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Poetry.

THE TWO CHURCH-BUILDERS.

BY JOHN G. SANE.

A famous king would build a church,
A temple vast and grand;
And that the praise might be his own,
He gave a strict command.
That none should aid the smallest gift
To aid the work he planned.

And when the mighty dome was done,
Within the noble frame
Upon a tablet, broad and fair,
In letters all aflame
With burnished gold, the people read
The royal builder's name.

Now when the king, late with pride,
That night had sought his bed,
He dreamed he saw an angel come
(A halo round his head)
Erase the royal name, and write
Another in its stead.

What could it be? Three times that night
That wondrous vision came;
Three times he saw that angel-hand
Erase the royal name,
And write a woman's in its stead
In letters all aflame.

Whose could it be? He gave command
To all about his throne
To seek the owner of the name
That on the tablet shone;
And so it was the courtiers found
A widow poor and lone.

The king enraged at what he heard,
Cried, "Bring the culprit here!"
And to the woman trembling sore
He said, "Thy very clear
That thou hast broken my command;
Now let the truth appear!"

"Your Majesty," the widow said,
"I can't deny the truth;
I love the Lord—my Lord and yours—
And so, in simple sooth,
I broke your Majesty's command
(I crave your royal ruth).

"And since I had no money, Sir,
Why, I could only pray
That God would bless your Majesty;
And when along the way
The horses drew the stones, I gave
To one a wisp of hay!"

"Ah! now I see," the king exclaimed,
"Self-glory was my aim;
The woman gave for love of God,
And not for worldly fame.
Thy my command the tablet bear
The pious widow's name."

Miscellany.

MEMORABLE CONFERENCES IN CANADA.

BY JOHN CARROLL.

THE DIPLOMATIC CONFERENCE, 1832.

This Conference may be so called, because it was attended by the Rev. Robert Alder, an Agent of the British Conference, and negotiations took place between him and the Canadian Conference, with a view to the union of the two bodies. In 1820 a convention, or arrangement took place between the British Conference and the delegate of the American General Conference, by which all the American preachers should be withdrawn from Lower Canada, and that Province left to the missionaries sent out by the British Conference; and the British Missionaries should be withdrawn from Upper Canada. This arrangement had been thoroughly carried out on both sides, excepting that a British missionary was left at Kingston, and that the Upper Canada Conference retained the Societies along the Lower Canada side of the Ottawa river. The presence of a Garrison of British soldiers was pleaded as an excuse for the former; and geographical proximity to other U. C. work for the latter.

But the Upper Canada Church having become independent of the States, and the British Conference having been urged by influential parties in Canada, "on public grounds," to take up positions in the Province, Mr. Alder had been sent out to explore the country, to see what places were most eligible for that purpose, and a mission among the Indians had already been taken upon the St. Clair. Being in York, Mr. Alder was requested by the Missionary Board of the Canada Conference, which was to meet on the 8th of August of the year above indicated, at the village of Hollowell, with a view to some arrangement that would prevent rivalry.

The probability of his presence, and that questions of such high import were to be considered, not only ensured a full attendance of travelling preachers, but a large gathering of local preachers and of members of the Church generally, from all parts of the country around, as spectators. In due time the Rev. Mr. Alder made his appearance, accompanied by the British missionary from Kingston, the Rev. John P. Hetherington. They contrasted strongly, as to their garb and appearance, with the great majority of the not over paid and motley dressed Canadian preachers of that day. There were both then middle-aged and middle-sized, but compact men, Hetherington was the handsomer man, but Alder the one with the more

strongly marked countenance. The first had a bald head, the second a massive one, surmounted by a profusion of curly hair, not unlike the Rev. Dr. Ormiston, now of this country. Hetherington was a neat, clear, terse, phoephorescent preacher as his twenty-five minutes sermon on the Talents indicated. Alder was stately, towering and masterly. His sermon (preached on Sunday) was on the *Genius, History, Progress and Prospects of Methodism*, or something to that effect. The text employed by him was the following: "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities; thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken: But there the glorious Lord will be unto us as a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." Isa. 33: 20, 21.

