

The Dominion Presbyterian

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Giving and Gaining.

It needs a real faith to accept the old saying, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty." And we can all of us understand the quaint statement that "there was a man, though some did think him mad, the more he gave away the more he had." The world still holds the madness theory with regard to generosity, and yet this truth, which is the inspiration of faith, is in perfect harmony with common sense, for it is the principle of all real life. If a man adopted the principle of always resting to save his muscular energy, that would mean not robustness, but ruin to his health. The body must "die to live," it must give to gain. So in our mental life it is by the expenditure of effort that we gain strength to grapple with harder problems. In commerce men must send out to receive bulk. Not by way of saving, but by way of serving does real wealth come in all spheres. A congregation that tries to keep its energy and resources within itself withers and dies. A man who gives nothing of his real self to the Church cannot get much out of it. If you give personal interest you will gain spiritual enthusiasm; give your prayers, and you will enjoy the sermon; visit the sick in a spirit of sympathy and you will receive a healthful influence; break down some small barrier of caste and you will let in new light to your soul. Look where you will in the universe of God and you will find that gaining is conditionally gain. In the lower world the social animals have the advantage over the solitary brutes; they give support to each other and gain the benefit of the general strength. This principle is at work in finer ways in the Christian Church; it is a cardinal truth emphasized most solemnly by our Lord that there is a way of saving our life, which means an utter loss of life, while there is a sacred recklessness, a holy self-abandon, which means the finding of a higher life. This is the principle of the cross; it throws its shadow over the whole creation, but it finds its full significance in the Christ who said: "I lay down my life that I may take it again."

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The Moderator's Chair.

The election to the Moderator's Chair by the General Assembly is considered to be the highest honor the Church can confer upon one of her sons. That it may continue to be such, the man chosen should be chosen for his eminent fitness for the position. This fitness is not eminent pulpit ability, or success in the professor's chair, or in the home field, or the foreign field. A man may have gained well-deserved eminence in any one, or in all of these, and yet be a painful failure in the Chair of the Moderator of the General Assembly.

The reasons being now advanced for the choice of rival nominees are therefore not to the point. The man presented may be the man for the position, but the reasons advanced do not justify the choice. Is he a man of such strong executive ability and such knowledge of affairs as to lead you to believe that he will control and direct the business of the great Court of the Church wisely? If he be the right man, he will stamp the legislation of the next Assembly with his individuality. He will be no figurehead. He will be primus inter pares in more than name. Those who have selfish ends to serve—and such do also come among the sons of God even now—will find their plans thwarted; for this man who is chosen not only loves righteousness, but is strong to see that it is done.

Let such be the man chosen. If he be eminent as a preacher, let that be an additional factor in the choice. But whether he be or not, we want the man who is able to control and direct, far-seeing, wide-ranging in his sympathy, with heart responsive to all that is good, but quick to divine that which is best.

A Mental Stimulus.

The purpose of the sermon or lecture is not to supply information so much as to furnish stimulus, and to give a right direction to energy. The preacher who fails to set his audience thinking in the right direction has failed in his mission. The professor who fails to inspire his students to prosecute independent research is a failure in the professor's chair. Nine out of ten men will absorb information, and retain it till examination day comes, when, with a relieved sigh, it is unloaded. It is equally true that a good percentage, perhaps not quite so large, will respond to a mental stimulus when properly applied. To do nothing more than supply information is to dwarf the intellect. To give an inspiration to search after knowledge develops strength and tends to the production of a healthy mental manhood.

Our grand business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.—Thomas Carlyle.

Biblical Criticism.*

We do not profess to be able "to review" this book in the brief space at our disposal; but we have pleasure in bringing it to the notice of ministers and students as a treasury of good things, new and old. In his controversy with Mr. Gladstone, Prof. Huxley said, "In science we do not call a man up to date who relies upon authorities over twenty years old." In these days things move fast, and that is true in the realm of Biblical science, as well as in the sphere of physical science. The Book still stands in its sublime grandeur, and its marvellous influence gains constantly a wider range, but the science of Bible study has been revolutionized within the present century. A great preacher once said of the nineteenth century that, like Iago, "it was nothing if not critical." In Biblical science it sometimes seems to have been more critical than constructive, but we are compelled to believe that the constructive era is now about to dawn. Literature, in its survey of English books of 1898, pointed out how few had been the important contributions to theology. But the best work that has been done in recent years is a preparation for a new presentation of Biblical theology which, in its turn, must influence apologetics and systematic theology.

Prof. Briggs is well known, not only because of his scholarship and vigorous advocacy of the "higher criticism," but also because he has been through "a heresy trial." Such a trial is at any rate a good advertisement; and there are some who think that this is about all that is accomplished by it. What Dr. Briggs himself thinks of the trial and its results we shall see. Before touching that branch of the subject, we note that the present book has a history. In a somewhat different form it appeared sixteen years ago, and "has been issued from the press nine times since that date, and there still seems to be a demand for it on the part of the public." This, along with the fact that Driver's Introduction has passed through six editions, shows that there are many who read works of this kind. Now, having reached the twenty-fifth year of his professorate, the author felt impelled to make a new volume out of the old one, and to bring in the results of fifteen years' additional work. Hence we have the present work dedicated to his pupils, and making special mention of one, viz., "my daughter, Emilie Grace Briggs, B.D., without whose patient, laborious and scholarly help I could not have finished this volume."

Such a volume, by its genesis and growth, claims an important place, and

General introduction to the study of Holy Scripture. The principles, methods, history and results of its several departments and of the whole, by Charles Augustus Briggs, D.D. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, \$3.00.