

Correspondence.

OPEN AIR MEETINGS.

BY EDWARD PATSON HAMMOND.

No. XI.

The open air mission has existed in London for eleven years. During this whole time it appears that there have been Christian men who have been so thoroughly impressed with the utility of open air preaching, that they have freely sacrificed time and money to carry on the work—year after year they have toiled on, confident of God's blessing. And yet in this country, so full of grand philanthropic movements, nothing of the kind exists. Thousands every Sabbath during our summer months wander in our parks. But few are found to kindly tell them of the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer.

Ministers of all denominations go forth under the auspices of the blessed Christian Commission to preach salvation to our noble soldiers, and to the wounded and the dying. They find no difficulty in speaking to vast audiences. They return to their people testifying of the conversion of scores and hundreds who listened to the words of eternal life in the open air. God grant that these men who have seen the immediate and blessed results of "preaching, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power," may have grace given them to preach Christ to the perishing neglecters of the gospel in their own cities and towns.

While visiting some of the great camps and hospitals in the vicinity of Washington, it did my heart good to see ministers and laymen sent out by the Christian Commission doing such a blessed work for the Master. For months, I think, daily meetings were held at "Camp Convalescent," and no doubt many in heaven will praise God for it. True, in the army the open air is generally the only place for religious services; but it seems to me that open air meetings are just as much a necessity in our great cities, where the masses do not and will come to our expensive churches. It is startling to see from statistics what a small percentage of our population attend the house of God.

But I intended, with only a few words, to introduce an abstract of the Eleventh Annual report of the open air mission in London. It is from a recent number of *The Revival*.

THE OPEN AIR MISSION IN LONDON.

This useful Mission, with the proceedings of which many of our readers are so well acquainted, has recently published its eleventh annual report, a document which is full of interesting matter to those who desire the spread of the gospel among the masses. An opening paragraph states that the society is unsectarian in its constitution; its object is to regulate, encourage, and improve open air preaching; to bring out properly-qualified laymen, who will take the gospel of Jesus Christ to their fellow-creatures assembled out of doors, at races, fairs, and executions, and in other places where opportunity is given. They are encouraged by conferences with their fellow-workers, and are helped by grants of tracts, and counsel when needed. When they are sufficiently known to the committees, or recommended by their minister, or by well-known Christian men, they are elected as members, and when they take services at the request of the Mission their travelling expenses are met.

After stating that there are upwards of 300 unpaid lay open air preachers in London besides the 600 city missionaries, Scripture readers, lay agents, and home missionaries, the report indicates the qualifications desirable for this work. Among the qualifications necessary for an open air preacher may be enumerated a good voice, naturalness of manner, self-possession, a good knowledge of Scripture and of common things, an ability to adapt himself to any congregation he may meet with, good illustrative powers, zeal, prudence, and common sense, a large, loving heart, a sincere belief in all he says, entire dependence on the Holy Spirit for success, a close walk with God by prayer, and a consistent walk before men in a holy life.

The Mission has done much by its useful conferences of preachers, held at the office on the last Monday in each month, and by its judicious selections of members (upwards of 100 being thus connected with it) to raise the tone of open air preaching. Of the work carried on by the society at executions, particulars of which appear from time to time in *The Revival*, the report states:—"One of the most encouraging departments of our work is that which is carried on at executions. Thousands hear the gospel at these gatherings who will not stop to listen at an ordinary open air service. Those only who have seen these crowds, especially in London, can form any conception of what they really are. Such a mass of wickedness and misery is not gathered together at any other time. And yet many of the people there present will listen to the gospel for one or two hours while waiting for an execution. To show the extent of these special efforts, it may be stated that when the five pirates were hanged on the 22d February, upwards of 100 Christian men and youths were at work among the vast crowd, and 72,000 tracts distributed through the Mission alone, besides those brought by other persons. Seven executions have thus been visited during the past year, at which fourteen criminals were hanged."

