

Correspondence.

On Theatre Going.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Some time ago I noticed a letter in your columns relative to the evils of the theatre. The writer called for expressions on the subject, which call, as far as I know, has been unheeded. As a young man, who for some time was intimately connected with theatres and theatricals, I would like to say a few words on the subject. Ministers preach again: the evil influences of theatres, good people denounce them; yet, how many of our church members uphold them by actions if not by words. There are, no doubt, some who, fancying that theatre-going does them no harm, and looking upon it in the light of a pleasant and harmless pastime, are often to be found in the private box or dress-circle. After the play is ended, they wend their way homeward, feeling satisfied that no evil influence has been exerted over their minds, forgetting that "no man loveth to himself."

Many arguments have been advanced in support of theatre-going, but are they not just so many of Satan's paste-board walls behind which his servants vainly endeavor to hide from Him who "searcheth the hearts" of all men. How many young men go two, three, and even four nights every week to the theatre (I have known young men to go four nights every week during a season), in time become intimates of the performers, and with how many is not this the beginning of a sad end.

Sister, at the midnight hour as you hear the stealthy footsteps creeping up the stair, if you know that the theatre had something to do with this lateness, and with the haggard appearance of your brother at breakfast, what would you say? And oh! in how many cases is it not so! After the play came the friendly glass, then the adjournment to the actor's lodging, then the cards, more drink, and then—let us for decency drop the curtain here. Some may think the figure too strong, but it is not strong enough; words fail to depict fully the extent to which thousands of young men plunge headlong into sin through the doorway of the theatre.

Young man, would you like to see your sister receiving the plaudits, even of thousands? would you be pleased to see her taking the leading character in one of the so-called most harmless pieces? Would the surroundings please you? would the low jest amuse, the oath uttered by the fair white lip—would these tend to heighten your enjoyment? If so, I am afraid you came not from a happy home circle. Would you like that celebrated actress who delights you with her delirious "Margery," or "Dorodona," to be the friend of your chaste sister? In whatever form your tongue answers this question, your conscience thunders a distinct No. Does the air on the stage differ much from that in the dress-circle?

What is the fascination connected with the theatre which seems to bind so many of our young men? Is it the love for the drama? I think, in most instances, this question would be answered in the negative. There is another reason underlying all outward appearances, and this is the undercurrent which Satan uses to drift on many a promising youth, until he is left a shattered hulk astrand upon the rocks. How many church members do we hear saying, "I can see no harm in going occasionally to the theatre." Can we ask God's blessing to follow us? Is there room for Jesus there? Grant that many can go and themselves receive no harm, what about the influence? The careless young man cites you, church member, as an example, and argues if it is bad for him it is so for you. What about the example! Think you you are held blameless?

What man can shut his eyes to the fact that the theatre is one of the devil's most powerful agencies? Numberless others fit and dove-tail in, so to speak, all to strengthen and sustain it.

Let those of us who confess Jesus, (remember "confessing Jesus is swimming against the stream," be guarded lest we become stumbling-blocks. Don't let us ask, "Is there any harm?" but carefully put the question to ourselves, "Is there any good?" The example of the man who once or twice during a season visits the theatre, is more to be feared than that of the one who is always a nightly visitor. The former may be held up as a pattern by fathers and mothers, the latter, like the drunkard in the gutter, as a warning. Say, who is willing to light on the top of yonder waterfall, "neath which the water is boiling and seething, knowing full well that to do so is death; but if we go some yards farther up, and allow the current to bear us down towards the precipice, will not the end be the same?

Young man, God has not placed you here to walk through the world gloomy and sad, he means you to be cheerful, always cheerful, and have true enjoyment, such as leaves no sting behind. Satan's service is the worst form of bondage. Can you find no pleasure without sacrificing your liberty? If you are a child of God you can, if not, you cannot. What enjoyment is there in the obscene dress of the actress, the leer of the eye, and the too often shameless expression and gesture? Call you that enjoyment; it may be, but it is of the most depraved nature. Oh! let us rise above all this. Remember sternly!

Fathers, see that your teachings and examples are right in this respect. Mothers, remember that God will one day recall his loan. Young women, act a noble part; discountenance the theatre; care not for the scoff of "society." You can do much. Oh! use your powers for the Lord. You will feel happier, and it may be avoid in the future days of untold misery. Young men, do not waste your strength and substance on trifles light as air. Think of the future! The keel is being laid now, and ere long the vessel will be launched on the sea of eternity. "Rejoice! O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes, but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." D. G.

