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## Contributors and Correspondents.

### REV. MR. HOWIE AND SABBATH SCHOOLS.

BY A SMALL COBBLER.

At a Sabbath School Institute at Paris, last week, I noticed that the Rev. Mr. Howie read a paper which took ground against Sabbath Schools. The subsequent criticism was condemnatory of the essay. This was to be expected. The most popular element of the Christian Church at present is the Sabbath School. It was nothing less than heroic in Mr. Howie to venture such sentiments on such an occasion, for he must have anticipated a strong unfavourable judgment on his production.

Mr. Editor, you ought to solicit the MS. from its author, and publish the same in your columns. I know it would interest quite a number, and perhaps it would benefit more. Mr. Howie is so devoted to the cause of our common Master, and so conscientious withal, that he must have felt he had a side of the question worth putting before the meeting—a side which, though condemned, has claims on Christian attention. I, for one, have some doubts as to the mixed good and benefit of Sabbath Schools as at present constituted and peopled. If Mr. Howie deplored the fact that Sabbath Schools were transferring the incumbent responsibility of Christian parents and lessening home nurture, I endorse him fully. A Sabbath-school enthusiast may say, Query, Is this the result? Have we less teaching at home now than if Christian parents kept their children away from the Sabbath School? On the one hand I reply by appealing to the fathers and mothers themselves, if there be not a tendency to relegate their duty in this matter to the Sabbath School teachers, and on the other I maintain that, in cities at least, the chief opportunity for home nurture is distracted by this popular means of training the young. Public services are held morning and evening. Too universal is the process of late rising on Lord's Day morning; too generally is it felt that little can be done before church except morning worship and getting ready to go out. Immediately after dinner the bustle begins anew of getting ready for school. Not yet any solemn quiet for the natural and successful approach to the young spirits! Late in afternoon they return excited by incident or illustrated paper or such like. And beyond the most superficial enquiries, the parents have no time nor opportunity for the most momentous claims of their life. They must set about getting ready themselves for evening service. By the time they return the Sabbath scholars are beyond the capability of any direct useful application. How, I ask, can the toilworn man get the chance of bringing up his child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, unless he consents to transfer his duty to the Sabbath School teacher? But perhaps Mr. Howie cited another objection to Sabbath-schools from the incidental injury they may be the occasion of inflicting on the children of Christian parents.

Many of your esteemed readers, clerical and layal, have fond remembrances of the quiet and solemnity of the Lord's day; and they have desire to hand down the like experience to their children. But I fear, (I refer again to city schools) the mere accident of going to and coming from school, the noisy, irreverent, boisterousness of much of the surrounding of the exercises themselves, must have a pernicious influence on those who otherwise would hear or see naught but the still, sacred quietude of the Sabbath. The homeward going from any Sabbath School you may care to notice is strangely and sadly antagonistic to the Sabbath views of the best portion of our readers. You may quote to me the Shoemaker of Gloucester over again. Yes, I know. What I want is that the successors of that esteemed cobbler should do his very work. He was a valorous man. We have plenty filled with the same spirit. He gathered around him the poor, neglected Arabs, who had no other means of religious training. But it is an insult to the membership of our churches; to the watchful fidelity of our best members, and the conscientious pastor of our ministers, to insinuate that church members should so neglect their most sacred and instinctive duties, that other Christian men and women—members or not members, must step in to teach and train the young instead of the parents themselves.

These are old foggy notions Mr. Editor,—more akin to the Tory sentiments of Mr. Howie than the prevailing and most praiseworthy activities of these Sabbath School days; but don't you think they are somewhat worth considering?

## A SABBATH IN BROOKLYN.

BEECHER AND TALMAGE.

"Take the Fulton Ferry from New York, and when you land in Brooklyn follow the crowd, and you will be sure to find yourself at Beecher's Church."

So I found my way to the Plymouth Church on the 1st of March. Everybody knows all about that bright and cheery room—with the platform standing out so far into the audience, which swept like a tide before it and around it—with the beautiful vases and flowers which adorn the platform and give a happy, home-like aspect to the place; and with the slight reading desk which serves to hold the books and not hide the man. How simple the invocatory prayer! How grand the singing! In some churches the choir and organ drown the voice of the people; here the voice of the people quite drowns the choir, and almost drowns the organ. This singing is to other singing what Niagara is to other waterfalls. It falls upon the ear as the full sunlight falls upon the eye—it is a perfect thing, an inspiration. Everybody looks happy. They enjoy it so much that they sing verso after verso, until the stranger wonders whether their hymns have any end. It was Sacrament Sabbath, and a number of new members were formally admitted into the Church by profession, and with a brotherly greeting manifested by all the members of the Church rising to their feet while Mr. Beecher pronounced the words of welcome.

