

PROSPECTS OF PRESBYTERIANISM

From the Edinburgh *Presbyterian* (which we are sorry to hear has been discontinued) we make the following extract on the Prospects of Presbyterianism in the British Empire:

"If Presbyterianism be only true to itself, its prospects in this country, and over the British Empire at large, are excellent. We say this, though fully aware of its liability in Scotland to be certain classes of the people—the aristocracy almost wholly, and the class who prefer culture and beauty to solid truth and rigid duty. The loss of these classes is undoubtedly to be deplored in their own interest, and in the interest of the country; but it does not necessarily impair the rest vitality and strength, or retard the progress of the Presbyterian Church. Our chief reasons for believing that the prospects of the Presbyterian Church are, on the whole, favorable, are such as the following. We need hardly say that the only ultimate source of prosperity is 'the good will of Him that dwelt in the flesh'; and that all to which we are now to refer must be regarded as subordinate to this.

"1. The prominence of *Biblical instruction* in our arrangements for worship is eminently fitted to secure the continued vitality and usefulness of the Presbyterian Church. It is this means that is most likely to be effectual for barring out heresies and heretical tendencies of every kind. Were our sermons but little essays of fifteen minutes, coming in after an exhausting service of more than an hour, the case would be very different. Were our mode of preaching such that exposition of Scripture could be easily dispensed with the minds of our people would not be so likely to have that full acquaintance with the scheme of divine truth which makes false systems appear to them very strange and repulsive. The conspicuous place which Scriptural teaching has in our meetings for public worship is a great security (as far as any such arrangement can be a security) for a wholesome and scriptural public sentiment. In other words, it is a security for that on which, next to the power of the Spirit of God, the health and life of a Church must depend. And we may be very sure that so long as we make the proclamation of divine truth, in its purity and fulness, a leading object, the hearts of the best people will be drawn to us. They will instinctively cling to a Church which proves itself to be what the Church was meant to be—the pillar and ground of the truth. We do not say that there will be no defection, but only that we are in the best way to prevent defection.

"We would, indeed, be very far from conveying the impression that preaching God's truth is the only part of our public worship which needs to be much attended to. On the contrary, we believe that the scandalous neglect of other parts of worship is one of the points on which Presbyterianism has not been true to itself, and is in some danger of perpetuating its old error. Undoubtedly there is a very pressing need for improvement both in the prayers and in the psalmody, and in the devotional tone of the whole service. The two classes of objects have no necessary antagonism; but on the contrary, they work into one another. Although we may not have a liturgy, a more liturgical structure of prayer (that is, a structure more adapted to be taken up by a whole congregation) is often to be desired. Although we may not fall down before mere taste, and make it our god, a greater regard to taste and culture in the conducting of our worship would be of great benefit. Although the great fundamental truths of the gospel must never cease to be the backbone of our sermons, a little more variety of subject, and application to the lesser matters of ordinary life, would both prevent monotony and promote edification. Although there must be no tampering with the fundamental doctrines of the faith, a greater candor in acknowledging difficulties, and a measure of greater freedom in the interpretation of particular passages, would not hinder, but help the vital interests of our people. Such things are quite compatible with what ought to be regarded as one of the chief bulwarks of our Presbyterian system—the full and conspicuous promulgation of the truth of God.

"1. The popular government of the Presbyterian Church is, in these times especially, eminently conducive to her prosperity and extension. A Church which virtually excludes the people from any effective part in its government must have a very repelling effect on many. In proportion as men get accustomed to the idea of taking a part in the affairs of the State, they get a desire, more or less consciously, to have something to say in the affairs of their Church. The growth of popular rights and popular government has always been favorable, *ceteris paribus*, to the Presbyterian Church. In the United States of America, it is said of those who are Episcopians when they emigrate thither, no fewer than eighty per cent. ultimately join one or other of the non-episcopal denominations. We cannot vouch for the number, but it is admitted that the genius of the Episcopal Church does not harmonize with the feelings of the great bulk of the American people. They are too much accustomed to take part in the management of their affairs to be easily reconciled to a system where the government is so much in the hands of the clergy. This, too, let it be observed, is the state of things in a Church which has admitted the laity to much more important place in its affairs than the laity either of England or Ireland possess. It is instructive at the same time to observe, even in Episcopal Churches, how much the laity press for power. Either they will succeed, or they will not. If they do not succeed, their attachment to the Episcopal Church will decrease, and perhaps they will cease to belong to it. If they do succeed they will so far check and impair the bishop, and bring him down from his pre-eminent position.