Toronto, Oct. 28th, 1875.

The Resurrection.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—Yet once more do we find "The General Resurrection" placed as the title to another portion of Old Testament prophecy, if not by the translators—by the publishers for the British and Foreign Bible Society. This is the prefix to Daniel xii. 2, a passage where many think they see a literal resurrection set forth in language, so plain that it cannot be gainsayed. "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." This passage is very similar to one already quoted, John v. 29. The awards are the same. It also finds a counterpart in Rom. ii. 6-10, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality—eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first and also of the Gentile." Awards—having a reference not to a future but a present dispensation. Or if it should be objected that one of the rewards promised, namely, "eternal life" cannot pertain to a merely regenerated state of humanity; it should suffice to give in reply Christ's own definition of eternal life. "This is life eternal that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." And again, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." But what are we to understand by the first clause of the verse, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake?" Isaiah, prophesying of the coming of the Lord, exhorts Judah and Jerusalem to "Enter into the rock and hide in the dust." When he utters God's judgment on Babylon, she is called on to "come down and sit in the dust." Micah, exhorting Jerusalem to mourning, says, "Roll thyself in the dust." Nahum, denouncing the King of Assyria, says, "My nobles shall dwell in the dust." And God speaking to Job out of the whirlwind, demands, "Canst thou—look on the proud and bring him low: tread down the wicked in their place; hide them in the dust together?" If, therefore, "hiding," "sitting," "rolling," and "dwelling" in the dust, are significant of fear, humiliation, oppression, and affliction; deliverance from these would be appropriately expressed by "awaking," "arising," and "coming forth" from the dust. Isaiah xxvi. 19 is to the point. "Thy dead shall live, with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead"—words having certainly no reference to raising to life, bodies literally dead, being part of a song of triumph and rejoicing, on the occasion of a great deliverance from the rule of "other lords who had dominion over" God's people, but who had been cut off, and so completely extirpated, that the earth is represented as casting out even their dead bodies, and their memory is made to perish: while those whom they had trodden in the dust of oppression, sing and rejoice over their recovered rights and liberties.

To make the passage under consideration point to a general resurrection still in the future, forces it out of its natural connection. In the former part of the prophecy, Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's vision sketches the various dynasties represented by the image, from their rise to their culmination in the advent of the Son of Man, and the setting up of His kingdom. In the latter—he records a similar vision of His own, embracing the same periods, but nothing more particularly, the bearing of passing events on the history and fortunes of His own people, with the various troubles in which they were involved, culminating at last in a great deliverance under the Prince Messiah; evidently the same person formerly called the Son of Man: events which had their fulfilment in the inauguration of the Christian dispensation. LATMAN.

Roman Catholic Processions.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,—in your issue of the 29th ult., there is an article headed "Roman Catholic Processions on Sunday," and signed "C. P." and as some of his remarks are very strange, if not absurd, I would like to say a few words thereon.

"C. P." says, "If such people would conduct their processions on a working day, and would not discommode others in doing so, it is scarcely probable that they would be interfered with." Well now. And so those men who throw stones and discharged firearms at the police and procession who do it in defence of the sacredness of the Sabbath. Dear good young men. What a shame to call them rioters, and put them in prison, for being engaged in such laudible work, as protecting the Sabbath from being desecrated—no wonder it is difficult to get a verdict against them. "C. P." ought to appeal to the City Council to give each of them a bag to hold stones and a leather medal to be worn on Sundays, so that they might be a terror to Sabbath breakers. Again, "C. P." says that the Sisters of Charity and Fathers and Superiors, all of them flaunting their peculiar costumes on the streets, are intended no doubt, to tell on the public mind, and to pave the way for effective proselytism. Dear me. And so he thinks that Protestants are such poor silly ninnies and holds their principles so loose, that a few peculiar costumes worn in our streets will make proselytes of them to Romanism. I think they produce a feeling of pity, for I am almost tempted to ask the Sisters when I meet them if they had got their heads hurt. But "C. P." may be right, for I had nearly forgot that there is a class of men who call themselves Protestants who are very fond of flaunting peculiar costumes in glaring colours in our streets. I wonder how many Roman Catholics have been brought to Protestantism by seeing the peculiar dresses in purple and orange and scarlet, and gold, displayed in the twelfth of July processions? I think none, for such displays by both Catholics and Protestants

only tend to fill the minds of intelligent men with disgust.

