

THE "VISITOR" ON THE "DOMINANT SYSTEM."

As we understand the position of our cotemporary, in its issue of last week, it maintains that representatives to a Christian Conference, such as that held recently in Toronto, are at liberty to introduce into its discussions views which lie properly within the limits of denominational test questions. If that be so, our Baptist brethren would be consistent in ventilating immersionist and close-communication principles on occasions set apart for the promotion of Christian-union. In fact this they have maintained on one or two notable occasions, much to the distraction of their brethren of other churches. This is a question, however, which we need not discuss, inasmuch as the *Visitor* has but limited sympathy in its relation to it. Instead of endeavoring to strengthen each other's faith and devotion and usefulness, the method recommended by the *Visitor* would produce upon such conventions the effect which itself describes, namely, "to be blown to the four winds of heaven."

The *Visitor's* admission of our opportunities for observation is not generously made. We laid no emphasis upon mere professional knowledge. Our cotemporary's allusion to "circuit riders" is altogether gratuitous. Within twenty years we have had, it is true, some advantage of hearing men of note in this Dominion, having travelled much in the Upper, and been stationed in all the Maritime Provinces, as well as in Newfoundland. We again repeat as regards the territory named, that, if Calvinism dominates the religious thought of these times, either men are not true to their convictions, or Calvinism has so changed since we learned its rudiments that Calvin would require a very elaborate introduction to his system before he could recognize it. Of the four or five Calvinistic addresses we have heard on this side of the ocean within ten years past, two of them were half apologetic, one was an ordination discourse, and another the ill-logical effusion of a rant. Of the scores of other sermons, exhortations and addresses we have heard from representative men in the several Provinces of Canada, it would have required a forty-power magnifying glass to discover any particles of Calvinism in their structure. But our memory, when we alluded to what we had heard from leading men, was in reference to the United States, to England, Ireland and Scotland, and to evangelistic agencies as far east as the diocese of Bishop Colenso. Our opportunities, too, were at a period when Calvinism had been so much a part of our parochial education that it would have been unpardonable if we had not been capable of detecting it in public discourse. A great sermon we did hear occasionally, giving prominence to the five points; but as a general rule Calvinism was held in subordination to the great system of general, evangelistic truth.

Guizot's assertion as to Calvinism proves nothing. It is admitted Calvin was a great man. Was Guizot himself a Calvinist? That is a question more related to the assertion of the *Visitor* as to the dominancy of Calvinism in modern times. As a writer of great eminence on history he had occasion to express an individual judgment at intervals. Will our cotemporary quote to substantiate the "dominant" theory?

Montesquieu, says the *Visitor*, endorsed Guizot's judgment of Calvin. Guizot died in 1874, and Montesquieu in 1775. Does the *Visitor* also believe in spiritualism? Our friend thinks we should quote from history. Let him look to his own quotations. It rests with the *Visitor* to show that "Calvinism as a system, dominates the religious thought of this day." It proves this by reference to a man whose early strength was expended in ridiculing religion; who gained the applause of Voltaire, who, with immense

powers for analysing and criticising the religious opinions of others, had no religious opinions of his own—a man, moreover, who has been in his grave a hundred years."

Bancroft writes eulogistically of Calvin, declaring he has achieved an "immortality of fame." Even Arminius himself bears testimony to Calvin's worth—so maintains the *Visitor*. Pray, what has all this to do with Calvinism dominating the religious thought of modern times? If we assert that Cicero recommended the philosophy of Socrates, does it prove that the Platonic dialogues dominate modern philosophic thought?

Froude is set down by our cotemporary as "England's great historian;" and his words quoted in favor of the "dominating" theory. This is coming to the point. Is the *Visitor* prepared to accept Froude as an authority in English history? Will it sustain his judgment against the verdict of the Reviews and general readers? If so it must be prepared to condemn most of other English historians. If not, why designate Froude, "the great English historian?" Is our friend of the *Visitor* disposed to receive Froude's own religious opinions as of great importance? He maintains that marriage with a deceased wife's sister is incestuous—fornibidden by the laws of God and nature. Will the *Visitor* endorse this opinion? Has he read Froude's *Nemesis of Faith*? Does he not know that Froude's chief defect is that of frequent self-contradiction? If he knows this, where is his sincerity? It he does not, where is his acquaintance with the writers he professes to quote so glibly?

