

# The Provincial Wesleyan

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## CAMP-MEETINGS.

Camp-meetings are an American institution. The first meeting of the kind was held in the State of Tennessee in the year 1779. The necessities of the growing western States made such meetings at that time indispensable. It was not until twenty-five years later that a camp-meeting was held as far east as the State of New York. Multitudes came together at those festivals. They attracted in great measure the attention of the nation. Many rose up to call such occasions blessed. Many others rose up to condemn. Though great good was obviously accomplished, yet it was feared that there was so much enthusiasm and excitement, as sometimes to involve mischievous results. For a time their popularity seemed considerably to wane.

In later years, however, camp-meetings have come into renewed prominence and favor. The church has learned wisdom by experience. The managers of such gatherings understand better now than their fathers formerly did, how to control the assembled thousands, to avoid threatening perils, to secure gracious results, and to gather in the sheaves. The camp-meeting question has been considerably studied by our brethren in the Republic. Its history covers nearly a hundred years. Its testimony for good, or evil, or both, is before the church. The result is that the interest in them has largely increased during the last decade. Present appearances indicate that the camp-meeting in the United States will become as popular a religious festival as the feast of tabernacles was among the ancient Jews.

We have had some camp-meeting experience in New Brunswick. There were two or three such gatherings in the Sussex-Vale Circuit nearly twenty years ago. In the years 1858, 1859 and 1860, camp-meetings were held on the grounds of John Bennett, Esq., on the Woodstock (now Florenceville) Circuit. In some of their salient features, those occasions were not unlike what such gatherings in former years, in the Republic, used to be. The objector may find some weak points in this enterprise, out of which to make capital to condemn.

Our New Brunswick camp-meeting history has covered ground enough to support the objectionable features of this institution, as well as some of its better tendencies. A camp-meeting is not organized and carried to a successful issue without great labor. It costs time, work, and some money. Among the thousands who assemble there will generally be some rude fellows of the baser sort. The wise handling of the gathered thousands, of various tastes and dispositions, is a somewhat difficult task. Parties, whose chief purpose is the getting of gain, are sometimes attracted to such places; enterprising traders will use the occasion to buy or sell; huxter shops will be extemporized; vendors of patent medicines will hover round; noisy auctioneers will cry up their goods; saloons for taking liquors will sometimes be set up; and other nuisances will be there, and there be developed. Of later years in the States, those lawless characters have ceased to annoy; and it is only occasionally that a tipsy straggler is seen on the ground; and one need only use ordinary vigilance to beware of pickpockets who sometimes still mingle with the crowds.

Experience has demonstrated that, notwithstanding these drawbacks, the camp-meeting rightly ordered, is a power for good. It possesses elements of great value. Perils, of course, are inseparable from everything good. Nevertheless the danger of mistakes now is less than in former times. The tented grove has charming attractions for many hearts. Nature's grand temple has sweet voices for the listening soul. The murmuring breeze sings amid the gracefully swinging branches, and amid the trembling and tender leaves, with a melody sweeter than the silvery tones of a Sabbath bell. The warm sunbeams, here and there finding their way down through the leafy foliage; and the soft, balmy air, fragrant with forest odors; are refreshing and inspiring. Amid influences so peculiar let thousands of voices and hearts unite in the song of praise and the voice of supplication, and we need not wonder that the glory and the power of God are manifested, as they have often been in many a camp-girdled grove, and in many a converted heart.

Camp-meetings are growing yearly, in favour with those of our people in the States, who have had large experience in their working and their fruits. They are valuable instrumentalities for christian work. They are found to be worth more than all their cost of time, and effort, and money. Would it not be wise and profitable to hold annually one or more camp-meetings within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Conference of Eastern British America? We do not see why a location may not be secured for such a purpose at some suitable point, between Annapolis and Windsor, and near a railway station, and not far from midway between those places. Nor do we see why five thousand persons or more may not be gathered in that charming valley in July next, to seek and find a season of refreshing and of soul-saving power, from the presence of the Lord.

