith in arts and sciences, in telegraphs and steam and printing, in armies and navies, to hasten the coming of the world's regeneration, than in God. When our first parents saw the tree of knowledge, that it was "a tree to be desired to make one wise," and they believed the lie of Satan, there was born within them the desire to be wise without God. They had received every thing from him thus far. All they knew—the very language in which they talked with each other—they had by direct revelation from God. But why should they not, like gods, get wisdom for themselves, and be independent of God? They would acquire knowledge, not receive it. They would take knowledge from God's works instead of God's word; from a NATURE, not from REVELATION. Alas! alas! God left man to himself, partially, as a punishment for his sin. God said, "You shall have your wish; you shall ask questions of nature, and learn of her." "You shall learn how to get bread out of the earth by labor." "Nature shall teach you her first lesson; by sweat of laborious brow shall you learn it." This is the origin of both labor and science. Satan is still saying to us, "Knowledge is power," still urging us on with the old hope that we shall be like gods, knowing good from evil. The "capacities of the mind," the "advancement of science," the "progress of civilization and the arts," the dignity of labor, in short the greatness of man without God are themes of sermons, orations, addresses, school essays, ad nauseam. What place is there left for God among the "laws of nature," or for revelation amid human sciences? I do not say that, in our fallen state, human science has not its legitimate uses and its lawful province, but I do say that it has great dangers and risks as well. I say that its uses are not either to bolster up or to pull down revelation, and that its place, its province, is not in preaching; that however Christ's ministers may, if they have leisure and opportunity, pursue the sciences as means of culture, yet it is their business to "preach the word" whether man, scientific or otherwise, will hear or forbear; whether it be a stumbling block to the Jew, or folly to the Greek. Let us not, too easily flatter ourselves that, in the midst of a wicked world, with the Gospel to preach to men, we have time to pursue human science in any great degree. This desire for human learning may be a temptation of the first tempter. Let us beware;

"Knowledge puffeth up," while Satan whispers, "Knowledge is power." I confess I am impatient even of that pulpit teaching which is always bent on justifying God's ways to men, as though God's claim for a hearing were to be tried by his concord with our human reason. I am impatient of those analogies by which preachers would make it easier to believe God's word, and bring the high mysteries of revelation down to a fancied scientific basis. For instance, I do not more thoroughly believe in the great doctrine and mystery of the Resurrection after all the "vain babblings" about grubs and butterflies, and other natural transformations which adorn so many sermons. I want the preacher to say to me, and to all men, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that GOD should raise the dead?" or if he condescend to give an analogy at all to him who says, "How can these things be?" let him precede it as St. Paul did with the words "Thou fool!" I would have Christian ministers sound out clearly and definitely what the Bible teaches, and if science does not agree with it, then "so much the worse" for science. There is nothing to me more humiliating than to see a "man of God" standing, with cap in hand, before some geologist or "savant" of human learning, and apologizing for Christianity. If the geologist (the knowing one), but say "Tribute to him, he is ready to re-adjust his theology to the new scientific basis, and is fearful for the sake of God as that man was for his life, who was told that he had an 'Epidermis' all over his body, and that the posterior lobe of his brain had got around to the back side of his head. There is no class of men that deceive themselves and others more than do scientific men by those terms which they have agreed to call scientific. There is no class of men more credulous and more easily imposed on than those of science. In the 'mystifications' of Miss Graham, as recorded by Dr. John Brown in his "Spare Hours," she says that the "clever men" were most easily deceived, while "dogs and children" were the surest detectives. They tell us that the race must be more than 6000 years old, because we want 10000 years to effect the division of the human family into the three great races, for it is, unscientific to suppose that the distinction existed in the family of Noah. But "an authentic instance of a white man turning black," is related by Dr. Dickson of the British Embassy at the Levant. The subject is an Armenian twenty-eight years of age. He was laid up for years with a severe sickness which was followed by intermittent fever of a year's duration, and this in turn by an attack of jaundice. During the last illness, the color of the patient's skin changed from yellow to bronze, and as fast as this change progressed his health improved. At present the entire surface of his skin, excepting the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet, is