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PERSONALITIES, AND THE PRESS.

It has often been noticed that the condemnation of the American press that it deals most offensively in petty slander and personal abuse, not only of leading public characters, but of the smaller fry who are in any way connected with public affairs. To take the stump as it is called in a contested election, to be put in nomination for the most paltry office, or in any way to attract the public eye is to make sure of having a man's whole private life, personal manners and domestic affairs ransacked for the materials of flippant editorials. When the elections are past, and all interest in local squabbles have subsided, rival editors set to dissecting each other's characters, and saying smart things at each other's expense, as if the welfare of the whole community was bound up in the history of these self-important men. It is a great mistake to suppose that this arises from a depraved taste in the readers of these journals of scandal. In the heat of a violent contest, when men's feelings run away with their judgment, it may be tolerated; and perhaps now and then when the excitement is gone, a palpable hit may amuse the multitude, but as a general thing, the public is not merely indifferent to their personalities—the public is offended and disgusted. But then any man can write a squib, but every man cannot discuss a principle. And to fill up a column with slang and smart sentences, neither demands the intelligence nor the industry which are required to fill it with useful and improving matter. An acquaintance with the people of the United States will satisfy any man that it is the incompetency of editors, not the perversion of public taste, that gives the low tone to the press of this country.

It is doubtless influential somewhat by the selfishness of party politics. The politician is not a man struggling for the triumph of great principles, in which he believes his country's honor and prosperity to be involved. He is merely a selfish man of desperate fortunes contending with another man of similar motives for a lucrative office. In such a contest, with the motto "to the victors belong the spoils," it is not surprising that party discussions, both oral and printed, should assume a personal aspect.

Like causes will produce like results in a Province and in an independent State. The press of Canada seems to be falling beneath the same influences, and it requires the vigilance of its conductors, and the firm rebuke of the public to guard it from a threatened degeneracy. For the past few months there has been a very marked tendency to this style of personal invective and petty slander, which has infected even the more respectable journals. And it is time that attention be directed to the fact before it embitters our social intercourse, and sacrifices the public interests to private feuds. It is not difficult to understand how the disappointment and irritation which follow a party defeat, as well as the warmth that is excited by a party contest, should give a relish for such attacks in the outset. But besides the injurious effects of the cultivation of such a spirit, it is plain that in the long run it must make the press simply contemptible. The remedy is to be found in the principle and self-respect of the conductors of the press, and in the good sense of their patrons. Some of our contemporaries who have stooped so low are capable of better things. The public expects better things of them.

We have a word to say to the objects of personalities, whether printed or spoken. There is only one thing that you have to do, take care that you do not merit public censure, and rest assured that an unmerited attack cannot, in the issue, do you any damage with those whose good opinion is your possession. An attack may come in such a shape as to demand a straightforward defence. A slander may originate in such circumstances, and from such a quarter as to make a contradiction not only consistent with self-respect, but proper to the satisfaction of your best friends. But as a general thing they are best left to themselves, and an honest man can live in his own skin faster than wickedness or prejudice can invent them. These remarks will be an answer to two or three correspondents—two of whom kindly intimate an attempt to create a prejudice against yourself, and the others seek a place in our columns to defend themselves. We present to both parties the following extract from one of Miss Edgeworth's tales, as containing an outline of our philosophy of the matter:

As young Francis was walking through a village with his tutor, they were annoyed by three or four dogs, that came running after them with looks of the most fury, snarling and barking as if they would tear their throats, and seeming every moment ready to fly upon them. Francis every now and then stopped, and shook his stick at them, or atopped down to pick up some bones which the curs retreated as fast as they came; but as soon as he turned about, they came to a farm-yard through which their road lay—a large mastiff was lying down in it at his case in the sun. Francis was almost afraid to pass him, and kept as close to his tutor as possible. However, the dog took not the least notice of them.