We have called this a "diplomatic" Conference, and certainly Mr. Alder was a consummate diplomatist. Finding there was an eager desire on the part of the majority of the Canadian Conference for a union with the British Conference, he multiplied the points to be surrendered, and put them strongly at the first to gain all he could, while he held out the pecuniary benefits to the Canadians, arising from contingent funds, alluringly; but I am bound to say, as the former were not all exacted, so also very little came of the latter. He said at once, that our *Episcopacy* would have to give place to an "annual Presidency." When some old Episcopalians scrupled about this, he inquired, "Where is your *Episcopacy*?" The remark was very just; for, as an independent Canadian Church, we never had been Episcopal except in name, and by mere provision. Besides all that, the discipline provided for "doing away" with *Episcopacy*, if it even had existed, *de facto*, "upon the joint recommendation of three-fourths of the annual Conference, or Conferences, then the majority of three-fourths of the General Conference could alter the restrictions in the Constitution of its being done away." (It was afterwards abundantly proven in courts of law, that all these necessary steps were taken, at the proper stage of the proceedings—but I must not anticipate.)

At the opening of the deliberations, Case, Whitehead, Metcalf, Richardson, Wright, Mesmore, P. Smith, and, to come down to younger and lesser men, Atwood, Allison, M. Smith, R. Jones, and others, were opposed to the scheme of Union; but the Ryersons, the Evans, and Maddens, if I remember right, Green, Healy, Ferguson, Heyland, G. Poole, Norris, Davidson, Beatty, Griffin, and Patrick, were for it from the first, as far as my memory serves. But a comparison of views, at length, produced so much harmony of opinion as led to the appointment of a Committee, consisting of the Messrs. Ryerson—the three brothers—Case, Madden, Richardson, and Green. Their Report constituted the basis of the "Preliminaries," which afterwards formed, substantially, the Articles of Union as ratified at the Conference of 1833, and to be found in the first volume of the General Minutes, page 63.

While some had their feelings, not to say passions, profoundly interested in this discussion, some, otherwise constituted, viewed it in a less serious aspect. The Rev. Alexander Irvine, a Scotchman of some education and eloquence, who, if he did not possess poetic genius was certainly a clever rhymist, turned the whole into tolerable verse, which served to amuse some of us younger ones for the time. It will surprise some with modern ideas to learn, that the plenipotentiary sent over to England to resume this business, was a young man, who had only travelled eight years, but then that young man was Egerton Ryerson. In view of the division that grew out of this Union, it is impossible to say whether the measures then taken were the wisest things that could have been done in the premises. Certainly it was not anticipated that any who claimed to be Methodists would have made a Union with the body of which was the parent of the American Methodist Churches, the occasion of dissatisfaction and strife. A desire for orders on the part of local preachers, grafting itself on political prejudice and dissatisfaction did the most of the evil. Some of this evil might have been forestalled and prevented had there been perhaps a little more care and prudence on the part of the Conference and some of its members. But "to err is human." Central Methodism assumed something of new type from the time of the "Diplomatic Conference."

STYLE OF LANGUAGE IN PRAYER.

If we should address any earthly king as we do the Deity it would—well, it would astonish the king, to say the least. And yet it would not begin to be such a piece of curious presumption as it is for a puny mortal to get down upon his knees, shut his eyes, and proceed to tell the Almighty a set of news items, or for him to announce, in the same way, a moral or religious proposition, and then go on to prove it. Yet this is what many people understand by prayer. Go into any prayer meeting in the land and listen for yourself, if you doubt it.

It is not alone the lay delegates to the altar of mercy who so forget their place as sinful petitioners, but ministers who have made the Scriptures their especial study, and are competent to instruct others in theology, adopt the same irreverent practice, and repeat their bits of information to the Lord, and exhibit their ability to present and argue questions of inter-

est as innocent of wrong as the most ignorant sheep in their flocks. Not many years ago, a good old father in Israel, now without doubt a saint in glory, was holding a series of revival meetings, and in his opening prayer at the evening service, told the Lord that the presiding elder who was expected to preach had got such a cold that he could not do a thing, and so everything depended on the help of the Lord. The good old man meant no irreverence, but his news item had a queer sound.

