

Pastor and People.

THE EDINBURGH ASSEMBLIES.

The Scotch Assemblies convened in Edinburgh on May 24th. The Established body was opened with the usual State ceremonial, the Earl of Galloway, the Lord High Commissioner, having previously held the customary levee at Holyrood Palace. Rev. Dr. Cook of Bourne, the retiring Moderator, preached from Mark ix. 40, and subsequently nominated as his successor the Rev. Dr. Phin, convener of the Home Mission Committee. Dr. Phin having taken the chair, the Lord High Commissioner assured the Assembly of Her Majesty's "resolution to retain Presbyterian government in Scotland," and announced the Sovereign's "royal bounty of a sum of £2,000, to be applied to such uses as may tend most to the propagation of Christian knowledge, and of the principles of the Reformed religion in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland." The Moderator suitably replied, after which Principal Pirie was appointed convener of the Business Committee. The Church Extension report showed that during the year eighteen new parishes had been erected, embracing a population of 60,000, giving to each parish an average of about 3,600 inhabitants. Reckoning the average sum required for endowment of these churches at £3,500, this gives a sum of £208,000 as provided during the year, without reckoning the value of the churches themselves. Towards the £150,000 required for the erection of the proposed one hundred additional parishes, the sum of £22,208 had been received by the Committee. It was agreed to place on record an estimate of the regard entertained by the Assembly for Dr. Smith, Mr. James Baird, Principal Campbell, and Sheriff Tait, who have been removed by death during the year. The report of the committee appointed to procure "full information respecting collections and contributions for religious, charitable, and educational purposes," stated that the information asked had been procured from 1,246 out of 1,331 churches, chapels and stations. The total sum returned as contributed in 1876, was £350,621; while in 1877 this was increased to £384,106.

The Free Church Assembly was opened by the retiring Moderator, Dr. McLaughlin, who preached from John iii. 86. Rev. Dr. Goold, late of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, a well-known theologian and editor of the works of John Owen, was elected Moderator. After glancing at the losses the Church had sustained through death since their last met, Dr. Goold dwelt at length upon the agitation for a revision of the Confession of Faith. The Church, he said, must abide by the direct message of salvation which God has given it to proclaim. It must not go fishing for a creed in this nineteenth century of the Christian era. Without a union of faith there can be no common worship. Not that any confession is beyond change. No Church should be in bondage to an instrument of its own formation. There may be progress in theological sciences, not in the communication of truth by God, but in the apprehension of it by man. To rank any such document as a confession with inspiration, and to regard it, consequently, as beyond revision, would be to defeat its very end. To tamper needlessly with the Confession would be to run a great risk. But no man need be an advocate for the infallibility, or even for the optimism, of that document, and he would go much further than some have done in the exercise of indulgent tenderness and forbearance towards minds that have scruples and difficulties about minor points contained in it.

On the Friday morning the Assembly sat for the despatch of business. In all there were 180 overtures before the court, fifty of these being in favor of disestablishment and disendowment in Scotland. Amongst the other subjects which had attracted much attention in Presbyteries were—the theological curriculum, on which twenty-one overtures had come up; hymns and hymnals, on which sixteen had been sent; and intemperance, in regard to which ten had been presented. The Committee on the State of Religion and Morals stated that their report contained no allusion to "widespread gratuitous movements in the Church." It was, however, one of the pleasing and encouraging features of the day, that so many young men and women were lovingly employed in varied departments of Christian work. The report also dwelt upon the scepticism and worldliness of the present time, even among the membership of churches. Reference was made to the Plymouthists, who, at a time of religious awakening, hindered the good work by seeking to draw people away from their own pastors. Principal Rainy gave notice of a motion in relation to the State "to terminate the connection of the State with the existing Established Church, and to give facilities for a free and independent ecclesiastical establishment." The year's income for foreign missions amounted to £51,217.

