

Wm. Robertson

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# THE ONTARIO EVANGELIST.

"Go . . . speak . . . to the people ALL the words of this Life."

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## Poetry.

### A DESIRE.

EDMUND SHEPPARD.

Clear as the wintry sky in northern clime,  
When not a cloud obscures the shining sky;  
Exalted to the height of things sublime,  
And comprehensive, all things to desery—  
Be my mind.

Warm as the sunshine on a summer's day,  
When glows the landscape in the solar heat;  
With strong affection like the genial ray,  
With every loving sentiment replete—  
Be my heart.

Like the refreshing breeze that comfort brings,  
When sultry days with scorching heat oppress,  
Which bears sweet music on its airy wings,  
To gently sooths, to edify and bless—  
Be my words.

Like the fresh flowers that beautify the earth,  
Or the ripe fruits that crown the bounteous year,  
Adorned by grace and utilized by worth,  
And always for God's glory to appear—  
Be my works.

WALKERTON, ONT.—*Christian Standard*.

## Original.

### LETTER FROM CHINA.

I hope you will forgive me for sending so few letters lately. I have been away for two months, and was quite busy the rest of the time.

Nankin is a grand place to work in, and we have now an excellent chapel and dispensary. We rented it last July from the Imperial Customs Collectors, and though we pay rather a high rental, it is on the main street, and is the best front on the street; and no matter, rain or shine, cold or hot, we can always have a good audience for preaching, and the people are quite orderly.

My dispensary work is flourishing. I see as high as eighty patients daily, and seldom fewer than fifty. I have also quite a number of operations, mainly on the eye. I have had one good case in which I removed cataracts from both eyes of a patient, thus restoring sight to a blind man. This is wonderful to the Chinese and helps very much to break down prejudice. Many cataracts are removed every year by missionary physicians and thus truly the gospel restores sight to the physically blind sometimes perhaps demonstrating its capability of giving sight to the spiritually blind. We have many lepers with their lean visages, contracted ulcered limbs and digits; but alas! we cannot cure them, though we do help some of them a little. They are good illustrations of sin for our preaching, serving to set forth the horrors of sin, and its irremediability by human expedients. Perhaps medical skill may yet find a cure for this malady. But then it will be medical skill flourishing under the influence of the Gospel of our Lord, not under that of heathen lands, and so the illustration will continue to hold good.

I joy in my work here and pray that health and strength may be given to advance in the work of the Lord. I hope our Canadian churches will find another physician for this field. It is a glorious work both from a medical and a Christian standpoint. But the medical part without Christianity would be of no use. We must have thoroughly consecrated men.

W. E. MACKLIN.

### PREACHERS AND PREACHING.

I have long since thought of writing on the above, but thus far have failed to produce anything worthy a place in your columns. And now instead of giving you something original I propose to give you a quotation from an article by Rev. Joseph Parker, Minister of the City Temple, London. I am sure I need make no apology as the quotation will commend itself to all, and perhaps may bring comfort to some young preacher and encourage him to become what may be called an expository preacher.

"Men preach well only in proportion as they preach like Christ. Speaking generally of the preaching of the present time I may venture to

record my opinion that there is decidedly too much preaching in this country, and that infinitely unreasonable demands are made on the preacher. He must unstop deaf ears, open darkened eyes, and awaken the dead three times every week. He must incessantly cudgel his brains for something new; not to be new is fatal, not to be startling is to be flat and unprofitable. Hence the itch for originality is the curse of our time. Steady, quiet, earnest exposition goes down before anecdotes, tragedies, and rockets.