It is not at all uncommon to hear a person start off in this way, "O Lord, we are all dying creatures. We live in a world where nothing is substantial, where everything is changing, and decay is stamped upon all. We are here to-day, but no one of us is sure of to-morrow. It is vain to trust in riches, for they take themselves wings and flee away; in friends, for they are out down and we see them no more; in health and strength, for the seeds of death are sown in our perishable bodies, and they will soon mature and lay us low. There is nothing but the religion of Jesus Christ to lean upon. In nothing else can we find safety or comfort."

Now this is all true, but it isn't prayer. God knew it long before we did, and it is not exactly respectful for us to pretend that we found it out first.

The trouble is that it is not meant for prayer at all. In spite of the kneeling posture and closed eyes, it is the audience that is addressed. No one ever prays in that way in his closet. When alone with God, we accept our position as sinners deserving punishment. We feel helpless and ignorant, and we are glad to take for our model the sublime prayer that our Saviour taught to His disciples. Ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving, confession of sin, and humble petitions for mercy, come spontaneously from the heart to the lips. It is the sense of having a listening audience that spoils all this in the prayer meeting.

Croaking is an ungrateful task that no one enjoys except the croaker, but while we are about it, let us look into the meaning of some of the requests that are real petitions. At first we will take a phrase so time-honored that it has nearly lost its absurdity. You have all heard it, "Gather us at last" where congregations ne'er break up." It is a line of poetry, but that does not make it sensible or agreeable. No one likes long meetings. We unanimously vote them a bore. We don't believe they will be allowed in heaven. Not long ago we heard a young sister quote this poetical line, with the addition of another which she unconsciously parodied. "Bring us at last—

'Where congregations ne'er break up,
And sermons have no end.'"

It was a dreadful prayer. It was entirely uncalculated and unprovoked. None of us had ever injured that young lady. We were ready to admit that we were sinners, but did we deserve so severe a punishment? It had a smack of endless torment, and we were trusting through grace to be delivered from that.

This is the only one of many phrases that are constantly repeated, which, taken literally, are only absurdities. And it is the use of these hackneyed expressions which draws out many prayers to such an interminable length. A real prayer does not weary either saint or sinner. It is only the "vain repetitions" that are forbidden by Scripture that so tire us. It is refreshing to read over the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, and the prayers of Ezra and Nehemiah and Daniel. They had weighty matters of interest to present before the Lord, and they did it with a simple directness and unctious. The reverent humility of their utterances is well worthy a study in these days.

There is an idea often expressed in exhortation as well as prayer that is a puzzle to the hearer. When or how it originated is not known. You hear it almost constantly in times of revival. The church members labor earnestly. They go from house to house, persuading their friends to be reconciled to God. No personal effort is neglected that can be used as a means to bring the sinner to Christ. The pastor preaches with a power unknown before. His words have a depth of meaning that surprises himself. The great congregation is swayed as one man by the burning words that fall from his lips. A goodly harvest of souls is garnered. Now comes the puzzle. Why are these redeemed ones universally spoken of as "stars in the preacher's future crown of rejoicing"? Is the praise of their salvation to be his, instead of being rendered unto Him who hath redeemed them and washed them in His own blood? Or, if it is the credit due to human instrumentality that is considered, have the faithful church members done nothing worth mention? Perhaps the "stars" would object to being divided so as to do justice to the separate influences brought to bear upon them, and they may prefer to wear stately crowns of their own, to being conspicuous ornaments in another's. Any way, there is no reason why the laity should go without "stars," and the minister's crown be studded so heavily. If this "star" theory were S. ritual we would do it reverence, but in our Bible, Jesus Christ gets the glory of our salvation.