We think it also quite expedient to earnestly consider whether, in some locality in New Brunswick, a similar gathering of the Jews should not be attempted during the coming summer.

We beg humbly to invite the brethren generally and those of the fruitful and far-famed Annapolis valley especially, to "think on these things." We purpose returning to this subject next week.

D. D. C.

## TIMES OF REFRESHING.

In this favored country, where every month in the year brings us "rain from heaven, thus securing fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness," we can hardly conceive of the evils of drought and famine such as desolated Egypt in the time of Joseph. We remember well the story of the suffering that prevailed then through all the land, even though the famine had been preceded by seven predicted years of exceptional plenty, and hence of almost measureless storage of food to meet it; how the wretched people, after spending all their money, gave up their lands and offered

to sell themselves into slavery for bread. Yet all our thoughts of such scenes are inadequate and faint for want of experience to make them vivid.

One day's personal acquaintance with an oriental drought would put new meaning for us into many a passage of Scripture forever afterwards, for example, as "A man shall be . . . as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." All nature mourns; the streams are dry; the deepest springs fail; the toil of the farmer is suspended because unrequited; the cattle pine and die; children cry piteously for bread; the air is dust, the sky brass, the sun blood. How refreshing at such a time, to see a cloud arising, spreading, covering the heavens; to feel on the hot cheek a moist breath from the pitying skies; to catch again, as they come pouring forth from God's great treasure chamber, the flashing diamonds of the rain. Every man, woman and toddling child; every beast, bird, flower, leaf and clod, is thrilled with delight. A time of refreshing has come from the presence of the Lord.

Even so does the Church lift up her head when God pours out his Spirit. It is of her "times of refreshing" that we now write; of those times when, after long and weary waiting, after now and then reaching the poor faith which says, "Yet four months and then cometh the harvest," she lifts up her longing and delighted eyes to see "the fields white already to the harvest." It is the sickle, gathers abundant sheaves, and sings her "harvest home." Sinners are converted, backsliders reclaimed, lukewarm professors revived, and the whole community is stirred by what used to be termed in New England "a reformation"—a word imperfectly describing a general work of grace, in that it fastens attention on the conduct alone and not on the heart; and yet a word suggestive of an important aspect of every real revival of religion; for on such a revival leads Church members to the renunciation of questionable courses and to better living, and brings in converts who are manifestly new creatures in Christ Jesus, it is a spiritual invasion, a new surface excitement, and not a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

We are sure it must be the occasional appearance of such counterfeits which makes it possible for any Christian to object to revivals. Like showers, they sometimes have their minor attendant evils; but the balance of good is immense. We do not need extravagance, nor apologize for rant, nor plead for wild-fire; but we do plead for the fire of the Holy Ghost to be sent down from heaven upon all our Churches, and to rest like a tongue of fire on every disciple. The principles of human nature and the history of the Church alike demonstrate the necessity of revivals; that is, of periods of special divine influence and spiritual activity.

There is in us a law of variety—we had almost said, of periodicity—which cannot be ignored. We were not made by God to run in ruts. He has not bowled us along a straight and level track, to run at one unvarying rate forever. He has put us into a world where the law of variety and periodicity is universal, a world of days and nights, of months and years, and of the perpetual revolution of the seasons. And the inhabitant is fitted for his home. Man needs day and night for his alternate work and rest. The changes of the seasons are better for his health and culture than one constant summer or winter. The race has always attained its noblest development in the temperate zone, where the changes of the seasons are distinctly marked. Man needs for his culture and pleasure the infinite variety of the world he lives in. It delights him because it fits him.

All our arrangements for life—domestic, social, educational and industrial—recognize this same principle. We seek variety at our tables, in our schools, churches, work, everywhere. Would it not be strange indeed if this law had no application to our religious life? It manifestly does apply there also. It lies at the basis of our itinerant ministry, which, with all its drawbacks, is the best system of ministerial supply enjoyed by any branch of the Church; for Paul and Apollon and Cephas in suitable seasons are better than either alone. It has led to the institution of numerous and diverse means of grace, public worship, Sabbath schools, prayer-meetings, class-meetings, love-feasts, and camp-meetings. This need of variety has in all ages of the history of the Church found from time to time its highest satisfaction in the phenomena of revivals.