Of course exceptions are neither few nor inconsiderable and are to be recognized with grateful honor; still, there is the unhappy and mischievous fact that our congregations can do with any number of small rhetorical miracles, and are prepared to regard them as signs from heaven. The preaching of the day, therefore, is in danger of becoming a series of surprises, or a succession of very clever and exciting feats. Another thing that has struck me in close connection with this fact is, that the preaching that is often most popular is least scriptural. The question is now not so much *what* is preached, as *how* it is preached. Sermons must above all things be short. Brevity is fame. A noted French preacher said that if any man would have the courage to preach just five minutes the whole city would go out after him. I have no wish whatever to preach a body of divinity in every sermon; on the contrary, I have a strong opinion that bodies of divinity when unworthily and clumsily handled have done infinitely more harm than good; at the same time it is very important that congregations should be well instructed in the divine word and should have the words of Christ dwelling richly in them. Above all things let the ministry be scriptural. To be scriptural is to be powerful. To be scriptural is neither necessary to the dignity, critical nor tediously doctrinal. Am I far wrong when I hint the text itself is often the only piece of scripture that is in the sermon? Plenty of shallow philosophy, plenty of questionable anecdote, plenty of unfeeling appeal, would not these go a long way towards the making of a popular sermon in the nineteenth century? Expository preaching is of necessity scriptural, and should therefore be largely adopted by ministers who are deeply concerned for the edification of their hearers. It is not likely to be what is called popular preaching. The mob likes anecdotes. The sweltering throng cheers the climax which loses itself in the midnight clouds. Or where the climax gleaming with artificial Cherubim and Seraphim, fails, there must be that rough power which takes no note of varying mental tone, but rushes through the common-places of salvation and damnation with a kind of jollity which regards the gospel as a species of cheap insurance. Against all this mischievous blasphemy let us lift up the standard of expository preaching. Let the word of God be heard in its own grandeur and beneficence, assured that it cannot return void to the fount from whence it flowed, and the preacher may lift up his head with all the joy and confidence of intelligent hope." To which I will add Paul's charge to Timothy, viz:—"Preach the word."

ZENAS.

## [EDITORIAL.]

### JUST LIKE DR. TALMAGE.

Rev. Dr. Talmage, of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, has quite recovered from the attack of influenza which seized him here, and is in excellent health and spirits. When I called on him the American Minister's carriage was waiting to convey the clergyman's family to the Bois de Boulogne. He was entertained at dinner on Wednesday night by Mr. Whitelaw Reid. "I am in Paris for the first time since 1885, but never during the winter. Paris is charming, and I regret that I must sail so soon (on the Aurania on the 25th) to resume my duties. I have returned from the most enjoyable trip of my life. I have been all over the Holy Land and into parts of Italy—Rome for instance,—which I had not seen before, although I have been abroad several times. Every place in Palestine had a great interest for me. Just before I reached Bethlehem and Jerusalem I could not sleep. I was as excited as a boy; for it was the realization of a life dream. At Jericho I met an American, whose name I have forgotten, who asked me to baptize him in the River Jordan. So one fine Sunday morning, when the sun shone gloriously bright, we assembled together on the banks of the great river.

I was clad in white robes, like an Arab sheikh, with a small crowd of interested people about me some of whom were Americans. We sang together, "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand," which my daughter had copied from her hymn book and distributed. After this the rite of immersion was performed, and we disbanded. My trip is replete with Biblical interest. I feel doubly repaid for it. Every book of the Bible seems to speak more forcibly. I could trace all the important places of Bible history in the journey I made."—*Daily Paper*.

And still some of our Pædobaptist friends will continue to protest that immersion could not be performed in the Jordan because of the swiftness of the current, or the shallowness of the water at the traditional place where John baptized.

## [EDITORIAL.]

### A GOOD EXAMPLE.

A letter has been handed to us with permission to publish a part of it. The extracts given will explain the situation of the writer.

"When you write me again please give me the name and address of our leading Canadian paper. I mean the leading paper published by the Disciples. We are anxious to know more about our people and the work they are doing in Canada. We take the *Standard*, but would like a Canadian paper also."

We occasionally hear of the man who does not take a religious paper on the ground that the Bible is all the reading of a religious character he needs. The writer of the letter we are quoting loves the truth as what follows will indicate, but inasmuch as he cannot learn from the Bible what his brethren are now doing, he very sensibly decides to take such papers as will keep him posted.

"We regret very much that our lot is cast in a community in which there is no congregation of Disciples. We are sorry to be deprived of the privilege of meeting with you regularly. It seems hard to witness others obeying the *Saviour* in the breaking of bread, and not to be allowed to take part unless we subscribe to their creed. Such, however is the case. We are assured of a welcome if we will subscribe to their creed; but since we will not we are denied the privilege of breaking bread."

The reading of the above paragraph excited our sympathy and our admiration. We feel for brethren who are unable to meet with the Disciples on the first day of the week to break bread, but we admire when such isolated brethren refuse to sacrifice their convictions, and to place themselves under the yoke of a man-made creed, even for the sake of church fellowship. Verily such faithful people will have their reward. They are the kind of Christians that form the nucleus of a church. Others there be who have no convictions, or what is just about as bad, have not the courage of their convictions. They found no churches, they despise the day of small things, they love the glory of men, more than the glory of God. "Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward."

