

# The Wesleyan,

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NO. 33

## HINTS ON GENERAL READING.

### LETTERS TO A YOUNG MINISTER.

#### NO. III. BIOGRAPHY.

MY DEAR BROTHER,— Biography has changed very much during recent years. Formerly it was simply history; a man's life was but a record of wars, speeches, or other leading incidents in which he took part. The biographer was a grave censor and fulsome eulogist by turns. Now biography is an analysis and criticism of motives, habits and morals; with a disquisition upon cotemporary men and manners. Hence this department of literature rises constantly into first importance to the student.

Here is the opinion of one who himself gave powerful pen-portraits of men:—

"Universal history, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men continued to do or to attain; all things that we see standing in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of thoughts that dwell in the Great men sent into the world; the soul of the world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something by him. The light which enlightens, which enlightens the darkness of the world; and this not as a kindled lamp only but rather as a natural luminary shining by the gift of heaven; in whose radiance all souls feel that it is well with them."

In this paragraph, at least, Carlyle is not only philosophic but Christian.

If we would learn, for instance, the true origin of great reforms, the causes which have led to abiding results in the introduction of new systems of religious thought, or scientific or philosophic principles, who so likely to inform us as the reformers and scientists themselves, providing that, in skilled, faithful hands, they are allowed to tell their own story? To obtain a correct view of the Copernican system of Astronomy, who can be a better teacher than Copernicus? His life by Gassendi gives not only the views of the great astronomer, but also, by a comparison of his system with others, lays bare much of the history of astronomy as it struggled into scientific form and importance. Then taking up the lives of Newton and Herschel in succession, we have the growth and many of the actual principles of the science presented to us, while we have been made acquainted with the habits and ambitions of noble men whose fame will never die. Geology, again, a science, as present understood, of comparatively recent origin, owes much of its discovery and classification to such men as Dr. Buckland and Hugh Miller. Not only the dry facts of the science but the peculiar circumstances under which these came first under observation, and subsequently became a part of a wonderful system, are defined by the biography of those great thinkers and their cotemporaries. By the way, Hugh Miller's life is of far more than geological importance. You will be inclined after reading his own "Schools and Schoolmasters," and his Life, by Peter Bayne, to rank him as Scotland's representative man. Chalmers leads Scotchmen by very general consent in the realm of oratory and social reform;—and to Chalmers we may have occasion to return by way of illustration; Scott always wears the crown in descriptive and historic narrative; Burns sways the sceptre as a poet; but Miller was, for intellectual strength, unequalled in any age of Scottish history. The life of such a man is more than an epitome of what he said and wrote;—it is a revelation of that marvelous method of Providence by which stupendous mental powers are bestowed for special exigencies in human history, and by which those powers are allowed to gather strength under a process which most of us would consider one of seclusion and neglect.

Referring to social changes, we are reminded that, almost within the memory of persons still living, the Slave Trade, once an extensive and lucrative traffic, has been abolished, and emancipation secured over all the civilized world. These were the glorious results of a contest begun by a few men in the British House of Com-

mons. Biography here again becomes our instructor. By it we ascertain the merits of this national movement. The lives of Wilberforce and Buxton are an eloquent illustration of individual influence when a cause is just. Similarly you may gain an insight as to causes originating reform agitations in different countries and social conditions, while philanthropy will delight in pointing out to your observation the best traits of its foremost champions.

Nowhere has individual energy and talent left monuments so imposing and abiding as in the realms of religion, and with these you are intimately related. Religious thought, as you find it to-day formulated into thesis and doctrines, had an origin somewhere. Professing to derive their opinions from the same source of inspiration, churches have different creeds, in some instances diametrically opposite creeds. It will be found that, pretensions to the contrary notwithstanding, each creed, in present form at least, sprang from a single mind, more or less remote in the ages. To trace a creed to its origin, is just to go up the stream to the single mind which, fountain-like, brought sweet or bitter waters to the surface for the refreshing or poisoning of the people. We select Mohammedism, the only form of false religion to which we need make reference. Who was Mohammed? What were his views? How came that religion into existence? What are the elements which render it for a time so aggressive, and the absence of which now prepares the way for its downfall? Mohammed's life will answer. It is written by several biographers. The Koran may also be bought for less than a dollar; but the key to the Koran is Mohammed's Life.

On the same principal, to understand those great religious agitations and polemical contests which marked the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which tended chiefly to mould the various Protestant creeds as we find them to-day, you should consult the lives of the reformers, the founders of new schools of divinity, and of church constitutions. Here, of course, John Wesley's Life claims your first consideration. Presumably you have mastered our theology and our polity; but there are peculiarities in Methodism, the philosophy of which you do not, cannot understand, unless you have followed the Wesleys through the whole of their very extraordinary career. That you may have read the Wesleys superficially, or only through the glasses of partial friends, or possibly through those of disguised enemies, may occur to you after we shall have renewed our subject next week.