Then follows a list of eighty-five special gatherings, races, fairs, etc., which have been visited during the year. The number of tracts given on these occasions, and at the ordinary services, amounts to 755,251. Speaking of races and fairs, the report says:—"Mr. G. Porter, who has visited a large number of races and fairs, says, 'From observation of these races and fairs, I feel convinced that the race-course is the common resort of all that is bad. Vice luxuriates in all its varied forms of drunkenness, blasphemy,

immorality, etc. The fairs become more demoralizing every day. And yet among these assemblies of blackguards, blacklegs, thieves, drunkards, card-sharps, gamblers, priests, pugilists, and blasphemers, many church and chapel goers are to be found who have put on the profession of Christianity. They are not there to lift up their voices against the sins, but to mingle in the throng, and to gaze upon scenes that if there were tears in heaven would make angels weep.

A striking, though by no means uncommon, case of usefulness is given in connection with services in Lincoln's-inn-fields. "A man more than ninety years of age died recently, who, it is believed, owes his conversion to the age of ninety to an open-air service. He was at one time worth £150,000, but having been reduced to deep poverty he determined to destroy himself. For this purpose one evening in 1850 he left his house to go into Lincoln's-inn-fields and watch for an opportunity when only a few persons were about, to commit suicide; it was about nine in the evening when he reached the above square. As he was passing through it he saw a crowd round a man who was just commencing to read the account of the conversion of the Philippian jailer. The words, 'Do thyself no harm,' struck his attention; he stopped to listen. The Scripture that was read and the truths that were spoken were blessed by God to the old man's soul."

Although the report aims rather to show the amount of work done than to record cases of usefulness, yet here and there we read of suicides prevented, conversions effected, and Christians stirred up to greater earnestness as the result of open air preaching.

The funds with which so much work has been accomplished are comparatively small, the expenditure for the year being only £385 7s. 8d. We trust that our readers will aid so good and simple and apostolic a work by their contributions from time to time.

I pray that the time may come when such reports as these shall be common in our land. In reading the life of the celebrated Rev. Ralph Wardlaw, D. D., of Glasgow, by W. Lindsay Alexander, D. D., you find that in his palmy days he was not ashamed to be called "a street preacher." "There are few villages," says his biographer, "around Glasgow, that have not their reminiscences of Dr. Wardlaw, preaching at cross-roads, and in fields. A regular station of his during many years, was the top of Balmannis street, where, on Sabbath evenings, mounted on a chair, he proclaimed the unsearchable riches of Christ. Nor were these labors unrewarded; for a congregation as attached as ever pastor possessed soon gathered around him. Those who thus flocked around him were branded as 'Wardlaw's brigade.'"

One of those who used to listen to the words of this distinguished pulpit orator and theologian, narrated to his pastor his experience in the following terms:

"Come awa, Doctor, I maun just tell ye a bit o' my experience. When I was young a man, I sat and heard Dr—, but it was puir stuff, there wasna pickin' for a ewe; and ane o' my neebors advised me to gang and hear Dr. Balfour; it was gude feeding there, a man might wade up to the bolly among rye grass and clover. I thoct mysel real gude then, I was veel pleased wi' mysel, and I began to mak family worship, and a bonny booch I made o' t. Somebody spoke about you, and I thoct I would gang and hear ye. And oh, Doctor, naebody ever rippet up the monieples o' my heart as ye did. Ye showed me what a puir sinfu cratur I was, ye didna leave me a fut to stand on; and noo I'm lying here, doctor, just trusting to the righteousness of Christ, and waiting his time to free me frae a' my sins."

Surely if an "open air mission" had been started in Dr. Wardlaw's day, he would have been one of the first to have used all his influence in its favor. It no doubt cost this great divine a severe struggle when first he mounted a chair in the street and began to speak to a few, of the truths of God's word, but is he not now rejoicing in heaven that he was enabled, with Paul, to hear the Lord assure him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness?"

I have read of one Antigonus, who, about to engage in a sea-fight with Ptolemy's armada; when the timorous pilot cried out "Oh, how many more are they than we?" The fearless king answered, "It is true if you count their numbers; but for how many do you count me?"

Oh, that the Lord would help all his servants who are humbly striving to do His will, to say with the Psalmist, "THE LORD IS ON MY SIDE, I WILL NOT FEAR WHAT MAN CAN DO UNTO ME."