Presently they came upon a common, where, going near a flock of geese, they were assailed with hissing, and pursued some way by these foolish birds, which stretching out their long necks made a very ridiculous figure. Francis only laughed at them, though he was tempted to give the foremost a switch across his neck. A little further was a herd of cows with a bull among them; upon which Francis looked with some degree of apprehension; but they kept quietly grazing, and did not take their heads from the ground as he passed.

"It is a lucky thing," said Francis to his tutor, "that mastiffs and bulls are not so quarrelsome as curs and geese; but what can be the reason of it?"

"The reason (replied his tutor) is, that paltzy and contemptible animals, possessing no confidence in their own strength and courage, and knowing themselves liable to injury from most of the things that come in their way, think it safest to back those of whom in reality they are afraid. Whereas animals which are conscious of force sufficient for their own protection, suspecting no evil designs from others, entertain none themselves, but maintain a dignified composure."

"Thus you will find it among mankind. Weak men, petty characters are suspicious, snarling,

and peltant. They raise an outcry against their superiors in talent and reputation, of whom they stand in awe, and put on airs of distaste, and insolence through mere cowardice. But they are great and calm and inoffensive. They fear no injury, and offer none. They even suffer slight attacks to go unheeded, conscious of their power to fight themselves whenever the occasion shall seem to require it."

COMMUNICATION.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL.

Sabbath School during the winter.—There is, we believe, a general impression, that it will be necessary to discontinue the district Sabbath Schools, during the winter season. We do not doubt, that in some instances, it will be duty to do so, in view of all attending circumstances. However, whether the schools should be given up, *in all the districts*, is, to us, a matter seriously questionable. Some of the districts, even in this country are emphatically missionary ground. And a brother, by maintaining a Sabbath school in them, would collect a goodly assemblage of children, youth and parents; might do the work of a minister of God, and have "the blessing of many ready to perish come upon him." To do this, it is true, he might create his seat a portion of the time, in the church, to which he belongs. But what weighty apology for non-attendance! The great religious necessities of some neighborhoods, and in spite of them, a Sabbath school should be maintained in them. As a well conducted Sabbath school is a precious blessing, so its discontinuance is a great calamity to a needy and destitute district, and how a man, having it in his power to do such a good and in such a way, and possessing a spark of true Sabbath School fire, can shut up his bowels of compassion I cannot decipher. But, to our main point.

To give up a single school, in the places of worship, during the winter season, we, by no means, believe necessary. To the "blacklisting" doctrine of discontinuance, we have not been converted, by all we have heard said, and bleak winds, and pelting storms, and bad roads, and poor clothes and diminished numbers and dying interest. No! Our position is, *maintain the Sabbath schools in the places of worship, during the year, without fail.* And here, follow our reasons for it.

1. It is yielding to a wrong impression to suppose, that the real interest of a Sabbath school depends on numbers, and necessarily declines when its numbers are diminished, as they, perhaps, will be less or more, in the fall and winter. I know we are prone to this mistake, as well, in our large, as little, assemblies. Interest, however, let it be remembered, depends not upon the presence of large numbers; but certain things. Let there be, in a small assembly, or diminished Sabbath school, even reduced to "two or three," the presence of Christ, and of the spirit of God; of the claims of truth, and of the disease and cure of souls; of the short road to death, and the heaven or hell at the end of it, and will there be a lack of interest? Suppose a Sabbath school of 70 scholars diminished to 20, or even 15, (and where is there a school, in any places of worship, half of whose numbers cannot be retained?) Is there any good reason, why these 15 tender lambs shall be turned out of the S. S. enclosure, to shiver and bleed during winter's pinching reign; their heavenly nurture abandoned, and their hearts left to rot, as having no foundation for interest and cherishing such? Suppose again that some faithful spirit hold on to the school; and to their full duty in it, and that these 15 are converted to God, under the steady influence of S. S. instruction and prayer. What a harvest! And that amidst a promiseless winter? O ye of little faith!

