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Communications.

FOR THE PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.

THE WASTE PLACES OF ZION.

SINCE the spirit of missions began to pervade the Church, many persons have written on this subject. We have no hope of adding any thing novel to what has been said, but we think it important to keep alive among Christians, a remembrance of the destitute state of our fellow creatures. For notwithstanding the many conquests which Christianity has achieved, and the numerous spoils which have been brought in to her from heathen lands, there is still a large field for Christian exertion. There are many places where the gospel has never been preached—places that belong to Zion by promise and by covenant. “Ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance; and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee; and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant to the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages, that thou mayest say to the prisoners, go forth: to them that are in darkness, shew yourselves.” The pencil of inspiration has thus gone round the earth, and marked it all out, with its kingdoms, its islands, and its deserts, as a possession sacred to the Redeemer.

On so practical a subject we shall waive a discussion of the question how far the gospel has extended already, or whether many nations have not rejected it to whom it has been offered. We believe that all the nations of the world might receive the gospel in a short time, if they had inclinations for its reception. Of course, by its daily rejection, they incur accumulated responsibility. But this responsibility, so far from relaxing the efforts of Christians, is with them an incentive to diligence. They who believe that the heathen incur no guilt by remaining

that in regeneration other faculties of the soul, as well as the will, are sanctified. But if depravity were confined to the latter, the former would stand in no need of a purifying process.

J. J. J.

(To be continued.)

“*Memoir of the Life and Character of the Reverend Samuel Bacon, A. M. late an Officer of Marines,*” &c.

When the public career of an individual has attracted attention or excited applause, nothing is more natural than the desire to become acquainted with his private history; and this desire is proportionably increased, if the incidents of his life partake of an extraordinary character.

With a complete portraiture, however, we can seldom be gratified, except through the medium of biography, unless we have enjoyed his particular confidence and friendship; and hence, this department of literature, properly regulated, is deservedly popular.

It furnishes the world with a variety of interesting details which would otherwise be lost; presents a faithful delineation of character; preserves the memory of good deeds, and brings under the view all the occurrences of the most eventful life.

There are but few of the religious community, we presume, who have heard of the hallowed zeal and unwearied exertions of the Rev. Samuel Bacon, without lamenting his premature fate, and at the same time, feeling anxious to learn the particulars of his history. The opportunity for gratifying this desire is now afforded the public, and we apprehend, they will readily unite with us in expressing the thanks due the Biographer for his interesting volume.

The execution of this work, is in general creditable to the author; although the fastidious reader may perhaps complain that the style is too laboured and rhetorical for this species of composition.

We must, however, be permitted to advert to one or two features in the narrative, which in our opinion are objectionable.

In the first instance, the volume is unnecessarily swelled in size, by the introduction of extraneous matter; with which the reader could have dispensed, or which might have been thrown, with more propriety, into the appendix. Of this nature, are the remarks relative to the public provision for the support of elementary schools and the regular administration of the gospel in New England,—the account of Harvard Institution and the history of Sunday Schools; all which, without any compensating quality, perplex and interrupt the narrative.

But a more serious objection we have to the plan pursued by the Biographer in exhibiting the manuscript papers of Mr. Bacon. He has observed in his advertisement, "Few of the manuscripts were intended for publication at all; and none of them, in the state in which they came into the author's hands; he has therefore used the necessary liberty of correcting the style and phraseology of nearly all the passages introduced into the memoir." Now it will be acknowledged that verbal emendations may be made, without any unwarrantable infringement upon the sentiments or style of an author; but we would be exceedingly sorry, should the precedent be established, by which the "phraseology of nearly all the passages" of a posthumous writing might undergo revision and alteration. It is remarked, it is true, as an explanation, that few of these manuscripts were intended for publication; but it may be replied, who writes a diary or enters into an epistolary correspondence with an expectation that what he writes will be presented to the public eye?

Were this the anticipation of authors generally, we venture to affirm that both these species of writing would be divested of their peculiar attractions. When a man has recorded his religious experience, we wish not only his sentiments, but his style, nay, his very words; it is essential to the interest, that we should have his feelings expressed in his own peculiar phraseology, and then we can readily forgive unimportant inaccuracies.