"My talents, gifts, and graces, Lord, Into thy gracious hands receive, And let me live to preach thy word, And let me to thy glory live, My every sacred moment spend, In publishing the sinner's Friend."

"I would the precious time redeem, And longer to be for this alone: To spend and to be spent for them Who have not yet my Saviour known, Fully on these my mission prove, And only breathe to breathe thy love."

THE CASE HONESTLY PUT.

A subscriber to the *Cincinnati Presbyterian*, who takes a reasonable view of things, writes thus—"I enclose you \$2 50 for the *Presbyter* another year. It always cost me the price of five bushels of corn to pay for it until this year and last. This year, although your price is raised, it only requires two bushels and a half peck to pay for it. Your patrons who are farmers, ought not to complain if you would now charge \$5 a year."

BROWNING'S DEATH OF ST. JOHN.

FOURTH PAPER—AND LAST.

That man must accept his true position as a spiritual being yet with limited powers,—that he must not suffer himself to be pushed into the gulf of materialism on the one hand, or deluded into the belief that his is the only spiritual being in the universe, and that he is therefore the sole god,—these are the positions the poet emphasizes in the mouth of the dying Evangelist. These accepted, a belief in the incarnation of the Eternal Son and in the Gospel word, would follow of course. Unbelief springs from a tendency to one or the other of these extremes. But it is the exaggerated spiritualism—the self-exaltation of modern speculation—that the poet more especially contemplates, and represents as formidable in the anticipation of the dying saint. Men of this turn of mind are fixed in the flattering opinion that their race is the repository—if not of all the power and the love in the universe—yet of all the kinds of power and love in the universe. Rather do they credit humanity with a positive superiority, in that they assume to themselves all the intelligence and freedom in the world, and refuse to allow of anything beyond Force in the world around them. Man is the creator, according to these presumptuous and profane thinkers, of all that professes to be a revelation in Christianity, quite as much as he is of the myths of heathen antiquity. All is but the reflection of his own inward experience. Man is "turned round on himself," worships himself, and dies.

The poet aims his heaviest weapons, therefore, at a speculative unbelief which, in fact amounts to Atheism, or the denial of the possibility of a revelation. That other class of unbelievers, who profess to admit the fact of a revelation, but who assume the right to deal with its miracles and its concrete facts as suits their theories, while they profess to retain its Ideas as its essential part, do not receive so much of his attention. Yet he has said enough to indicate his own position as a believer in the Gospel miracles as facts and to be distinguished from the spurious marvels of mythology. Further light is thrown upon the poet's views on this point, however, in a poem belonging to a somewhat earlier volume,* and called "Christmas Eve." Here the poet represents himself, among other Christmas Eve experiences, as listening to a German Professor, lecturing upon the "Myth of Christ." The lecturer states the case in the following—which may be styled the most approved Straussian fashion:

Whether 'twere best opine Christ was, Or never was at all, or whether He was, and was not, both together— It matters little for the name, So the Idea be left the same.

The poet reviews the positions of the lecturer and distinctly repudiates them. Others, he says, poison the atmosphere of truth,

"But the Critic leaves no air to poison, Pumps out by a ruthless ingenuity, Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity, (This much of Christ does he reject! And what retain?")

Over against this destructive critical analysis and arbitrary selection of what the Critic calls "ideas," the poet places the plain declarations of Christ himself:

What is the point where himself lays stress? Does the precept run "Believe in Good, In Justice, Truth, now understood For the first time?"—or "Believe in Me, Who lived and died, yet essentially Am Lord of life?" Whoever can take The same to his heart, and for mere love's sake Conceive of the love,—that man obtains A new truth; no conviction gains Of an old one only, made intense By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

These extracts show that the poet fully recognizes the supreme importance of the concrete facts of Christ's life. The emphasis placed by him upon the witness of the Apostle John himself to these facts—referred to frequently in the poem on his death—also shows in what light he regards them. A true historical personage, whose life, marvels, teaching and death are recorded, not in myths, but in historical books, written by living and trustworthy witnesses,—such is the Christ of Robert Browning. And yet He is the incarnate Son, He is God in Christ, acknowledged several times over in those very terms, by the devout poet. There is no sympathy whatever between his views and those of Renan, Strauss, and Schenkel on the character of Jesus. On the contrary, Browning seems to enter consciously into the lists against these arch-caricaturists, whose opinions are so current in Europe. He appears to have actually taken up the cause of Evangelical Christianity, and engaged in the vigorous defence of that conception of the Founder's character, which corresponds to the views of the simplest believers in a divine Saviour.