We take but a single extract from Froude, bearing upon the question at issue. It is Froude's own opinion. Alluding to the hatred existing between Catholics and Calvinists in 1568 he says, "It was Calvinism which was making the rent (in the English nation) incurable, and splitting Christianity into the Romanism of Trent and a fanaticism which fought the battle of liberty with a spirit which a milder creed would have failed to evoke, but which, when the victory was gained, became itself a tyranny no more tolerable than that of Rome itself." (*His. of England, Longmans, Green & Co., vol. viii., p. 436. Note.*) So much for Froude.

The *Visitor* does not distinguish between high and low Calvinism. We do; and we maintain that to-day there is no such creed in existence as that contained in the five points—carrying them to their logical issues. Irresistible Grace, Particular Redemption, and the unconditional Perseverence of the Saints—three of the five points—are not now mentioned, to any great extent, or if they are, not in the ordinary ministrations of the pulpit. That persistent effort is made to disseminate these doctrines through pamphlets, and by Bible readings, in a certain way, is a question of no moment, because firstly, if this were done by evangelical ministers it would only prove that men print what they dare not preach; and secondly, because the principal part of this work is performed by Plymouth Brethren, or men who have adopted their views.

The Lutheran churches of Europe are not Protestant, in our sense of the term. They are greatly divided in opinion; and where the sovereign is chief bishop, and the members of congregations have almost no rights, it matters little, in our discussion, what they profess to believe. That the Episcopal and Presbyterian bodies have Calvinistic articles of faith we admit, but where the former is quite anxious to call back Arminians into its fold, and the latter is strongly advocating a change in its Confession, we may claim that, at least, a very considerable proportion of the two have abandoned high Calvinism. As to Congregationalism, it may not be known to our friend that ministers from the Methodist body frequently preach in its pulpits as regular pastors, to their great edification. This has been the case in these Provinces, and in the United States.

We await the *Visitor's* next article on Calvinism "as a controlling influence in literature and political life."

The *Presbyterian Witness* notices this discussion, but it infers that while the *Visitor* maintains Calvinism to be the dominant theology of modern times, we claim the same for Arminianism. This latter inference is scarcely justifiable, except as a logical sequence. But the judgment of the *Witness* is so completely at variance with that of the *Visitor* that it comes in very timely. We make an extract.

The narrow, strait-laced, hyper-Calvinism which existed in some quarters a century ago, and even much more recently, and which flourished in the imagination of eager controversialists, is virtually defunct. It rarely comes to the surface, and when it does come, it is not encouraged to stay. (As, for instance, at the Christian Convention, Toronto.—Ed. WESLEYAN.) On the other hand, the exaggerated Arminianism of the past generation, has but small place left to it in the evangelical world. The dominant "Arminianism" is evangelical, Biblical, and worthy of all acceptance; we mean the Arminianism which insists on a free and full salvation, on immediate conversion, on holiness of life, on a gospel for all, on human responsibility as well as divine sovereignty. This "Arminianism" is a precious part of Calvinism, and in so far as Calvinism ignores it or makes little of it, it is greatly to blame.

BROODING PEOPLE.

Has the reader noticed among the other remarkable powers possessed by the human mind, that capacity of holding to and intensifying an idea, an ambition, a hope, a misgiving, or a grievance, which, under certain conditions, and with certain peculiarities of disposition, does so much to make or wreck the happiness of mankind? It is certainly a divine gift, for, as revealed by Himself, the Holy Spirit at the creation hovered or brooded upon the face of the waters, the narrative immediately disclosing the results of this meditation, deliberation, or whatever was the sacred mental process. Light, order, beauty, growth, at once ensued. This tenacity of thought—the power of clinging to or pursuing a distinct object or plan, has been wonderfully instrumental of good. But it is remarkable that this mental gift has been alluded to far more on the worst than on the best side of human nature by eminent writers; from which we make the reasonable inference that this, like most good gifts of God, is sadly abused and misapplied.

