

Correspondence.

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES." II.

The painful and alarming lapse which we behold at the present day, began with the general increase of books, by which the time for reading on the week days was taken up with secular reading. As the people, and especially the younger class, began to have more leisure, instead of allowing as much or more time for the reading of God's word, less time was given to it till at last it came to be read by the masses of working people, only at family prayers. But had not the hours of the Sabbath devoted to Bible reading been broken in upon, it might still have made us, like our fathers, deeply versed in Divine truth.

The first entering wedge was in the rapid multiplication of what is termed *religious reading*. Religious biographies among us modern Protestants have become as much a characteristic as the lives of the saints among Catholics. It is a pity, too, that our writers of biographies could not follow the Bible example, and give us plain unvarnished accounts, without eulogy or suppression. Along with these came the religious periodicals, including the religious newspaper, and the Missionary and Tract journals. Soon after came the religious novel, both for adults and children, the latter with the general introduction of Sabbath-schools.

What do we now find in our land in the way of obedience to this command to make the Bible a study? As has been the custom for a long time, the masses of Christians do not read the Bible during the six working days, save once a day at family prayers. They are seized with the universal ambition to get wealth and influence, and to improve those opportunities to rise in the social scale, which are open to all. So, the most that the business men and women of the church allow themselves to read are the daily paper; more or more regarded as a necessity; one or two weeklies, occasionally a magazine or some popular book. It would perhaps be utterly useless to attempt, under the present circumstances, to secure time for the systematic reading of the Scriptures during the working days of the week. Probably the combined power of our ministry and religious press could not make this a general custom, until they had first excited a greater love for it.

Our only hope is in the Sabbath, and what we observe here is not the most encouraging. First, this holy day is shortened at each end by a general custom of continuing labor later on Saturday night, and commencing earlier on Monday morning than on other days. This, with the over-work of the week past, requires a certain portion of the time to be spent in sleep. After a late morning meal on Sabbath the family prepare for going to church, with much hurry and bustle. The children have scarcely time to look over their Sabbath-school lessons, and those adults who *deign* to prepare themselves, either for teaching or recitation, give a hasty glance at the commentary. After the morning service usually there is a Sabbath-school, and after that, either in the afternoon or evening, a second preaching service. This will allow on the average but three or four hours of leisure. This is commonly spent by the children in reading their Sabbath-school books and papers. The adults read the religious newspapers, and latterly the secular paper, which has gradually crept in. The last daily perhaps may not have been read, and in the country where there are fewer dailies, the last weekly which comes on Saturday is commonly read at this time. Some do not scruple to take up the favorite secular book, the last novel or most popular work. A few of the more devoted may be interested in the Missionary journal, where one is taken. Only here and there a Christian reads the Bible regularly, or takes time to retire for religious meditation and prayer. If he would read without distraction, he must withdraw, for there is no restraint put upon conversation, particularly when visitors, or members of the family who have been absent, are present. This often consumes the whole of the time, and the staple of it is the weekly gossip, most of which was learned at church. Thus are the impressions of the pulpit dissipated, the Sabbaths desecrated, and the commandments of the Bible neglected. The next day begins the busy race and toil for daily bread and social position.

I will venture the estimate that the masses in our American churches do not read through the entire Bible once in ten years; still the reading of one chapter daily would be sufficient to go over the whole book once in about three years, if it were read in course. Certain portions are no doubt read over much oftener than that. As the result of frequent inquiries in Bible classes, both in city and country churches, at least one-half of the children of Christian parents have been found not to have read the whole Bible at the age of twenty years. Of the other half, but few have read it through more than once. It is common to meet with those who have attended Sabbath-school regularly for ten years, who are notwithstanding extremely ignorant in respect to a general knowledge of the whole Bible; but neither Sabbath-school instruction nor the pulpit can supply the place of systematic reading.