We close by quoting the lines which

*Sonnetto, Stratford, Christmas Eve and Easter Day, By Robert Browning. Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1864. The last two poems in this volume are worthy a serious reader's attention in this connection, and may possibly receive it at our hands.

form the conclusion of the "Death in the Desert." The manuscript containing the story of the Evangelist's Death is represented as falling into the hands of Cerinthus, one of the earliest opponents of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ; and to have received some additions from another hand. It will be seen that not only the possibility, but the fact of the sinner's death (which Browning elsewhere seems to question) is asserted in the concluding line of the poem. What will Unitarian admirers of the poet think of his representing an unbeliever in the divinity of Christ as, on that account, lost? The critic in the *Atlantic Monthly*, who became indignant at certain lines in Browning's Legend of Parnic, teaching the doctrine of Original Sin, should certainly have had a word for his condemned fellow-unbeliever, Cerinthus.

[Cerinthus read and mused; one added this; "If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of man Mere man, the first and best, but nothing more,— Account Him, for reward of what He was, Now and forever, wretchedest of all. For see; Himself conceived of life as love, conceived of love as what must enter in, Fill up, make one with His each soul He loved; Thus much for man's joy, all man's joy for Him, Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit reward. But by this time are many souls set free, And very many still retained alive; Nay, should His coming be delayed awhile, Say, ten years longer (twelve years, some compute) See if, for every finger of thy hands, There be not found, that day the world shall end, Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's word. That He will grow incorporate with all, With me as Pamphylax, with him as John, Groom for each bride! Can a mere man do this? Yet Christ saith, this he lived and died to do. Call Christ, then, the illimitable God, Or lost!"]

REV. ALBERT BARNES' SERMON.

Mr. Editor:—Yesterday afternoon, December 4, 1864, I went with a friend from Massachusetts, as I usually do with friends, to hear Mr. Barnes. His text was Luke, chap. ix: 23—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

I never hear Mr. B. preach but I feel just as a Mr. S. did, in Massachusetts, when he heard the celebrated Dr. Griffin, the first pastor of Park Street Church, Boston. Mr. S. was a pastor in one of the small towns of Massachusetts, and went as representative to "The Great and General Court" at Boston. There he heard Dr. Griffin preach. The people were all attention, almost all in tears, every pew full, &c. "I thought," said Rev. Mr. S., "I would go home and preach just as Dr. G. did. So I tried. I wrote my sermon; I thought it a real Dr. G. sermon. I began to preach it, and looked around to see the same effect produced that I had seen from Dr. G.'s. But the pews were not full; some of the people were asleep; others inattentive, and none weeping. My next thought was, why is this? When lo! the difficulty was solved in a moment. It was not Dr. G. that was preaching, but Thomas Shepherd." So I apprehend it would result with those who should attempt to preach like Mr. Barnes. I admire that plain, straightforward way of talking—no effort, no straining of the throat or lungs, no schoolboy reading, no solemn twang, as though he would say, "Now prepare yourselves, for I am going to do some great thing. I am going to preach."

After a few brief remarks on the openness or frankness of the Saviour in stating plainly what he expected of his disciples, Mr. B. said, the text divided itself in two parts. First, to be willing to follow Christ; and second, what they must do who follow him. Of the first part he said: If any will. This is not the auxiliary verb will, but a principal verb, denoting willingness to come after Christ. It was illustrated by the passage, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." The idea was this: it is not the judgment, understanding, conscience, imagination, memory; in a word, the faculties of the mind that are changed, in experiencing religion, but the will. It was admitted, however, that sin does bias the judgment, and, in a measure darken the understanding, and harden or sear the conscience, though it was maintained that generally these are correct. Some might have said there was a little *new schoolism* in this sermon. But, if there was, it seemed to be sanctified by a sufficiency of truth.

