

THE WESLEYAN

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1879.

Rev. E. Barrass, M.A., known as an active, entertaining correspondent of continental newspapers, and a General Conference reporter, has written a little volume—"Smiles and Tears"—suitable for a present or Sabbath School Library. It is neat, well written and quite cheap—50 cents. For Sale at the Book Room.

We "nod" assent to the point made against our allusion to Dr. Topp, by a correspondent in last week's "Witness." Curiously enough we mixed things considerably. Topp for Robb was inexcusable; but how was any one outside to know that "In most Presbyteries the brethren occupy the chair in rotation." This rotary process of government is something unique in modern ecclesiastical organization. How would it work in Methodist "Districts?"

The McCarthy murder case has taken a new and very curious turn. Annie Parker, accused of perjury, and having no counsel, has herself been engaged in cross examining witnesses. Eliza Osborne, under examination, indignantly denied that Annie's story of some months ago had a word of truth in it.

Montreal is passing through its visitation of disastrous failures. One—Mullarky & Co.—was reported last week for a very heavy sum—perhaps half a million—and it was supposed that several firms, dependent on this one, would have to succumb. Altogether it is a dreadful season in commerce.

France has been threatened with a revolution. President MacMahon found so much discontent with his administration that he yielded to the wish of the opposition and resigned. A new President was elected; but matters have been rather threatening. The Pope considered it necessary to warn his clergy against encouraging any rising among the people. The nation is always a difficult one to manage. Surrounding countries consequently look on with some degree of anxiety; for trouble in France might mean a disturbance of international amity in Europe.

Will the Visitor have pity upon us? We were under the impression that Calvinism was declining in the world. The Visitor startled us by the declaration that "Calvinism dominates modern religious thought." To satisfy ourselves that a very extraordinary delusion had not been holding possession of our mind, we begged the Visitor to relieve us by affording some little shadow of evidence. It went at once into a double-column fever of learned, literary and philosophical discussion. We looked to be convinced—overwhelmed; but because we innocently asked what compliments paid to Calvin by dead men had to do with the subject of Calvinism dominating modern thought; or how it was possible that a man could endorse an opinion uttered a hundred years after his death—the Visitor avers that we attacked Calvinism! This is too bad. In its own little hallucinations we have borne with the Visitor from time to time, as for instance in that glamour as to baptism; we have even helped it to its feet after a sorrowful stumbling. And here now is our recompense! Will our friend answer two questions?

- 1. What—in his estimation—is Calvinism?
2. If it be the genuine article, where, outside of the Visitor office, does it "dominate modern religious thought?"

This subject we see is agitating the papers in Toronto and Australia. But the "dominant" champions yonder attempt argument at least.

MARRIAGE WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER.—This question is creating a good deal of discussion at present in Scotland. A majority of the Town Council of Edinburgh voted in favour of a petition to parliament to legalize such marriages, inasmuch as they are not "forbidden by the law of God or of nature." It is astonishing to find the Metropolitan city of Scotland thus petitioning. More surprising still, the United Presbyterian Synod of Edinburgh by a vote of 22 to 12 passed the following resolution:

"That marriage with a deceased wife's sister, being a matter in regard to which the law of Christ is the law of liberty, such marriages shall no longer be a bar to membership in the United Presbyterian Church."

The Aberdeen Presbytery of the same church decided in favour of allowing such marriages, by a vote of 5 to 2. The Presbytery of Orkney decided to the same effect.—Witness

Froude maintains that all such marriages are incestuous—contrary to the laws of God and nature. The Visitor believes in Froude as an authority. The Scottish people do not agree with Froude;—hence the Scottish people do not agree with the Visitor. That, we think, is good logic. Yet Froude was the only authority quoted by the Visitor to support the "dominating" theory.

WAVES.