Then, after a prayer, marked by a strong grasp of God, and a strong sympathy with man, about ten minutes were spent in reading notices and making comments on them. In announcing a mass meeting to be held in Dr. Cuyler's Church, in connection with the Women's Temperance Movement, Mr. Beecher expressed his sympathy with the extraordinary crusade, and his hope of its, at least, partial success. There is no other crime, said he, like that which makes criminals. This temperance battle can't be so fought in one generation that it will not need to be fought again in the next. But each generation should fight the pest. Every man that has a heart should criticise the faults of this movement with great leniency, and should rejoice in its success with great joy.

The text was Matt. vi. 30,—and the sermon on the doctrine of Particular Providence. Mr. Beecher, contrary to his usual method, made considerable use of his manuscript.

There is special need, he thinks, of reiterating the good old doctrine now, when science, imperfect, is rather inclined to discard a truth which science, when perfect, will only illustrate and confirm. Take this doctrine away and you pull the string out of the clock, and the beads all scatter. Analyse your objections to this doctrine and you will find it resolved into an objection to revelation itself.

Why should men desire to rid themselves of so benign a doctrine as that taught in the text? He could understand how Laplanders might want to kick winter out of Lapland, but not summer; he could understand how men might wish to banish some doctrines, but not this doctrine—which is the very sunshine of the world. Shall we remit the world to the old doctrine of fate, bare and cold, as bones without any flesh on them? Nay, man needs the doctrine of a particular providence—of a God that overrules and can help him. Then, as it is not desirable to eliminate this truth, are there any solid reasons to do it. He here grappled masterfully with the idea of the constancy of causation in natural laws, to the exclusion of divine interference or guidance. Take the human race suddenly out of the world and natural laws would still remain; but all that makes the world of any value would have perished, the world would be a wilderness. Natural laws without man are more barbaric, fruitless, raw force; with man to guide them, to celebrate them, they are beautifully fruitful, and bring forth civilization. Man can use one natural law to meet and resist another; man can thus control and vary the outcome of natural law. And is God weaker than man? Nay! He so controls and directs natural laws that "all things work together for good to them that love Him." Man has made the elements his servants. "But God never meddles with the working of natural laws." Don't He? Well, then, He ain't half so meddling as I am! God has not set the machine going, and then left it blindly to grind out effects. And we are not bage, hanging and catching the meal while the mill grinds on and on—forever. God works by means. He touches men, and through them controls the natural laws. There may be exceptional cases, but gener-

ally the voice of God's providence is—work! work! God don't whisper to the clouds, "Clouds go down and water Beecher's farm;" but he says to Beecher, "Subsoil your farm." By one way and another the great thought—power of the world governs and controls all things. Take comfort from the fact; but don't fold your hands and expect God to drop down sugar plums to you, use the means and trust your Father. A young man is on his way to get married, a brick falls and kills him. You say, "that's a mysterious providence." But another young man on his way to get married, passes down the same street, and a brick don't fall and kill him. Wasn't that also a special providence? There is providence in everything, not simply in the dramatic incidents—don't make exclamations point the whole of literature! There is something besides sin, and sun, and tides; there's a brain somewhere. Heathenism knew that. Christianity knows there is a heart too. Be of good cheer, when Jesus tells you to go down out of the ship and walk upon the wave. And now may He that suffers no more loss you—He that weeps no more, comfort you—He that forgave the harlot, forgive you.

After the sermon followed a beautifully simple sacramental service, participated in by about 1,500 people.

In the evening I mingled in the crowd of 5,000 that filled Talmage's magnificent Tabernacle. It is of a semi-circular shape, and every seat commands a full view of the platform and speaker. Its acoustic properties are excellent. The building is attractive in appearance, and is superbly illuminated by large pyramidal chandeliers, which are all at once lit up by a flash of electricity. The organ is unique in its combination of sounds. Now it thunders and then it is subdued as a child, and then there comes a sudden trumpet blast, and then again you hear life and drum, and anon the sound of cymbals and sweet liquid bells. There is no choir. At the hour of service the preacher steps on the platform, waves his arms, and up rise the multitude, and from people and from organ peals forth, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Talmage's idea seems to be to get a crowd by almost any means, and then in his own queer but earnest way to talk to them of Jesus. In that strange, gruff, drawing monotone, and with those wild awkward gestures of his, he preached a characteristic sermon on the "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." There was no smiling there; it was too earnest for that. All his graphic power of illustration and of exhortation was bent to the one end of persuading men then and there to come to Christ. Then followed a brief prayer-meeting of about 2,500 people, and a large number arose in their seats to solicit an interest in the prayer.

