

Poetry.

OLD LETTERS.

BY JOHN G. SAXE.

Old letters! old letters!—what hist'ries ye hold,
Shut up from the world in your hiding-place
here;

What marvellous stories your leaves could unfold,
That were never meant for the popular ear!

No matter—come down from your dusty old shelf,
(Your secrets are safe from a sinister sight,)

While just in a whisper, and quite by myself,
I read what may chance to come up to the light?

A letter from MARY—to say she received
My rather short note of the 10th of July;
Was glad of the missive, but terribly grieved,—
Indeed she'd a strong inclination to cry,
To think I should credit those slanderous DAYS,
Who seem to delight in offensive remark,
And are always contriving in all sorts of ways,
To marry her off to that "odious CLARK!"

A letter from CLARK!—The date, by the way,
Is later, I see, by a couple of years;
"I write you, dear Frederick, merely to say,
My business is better by far than my fears;
I've plenty of clients,—rich, obstinate fellows;
I'm a *pari-ent* also, quite lately elected;
(I remember, my boy, that you used to be jealous!)

And MARY's as well as could well be expected."
From cousin LEANDER, a mischievous rogue,
Very far from a sage, and as far from a fool;
Expert at the deepest diversions in vogue,
But dull in the lessons they set him at school,
"Dear Fred:—I must tell you I'm going to sea;
The 'Sybarite' sails in a fortnight or so;
Hurrah for the Ocean!—the ocean for me!
I'm fond of the water (with brandy) you know!"

Poor boy!—what a pitiful story is thine;
And yet the same fate has been many another's,

Who, wandering like thee o'er the turbulent brine,
Has blasted the hopes of the fondest of mothers.
Ah! bootless are prayers lest the ocean should drown
Whom the treacherous syrens of Pleasure beguile;

For Neptune was gracious in spite of his frown;
And Bacchus was cruel in spite of his smile!

A letter from JANE:—"Philosophical friend,
Pray give me your candid opinion of HARRY;
Is he perfectly moral? (don't fear to offend)

And a proper young man for your servant to marry?

He's clever, and handsome, and graceful, and tall,

And don't seem a person addicted to vice—"

My opinion?—of course—'tis the way with 'em all—

They want approbation, and ask for advice!

I gave what she asked, and obtained, as I ought,
A lesson of wisdom not easily lost,
That the soundest opinion when given for naught

Is worth just the price that the article cost!

'Twas a different thing when she paid me a fee
For bringing a suit in the regular course;

Alas!—that a maiden so happy as she,
Should wreck her high hopes on the rock of Divorce.

From Mother!—"I send you the parcel to-day;

I hope all your stockings are decently whole;

I think of you always, my son, when I pray;

Take care of your health; and take care of your soul."

Dear name!—truest symbol of goodness and worth

That ever in language to mortals was given;

God grant that the prayers of my mother on earth,
May still be the prayers of my Mother in Heaven!

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE.

A Sketch of Church History by Elder GEORGE A. SMITH, spoken in the Tabernacle at Ogden City, Tuesday, November 15, 1864, 10 a. m.

[REPORTED BY G. D. WATT.]

When the Lord appeared to Joseph Smith and manifested unto him a knowledge pertaining to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and the work of the last days, Satan came also with his power and tempted Joseph. It is written in the book of Job, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." In the very commencement of this work, the prophet Joseph Smith was called upon to contend face to face with the powers of darkness by spiritual manifestations, and open visions, as well as with men in the flesh, stirred up by the same spirit of the adversary to edge up his way and destroy him from the earth, and annihilate the work which he was about to commence. He thus describes the incident:

"In the spring of 1820 after I had retired into the place where I had previously designed to go, having looked around me, and finding myself alone, I knelt down and began to offer up the desires of my heart to God. I had scarcely done so, when immediately I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me, and had such astonishing influence over me as to bind my tongue so that I could not speak. Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction. But—exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy which had seized upon me, and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction; not to an imaginary ruin, but to the power of some actual being from the unseen world, who had such a marvelous power as I had never before felt in any being—just at this moment of great alarm, I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, pointing to the other—"This is my beloved son, hear him."

It was also peculiar in the history of the age, that just at the time that God was revealing unto his servant Joseph to raise up men to bear testimony of the principles of the gospel in its fullness and simplicity, that Satan was at work stirring up the hearts of the children of men to a species of religious excitement. There were in many parts of the country strange manifestations, great camp and other protracted meetings were assembled together to worship under the various orders denominated Methodists, Campbellites, Presbyterians, Baptists, Unitarians, etc. Among whom were manifested the development of a spirit which deprived men of their strength; they would faint away, or they would manifest a variety of contortions of countenance. There was introduced into the Western States a phenomenon called the jerks; persons under the influence of religious fanaticism would jerk seemingly enough to tear them to pieces.