The evidences of great ignorance of the Bible, and the consequences that flow from it are not so apparent now, as they will be in a few years, if the present

habits of the church continue. We may take warning from a growing laxness of opinions, a disposition to dispense with creeds, a disrelish for doctrinal preaching, and a craving after sensations. If these tendencies do not take a bolder and more alarming form, then, for once, we may conclude that the teachings of history are false, and that no evil will arise from a disregard of a command of God's Word: It is utterly impossible that the church should ever put on its true strength till this sinful neglect of the Bible is reformed, and *thoroughly reformed*. Without it the services of the sanctuary, and all the various instrumentalities of the church will be comparatively inefficient. Our revival efforts will be feeble, and narrow in their influence, and be more like the spasmodic struggles of expiring spirituality, than the vigorous action of health. Once the Reformed Church quickly spread over several Catholic countries, and to tolerate it was to establish it; but now such is the decline in moral power, that though in this country the moral and intellectual advantages are on the Protestant side, yet Romanism is on the increase, and the conversion of even a Catholic servant girl is a rare occurrence. We shall never, as a church, go forth conquering and to conquer, until we take up this sword of the Spirit. It is only by a change in the church that we can hope for a change in the habits of worldly people, such as we now may see in Scotland, and as has been witnessed in New England, through which we may hope for powerful and wide spread revivals.

The reading which has usurped the time once given to the Bible is valuable in its way. Some of it, particularly the periodical press, probably will never be dispensed with; but it is of infinitely less importance to the purity and growth of the church than the Bible. It ought to be given up on the Sabbath, or at least a sufficient time should, invariably be first given to God's word. If that were done, much of it would never be read, and would be cast out as useless waste matter. If it were found upon making a concerted effort, that the temptation to forsake the Bible for this reading was too strong, then it would be better to preach a crusade against our Tract Societies, and Sabbath-school Publishing Societies. There often arise crises in the history of the church, when it is necessary to break men's idols in order to free them from the superstitions that cling to them. In such a case as the temptation proving too strong, I would wish, as the ancient tyrant did of the people of Rome, that they all had one neck, and that it lay on the execution block before me, that I might rid the world of them all, and give it instead the light of God's truth. I believe that in such an emergency our Saviour would say, "Take these things hence, they are an offence unto me." If the Bibles, that through the enterprise of our Bible societies, are now found in every room of the house, and those that are degraded into parlor ornaments, or carried about as Sabbath toys, could speak, how would they cry out against the neglect and mock honor they receive.

No irregular and indefinite suggestions can check this evil. It must be met by a positive and tangible rule, inaugurated by concert of action. It may require a heated controversy almost equal to a reformation to establish it; and it must be stereotyped by custom into an institution, through the watchfulness of the guardians of the church. The change in the aspect of the question of intemperance occasioned by the discovery and use of distilled liquors, had to be met by a new measure unknown before, even in the times of the Bible. The Scriptures must become the principal study of the church, if we would save our nation and the world. That denomination that shall soonest and most effectively remedy this evil within its own body will become the most powerful, and will be honored the most by the Head of the church. All of them must assist in this work, or else those that neglect it will be supplanted before our land can be christianized. Unless the work is commenced soon, the foundations of the Christian civilization already established will be undermined. PURITAN.

New York, July, 1865.

CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

Why are not Christians more concerned for the Spiritual Condition of the Jews?

If the Heirs of the Promise are beginning to renounce "the hope of Israel," to despair of a Messiah, and sink into cold atheism, becoming rationalistic and performing the rites of Judaism, rather than national than religious reasons, is it not time for the followers of Jesus to rise for their help, place the claims of the Saviour before them, and pray for the deliverer to come out of Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob?

We should also be encouraged by the good results flowing from Christian efforts in the Old World.

The London Jews' Society alone, can tell of twenty thousand converts, of whom three thousand dwell in London, and of more than one hundred ordained clergymen, once of the Jewish faith, now believers in Jesus and preaching the everlasting Gospel; although, when the Society was first organized, it was not known there were fifty converted Jews in the whole of Great Britain.

Let those who hope in Jesus, think of his brethren, according to the flesh, how he loved them, and how, through them, a Saviour and living oracles, were given to the world.

Their long, dark wanderings of un-

belief and disinheritor have been occasioned by enormous sinning, but remember God's ineffable goodness, in that the record of their casting off, though dark as midnight has a tinge of light and a glow of promise.