## A SET OF MEN.

(BY F. C.)

Some men are so busy in squabbles over the dry husks of creeds and formalities that they forget the sweet kernel of Christianity, which inspires the heart to daily deeds of kindness and benevolence. Some men are so busy in erecting theological standards for their neighbours to live by, that they forget to live by any standard themselves.

Some men, if you ask them how you must be saved from sin, and the wrath of God, begin by telling you how you must be baptized. Instead of striving to guide the soul struggling for light, that it may take hold of that knowledge best adapted to its present condition, that God intended for it, they will talk for a while about Philip and the Eunuch.

Some men, if you manifest any interest in your soul's salvation, instead of sending you books, whose contents would encourage you to trust Jesus only, or make more explicit the plan of salvation, they will keep on, continually, sending you books and pamphlets on doctrinal theology.

Some men will assert, without any qualifying "ifs" or "buts," without any mitigating circumstances whatever, that if you have experienced a thorough work of grace in your heart you must think, must believe just as they do.

Some Christians will do these things. Did I say Christians? I did—but at the expense of my conscience—they are not a bit like Christ.

The true Christian will not teach any such absurdities; and will consider it a solemn sin to compel a formal assent to what has no real hold upon a man's mind and heart. Such men (if they do not, sometimes chance to be ministers) I do not, can not like. They are a power for evil in society, especially among anxious inquirers after salvation.

Broken stairways where the feet  
Stumble, as they seek to climb.

Different men are differently constituted, have been differently educated, and must, of necessity, think differently of the same subjects, as they view them from different lights and different angles.

Now since no man can solve the mystery of creation, who can tell, for instance, why sin was created, and, since no two individuals can think precisely alike with regard to all these mysteries, is it just—is it Christ-like—is it honest, to say that all intelligent beings must think; must believe alike?

No man is infallible, and no man—or set of men, have any right to seek to inflict their bundle of beliefs upon another.

It is each one's sacred duty to think and study for themselves, form their own doctrine, enlighten their own conscience and be guided thereby. In giving instruction, the great aim of the teacher or preacher should be, not so much to engrain his own thoughts and ideas on the minds of the learners or hearers, but to lead them to think and study for themselves.

As Gen. Jackson said:—Each man swears to support the constitution as he understands it, and not as it is understood by another; so is each man under grace obligations to do his part in life, according to the dictates of his conscience and not that of the other.

They who let God's holy word be a lamp to their feet, and a light to their path: who allow its teachings to guide and control them through life, need not trouble themselves about squaring their intellectual opinions with any one.

The best creed is the Golden Rule; the most eloquent sermon, a good life; and the noblest prayer, a desire to do right.

For modes of worship, let grateful zealots fight, He can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.

DeBert, July 27, 1878.

## ABOUT WITNESSES.

(Concluded)

Perhaps the most extraordinary evidence ever tendered in support of an alibi was advanced in behalf of a man tried at Sydney, when the witnesses swore that, at the time the robbery with which he was charged was committed, the prisoner was in his hut with them, listening to the recital of the "Old English Baron," which occupied two hours and a half. Lane, the novel-reciter, corroborated their statements, averring he could repeat several other stories of equal length, word for word. "Now sir," said the attorney-general, "do you wish to persuade us that, without a book, you could occupy two hours and a half in reciting the 'Old English Baron?'" "I could, and I will, if you please," replied Lane. "Well, we will have a page or two, then," said the attorney-general. The witness at once began: "In the time of King Henry, when the good Duke Humphrey returned from the Holy Land; and so went on until the attorney-general cried "Enough." The prisoner's counsel, however, insisted upon Lane's going on to the end, to prove the tale would occupy the time his witnesses had sworn it did, unless the other side conceded that important point. This, after some demur, the attorney-general agreed to do, provided the witness repeated the last page of the book as he had repeated the first. Lane did as he was bidden, and the prisoner was acquitted.

An American delinquent was not slackly in his alibi. That worthy swore that the prisoner had been plowing for him all day long on the 29th of November, and chopping wood for him all the following day. So far, all was well. Then the counsel for the prosecution rose and put the question, "What did Ellis do on the thirty-first?" "That was Sunday," replied the unsuspecting witness, "and we went squirrel hunting." "Well, what did he do on the thirty-second?" "Threshed the wheat." "On the thirty-third?" "It was raining and he stayed indoors and shaved out some of his hair." "What did he do on the thirty-fourth?" "Chopped wood." "Yes, and on the thirty-fifth?" "What Ellis did on the thirty-fifth was never known; for here the wife of the witness whisked him off the stand with, "You old fool, don't you know there are only thirty days in November?" The calendar-ignoring farmer overrid the business, like the Scotch woman who identified the chicken by the likeness to its mother, and the positive dandy who recognized certain turkeys by their countenances, walk, and manner of roosting.