Dryden imitates, perhaps unconsciously, the sacred historian when he says:

"Here Nature spreads her fruitful sweetness round,  
Breathes on the air and broods upon the ground."

The Poet's sentiment is Atheistic at the best. Nature incubates Nature—Nature brings forth Nature's life of vegetation;—that is his real doctrine. He attributes to an inanimate source a quality belonging only to an animate being. The figure was used frequently by the Dramatists of the seventeenth century, in the sense of care, indulgence exercised by one person over another. In Shakespeare, and in Beaumont and Fletcher, this use of the term may sometimes be met. With poets it has always been a favorite metaphor. "Brooding o'er our Nature's night" is a phrase employed in two or three different ways in our own Hymn Book, taken from the Scriptures, as is the case doubtless with many writers, medieval and modern, who have availed themselves of a singularly expressive figure of speech.

In the opposite direction, delineators of character have made powerful use of the figure to represent the evil qualities of the mind, and such consequences as owe their birth to prolonged bitter meditation. One or two quotations will suffice. Shakespeare, to whom we are more indebted for the most expressive portions of our familiar phraseology than to any other writer outside of the Bible, gives this turn to the word: "O'er which his melancholy sits on brood." Walter Scott uses a similar figure in regard to Roderick Dhu. But no more expressive line was ever written than that of Robert Burns in Tam O'Shanter,—  
"Where sits our sulky, sullen dame  
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm."

Here is the offspring of a brooding mind kept well up lest it may die. We are reminded here of the awful words of the Apostle—"And sin, when it is finished, bringeth

forth death." Alas, how many deeds of violence have sprung from melancholy and angry brooding! Is it any wonder that we are advised—"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Instead of nursing it over night, turn it out into the cold, or fling it into the sea, that sinking it may rise no more forever.

It is much to our shame that our national education, until very recently, has been all in the direction of helping to foster grievances and hold to the claims of insults till they were avenged. It was un-English to forget a wrong: highly national to pursue it for satisfaction. Hence we have been a duel-loving people. English honour and New Testament principle thus far were at variance. Our spirit, however, thank God, is changing in this regard; though it may require generations yet to overcome the habits of disposition engendered by England's "code of honour," just as it may need long years to drain from the northern constitution that wild blood which flowed through the veins of Burns' fierce virago.

Our subject has more than a physiological caste, however. In Christian hearts there are too often evil germs over which the Creator hath given us more or less control by the exercise of a strong will, and over which the grace of God may ensure absolute conquest. Grievances, real or imaginary; notions of self-depreciation, which, lurking long in the heart, may disqualify any man for usefulness or happiness; dislikes and distrusts, dreads and anxieties, having, perhaps, no foundation except in a morbid fancy,—all these haunt the souls of men, and seek for a lodgement. Once in, they crave attention and nourishment,—cry to be nursed, the nursing habit meantime growing with its occupation. There are several causes which superinduce these conditions of mind:—

1. The brooding of disease. When the nerves are unstrung, the imagination becomes especially active, picturing a thousand things and brooding intensely to increase the number. For this condition, of course, there is but one remedy—restoration to a normal physical state.

2. The brooding of solitude and idleness. Ghosts are always numerous where living beings are few; and Satan finds mischief for idle brains as well as hands. Active, and especially benevolent, occupation, is a sure remedy for the blues. Get back into the regular current, for these whirlpools of life are always full of melancholy.

3. Constitutional brooding. No doubt there are persons who inherit a tendency to mental distrust and melancholy cogitation. More or less of a life-conflict they may have all through; but He who gave victory over despair and despondency long ago, can do so still. Christ reigns.

