

Reminiscences of a Scottish Country Parish.

BY AN OCTAGENARIAN.

V.—THE OLD MINISTERS.—(Continued).

For the Review.

After the death of the old minister he was succeeded in 1829 by a young man, whose family it was alleged had shown kindness to the mother of the Patron, when she had been disowned by her own people and left to provide for herself and child. Out of gratitude their son received the presentation to the Parish.

These were in the days of patronage, when the congregation had nothing to say in the choice of their pastor. They might decline to sign his call, or withdraw from his ministry. But however unacceptable his services, however little benefit they might derive from his preaching, unless there was some immorality in his life or grave unsoundness in his doctrine, they must receive him as their spiritual guide or withdraw from the church of their fathers. The form of call was gone through, and the presentee had to conduct the services for two Sabbaths that the people might have a trial of his gifts; but it was well understood to be a foregone conclusion, and that, whether they were satisfied or not, he would be settled as their minister. And so after the usual preliminaries the laird's presentee was ordained and inducted into the pastoral care of the parish and to all the rights and privileges connected therewith.

The young minister at the time of his settlement was of the same party in church politics as his predecessor. But a great change came over his views after a time, through the influence of a co-presbyter, who was the means of leading him and several others in the same Presbytery to clearer views of divine truth, and to realize that the great work of the ministry was to labor for the salvation of their hearers.

In the parish school there were at that time four scholarships for four boys to prepare for college, and of increased value till the end of their university course. These scholarships were under the care of the Kirk session, and the minister had the power under the founder's will of nominating those who were to have the benefit of this "mortification" as it was called. As soon as we were sufficiently advanced in our school studies, along with three others we were induced to begin the study of Latin by the nomination of the minister and were thus brought into close contact with him, as he often visited and took charge of the school in the absence of the teacher. We acknowledge that we were not much drawn to him in those days, as he was not the most patient or helpful of teachers. But as we grew up and came to know him better our affections were drawn out towards him and we delight to cherish his memory as the instrument in the divine hand of pointing us to the Saviour.

When he came to the parish there were not a few needed reforms, and after a time he set himself steadfastly to bring them about. The first he accomplished was to put a stop to the "series," as they were called, at the church door on the "scailing" of the Kirk, when all the sales of farmstock and implements, all the advertisements of stray and lost cattle, all the raffles of apples and of smoked fish, were proclaimed by the "bellman" from a small knoll by one of the church gates. The practice was an old and established one, a relic of pre-reformation times. The announcements were prefaced by the old Norman-French word "Oyez," "oyez," which in course of time had not only lost its meaning, but had been changed into something like, "Ahise and another ahise."

The proposed reform met with a good deal of opposition, and it was only by providing a large board to which the advertisements might be affixed and engaging to indemnify the bellman for his loss, that he succeeded. Such a practice of advertising was common in the surrounding parishes and the ministers began generally to speak from the pulpit against it.

One case in a neighboring parish we remember well, when the minister after speaking very plainly against the practice was sadly taken aback, on leaving the church at the close of the service, to find

his own servant man busily calling out, "There will be a sale of a litter of pigs at the manse during the week."

Another change introduced was the observance of the Communion twice in the year, in the months of March and August, the one when the seed-time was well over, the other before the harvest work began.

Two services during the summer months were also begun, and the abolishing of the money compensation for breaches of the seventh commandment brought about, which up to this time had been exacted, and which went to augment the fund for the support of the poor in the parish. There was at first a great outcry at all these changes, and especially at the last; as an encouragement to transgressors and a lessening of the poor fund. So difficult is it to break up established customs even after they have ceased to be defensible through the altered circumstances of the times and the advanced intelligence of the people.

Glimpses of Japan.

BY T. IVERTON.

II.

For the Review.

Nagasaki and Shimoneseki are left far behind. About ten o'clock on a fine star-lit night we pass through a strait so narrow that the ship seems in constant danger of being stranded. The sea on either side is dotted over with bright lights, displayed by the small fishing boats, which flit by us like fire flies, and give a picturesque aspect to the surroundings. Next morning we find ourselves sailing over a summer sea on whose placid surface the ship is mirrored all the while. Sometimes we pass close by a rocky coast where it would be difficult to effect a landing. Then we are close to a long sandy beach, and again passing by a foreshore of shining pebbles. An endless succession of islands follow us all day and some uncanny instinct seems to guide us through the labyrinth which they form. Most of these islands are inhabited. Nestling at the base of the hills a smart village appears now and again. Passing by small coves we see boats at anchor and the fishing hamlet peeps out from behind the foreshore. Seldom are any of these isles bare of vegetation. When not cultivated they are covered with trees or with the rank grass so common on the hills and mountains of Japan. As I was watching a delightful bit of scenery from the promenade deck, a native gentleman walked up to me, and said "Well sir, What do you think of our country?" It is a very pretty country, I replied, which seemed to please him. He then commenced inquiries about England, and expressed his longing to see that country although its naval power seemed to be the great attraction for him. A certain Count, well known in aristocratic and political circles, is busy sketching favorite bits of scenery close to us, but he has time to listen to a conversation on England and Japan. A very cultured and able man he appeared to be. I noticed everywhere that the better classes in Japan have an air of culture and refinement altogether lacking in China, and scarcely excelled in any country. So a day passes sailing among these islands and the whole seems like a pleasant dream all too good for the modest enjoyments of waking hours. Were we to land at any place, we should find that these are not "the islands of the blest," that sin and suffering are present there; we should find that yon shore of glittering sand and pebbles is not at all the happy golden shore of pietists and poets; that the inland sea, though its surface is unruffled to-day, has other aspects and that it has associations for lonely hearts on these islands very different from ours. The next day finds us at Yokohama and moving about seeing the sights of that interesting city. As at Nagasaki and Kobe so here Christian missionaries are at work. We first call on some of them and are taken round to see their work, after which we abandon ourselves to their guidance in the vicinity. By far the most interesting object in the neighborhood of Yokohama is the colossal image of Buddha known as the Dai-butsu which simply means, great Buddha. This famous image is situated in the monastery of Kotokuin at Kamakura. This was at one time a very large city