The debate on what is known as "the case of Prof. Smith," which took place on Tuesday, had been looked forward to with much interest. We find the following sketch of it in the London World of June 1st: The Rev. W. Robertson Smith, a Professor of the Free Church College of Aberdeen, and a member of the Bible Revision Committee, having written, amongst other things, an article on "The Bible," for the "Encyclopedia Britannica," which was thought by some to be heretic, the whole matter was referred to the College Committee. This Committee reported to the Committee of Assembly that they failed to find sufficient ground to support a process of heresy against the Professor. They, however, considered it a fair question whether the article was not of such a nature as to call for the interposition in some form of the Supreme Court of the Church. The Committee expressed their regret and disapprobation that the article does not adequately indicate that the Professor holds the doctrine of the divine inspiration of the books of the Bible, the history of which he investigates and describes, and that the Professor holds the instructions and laws which in the book of Deuteronomy appear as uttered by Moses, as certainly part of the divine revelation. The case having been transmitted to the Free Presbytery of Aberdeen, that Court obtained certain answers from Prof. Smith, which were forwarded to the Assembly's consideration. On Tuesday, when the case came up for disposal, Prof. Smith said he had come up to the resolution to ask the Presbytery of Aberdeen at its next meeting that all charges against him be reduced to the form of a libel, so that, according to the ordinary operations of the rules of procedure, his functions as a teacher might be suspended till the case was exhausted and decided. Rev. Dr. Wilson then moved a series of resolutions to the effect that the Presbytery of Aberdeen proceed with the case according to the rules of the Church, so that it may be ripe for final judgment at the next General Assembly. Prof. Smith in the meantime to cease from discharging his duties as a Professor. In supporting his motion, Dr. Wilson said that in such a day as this the Free Church could not expect to escape the trial that was manifestly coming over all Churches in the world. They must be prepared to abandon traditional beliefs, if they were incapable of substantial proof; and on the other hand, they must take care to hold fast that which was good. The motion was seconded by Dr. Moody Stuart, who contended that Prof. Smith's views, however unconsciously, robbed Scripture of all authority. A second resolution was moved by Prof. Candlish, to the effect that the General Assembly deem it expedient to pronounce no opinion at this stage on the College Committee's report, or on any point connected with the case, and leaving the matter in the hands of the Presbytery. In the course of his remarks Prof. Candlish said Prof. Smith's article on the Bible was not very judicious, and contained rash statements; but the Assembly should remember that the Church had received Prof. Smith as a gift from the Lord, and they should accept what had now occurred as also coming from the Lord. With all the explanations that might be given, he could not divest the proposal of suspension of the aspect of prejudging the case. Mr. Ferguson, an elder, seconded Dr. Candlish's motion. Prof. Pringle said they should beware of making their personal beliefs essential to faith in the Bible. They ought not to discourage the attempts of believing men to deal with difficult questions of Biblical criticism. Prof. Smith thought he could go as far as he had gone on the same road with critics not of the orthodox school, and yet retain his faith in the doctrine of the Church. There were Catholic orthodox critics, as well as Rationalist critics, who held the same views of Deuteronomy as Prof. Smith. It was a new question, but they ought to face it. He confessed for his own part, he was in serious perplexity, and the report of the College Committee—a committee of learned men—showed that they also had been groping their way. Sir Henry W. Moncrieff, who supported Dr. Wilson's motion, was in favor of limiting criticism. Prof. Macgregor regarded Dr. Wilson's motion as a censure on Prof. Smith before he was tried, therefore he must withhold his support. Dr. Begg objected to what some called the higher criticism, but what others called lower scepticism, having free course in the Free Church. Principal Rainy said all Churches must be prepared to recognize an honest difference of opinion about matters upon which they were formerly very much agreed. At the close of the debate the Assembly divided, when there voted for Dr. Wilson's motion, 491; for Dr. Candlish's, 118. The motion for the suspension of Prof. Smith was thus carried by a majority of 373. Thirty-four members intimated their dissent from the Assembly's finding.

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IRISH PRESBYTERIAN ASSEMBLY.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland began its annual meeting in the May Street Church, Belfast, on June 4th. Rev. John Meneely, the retiring Moderator, preached the opening sermon. Rev. George Bellis was found to be the choice for Moderator of eighteen of the thirty six Presbyteries in the Church, ten of whom did not express their preferences at all.

The report on the state of religion states that there was nothing unusual to record in the spiritual history of the Church during the year past. The means of grace have been maintained as formerly, the standard of Christian liberality is rising, and greater interest is manifested in missionary work. The committee, while not believing that vital religion was at a lower ebb in the Presbyterian Church than in any other churches of the land, thought there was urgent need of a spiritual awakening, and proceeded to enumerate amongst the evils which demanded the practical consideration of all who professed to be the servants and followers of Christ, "intemperance, worldliness, as manifested in the race for riches and the love of worldly display, neglect of private and family study of the Word of God, and an increasing laxity of attachment to the Church of their fathers."

The report of the Committee on Temperance states that the practice of abstaining from the use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage is becoming more extended. There are now 289 abstaining ministers in the Church who have given their names to be published, besides many others who are acting on this principle. There are also enrolled 25 licentiates, 82 theological stu-

dents of the Belfast College, and 19 students of Magee College, Derry. In regard to other churches great progress has been made. It is stated that more than 8,000 ministers of the Episcopal Church have become abstainers.