THE JOST CITY MISSION.

Halifax retains the solitary glory of British American military and naval possession. From its citadel and harbour are fired the only Canadian guns by which the Admiralty of the seas and the chieftainship of British prowess by land, proclaim the hours, or herald the coming of their associates in arms. The city is Britain's gateway to the Dominion, beside which sentries stand guard, and fortifications float the Royal Standard. This brings its advantages; an occasional burst of loyalty from manned yards and regiments on parade; a quickening of the city's commerce; an addition to the city's wealth; an increase of the city's pride and population. But the opposite conditions, superinduced by additions of this sort to the populations, are always serious. Halifax has its full share of poverty, perhaps more than its share of vice. It has, however, a proportion of benevolent and philanthropic agencies quite in excess of any city of equal population on the continent. Its societies and institutions for reform and amelioration are numerous, well worked and successful. Still, there remains a great amount of wickedness and wretchedness. Several years ago, Mr. Edward Jost,

who made considerable wealth in Halifax, wisely resolved to spend a portion of it for the benefit of the city's poor and fallen.

He built a commodious brick church in a position which would bring evangelical agency into direct contact with the lower classes of the population. For a few years he watched over this building with much anxiety, aiding, by his presence and means, the Y. M. C. Association in their endeavors to call to repentance, through its instrumentality, surrounding sinners. At his death, Mr. Jost left the church, with a few additional perquisites, for Methodist City Mission purposes. A committee was chosen. The work of the Mission was entered upon with vigour.

A Missionary was ready for the position—Rev. E. R. Brunyate, who, for two or three years, under the direction of Rev. A. McAulay, recently President of the British Conference, served a good apprenticeship in similar work. With his little iron church, mounted on wheels, and removed from place to place, as openings seemed to invite, he went in and out among the alleys and foul dens of Liverpool, singing, talking, even fighting betimes, his way to the hearts and consciences of the roughest of the population. His scars as well as his experience he brought out here with him—the one a certificate of the amplitude of the other. Once, while stepping among a rude multitude he was tumbled by a brick, and left unconscious at the doorstep of his little tabernacle. He survived for other work and on another continent.

The Missionary began in the Jost Mission Church with thirteen persons, chiefly children: Within 12 months he has gathered a Sabbath School of children, worked by twenty teachers, as intelligent, self-sacrificing and devoted a class of young men and women as the city can produce. Last Sabbath evening his service consisted of upwards of one hundred persons, the most thoroughly missionary congregation in appearance, we will venture to say, that can be found between the two extremes of savage life and city refinement. We will describe it, as far as any such description is possible.

On the platform were six or eight choristers, with the organist and the Missionary. As we stepped in the Missionary was in the act of offering a young man his choice between a seat to which he pointed and the door. He preferred freedom and went out. It was a characteristic incident, exhibiting the kind of stuff required for the constitution of city missionaries, and the material on which they have to operate. The majority of the audience were children, chiefly with worn, pinched features, striving, with the little all that life afforded them, to make a clean and decent appearance. Others were of better social circumstances, and seemed to take their place voluntarily as honest associates with the poor striving after Sabbath help. There were nearly twenty adults, a few of whom were present to countenance a worthy movement, one a policeman on duty, and the remainder young men, showing in some of their lineaments that a hard struggle had been fought up to this time between their passions and their cogitations. A hymn was sung, the missionary prayed, another hymn and then a warm address, plain, pointed, but relieved frequently by illustrations from common life. There was good attention. At the close, those interested stepped down among the company, cordially shaking hands and inviting them back.

Next week we will refer to the Sabbath School enterprise of this Mission.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

Among the new dresses donned recently by newspapers, we notice the very pleasant one of the *Amherst Gazette*—one of our best country exchanges.

This week obituaries reached us of two deaths in P. E. Island which deserve editorial notice. The persons were Messrs. George Wigginton and R. Hudson. They both held high positions in the church, and were remarkable for their piety and common sense. Their obituaries will appear in next issue.