The second part, namely, what he must do, who would become Christ's disciple: it was said this needed three things: 1. To deny himself; 2. Take up his Cross daily; and 3. Follow Christ. 1. The Christian must deny himself in sensual pleasure; 2. Worldliness; 3. He must deny himself as to his manner of living; and 4. He must deny himself pride of opinion. Under these heads, the duty of the Christian was clearly shown, and it was stated that even the immoral are more apt to come into the

kingdom, than those who are wise in their own eyes, or who cannot bring their own ideas down to simple truth.

2. He must take up his Cross—the Cross was a term implying a burden, shame and reproach. The Cross to be taken up was not one which we make ourselves, like wearing hair-cloth next the skin, doing penance, &c., but such a Cross as the New Testament points out—not some great thing, but constant little things—a daily Cross, "daily," till the end of life.

3. He must follow Christ. Follow him in what? (1.) In his example, works, &c., doing good as He did. (2.) Follow his precepts. (3.) Follow his Spirit, his teaching. (4.) Follow his Providential leadings.

I do not pretend to have given the words, but the general ideas. My maxim has ever been that any one who will attend can repeat all the heads of a sermon, and I think all should make the trial. These divisions were perfectly natural, and yet I should scarcely have thought of them, in the same order. The sermon seemed to have been preached for those especially who were about to make a profession of religion, and as such was very appropriate. But, what is most to be admired in Mr. B. is the plain, simple, easy way of his talking sermons. It does seem as though any one could talk just so; and yet, as Horace said of making poetry, so I would say of those who would preach like Mr. B., "let them try."

Now, Mr. Editor, you remember I some time since advocated expository preaching. I consider this of Mr. B.'s a fine specimen of such preaching, and I wish we could have much more of it. I still believe this to be the oldest and the best method of preaching, though one of your correspondents seemed at the time to have some doubts upon this subject. W. M. C.

THE SATANIC ORIGIN

OF THE DISEASES WITH WHICH MANY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD ARE AFFLICTED.

The afflictions of the people of God have well nigh staggered the faith of many. To contrast their own sufferings and trials with the health, the prosperity, and the many enjoyments of the enemies of God, has been too much for them. Good old Asaph felt it, and no marvel if many a weaker saint has been more staggered. He says, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning." Because of his dreadful disease and other sore trials, Job's friends judged him to be a very wicked man, but God pronounced him to be a "perfect and an upright man, one who feared God and eschewed evil."

But it may be asked, why are the best the most frequently lying on beds of suffering and pain? It is not because they more frequently than others violate the laws of nature. So far otherwise, those who are most conscientious in the observance of all God's laws, physical and moral, are the most frequently afflicted.* The man who tramples on the laws of God, moral and physical, often seems to do it with impunity. While he does live, he lives almost without pain and suffering. It was Lazarus that was covered with sores. The rich man "received his good things in this life." God chastens his own children but he uses the devil as the rod. The devil, contrary to his own intention, is often the means of educating and disciplining saints for glory.

But is it true that God permits Satan to afflict his own children? Yes. See the case of Job, chapter i: 2. The arch enemy was permitted to afflict him with a most painful and loathsome disease. It was Satan, and not any imprudence or violation of law, which "smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his feet unto his crown." Did he smite Job? he only wants the Divine permit and he will smite us.

The Saviour could say of a woman whom he had healed, "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed on the Sabbath day?" An affliction was directly charged to Satan. He was the cause of her pains. It was not her own imprudence, her violation of physical laws, nor anything of that kind. Satan was the author of her disease, just as he was of Job's, but none except the Saviour knew it.

So Paul had "a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan to afflict him." 2 Cor. ii: 7. See the original, which may be rendered "an angel Satan," or "an angel of Satan." The buffeting of the angel Satan, or the angel of Satan, was to him the thorn in the flesh. What, or how his flesh suffered, we are not told. Paul advised that one of the

* Doubtful.—Ed.

