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INTERESTING INTERVIEW WITH
DR. DURBIN.

On Saturday last Bishop James, the Missionary Secretaries, and the Book Agents, visited Dr. Durbin, the venerable Honorary Secretary of the Missionary Society, at his residence on Twenty-third street in this city. For some time he had not been at 805 Broadway, and the immediate object of the visit was to convey to him a resolution passed by the Bishops at their last meeting. The doctor as he entered the parlor "slipped along," as he described it, a chronic rheumatism hindering his locomotion. His locks seemed whiter than usual, and his grey beard and moustache gave him quite an altered aspect from that once so familiar in the churches. His voice was very feeble, and he invited the company to seats near him.

Bishop James then told him that the Bishops had intended to visit him in a body, but, having learned that he was at Philadelphia at the time, they had no subsequent opportunity to visit him. He then read to the doctor the resolution, and handed him a copy of it. The doctor replied that he could recollect but one other paper of the sort in all his life that was not distasteful to him. His paper was so evidently sincere, and was expressed in such terms, that he received it with gladness, and would cherish it among his pleasant memories.

He then for half an hour indulged in free conversation with us in respect to his own history. He said that in his camp-meeting, below Lebanon, Ohio, he had been appointed to preach, and lay on the straw meditating, when the elder came in and said, "John, what are you doing?" He replied, "Waiting for the hour of preaching." "But," said the elder, "are you ready to preach to these crowds that are pouring in to hear you?" "That," said the doctor, "gave me the first intimation that anyone wanted to hear me preach. The thought that people would come twenty miles to hear me never entered my mind." He further said that some such experience had marked him through life. When he had become Missionary Secretary, and visited the scenes of his early ministry, he was surprised to find so many evidences that there had been power in that ministry. And he had been equally surprised to find that the Church esteemed his services so much value to the missionary cause. He had not been wont to refer to this lest some should count it only vanity on his part, but it was unaffected, and he felt thankful to the good Spirit, through whose help this had been done.

He said his sermons were not prepared as sermons are now prepared. They were never written. One side of a paper of commercial note would contain all of any sermon that he had ever committed to paper.

He alluded to his Christian experience. At first, he said, the fact that he had not the joys which other Christians had gave rise to questioning doubts. But he afterward learned better, and, though he had never been demonstrative, his experience as a Christian had been, and still was, satisfactory to his heart.

He was assured by the Bishop of the wide spread love and sympathy of the Church, for which he expressed his gratitude. His conversation was enlivened at times by a bit of exegesis, a flash of the old eloquence that erst moved such multitudes, or by a falling tear and melting pathos. It would have been well could some one present have been prepared to report the whole interview.

There has been a practical application of women's rights principles in Welshport in Wales. In consequence of sickness a man was compelled to seek relief from the Poor rates, which was granted. But his wife, being a healthy and prosperous woman, was asked by the guardians to do something for his support. She refused and now the courts have made him comply.

WESLEY AS A MAN OF LETTERS.
(From the Spectator.)