Within a few weeks past several reports of sudden death have appeared in the newspapers. It is generally noticed that fatalities of this kind follow each other with startling rapidity for a few days, and then cease for a period. It is in accordance with a law so often quoted—"Misfortunes seldom come alone; they travel in twos and triplets." But who knows anything as to the operations of that mysterious law? One fascinating but fallacious philosopher, Buckle, built up a theory upon this fact in human circumstances. By comparing dates in connection with extraordinary conditions of life, he found that not only accidental deaths, but deaths by personal violence, occurred at intervals more or less regular all through human existence. He found Historic waves, so to speak;—Waves of mania in the direction of duelling and suicide; waves of speculation, when men went mad over money-making, and tulip-raising, and the transformation of metals. He found—or thought he did—that at certain intervals people killed themselves with the same kind of weapons, or chose other similar methods for self-destruction; that at other intervals people were soberly disposed and contented. On these facts—real or supposed—he built up a theory, very much akin to many other sophisticated theories which ruled the true God out of the universe and erected a throne upon which to establish the god Fatalism, or Chance.

Our Christian conclusion is that God works by periodical laws in human affairs, as it is plainly seen. He works in other departments of his great realm. "History repeats itself."—that is a saying founded in fact and is admitted by every one who has any knowledge of the national affairs of the different ages. There are historic waves which are tremendously sweeping and, fortunately for humanity, recur but at long intervals—waves of revolution, of popular phrenzy. Other conditions would be more welcome, but are held in perfect subjection to human good, and so return only in their regular order.

Our Commercial waves are so well defined that shrewd business men can almost anticipate their rise and fall, without being actually wise enough as to how they may avail themselves of these opportunities to turn them to safe account in making riches. That privilege God does not give ordinarily. It was not the waves but a "tide" in the affairs of men to which Shakespeare alluded as sufficient to bear men on to fortune. Commercial waves do bear men on to prosperity, but only because they happen to be in the way and throw themselves on the breasts of the passing billows. Could we so far directly, positively foresee the periods at which good times shall come in and go out, that we could reckon safely upon investments and speculations, our world would soon be controlled in finance by a few thousand-millionaire monopolists. God holds us all to the conditions of industry, promising only a regular recurrence of seasons and opportunities, and commanding all to be watchful and prudent. Men are blind to a great degree, and so must always depend on Providence. It is in disappointment that God's hand and voice are specially tender; and the day will never come when human affairs may be tabulated in advance, thus shutting out all defect of human genius and foresight. In other words, we shall always have opportunities of appreciating the love and mercy of Divine, compensating Providence.

Atmospheric waves are among the most recent discoveries of science. Waves of Heat, and Waves of Cold, travel at intervals, starting from known points, and now usually announced by telegraph to the ends of the civilized world. There are Waves of Light, also, and waves of Electricity, pervading space, doubtless under regular laws, as yet but imperfectly understood. What connection may exist between epidemics and certain waves of atmospheric agitation, no one can explain; but it seems quite certain that sickness and death to man and beast and plant-life are intimately

associated with atmospheric laws.

Nature, in its inanimate elements, is subject to the same universal wave-law. The sea heaves in three successive billows, followed by a period of calm. Who that has stood by a foamed rock on the sea shore has not noticed this? Earthquakes are but waves of a tremendous sea of gases pent up in the internal caverns of this planet. And so, it may be observed, does this law work in Nature throughout.

Are there Religious waves—periods of special intensity of spiritual thought, when whole communities become obedient to one gracious influence? It would be easy to find in ecclesiastical history indications in favour of the theory—a theory, indeed, which has been advanced in various quarters, though not always with devout dispositions. But in conflict with it are those established conditions upon which mankind hold their relation to God and salvation—the freedom of the will, the powers of obtaining an increase of spirituality by an exercise of faith. On the other hand, there is nothing in our belief inconsistent with the idea that periods of revival may follow each other at intervals; indeed, it would seem that greater condemnation is visited upon mankind because these special visitations form a part of the spiritual economy.

How great is our God in his methods of regulating this universe! How awful the Being who thus surrounds Himself with a cloud of mystery into which no eye can penetrate! "Lo these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him; but the thunder of His power who can understand?"

THE WASTE OF INTELLECTUAL STRENGTH.

To nine out of every ten persons born into this world God has given the ability of attaining to great and abiding knowledge. They are rare exceptions that could not master several languages if disposed. A fair mathematical discipline—which means educating the mind to processes and habits of systematic and vigorous thought—is within the reach of most men and women. There can be no doubt of this—dwarfs in intellect are abundant, not because they are devoid of powers of thought, but because their actual abilities are not cultivated.