When the Church was organized, persons came into it bringing along some of these enthusiastic notions; individuals who professed to have revelations on every subject, and who were ready to banish every moral principle under the guidance of false spirits. Joseph the prophet had also to learn by experience, and to teach the Elders and the early members of the Church, how they should judge of the manifestation of spirits. Book of Doctrine and Covenants Sec. 17, Par. 7.

"Wherefore it shall come to pass, that if you behold a spirit manifested that you cannot understand, and you receive not that spirit, ye shall ask of the Father in the name of Jesus, and if he give not unto you that spirit, that you may know that it is not of God: and it shall be given unto you power over that spirit, and you shall proclaim against that spirit with a loud voice, that it is not of God; not with railing accusation, that ye be not overcome; neither with boasting, nor rejoicing, lest you be seized therewith," and refers to Hiram Page who began to get revelations through the medium of a black stone, certain characters appearing on that stone which he wrote down.

Notes concerning false revelations, apostacies.

Joseph Smith in his history wrote thus:

"To our great grief, however, we soon found that Satan had been lying in wait to deceive, and seeking whom he might devour. Br. Hyrum Page had got in his possession a certain stone, by which he had obtained revelations concerning the upbuilding of Zion, the order of the church &c., &c., all of which were entirely at variance with the order of God's house, as laid down in the New Testament, as well as our late revelations. As a conference had been appointed for the first day of September, I thought it wisdom not to do much more than to converse with the brethren on the subject, until the conference should meet. Finding, however, that many, especially the Whitmer family and Oliver Cowdery, were believing much in the things set forth by this stone, we thought best to inquire of the Lord concerning so important a matter; and before conference convened, we received the revelation to Oliver Cowdery given at Fayette, New York, September,

1830. In the 4th paragraph of which, the Lord says: "And again, thou shalt take thy brother, Hyrum Page between him and thee alone, and tell him that those things which he hath written from that stone are not of me, and that Satan deceived him; for, behold, these things have not been appointed unto him, neither shall anything be appointed unto any of this church contrary to the church covenants, for all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith."

Joseph's history continues:

"At length our conference assembled. The subject of the stone previously mentioned, was discussed, and after considerable investigation, Bro. Page, as well as the whole church who were present, renounced the said stone, and all things connected therewith, much to our mutual satisfaction and happiness."

Some of the elders journeyed to the westward from the State of New York and built up branches in the State of Ohio. Elders Oliver Cowdery and P. P. Pratt visited Sidney Rigdon who resided in Mentor, Geauga county, and was famous in that country as a reformed Baptist minister, more familiarly known as Campbellites. He had preached the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins, the regular Baptist church having a different view of the subject, for they considered "baptism as an outward sign of an inward grace," and that in order to be a candidate for baptism he must have received a change of heart, changed from a heart of stone to one of flesh; he was required to go into the congregation and formally renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, having given evidence that he was a new creature and was prepared for baptism. But the reformed Baptists held the doctrine which I believe was first preached in Ohio, by Sidney Rigdon, that a man must reform, that repentance was simply a reformation, and the moment that repentance was resolved upon, the candidate was ready for baptism, and so far their notion appeared to be an improvement upon the general idea entertained, and consonant with the Bible view of it, as it was laid down by the Savior and his apostles. But here they stopped, and did not administer the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and what was further; they contended there was no need of it, that it was all done away, and that the written word was all the spirit there was.

When the elders waited on Sidney Rigdon and presented to him the Book of Mormon, teaching him the principle of laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost, he received it, as did several hundred members of his church, and members of other churches in that vicinity, who were baptized in a few weeks. In a few days Elders Oliver Cowdery, P. P. Pratt and Ziba Peterson passed on westward, as their mission directed them to the western boundaries of the State of Missouri. Sidney Rigdon took a journey to the east, as did Edward Partridge for the purpose of visiting the prophet, and these strange spirits of which we have already spoken began to manifest themselves in the churches and branches which had been built up.