"Let us look for a moment at the Episcopal Church of Ireland. The present arrangement which makes voting by separate orders necessary, and virtually gives all the power to the clergy and bishops, can hardly be expected to be long borne with. The laity cannot tamely look on and see the measures of which they are in favour carried by considerable lay majorities, but refused, because the clergy are not equally in favour of them. Either they will cease

to attend meetings where they meet with such treatment, or they will insist that their voice shall have more authority. In either case they will weaken the Episcopal element, and reduce the bishop nearer to the position of John Knox's superintendent—a very useful functionary, that it might sometimes be well to revive.

"Presbyterianism in Scotland was grievously untrue to itself during the reign of Moderatism, and especially in its protection of a rigid lay patronage. Nothing comes more bitterly home to the feelings of an intelligent and earnest people than to be excluded from all share in the election of their pastor. Lay patronage in a Presbyterian Church is in every sense a grievous blot. The Moderates thought that it would preserve the connection of the aristocracy with the Church—in that it has most conspicuously failed. It discouraged and drove out the serious and the independent members of the congregation, and ultimately it has created an amount of non-conformity which more than threatens the existence of the Establishment itself. Much of the rapid progress of the Secession churches in the beginning of the present century was due to the fact that, in their government, the place of the people was recognized. Take, for example, the case of Edinburgh. In the earlier part of this century, several very massive congregations of dissenters were formed. One does not find that all these congregations were pervaded by the tone of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine. To a considerable extent they were made up of men who recognized, indeed, the importance of religion, but who also felt that it was right that in the Church to which they belonged they should have a share in the government. In the Established Church of the day that was not accorded to them. Even the Chapels of Ease were governed by elders appointed by the kirk-session of the parish church. There was little or no standing ground in the establishment for that class of people who like to have a voice in the affairs of their Church. Consequently they became Dissenters. And so it has always been. Patronage cannot exist in a popular Church. Under its influence the people either leave, or they assume a mere passive attitude—take an active interest in nothing, and become languid and dead. Presbyterianism is a system that, duly carried out, allows a place to the popular voice, and in these days when the popular voice is uttering itself so loudly, this circumstance, so thoroughly accepted in nonconformist Presbyterian Churches, gives them great advantage over Churches whose government is exclusive.

"3. Presbyterianism is remarkably well adapted for working out the principle of the 'universal priesthood,' or many members in one body.

"It has its ordained ministry, but not its single minister. Ruling elders and deacons are formally ordained to office likewise. And around this central group it is easy to have reviving an almost numberless band of Sunday School teachers, helpers at children's churches, district visitors, collectors for sundry objects, helpers at mothers' meetings, and at Dorcas meetings, young men's associations, fellowship associations, psalmody associations, singing choirs, and all the other institutions that are to be found in an active congregation. There is hardly a difficulty or a question about the proper place of any of these. Nay, a congregation, through suitable agents, may undertake mission work and mission meetings, and may find a suitable channel for the services of members gifted with more than the ordinary power of speech and capacity of exhorting. It is plain that any Church that cannot readily provide for the use of the talents and graces of its most earnest members is in an unfavourable position in these times. Whence comes Plymouth Brethrenism in its more aggressive form but for the want of sphere for the activity of church members who have been powerfully moved to work in the vineyard? The Church of Rome found scope for the energies of its most active spirits in the various religious orders, and undoubtedly the more gushing souls in any Church will go off somewhere if provision be not made for using their energies within its pale. If Presbyterianism were fully developed in this direction, we should not find our home mission work half so arduous. In past ages Presbyterianism has been allowed to a large degree to languish in this respect, and in our country parishes at this day we fear that there is very little idea of the universal priesthood. The development of this truth in theory and in practice is one of the crying demands of our time.