Some people object very strongly to the pretty theory set forth in that charming book, "The Gates Ajar." They say it is unscriptural. That may be true or not true. The Bible tells us very little about the unseen world. God has seen fit to veil its secrets from our curious eyes, and it will take something more than mortal curiosity to find them out. We have

His own sweet promise of rest and peace, of purity and safety, of "fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore." But the nature of our pleasures or employment is not revealed, and all our speculations thereupon, are necessarily vague and uncertain. The fanciful pictures of the afore-mentioned book, are very delightful; far more so than most of the anticipations suggested in our social meetings. Listen for yourself if you doubt it.

Good people often make Scripture ridiculous by their use of it in their prayers and exhortations. A little time ago I heard an old lady say she was so happy that she "could run through a troop and leap over a wall." Of course one's imagination couldn't help seeing her do it. A brother suggested that it was the privilege of the Church to "grow up like calves in a stall." Another sister told us that her soul was feeding on the grapes of Eshcol, and that every branch was so heavy that it took two men to carry it. We listened soberly, knowing that her language was figurative, but no effort of imagination could spiritualize for us those immense bunches.

A gentleman, with whom I conversed the other day on this subject, objected to lopping off all this sacred verbiage from our public efforts, because there would be so little left to occupy the time of the meetings. A Quaker meeting in a Methodist chapel is certainly not desirable. Yet it seems a pity to ignore the true meaning of prayer in order to lengthen the exercise. Solomon's prayer, on so momentous an occasion as the great dedication, was short. There was no effort made to spin it out. There isn't a long prayer anywhere in the Bible. Here again, if we should take our closet devotions as a pattern for our public offerings, the latter would generally be edifyingly brief as well as comprehensive.

No one would complain if most narrations of experience should be narrowed down to a simple account of present feeling and present progress, expressed without those figures of speech that are incomprehensible to the multitude. None but the irrepressible, long-winded ones will object to a short meeting, full of real life, of true worship, and common sense.

This reminds me that croaking should be a short work also, so I lay down my pen at once.

—Zion's Herald.

THE HOUR FOR IMPRESSION.

"It is the first step that costs," as the French proverb teaches, for good as well as for evil. The first blow that the minister strikes when he enters upon a new field of labor is ordinarily the most impressive. He brings with him the charm of novelty—his style, his manner, his voice—are all fresh, and awaken the whole field of Gospel truth before him. He can select the most striking lines of thought and illustration which have been gathered during his previous years of study and experience. No memory of his congregation is hardened against him, or has become so familiar with his modes of dispensing truth as to remain unaffected by them. His first visits among his people, from the nature of things, will be especially pastoral. His social relations with them have not become so familiar as to considerably weaken, if not asperse, his spiritual. He knows nothing of the previous life and habits of the members to disturb the earnestness of his purpose in inviting all to join with him in fresh endeavors for the salvation of souls.

This is the hour to expect, to pray, and to labor for, early results. It is an awful temptation of the devil that causes one to look upon these early services as simply introductory, and to say, "There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest." So far as human laws are considered, there is no hour when a man can hope to make a stronger impression upon his audience; and as God works by his Spirit in accordance with the natural laws which he has established, there is no hour when the Divine Presence may be more hopefully expected than such a one as this.

The providential call to all who have, within a few weeks, entered upon new fields of labor is, to do with their might whatsoever their hands find to do. Let these early hours be counted as the most precious of the limited period of ministerial service in a local church. While the great general truths of the Bible need not be overlooked at this hour for opening fresh their commission, they may wisely press the immediate question upon the unconverted, and entreat them, in scriptural language, "Now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me; and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left."

The great effort of the new pastor at first must be to become acquainted with his fellow-laborers, and to draw them into co-operation with himself. We were struck with the suggestion of an experienced and successful minister at a ministers' meeting some time since. He was accustomed, he said, at the close of his first official meetings, when the appointed business had been completed, to change the Board meeting to a class-meeting, and to kindly but closely scrutinize the religious experience of his leading men, and to seek to inspire them to unite with himself in a hearty personal consecration to the work of the Lord.