Corinthian brethren should be "delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh." 1 Cor. v: 5. Hymeneus and Alexander were "delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme." 1 Tim. i: 20. The fearful thing in Egypt's plagues was the sending of evil angels among them. Ps. lxxviii: 49.

All these things are "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world have come." Did not men need the admonitions which these truths convey, they would not have been written. In this way the power of death may often be given to Satan.

JAMES KEER.

BRINGING JOSS TO TERMS.

Henry B. Auchincloss, in the *Continental*, relates the manner in which the people of Shanghai manage a stubborn god:

The idol, he says, was a little gilt figure, about six inches high, with the body of a beast and the head of a man. His peculiarity was the possession of a supplementary eye, which, as his natural pair squinted horribly, no doubt was very useful. His position was on a little table surrounded by tall candles; whether they were borrowed from the Roman Catholics or the Catholics borrowed the custom from them, is a question for the student of church history. Before the idol was placed another table with ten elegant bowls, scarcely larger than our tea-cups, filled with the choicest fruits and grains that the market afforded. Each article was perfect of its kind. Rice, tea, the nelumbium, and agaric, a species of fungus, were among them. Just then the country being in great want of rain, the priests were trying the coaxing process, and tempting the god with the best chowchow to be had; but the next day they got out of patience, and were to be met parading him through the dusty streets, exposed to a fierce sun, for the purpose of giving him to understand that the heat was quite as disagreeable as they had represented it.

Their arguments for this proceeding are extremely logical: they say that Joss, in his cool temple, laughs at them, and is disposed to think that they are humbugging him; therefore, if they give him two or three hours of good skin-roasting in the sun, he will be much more likely to come to terms, to avoid a repetition of the process. As they do this every day until rain comes, it is of course seen in a short time, if they are patient, that it never fails in the end.

Indeed, it is quite common to meet in all the large cities processions of priests, followed by the rabble, who are giving "Joss an airing." The eminently practical object of these mummeries argues very little genuine respect for the deity, an inflexible that has often been drawn by missionaries from other points in their treatment of their idols.

PAUL'S ESTIMATE OF HEAVEN.

In speaking of the glories of the eternal world, the rapture of the apostle did not escape him as a sally of the imagination, as a thought awakened by a sudden glance of the object; he does not express himself at random, from the sober impulse of the moment, but in a sober tone of calculation. "I reckon," he says, like a man skilled in this spiritual arithmetic, "I reckon," after a due estimate of their comparative value, "that the sufferings of the present time are nothing to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed."

No man was ever so well qualified to make this estimate. Of the suffering of the present world he had shared more largely than any man. Of the glory that shall be revealed he had a glimpse granted to no other man. He had been caught up into paradise. He had heard the word of God, and seen the vision of the Almighty; and the result of this privileged experience was, that he "desired to depart and be with Christ;" that he desired to escape from this valley of tears; that he was impatient to recover the celestial vision, eager to perpetuate the momentary foretaste of the glories of immortality.—*Hannah More.*

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE IN CHURCHES.

A SUGGESTION.

The following is the close of an article in *The Congregationalist* on Brotherly Love:

"We heard it suggested in one of the church meetings of the city last Friday evening, that the church should not hurry out and rush home, when the benediction had been pronounced; but should remain a few minutes for social conference—to shake hands together, and get a little better acquainted. The suggestion struck us as a delightful one, and we judge, from the way in which it was carried out, that it was felt to be by all a most fit and happy one. We commend it to all. Let the people of God love one another! To do this, they must know one another better. They live too far apart. The world justles them quite too wide asunder in their daily toil. Let the meeting for prayer be also used as a meeting for fellowship, and manifested love, and it will be more beloved by all; more will gather to it; and the Spirit of God cannot long be absent!"

Two MEN were speaking together of the evidences of their hope. The first said he should be saved for he had hold of Christ. "Ah! but what will you do," said the second, "if the devil cuts your hands off?" "What then," asked the first, "is your hope?" "My hope," said he, "is that *Ch. has hold of me.*"