"It is plain that in a lively, and at the same time stable Church, you must have a combination of two things—authority and freedom. A central authority, a backbone, a pillar to prevent things from drifting away into mere Brethrenism; and, at the same time sufficient scope for the active energies of men who desire to serve the Lord according to the best conceptions they can form of how the Lord desires them to serve him. The idea of Presbyterianism includes both of these things, and therefore, when duly worked, this system is susceptible of having connected with it the highest strength of spiritual activity—the fervor and fire of the deepest earnestness.

"Presbyterianism is often weakened in practice by an excess of uniformity. Some have the idea that it is not Presbyterian to be in any respect different from their neighbors. And so it is not Presbyterian in their view to adopt any practice which has not been handed down from our forefathers, or to drop any that has. But this idea of rigid uniformity is absolutely unscriptural. The Presbyterianism of the New Testament Church admitted of a great deal of home rule so to speak, in different localities. Undoubtedly the *vinculum* that bound together neighbouring groups of congregations was looser than that to which we have been tending in Scotland. The seven churches of Asia had all a considerable degree of independence, and were not much controlled by any single court, close though they lay to one another. For the healthy development of Presbyterianism it is necessary to have a good deal of home rule. The General Assembly is very convenient, and the unification of interests which it effects is very advantageous in many ways, but those who claim a rigid *jus divinum* ecclesiastical arrange-

ments, will not find in the New Testament any court exercising the powers of the modern General Assembly. We rather think it will be found that the tight government which has been so much the vogue, instead of promoting union, or preventing disunion has had the opposite effect. A greater degree of local and congregational freedom will in the end be more serviceable for the purpose in view. What can be more vexatious than the demand made by some that a congregation must have the permission of a unanimous Church before it shall sing God's praises in particular words? It is contrary to the very sense of freedom that such matters should be regulated for congregations by persons outside. The discussions of late years have doubtless done a good deal towards securing more freedom for congregations and districts; but we do not think that the maximum allowable has yet been reached. Perhaps the day may come when even this will not be counted enough, and then the Church will have to fall back on its authority, and remind its people that there are two factors—authority and freedom—essential to its right order and true prosperity.

"Into such questions, however, we do not enter now. We have pointed out some particular features of the Presbyterian system, that, if properly worked out, will prove favourable, under the Divine blessing, to its permanence and extension in these times. It is obvious that when Presbyterianism has anything like an equal chance with Episcopacy (as in our colonies) it gains much more than a proportional position, in the ratio of the population of Scotland to England. Many questions arise as to the true development of Presbyterianism, the best way of adapting it to the wants of the times, the practical defects needing to be corrected or supplied, the limits within which change is allowable, and the like. These questions will evidently afford employment to men's minds for some time to come. If they be solved with wisdom, the Presbyterian Church may yet become the most extensive and influential in this empire."

HEROES AT HOME.