"If they shall then confess their iniquity; if, their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and with Isaac, and with Abraham."—Leviticus xxvii.

"And when thou shalt call to mind these things, among all the nations, whether the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul, then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity and gather thee from all the nations, whither he hath scattered thee."—Deut. xxx.

"As it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my Covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."—Romans xi.

Fellow-Christians, is not Israel to be saved, and not to be utterly destroyed? And if their partial casting away, be "the reconciling of the world," "the riches of the Gentiles," what shall the receiving of them be, but "life from the dead?"

And is it not the time? And will not our affectionate Christian overtures be kindly and gladly received? Remember, we stand by faith. If we will not believe that God is to receive them, and labor thereto, are we not committing the great sin that occasioned their fall? and should we not take heed, lest, for not continuing in his goodness, by imitating it towards Israel, we, also, be cut off? W. W. T.

Newburg, July 10.

MEN WANTED—FOR WHAT—AND OF WHAT SORT.

BY E. A. GILLET, D. D.

The last number of the *Missionary Herald* has as the title of its leading article, "A Call for Men." The country has made that call and it has been nobly responded to in our recent conflict. Hundreds of thousands have yielded to the claims of patriotism, and tens of thousands have laid down their lives on the battle-field. But there is still "a call for men," no longer to resist and suppress armed treason, no longer to throw a living wall of valor around the constitution of the country, but to engage in a conflict more magnificent in its proportions, and more sacred in its object.

The need is felt in the foreign mission field, where one after another of our heroic and toil-worn laborers falls at his post, and the over-burdened survivors are almost disheartened at times under their new burdens. The heathen world is calling for men, men of God. The field is broad and white for the harvest. In our own land there has never been such a call before as there is to-day. Hundreds of places call for a self-denying and laborious ministry, and the destinies of the country will be moulded by the response made to the appeal.

But the great need is men of the right kind; men who will go to their work as volunteer soldiers went to the battle; men who are willing to face difficulties and endure hardships, and who will count it a privilege and an honor to do so. Cravens, cowards, and idlers are not entitled to the name of men. The work to be done does not allow the luxurious indulgence or lettered ease which many covet. It is rough work, wilderness work. One needs only to read over the accounts of Presbyterian missionary labors on the frontiers toward the close of the last and at the commencement of the present century, in order to learn what kind of labor is needed, and what sort of laborers are demanded to-day. The annual reports of the old Connecticut Missionary Society, and the journals of men like James Hall, of North Carolina, Dr. Coe, of Troy, and Timothy Flint, whose "Ten Years in the Mississippi Valley," have photographed his own perils, as well as the barbarism and impiety he sought to subdue, might not unprofitably form a part of the reading of our candidates for the ministry, as well as those actively engaged in such duties. Our country has seen few men superior to those who have been trained in this school of frontier hardship and discomfort. The wilderness and constant contact with its hardy settlers contributed not a little to form such men as Blackburn and Ramsey, Henderson, Anderson, and Carrick. Tennessee has no prouder names than these in all her history. The times demand more, an hundred fold, of the same stamp, both at the South and West. The fields are white for the harvest, and the harvest will perish without the reapers.

But it is not only in the ministry or in our new settlements that men are needed. We want them in all our churches, ready and anxious to perform service, not only in behalf of the country, but in behalf of Christ. We want an infusion of a more vigorous spiritual life. Each member should be asking, ever in the spirit of a volunteer, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" There is a vast mass of heathenism in our cities and villages. There are Chinas and Indias lying, as it were, around our own doors. Hottentots and New Zealanders, only clothed in a civilized garb, and speaking our own tongue, are in ignorance and vice, desecrating our Sabbaths under the shadow of our churches. To bring them within the sound of the gospel, or to bear the gospel to them in one way or another, is a work broad and varied

enough to challenge a manifold activity on the part of all the members of our churches!