There was at this time in Kirtland a society that had undertaken to have a community of property, it has sometimes been denominated the Morley family, as there was a number of them located on a farm owned by Captain Isaac Morley. These persons had been baptized but had not yet been instructed in relation to their duties. A false spirit entered into them, developing their singular extravagant and wild ideas. They had a meeting at the farm, and among them was a negro known generally as Black Pete who became a revelator. Others also manifested wonderful developments; they could see angels, and letters would come down from heaven, they said, and they would be put through wonderful unnatural distortions. Finally on one occasion, Black Pete got sight of one of those revelations carried by a black angel, he started after it, and ran off a steep wash bank 25 feet high, passed through a tree top into the Chagrin river beneath. He came out with a few scratches, and his ardor somewhat cooled.

Joseph Smith came to Kirtland, and taught that people in relation to their error. He showed them that the spirit of God did not bind men nor make them insane, and that the power of the adversary which had been manifested in many instances was visible even from that cause, for persons under its influence became helpless, and were bound hand and foot as in chains, being as immovable as a stick of timber. When Joseph came to instruct these

Saints in relation to the true spirit, and the manner of determining the one from the other, in a short time a number of those who had been influenced by those foul manifestations, apostatized. Among the number was Wycom Clark; he got a revelation that he was to be the prophet—that he was the true revelator, and himself, Northrop Sweet and four other individuals retired from the church, and organized the "Pure Church of Christ," as they called it; composed of six members, and commenced having meetings, and preaching, but that was the extent of the growth of this early schism. John Noah, another of this class, assumed to be a prophet, and in consequence thereof was expelled from the church.

Among the early baptisms in northern Ohio, was a methodist minister by the name of Ezra Booth. He was present when the Elders first received the ordination of the High Priesthood. They met together in June, 1831, in a log school-house in Kirtland, a room about eighteen feet by twenty. While they were there, the manifestation of the power of God being on Joseph, he set apart some of the Elders to the High Priesthood. Ezra Booth was bound, and his countenance was distorted, and numbers of the brethren looked at him, and thought it was a wonderful manifestation of the power of God, but to their astonishment, Joseph came forward and rebuked the foul spirit, and commanded it to depart, in consequence of which Booth was relieved, and many of the brethren were greatly tried at such a singular treatment by the prophet of these wonderful manifestations of power.

Others had visions. Lyman Wight bore testimony that he saw the face of the Savior.

The Priesthood was conferred on a number of Elders, and thirty were selected to take a mission to the western boundaries of Missouri, and travel and preach two and two by the way, traveling without purse or scrip. They did so, building up churches. Joseph was required to travel by water, or at a more rapid rate to reach there, to meet the brethren and hold a conference in the land of Zion. It was only a short time after the return from this mission, that Ezra Booth apostatized as did Jacob Scott, Symons Rider, Eli Johnson and a number of others. The spirit of apostasy was little known, but when these men apostatized they became more violent, more cruel, and manifested a greater spirit of persecution than any other enemies. What seemed singular, Ezra Booth had been brought into the church through the manifestation of a miracle. The wife of Father John Johnson had been afflicted with the rheumatism so as to be unable to raise her arm and hand for two years. Her husband had believed the work, and she also was believing. She went to Joseph Smith the prophet to have him administer to her, Booth accompanied them, for he was well acquainted with the family, and the condition of Mrs. Johnson. When the Elders laid their hands upon her, she was instantly healed, so that she could use her arm and hand as well as ever she could previously. Booth knew this to be an instantaneous cure, and soon after witnessing this miracle, he was baptized, and ordained an Elder. He having formerly been a methodist minister, commenced preaching the gospel without purse or scrip, and he did so until he found, (using a common expression,) it did not pay. Under these circumstances he apostatized. While he was in apostasy he searched his cranium for some means to justify himself and published a series of lying letters in the Ohio Star, a paper printed in Revenna. Those nine letters had been republished several times as evidence against Mormonism; and his apostasy culminated in collecting a mob who tarred and feathered Joseph Smith and inflicted upon his family the loss of one of its number at Hyrum, Portage county, Ohio. Joseph Smith was occupying the room of a house brother Johnson was living in, at the same time; it was a two story building, had steps in front. The mob surrounded the house, the twins being afflicted with measles, Joseph was lying upon a trundle bed with one of them. The mob rushed in and gathered up Joseph while in his bed and took him out in his night clothes, and carried him out on to the top of the steps. Joseph got a foot at liberty and kicked one of the men, and knocked him down off the steps, and the print of his head and shoulders were visible on the ground in the morning. Warren Waste, who was the strongest man in the western reserve considered himself perfectly able to handle Joseph alone, but when they got hold of him, Waste cried out, "do not let him touch