People who live on the outside of the charmed circle of letters, but who believe that the men and women that compose it are of a different mould from the rest of mankind, and who long to be permitted to penetrate the "rose hedge" and learn the facts of the Armida's garden for themselves, sometimes learn them too clearly for their dreams to be ever possible again. They have a favorite author—a poet, say, or a novelist. If a poet, he is probably one whose songs are full of that delicious melancholy which makes them so divinely sad; an æsthetic poet, a blighted being, a creature walking in the moonlight among the graves and watering their flowers with his tears; if a novelist, he is one whose sprightly fancy makes the dull world gay. A friend takes the worshiper to the shrine where the idol is to be found; in other words, they go to call on him, at his own house. The melancholy poet, "hidden in the light of thought," is a rubicund, rosy-gilled gentleman, brisk, middle-aged, comfortable, respectable, particular as to his wines, a connoisseur as to the merits of the *chef*, a *bon vivant* of the Horatian order, and for talk prone to personal gossip and feeble humor. The lively novelist, on the other hand, is a taciturn, morose, kind of person, afflicted with a perennial catarrh, ever ready with an unpleasant argument, given to start disagreeable topics of a grave, not to say depressing nature, perhaps a rabid politician, taking gloomy views of the currency and despondent about our carrying trade. As for the women, they never do look the thing they are reputed to be, save in fashion and sometimes in beauty. A woman who goes to public meetings and makes speeches on all kinds of subjects, tough as well as doubtful, presents herself in society with the look of an old maid and the address of a shy school-girl. A sour kind of essayist, who finds everything wrong and nothing in its place, has a face like the full moon, and looks as if she fed on cream and butter. A novelist who sails very near the wind, and on whom the critics are severe by principle, is a quiet as a Quakeress in her conversation and as demure as a nun in her bearing; while a writer of religious tracts has gowns from Paris and gives small suppers out of the proceeds. The public character and private being of almost every person in the world differ widely from each other; and the hero of history who is also the hero to his valet has yet to be found. Some people call this difference inconsistency, and some many-sidedness; to some it argues shallowness, veneer, unreality, and is therefore unworthy of esteem; to others it is but the necessary consequence of a complex human nature, and a sign that the mind needs the rest of alternation just as much as the body. We cannot be always in the same groove, never changing our attitude or object. Is it inconsistency or supplement, contradiction or compensation? The sterner moralists and those whose minds dwell on taxes, say the former; those who look for wheat even on the stony ground and among thorns, assert the latter. Any how, it is certain that those who desire ideas, and who like to worship heroes, would do well to content themselves with adoration at a long range. Distance lends enchantment and ignorance is bliss in more senses than one. Heroism at home is something like humanity in Brobdingnag, and the address of the domestic hearth is more favorable to personal comfort than to public glory. To keep our ideals intact, we ought to keep them unknown. Our goddesses should not be seen eating beefsteaks and drinking stout; our poets are best in print, and social small-talk does not come like truths divine mended from their tongue; our sages and philanthropists gain nothing, and may lose much, by being rashly followed to their firesides. Yet, after all, a man's good work and brave word are in any case a part of his real self, though they may be very far from being the whole; and, even if he is not true metal all through, his gold, so far as it goes, counts for more than his alloy, and his public heroism overlooks his private puerility."—*Saturday Review*.

No great work can be done without much opposition.

A REPORTED FALSE PROPHET IN ARABIA.

According to a writer in the *New Free Press* a would-be Messiah has appeared in Arabia. The pretender, a Jew of Sana in Yemen, is said to have fascinating exterior and a melodious voice. After studying the mysteries of the great cabalistic work, the *Zohar*, he withdrew from intercourse with his fellow-men, and eventually retired into a desert, where he suffered from bodily mortifications and self-denial. He soon became distinguished as a worker of miracles, and as such attracted the attention of the superstitious Bedouins. These, seeking to obtain his good graces, brought various descriptions of food, and were pleased that he condescended to accept their offerings. The increase of their flocks and of their household and even their success in the attack upon hostile troops were attributed to the power peculiar to this worker of marvellous doings. His reputation spread far and wide among the Arabian population, and many incredible stories were circulated about this "wise man." His Jewish compatriots were not pleased with the connection between their favorite scholar and the members of a strange religion; and they determined to bring him back to his own people. A sudden calamity gave the position of this man a new turn. An epidemic broke out amongst the flocks of the Bedouins, who in consequence of this calamity were in a short time reduced to extreme want. These changes in the fortune of the Arabs were assigned to the secret influence of the mysterious man. It was then remembered that he was a Jew, and he all at once became the object of bitter hatred. The recluses had meanwhile quitted his solitude and returned to his native place. Here he was declared, chiefly by the Arabs, to be a Messiah, and he became a dreaded and unapproachable power, even in the eyes of his fiercest enemies. His Jewish countrymen were in expectation that he would crush the Arabs and lead his own countrymen to the Holy Land. His heated imagination accepted the Messianic part which the delusion of the people had conferred upon him; and he beheld in the opinion of the multitude an evidence of his high mission. He received everywhere magnificent presents, lived in a princely style, was revoroned by his own people, and dreaded by the Arabs, continues to the present time to maintain his position, but does not appear to have attempted the restoration of his followers. Being a cabalistical enthusiast, he remains passive and awaits a miracle that shall accomplish for him a new and extraordinary feat in regard to the deliverance of the people.