a very deep bronze hue, such as marks the color of the dark Abyssinian races. The medical term for this disease is melanopathia. Now, since we have this "authentic instance" of the change from white to black occurring within four years we shall no longer need the ten thousand years, and it will be scientific (?) to think the race-difference might have existed in the family of Noah. There can be no doubt of it now that we have the scientific term "melanopathia," although it might still be doubtful if the cause of the change had been called the "Black-sickness." Well does St. Paul command his apostolic legate, Timothy, to "avoid profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science falsely so called" for science, in his days, as in ours, and in every age, has been largely falsely so called. It is said indeed that science is knowledge, for such is the meaning of the word; but it is just because that is the meaning of the word that the so-called sciences are falsely so called. "Science is knowledge reduced to a system." Supposing the facts to be true facts upon which the system is built, still the science may be false; the system, the theory, may be only a cloak for ignorance; ignorance veiling itself in scientific terms. How well I remember when Professor Boye had given us the theory, the science of electricity, or light or heat, or something of that sort, and we were ready to receive it as absolute truth, and "re-adjust our theology" to it if need be, he stopped short, and in his broken English (for he was a Dane) said: "Young gentlemen, we have discovered that the theories of former philosophers were false, and perhaps what I am telling you now is a lie!" D. G. M. [We give place to our correspondent's remarks, as forcibly exposing the false and presumptuous claims of science upon the preachers and believers of

Christianity, though we regard his line of argument as tending to the opposite and equally dangerous extreme of undervaluing science: a course likely to land us in superstition or in mysticism.—Ed.] PRESBYTERIANISM IN AMERICA. LIBERAL ELEMENTS IN THE EARLY ORGANIZATIONS. In the recently-published volume of the Autobiography and Correspondence of Dr. Lyman Beecher, we find a statement of the manner in which the church over which he was first settled, that of Easthampton, L. I., was led to assume a Presbyterian organization. "My first business," he says, "after ordination, was to organize a session." This was in 1799, ten years after the organization of the General Assembly. "Dr. Buell," says Dr. B., "had always belonged to the Presbytery, and the church called itself Presbyterian; but they never had an elder, never sent up any records, never had any to send. Dr. Buell was church and everything else." Such a state of things as this, no sensible Presbyterian will quote for commendation, but it is indicative of certain elements which were combined in the organization of the General Assembly, which need to be considered in our estimate of the spirit of the church at that critical period of its history. When it was proposed to organize the church in connection with the Assembly, the Long Island churches—Suffolk Presbytery—were reluctant to place themselves under its jurisdiction. They made no secret of their sympathies, and even committed themselves by their resolves, to stand aloof from all connection with it. It was only by the correspondence and persuasions of Drs. McWhorter and Rodgers—a committee of the Assembly—that they were led to reconsider their action and become a constituent part of the Presbyterian church. A rigid ecclesiasticism they abhorred, and it was upon the assurance that this was not intended, that they consented to the Synod's request to adhere to the new organization. Numerous other facts, equally indicative of the liberal spirit of the Presbyterian church at that period, might be given. Many of the churches, besides that of Easthampton, were not provided with an eldership. It was sometimes after his settlement at Catskill, that the late Dr. Porter was led, by the pressing necessity of the urgency of discipline to organize a session. Even the First Church of Baltimore, although it had been for nearly forty years under the charge of Dr. Allison, one of the Fathers of the church, had no session until about the commencement of the present century. Henry Patillo, the Patriarch of the Presbyterian Church in North Carolina, in a volume of discourses published the year preceding the meeting of the first General Assembly, expressed his decided preference for a system which should conjoin the Congregational pattern of the local church with Presbyteries and Synods. It is well known that Dr. Wilson, the father of Dr. J. P. Wilson, of Philadelphia, was even dissatisfied with such concessions as he supposed were made in the adoption of the Standards of the church, while the venerable Dr. Witherspoon himself, with all the affection he might be supposed to entertain for a Scottish model, would have preferred that the highest jurisdiction of the church should be known as "Council" rather than "Assembly." So little zealous, moreover, were the Synod of Philadelphia in behalf of Annual Assemblies, that soon after the commencement of the present century, they proposed that the church, by its representatives, should meet only once in