Just sixty years ago, Admiral Collingwood, anxious for the prospects of the British navy, wrote, "If the country gentlemen do not make it a point to plant oaks wherever they will grow, the time will not be very distant when to keep our navy, we must depend entirely on captures from the enemy. . . . I wish every one thought on this subject as I do; they would not walk through their farms without a pocket full of acorns to drop in the hedge-sides, and then let them take their chance." If a zeal correspondent to that of the British admiral for the navy, was felt now by all in behalf of the church, they would be as anxious for the right kind of men as was for oaks that would make ship-timber. Our churches are not lacking in pine and chestnut, but they are less abundant in oak. Even now we are largely dependent on "captures from the enemy." A gracious Providence has transferred a Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Apostle, has snatched from the grasp of an unhalloved ambition talents that have been gloriously consecrated to his service. But we ought to aim at making the church itself such a garden of the Lord or such a forest of Lebanon, that thousands of youth should be ready to respond to the call for men put forth by the church in the name of her great Head.

MR. HAMMOND'S LETTER TO THE CHILDREN.

FROM THE GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE.

CAMPBELLTOWN, CHALEUR BAY, GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE, June 23, 1865.

MY DEAR LITTLE FRIENDS:—The words which I have been writing to you for the last four weeks in the *AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN*, the editor has called "Familiar Talks." I am now going to write you a "familiar" letter from away up in these cool regions. My house, by day and by night, now for more than a week, has been on board two beautiful steamers, the *Greyhound*, and *Island City*. We have travelled more than eleven hundred miles since we left Boston last Tuesday.

Sometimes the winds and waves have seemed to dash our boat about like a plaything, but still she has kept on her way, and here we are now in one of the most beautiful bays I ever saw. If you had visited Loch Lomond, in Scotland, and seen the spot of mountains standing around like sentinels to guard these peaceful waters, you would say this was a place much like it; and then it is so cool here! What a splendid place it would be for a Sabbath-school picnic! Why I've had on two coats all day, yes, and most all the time for a week past! You who live in the city would think it May or October, if you were suddenly let down here from a balloon. But after looking some time at the fields, clothed with a carpet of a beautiful and peculiar green, such as we never at this time of year see in the States, you would soon find it could not be October. It is only the cool air that would make you think it October. Ah! how beautiful our Heavenly Father has made this earth on which we live! Often these words in the one hundred and seventh Psalm have come to my mind, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for his wonderful works to the children of men." If you will read that Psalm from the 23d to the 32d verse you will find it a beautiful description of a storm at sea. When we came around Miscou Island, we had a storm that made us think of these words, and though some of our party were sea-sick, we got the Bible and read these words. I had a little prayer meeting and it seemed as if Jesus rebuked the winds, and said "peace, be still." If you turn to the 1st chapter of Mark, you will find how when Jesus lived on earth and was once in a storm on the sea with his disciples, he saved all on board from shipwreck. How thankful they must have felt! I think we felt something the same when we saw the peaceful sun shining on again, and everybody on board looking so cheerful and happy. The ship at one time rocked so much that it overturned a sofa. There was a lady on board with two little children, but she was so frightened that she took no care of her little ones. She did not act to me like a Christian, for if she had been one, I think she would have been more calm. The sight of a sofa turning over, would not have made her scream "we are all going to the bottom!"

In the lady's cabin my sister saw a little girl down upon her knees in prayer, and she was calm all the time. Those who put their trust in Jesus will not be long frightened at storms whether on land or on sea.

Now, my little friends, you have read this letter so far, and yet I don't believe you know exactly where my letter is dated from. I think you will be more interested if you will lay down the paper for a little and get your atlas, and look for Chaleur Bay, just south of the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. It will take but a moment for you to learn the way we came here—so I will tell you. Two brothers in Boston, the Messrs. Snow, who love children and wish me to get some rest, so that I can tell more little ones about the way to come to Jesus, asked me to take this voyage on their line of beautiful boats up to this snowy region. So after a few days sail we reached Charlottetown, Prince Edward's Island.