That morning Talmage had received 800 new members into his church. With all his oddities, he is doing a grand practical soul-saving work, dragging men from the gutters and bringing them to Jesus. Talmage is no fraud or mere buffoon. F. H. W.

[We shall be glad to hear from our correspondent again. Ed. B. A. P.]

## REMARKS ON CORRESPONDENCE.

Mr. Editor,—Your paper is a public benefit, affording needed opportunity for the exhibition of important religious principles and the dissemination of desiderated religious intelligence. For providing this you deserve better at the hands of the Church and the community than you have yet received from either. Not the least of the many recommendations of the B. A. Presbyterian is the freedom of discussion allowed in its columns. Of this your correspondents (and of such you have no lack) take ample advantage. But some of them abuse the liberty you so generously grant. The contributions of not a few are really good and are read, no doubt, with interest and profit. Others are heavy and of unconscionable length. Would it not be worth your while to reiterate in their ears, in editorial thunder, "Gentlemen, Brevity! Brevity! Brevity!!! Don't suffocate and virtually entomb your sentiments, facts, and arguments, by swaddling them, mummy-like, in so many folds of verbiage."

There are at least two of your recent correspondents whose productions are chargeable with characteristics more reprehensible than length and ponderosity; they are wanting in due regard for Divine dicta, as well as for the temporal and spiritual good of their fellows. I refer to the letter of "Canadensis," and to that of "Philos." The former is a laboured and specious apology for doubt and unbelief, and would have better suited the pages of the Westminster Review than the columns of the

Presbyterian. The latter is a misanthropic attempt to cool the zeal, and paralyse the efforts of those who are seeking to rid the Church and the community of the most destructive demon known to modern times, viz., Intemperance. The letter of "Philos," if sent anywhere, should be sent to some journal that advocates the inhuman Liquor Traffic—there it would have been at home and appreciated. But it is sadly out of place in your Christian and humanitarian periodical. It is pitiable to hear advanced, at this time of day, the stupid and stale argument, viz., that the efforts to arrest and remove a positive and crying evil should be at once gentle and apologetical, because, perchance, they may increase the evil! Pharaoh made the burdens of the Hebrews heavier because their deliverance was demanded by Moses. Nevertheless, he persevered in and pressed his demand with the Lord's authority, and by the Lord's delegated power, he scourged Egypt with plague after plague, till the enslaved went forth free. And who does not remember that the abettors of bondage in the British Colonies, and in the Southern States of America, denounced the ears of the energetic friends of freedom with the statement, "Your zeal and efforts are unwise, yea, cruel! They frustrate your object, and directly tend to augment what you deem an evil, and rivet more firmly the chains of servitude." But Christian and philanthropic men hold on in their benevolent demands and efforts till the curse of slavery was swept from the wide domains, covered by the flags of Britain and America. In like manner, let the friends of sobriety and of individual and social safety, put forth the most vigorous and persevering efforts, undeterred and undiscouraged by the babblement of interested parties and the illogical drivell of mawkish minds, till this so-called Christian country is rid of the criminality and disgrace of legalizing and patronizing a traffic that is only evil, and that continually.

The letter of "Canadensis" on "Dr. Caird and his critics" is a manifest and daring attempt at being wise beyond that which is written. While characterised by considerable ability, it contains reckless statements, and examples of false reasoning, or conclusions without any reasoning or authority whatever. It is fitted to pain the enlightened and pious, and to do serious damage to those who may be groping their way in the cloud-land of doubt. The effect of his statements, if accepted, and of his reasoning, if relied on, is to lead the reader to conclude that those who doubt are safe. In fact "Canadensis" endeavours to give doubt a place among the virtues, and to invest it with exculpatory, if not with a degree of saving, power. Now all this is alike lame and lamentable, being in direct conflict with the teaching of God's Word. He talks only of "honest doubt," and strives to prove it guiltless. Why, all doubt is of necessity honest, though doubt may be avowed by those who feel it not, in which case there is deceit, but not doubt. The degree of guilt attaching to doubt depends on circumstances, but to talk of honesty divesting it of culpability is simply nonsense. And what should be said of the argument, that because an honest doubter may exhibit in his life-conduct a purer morality than a hypocritical professor of Christianity, that therefore the "honest doubter" is sinless and safe? And it may well be asked, has that man thoughtfully, and to advantage, read his Bible who tells us "We must indeed believe this process of the new birth may have taken place in many who have never heard of Christianity?" Where have we warranty for such a belief? Not in that Book wherein are revealed "the things that belong to us." The present writer is no stranger to the benevolent wish that it were as "Canadensis" affirms; but he cannot find a "thus saith the Lord" to give the slightest foothold to faith, or even to hope in regard to this awfully solemn matter. And he cannot read the Saviour's parting command, "preach the Gospel to every creature," otherwise than plainly implying that without the Gospel men cannot be saved.