THE POPULAR CAPACITY FOR SCANDAL.

One of the most saddening and humiliating exhibitions which human nature ever makes of itself, is in its greedy credulity touching all reports of the misdeeds of good men. If a man stand high as a moral force in the community; if he stand as the rebuker and denouncer of social and political sin; if he be looked up to by any considerable number of people as an example of virtue; if the whole end and power of his life be in a high and pure direction; if his personality and influence render any allegation against his character most improbable, then most readily does any such allegation find eager believers. It matters not from what source the slander may come. Multitudes will be influenced by a report against a good man's character from one who would not be believed under oath in any matter involving the pecuniary interest of fifty cents. The slanderer may be notoriously base—may be a plunderer to the worst passions and the lowest vices—may be a shameless sinner against social virtue—may be a thief, a notorious liar, a drunkard, a libertine, or a harlot—all this matters nothing. The engine that throws the mud is not disregarded. The white object at which the foul discharges are aimed are only seen; and the delight of the bystanders and lookers-on is measured by the success of the stain sought to be inflicted.

As between a worldly and a man who professes to be guided and controlled by Christian motives, all this is natural enough. The worldly man, in his selfish and sensual delights, who sees a Christian fall or hears the report that he has fallen, is naturally comforted in the belief that, after all, men are alike—that no one of them, however much he may profess, is better than another. It is quite essential to his comfort that he cherish and fortify himself in this conviction. So, when any great scandal arises in quarters where he has found himself and his course of life condemned, he listens with ready ears, and is unmistakably glad. We say this is natural, however base and malignant it may be; but when people reputed good—nay, people professing to be Christian—shrug their virtuous shoulders and shake their feeble heads, while a foul scandal touches vitally the character of one of their own number, and menaces the extinguishment of an influence, higher or humbler, by which the world is made better, we hang our heads with shame, or raise them with indignation. If such a thing as this is natural, it proves just one thing, viz., that these men are hypocrites. There is no man, Christian or Pagan, who can rejoice in the faintest degree over the reputed fall of any other man from rectitude, without being at heart a scamp. All this readiness to believe evil of others, especially of those who have been reputed to be eminently good, is an evidence of conscious weakness under temptation, or of conscious proclivity to vice that finds comfort in eminent companionship.

There is no better test of purity and true goodness than reluctance to think evil of one's neighbor, and absolute incapacity to believe an evil report about good men except upon the most trustworthy testimony. Alas, that this large and lovely charity is so rare! But it is only with those who possess this charity that men accused of sins against society have an equal chance with those accused, under the forms of law, of crime. Every man brought to trial for crime is presumed to be innocent until he is found guilty; but with the world at large, every man slandered is presumed to be guilty until he proves himself to be innocent, and

even then it takes the liberty of doubting the testimony. Every man who rejects in a scandal the thereby advertises the fact of his own untrustworthiness; and every man who is pained by it, and refuses to be impressed by it, unconsciously reveals his own purity. He cannot believe a bad thing done by one whom he regards as a good man, simply because he knows he would not do it himself. He gives credit to others for the virtue that is consciously in his own possession, while the base men around him, whether Christian in name or not, withhold that credit because they cannot believe in the existence of a virtue of which they are consciously empty. When the Master uttered the words, "Let him that is without sin among you first cast a stone at him," he knew that none but conscious delinquents would have the disposition to do so; and when, under this rebuke, every fierce accuser retired overwhelmed, He, the sinless, wrote the woman's crime in the sand for the heavenly ruler to efface. If he could do this in a case of guilt not disputed, it certainly becomes his followers to stand together around every one of their number whom malice or revenge assails with slanders to which his or her whole life gives the lie.