There on a Sabbath we met four hundred children, and I told them all about

how Jesus had bled and died on the cross for them. Their hearts seemed very tender, and I could but hope that some of them would give themselves up to Christ. Though these dear children were shut up among the snows and surrounded with thick ice for most six months in the year, still I could not see much difference between them and little folks in the United States. They look much as if they had the same kind of hearts at any rate that you have, though they may be able to skate and walk on snow-shoes better than you. It would take too long to tell you of all the beautiful places at which we stopped, and of all the charming cool bays and rivers we ascended all along the coast of New Brunswick. Sometimes we used to stop and catch cod-fish and mackerel; at some places we saw them catching great salmon, three or four feet long. These we had to catch with a silver hook. We could get plenty of them at five cents a pound.

Some parts of this charming bay are almost black with wild ducks. When they go down South again to their winter quarters they will not hear the booming of cannon, and beneath their flight see the ground covered with wounded and dying. Would not the birds everywhere sing more sweetly if men loved God and kept his commands? Do you read these commands daily?

In the Captain's office, on board the *Island City* steamer, there lays by my side, as I write, a great chart. Do you know what a chart is? I will tell you. It is a kind of map that tells where all the rocks are, and how deep the water is all over this part of the ocean. You know the boat keeps moving in the night as well as in the day time, and also when the fogs are so thick we can't see a head at all. Still we have to go on our way. Now the Captain looks carefully at the chart, and finds just the direction he wishes to go, then he tells the man at the wheel, who guides the ship with the rudder. The way the pilot does this is to keep his eye on a little compass, which always points towards the north star. So, you see, my dear little friends, that we should get lost without the chart and compass. What is that chart like do you think? I can almost hear you say "The Bible." Yes, that's it. The Bible is the blessed chart God has so kindly given us to guide us safely over the rough seas of life, amid rocks and quicksands to the haven of eternal rest.

With this in your hands, and with Jesus like the compass, telling you all the time what is right, you need never lose the way.

I have noticed that Captain Wood does not consult the chart merely when we are in darkness and danger, but I have often, in pleasant weather, and in sight of land, seen him studying it. That made me think we ought to read our Bible and pray to God every day, and then when storms and dangers come upon us suddenly, we shall be ready for them. I want to tell you of another thing, which I shall never forget. Whenever we came in sight of a harbor, there is a pilot ready who knows just how to take the ship safely through all the dangers. Some captains are so sure that they can get in without a pilot, that they refuse the offers of these men, but when they do this, if they run the ship on a sunken rock and she goes to pieces, and is lost, the owners can get nothing from those who insure the ship. Just so I thought of poor blind and proud children refusing to receive Jesus as their pilot to heaven. They will be lost, and it will be their own fault; for Jesus comes often and kindly offers to direct and help them all the way home to heaven. These pilots often ask \$40 to take a ship into harbor, though it only takes them but an hour. But how unlike they are to Jesus. He offers to take every one home to heaven "without money and without price." What a dreadful thing to be lost, after all He has done for us!

I hope none of you, my dear little friends, will reject his offers of mercy and perish. Will you not turn to Him "just now," and ask Him to be your pilot into the heaven of rest? Then I shall meet you there, where there are no rude storms, "in green pastures and beside the still waters."

Your Affectionate Friend,
E. P. HAMMOND.

AWAY FROM HOME.

Take the day boat, by all means, if you are travelling from New York to Albany. By this precaution you avoid the dust that is sure to creep in at every window and crevice of a rail car, producing a most uncomfortable consciousness of the need of soap and water ere you have sped half your way between the two cities. Nor do the cinders here assail eyes and garments with their fiery greetings. Besides, the noble Hudson is an object of grandeur in itself, upon whose surface you can gaze with growing delight for more than the nine hours that are required to make the entire journey. And then you have scenery on either hand that claims your study, not only on account of the historic and literary and artistic associations that will abide through all future time, in the groves and hills that meet the eye in quick succession, as the graceful boat ploughs the yielding water at the rate of fifteen miles an hour; but also for its intrinsic sublimity and beauty. The groves may be cut down by the aggressive axe of an irreverent civilization that cares not for the sacred memories of the past, but the localities that have been rendered famous by the pen or the pencil or the heroic deed, will remain; and

the everlasting hills will hold on to their foundations, although their forest drapery should be swept away, and the nodding grain should smile, where now the old century-rooted trees bend and frolic in the margin.