Then, sir, "C. P." makes a great discovery that the *Globe* is too liberal in publishing a Bishop's sermon, Romish consecrations, and Romish marriages, and other movements of Romanism, and then he asks is this liberality a proper thing? Well, I think it is, for it gives us a knowledge of their sayings and doings. But is it not strange that "C. P." and the Pope should be crying out the same thing—too much liberality. The Pope thinks that Victor Emmanuel is too liberal in giving his people civil and religious liberty. Germany is too liberal, and Austria too liberal, and France—where is she?—who used to support the old man on his throne with her arm. Too liberal: she too has become like the rest, and will no longer assist the Pope in trampling down Italian freedom. And Spain; she too has dared to be free, though yet in the toils. And Britain? What of her: is she too liberal? Yes, she leads the van. Long ago her liberality drove James the Second from his throne and placed upon it William the Third—the most liberal man of his time, so liberal that his life was made miserable by the old Tory faction of that period. And Sir, this liberality complained of by "C. P." will yet drive Popery and every other error from the Christian Churches, for Popery exists in some shape or another in all our Churches, and must be rooted out, and I think by the liberality of the press. Huron, November 1st, 1875. H.

Creed and Conduct.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir,— "Oh, we trust that some how good Will be the final goal of ill. Let us hope that it will be so, at any rate, of the controversy just raised regarding the state of the wicked after death. Rom. viii. 18 gives us one this confidence. Allow me to suggest how this may be. First, as to the

CAUSE OF THE CONTROVERSY.

Does it not lie in the want of harmony—irreconcilable to the world—between the professed belief and daily conduct of Christians towards unconverted friends around them, not to speak of the heathen, living, and liable at any moment to die, under the wrath and curse of an infinitely just and holy God. A young man of education, refinement and high morality told me not long ago that this was the great hindrance in his mind to embracing the Christian faith. As he spoke he read to a volume of essays of the day in which this really strong argument was powerfully presented. He had been under the pastoral care of several of our ministers, and been much in the company of others, and yet he added, "Only one, besides yourself, ever spoke to me about personal religion." He went on to mention as facts some instances of ministerial inconsistency which I cannot here bring myself to record. Is it any wonder that when Zion thus takes its ease, the world refuses to believe its creed, and soon doubts and controverts upon such questions as to the state of the lost make their appearance in the Church. God seems to permit, if not order it, for

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that His people may be aroused to define more clearly their own belief, and bring more carefully into conformity with it their own conduct. If it lead to more direct, determined, self-denying, agonizing efforts for the salvation of the lost in many family and social circles—something like adequate efforts to "pluck brands from the burning," far more good than harm will be done. God seems to force it upon us for this very purpose. The Church will make a great mistake if it tries to

DISPOSE OF THE MATTER

with mere anti-heretical proceedings and dogmatic deliverances. The only triumphant judgment of the creed of Christ is the life of Christ exhibited in his followers. It may be the duty of yourself, in the editorial chair, and of the "learned and able men" you justly recognize in the Toronto Presbytery, to deal with this difficult question controversially, but I would venture to call the attention of all interested to this other aspect of the case as one of still greater importance. Yours, etc., Consistency. Oct. 30th, 1875.

Conversion.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Conversion is the fruits of regeneration. The chief distinction between Regeneration and Conversion is, that the former is the work of God in giving a man a new heart; the latter is the spiritual action of the regenerate exercising repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. As defined by one of the Puritan Divines: "Regeneration is a spiritual change, conversion is a spiritual motion: in regeneration there is a power conferred, conversion is the exercise of that power: in regeneration there is given us the principle to turn, conversion is an actual turning: regeneration is the motion of God, conversion is the motion of the creature toward God." The relation between Repentance and Conversion is thus defined by Stier: "Repentance is the negative element, the penitent's aversion to the by gone life of wickedness; conversion is the positive element, a believing turning to the future good through confidence in mercy." To such a view of conversion objections are raised by those who believe that man can turn to God without the aid of supernatural influences—and likewise by such as underrate the difficulty of repenting and believing, by ascribing to man some remains of moral power for effecting these results, and who represent the work of the Spirit as merely a rondering of some aid in assisting the original powers of the mind. Arminian view: Arminius taught "that a man by his own free-will receives the

grace that is divinely offered him; and that it always remains in the power of the free-will to reject the grace bestowed, because grace is not the omnipotent action of God which cannot be resisted." Watson adopts this view and teaches that "man has power to choose or refuse life or death," which doctrine he adds "is against the unfrustratable operation of grace upon the elect." This view labours under the following defects: (1) It overlooks the fact that the will is itself subject to the influence of the Spirit, and freely chooses what the renewed affections desire. (2) It makes the sinner the chief agent in his conversion. (3) It represents the corrupt nature as stronger than the operation of the Divine Spirit.