An Irishman, examined before a fishery commission, seemed so inclined to avow anything that one of the commissioners asked if there were any whales on the west coast. "Is it whales?" says Pat. "Sure you may see 'em by the dozen, spouting about like washer engines all over the place." "Are there many dog-fish?" was the next question. "Dogs, begorra! ye'd say so 'av ye passed the night here. Sure, we can't sleep for the barkin' 'o them." "Do flying fish abound here?" queried another gentleman. "Flying-fish, is it?" quoth the veracious fellow. "If we didn't put up the shutters every night there wouldn't be a whole pain 'o glass in the house for the craters' bairn' against them! When he came up for his experience Pat

tried to coax something extra out of the commissioners on the plea that he had sworn to everything their honors "axed" him. Irish witnesses are not usually so tractable, no small amount of patience and skill being required to extract a definite answer to the simplest of questions. Nothing pleases you fun-loving Irishman better than to bother a lawyer, and the Irish courts have known many a dialogue like this: "You are a Roman Catholic." "Am I?" "Are you not?" "You say I am?" "Come, sir; what's your religion?" "The true religion." "What religion is that?" "My religion." "And what is your religion?" "My mother's religion." "What was your mother's religion?" "She tuk whisky in her tay." "You bless yourself, don't you?" "When I'm done with you, I will." "What place of worship do you go to?" "The most convaynient." "Of what persuasion are you?" "My persuasion is that you won't find out."

"What is your belief?" "That you are puzzled." "Do you confess?" "Not to you." "Who would you write to if you were likely to die?" "The doctor." "I insist upon your answering me, sir. Are you a Roman Catholic?" "I am," and why didn't you say so at once?" "You never axed me. You said I was a great many things; but you never axed me; you were driving crass words and crooked questions at me, and I thought it was manners to cut my behaviour on your own pattern."

An examiner's perseverance is not always successful in eliciting the desired answer. "Was there anything in the glass?" asked a counsel of a somewhat reluctant witness. "Well, there was something in it," he replied. "Ah, I thought we should get at it in time," observed the triumphant questioner. "Now, my good fellow, tell us what that something was." The good fellow took time to think over it; at last he drew out, "It were a spoon." Equally unsatisfactory, in a legal point of view, was the following short dialogue: "You have a property, you say, did you make it yourself?" "Partly." "Are you married?" "Yes." "Did your wife bring you anything?" "Yes." "What?" "Three children." The witness had the best of that bout. And the lady was too much for the lawyer when they tried conclusions in this fashion: "On which side of the street do you live?" "On either side." "How can you go one way it is on the right side, if you go the other it is on the left?" The information imparted was as little to the purpose as the answer to the question. "When you called upon Mr. Roberts what did he say?" propounded to a voter before an election committee. Ere the man could open his mouth to reply, the question was objected to. For half an hour counsel argued the matter; then the room was cleared, that the committee might consider the subject. After the lapse of another half-hour the doors were opened, and the chairman announced that the question might be put. "All ears were strained to catch the impending disclosure. But the mountain did not bring forth even a mouse. "What did Mr. Roberts say," asked the counsel; and the witness replied, "He was'nt at home, sir; so I didn't see him."

## CURIOUS AND USEFUL.

**PROPERTIES OF THE HUMAN GASTRIC JUICE.**—The *Press and Circular* says M. Chas. Rickett has been experimenting upon the patient on whom Professor Vernuill recently performed the operation of gastronomy. According to his researches the acidity of the gastric juice is equivalent to 1.7 grammes of hydrochloric acid to 1,000 grammes of fluid. The acidity increases a little at the end of digestion. Wine and alcohol also increases it, but cane sugar diminishes it. It tends to return to its normal acidity after the introduction of acid or alkaline matters. The mean duration of digestion is from three to four and a half hours, and the food does not pass gradually but in masses. According to four analyses, after a modification of Schmidt's method, free hydrochloric acid exists in the gastric juice; and altogether this secretion appears to consist of one part of lactic acid to nine parts of hydrochloric acid, the former of which is free in the gastric juice. The nature, therefore, of the free acid in the stomach seems almost solved, and it may be said that in every 1,000 grammes of the juice there are 1.53 grains of hydrochloric acid and 0.43 of the lactic acid.