To our brethren throughout our country who are deprived of the great privilege and joy of church fellowship, we send a cordial Christian greeting. Upon many of them the *EVANGELIST* makes its monthly call. We trust it carries joy and hope with it; joy at the progress of the cause recorded on its pages month by month, and hope that the time may come soon when every Christian in "his own city," and not far from "his own vine and fig-tree" may be able to meet on the Lord's Day with a church built upon the Divine foundation and upon that alone.

Should any of these isolated Disciples desire to speak to their brethren through the *EVANGELIST* we shall be happy to receive and publish their communications.

## [EDITORIAL.]

### DO YOU KNOW THIS?

What? Why, that the Disciples of the United States have lost 230,000 members and 67 preachers since 1881. At least so it has been asserted in this part of the world. This will seem rather strange to those who saw reported in the *Christian Standard* in one week's issue last winter, 2,112 additions, and in another week's, 1,712. We had been entertaining the idea that, perhaps, no religious people was multiplying more rapidly than the Disciples in the States. Will the *Christian Standard* and the *Christian Evangelist* tell us what they think of the statement quoted above?

We are debtor for the foregoing to the *ONTARIO EVANGELIST*. It is owing to an oversight that it has not sooner received attention. We

take it that the estimate referred to is one of those periodical compliments paid us by those who have no other way in which to give adequate testimony to the affection they bear us. As usual in cases of excessive fondness, the figures are overdrawn, at least in respect of our membership. If we have lost 230,000 members in eight years, that is an average of nearly 30,000 per year. And the average death rate in this country is less than 20 per 1,000, and a loss of 30,000 a year, indicates a membership of more than 1,500,000, which is a figure we blushing disclaim. True we have no infant membership, and possibly this might affect the death rate, but we think not to so great an extent. In fact, it is but the part of virtue to admit that the imputation is too flattering; that we have not more than a million members at most, and possibly several of them reflect no credit upon us. But while our membership is decreasing by natural causes, we are thankful that it is increasing at a fivefold rate—say 100,000 a year—through the preaching of the gospel. We trust the day is not far distant when such figures as those cited will do us no more than justice.—*Christian Standard*.

The *Standard* appears to apprehend the usual motive in circulating such reports as the one referred to above. It is probably a case of "the wish being father to the thought," and a desire to prejudice people against the Disciples by attempting to show that they are losing ground. Such efforts reveal a scarcity of sound arguments. Numerical superiority is a poor standard of orthodoxy, anyhow. The Pagans outnumber all who profess to be Christians.

## RE BAPTISTS AND DISCIPLES.

DEAR EDITOR,—I read with care and pleasure your remarks in the article entitled "Baptists and Disciples," which appeared in the February number of the *ONTARIO EVANGELIST*, and I am satisfied that you are right in your opinion that "if Rev. A. Grant, as we believe he does represent" the opinion of "the majority of the Baptists of Canada, there is no immediate prospect of union."

Permit me to say a few words on this question through the *EVANGELIST*, for only through interchange of thought can any such end as union be reached.

The proposition made by Disciples to Baptists as outlined by Mr. Gaff is "that all lose their separateness of fellowship and be at one in Christ." This proposal put into other words means that the Disciples desire Baptists to give up close communion, so-called, so far as immersed believers are concerned, and invite all immersed persons to the Lord's Table. This proposal looks reasonable at first sight, but when it is taken into consideration with the fact that Baptists do not believe that, in a Scriptural sense, Disciples are baptized believers, its reasonableness vanishes at once.

We believe there are many regenerate persons among Disciples, but it is not because of the correctness of their doctrines that such is the case.

Baptists do not believe that a person in an unpardoned state is forgiven and regenerated while in the waters of baptism. But Disciples do, or else we misunderstand their language. See Campbell & Rice Debate, page 479. On Acts ii. 38, Campbell remarks: "They were informed that though they now believed and repented they were not pardoned but must reform and be immersed for the remission of sins." See also *Christian Baptist*, pages 416 and 417: "That in and by the act of immersion as soon as our bodies are put under the water at that very instant our former or old sins are washed away provided only that we are true believers." The Baptists cannot accept this view as Scriptural. When the blessed day arrives when both shall see that salvation is by a fruitful faith in the merits of the work of Christ, and that Baptism is the symbolic action by which the believer declares his death to sin and resurrection to newness of life in Christ, then, and not until then, may a real union be expected. In fact because of our congregational form of church government this is the only way possible.

I cannot close this letter without calling public attention to the most glaring misrepresentation I have ever seen concerning church statistics. It is found in the following sentence in Mr. Gaff's letter: "The Baptists in the States and Canada number two millions and a-half of people; the Disciples number about one million." The

(Continued on page 4).