The income of the Sustentation Fund for the year was £26,410 18s. 11d., which, compared with £25,751 13s. 3d., the aggregate of the preceding year, shows an increase for 1876-7 of £659 5s. 8d. Payments of congregational arrears amount to £704 2s. 10d., as against £600 11s. 10d. for 1875-6, being an increase of £103 11s. 0d.

The Pratuody Committee reported progress, and the Assembly expressed approval of its work. It is expected that the amended and improved metrical version of the Psalms will soon be published. The committee has been engaged upon the work for a number of years.

The following is from the report of the Committee on Statistics: "Returns have this year been received from 657 congregations. The past year has been one of great depression in the commercial world, and we should be thankful that our Church income has been steadily maintained. It is true, there has been a decrease of £201 in the supplemental stipend, which amounts to £1,640, and of £2,412 in the sum raised for debt, which amounts to £25,374; but there has been an increase in almost every other particular. £792 has been added to the rent rolls, which now amount to £44,812; £690 to the Sabbath collections, which have reached the sum of £17,818; and £194 to the Sustentation Fund, making £21,510. The sum contributed for missions this year is £18,867, or £811 in advance of last year, while £160 more has been raised in the Sabbath schools, which now contribute £2,100. £18,550 are returned as having been given to other charities, or £1,278 more than last year. When the two sides of our account are compared, we find a total increase of £1,577, making the sum raised during the year £142,729. The number of Sabbath-schools is 1,086; of teachers, 8,570; of scholars, 69,240. Since 1854, when these statistics began to be published, the communicants have fallen off from 122,000 to 107,000, and certainly the mere coexistence of inaccuracy that might have been made yearly in the returns was not a sufficient explanation for such a diminution."

The question of instrumental music was before the Assembly, but no action had been taken at the time the Belfast Witness—from which we glean the foregoing facts—closed its report of the proceedings.

A Breath of Honeysuckle.

Sweet from the richly burdened trolis comes the perfume of the honeysuckle. There are delicate distinctions of fragrance wafted in from the garden beds; amongst them none more tenderly freighted than this. Did you ever think about the charm there is in the scent of a flower? It is a source of exquisite pleasure, and yet its real spell is less in what it is, than in what it suggests. Perfumes are something like strains of music, or like pictures seen for a moment, and then vanishing out of sight. They often are so intertwined and blended with associations, that meet them where we may, on the instant the present recedes, and some dear, or sad, or beautiful memory of the past returns to the soul. You pass a bed of lilies; they rise before you in their purity, like stainless vestals, and straightway, with the sight and smell of them, a dozen years fall away from you like a dream, or like mist of the morning, and you are back in the bright, blithe days of your youth. Back to the glad times when life was all before you, and no pent-up Utes confined your powers. Back to the era when you never, in the full buoyancy of bounding health, knew what it was to bear the weary pain of an aching head, or the slow torture of an aching heart. By the mystic touch of the lilies you are for the moment carried away to the fairy land left far behind you. And the sweet voices you hear, and the soft hands you touch are the hands and the voices of companions whose ways have parted from your own.

The honeysuckle that is blooming now, was in full sweetness in that never-to-be forgotten June, which took from you the precious child, your loveliest and fairest, to be with Jesus. Never since then do you pass it in flower, or catch a whiff of its delicious breath without living over that week of anxiety and that night of long watching which came before the dawn when "she passed through glory's morning gate, and walked in Paradise."

It is with the flower as with other things. Our most precious treasures are those which are rooted in our affections. That is often most ours, which has gone out of sight into the safe-keeping of Heaven. Though there be pain mingled with the pleasure the sweet memory brings, it is pain which is sacred, and which gathers all-way around it thoughts of joy and hope.

The Apostles Work.

The field embraced in the labors of the Apostles was undoubtedly a large one, the missionary centres established by them having been widely scattered through the Roman Empire, and here and there being found even beyond its limits. Paul alone carried the gospel from Jerusalem through Syria and Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, as far as Illyricum and Rome, and probably even into Spain; Peter sends greeting from the Church at Babylon to the elect strangers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia; and John addresses epistles to seven churches in Asia Minor, five of which—Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia—do not come within the range of Paul's missionary labors. And in the post-apostolic times the boundaries were, doubtless, still further extended. By the close of the first century it is certain that the entire coast-line of the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt, proconsular Africa and Spain—probably, also, Southern France—were comprised within the mission field. The meshes of the mission net were, indeed, tolerably wide, and the churches rather scattered than close and numerous; but still, there was hardly a province in the vast Roman Empire into which Christianity had not found an entrance.—Indian Evangelical Review.