three years. Even in Western Pennsylvania, that zealous and decided Congregationalist, Joseph Rodgers, was accounted a sufficiently sound Presbyterian, and was one of the Committee that assisted in the organization of the Pittsburg Synod as the Western Missionary Society. Such facts as these serve to manifest the spirit of the church at that period. As Dr. Beecher says, "there was none of that foolishness about isms which has been got up lately." The real parties by whom the plan of union of 1801 was sanctioned in the Presbyterian church, were very largely themselves participes criminis—in complicity with Congregational usages. If evils finally resulted—as was contended—from the plan, what was the true method of meeting them? Surely the Long Island churches, at the time of the organization of the Assembly, were as indifferent to strict Presbyterianism, and as lax in their usages, as the obnoxious Synods were in 1837. Yet they formed an integral part of the whole body. They were even urged to adhere to it. They were assured that they were not called to accept or endorse a rigid model. All that was ne-

cessary to lead them to conform more strictly to the Presbyterian system, was time and experience. "They changed to Presbyterian," says Dr. Beecher, "without any particular influence." In the case of his own church he remarks, "I persuaded them, and we organized a good, strong, sober session." His common sense led him to see the need of it for the exercise of discipline. "When I got the eldership," he says, "we found a member who was a drunkard." "Another had sold a horse for sound that was not sound. He said it was not his business to tell the horse's faults. We gave him some edification on that point. So we straightened things, and kept them strict and careful, and had no trouble." Here was practical wisdom conformed to the true spirit of American Presbyterianism. Time has shown that the excommunicated Synods only needed to be left quietly to pursue their work, in order eventually to approximate near enough to the Presbyterian system—even where there was an original divergence—for harmonious co-operation. It may be easy after the lapse of years to forget the principles that lie at the foundation of an organization, but it is never safe to disregard them. Any such neglect is sure to risk the disruption of the body, or the overthrow of the structure. We think it safe to say that the constitutional Presbyterian Assembly is the proper representative of the fathers of 1789. THE MARYLAND FAIR FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHRISTIAN AND SANITARY COMMISSION. The loyal women of Maryland, have projected a fair in aid of the two noble Commissions, which everywhere follow the army in their work of benevolence and love. It is to begin in Baltimore, on the 18th of April next, and will differ from the great fairs which have been held in the metropolitan cities in the East and West, in placing as its first object the Christian Commission. Its proceeds will be equally divided between both enterprises. This is but justice, for the Christian, equally with the Sanitary Commission, goes to the army with food and raiment, and hospital supplies, and while giving the Testament and the tract, and pointing the soul of the soldier to Jesus, ministers to his bodily needs. In the arduous work they have undertaken, the women of Maryland would thankfully receive any aid, however small, in money or material from those who sympathize with them in other States. The loyal women are in the minority. Those who sympathize with the rebellion will give them no assistance, and are only prevented from openly hindering the work by the strict military rule which so wisely prevails in the State. During the residence of many months in Maryland, the writer has conceived a profound respect for the loyal women of the border States. They have been constant and heroic in their adherence to the Union, braving the severance often of pleasant and family ties, and their attendance on our gallant soldiers, both on the battle-field and in the hospitals, has been faithful and unremitting. And therefore, I would ask the readers of this Paper who have anything to spare, however small, to contribute their mite to the ladies of Baltimore. Do not repeat the old question, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth," but believe that to-day there is in Maryland, very much of proud devotion to the old flag, of staunch loyalty to the government, of tender love to the soldiers. Full information may be attained by addressing Mrs. Alph Hyatt, or Mrs. G. S. Griffith, 77 West Baltimore St., Baltimore. M. E. M. THE MALDEN MURDER. The Christian Register, of Boston, thus derives two solemn lessons from the tragedy of crime recently enacted in broad day in that city. In like manner, it was the pressure of debt which led Dr. Webster to murder Dr. Parkman in Harvard College. A young man, in the middle of the day, about two months since, was found dead on the floor of the Malden Bank. He had fallen by the hand of violence. Unseen, unheard, the villain had escaped, carrying with him his criminal spoils. Men were appalled at this bold and successful crime, perpetrated at noonday in the busy scenes of traffic. After fruitless labor to unravel the tragic mystery, the community was fast forgetting the deed in the swift whirl of events; when the public mind was startled by the announcement that the murderer had been arrested, and the guilt confessed. Moreover, we are told that the man who did the atrocious deed was a fellow-townsmen, who, heretofore, had borne a good character, held responsible trusts, and was surrounded by the endearments of domestic life. In his confession he