Wesley's remarkable career, and the marvellous work which he achieved, have afforded a fruitful field of discussion from his own day to the present. He was a dogmatist, a controversialist, a theologian of untiring energy, who loved his least important opinion better than his best friend; a man of undaunted courage, of acute though not of profound intellect; an enthusiast, as every man must be who achieves great results in the face of great opposition; and he possessed the power, common to all born rulers, of attracting everyone who came within his influence. As an orator he was surpassed by Whitefield, but in intellectual strength, in breadth of culture, in administrative skill, Wesley was beyond comparison superior to his friend. In any department of life demanding vast energy and organising power Wesley would have achieved success, and though his chief gifts lay in action, there are indications that he might, had he pleased, have attained a considerable reputation as a man of letters. Methodism, it may be observed, has produced no literature of abiding value. A few of Charles Wesley's hymns take rank, indeed, with the best in the language, and are likely to form a permanent portion of our hymnody, but beyond these we know of nothing amidst the vast number of publications issued by this body which has an interest for readers who do not belong to it. Books of a devotional character have been issued from the Methodist press by hundreds and by thousands, and are probably read by Wesleyans; but even of books like these we do not know one which like the "Holy Living" of Taylor, the "Saint's Rest" of Baxter, or the splendid allegory of Bunyan, has obtained universal recognition. Wesley himself was a prolific writer. He appears always to have had some work on hand; and what he began he was certain to complete. Although during a great part of his life he travelled from horseback or on foot, he preached nearly every day, his brain all but unweary, and he made use of the minutes most of us are apt to lose, and his work, it is needless to say, fill many volumes. Six of these (in the edition of 1813) are occupied by the "Journal," which forms a curious medley of spiritual experiences, marvellous and amusing incidents, and personal statements, which, when put together, supply a life-like picture of the writer. How, amidst his innumerable occupations, he could find time to write such a record of his public and private career, it is difficult to say; but Wesley's whole course was one of conflict and of triumph over circumstances, and he exemplified the noble saying of Shakespeare that "in the reproof of chance lies the true proof of men." The "Journal," although the most readable of Wesley's writings, is, we suspect, not often read in the present day. It exhibits Wesley under a variety of aspects: his constant eagerness to gain knowledge, a feature of character in which he resembled Dr. Johnson, his sagacity in ordinary affairs, his amazing and growing credulity with regard to spiritual phenomena, his keen observation, his cheerful disposition and physical activity, which prevented him from brooding over griefs that would have given sleepless nights to more sensitive men, his curious lack of reticence, his unflinching confidence in his own judgement—all these traits stand out prominently in the "Journal," and will partly amuse and partly irritate the reader. Moreover, this curious book affords much information with regard to the manners of the age, and it is no small boon to obtain this information from a writer who is always accurate in his statements save when, in his account of the Moravians, his violent prejudices get the better of his honesty. To notice such a work adequately would occupy far more space than is now at our disposal, but it may be worth while, by the help of it, to look at one phase of Wesley's character—his activity as a man of letters.

Unlike some religious enthusiasts, who treat all human learning as dross, Wesley valued highly the advantages he had gained from a University training. At college he became eminent in logic, and no man, according to his biographer, was ever more dextrous in the art of reasoning; he gave great attention to mathematics, studied Hebrew and Arabic, and laid out a plan of study which, if it were not strictly fol-

lowed, showed at least the extent of his ambition. For a time, indeed, in the first warmth of religious zeal, his fanaticism overpowered his judgment, and during his voyage to Virginia, in which, by the way, he learnt German, he wrote to his brother Samuel begging him to banish all such poison from his school as the classics which were usually read there; but this feeling was not lasting, and notwithstanding the incessant whirl of his after life, he never wholly neglected the great writers of Greece and Rome. In his old age he writes: "I saw the Westminster scholars act the 'Adelphi' of Terence, an entertainment not unworthy of a Christian. Oh how do these heathens shame us! Their very comedies contain both excellent sense, the liveliest pictures of men and manners, and so fine strokes of genuine morality as are seldom found in the writings of Christians." He relates, among similar exploits, how, in riding to Newcastle, he finished the Tenth "Iliad" of Homer, and was struck not only by the writer's "amazing genius," but by the "vein of piety" that runs through his whole work. Another day he read over, whilst riding, a great part of the "Odyssey," and expresses for it the highest admiration. To read Greek on horseback must have taxed even Wesley's eyes; but so accustomed was he to reading in that position, that he tells us he generally kept history, poetry and philosophy for such occasions, "having other employment at other times." "Near thirty years ago I was thinking," he writes, "how is it that no horse ever stumbles while I am reading? No account can possibly be given but this: Because then I throw the reins on his neck. I then set myself to observe, and I aver that in riding about a hundred thousand miles I scarce ever remember any horse (except two, that would fall head over heels any way) to fall, or make a considerable stumble which I rode with a slack rein. To fancy therefore, that a tight rein prevents stumbling is a capital blunder. I have repeated the trial more frequently than most men in the kingdom can do. A slack rein will prevent some horses stumbling will. But Wesley was an omnivorous reader. Nothing came amiss to him. He reads Hay "On Deformity," and remarks that it is, perhaps, one of the prettiest trifles extant in the English tongue; he reads in his "scraps of time" Commodore Byron's narrative, and deems "that no novel in the world can be more affecting or more surprising than this history;" he takes up "casually" Sterne's "Sentimental Journey," and finds fault with the title as well as the book itself. "Sentimental, what is that? It is not English! He might as well it say *Continential*. It is not sense. It conveys no determinate idea, yet one fool makes many. And this nonsensical word (who would believe it?) is become a fashionable one! However, the book agrees full well with the title, for one is as queer as the other. For oddity, uncouthness, and unlikeness to all the world beside, I suppose the author is without a rival." Among other strange books he records his personal of Mandeville's "Fable of the Bees," and of the "Life of Baron Trenck," which he styles a most dangerous book, adding, "I wish none that cares for his soul would read a page of it. Are any of our readers acquainted with the Rev. P. Skelton's works? If so, they will hardly accept Wesley's judgment, that "he shows all the wit of Dr. Swift, joined with ten times his judgment." Indeed, Wesley has not a judgment." Indeed, Wesley has not a word to say in favour of Swift; and in another entry in the "Journal" he observes, "In my way, I looked over a volume of Dr. Swift's 'Letters.' I was amazed. Was ever such trash palmed upon the world under the name of a great man? More than half of what is contained in sixteen volumes would be dead at twopenny a volume, being all, and more than all, the dull things which that witty man has ever said." There is more truth, perhaps, in his estimate of Lord Chesterfield, whom he describes, after reading his "Letters," as "a man of much wit, middling sense, and some learning, but as absolutely void of virtue as any Jew, Turk, or heathen that ever lived." He is often then that ever lived. Smollett had severe in his comments, and his misrepresentation of the Methodists, and his critic asks whether a man of reason will give credit to any fact upon his authority. After reading Warner's "History of Ireland" with "calm deliberation" he writes: "I do not believe one leaf of it is true from the beginning to the