**TO PURIFY WATER.**—The *Scientific American* says that nine ounces of pure fresh lime dissolved in forty gallons of water will purify five hundred and sixty gallons of hard water; the precipitate is chalk. It takes sixteen hours for water to settle, and all the impurities to sink to the bottom of the vessel which contains the water. This is a very useful fact in chemistry, and is not very extensively known.

The *Missionary Advocate* puts this striking contrast: "We spend annually in this country \$700,000,000 for intoxicating drinks. All the Boards of Missions spend for the salvation of the world less than \$8,000,000."

It is computed that the grain used for liquor in a year, in the United States, reaches 70,000,000 bushels, which would make 4,000,000,000 two pound loaves of bread, or an average of 200 pounds of bread per annum to every man, woman and child in this country. Great Britain uses 80,000,000 bushels of grain yearly for the same purpose, yet she annually imports food to the value of nearly \$400,000,000. The above figures form a very suggestive temperance sermon.

**A SAN STORY.**—It is stated by a Chicago authority that 30,000 boys and girls of Chicago are patrons of drinking saloons, and many of them are drunkards. About 9,000 of the tripping children are arrested annually for drunkenness and one species of crime or another, and many of the saloons could not exist if it were not for these juvenile drinkers.

## GEMS WORTH SETTING.

God made the soul to correspond with truth. Truth is its own evidence, as the lightning flash is, as the blessed sunshine is.—F. W. Robertson.

How idle a boast, after all is the immortality of a name! The idol of to-day pushes the hero of yesterday out of our recollection; and will, in turn, be supplanted by his successor to-morrow.—Fruing.

The bird of wisdom flies low and seeks his food under hedges; the eagle himself would be starved if he always soared aloft against the sun.—Landor.

Grace must be always growing. He that sits down contented with the grace he has, and is not pressing forward toward perfection and striving to grow in grace, and to get the habits of it more strengthened and confirmed, and the actings of it more quickened and invigorated, it is to be feared hath no grace at all.—Matthew Henry.

**WHAT IT WILL DO.**—One of Benjamin Franklin's truest sayings is the following:—"Temperance puts wood on the fire, meal in the barrel, flour in the tub, money in the purse, credit in the country, vigor in the body, contentment in the house, clothes on the bairns, intelligence in the brain, and spirit in the constitution." When a young man leaves his father's house with the blessing of a mother's tears still wet upon his brow, if he once loses that purity of character, it is a spot that he can never make whole again. Such is the consequence of crime. Its effects cannot be eradicated; it can only be forgiven.

**ALL FOR THE BEST.**—Dr. Johnson used say that a habit of looking at the best side of every event is better than a thousand dollars a year. Bishop Hall quaintly remarked, "For every bad, there might be worse; and when a man breaks his leg, let him be thankful that it was not his neck." When Fenelon's library was on fire, "God be praised," he exclaimed "that it is not the dwelling of some poor man!" This is the true spirit of submission—one of the most beautiful traits that can possess the human heart. Resolve to see this world on the sunny side, and you have almost half won the battle of life at the outset.

Many a child goes astray, not because there is a want of prayer or virtue at home, but simply because home lacks sunshine. A child needs smiles as well as flowers needs sunbeams. Children look little beyond the present moment. If a thing pleases, they are apt to seek it; if it displeases, they are apt to avoid it. If home is the place where faces are sour, and words harsh, and fault finding is ever in the ascendant, they will spend as many hours as possible elsewhere.

If we are to meet with a brave front to the foes that rise up against us, and conquer in the daily battle of our lives, we want no miserable croaker to prophesy ruin and defeat; we want no faint-hearted spies to give an evil report of the goodly land; but a strong resolute spirit, whose words may be an inspiration to the faltering. We want poet, prophet and priest, who will say with the old Scotch piper when ordered to play a retreat, "I never learned to play a retreat, sire."—Emily Huntington Miller.

All that goes to constitute a gentleman—the carriage, gait, address, voice; the ease, the self-possession, the courtesy, the success in not offending, the lofty principle, the delicacy of thought, the taste and propriety, the generosity and forbearance, the candor and consideration—these qualities some of them come by nature, some of them may be found in any rank, some of them are a direct precept of Christianity.

**ETERNITY FADING.**—Eternity has no gray hairs. The flowers fade, the heart withers, man grows old and dies; but time writes no wrinkles on eternity. Eternity! O, stupendous thought! The ever-present, the unborn, undecaying and undying—the endless chain composing the life of the universe. Earth hath its beauties, but time shrouds them for their grave; its pleasures they are bursting bubbles. Not so in the untried bourne in the dwelling of the Almighty can

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