

Communications.

Our Troubles.

NUMBER XXI.

"What various hindrances we meet,
In coming to a mercy seat,
Yet who that knows the power of prayer,
But wishes often to be there."

Last week we called the attention of the readers of the P. O. MESSENGER to the providence of God, believing that all true disciples of Christ, when able to separate the providential from the superstitious of the present age, would heartily believe that God could and would hear their prayers and grant their petitions; when they come to him aright. We wish now to speak of the various hindrances or troubles to be overcome or removed by

CHRISTIANS.

to come acceptably to God in prayer. The first cause that prevents the approach of a soul to God, is the want of confidence. "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. ii. 6. If our faith be weak or if we have little faith, we must cultivate it and strengthen it, until we have much faith or great faith. While we are taught to ask God to increase our faith no Christian can expect him to give him any more faith than he now has, without an effort upon his part. God has furnished us every facility necessary to the perfection of our faith. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, and this word is high us. And though the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork, yet God has decreed that we should hear his word in order to faith and search his holy writings for that testimony necessary to increase our confidence in him. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." John v. 39. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John xx. 30, 31. Then that we may have living faith, that will work in love and purify the heart and prepare us to draw nigh to God in full assurance. Let us take the advice of James when he says: "wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superiority of naughtiness, and receive with meekness, the engrafted word which is able to save yourselves. But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Jas. i. 21, 22. The first object with every man should be the present and eternal salvation of his soul, which cannot be secured, without living faith and obedience. For the perfection of our faith let us look at a few predictions, made under the former dispensations and recorded in the Old Testament, pointing to the coming of Christ. But before we refer to any Scripture in the Old Testament, we wish you to remember that for hundreds of years, the Jews were the only custodians of that book, and that they have watched it with a jealous eye even until now, and that they do not believe in Christ, that they always have been and are now opposed to him.

Therefore no part of that book could have been manufactured and inserted therein, by the friends of Jesus after his birth, that could be construed to prove His divinity. With this information let us examine a few predictions. When Jacob had grown old and was about to be gathered to his fathers, he called together his twelve sons, laid his hands upon them and blessed them; he being gifted with prophetic powers, gave to each of his sons a synopsis of their future. When he spake of Judah he said, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between

his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Gen. xlix. 10. Here we have two predictions. 1. That a descendant of Judah should sit on the throne of Israel, which to all appearance was very unlikely. Israel had not been governed by a king, and when they demanded a king, God gave them Saul the son of Kish, who was of the tribe of Benjamin.

According to custom Saul's sons would have reigned after him. But God removed Saul and anointed David, who was of the tribe of Judah. 2. When the sceptre should be placed in the hands of Judah, it was not to depart until Shiloh or Christ came. When we examine the history of the Jewish nation, it will be seen that the descendants of Judah reigned, until Christ was introduced to His throne, then Judah reigned no more. But we must take a recess for one week.

HENRY THOMAS.

Oakland, Cal., March 15, 1878.

Tramps and Bums.

Just now, the great affliction of San Francisco is "Tramps." The climate being mild so people can sleep under sheds or in the open air most of the year favors this semi gipsy life.

As Colorado is called the "Asthmatic heaven on earth," so California may be called the "Tramp's heaven," if there is any in the universe for him. One can scarcely walk a square on the streets without being importuned for money, old clothes or something to eat. These have come from almost every quarter of the earth, but most of them seem to be the product of our own civilization. I believe I never met a Chinaman or Japanese playing this role. The great destitution in our city this winter, led to efforts on the part of the churches and various benevolent societies, to relieve the suffering. For many weeks, free lunches were given, and thousands were thus fed. This gave the tramps a chance, and no doubt was the means of attracting to the city many who would otherwise not have come.

Now that this lunch arrangement has ceased, we have the evil aggravated. The question of what is to be done with this class is quite a problem. If you put them in jail they will fair better than when out, that is, if the jail is kept in decent plight. If they get victuals equal to what we would consider wholesome food, and such as a civilized people would wish to give to criminals awaiting trial, they will be happy. So what are we to do? There is an imperative need for something to be done, and it looks like the revival of the whipping post is the only remedy. When men sink so low, as to make all punishment which has shame and disgrace for its foundation, no punishment at all, we must resort to something that will reach their case, or fail to protect society. But this mode of punishment to be effectual, must be accompanied with work for the vagrants to do. To whip a man for being simply a tramp, would not be just. But after work was provided, to make him work, and if he would not work without being flogged, lay it on till he does work, would be just and effective.