end." He compares Pennant's "Tour through Scotland" with Dr. Johnson's and wonders that Pennant, a man of sense and learning, should write bad English in almost every page; he complains of Robertson's "intolerable proflixity," and regards Swedenborg as an entertaining madman. Rousseau is styled a "consummate coxcomb," and Voltaire's "Henriade" convinces him that "French is the poorest, meanest language in Europe," and that it is "as impossible to write a fine poem in French as it is to make fine music upon a Jew's harp."

Wesley seems to have read a great deal of poetry, and his critical judgement will frequently sound strange in modern ears. We do not remember any allusion to Shakespeare, but he considered "Don Quixote" the play which has made the most noise," one of the finest tragedies ever read. Blackmore's "Rings and Arrows" he termed "by no means equal to his poem on the Creation, on which are many admirably fine strokes." (Alas for fame! what do modern readers know of these fine strokes?) The comment on Beattie is amusing: "Certainly, one of the best poets of the age." He wants only the ease and simplicity of Mr. Pope, I know one, and only one that has it. This no doubt was his brother Charles, for whose poetical abilities John had the highest value. In reading that "pretty trifle," the "Life of Mrs. Bellamy" whom he terms a lovely and elegant writer, he finds an anecdote about Garrick, who, it is said, flung overboard a parcel given him before making a voyage, on finding that it contained Wesley's Hymns. "I cannot believe it," writes the elder brother; "I think Mr. G. had more sense. He knew my brother well and he knew him to be not only far superior in learning, but in poetry, to Mr. Thompson, and all his theatrical writers put together. None of them can equal him either in strength, nervousness, or purity and elegance of language." Wesley had a mean opinion of Thomson, but on reading his tragedy of "Edward and Eleanor" he was surprised. "The plot," he writes, "is wrought up with the utmost art, and manner. It is quite new, and modern in every part of the kind." But, of all the imaginative writers of that country, he praised Prior the most highly, considered his "Solomon" one of the sublimest poems in the language, and seemed quite oblivious to Prior's naughtiness as an amatory poet. Perhaps he agreed with Dr. Johnson, that "Prior's is a lady's book."

Like Dr. Watts, Wesley was willing to work for children, for whom he entertained a liking that affected his theology. "Who can believe," he writes, "that these pretty little creatures have the wrath of God abiding on them?" He wrote for his school at Kingswood a short French grammar, revised Kennet's "Antiquities" and Porter's "Grecian Antiquities"—a dry, dull, heavy book—prepared a history of England and a short Roman history and several other school-books. On the whole, considering the kind of life he led, the amount of literary work accomplished by Wesley is marvellous. But he was blessed in no common measure with a vigorous mind and a strong body. The man who at eighty-two, could write that many years had past since he had felt any such thing as weariness, might well be capable of achievements which astonish persons endowed with ordinary constitutions.

A WESTERN AIR TOWN.