The excellence of such periods of spiritual quickening will be still further manifest if we note the universal operation of the social principle, and the necessity of excitement for the production of great results. Almost every great movement in the world is carried on by masses of men under the impulse of strong emotion. What is a drop of water? A glance of the sun dissipates it. It seems of no account. A particle of air is more powerless still. Now the ocean is only a congregation of drops, and a hurricane is only air in motion; yet the stern-swept sea founders fleets and strands whole navies. We do not forget that a frequent objection urged against revivals is that they are attended with the very men who object to any earnest and exciting manifestations in the work of saving sinners are often the loudest political partisans, and the most zealous supporters of other great movements. They think intense enthusiasm proper in minor matters; but, in dealing with concerns the most momentous, because eternal, a man, in preaching, or praying, or exhorting, shows that his whole soul is intensely moved, they will cry out as an awakened sinner did of old, "Thou art beside thyself." We may well make the same reply to get.

It is a rule admitting of but few exceptions that sinners will not be converted except under the influence of excitement. No doubt much of the current talk about the "need of calmness" in religious matters, and about acting "from principle" and on "mature conviction," is a joy to Satan. If by "calmness" is meant the stillness of death, the world is full of that. There are millions in Satan's cradles, and he is gently rocking them, and singing lullabies to keep them quiet. God forbid that the pulpit or the Church should help him in this fatally ruinous work! When men talk of the necessity of mature, conviction on religious subjects they

generally speak idly, because they plead for that which already exists, and is almost universal. Probably a sense of duty alone never led one sinner to do his duty. There must be added to this motives appealing to the affections. Men talk as though they supposed the seat of religion to be the head. God nowhere says, "Give me thy head." He does say, "Give me thy heart." He demands the whole of us, knowing that if he gets that he will have the whole, for that is the controlling part.

What is the question we are asking? Are revivals desirable? We must have them. A careful observer says, "Almost all the religion in the world was produced by revivals." Whether we like it or not, we must perceive the strong tendency of the Church to decline into worldliness and spiritual dullness, a tendency not irresistible, yet not often successfully resisted for any long period. We are liable, as nature is, to lapse into a wintry state, which has in itself no cure.

A few weeks ago we had occasion to make a journey a hundred miles upon the Hudson. The river, the land, all nature lies prostrate at the feet of winter. The ice-monarch bears undisturbed sway. Not a bud swells; not a flower dars lift its head. No wind can raise a ripple on the imprisoned river. But wait a little. The sun is already returning from the Southern tropic. In a few weeks he will loosen the chains of frost and melt the snow upon the mountains. Every hill side will pour down its swelling torrent; the ice-bridge of the river shall give way; and be swept into the ocean. Every seed and bud shall come to life again, and the broad face of nature shall laugh once more with the gladness of spring. Sunshine makes all the difference. O that the Sun of Righteousness might shine forth in his strength, dissolve the Church's winter, and make her dormant life to bloom in beauty and wave with luxuriant fruitage.—*Christ. Adv.*

## THE BURIED TALENT.

"It seems to me that if I were to hide my self away somewhere in the earth, I should be just about as useful as I now am in the Church of Christ. If I were as well versed and as enthusiastic in the service of God as I am in mechanical ideas and pursuits I should certainly make more proficiency than I do." These words, and others similar in kind, were spoken by a young gentleman, a successful enthusiast in invention and practical mechanics, in a recent experience meeting. Perhaps they expressed a lower estimate of his worth in the Church than those best acquainted with him would make. But whether they apply strictly in his case or not, there are thousands of instances which they do most fully represent. They stand appropriately and forcibly for that large class which the Saviour personified in his parable of the talents, by the man who went and hid his lord's money in the earth.