With this partial abatement, we express our general approbation of the manner, in which this memoir has been prepared, and our peculiar pleasure at the generous and sympathetic feeling and tone of evangelical piety which prevail throughout.

Mr. Bacon, the subject of this memoir, was a native of Massachusetts, and passed the first twenty years of his life in the laborious occupations of his father's farm, uneducated and unenlightened.

Unhappy domestic circumstances rendered his seclusion unpleasant and stripped home of its customary endearments.* He was not, however, to be hopelessly depressed; with a naturally enterprising mind, he struggled, amidst discouragements of no ordinary kind, to emerge from the obscurity in which he was involved, and seized with avidity every opportunity for acquiring knowledge. What tended most effectually to his advancement, however, was the then secret determination of Providence to select him for usefulness in the church.

He was, indeed, the subject of remarkable providences; but

* Perhaps it might be objected, that the Biographer has revealed too much of the unhappy temper of Mr. B.'s father. It was necessary that the fact should be adverted to, but in such painful representations, the feelings of survivors should be consulted.

it is not our intention here to enumerate the strange vicissitudes of his life, but to excite the attention of the religious public to the narrative in which they are recorded.

The greater part of Mr. B.'s life was spent "without God and without Christ in the world;" but at length, after many wanderings, his active and restless mind was brought to concentrate all its energies upon the important subject of religion.

By the transforming grace of God, the *soldier*, the *infidel* and *duellist*, was induced to lay aside his irritable temper, gloomy speculations and false notions of honour, to become an humble and yet intrepid standard-bearer for Christ.

The first permanent religious impressions which he experienced and their happy results, are thus well portrayed.

"The fear of death shortly invaded him again; excited a guilty conscience, to discharge its dreadful office with still better criminations, and more alarming anticipations than before; and after many hours of fruitless supplication, subsided into a tranquil calm of the soul. This visitation of the hand of God he was not able to forget entirely. He gave, from this period, a more constant attendance on preaching; read the Bible, prayed, bought religious books, and without discovering his intention to any one, was disposed to make religion a very serious matter both of inquiry and practice. He still appears to have been a stranger to Jesus Christ, the source and channel, of all efficient spiritual influences. The word sown in his heart was still on 'the stony ground where it had not much depth of earth;' and however promising in appearance, was without root, and 'in the hour of temptation withered away.' He, indeed, was convinced that he had not attained to a state of safety; but, for a short time had too much confidence in the efficacy of his own dead works, 'performed without grace,' to advance him to that desirable state, to relinquish his dependence on them, and trust alone, in the righteousness of Christ. With the root of self-righteousness still vigorous in his heart, was united its inseparable concomitant, great ignorance of the way of salvation, by faith. This, indeed, is a mystery which can be fully learnt only by experience. But Mr. Bacon appears not to have possessed even that theoretical knowledge of the important doctrine which many persons, as destitute of saving faith as himself, have nevertheless, acquired. While he continued to acquit himself, with tolerable regularity, in the duties to which he was now addicted, his conscience slumbered; and a vague hope of finally escaping the wrath of God, and obtaining his favour, held him fast in its delusion. But God again suffered him to fall by a train of temptations, an easy prey to sins, which he could not reconcile with the character even of a sincere and earnest inquirer in religion. He had been invited by his gay associates, to unite with them in a scene of fashionable dissipation; and so utterly destitute of firmness to withstand the solicitation did he find himself, that he yielded an almost unhesitating compliance. While participating in this frivolous amusement, all serious reflection was stifled; and he was conscious of no other restraint on the levity of his feelings, than that which the laws of decency and custom impose. He was at this time in Lancaster. On his return to York, the next day, he had leisure to review his conduct, in the black shade thrown over it by the recollection of violated resolutions and vows, and the consciousness of having offered a direct resistance to the suggestions of the divine Spirit, and of violating his own knowledge and convictions of duty. He perceived that he had not only been overcome by the temptation, but vanquished almost without an opposing struggle. His reflections were distracting; and hurried him into a state of mind but little short of despair. He dared not even pray for forgiveness. Either the agitation of his thoughts, or real indisposition, impressed strongly on his imagination the expectation of sudden death. His health again became sensibly affected; and he ventured to pray only for strength to reach

