

Ryland's Poetical Letter.

IN 1764 the Midland Association met at Birmingham. John Collett Ryland, of Northampton, attended the meetings, and wrote an account for his friend William Christian, who for over half a century had been minister of the church at Shepshed and Rempston, and still had six months to live. He had several helpers, including William Guy for nine years. In October a new Association was planned, which met first at Kettering in Whitweek, 1765; two years later, both Northampton and Shepshed joined this, destined to be famous as the Northamptonshire, whence arose the B.M.S. Ryland kept a school, as to whose boys he left pungent remarks. His own lad, John, at this time eleven years old, got hold of his father's letter, and turned it into doggerel. The proud father had it put into type, and a copy is in the Angus Library. It is probably more interesting than the official minutes, which may be seen at the British Museum.

My Dear Brother Christian, whom much I esteem,
As one whom the Lord by his Blood did Redeem;
As you when we parted desired that I
Would write very soon and so now I comply.
And for once I have taken a fancy to send
A few rambling lines to you, my dear Friend,
If my verse be but awkward, my friendship is true,
Nor need I make any excuses to you.
To my Friend, Mr. Guy, I have briefly sent word,
That I got safely home, through the care of the Lord.
To his name be all honour, and glory, and Praise
Whose providence graciously prospers our ways.
My Friends at Northampton in health I all found,
With manifold Blessings encompass'd around.
I was glad of a pleasant Church meeting to hear,
Although I regretted that I was not there.
By the power of God's Spirit, five persons reveal'd,
And told how he wounded, and then how he heal'd;
One woman especial, Brother Chorus's Sister,
Spoke choicely indeed, for the Lord did assist her:
But poor Thomas Tilly could hardly go on,
Satan told him he'd Die as soon as he'd done:

He trembled and Quak'd every word that he said
And in earnest expected to tumble down dead.
Charles Tilworth, poor Lad, tho' propos'd was not there
I heard he was kidnapp'd by Giant despair :
But we hope that his heart will be better in tune,
To speak, with five more, the beginning of June.
May their tongues be untied, that they boldly may tell
How the arm of Jehovah redeem'd them from Hell!
How he sought them, and found them, far going astray,
And taught them to Travel in Zion's right way.
O! what a blessed day is approaching, dear Brother,
When I trust we in glory shall meet one another.
What singing, what shouting, what heavenly greeting,
Will be at that general triumphant Church-meeting!
When all the Lord's chosen together shall join
To tell of the wonders of mercy divine.
Not Idleness, Business, or length of the way,
Shall keep from that Meeting one member away.
Temptations and Trials no more shall be known,
Nor Satan, nor Sin shall then make us to groan.
Doubts, fears, nor distress, shall our souls then invade
Nor scoffs of the World longer make us afraid.
No Parties, no quarrels, the saints then divide
They'll be free from all shyness and free from all Pride.
Well met shall be all, both the great and the small—
For I may shake hands with the Blessed St. Paul.
Each strange dispensation, now well understood,
We then shall see clearly all work'd for our good.
What merciful dealings we then shall be told;
What wisdom, what goodness we then shall behold,
When each tale is ended, how will they all sing;
The loud sounding Chorus will make Heaven ring.
But O it seems long to that blessed day
And I'm often discourag'd because of the way!
We must travel, you know, as we go to Mount Zion,
O'er mountains of Leopards, by the den of the Lion;
And though they're all chain'd, and Christ over them rules,
Yet their horrible roaring frights Children and Fools.
Such short-sighted creatures as you and I be,
Can often the Lions—but not the Chain see :
And to see but their shadow, if Christ be not there,
Is enough to make anyone tremble for fear.
However our Saviour has broken their Head
And promis'd that I on the Dragon shall tread.
O that he would give me more courage and faith,
To believe, and rely on whatever he saith;

In his strength to resist all the armies of Hell,
 With the sword of the spirit their might to repel,
 Like the brave Sons of God at my Saviour's command,
 To fight 'till my sword shall cleave fast to my hand.
 But the worst of all is, that, from want of faith, I
 Am apt to take fright, like a coward, and fly :
 And none but my Captain, with shame, I may say,
 But would long since have hang'd me, or turn'd me away :
 But his patience is boundless, and boundless his Grace,
 And still doth he bear with a rebel so base !
 God grant that his goodness my soul may excite,
 With firmness and courage in order to fight.
 To consider what persons we now ought to be,
 May the foresight of Glory constrain you and me.
 Sons of God ! Heirs of heaven ! the purchase of Blood !
 Forbid it dear Lord ! we should wallow in mud,
 Leave the earth to the moles, we are bound to the skies,
 There's nothing deserves our affection besides.
 Still to pray hard for me, my Dear Brother, cease not,
 Alas ! you can't think what a heart I have got :
 So stubborn, so stupid, so carnal, so cold ;
 The half of its wickedness cannot be told !
 Above all things deceitful, and desp'rately bad—
 Good Lord, 'tis enough to make John Ryland mad !
 Thou only canst know it—thou only canst mend it !
 O search it, and wash it, and break it, and cleanse it !
 But I shall rhyme on 'till you surely be tir'd,
 My Paper is fill'd, and my time is expired.
 May God bless you all, and may you increase
 In love and in holiness, knowledge and peace,
 To your Aunt, Mrs. Barnes, Mrs. Wales, Mrs. Pratt,
 The lady whose house we all breakfasted at ;
 The good man, whose namesake, without food or lights
 In the sea-monster's belly liv'd three days and three nights :
 To every one else to Christ Jesus a Friend,
 My Christian respects I most cordially send ;
 And pray God to prosper his Gospel, and bring
 All his people to own the Lord Jesus as King.
 Farewell ! and believe me, there's none in this Island
 That wishes you better than I do. John Ryland.

These lines which the Post-man to you will convey,
 Were wrote at Northampton, the seventh of May,
 In one thousand seven hundred sixty and four—
 Since I left you at Sheepshead, six days and no more.