Nor are opportunities for cultivation by any means wanting in this country. There are places where mankind generally are doomed to the curse of toil—a curse only where the pleasure of work never comes in. But with us there are long evenings by winter, and precious hours of quietness by summer; for, with moderate industry, this favored land offers to every toiler frequent hours of repose and relaxation. Yet it is painful to see how such golden hours are frittered away. Bring the young people of a village together and what are their occupations? Do they attempt any improvement of their mental tastes or capabilities? In a few instances perhaps they do; in most, they indulge in frivolous conversation.

Look again at the treasures of knowledge within the reach of our people almost everywhere. Books of the richest sort, by good authors and with excellent narrative or precept, are cheaper than the commonest staple articles of life. These are neglected, while stories of adventure and love and sensational literature generally, are sought with eagerness. This shows how much mental training is neglected.

It is with getting knowledge as with getting riches. A little added every day makes a good accumulation in the end. And the habit once acquired in both instances is sure to bring success, all other things being favourable.

Let our young people form a correct estimate of their strength, and of the possibilities of life. Given an ordinary brain, with steady application as opportunity offers, and excellence in knowledge is quite possible. In other words, if a man remain ignorant and uneducated it is either because God

has withheld from him a common understanding, or because he is himself culpably indolent and unambitious. Fools by creation are few; fools by self-neglect are numerous.

THE APPROACHING CENTENNIAL OF SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

The Centennial of Sunday Schools, to be celebrated next year, is one of those events that punctuate the moral and religious history of mankind; and is of itself sufficient to make as well as to mark a distinctive epoch. From the proud summit of a century of years, the mind looks down upon many noble monuments that have been reared by patient and devoted toil; but none among them all surpasses, either in comeliness or magnificence, the institution of the Sunday-school, whose rapid growth is, confessedly, one of the marvels of Christian achievement, and whose influence to-day cannot be estimated. A mere handful of waifs, gathered by the loving care of Robert Raikes, of precious memory, from the streets of Gloucester, England, have multiplied until they now number upwards of twenty-three million Sunday-school scholars, receiving regular Christian counsel from the lips of some two and a half million teachers. But wonderful as is this numerical progress, what is still more wonderful is the marked change that has passed upon the character of the Sunday-school institution itself. From a purely philanthropic agency, whose special aim was to gather in the wait and the strayed and the ignorant, that they might be brought under secular instruction, with which was mixed in homeopathic doses, higher instruction for the soul, this institution has now become "the school of the Church," where the tender mind is taught the principles of true piety and of Christian virtue. The Sunday School is no longer looked upon as a separate organization; nor yet as a mere appendage; but it is regarded rather as a part and parcel of the church itself. A development is seen also, in the nature of the motive that actuates Sabbath School workers. At the first, and for some time, Sunday-schools were conducted by paid teachers; next followed a lengthened period when a kind of pity, or philanthropic benevolence, was the prevailing motive; but to-day the noble band of Sabbath-school workers have chosen this sphere of labour, as presenting a suitable field for the exercise of their gifts and graces, and also as promising the most remunerative spiritual results. And so the Sunday-school is now regarded as not only an important, but also an essential department of Christian work. Consequently it has assumed a cosmopolitan character; for every section of the Christian church and every country of Christendom, has its Sunday-school agency. In the United States alone, there are between seven and eight million Sunday-school scholars; the Methodist Episcopal Church numbering one and a half million scholars. Our own Methodist Church of Canada can boast of more than seventeen hundred schools, having nearly sixteen thousand teachers, and more than a hundred and twenty-two thousand scholars. Mention might be made, too, of the gigantic proportions which this institution has assumed in England, and of the progress it is making on the Continent, particularly in Germany and Denmark. It would seem, indeed, that the Sunday-school, as a distinct agency for the promotion of the work of God in the world, is just attaining the maturity of its strength; and what with a peerless hymnology for the school, and numerous Conventions for the special benefit of the teacher, and all the help afforded by a uniform system of International Lessons, the future of this institution is singularly hopeful. Its existence is a necessity. So long as the education of the weak is insufficient; and while the influence of the family is inadequate; and if sacred knowledge is to be leveled and equalized, like the waters of the ocean, by the impartation of such knowledge on the part of the more enlightened mind, the Sunday-school cannot become either defunct or effete. And what rich fruit