You may think it awful to advocate a return to what you have been taught was a relic of barbarism, but let me ask what are we to do? Shall we preach to them? Where will you begin? They don't believe there is any God. They say the Devil is dead. As for hell, they would like to get close enough to it to dry their wet clothes this rainy season. The penitentiary is a hotel kept by Uncle Sam. The jail is a free lodging house. You must have a certain amount of enlightenment, and noble principle to make these modes of restraining men from evil effective. When they are below this level we must resort to such leverage to lift them. The cure of "Tramps," "Bummers" and "vagrants," generally, is the old fashioned

whipping post, that Benjamin Franklin in his proverbs and political philosophy says so much about.

J. H. MCCOLLOUGH.

Work.

Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Eccles. ix. 10.

1. There is work in the Church of Christ, something to be done; work is essential to our physical and mental development; the healthiest of persons will die without it; children are constant workers, they are seldom found idle, the result is they grow up with hardened muscles and strong bones, and are thereby fitted for the work of life. It is a well established principle in society, sanctioned alike by the voice of reason, and of Holy Writ, that they who won't work ought not to eat. These principles are no less true in their application to the

spiritual development of man than to the physical or mental. Constant and incessant work in the church is indispensable to a vigorous and healthy spiritual development and growth. Yea, without work in the church death, spiritual death is the certain result. The Savior, as in everything else is our greatest example, in constant work for the salvation of souls. He says, "My Father worketh and I work." "I must work the works of him that sent me." "I must work while it is yet day, for behold the night cometh when no man can work." "I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do."

2. But another thought presented by this text is, the work that we are to do. Whatever thy hand finds to do. There are two principal difficulties in our way in working. First we underestimate our abilities, while it is a sound Scriptural truth that no one should "think more highly of himself than he ought to think." It is also true that we should think soberly and righteously, and if we do this we will not fail to see that we can do something for the advancement of the cause of the Master. The men that succeed in the world as lawyers, doctors, statesmen, merchants, or in any other profession or business, as a rule, are men who have confidence in their ability to succeed. The disciple of Christ that attains to the highest degree of usefulness, of which he is capable, must have confidence in his ability to accomplish something, and an ambition and zeal in the cause which will urge him to try to reach the highest round in the ladder, within his grasp.

Second. We are too apt to underestimate the importance of things which we can do. We are told to "despise not the day of small things," but this is just what we often do. Many of the miners in the early days of the gold excitement in California, left good "diggings," where they were making their \$10 and \$20 a day, and went in search of a "bigger strike," and thousands of them have spent what little means they had, and then given up in despair. Discouraged, broken down in health, their money all gone, they have sought relief in the wine cup, and thereby become a mental and moral wreck. So there are many Christians who could find plenty of work to do, for the Lord, all around them, if they only could see the importance of it, but, they pass what they call the small things by, and are constantly looking for something greater, which is beyond their reach perhaps. The little iron pin that couples the cars to the locomotive is a very small thing, yet it is just as important in its place, and as essential, as the locomotive itself. So the word or the act on our part that brings a soul to Christ may be small or insignificant in its appearance, but nevertheless important to the greatly desired result. It was a small matter for Andrew to go and find his brother Simon and bring him to Jesus; yet who knows, but for that act that the name of the great Apostle to the cir-

cumcision would be unknown to-day to the world. It is not impossible that upon that small transaction hinges the story of Peter's noble confession, of Peter's fall, and of Peter's tears, yea much of the records of the New Testament and much of the writings of history. It was a small act for a mother to take her babe and cast it upon the waters of the Nile to escape the wrath of the king, yet who knows but upon that transaction was hinged the destiny of a nation; certain it is that the story of Moses would have never been written.

Let us pause here, dear reader, and reflect for a moment. How many times, my dear brother, have you had the opportunity of speaking a word for Christ and have failed to do so? How many times have you sought out your neighbors and invited them to church to hear the word of the Lord and be saved? How many times have you provided a way for your neighbor or friend to get to church who have no conveyance of their own? How often do you visit the sick of the community and tell them of the love of Jesus? These are small things, yet it may be that in eternity our hearts will be made to feel sad in contemplation of the fact that there are souls lost and gone into perdition, because of our neglect and indifference.

Let every lover of the Lord go to work; let them be sure to find something to do, and when we shall have found it, let us do it with our might, remembering that the Lord has said that "Whosoever looketh into the perfect law of liberty, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the works, that man shall be blessed in the doing."