The Sabbath-school is close at hand, and here the field is already "white to harvest." Here, above all other places, the first blow tells. It will be well understood in a few weeks whether the new pastor is interested in the lambs of the flock or not. The children will

be sharp and truthful in their apprehensions of his appreciation of them and of their instruction. The Sunday-school teachers, ordinarily the most devoted assistants, a Pastor has in his work, will watch, the first Sabbath, with no common solicitude, for the unmistakable marks of zeal and adaptation on the part of the new minister in their province of the Christian work. He may win their confidence and co-operation if he will, and hold it to the end of his ministry among them. Or he may neglect them, and wonder in vain why they are not found in his prayer-meetings as well as in the Sunday-school.

This is an interesting year. The great Protestant Ecumenical Council will soon bring together devoted Christian representatives from all parts of the earth. The Churches of Christ are all drawing nearer together, and combining in efforts and prayer for the coming of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus upon the earth. This unity of spirit is an evidence of the presence of the Holy Ghost among the Churches. It was at Pentecost that the Church was praying with one accord, and this general and sublime union among those that accept Christ as the alone foundation of faith may be a significant prophecy of a great outpouring of the Spirit upon the Churches. "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

THE JORDAN.

There is no river in the world like the Jordan; none so wonderful in its historic memories, none so hallowed in its sacred associations, and none so remarkable in its physical geography. It is emphatically "the river" of the Holy Land. It has been more or less intimately connected with all the great events of Scripture history from the patriarchs to the apostles. Its banks have been the scene of the most stupendous miracles of judgment, power, and love the earth ever witnessed. When the fire of heaven had burnt up Sodom, the guilty cities and polluted plain, the waters of the Jordan rolled over them and buried them forever from the face of man. Thrice was the swollen torrent of that river stayed, and its channel divided to let God's people and prophets pass over "drenched." Once at the bidding of the man of God, the iron ax rose buoyant from its deep channel, and floated on its surface. Once its waters gave forth healing virtue, as if to prove to the proud Syrian chief the fallacy of his sneering exclamation—"Are not Abana and Parpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" Greater still were those miracles of our Lord, which the evangelists have grouped thickly on and around the central lake of the Jordan. There did the storm-tossed billows hear and obey the voice of their Creator; there did the incarnate God walk upon the face of the deep; there, obedient to his will, the fishes filled the disciples' nets; along those shores the lame walked, the deaf heard, the blind saw, the sick were healed, lepers were cleansed, the dead were raised to life again. But the most glorious event the Jordan ever witnessed was Christ's baptism; for when he was baptized "the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him;" and when the Divine Son was perfectly equipped for his great work of redeeming love, when just about to set out on his glorious mission, the voice of the Divine Father pierced the vault of heaven, and proclaimed to the astonished and joyful disciples on Jordan's banks the Divine approval of both work and worker—"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Surely, then, we may say that every spot along this stream is "holy ground," and that the name Jordan is not only emblazoned on the page of history, but is enshrined in the Christian's heart.

It would almost seem as if nature or nature's God had from the first prepared this river to be the scene of wondrous events, by giving to its physical geography some wondrous characteristics. Its principal fountain, bursting from the base of Hermon, is like the mouths of other rivers, on the level of the ocean. It descends rapidly through its whole course, and at length empties into the Dead Sea, whose surface has a depression of no less than 1,312 feet. The whole valley of the Jordan is thus a huge rent or fissure in the earth's crust. Though it is not much over a hundred miles in length, at its southern end, along the shores of that mysterious lake, we have the climate and products of the tropics, while at its northern end we have a region of perpetual snow.

WHAT THE "HIGH CHURCH" RITUALISTS ARE COMING TO.

The London Church Review publishes a letter giving some noteworthy facts which we commend to the attention of Ritualists in this country. We quote a paragraph: "At the majority of London churches where confession is preached, the penitents have to go either to the priest's private house or to the vestry. It is time this great opportunity for scandal should be removed; such proceedings may have been expedient when the practice was more uncommon, but now, as thousands habitually make their confession, and the clergy are engaged for whole days and nights hearing them, surely some better system might be adopted. At St. Alban's, Holborn, the boxes have been in use some months, and appear to give satisfaction; why, then, should not this example be followed, so that the sacrament of penance may be administered in the only place consecrated for such purposes?"