

Correspondence.

LETTER FROM HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

Huntsville, Ala., March 20, 1864.

DEAR EDITOR: In this second letter which I write you as a delegate of the Christian Commission, I resume my sketch of our work at this point, proceeding now to speak of our labors outside of the office.

The following are the things that this part of our work consist in: Distributing reading matter, visiting the hospitals, preaching, and teaching in a negro school. Of these in their order.

First—Distributing reading matter. The matter itself is of course all religious, consisting of tracts and newspapers. The newspapers are of all denominations—that is, evangelical denominations, and we have them in the fullest variety; indeed, it seems to me that there is scarcely a religious paper published in the country, but we have copies of it. Hence let a man ask us for what paper he may and we are able to supply him. And oh! how it gladdens the hearts of the soldiers to receive the very paper of their choice—the dear, old, familiar sheet, maybe, that they have been accustomed to see and to read from their boyhood! One of the family faces, it seems to do them as much good as a visit from a father or a brother would.

In distributing these papers we do it as delegates, only in those regiments that are not provided with chaplains. Where there is a chaplain, we give him the papers and suffer him to distribute them, never wishing in any way whatever to come between the chaplain and his men. We go from tent to tent in distributing, and leave one, two or three papers in each tent, according to the number of its inmates. In thus going from tent to tent, we get acquainted with the soldier's inner life, as it were. And alas! in how many cases do we find it no very creditable one. Card-playing and even gambling we find, not indeed universal (for we not infrequently light upon men singing hymns and reading the Bible) yet fearfully common, alarmingly general. Happening upon any so engaged, we never suffer them to go unrebuked; we always, kindly and yet as forcibly as we are able, protest against their employment, and though we have done so hundreds of times, have in no case received other than the kindest replies.

In these distributing visits, besides our papers and tracts we sometimes carry with us homewives comfort bags. And how willingly these are received—yes, eagerly sought after! Why, scarcely do you appear in camp with them but you are surrounded by a crowd, each begging most eloquently for one. However, our own practice is never to give them indiscriminately in a crowd. We distribute them the same as we do the papers, from tent to tent, and one, two or three in each. Thus, each mess to some degree reaps of their handful, and not, as otherwise would be the case, all of one mess getting and perhaps none of another. That soldier considers himself the most fortunate and is the envy of all the others, who gets a real pen and ink letter from the donor in his homewife. And doing so, down he sits almost immediately and writes a thankful acknowledgment to the little boy or girl from whom it has come. And now let this be an encouragement to the little boys and girls that are accustomed to read this paper, to have a hand in this good work. Yes, my little friends, make up a housewife or comfort bag; fill it with needles, and thread, and buttons, and pins, and put a little letter of your own writing in it, and start it off to some soldier through the Christian Commission. So doing, I guarantee you that, whilst you will bestow a great favor upon some brave soldier, so also in the course of time you will receive from him a nice letter of thanks, which will repay you tenfold for your expense and trouble.

Second—Visiting hospitals. At some points this is the delegate's principal work. Here, however, it occupies but little of his time and attention. The reason is that we have but two hospitals in the place, and in them both only from thirty to forty patients. Still, though the patients are so few we don't overlook them. We distribute papers and tracts among them, hold religious services from time to time in their wards, converse individually with such as are particularly sick, and write letters for them to their friends at home. We came provided with delicacies and underclothing for such as might need them, but so far have found very little occasion to use them. Two sanitary commissions are here, whose peculiar work it is to provide these things, and as they do it most abundantly, all aid from us is entirely forestalled.

A third thing in our work is preaching. Here again our work at this point is somewhat limited. Not from the fewness of men or regiments, but from the multiplicity of Chaplains. No part of the army, I suppose, is better supplied

in this way than the divisions around here. Only two regiments here are found that are destitute, and some batteries. These, of course, we take under our special care and minister to them regularly the word of life. The 5th Ohio Cavalry is one of the two regiments, and to them have I more particularly preached. An affecting incident occurred in respect to three men of this regiment on last Sabbath night, which I will here relate.