The representatives of this class we find all about us. They are not always the drones of society, those who sleep for a little more slumber, a little more sleep, and whose spiritual slothfulness and worthless is best illustrated by their sloth and lack of enterprise in the secular affairs of life. On the contrary, they are often the most busy and energetic, the most clear-sighted, thorough-going business men. They are the men who build up the industries of the cities, the manufacturers and merchants, the men who construct our railroads and drive the wheels of commerce. They are found among that numerous, more quiet, but powerful class, the farmers, who, in digging the earth to hide in its bosom the seeds of future harvests, so often hide also their God-given talents. Among all these classes is found a large proportion, perhaps the largest proportion, of men who are so engrossed with the thoughts of their business, who have their minds and their ambition so thoroughly set on the pecuniary results to be reached, as to bury entirely out of sight the talents which God has entrusted to them for special improvement. Of many of these it may truly be said that if they should hide themselves away somewhere in the earth they could not be any less useful to the Church of Christ than they are now.

There is often a wonderful deceptiveness connected with successful business enterprise. The Saviour, whose definitions were conceived in infinite wisdom, calls it "the deceitfulness of riches." Step by step is the mind drawn away from spiritual subjects, from themes upon which in its earlier simplicity it loved to dwell. Step by step does it become absorbed by worldly enterprise until the spiritual is wholly in abeyance. Not by a sudden perversion, but usually by insensible gradations are the tastes and inclinations so changed that the things which once were clothed with a perpetual charm have lost all their interest, and the things that the world has gained for the mind such a potent enchantment as to hold its energies fast in the chains of an unyielding spell.

So powerful is this deceptive influence that the messages God conveys by his providences and those communicated through his word are alike misinterpreted and unheeded. We have known familiarly a man of this kind. Kind, generous, possessed of many of the most estimable virtues, singularly successful in business, with his name on the record of the church, he has quite forgotten the talents God has entrusted in his care. The strokes of providence have visited him, the Father verifying that "whom he loveth he chasteneth." A child, sprightly, promising, and greatly beloved, has been taken away, and fire has consumed in a single night the results of the enterprise of many months. But the interpretation of God's message is not understood. Will the scales not fall from the eyes, or will further visitations be required, or will there be no other warnings until at the day of final reckoning it will be commanded to take from him that talent which was buried in the earth and give it to him that had devoted his talents to their proper use?

The extent of buried talent in the Church none can estimate. It is greater in amount than that which is kept in active use. Reader, that disposition have you made of the talent God has allotted to you? Are you so using it in the great day you will be able to account for it with the required increase? or will you come up and say, "I went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine?" There is an immense amount of work

to be done. It is around you on every hand. What share will you bear in its accomplishment?—*R. Higgins, Toronto.*

## DANGERS TO METHODISM.—DISINTEGRATION.

Mr. C. C. North, in a third letter on Methodist matters, to the *New York Advocate*, speaks of the dangers impending over the Methodist Episcopal Church in this country from the strongly developed tendency to localism—a theme which has received more attention in preacher's meetings and Conference meetings than perhaps any other relating to our polity. This tendency to localism Mr. North believes to arise from the growth of wealth, which fosters pride and creates sectional attachments. The inherent tendency to localism was most plainly seen in the gifts of the Centenary year. Church edifices received the first and most lavish offerings; Conference academies came next followed by gifts to colleges and missionary and educational societies. The remainder the objects from the homes of the people the smaller offerings. In suggesting the elements which will conserve the Methodist body and arrest the tendency to disintegrate, Mr. North notices: 1. Increased spirituality. 2. Undiminished powers of government, and legislation. 3. The Union of the ministry and laity. On these points he dilates with words of convincing clearness and earnestness.

## OUR PRAYER MEETING.

BY REV. A. C. THOMPSON, D. D.