has been gathered already. When it is remembered that such men as Anderson and Patterson, who have been so eminently useful in regard to the Bible cause in Europe; and Dr. Morrison, missionary to China, and who translated the whole Bible into the language of the Chinese, are the fruit of Sunday School teaching, who can tell what the full and final harvest shall be? The influence exerted upon our world by twenty-three million Sunday-school scholars, must be immense. These children are like the myriads of tiny leaves that play such an important part in the economy of nature. A single tree has been known to have a leaf surface of twenty-two thousand square feet, and to exhale seven and three quarter tons of water every twelve hours. According to this calculation what must be the influence of a forest upon surrounding nature? So is it with the children; they are ever exhaling a mighty influence upon human society; and therefore it is very essential that the moral character of these millions of scholars should be carefully cultivated. The generations to come will be moulded by the race that is under the care of the church and the family to-day. Just as Sparta was made warlike by the bellicose institutions of its great philosopher, Lycurgus; as also Attica inherited its civil and literary instincts and temperament from its famous law-giver, Solon; so the future of our world will receive its character and bent from the instructions that are imparted to our youth. May our Sunday schools abundantly prosper!

"PARSON BROWN."

A letter has reached us from the author of the treatise above named. From a careful estimate, its matter would occupy more than three columns of this paper. Some space is certainly due to him, but he would not himself be gratified, we are quite sure, with the result, should the entire letter be published. We have given him cause for this opinion. The author, contrary to all our inferences, wrote with an honest purpose, with a high and proper ambition. We accounted for the endorsement of a brother minister given to the book, by the fact admitted on its cover, that much of the writing was added subsequently. It would have been specially painful could we have believed that to some of the expressions used by the author, any evangelical minister would append his signature. Indeed the author will allow us to say, that a consultation with some ripe theologian would have secured for his little book all the attention which its originality and ability really merit, and the excision of words which no one having sacred regard for our Lord's divinity could possibly accept. Those whose names he furnishes with his treatise would have been amply sufficient for this, had they seen the manuscript in its entirety.

Our friend is youthful. We can sympathize with him, having gone over the same ground in early life, and having tasted something of the same experience. Only a soul here and there feels its way through religious difficulties by the energy of thought. Mankind are too often christian on trust; and where a young man threads his own way amid the breakers, older heads should nod approval where they possibly can. We say to the author then—With time, and means and application, much is possible to one whose ambition is elevated and who possesses genius. There are but two lessons which we would urge:—1. Handle the mysteries of our religion with great fear and reverence. The profoundest thinkers have uncovered their heads in presence of the awful truth of Christ's incarnation. 2. Trust your brethren in literature. Editors of religious papers would long hesitate before discouraging an author whose name was placed confidently in their hands. An anonymous treatise, assailing or disputing fundamental truth, is always justly regarded as a challenge, and treated accordingly.

We give a few paragraphs of the author's letter to us:— Speaking of the Mary matter, this is what the Rev. Frederick Smallwood says,—see his testimonial in the book:—

"The bill deals out a unsettled th which they dexterous w by the Pa practice."

One thing surance that rity to use mentioned

Rev. Mess ministers n respecting on the back the front. publication forged test men, and them. T was witho completed a printed e the insertio also Rev. J Mr. Small ley & Allert ish another

And now there be, I thee and Judge; and Adam at le ill feeling b ian Messet choose all the waters portion I s there be, l tor of the serant—me ward— Presbyteri 83 of my head, is c accept it; nlike, nor do, love is

Charlotte J. J. Temple, Baptist A. suspended tist Minis til he wit concerni the same

There s shippers nounced portation taken to ted State England tions.

DEAR SIR Referrl rack Stre a for aer lish the month a led is not ing the s

The e Methodi gave a v week in filled.

Childr day of g Esq., S School, vantage, very elo

Rev. J turing o week a ture wit Knight t congeni tended u it with n

Mr. S it was p oposed re time, the Prayer n compose and layn churches invitation

The f Sunday, said to h Although the tack among the bell During were h in the b ed, but each ev was al-S On Su again of and the

During every n and an Pres-byt gregatio gave the