I preached to the regiment about four o'clock. As soon as service was over, the three men referred to, who were present, left the camp, going away on some business, I know not what. Night came on and they did not return. Monday morning came and yet they were not back. The day passed away and Tuesday came, and still they were not heard from. During the morning, however, word comes to camp that two soldiers have been found drowned in a well, and that they can be seen at the post hospital. The captain of the company to which the three men belong goes to the hospital, and there, in the drowned soldiers, recognizes two of his missing men. But where is the third? It is suggested that he had better go and examine the well further. He does so, and lo! not only the third soldier but a fourth person, a citizen. Four men dead in a well! How could it have happened? There is suspicion at first of foul play, one of the soldiers being known to have had over two hundred dollars on his person. His body is searched; the money is not found. The well is drained and there it is in the bottom with a couple of revolvers. The bodies are then examined to see if they have been injured in any way; but no, no marks of violence are to be found. What then? Why, but one conclusion can be come to—that in the darkness of the night the four have all walked together into the well; which they could easily do, its mouth being some eight or ten feet in diameter. And yet these men heard me preach but a few hours before their death! "Was I faithful to their souls?" was the first question I asked myself on knowing it. Thank God! I was, for immediate acceptance of Jesus was the burden of my sermon, urged particularly from the uncertainty of life, from our ignorance of what the morrow may bring forth. "If thou warn the wicked in his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."

In preaching to a regiment our place of worship is of course always in the open air. Our pulpit, if we have one, is a stump—at least such has been mine in preaching to the regiment mentioned above. We gather our audience together, sometimes by means of the bugle, or the fife and drum, but more usually simply by singing. Mounting on stumps we sing a portion of psalmody with as strong a voice as possible, and this attracting the attention of the soldiers, by the time we are through we have a very good number about us. Scarcely ever, either at the beginning or end of the service, can you get the soldiers to join with you in your singing; at least such is my experience. With the exception of a weak support from one or two voices I mostly have to do the singing myself. Very respectful and attentive always are the soldiers during the preaching. Sitting around you in a circle if the ground is dry, or standing if it is wet, they remain till you are through, and then many will come forward to shake your hand and have a conversation with you. These, as would naturally be expected, are usually Christians. Yet not always so. Sometimes they are open sinners that have been affected by the sermon, and that are drawn irresistibly to you as if you could afford them relief.

Some subjects that you preach on seem to affect them more than others, they give more earnest heed and attention to them. Chief among these, in our experience, is profane swearing. I don't know how it is, but whenever I preach on this subject every one's attention seems riveted. Indeed they will gather in so closely about me that my hands will almost be reaching them. The aptness of the subject—its almost universal suitability (if there is such a word)—goes a great way; I suppose, towards attracting their attention. I mentioned a fourth thing that occupied our attention—teaching in a negro school. My letter is so long now, however, that I shall have to reserve reference to it to a third.

ROBERT McMILLAN.

SOMETHING YOU CAN DO FOR OUR SOLDIERS.

Christian reader, you are deeply interested in the great struggle now going on in our country. You look forward to an active campaign soon to open, with bright hope that it will be successful, and yet, and yet, you cannot forget that many brave boys must fall, and you long for their immediate conversion lest some should die unprepared,

and, though martyrs to a glorious cause, should be lost forever. You have heard with joy and gratitude of the great work God is doing in the awakening and conversion of soldiers, and wish home duties would permit you to bear a part in the special efforts now being made for their salvation. I write to remind those who cannot leave home, that there are two ways at least, in which they may render important aid to laborers in the field.

First—You can pray. Every evening thousands gather in the chapels to pray. Can you not spend at least a part of the hour between seven and eight o'clock each evening in "effectual earnest prayer" for the brave and noble defenders of our country whose souls are in such peril? The early Christians sympathized so deeply with Peter when he was in prison that prayer was made without ceasing, of the church, unto God for him. (Acts xii.) And surely the tens of thousands of Satan's captives in our armies ought to awaken all our sympathies. God delivered Peter and will deliver these if the whole church unites its prayers for them. A father wrote me recently, that in praying for his son in my regiment, he had been assured that he would be converted. Then the son was far from God; but before the letter reached me he was rejoicing in the pardon of sin. O for united, believing, importunate prayer!

Second, You can write. There is probably at least one in the army, with whom you might say would have more weight than all that could be uttered by his Chaplain, or any one else. You know his history. He may have made you vows as yet unfulfilled. You understand the secret spring of his nature. At any rate, you love him and he loves you, and if any one can influence him you can. Write him an earnest, affectionate letter, pleading with him to give God his heart at once. Let it be steeped in prayer, and if it is blotted with tears all the better. The Spirit will attend it to his soul and he will be saved. As you value these precious souls—as you desire to be pure from the blood of all men, I beg you do ALL YOU CAN, and do it NOW. CHAPLAIN.