- I purpose to be there regularly and punctually.
- Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.
- I will endeavor to draw others to the meeting.
- Come thou with us, and we will do the good.
- Before entering the place of prayer I will ask the Saviour's presence.
- We would see Jesus.
- I will not, unless it necessarily, occupy a back seat.
- How pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.
- I will not set myself as a hinderer others from occupying the same seat with me.
- Be courteous.
- I will not sit in from fault finding, and will not indulge a criticizing spirit.
- Be ye kindly affectioned one to another.
- I will not expressly dissent from one who has spoken, and will avoid giving the impression of variance of feeling.
- They stand appropriately and forcibly for that large class which the Saviour personified in his parable of the talents, by the man who went and hid his lord's money in the earth.

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## ADVICE TO WRITERS.

The *New York Observer* gives advice to writers for the newspapers. See how old editors lecture on the subject: Omit the beginning of your essay. Most writers, not used to the press, imagine that a newspaper article, like an oration, should have an exordium, an argument and conclusion. Not at all. The argument is all that is wanted. That is, state your case, say your case, and stop. Do not take time and space to get into the subject, and more to get out of it; but come to it instantly, and stop when you are done. Dr. Griffin used to say that he could put the five volumes of a Bible Commentary into one volume, and not lose an idea worth retaining. We believe he could have done it. And so could we.

carefully, making it shorter each time. Write on one side only of the paper. Write legibly. Keep a copy of what you send to the press. Editors do not return manuscripts. We can not undertake to, and we so state every week, but are every week asked to. It is impossible to make the reasons plain to writers, but it is out of the question.

Be very modest in your estimate of your own productions, and do not fret if others esteem them even less than you do.

## METHODIST VALOR.

There is probably more fidelity to the Master and ringing independence in the Methodist ministry than in the ministry of any other denomination. They are among the first to take advanced positions. They were the first to strike the knell of slavery. They have, from the beginning, been in arms against intemperance, and are squaring themselves against the "noxious weed." Among the broadest utterances we have yet heard in favor of breaking the old-fashioned creed-chains, and making manifest, by the yet in the flesh, the oneness of Christians, which we all expect to witness around God's throne, [have come from the lips and pens of these men. Why is there so much bravery among these Methodists? Perhaps their system of rotation has much to do with it. The Methodist minister never thinks of "feathering his nest," and making a life work of building up some church in a neighborhood that has won his heart, and then straightway become conservative, so as to displease none. Two or three years he must pack up and be away. So he is enabled to fire heavy shots, and get away before the return fire. He attacks sin boldly, and yet has little risk. By the time enmity is fairly aroused, he is safely elsewhere on his next charge. The tactics of the Methodist minister is to fire and retreat. Half the usual temptation is taken away to make the pulpit the coward's castle.—*Christ. Radical.*

## THE ANTIDOTE FOR SKEPTICISM.

The most effective weapon against skepticism is the exercise of the faith we wish to produce in others. This is in accordance with the great law that like begets like. Would you produce kindness in others? Manifest kindness before them and to them. Would you produce forbearance? Be forbearing. Would you produce hostility? Manifest hostility. And so, would you produce faith in others, you must manifest before them and towards them the fruits of faith. If an intellectual result simply were aimed at, this would not be so; but, aiming at a practical result, nothing can be substituted for this. Without this there may be arrangements, expenditures, meetings, addresses, but the work will be superficial. The unevangelized mass, untouched by any particle with the true heaven in it will remain unchanged. The whole secret of the spread of Christianity over the world, is in this figure of the loaves. It is fire that kindles fire; love that kindles love; Christianity manifested that spreads Christianity. Talent, learning, conviction from argument, are well in their places, but avail little. Belief is needed, but it must be in the form of trust. It must be on the Lord Jesus Christ. There must be in it the acceptance of Him for all that which he offers himself to us, and sympathy with Him in all that He proposes to do. In such a belief there is life; and in life there is power, and in the instincts of all life there is practical guidance.—*Christian Churchman.*

WEALTH born of speculation is as uncertain as the changing winds, and when it flies away leaves its possessor a pitiable wreck. Henry Ward Beecher, in a recent lecture in Boston, said:

I have buried four generations of men from Wall street in twenty-five years. Wall street is a dunghill of mushrooms. There is a vast growth of men in every single year, and every year they are trampled down in haste. I know but one or two men in that period who have been able to make permanent gains and hold their gains. And they didn't do it by speculation; they added other means of accumulation, which were the foundation of their stability, and I believe that all the men there are trying to be rich in ungodly ways and get-to be rich without paying for what they get—they are rushing on to destruction. Others may look upon those great, marvellous and sudden changes that have taken place in New York with ridicule. I feel in looking upon them as solemn as judgment day. I have for years been urging the young men in my church not to envy the riches of men that came not by honest means. I have again and again prophesied that the day should come that would see them overwhelmed or ruined. I thought it could not come so soon.

This rapid and sad the social revolutions brought about by speculation. Stock gamblers in New York attract the eye of the nation because of the magnitude of their operations; but in every city and village throughout the land they have their humble imitators; and they also write out a history as spasmodic, ephemeral, sad. Who is it that cannot recall numerous instances of men who have thus shot up like meteors, glittered for a moment, and then passed into eclipse and darkness? God is against the man who hastens to be rich by dishonest means.—*Pittsburg Ad.*

## PUBLIC DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS IN ROME.

To the Editors of the Watchman.

GENTLEMEN.—I write you a few hasty lines on the subject of what I cannot forbear from designating one of the most marvellous events of modern ecclesiastical history. Here in this city of Rome, under the shadow of the great Basilica which contains the famous bronze statue and so-called trophy of St. Peter, in the seat and capital of that system which derives its pretensions to authority from the supposed Pontificate of Peter within its walls, within a few months of the world-belonging miracle which was declared to have prolonged the years of the reigning Pope beyond the fatal twenty-five of the first holder of the keys, it has been freely

and publicly discussed between Catholics and Protestants, by chosen champions on both sides whether Peter was ever in Rome at all.

The affair was brought about suddenly; hence in this first notice I am able to give you of the matter, I have to speak of it as an accomplished fact.

Last Thursday week Sig. Sciarrelli, our own Methodist minister in Rome, delivered a course in the hall in Via de' Barberi to prove "with arguments drawn from the Bible and the Fathers that St. Peter had never been in Rome." Thus the lecture was announced the day previously in one of the most widely circulated of the Roman journals; and together with the announcement a challenge was thrown out to any priest who might desire publicly to discuss the subject. Many such invitations to public discussion had been previously given to the Italian evangelists in Rome; but hitherto the subjects proposed had, I imagine, been of such as to deter the priests from the venture. Or it may be that the taunts of the Liberal Press had at length goaded them to save their honour by taking up the glove that had lain long under their eyes in the arena. However this may be, certainly by any one acquainted with the points that constitute the Roman controversy, it will be readily understood why, if the Catholics ever intended to come to a public issue with their opponents, they should seize the opportunity of a challenge on historical argument, which enabled them to entrench themselves behind the bulwarks of patriotic tradition, and on which not all Protestants were agreed amongst themselves.

Accordingly when Sciarrelli on the evening fore announced entered the preaching-hall for the purpose of delivering his lecture, a paper was placed in his hands, signed by a half-a-dozen priests and formally accepting the discussion, with the reservation that time, place and conditions should be duly fixed previously by private negotiation. Shortly after the following morning two of them should meet Sciarrelli and myself at the hall, and draw up the preliminaries of the discussion.

Not to weary your readers with preparatory detail, let us suffice to say that at length it was determined that on Friday evening, Feb. 9, at the hour of seven, the discussion should commence, that the disputants should be three on either side, that the discussion should be regulated by four presidents, two from each party, that the audience should be admitted by tickets in equal numbers according to the capacity of the hall, that the debate should be rigorously limited to the question propounded by Sciarrelli, that stenographers should be admitted on either side, and when all was finished should draw up and consign to each party a full report in exact duplicate, duly signed and authenticated.