The Lord's Supper.

Around a table, not a tomb,  
He wills our gathering-place to be,  
When, going to prepare our home,  
Our Saviour said, "Remember me."

We kneel around no sculptured stone,  
Marking the place where Jesus lay;  
Empty the tomb, the angels gone,  
The stone forever rolled away.

No—sculptured stones are for the dead—  
Thy three dark days are o'er;  
Thou art the Life, the living Head,  
Our living Light for evermore.

Of no fond relics, sadly dear,  
O Master, art thine own possessed—  
The crown of thorns, the cross, the spear,  
The purple robe, the seamless vest—

No—Relics are for those who mourn  
The memory of an absent friend.  
Not absent thou, nor we forlorn;  
Art thou not with us to the end?

Thus round thy table, not thy tomb,  
We keep thy sacred feast with thee,  
Until within the Father's home  
Our endless gathering-place shall be.  
—Mrs. Sigourney.

Feeding with the Spoon.

The custom of preaching exclusively from selected texts, is like feeding adult mankind with the spoon, and that spoon often half empty. Strong meat, in slices and solid morsels, "belongeth unto them of full age." It is to an adult church that our Lord has addressed the revelation of redemption, and it is to go contrary to the Eternal Will to conceal from that church the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are there.

The Bible ought surely to be "expounded in order." If it be a record of a progressive and continuous revelation, it will carry with it traces of the intelligence which reveals itself in nature. Nature is a living and complex whole, absolutely unintelligible in fragments, and requiring, alike for its scientific explanation and highest practical use, consecutive study of its unity. Can we believe that the all-embracing, continuously-thinked mind of God has wrought differently in man's redemption from sin and death, or can he be satisfied with seeing His scholars picking scattered grains and elements of thought like so many chickens, taking their gospel throughout a lifetime from a preacher's version of selected verses from the mighty record, without bringing their minds into direct and steady contact with the amply-supplied materials for a personal and inductive understanding of coherent truth?

A people fed on sermons and single texts, depending for its knowledge of God mainly on scraps of revelations, doled out by unstudious clergymen, finds its heart trembling for the ark of God at the sound of every rustling leaf of an infidel pamphlet or article which flutters in the breeze, and which fades almost as soon as it flies. Even a "bare bodkin" of bone, dug from the caverns at Torquay, is sufficient to "make the quakers" of many a modern believer's faith, in this age of popular semi-scientific information. What, if the churches were trained to study their Bibles as a connected history, as an organic whole, as the record of a continuous revelation, and incited so to do by the example offered to them in the pulpit, Christian faith could stand without wincing the discovery of ten thousand bones in the drift, and even of cartloads of flint implements in the quarternary gravels. It is even possible that a belief in God might survive a whole flight of hot thunderbolts from professors who declare that they will for the future, take evolution for granted—even if unproved; and that they will never again condescend to reply to the stupid argument from design in nature, since true science knows nothing of any Designer.—Rev. Edward White.

Evils of the Half-way Covenant.

The Rev. Joseph Cook, in one of his recent Monday lectures, ascribed the origin and wide prevalence of loose religious opinions in New England to the admission of unconverted persons to the membership of the churches in their early history, under what was called the "half-way covenant," and he gave the following graphic description of the trials endured by Jonathan Edwards in his conscientious endeavor to establish the rule that evidence of conversion should be an indispensable prerequisite to church membership: "I know where in Massachusetts I can put my hand on little irregular scraps of brown paper, stitched together as note-books, and closely covered all over with Jonathan Edwards' handwriting. Why did he use such coarse material in his studies? Why was he within sight of starvation? Because he had opposed the half-way covenant. Why did that man need to accept from Scotland funds with which to maintain his family? Because he opposed the half-way covenant. Why did his wife and daughters make fans and sell them to buy bread? Because he opposed the half-way covenant. Because he defended with vigor, as Whitefield did, the idea that a man should not be a minister unless converted, nor a church-member unless converted, and so set himself against the whole trend of this loose, turbid, hungry, haughty wave of secularization that had been rising since 1631. Of course, he was abandoned by the fashionable. Of course, his life was in some sense a martyrdom. His note books were made from the refuse of brown paper left from the fans. There is nothing Massachusetts so little liked to be fanned with as those fans Jonathan Edwards' wife and daughters made and sold for bread. Yes, you starved him; but Scotland fed him, thank God. When Edwards was dismissed, it was proposed that there be a council of ten pastors, and he, of course, claimed the right of choosing five; but he was obliged to go beyond the broad bounds of old Hampshire county in order to find five who agreed with him in opposing the half-way covenant."