home, and permission to die in the midst of his friends. He arrived. But his spirit found no rest: it had received a wound, which every recollection aggravated, and all his attempts to heal were worse than ill. The hand of the Almighty had inflicted it, and the remedy was only with himself. He read the scriptures, prayed, wept, but to no purpose. He was even tempted to drown his anguish in intoxication: but God mercifully overruled the intention. His imagination was still full of the apprehension of a sudden death—and while he repressed the open expression of his feelings, he more than once took a final leave as he supposed, of his child, and his friends. His inward anguish and alarm so far predominated as to overcome, at length, the pride of heart which had hitherto restrained him from availing himself of the counsel and society of his pastor and Christian friends. It cost him even now, a severe struggle to withdraw himself from a number of his customary associates, and go and unobtrusively himself to the clergyman on whose ministry he attended. In this interview, to employ his own phraseology, 'he cried and roared aloud:' and it was not until he had freely given vent to the strongest of his feelings, that he could utter his errand in intelligible language."

"The perusal of 'Doddridge's Rise and Progress,' which was put into his hands at the time, was an important help; as, by preserving him from absolute despair, it gave him the power of concentrating his thoughts without distraction, on the great doctrines of salvation. His time was as much devoted to inquiry on these subjects, and to public prayer, as his secular avocations would permit. Thenceforward he mingled more freely, than ever before, in the circles of the pious, and found a great advantage in their society. It was by no means the least, that he was at once delivered from many of the temptations and dangers, unavoidably growing out of his former connexions. The spirit of grace continued gradually to enlighten his mind, with a clearer knowledge of the gospel; and in a few weeks, he found himself able to repose his soul with a happy confidence on his Saviour.

"At what moment the gift of faith was first imparted, and his heart brought to bow with entire submission to the yoke of Christ, does not plainly appear. But, from the period to which this part of the narrative refers, he seems never, even for a day, to have remitted the pursuit of his salvation; and scarcely to have declined, by a single relapse, from those high attainments in faith and holiness, which he was enabled through an abundant supply of grace, to make with a rapidity seldom exceeded by the most favoured Christian. But it will be seen, that the original corruptions of his heart were not at once eradicated, nor the current of habit reversed, by an absolute exertion of divine power. But grace eventually accomplished this work, by engaging all the powers of his mind in a long and arduous course of exertion, vigilance, and self-denial. His conflicts were often sharp and painful: but commonly of momentary continuance. The fervency of his prayers, and the habitual prevalence of a vigorous faith, gave him an easy and rapid conquest of his spiritual foes. Nearly every struggle against sin proved to him the occasion of a new victory over it, till, by a dispensation as merciful to him, as mournful to the world he left, he was early translated to the scene of his everlasting triumph."

It might naturally be expected, that with a heart so deeply affected by the grace of the Redeemer, he would desire to devote all his talents to the service of the gospel, by freeing himself from secular employments and selecting a station more congenial with his renewed feelings. The practice of the law was accordingly abandoned; the prospects of professional distinction were promptly waved, and the arduous duties and responsibilities of the gospel ministry assumed.

When the experiment of African colonization had been determined upon, Mr. B. was entrusted with a principal agency, as a person peculiarly qualified for the management of the con-

templated settlement. The public are already apprized of the disastrous circumstances attending this first experiment. In this station he exhibited the true dignity of his character and illustrated the strength of his Christian faith, amidst events which were calculated to appal the heart. Breathing the contagion of a poisoned atmosphere; his colleagues in the agency dying around him; sustaining almost alone the responsibilities of an important mission, he shrunk not for a moment from fatigue and danger, but with a magnanimity and fortitude altogether surprising, continued to give his personal attendance wherever it was needed, until a mysterious providence terminated his labours with his life.

The reader will be pleased with a few extracts from this volume, illustrative of Mr. B.'s Christian character.

The following anecdote may serve to exemplify the peculiarity of his zeal.