2. The winter season affords most leisure for literary and religious improvement. Summer's urgent business is done. The leisure days and long evenings of winter have succeeded. And so far as regards intellectual cultivation, these are the best seasons. Hence, the singing school, the school of prayer, the school of prayer, the common school is thronged. And, I may add, Religion flourishes. All, all the priceless machinery for literary and moral improvement, is in brisk operation, but the Sabbath school! This is offered to freeze up! And, that at a season, affording children the greatest leisure, to study, and to read, the most time, to help them. "O tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon!"

3. Experience has proved the maintenance of Sabbath schools during the winter, both profitable and profitable. And is not "Experience the best schoolmaster?" and judge? No more difficulty, upon the actual experiment, has been found in keeping up Sabbath schools in the winter, than our ordinary Sabbath meetings. To all our religious operations and, indeed, to every kind of business, there will be more or less embarrassment arising from unfavorable weather, and bad roads; but shall they all be given up, thereby? No. Especially is it true, beyond the fact that we will go through thick and thin to compass our earthly ends! O for a set of Christians who will go through thick and thin, to gain "a true treasure in heaven" for themselves and their children! A set of Christians who, in the lofty engagements of the Sabbath school and religion, shall yield to the dictates of a sound experience.

4. Such an interruption of our children's scriptural studies is a serious detriment to religious education. To achieve victories over obstacles in the way of physical, intellectual or religious education, requires an application, difficulty, upon the actual experiment, has been found in keeping up Sabbath schools in the winter, than our ordinary Sabbath meetings. To all our religious operations and, indeed, to every kind of business, there will be more or less embarrassment arising from unfavorable weather, and bad roads; but shall they all be given up, thereby? No. Especially is it true, beyond the fact that we will go through thick and thin to compass our earthly ends! O for a set of Christians who will go through thick and thin, to gain "a true treasure in heaven" for themselves and their children! A set of Christians who, in the lofty engagements of the Sabbath school and religion, shall yield to the dictates of a sound experience.

5. Each interruption of the schools, works a corresponding injury to the Teachers. I mean, as it respects the habit of teaching. "Practice makes perfect." Not occasional, but regular practice. A regular study and teaching of the scriptures, the year round, and year after year, renders the letter and the sentiment familiar, and makes the duties and devotions they require sweet. Ah! this makes the teacher. It inspires a deep and fixed and ever-thriving relish for the truth and the sacred service of imparting it. I repeat it makes the teacher. There are a few such, blessed be God; splendid illustrations of the truth of these remarks. But many furnish melancholy instances and proof of the correctness of my position. They are raw militia, instead of regular troops; capable of being excellent sol-

diers; but not without long and painful drilling. It gives an opportunity, more than one half of the year, for bad habits of thinking, feeling and action, to "strengthen with their strength and grow on with the strength of their strength." And so it will be. For think and feel and act our children will. They were made to do so. And this, simply considered is right. But recollect that certain something; that cause, or influence, which renders it certain, that thinking they will feel wrong, and feeling, they will feel wrong; and acting they will act wrong. Call this depravity or what you will, it is so. Remember, again, that religion is designed to correct what is wrong and guides all these powers aright; and that nothing besides religion can do this. But, alas! this, the only remedy is unapplied, or not fully and properly applied. Do not think, "damp devils," like trying a sailing ship to the perpendicular, one half of the year, and then, cutting the cord, allow it to fall back to its ordinary posture. It is like drawing our children with the silken cords of religion, away from the thousand dangers of earth, to the house of God, to the sacred service of His Father, and that their eyes may be taken off from beholding vanity; that they may learn to "seek first, the kingdom of God," and "lay up treasures in heaven," as though this were, alike their highest duty and highest interest, and then, just as they begin to think into the spirit of these lofty engagements, "damp devils," like trying a sailing ship to the perpendicular, one half of the year, and then, cutting the cord, allow it to fall back to its ordinary posture. 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