There are pauses amidst study, and ever pauses of seeming idleness, in which a process goes on which may be likened to the digestion of food. In those seasons of repose the powers are gathering their strength for new efforts; as land which lies fallow, and recovers itself for tillage.

Random Readings.

Those whom God anoints, he will accompany; he will himself be with those to whom he has given his Spirit.

We came into the world that we may do all the good we can in it; and therein, like Christ, we must always abide and abound.

Whatever gift we are endowed with, we ought to honor God with it, and particularly the gift of speaking, and all the improvements of it.

Few things are impracticable in themselves; and it is for want of application, rather than of means, that men fail of success.—Rochefoucault.

It facilitates the work of ministers, when they deal with such as have some knowledge of the things of God to which they may appeal, and on which they may build.

Conformity to the world has, in all ages, proved the ruin of the Church. It is utterly impossible to live in nearness to God, and in friendship with the world.—Rowland Hill.

Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home to the full period, but content themselves with a mediocrity of success.—Lord Bacon.

The useful encourages itself; for the multitude produce it, and no one can dispense with it; the beautiful must be encouraged; for few can set it forth, and many need it.—Goethe.

ENTERING the house of one of his congregation, Rowland Hill saw a child on a rocking-horse. "Dear me," exclaimed the aged but thoughtful minister, "how remarkably like some Christians. There is motion enough, but no progress."

If we would have God's special presence at an ordinance, we must be there with a special presence—an ordinance presence. In holy ordinances we present ourselves unto the Lord, and we must be as before Him, as those that see his eye upon us.

To no kind of begging are people so averse as to begging pardon, i.e., when there is any serious ground for doing so. When there is none, this phrase is as soon taken in vain, as other momentous words are upon light occasions.—Archibald Harn.

BEAUTY is as Summer fruits, which are easy to corrupt, and cannot last; and, for the most part, it makes a dissolute youth, and an age a little out of countenance; but yet, certainly, again, if it light well, it maketh virtues shine, and vices blush.—Lord Bacon.

We can all find trouble without going very far; and very likely, too, we can all be like the old coloured woman in New York, who, hearing the jubilee melody, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen," said, "Yes, and nobody knows how much less trouble we might see if we would only stop looking for it."

THE pastor must work on Payson's rule—"The man that wants to see me is the man that I want to see." He must be the most accessible man in the church. Following that idea, I keep the latch of my church study door always out. There is not a soul who needs me that cannot find me from morning till night.

I FIND upon strict scrutiny into myself, that I am not so much influenced by a sense of reputation as to deny a persecuted truth; nevertheless, I plainly perceive, that if I could be instrumental in spreading it, the great motive to it would not be love of the truth of Christ, or the souls of men, and that my chief pleasure would arise from the credit of it.—Rev. T. Adams.

"WHAT does Satan pay you for swearing?" asked one gentleman of another. "He does not pay me any thing," was the reply. "Well, you work cheaply—to lay aside the character of a gentleman; to inflict so much pain on your friends and civil people; to suffer; and lastly, to risk your own precious soul, and for nothing—you certainly do work cheaply, very cheaply, indeed."

ONE of the most sorrowful disclosures we have ever read is that contained in a request sent in lately to a prayer-meeting, which was in the following words: "Will you please remember in your prayers this day a dear young mother who is addicted to strong drink, who has two beautiful young children, a loving husband, and every thing around her to make her home happy were it not for strong drink."

A few days previous to his death the Rev. Dr. Belknap of Falkirk, hearing his infant son's voice in an adjoining room, desired that he should be brought to him. When the child was lifted into the bed, the dying father placed his hands upon his head, and said, in the language of Jacob: "The God before whom my fathers did walk, the God who fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lad." When the boy was removed, he added, "Remember and tell John Henry of this: tell him of those prayers, and how earnest I was that he might become early acquainted with his father's God."

THE Rev. Dr. Belknap's story is not so frequent as they were some years ago, but the list of intemperate and dissolute men is still large. It ought to be. The law of permutation is not taken hold of the church as it ought to be, and the desire of some new thing is leading pastors and people to hastily break up old relations and associations which were regarded as life-long. A minister, reading past the scene of his first setting out, long since, and looking out at the world, said: "There was where I made a mistake. I was doing good, but in a poor way since the Lord has been so good for my sickness." Another, counting his experiences, remarked: "A great mistake was in leaving my old friends." These gentlemen had something by experience, and had acted hastily and against what have been considered judgment, the ready to make confession, not only of mistakes, but also of their sin. Testimony ought to be useful to all who are causelessly contemplating dominion of their places."