Our duty to the ignorant and doubting is patent and pressing, but to predicate the safety of either is most unwarranted and reckless.

A READER.

Ontario, 27th Feb., 1874.

An interesting social meeting, under the auspices of the Young People's Association of the Presbyterian Church, Bothwell, was held in the New Hall, on Wednesday evening of last week. The Mayor, C. Reid, Esq., discharged the duties of the chair with marked ability. Reading, recitations, speeches and music made up a varied and instructive programme.

## Totalism and the Church.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—I have read Mr. Fraser's letter and your remarks on it in your issue of the 20th, and would say that Mr. Fraser cannot guard the cause of temperance more sacredly than I do myself, but as Doctors differ in reference to the cure of other diseases, so there is a difference of opinion about the best cure for intemperance. I may add that I do not think your paper will ever be injured by the discussion of disputed questions, except when personalities are indulged in; and these should be excluded. In reference to Bluenose's last epistle I would remark that while it may please him and amuse me, it's tone or matter is not likely to profit either your readers or your paper. Balaam was reproved on a memorable occasion, but the courteous language of the reprover is a model that Bluenose would do well to copy, if he desires any good result, even from merited reproof. I do find some excuse for him in the fact that his is evidently short of adjectives, and has to repeat his very words. As a prophet I fear that Bluenose is not "a success," at least his ignorance of the present would not warrant us to trust his knowledge of the future much. Perhaps "the wish is father of the thought!" If it would serve any good purpose I might refer Bluenose to the experience of those who have tried the Maine Liquor Law, but as experience goes for nothing with him; it would only be "wasting pearls" in his case, while I have no doubt the bulk of your intelligent readers have made up their mind on the question ere this. In conclusion, I would say, that unless the style in which Bluenose writes in future is very different from his last letter, I will not waste your space nor my time replying.

Very truly yours,

PHILOS.

## A Friend to Union on the "Headship."

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR,—I have lately noticed in your useful periodical several articles regarding the "Headship of Christ." Perhaps you will kindly allow me, a "Lay Elder" of the Canada Presbyterian Church, briefly to give my views on that subject. The Headship of Christ means more correctly nothing more than the old question of Church and State. I presume that in the question of religious supremacy all Protestant Churches recognize our Lord as the only Head of His Church. In Scotland, as you are well aware, there is an Established Church, which means a close connection between Church and State. The Church claims supremacy in matters ecclesiastical, and the State in things temporal; and, besides, there is patronage exercised by and vested in many individuals as well as the Crown. Well, Sir, in 1848 the Church was rent in two, because the State interfered with a high hand in "matters ecclesiastical" and the majority submitted and thereby abandoned the "Headship of Christ" to the authority of the State. The Free Church was then formed, and when the question came up in Canada a majority voted to continue the connection with the Established Church of Scotland, thereby sanctioning their doings, and the minority formed the "Presbyterian Church of Canada." In 1861 the Union of the "Presbyterian Church of Canada" with the "United Presbyterian Church" formed the Canada Presbyterian Church. I may safely say that since 1844 the body in connection with the Church of Scotland in Canada, have acted as an independent Church, the Church of Scotland doing nothing to interfere with them as a Church. Well, Sir, as you are well aware, neither the government of the Dominion, or of any of the Provinces, exercised any authority over any church whatever, and have not the slightest connection with any Church, so that I cannot see how the Headship of Christ is ever likely to be called in question. I feel satisfied that no lawyer of any respectability would like to meddle with Church matters, or interfere in any way with the doings of Church courts in Canada. Of course if people are so foolish as to quarrel about property, and go, for instance, to the Court of Chancery for redress, they must, just like other citizens, submit to the law of the land. I must say I like the "Act of Independence" of the Connection Church, and if they still adhere to it as they have done, as far as I know, all along, I think anything stronger can hardly be asked for. With regard to the Headship in the religious sense, I am sure any honest man who signs the Confession of Faith in simplicity and sincerity, can do no more to testify his loyal allegiance to our Saviour; and to call in question the sincerity of our brethren in this respect, is in my view quite uncalled for, and lacks the true spirit of charity which we all need to exercise, and especially at this time. In 1844 or 1845, I am not sure which, it was solemnly proposed to the Canadian Church to sever that connection and so make one independent Canadian Presbyterian Church, which they declined to do; but they are willing to do so now, and we should be rejoiced at this change of views, and instead of coldly turning away, ought joyfully to promote a re-union which will be for the good of all, and I feel confident be pleasing to our Great Head himself, and to a great majority of the members of the Presbyterian Churches in Canada.

I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

A FRIEND TO UNION.

March, 1874.