

Our Contributors.

FIFTY THOUSAND AARONS AND HURS WANTED.

BY KNOXONIAN.

The battle raged on the plain of Rephidim. Moses stood on a neighbouring hill with the rod of God in his hands. When he held up his hands Israel prevailed, when he lowered his hands Amalek prevailed. Being human, like lesser men, Moses became weary. He was one of the best men the world ever saw, but the muscles in a good man's arms relax even when they are strained in a good cause. Aaron and Hur were on the hill-top with Moses. What did Aaron and Hur do when they saw Moses become weary? They rolled over a good-sized stone and told him to sit upon it so that he could all the better keep his hands up and steady. Some people would have taken a stone and thrown it at Moses because he didn't keep his hands steady. That is the way they would have helped him. That was not the style of Aaron and Hur. When Moses was seated what did Aaron and Hur do? Did they stand off and say: "Now we'll watch Moses; if he can hold up his hands himself and struggle through alone we'll say he is a good man, but if he can't get through alone let him sink?" No, that was not what they did. Not having had the benefit of the example of some modern Christians they didn't know how to do such a chivalrous thing as that. Did they shout: "Moses, you are a failure, you are not the man we took you to be when you became our leader?" No, they didn't do that either. Did they run down to the plain and sneak around among the captains and say: "It is all the fault of Moses?" Not they. Did they call a meeting in some quiet corner on the plain and pass this resolution: "Moved by Aaron and seconded by Hur, that inasmuch as it is a matter of prime importance that the Amalekites be defeated, and inasmuch as Moses, our leader, is not able to hold up his hands all day without any help, be it resolved that the said Moses be requested to consider the propriety of resigning for the glory of God and the good of the cause?" No, they didn't "whereas and resolve" anything about it. Did they get up a petition asking Moses to resign, and carry it around among the camp followers, cowards in the rear, camel drivers and general hangers-on, and by coaxing and misrepresentation induce these worthy and intelligent Christian people to sign it? No, Aaron and Hur didn't know that trick. Did they stand off and say: "We don't wish to take any responsibility. If we take any part and the battle is lost then we may get blamed. We can't take so much responsibility?" No. Aaron and Hur were not "safe men" in that sense. The Church in the wilderness was not blest with as many safe men as the Church in Canada. What did Aaron and Hur do? Why they simply went up to their leader and stood "one on the one side, and the other on the other side," and held his hands steady until the last blow was struck and the last Amalekite driven off the field. Blessings on the Aarons and Hurs!

Aaron and Hur would have done splendid service in the eldership. Perhaps they were elders and that may account for the loyal and practical way in which they stood by their minister. It is hard to say what Aaron and Hur might have thought about the deceased wife's sister, or Romish ordination, or a college of moderators, or other matters of that kind, but alongside of a hard-worked, weary minister they would be worth as much as an average General Assembly. A session composed of Aarons and Hurs is worth more to the Church than Drummond's new book. No doubt Aaron and Hur were men of prayer. But they didn't go round behind the hill to pray and leave Moses alone. As they watched the battle on the plains no doubt they mentally asked the God of battles to nerve the arms and cheer the hearts of the troops. But they held up the hands of Moses at the same time. Aaron and Hur were sensible men. They believed in prayer but they believed in work as well. They saw that the pressing and immediate duty was to hold up the hands of Moses and they held them up bravely.

A young minister was once settled over a congregation in the Presbyterian Church of the United States. A good deal was expected from the "new man"—what new man is not expected to do impossible things?—but the expectations were not all realized. Instead of helping him most of the church officers stood off and watched him struggle—the way Aaron and Hur

didn't do. Disappointed expectations grew into open dissatisfaction and a caucus was called behind the minister's back to consider the situation. Several suggestions were made, when a live Yankee, who probably had more grace than the others, rose and said: "I move that we pray for the young man and help him." The resolution passed and was faithfully acted upon and from that evening forward the congregation flourished. The discontented parties turned Aarons and Hurs and the Lord's work went on triumphantly. If everybody in all denominations that imitate Judas and Ishmael would stop and begin a vigorous imitation of Aaron and Hur we might soon have the Millennium.

THE BENEDICTION.

BY REV. A. WILSON.

The giving and receiving of a blessing in the patriarchal age was of frequent occurrence. Melchizedek, "priest of the most High God," blessed Abram; Isaac blessed Jacob, and from the conduct on this occasion both of Jacob and Esau may be learned the value that was in those days placed upon the patriarchal blessing.

When the visible church of God was fully organized under a former dispensation there was a special form of blessing the people given—a form of Benediction appointed to be used by the priests. It is as follows: The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace, Num. vi. 24-26. This was no mere form; when received by faith the grace signified therein was imparted to the recipients, "and they," says Jehovah, "shall put my name upon the children of Israel and I will bless them." There is nothing about this form of benediction given by Jehovah and to be used only by the priests of a propitiatory character. It was not, therefore, peculiar to the office of a priest. It was an official act that could not be done by any who were not in the office of the priesthood; yet there is nothing in the nature of it to show that it was peculiar to that office.