These determinations were zealously and speedily carried into effect. The hall selected was that of a Catholic Literary Society, called *Accademia Tiberina*, capable of accommodating about 300 persons. The presidents elected by our opponents were the Prince Chigi, of Campagnano, brother of the well known Papal Nuncio at Paris, and a distinguished Roman advocate, Joe Commendatore de Domenico Tosti; the Protestants were represented by Dr. Herman Philip, missionary to the Jews, and myself. The champions on our side were Sig. Sciarrelli, Ribetti, the Waldensian minister in Rome, and Gavazzi. The names of the Catholic disputants were kept secret up to the evening of discussion.

At length, as was natural enough, the affair blew wind, and the interest excited was immense. Space for the presidents, the disputants, and the stenographers, the hall did not admit of the issue more than 130 tickets on either side. If there had been a thousand the demand would not have been met. It was the high tide of Carnival; there was a mask ball that night at two of the principal theatres; Salvini, the greatest tragedian, of modern Italy, was performing at another; yet the palm of public interest was carried off by the Evangelico-Catholic controversy. On Friday evening the hall filled rapidly and to overflowing, not a ticket was wasted. On the side of the Catholics, for the audience sat to the right or left of the hall according as they entered with the yellow tickets of the Papal party, or the red ones of the Evangelicals, were many distinguished members of the clergy and aristocracy of Rome. On the side of the Protestants, to gether with a large representation of the several Italian congregations, were to be seen a few foreign visitors, though care had been taken to admit only such as had some knowledge of the language. Two ladies sat in the first row of the Romanist chairs; all the others were occupied by men; amongst the Protestants was a considerable sprinkling of bonneted heads, both Italian and Foreign. The four Presidents sat on a slightly raised platform, in front of a long table, facing the audience; to right and left of them, the reporters, between them and the front row of chairs the disputants taking one another, and sideways to the assembly, behind these backing of ministers and priests were immediately interested in the discussion.

It had been agreed that Sciarrelli should read his opening thesis, and then deposit the manuscript on the President's table, to provide against all possible misunderstanding of his words. The production did him great credit, and set forth lucidly and convincingly the arguments against the presence of Peter in Rome, to be derived from the silence of Scripture, from the life of Peter as far as traceable in the Acts, from the respective commissions of St. Paul and Peter, the one to the Gentiles, the other to the Circumcision, and from the silence and implicit counter-evidence of the Apostolic fathers, while it anticipated the reasoning of the opposite side by estimating at their true value the patristic authorities of a later epoch. The discourse was well written and well read, and made an evident impression on the audience. The faces of the Evangelicals were radiant with triumph; while the Romanists sat with knit brows and looked anxiously towards their champions. But their turn came next. In reply to Sciarrelli rose a priest of about sixty years of age, of name not unknown in Europe. A profound archaeologist and orientalist, whose whole life has been spent in grubbing amongst the monuments of Rome and the records of the early

Church, and withal a man of robust intellect, and a powerful Lent-preacher, the Romanist could hardly have found through dignified ranks an abler antagonist on such a question than Don Fabiani. He has, moreover, written recently on the very subject in hand, and had, therefore, all his arguments at his fingers' ends. I believe that no better cause could have been made out on the Romanist side of the question than was set forth by Fabiani; that night in his long and eloquent speech of nearly an hour and a-half. Yet it was no reply to Sciarrelli. His scriptural arguments and those from the Apostolic fathers, which formed the strength of Sciarrelli's reasoning, were passed lightly over as "a *solite cose*," the old story; and we were overwhelmed with citations from a later antiquity, with the consent of tradition, and with the great fact of the *existence* of the Romish Church, which as an effect presupposed its only adequate cause, the presence, the penitence, and the martyrdom of Peter in Rome.