In a world full of influences and tendencies to evil, where every good force is needed, and needs to be jealously cherished and guarded, there is no choicer treasure and no more beneficent power than a sound character. This is not only the highest result of all the best forces of our civilization, but it is the builder of those forces in society and the State. Society cannot afford to have it wasted or destroyed; and its instinct of self-preservation demands that it shall not be suffered. There is nothing so sensitive and nothing so sacred as character; and every tender charity, and loyal friendship, and chivalrous affection, and manly sentiment and impulse, ought to interpose themselves around every true character in the community so thoroughly that a breath of calumny shall be as harmless as an idle wind. If they cannot do this, then no man is safe who refuses to make terms with the devil, and he is at liberty to pick up his victims where he will.—*Scribner's*.

WINTERING IN EGYPT.

The long sea-passage has hitherto deterred many persons from visiting Egypt; but now that the journey from Brindisi to Alexandria can be made in three days and a half, the superiority of Lower Egypt over the south of France or Italy as a winter residence will become better known and appreciated. Cairo is, *per excellence*, the most perfect Arab city of the present day, and one in which its inhabitants have, perhaps, attained to a higher degree of civilization than in any other city in the East. The climate of Egypt is salubrious during the greater part of the year, and in Alexandria, even the heat of the summer is seldom oppressive, being tempered by a fresh northerly breeze. The Khamsen, or hot south wind, however, which prevails in April and May, is at times unpleasant; and the inundations from the Nile render the latter part of the autumn less healthy than the summer and winter. In summer the village of Barmeh, four miles from Alexandria, is a charming residence, while Cairo, from its clear, dry atmosphere and equable temperature, is now admitted to be one of the most desirable winter resorts for invalids in the world. The Khedive, too, who, from his immense wealth, his splendid hospitality and liberal patronage of art, is justly entitled to be called the Haroun-al-Raschid of modern times, is fast rendering his capital as luxurious as it is interesting.

One of the principal advantages which invalids derive from a winter's residence in a favourable climate is, that they are enabled to take daily and efficient exercise in the open air. At Cairo the invalid or tourist can be constantly in the open air, either on foot, donkey-back, horseback, or in a carriage. The atmosphere is not subject to any sudden change, nor is there danger of vicissitudes of temperature, such as are experienced in many places in the south of Europe, nor cold, cutting winds, such as frequently prevail during winter and spring at Nice and Naples. The complete change, too, from the habits and customs of Western Europe to those of an Eastern city like Cairo, is, I am convinced, of immense importance to valetudinarians, for impressions made upon the mind react upon the body, and the novelty of the new state of life in Egypt gradually weans one from a too frequent thought of self. Who could think of dyspepsia or hypochondriasis while beholding the lovely sunrises and glorious sunsets which, in this forgy and comparatively dismal land, are never seen, or while contemplating, as at Thebes, the ruins of a civilization that existed long before Athens and Rome were thought of, or the history of Greece had even been begun?

The pleasantest months in the year for a residence at Cairo are December, January, February, and March. The inundations of the Nile having subsided, leave the fields in November covered with a fresh layer of rich deposit; then the lands are put under cultivation; and during our winter months, which are, in fact, the spring months in Egypt, the Delta, as well as the valley of the Nile, looks like a delightful garden teeming with verdure and beautiful with the blossoms of trees and plants. It very seldom rains at Cairo, probably not more than three or four times in the year.—*Belgravia*.

Never attempt to do anything that is not right. Just as sure as you do you will get into trouble. If you even suspect that anything is wrong, it is not until you are sure your suspicions are groundless.

There is no difference between knowledge and temperance; for he who knows what is good and embraces it, who knows what is bad and avoids it, is learned and temperate. But they who know very well what ought to be done, and yet to do otherwise, are ignorant and stupid.

There are some people who are born with strong powers of indignation at injustice or ill-doing. Such are often blamed for the expression of it even in a righteous cause, by the more conservative. If these last would only remember how much more such persons improve than those they would otherwise praise.