It was the writer's destiny to be associated for some years with the organization of towns for what was then the Eastern Division of the Union Pacific Railway—a line running from Kansas City, on the Missouri River, to Denver. The first portion of the road that east of Fort Harker, the centre of the State of Kansas, was through an agricultural region, and with that our article has nothing to do. From where the "Harker Bluff" looked out upon the silent plains, away off through Western Kansas and Eastern Colorado to the Rocky Mountains, the iron road was being placed. Five hundred miles through the red man's pasture was a path levelled that the genius, steam might tread it; and along this path, wherever the Aladdin lamp of the engine became stationary for a brief time, magic offices sprang into existence. With those which have survived, future generations have to do. Be ours the task to rescue from oblivion those towns which were, but are not.

Coyote was a temporary terminus of the railroad in 1868. On every side the

heavy rolling plains lay up against the cloudless horizon. Sky and earth came together like two tenantless wastes, relieved only by the golden sun rolling daily over the one, while the mushroom town looked up at it from the other. A crazy street of shanties and a mob of men had been flung down among the buffaloes—the wreck of other mushroom cities, and the habitants of their purlieus. Canvas saloons, sheet-iron hotels, and sod dwellings, surrounded by tin cans and scattered playing cards, the latter so out of form by repeated turnings from the bottom that even a Coyote gambler could not manipulate them. And it was interesting to see Boredom and Notus take a hand with the discarded trump. Before the breath of the wind they would rise into air, the cards as close over the smooth surface they lay South. A few moments and the barren earth would be swept clean, while the newspapers and old hats were fluttering like a flight of white birds, out of sight. These were the usual life of a full-grown prairie might pass, and then as the north wind met the forces of the south, and fled back over this desolate territory of the tempests, the tenantless air became alive again. Far off on the heel of the vanquished and the crest of the victor wind came the white-winged cooys of cards, like the curses of the proverb, on their way home to roost. At night fall they had collected beside the track and among the houses, and were again as thick as leaves in autumn. Had it been possible for conscience to prick through a Coyote gambler's skin, how it might have gratified him to see the marked Jack that had fleeced the last stranger rise up like a grasshopper and fly south, beyond the possibility of becoming state's evidence! And how annoying to wake up and find the knave again under the window!

Coyote was in the midst of the Buffalo country. For a hundred miles on either side carcasses disfigured the land. So numerous were the buffaloes around Coyote that on several occasions I knew them to dash through the suburbs of the town when chased by horsemen.

Coyote soon disappeared. The temporary terminus moved forward to Sheridan. If the noise of house-building, the blow of the hammer and tear of the saw, are sweet music to the workman's ears, however jarring to that of the neighborhood, no such plea can be put forth for the sounds which proclaim a prairie building's removal in situations where each man is his own carpenter. A liberal application of boards and timbers elsewhere assigns most wonderful. Happy the neighbor who may be deaf! The tempers of the workmen change for the worse, and there seems to be a general disjuncting of dispositions as well as beams.

In one short week not a house but that of the railroad section men. Thousands of eyes and fruit cans alone marked the spot where vice had lately rioted.—W. E. WEBB in *Harper's Magazine for Nov.*

Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle looks well on a Sunday, even when that great preacher is not there to attract a congregation. When he is present his hours get fine samples of useful preaching; but sometimes, when he is not the preacher, sermons of great excellence are delivered from his rostrum. I was particularly pleased to find he had secured the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse as his substitute for Sunday last, and, unless I am greatly mistaken, *habitus* of the Tabernacle will be happy to welcome the sprightly author of "Daniel Quorn" again. I have not heard Mr. Pearse often but should suppose his sermons at the Tabernacle were in his best style—forceful, suggestive, practical, spiritual, abounding with telling illustrations. Some one said preachers should have gush, glow and grip. My opinion is that Daniel Quorn's would be that his countrymen had all these.

By the way, what a model Mr. Spurgeon would be for the next Home Missionary Secretary, the successor to Mr. Pease! The Tabernacle and its belongings are splendid home missionary quarters. There is the College, and eighty students are resident. They are in training for posts as pastors and evangelists. If they are for Baptist work, their costs are paid for them; if not, they pay for themselves. Then there are two hundred students attending the evening classes: these are non-residents, and in training for church work, and are members of nearly all the various evangelical churches. Surely our new Home Missionary Secretary might institute some such working college in London, and fit men for successful toil; and surely he ought, for Mr. Spurgeon said that he received about sixty Methodists a year into his classes as students. We should keep our own.—*London Methodist*