"In a letter dated October 15th, he writes to a confidential Christian friend, 'My cup is full to overflowing. Help me to praise my merciful Saviour. A brother of mine lately visited me. He was a confirmed Deist. Being older than myself, I neglected, for some time, to invite him to our stated prayer meetings, fearing the ridicule of sacred things which might be expected from his satirical tongue. But a sense of duty compelled me at length to take him along. We went into meeting: in prayer, he was the only one present who stood. He kept his position as erect as a post; until, as I was kneeling near him, I pulled him by the coat, and he came upon his knees.—God not only gave me utterance, but enabled me to wrestle in faith for his salvation. The next morning he came very early into my room, begging me to pray for him. I did so; and kept him with me about twelve days. In the mean time he was born, both 'of the water and of the Spirit.' He partook of the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper, and has left me, and all his sins behind.'

"The brother referred to in this extract, has since exhibited a life of consistent piety, and been usefully employed in a public capacity, on the coast of Africa."

His feelings during a storm on his voyage to Africa, show the faith of an established Christian.

"February 11th. A little before sunset, the wind began to rise; and it soon blew a gale, more severe, if possible, than in the preceding night. We shipped nearly a hundred seas,—some of which were very heavy. The binnacle was washed off, and compasses broken. Sometimes the slip was before the wind;—sometimes she was rolling in the trough of the sea; sometimes they lost all command of her. During the latter part of the night, they hove to, and we rolled about till day-light, when the wind abated. These three last nights were awful ones indeed; but in the midst of the dangers,—when every sea seemed to be about to swallow us up,—and every fresh blast of wind stronger than the last; in the midst of all, I rejoiced in God and in the 'help of his countenance.' I could ask myself, whether there was another place in the universe, I would prefer to be in, at that moment?—and I desire to give glory to God, that I could say, there was none. 'Duty had called me here; God was with me; and I was happy. A covenant God; a triumphant Saviour; a holy Bible; and a peaceful conscience,—all how precious!'"

When the sickness among the colonists commenced Mr. B.'s cares and fatigues were multiplied.

“Who can describe the burden under which I am obliged to struggle, in feeding this people,—enduring their complaints,—listening to their tales of trouble,—inquiring into their sufferings,—administering medicine,—labouring with my own hands in building houses for them,—and toiling at the oar, and handling casks, in unloading the vessel and landing the goods!—In addition to all this, I have the spiritual concerns of the whole company to look after. I go without stockings, entirely,—often without shoes;—scarcely wear a hat, and am generally without a coat;—I am up early, and not in bed until ten, or eleven o'clock. I eat little, and seldom use any other refreshments except hard ship-bread, salt meat and water.’ ‘I labour more,—am more exposed to heat, and wet, and damp, and hunger, and thirst, than any one; and yet, blessed be God, I continue in health.’ ‘In addition to all this, I have the weight of the whole interest on my mind:—all the care,—all the responsibility,—all the anxiety. But God be praised, I have peace within.’ ‘There are eight entire families sick; amongst whom there is not one able to dress his own food, or wait upon a child. Oh God, who can help but thou?’”

We conclude with an account of his last illness.

“It was now noon. Mr. Bacon had been exposed to the direct rays of the sun, for six hours, with no better covering than a silk umbrella; nor was it possible to regain a better shelter, before night. He ordered the men to direct their course towards the Plantain Islands; where the boat arrived in the evening of the same day. After resting through the night, Mr. Bacon was carried aboard the boat, early in the morning of the 30th, and passed the whole of another day in the same exposed condition as he had done the preceding. His fever had now attained a degree of violence which almost deprived him of the power of speech; and rendered him apparently insensible to passing occurrences. On the evening of this day he was landed at the recent English settlement on Cape Shilling; and very hospitably received by Captain William Randle, the superintendent of the station. Every requisite attention was bestowed upon him by that gentleman, and his family; and his mind appeared soothed by the kindness which was evinced. But remedies came too late to do him good.