Upon the margin of the river, not far from Tarrytown, is *Sunnyside*, the residence of Washington Irving, where many of his literary labors were performed, and where he spent the evening of a pure and gentle life. About fifty miles north of New York, near Cold Spring, is the country seat of General George P. Morris, whose first literary enterprise, the *Mirror*, a weekly periodical, was conceived and inaugurated while he was a journeyman printer in the office of Mr. Seymour. The first number of that paper, he put in type, partly with his own hands. The author of the "Old Oaken Bucket" worked, if we mistake not, at the same time in the same office. Cole, the artist, gathered the inspiration of his pencil from the broad mountain range that swept grandly away into the far distance in view of his own studio.

Revolutionary scenes of startling interest were transacted along the banks of this noble river. Here Arnold matured and endeavored to execute his foul purpose of treason. Here Andre was captured, and met his terrible fate. Near Newburg were the headquarters of Washington. At West Point is still to be seen the rock to which was fastened one end of the mighty chain that was stretched across to prevent the British vessels from ascending the river. The ruins of the fortifications then erected, still remain. This locality is identified too, with the history of later times. Here were educated some of the arch traitors who, during the past five years, have endeavored to destroy the Government that kindly fostered them, and which they were pledged by their solemn oaths to sustain.

The scenery along the river is wonderfully varied. First are the Palisades, lofty stone battlements, rising perpendicularly from the water's edge, and extending several miles. Beyond this vast rock structure, on the east side of the river particularly, the surface of the country rises in gentle undulations, forming delightful eminences on which are beautiful villas in every style of rural architecture. Frequently the houses are grouped into hamlets or villages, and even cities. As you approach the Highlands, the river widens into a miniature sea, bounded on the northern border by lofty mountains, that seem in the distance to form an impassable barrier to the progress of the vessels that are approaching it. But as you draw near, a narrow opening suddenly appears, and as the boat passes along the deep channel, you feel as if you could almost touch the lofty hills that rise up grandly on either side. Soon the river widens again, and the hills subside into less commanding undulations. Here and there the hand of utility has interfered with the natural features of the landscape, and the sloping hill sides have been transformed into perpendicular precipices, to make a path for the rail car that sweeps along the edge of the river, now moving in a straight line for miles, and then curving gracefully as it winds around some projecting promontory, or recedes along the borders of a quiet bay. At several points, the road passes through the river for a mile or more, in order to save distance and curves. The mind is inspired with a sense of power and beauty, as the eye follows the train, speeding its way impetuously along the iron track that holds it to its course; now dashing forward in obedience to the mighty force that impels it, and then swayed into a slow and gentle motion by the human will that governs its movements. Our age is indeed a progressive one. And with the Atlantic cable binding together the ends of the earth, and slavery eradicated from our own social system, we see not what there is to prevent the universal spread and influence of a true civilization. Add to the facilities which science has afforded, the co-operative force of a becoming Christian activity, and there will soon be a BROTHERHOOD among mankind that will beat swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks.

We had music on the boat. The performers, whom we supposed to be Germans, were only two in number. The one touched the harp with a good degree of skill; the other played the accordion, as we had never heard it played before. The soul of the performer inspired the instrument with wonderful power; and as it swayed to and fro under his guiding hand, and conveyed to the ear, in touching, subduing harmony, the real thought and meaning of the composer, the very muscles of his face trembled in visible sympathy with the emotions that were swelling within. The sun shone with a subdued brightness. The air was cool. And we reached the old Dutch city, according to the promise given on the handbills, in time for the Northern and Western cars. Therefore, we say again, take the day boat, by all means, if you want to go from New York to Albany. C. A. S.

WORLDLY PLEASURE.—No worldly pleasure hath any absolute delight in it; but as a bee, having honey in the mouth, hath a sting in the tail. Who sees an ox grazing in a fat and rank pasture, and thinks not he is near to the slaughter? Whereas the lean beast that toils under the yoke is far enough from the shambles. The best wicked man cannot be so envied in his first shows as he is pitiable in the conclusion.—Joseph Hall.