Between the discourses of the two protagonists nearly three hours had elapsed; so that the other speakers of the evening were taken somewhat at disadvantage, owing to the lateness of the hour and the weariness of the audience. They were on our side Signor Ribetti, on that of the Catholics a certain Monsignor Cipolla, a parish priest of Rome, and, it report speaks true, of no very savoury reputation. Neither of them showed very good fight. It was no easy matter to reply to Fabiani's powerful speech, without time for premeditation, and Ribetti, therefore, took refuge in generalities, and in generalities now and then a little pungent for the occasion. As for Monsignor Cipolla, being afflicted with a great thickness of utterance, he so chewed and mumbled his own words that the very stenographers gave him up in despair.

It was already eleven o'clock, and neither Gavazzi nor the corresponding third on the other side had spoken, so it was agreed that the discussion should be resumed on the following evening. I confess that I retired from the meeting a little downcast and discontented; not that I thought our opponents had really had the best of the argument, but the *last profound* impression had been made by one of their disputants, and it had not met with any adequate reply.

But all was redeemed by the result of the second evening. The audience was as large as before, and pretty much identical in its constituents. Gavazzi resumed the debate, and I never heard him to greater advantage. It was fortunately a subject he had specially studied, and on which, indeed, he had written. He spoke for more than an hour and a-half, and claimed the attention of both Protestants and Catholics by the vigour and life of his discourse. Returning upon the arguments of Sciarrelli, he gave them fresh point and force, turned inside out the sophisms of his opponents, met erudition with counter-erudition, while the wonderful vitality of the man infused itself into the driest facts and hardest logic, making attention a necessity and a delight. Many had feared that Gavazzi's vehemence might betray him into expressions inconsistent with the urbanity desirable in such a debate; but these fears were proved by the event to be utterly without foundation. Nothing could have been more Christianly courteous than his treatment of his opponents personally, though nothing could have been more unsparring than his demolition of their arguments. All Protestants the world over owe a debt of gratitude to Gavazzi for his speech of this evening, for it was a great triumph won for them on a great occasion.

The replicant on the Catholic side was a young priest of the name of Guidi—a fluent and able speaker, but not the man to follow Gavazzi. Nor were his arguments of any intrinsic value. Indeed, it was plain that they were intended not for the Protestants, but for the Catholics; to save the sheep from seduction, not to bring the heretic goats into the fold. The main point was a reiteration of the reasoning of the previous evening. The Romish Church exists: exists as a stupendous fact; it must have had its origin in a cause equal to so vast an effect; that cause, as attested by all antiquity, is the Pontificate and martyrdom of St. Peter in Rome. Good, perhaps, for those who admit the underlying assumption of Peter's primacy; but for the Protestant a *petitio principii*. With this reply the discussion came to a close. The stenographical report will be published as quickly as possible, and, if I can find time, I hope to enable your readers to peruse it in an English version.

This event has been the talk of the city for the last few days, and the public journals have not failed to note the significance of the fact. If my letter has occupied too large a space in your columns, let this significance be my justification. Think of all that is implied in it, and you will feel with me, that a Roman Priest and a Methodist preacher should sit side by side to preside over a religious discussion in the city of Rome—a discussion between elected dignitaries of the Papal Church and Italian native evangelists—a discussion sanctioned by the express authorization of the reigning Pontiff (for such I have heard to be the case since I began this letter)—a discussion to prove the *petitio principii* of St. Peter's very presence in Rome; that such a discussion should have been conducted with the utmost amity and decorum, for so it was, that it should have terminated in a very demonstrative shaking of hands on the part of presidents and disputants, for so it did; that its results, caught verbatim by stenography, should be committed to the press for free circulation throughout Christendom, is an event so passing strange that had a prophet from God foretold it ten years ago, he would have had to make his credentials very plainly out indeed before the most sanguine amongst us could have received his report.

I am, Gentlemen, Yours very truly,  
HENRY J. PROBERT.

Rome, Feb. 11, 1872.

BEAUTIFUL.—In closing the eyes for nightly rest it is good to say, "He giveth his beloved sleep;" and in opening them when night is past, to say "When I awake I shall work them."