“During the next day, he was able to recline for short intervals on a sofa; and to take a small part in the conversation. But his disorder was hastening rapidly, to a fatal termination. He perceived it, and expressed in the intervals of his sensibility, his acquiescence in the sovereign pleasure of God. The cause in which he had embarked retained a strong interest in his affections, to the last. In his last conversation, he feebly asked, ‘Dear Brother Randle, do you not think we have happiness reserved that will——?’ As the interrogatory was unfinished, the gentleman to whom it was addressed, did not immediately reply: when, Mr. Bacon continued, ‘What do you say to my question?’ A hope was then expressed, that the Saviour would reserve for both, a happiness which should abundantly compensate their present sufferings. He replied, and they were some of his last words, ‘Ah! that is all I want.’

“This last effort of reason and speech, took place about eleven o'clock, on the night of the 1st of May. The languid current of life ebbed gradually away, until half past four, on the following morning; when he expired. His remains were interred on the same day, in the burial ground attached to the church in the settlement: and though deposited by the hands of strangers, on a foreign and pagan shore, they rest under the sure protection of the Christian's Saviour, and in ‘the certain hope of a glorious resurrection.’”

From the narrative we learn that Mr. B. was but a very few years in the Christian life; but that brief term was filled with works of faith and charity. He entered the course late, but as one sensible that time had been lost in making a commencement, he ran the race vigorously; his career was unchecked, until he had reached the goal. As if anticipating his early fate, he appeared to live every moment to the best purpose; and now hav-

ing finished the work entrusted to him, he is, as we confidently trust, translated to his reward.

We have no desire that this brief sketch should *satisfy* curiosity, but rather *awaken* it to a perusal of the volume under review. We cordially recommend it to the patronage of the Christian public. Its gratifying details will amply compensate the expense of purchase; and, as a more powerful appeal to benevolent feeling, it may be mentioned, that the profits of the publication are to be devoted to the education of Mr. B.'s orphan boy.

W. M. E.

HINDOO SUPERSTITION.

Extract from a Discourse, the substance of which was delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Baptist Missionary Society, in Bristol, (England,) September, 1818. By John Foster: the Author of "Essays on Decision of Character," "Evils of Popular Ignorance." &c.

An edition of this *excellent* DISCOURSE has been recently published, "FOR THE BENEFIT OF MISSIONS," by a Student in the Theological Seminary, Princeton, (N. J.) and with a view of introducing it to the notice of our readers, we give the following extract.

"There is much in the Hindoo system that is strikingly peculiar; but as it is the substantial greatness of the evil, rather than its specific discriminations, that requires to be presented to the view of Christian zeal, our brief notices will mainly place the emphasis on qualities common to this with the other principal modes of paganism. Our object is rather to exhibit the system in its strength of pernicious operation than in any explanatory statement of its form and materials. There needs no great length of description, since the communications of missionaries, and various works in common circulation, have made all who take the least interest in the subject, familiarly acquainted with the prominent features of the heathenism of central Asia. For the attainment of any thing like a complete knowledge it may defy all human faculty, which faculty besides, if it might search the universe for choice of subjects, could find nothing less worth its efforts for knowledge. The system, if it is to be so called, is an utter chaos, without top, or bottom, or centre, or any dimension or proportion belonging either to matter or mind, and consisting of what deserves no better order. It gives one the idea of immensity filled with what is not of the value of an atom. It is the most remarkable exemplification of the possibility of making the grandest ideas contemptible, for that of infinity is here combined with the very abstract of worthlessness.

"But, deserving of all contempt as it is, regarded merely as a farrago of notions and fantasies, it becomes a thing for detestation and earnest hostility when viewed in its practical light, as the governing scheme of principles and rites to a large portion of our race. Consider that there is thus acting upon them, as religion, a system which is in nearly all its properties, that which the true religion *is not*, and in many of them the exact reverse. Look at your religion, presented in its bright attributes before you, reflecting those of its Author; and then realize to your minds as far as you can, the condition of so many millions of human spirits receiving, without intermission, from infancy to the hour of death, the full influence of the direct opposites to these divine principles,—a contrast of condition but faintly typified by that between the Israelites and the Egyptians in beholding, on the different sides, the pillar in its appearance over the Red Sea. Consider in comparison the intellectual and moral systems