We need not add that such errors in theology are the results of holding that strange dogma in philosophy, viz.: The Power of Contrary Choice, which means that the unregenerate will, without any motive, but simply in virtue of a power which it possesses, may choose in the direction of holiness, or in the direction of sin. This dogma separates the will from all the affections of the soul;—from the whole disposition of the individual;—and represents it as reigning in dreary isolation, acting the part of a despot, now, choosing this, now, the very opposite, without any assignable reason; being simply self-determined in all its volitions. It is no part of our consciousness, nor is it in keeping with our experience that, regardless of motives, or of the inclination, the will determines its volitions. The very nature of our volition is the resolving on that which is agreeable to our affections: for it is absurd to say that with an inclination one way, we are able to will the contrary; for the fact that we willed, proves that our inclination lay in that direction." It is evident that no man has power to change the current of his affections at pleasure. If any man thinks he has, let him try to what extent; let him try to love the object he loathes, or hate the object he loves. If he has the desire to change the object of his affections for another, this proves that the change has taken place.

The Arminian view makes free will the principle of all grace and goodness. God furnishes the means, but man makes it successful. What God and the Holy Spirit do of no consequence, unless man consults to its efficacy. In other words, the human will limits the will of God. The Apostle Paul taught a different doctrine: "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and do." The Calvinistic view commends itself to the mind on the grounds of a correct logic, and a sound exposition of the Scriptures. It teaches that if grace is effectually resisted it is resisted by a regenerated or by a corrupt heart. It cannot be by the former, because such would be contrary to its very nature. It is evident it must be by the latter. Now, if the corrupt heart, which is naturally disposed to war against grace, carries its opposition to the point of successful resistance in one, it will be difficult to understand why not in every case. If such are the adverse conditions under which grace operates, it will be difficult to believe that a single case of conversion is possible. It further sets the Scripture truth in a clear light by teaching that while resistance may be made to grace, the ultimate issue is never doubtful because the means used by the Spirit are "mighty through God to the putting down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. x. 5.

Good Works.—Viewing conversion as the outgrowth of regeneration the inquiry becomes pertinent. Can man do good works previous to his conversion?

It materially assists the answering of this question to notice that there are too separate standards by which good works are judged—the Human and the Divine. Popularly speaking the former standard takes no recognition of the spiritual;—frequently overlooks the motive of the act;—and embraces as good works such as fail to merit that name when tried by the Divine standard, which as ams as good only such works as are for the honour of God, and proceed from love to Him. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart." The Church of Rome teaches that there are certain works done before justification which are not sin, on the ground that the depravity of man is not total but partial. If we take the Scriptural view of the fall and its results, we cannot but dissent from such a view. The acts of any unregenerate man must evidently be righteous or sinful in God's sight. We have shown that good works proceed from love manifested in a life of new-obedience. Now such a life belongs to the converted only. "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

We are not, however, on this account to change the popular mode of expression, or to cease to draw moral distinctions between the actions of unbelievers. As Calvin says: "Nor do I, in opposition to common sense, contend that there is no difference between the justice of Titus and the cruelty of Nero: between the continence of Vespasian and the lust of Tiberius: between the observance of law and justice and the contempt of them: for we see how God visits those who cultivate virtue, with many temporal blessings. Still the observation of Augustus is true, that all who are strangers to the true God, however excellent they may be deemed on account of their virtues, are more deserving of punishment than a reward, because they are kept from acting ill, not by a sincere love of goodness, but merely by ambition, or self-love, or some sinister affection." This view of the question is that held by the Reformed Church in Holland; as expressed in Article xii. of the Church of England, and is clearly set forth in our Confession of Faith.

(To Be Continued.)

The chief want of the times is not a higher culture. The chief want in our literature is an honest, native spirit, and the chief want in our politics an untrailing patriotism. As to our politics, the evil is not in the lack of knowledge so much as in lack of conscience.