SLEEPING IN CHURCH.

Veneration for the maxims of antiquity, and respect for long established customs, are elementary principles in the human soul. So strong is their hold upon the majority of persons, and so great their influence, that more than ordinary courage is requisite to free one's self from their powerful grasp, and none but the strongest reasons will be accepted as a sufficient justification for attacking them, and desiring to abolish them. Hence it was not without a good deal of fear and trembling, that we determined to make some strictures upon a practice so ancient and widespread, as sleeping in church. Apart from the presumption with which we may be charged, and the cry of innovation that may be raised against us, we felt that it was a hazardous enterprise, and one which would not fail to excite opposition, to attempt to do or say anything which would interfere with the weekly slumbers of so many good men: for very few Christians have grace enough to enable them to bear to be awakened in the middle of a comfortable nap without feeling irritated, much less to be entirely deprived of it; in rousing them out of sleep, you are liable to rouse their anger. We are willing, however, to run this risk; for we are firmly convinced, and this is our only apology for saying anything against so venerable and respectable a habit, that sleeping in church is wrong, and therefore ought not to go unrebuked.

In making this charge we are not unaware of its gravity, nor of the many excuses that have been framed in defense or rather in palliation of this evil habit, and shall therefore endeavor to make good our statement by arguments as profound as church slumbers generally are.

It is said by some that sleeping in church is a mark of confidence in the preacher that they are sure of his being orthodox, that it is a compliment, therefore, instead of a slight. This certainly is very soothing, and ought to be perfectly satisfactory. But we reply that it is replying too much in the faithfulness of man, forgetful of the exhortation, "put not your trust in man, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no stay." It would also seem to recognize the Popish doctrine of clerical infallibility, and it is a well-known fact that those ministers who most need watching, are the very ones under whom their slumbers are unbroken, and their sleep most refreshing. And how do these sleepers know, but that, while they are enjoying a most delightful doze, and dreaming about something in no way connected with points of doctrine, their minister may be insidiously inserting the wedge of error into their system of truth, or slyly insinuating some dreadful heresy? The above excuse is clearly unsatisfac-

tory; these sleepers ought to be wide awake. It has been asserted that the nodding of the head, observable in some persons while lost in sleep, must be very encouraging to the preacher, because it signifies their cordial assent to the truths which he may be uttering. This is another "quieting" argument, but equally flimsy with the one preceding. Not to speak of the fact that ministers know right well, particularly when their preaching is of a "personal" character, that they do not coincide with all their statements; we refuse, on philosophical grounds, to give to this downward motion of the head any such interpretation. It is an involuntary thing, caused by the action of gravitation, and, therefore has no more significance than the well-known shaking of the head produced by palsy. In addition to this, there is the painful feeling which is excited in the breast of the minister, and of all who may be cognizant of it, lest this very important portion of the human frame, in its sudden descent, should, by its own weight, break the ligaments which connect it with the rest of the body, and tumble to the ground.

"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," is another plea urged in extenuation of this offence, but it cannot be satisfactorily maintained. Where, we ask, are the signs of "weakness in the flesh" in those who constitute the vast majority of sleepers? By a euphemism, we know, all bad habits are called weaknesses; as, for example, when we see a man too feeble to stand alone, but must lean against a wall or lamp-post, we attribute this weakness of his to a weakness. Upon this principle, we readily admit that sleeping in church may be ascribed to a weakness, but, most assuredly, it cannot be imputed to weakness. We are inclined to think that the "willingness" which these persons speak of, is a willingness to sleep. This habit of theirs cannot, therefore, be called a sin of "infirmity," owing to "weakness in the flesh."

But, perhaps some of these sleepers may say that, in their case, it is a "work of necessity and mercy." Well, we remember seeing somewhere an account of an old lady, who lived in a place where they had only occasional preaching. During the interval between the visits of the minister, she slept little or none. When there was preaching, her children always took her to church, not with the expectation that she would derive any benefit from the sermon, for she could not hear a word, but because she was sure to go to sleep, and she returned home, if not edified, at least greatly refreshed. In this case we might admit the plea of "necessity and mercy." But, as a man, once said when the advice of Paul to Timothy was quoted to him, in order to persuade him to drink, "my name is not Timothy and there is nothing the matter with my stomach," so we would say in regard to the sleepers in our churches, they are not old women, they are not deaf nor are they insomniacs. This excuse is evidently unavailing.