also disavowed the feeling of vindictiveness towards young Converse. What then was the great underlying motive which led to this atrocious crime? DEBT! The man was maddened into the wicked deed by this harrowing spectre. It followed him by day—it haunted him at night. It was more powerful as a motive than his love for his family. It blinded his reason, silenced his conscience, roused his passions, until, under the tremendous motive pressure, he formed a cool, skillfully prepared and diabolical plan, to strike the fatal blow, and brand his soul with the ineffaceable crime of murder. The career of Edward W. Green is the biography of a numerous class in the community. He is but an exaggerated type of men who live without fixed and firm principles of character, and allow themselves to incur obligations which involve pecuniary embarrassment. The whole life, in this case, rests on a false basis. The man who through extravagance allows himself to get in debt, at once opens the door for the tempter. In his desperation he rushes to the gaming table, tries a hazardous speculation, begins the incipient fraud which ends in forgery, and when the trouble accumulates he is at last driven to steal. To Edward W. Green, the tempter said, kill young Converse and rob the Malden Bank. This dark page of human guilt has a warning. That man in his wretchedness and woe lifts up his voice. To those who are drifting by the currents of extravagance, into debt, with no deep and abiding principles of action, the tragedy has a profound moral. To such it says—your lives are rotten at the core. They rest on a false basis. You are sapping the foundations of integrity. Have the moral courage to commence a better life. As you value character, the esteem of the world, the welfare of your family, and the approval of God, begin anew to live according to right principles. This is the pathway of honor, truth and peace. The holiest dictates of religion entreat you to pluck the nettle of danger. We have also, in this startling crime, an illustration of the power of a wicked idea to gain possession of the soul and lead the man to do the wicked deed. Have you a criminal intent in your heart? Do you cherish a wicked thought? Then the root of the fraud, theft or murder, has started its fibres in your breast. Lift the veil that conceals the real moral history of that man who now in prison bears the burden of this horrible crime. How could he, while gazing on the face of his first born, carry with him the cruel thought of murder? How could he, in the presence of the wife he loved, put the pistol, with which he designed to kill, into the drawer? There are many steps in his history of crime before this is reached. He began the career just closed by living beyond his means; and as the condition of his affairs became more desperate, still more desperate thoughts flashed up in his mind. On a certain day he went into the bank and saw the money. The idea of robbing it rose vividly before him. It was then only a suggestion. But he played dalliance with the thought; soon it became a fixed purpose. Familiarity with it imparted strength. The great end in view held him spell bound. As he laid his head on the pillow, the idea was his companion. In the morning hour, as he went to the Post Office, it grew in intensity. Then he began to act. The pistol was put in his pocket. He watched for the fitting hour. At length, after being thwarted, the opportunity came. The flash, the report, twice in rapid succession, the rifling of the drawer, the stealthy retreat, the burden of the awful crime, the woe of remorse, the fear of death, all these are but parts of the tragedy. The deed, with all its antecedents and consequences, is but the ripening of the first wicked thought. The crime was all enveloped in that early germ. The guilt began the moment the wicked purpose was detained in the mind. Therefore "keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." UPON THE QUESTION, What is the worst bread which is eaten? one answered, in respect to the coarseness thereof, bread made of beans; another said, bread made of acorns; but the third hit the truth who said, bread taken out of other men's mouths, who are the true proprietaries thereof. Such bread may be sweet in the mouth to taste but is not wholesome in the stomach to digest.—Thomas Fuller. LET MINISTERS remember to bring up the rear in their congregations, that the meanest may go along with them in their devotions.—Ibid. I WOULD HAVE MEN not to hear fewer sermons but to hear more in hearing fewer sermons. Less preaching better heard (reader, lay the emphasis not on the word less but on the word better,) would make a wiser and stronger Christian, digesting the word from his heart to practice it in his conversation.—Ibid. THE STEPS OF FAITH, Fall on the seeming void, and find The rock beneath. NOTHING but effort for virtues that are not can keep alive virtues that are. DEATH is the crown of life.