How to Discourage your Minister.

1. Hear him "now and then." Drop in a little late. Do not sing; do not find the texts in your Bibles. If you take a little sleep during the sermon, so much the better.
2. Notice carefully any slip he makes while you are awake; point out the dull portions to your children and friends, it will come around to him.
3. Censure his efforts at usefulness; deplore his want of common sense; let him know that you won't help him because A. B. does, because you were not first consulted, or because you did not start the plan yourself.
4. Let him know the follies and sins of his hearers. Show him how much he overrates them, and tell him their adverse criticisms on himself.
5. Tell him when he calls what a strange or he is; how his predecessors used to drop in for an hour's chat, and how much you liked them.
6. Never attend the prayer-meeting; frequent no special service. Why should you be righteous over-much?
7. Occasionally get up a little gaily for the young folks. This will be found very effectual about the communion season. "There is a time to dance."
8. Give him no intimation when you are ill; of course he should know; and your offended dignity, when he comes to see you, will render his visit pleasant. On no account intimate your recovery.
9. Require him to swell the pomp of every important occasion, unless, indeed, there are prudential reasons for passing him over.
10. If he is always in his pulpit, clamor for strangers; if he has public duties, and sometimes goes abroad, complain that he is never at home.
11. Keep down his income. Easy means are a sore temptation, and fullness of bread is bad for every one—but the laity.
12. As he will find it hard to be always at home to receive callers, and always well prepared for pulpit and platform, you will be sure to have just cause for complaint one way or the other. Tell it to every one, and then lament that there is so general dissatisfaction with him.

Random Readings.

There is nothing so mean but I may sin in it—therefore, there can be nothing so mean but I may pray in it.

God's promise does not bind Him, in the true sense of the word, but it tells us what his heart is.

Be assured of this all ye that hear me—wherever Satan's emissaries, or sinners in the darkness of nature—whoever knows God loves God.

If we trace these things to their source, we shall soon find something else, besides the sovereignty of God, which hinders our being happy.

May they remember that their Redeemer can make no mistake; and may this be their comfort, that He who tries them is He who died for them.

GREAT GOD! what a God hast Thou been to us! Keep us from the sin of wondering at it, seeing Thou hast given us Jesus, the proof and pledge of every blessing.

Do not travel up from the precept to the cross, but come down from the cross to the precept. Ye must know Christ as the priest before ye know Him as a king.

No man, I apprehend, can enter heaven who is not a fulfiller of God's holy law; if so, it is at the expense of justice that mercy is shown: it is upon the ruins of His throne of power that the throne of mercy is erected. (Rom. viii. 33, 34.)

I accept the fact, the simple fact, the august, solemn fact, that it was necessary for Christ to suffer. Those who say that Christ's sufferings were not vicarious will have to fight, not only with the Bible, but with all the weight of human life.

Do nothing you would not like God to see. Say nothing you would not like God to hear. Write nothing you would not like God to read. Go to no place where you would not like God to find you. Read no book of which you would not like God to say, "Shew it me." Never spend your time in such a way that you would not like to have God say, "What art thou doing?"

Some one estimates that all the prayers recorded in the Bible could be repeated in thirty-five minutes. Most of them are from one minute to two minutes long. The prayer of Solomon is less than ten minutes. Is there not a lesson and a warning in these facts, which should be noted Christians! Let us not imagine that we are to be heard for our much-speaking.

Is it not a straight and a narrow door? Ay, but the few who seek shall find it. There are well-worn paths that the sheep have made as they followed the Shepherd thither. The Shepherd himself has set up a highway. Finger-boards point the way to the gate; good evangelists (as in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress") stand here and there to point to the Wicket Gate, and cry, "This is the way—walk ye in it!"

It was as the suffering Messiah, the Shepherd-Sacrifice, that the Jews rejected Jesus. The priests of Pharisaism stood at the door of the Temple, warning off all who came to teach in the spirit and power of prophecy, who did not belong to themselves, or who would not adhere to their dogmas and recognise their authority. This oligarchy set itself to be not only the porter of the door, but the very door itself, usurping the claim that through them the teachers of the people must come. Thus they gave, through their perverted doctrines and lives, the means of entrance to thieves; nay, they wore themselves the thieves and robbers referred to, but the "sheep" did not hear them; the chosen remnant rejected their proud impiety, and still looked and longed for the coming of the true Messiah-Shepherd.