In regard to the cause or causes which make a church, during the hours of public worship, so favorite and so favorable a place for sleeping, we shall not say anything; for, on this subject we could not speak with any degree of definiteness. One thing we know, and it is a very consoling fact to those who are conscious of being somewhat "heavy" and "dry," that it is not always nor altogether in the minister, for under the greatest preachers, Paul the Apostle, for example, persons have gone asleep. Where then lies the blame? Could we only get to the root of the matter, a cure might be proposed, a remedy might be applied. R. W.

HOW GOD ANSWERED PRAYER IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

A SCRIP FROM ANCIENT HISTORY.

In the fourth century, during the reign of Constantine, the church had rest from a persecution which had been almost continuous under the Emperors of pagan Rome from the days of the Apostles.

In this reign lived Arius, the founder of the great heresy known as Arianism, a belief very similar to that of the Unitarians of the present day, who deny that Christ was divine, looking upon him as a wonderful man endowed by God with miraculous powers.

A great council of bishops was called by the Emperor Constantine, at Nice, to determine what the true doctrine was in relation to the divinity of Christ. Constantine was not clear in his own convictions as to the truth in this matter, nor was he very particular as to what he did believe, but the discussion upon this topic was running high throughout the Empire. The Christian world was the scene of constant animosity and contention; the absorbing subject everywhere was this religious controversy, and Constantine desired

peace. The council of 318 bishops from all parts of the Christian world met at Nice, A. D. 325. Constantine paid all their traveling expenses and also maintained them while there. Some of these good bishops had been sorely persecuted in former days for the faith of Jesus. One had had both hands horribly burned by hot irons; others appeared deprived of their right eyes; others deprived of their right legs. A crowd of martyrs, in truth, were seen collected in one body.

Twenty-two favored Arius. The result was, he was deposed and excommunicated.

Constantia, the sister of Constantine, had great influence over him, and on her death-bed, she being secretly in the interest of the Arian party, persuaded the Emperor to take measures to restore Arius. By degrees the Arians succeeded in gaining a new foothold, accomplishing by arts, subtlety and ingenious falsehoods what good men would not dare to undertake.

Arius came to Constantinople, the capital, by order of the Emperor. His friends, who were influential and powerful, determined that he should proclaim in the church his doctrines. The good bishop of Constantinople, Alexander, knew that his subtlety and artifice were dangerous elements to contend with. He was unwilling to admit a wolf who would devour the sheep by insinuating his poison into the church. He spent several days and nights in prayer alone in his church. The faithful followed his example, and prayer was made by the church without ceasing, that God would interfere on this occasion.

Constantine examined Arius as to his faith, requiring him to subscribe to the truth of the decrees of the Nicene council, which he did readily, and confirmed it by his oath, thus unscrupulously perjuring himself. Bishop Alexander was then ordered by the Emperor to receive Arius into his church.

"The good bishop had given himself to fasting and prayer, by renewing his supplication that day with great fervor in the church, prostrate before the altar: He begged that if Arius was in the right, he himself might not live to see the day of contest; but if the faith was true that he professed, that Arius, the author of all the evils, might suffer the punishment of his impiety. The next day seemed to be a triumphant one to the Arians. The heads of the party paraded through the city with Arius in their midst, and drew the attention of all toward them. When they came nigh to the forum of Constantine, a sudden terror with extreme pain in the bowels seized Arius. He fainted, and in a few minutes expired with a fearful hemorrhage. The place of his death was memorable to posterity, and was pointed out for many years." Finally a rich Arian purchased the spot and built a house upon it, that the judgment upon Arius might be forgotten. Thus did God answer the prayer of the faithful Christians of the fourth century. G. W. M.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF REV. E. E. ADAMS,

DURING A VISIT TO THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

On the morning of Feb. 23, we set off for the army. Met in the cars some marines, who gladly took the reading matter we offered, and listened to our Christian advice. One among them, a boy, had deserted, and was returned by his mother. He was full of fun, regarding his desertion as a good joke. Soldiers gathered about me earnestly asking for tracts and books. At the station of the Christian Commission, we numbered five in the little attic dormitory. Retiring first, my heart went up grateful to God for rest. The moon looked kindly in through the windows, and stars peered out from their pavilions, as if beckoning me upward. It was blessed to feel the calm of the hour, to have gone aside from the noise and sin, and clashing of the world, and be alone with night, with heaven, with God. With these still serene thoughts I sank to sleep.

"O sleep, sweet sleep; Whatever form thou takest, thou art fair. Holding onto our lips thy goblet filled, Out of oblivion's well, a healing draught."