Hence it would not be unreasonable to expect that we should find an authorized form of benediction under this dispensation of one and the same covenant of grace. On turning to the New Testament, we do find that a form of blessing was employed by the apostles. It is given in full at the end of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen." While the outward form is different, a careful comparison of these two benedictions will clearly show that for substance they are the same. The second blessing in the Christian benediction answers to and embraces all that is contained in the first of the Jewish. The first in the Christian answers to the second in the Jewish. And the third in the former answers to the third in the latter.

The apostolic benediction appears in several other epistles than Paul's Second to the Corinthians, but in an abridged form. It is highly probable that it was used by the apostles and others not only in letters to the churches, but also in the assemblies of God's people when convened for His worship. There appears, however, to be no record of the way in which it passed into use in the public assemblies of Christians; but as the earliest liturgies contain it, and as the substance, and even the full form of it occurs constantly in the patristical addresses to Christian individuals and churches from the apostles down, it must have been adopted on authority of unquestionable validity. "It is not improbable," says a writer, "that the apostles used it no less in the public assembly than in epistolary correspondence; and that it passed from the apostolic age into the subsequent times as an established form of blessing, agreeable to the spirit of Christian faith and worship. Our authority for using the ceremony may be safely presumed to be apostolic, and therefore divine. It must, hence, be considered as having a sacred import. It is not an empty ceremony; not a mere sign of kind wishes on the part of the leader of divine worship, for the spiritual edification of the people; but like preaching, prayer, sacred song, and the sacraments, it has a deep spiritual significance, and when properly used, an efficacious power, through the Holy Spirit, for Christian edification." It is hence of great importance that the nature, design and proper use of this benediction be rightly and well understood.

As a contribution to this end I humbly offer the following observations:

1. It should not be regarded as a mere form of dismissing a worshipping assembly. That it comes last in the services of the sanctuary is not determined by anything in its nature as in the sentiment it expresses or in the effect it is intended to produce. It does not appear that the benediction given to be used under a past dispensation was used at the close of public services or used as a form of dismissing the people. It was a form of public blessing, appointed as a part of divine service. The apostolic benediction ought so to be employed in the Christian church. It is a solemn and emphatic form of pronouncing a blessing in the name of the Lord upon the people, in the proper use of which much good may come to God's believing people.

2. It ought not to be regarded as a prayer. Any one looking at it will at once see that it is not, when used, addressed to God, but to the people, and that it is not a form in which both people and minister unite in offering to God. But that he who pronounces it is in the attitude ministerially of the giver by divine authority, and the people upon whom it is pronounced are in the attitude of recipients of the blessing. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen." "The Jewish High Priest was commanded to bless the people in the name of the Lord, and this was to be one of the ways of putting the name of the Lord upon the people, and, also, one of the ways of imparting His blessing to them. This was not a sacerdotal function, inappropriate to the Christian ministry; but like any other service, properly ministerial, as, for instance, in dispensing the sacraments. It was fulfilling an office which conveyed a blessing to the faithful. So likewise the Christian benediction is not a prayer addressed to God by the minister or the minister and people united, but a form of blessing addressed to the people. "Be with you all" are the last words of it. Some ministers are indeed so modest as to change the *you* into *us*, lest I suppose, any should think there was any virtue in themselves which of themselves they could impart to others. But all Protestants believe in the doctrine of our Confession of Faith which will apply as well to pronouncing the benediction as dispensing the sacraments, namely, "The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof a promise of benefit to worthy receivers." If we make use of this benediction at all, what right have we to change one word in it for another? and if we do it in this case why not in another? Why not in the case of Baptism say, "We baptize thee," or in dispensing the Lord's supper, why not turn the second personal pronouns, given in the scriptural form into the first and say as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we do show the Lord's death till He come? Which, I emphatically ask, is the most proper and the most modest, to take this unwarrantable liberty with God's word, or to use, as God's servants in the discharge of the functions of our office with which they have been invested, the very words, and no other than the very words, which God himself has given to be used? Most assuredly, the latter is the more modest of the two.

3. Again, it is an official act to pronounce this benediction. Hence, those who take upon themselves to pronounce the benediction who are not in the office of the gospel ministry assume a position and discharge a duty to which they are not called and for which they have no warrant. In Baird's Digest of the Acts, etc., of the supreme judicatory of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, it is stated, "The benediction is an authoritative blessing of the people of God in the name of Christ. Strictly it can be pronounced by none but ordained ministers of Christ;" and in Dr. J. A. Hodge's Presbyterian Law, as defined by the Church Courts, it is stated to be one of the duties of the office of the minister to bless the people. Yet we have known laymen to assume this position and pronounce this benediction. It seems to me if they at all understood its nature and design they would abstain from both. None but Aaron and his sons and their successors in office were authorized to pronounce the Jewish benediction upon the people. Moses the highly honoured servant of God and Lawgiver of