Oh! that each in that day of his coming may say, "I have fought my way through, I have finished the work thou didst give me to do."

BENTON.

No Substitute for the Bible.

BY S. H. HEDRICK.

NUMBER V.

The whole tenor of the Bible shows that it is a system adapted to the great object of man's redemption. Like all other great systems, in its vast scope, it contains its departments, its preparatory things, which gave the way for something more grand and sublime. This is exhibited from the first throughout all the ages of patriarchs and Jews. "Even the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did." Heb. vii. 19.

Again, "There is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before the weakness and unprofitableness thereof." So the great work of Moses and the prophets, John the Baptist, the apostles and Jesus in his life time, but opens up the way for the spreading forth of the Gospel to both Jews and Gentiles for all time, which points out the road all the way from earth to heaven. This feature of the Bible shows that we must advance and grow up, into Christ who is head over all things. It is, therefore, adapted to man as he is, but contemplates what he may be. Hence the greatness of its variety and the importance of properly applying it in each step in one development. Here again nature's field is the only analogy to the field of revelation. One is to propagate, perpetuate and sustain animal life; the other is adapted to the same ends in spiritual life. In each of them man finds many things which he does not, and perhaps many never fully comprehend; but this by no means justifies the rash act of discarding or substituting, if this could be done, nor the equally rash idea that we are at any time to cease our investigation. As we daily partake of the field of nature, so we must daily draw from the field of spiritual life, and to do this intelligently and profitably we must continue to learn of them.

2. The Bible is not conformed to the peculiar taste of any age or race of men, and on this account many feel inclined to reject it, for it has been well said, "There is selfishness enough in almost any age or race of men to cause them to think and feel that they are the whole race, or at least the most important one." They therefore, object to the Bible because it

does not sanction their present tastes and peculiar traits of character. If such would consider that they are but small part of mankind and that the Bible is given with reference to the best possible good of all men, that although it partakes of the character of those nations and countries where it was given, yet it is remarkable for rising above the local and portraying such precedents as are applicable to and would elevate and redeem man in any age to come, all this sinful cavil against it would cease. Therefore Paul enjoined upon Timothy to "study." Jesus said, "Search the Scriptures." The Bereans are denominated noble in that they daily "searched the Scriptures." All this implies that a knowledge of the Bible is obtained by investigating it, and that this knowledge has a salutary influence upon those who obtain it. This knowledge the objectors to the Bible do not possess, at least a vast majority of them do not possess even an ordinary familiarity with its contents. They exemplify the characters referred to by Peter as "willingly ignorant," and by the prophet as "closing their ears," &c.

3. Notwithstanding all the objections, neglect and abuse of the Bible, it is a common and general expectation that when any man embraces it in its theory and practice that he will become a better man. Yea, the worst of men expect this, whatever they may say, they know that such an one will be different, better, nobler, wiser and happier. This is no less true of communities, cities, countries or nations. If any citizen of any given community, city or country was to fully embrace the Gospel and strictly put it in practice in their lives, the civilized world would recognize and hail with joy their advancement, and daily expect to hear of their further growth and development in all things that makes men useful and happy. Not only so, but in all the regions around it the bulwarks of misery and woe would fall as weeds before a sharp sickle or as chaff before a mighty wind.

This argument any reader can practically demonstrate, so far as it pertains to individuals; one, too, that has in it purgency and strength that will cleave a gap in the ranks of the opposition and overthrow all the claims of any system of man, offered as a substitute. We ask the reader to pause here and contrast the effects of the Bible when embraced and lived up to as just referred to, with any system man has ever invented. Does the civilized world expect any man or nation to be benefited by laying aside the Bible and accepting any thing else as a substitute? Have not all the isms whether of Jewish or pagan traditions, or as embraced in the creeds of Catholicism, Mahomedanism; yes, any of the popular creeds of modern times, have they and are they not proving a curse rather than a blessing. Standing to-day as they do, a mean apology, and the only excuse for skepticism and deism, in their efforts to supplant the Bible. Further, what commendable feature of any of these can you find that has not been extracted from the Bible? Are these extracts more powerful when thus separated and compounded with the theories of man? If some genius should ask our farmers to buy seed, wheat or corn that he had manufactured and improved, would they believe him? If they did and should sow said seed, would they reap a crop? No, they would not. Nor would they listen to his boasts of