Awaking at the sound of the bell, I saw in the surrounding couches, wakers like myself. We interchanged "good morning." "We are ignorant of each other's names," said I, "but doubtless on the same errand." Whereupon one after another sat up and the introduction went around: "I am Mr. Adams from Easton," and "I am Mr. Adams from Philadelphia," and "I am Mr. Tenney from Maine," and I am Mr. — from New Hampshire," and "I am Mr. — from Connecticut." And we laughed for joy. "Now," said one, "let us see what we are ecclesiastically," and the response began; "I am N. S. Presbyterian," and "I am O. S.," and "I am Congregational," "I am a Methodist,"

and "I am a Covenanter!" and then we laughed again. Is not this a token of the great hour, when the "reville" shall be sounded by angel trumpets awaking dead millions to eternal day? Will there not be greetings and introductions, and instructive views of life and character and personality? Gathered from all quarters of the earth, from all branches of the church, standing up together by our deserted graves, shall we not know the oneness of all Christ's children? It is pleasant to meet men, as we met in that chamber. We have no antagonisms. We see each other in our best mien, we are communicative, We exchange our best thoughts, and part with happy remembrances. The work of the Christian Commission offers many such occasions, gives many such delightful introductions, in and on the way to the camps. And there will be hours in eternity for the review of these meetings, as there will be friendships also which were formed in this casual, but providential manner. Long shall I carry in my heart the images of those whom these reunions brought together.

ROMAN CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT CHURCH BUILDINGS IN THE WAR.

BRO. MEANS:—Your correspondent J. L. L., writing from Chattanooga, mentions a fact which is by no means agreeable, either to truly loyal, or Protestant feeling. I refer to the especial care of the commanding general, to prevent the use of a Roman Catholic church for sheltering our sick and wounded soldiers. This it seems was too sacred to be used for such a necessary purpose; and hence a guard was detailed to keep it from being so used, and that too, while our suffering soldiers were perishing for the want of proper shelter! Roman Catholic churches are too holy to be used to save the lives of those who are fighting for their country! To the commanding general, a church of his faith, is a more sacred thing, than the lives of the brave boys who are fighting under him. The suffering men are lost sight of in his zeal for the church. And this is one of the characteristics of popery. Of this, the conduct of the Romish priests, at the burning of the Jesuit's church in Santiago, is an illustration. They could busy themselves in saving their idolatrous trumpery, while thousands of their deluded followers were perishing amid the flames. And so, General Rosecrans must preserve the church, at the expense of the lives of the soldiers!

Protestant churches are cheerfully offered when required, for the comfort of our sick and wounded soldiers. Commanding officers do not hesitate to appropriate them for such a purpose; but holy Roman Catholic church-buildings must not be so desecrated! Out upon such invidious discriminations. I knew an instance here in Kansas, where a Protestant church was used last Winter, not to shelter soldiers from the inclemency of the weather, but their horses; and, I suppose, if such a thing had been done to a papal church, there would have been a terrible indignation all over the land among the papal devotees, and their dear friends, certain politicians who are ever trimming their sails that they may catch the popular breeze; and, I suppose too, that some of the dignitaries at Washington would have written letters of sympathy and condolence on the occasion; and perhaps Congress would have made a special appropriation to heal the terrible desecration, and to pacify the papal conscience.

This is a Protestant Nation. Our religion is the religion of the Bible; Roman Catholics are not entitled to any peculiar privileges; and when some of our civil and military officers show them special favors, such become "unsavory" to all true Protestants. S. H. W.

DEATH OF DR. JONATHAN EDWARDS.

Returning from Sabbath evening service recently, we passed a church whose denomination we did not know, but hearing a preacher's voice, we quietly stepped to the door ajar, and listened. The theme was "Death, a benevolent provision of the Almighty." Among the illustrations, was the removal of Dr. Edwards, giving place to those who would cast off his errors, and extend the area of truth. The speaker said earnestly, "We are greatly in advance of him! But for death, he would still have been preaching up the lake of fire &c."—We do not give with perfect accuracy, perhaps, the expression, but nearly so. We looked at the young man with a smile of incredulity. The scholarly theologian, the devout and eloquent preacher, dwarfed in the distance, by a youthful divine, commanding an audience of about 100 people! He farther insisted, that each generation of the race, was an improvement every way on the preceding. We thought in reference to such teachers, of David's holy irony: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." H.