

British American Presbyterian.

VOL. I.

TORONTO, CANADA, FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 1872.

No. 19

Contributors & Correspondents.

NEW BRUNSWICK.

Policy not Principle the ruling motive among Politicians—Meetings of Synods—Local Union—French Colporteurs.

(From our own Correspondent.)

Notwithstanding all that has been said and written about school matters in New Brunswick, our friends in the Upper Provinces still persist in misrepresenting the question at issue. They still harp on the string that the minority down here have been wronged, and are now suffering under the effects of that wrong. Is it wilful blindness on the part of the Montreal Gazette and other papers that is the cause of the continued misrepresentation, or what is it? The only cause that I can see to operate is a political one. A general election is to come off soon, the Roman Catholics have votes, and so my line of policy is welcome in order to gain support. Such tergiversation on the part of politicians is enough to disgust people for ever with politics and the men that want to be leaders in our country. Trust not in princes nor in men's sons. We cannot but think that New Brunswick and her best interests are but a small matter, a mere sop, to many of our would-be statesmen, provided only a long lease of power were obtained. I see that the Quebec papers have taken to the song that we will not get the better terms until we yield the point ancient schools, in other words saddle ourselves for ever with a separate school system, or so long as the present political arrangements continue. Your correspondent professes to know very little about the question of better terms, such claims travel further back than he has any knowledge of in connection with the Province. He does know, however, that such a threat is as impertinent as it is futile. There are men down here, and many of them, the "parish politics" accusation that is thrown in our teeth sometimes, notwithstanding, that have more regard to great principles such as a non-sectarian education law than a pile of dollar bills or the keeping intact party lines no matter what the policy is that is put forward. We used to think that liberal minded Protestants in the Upper Provinces would stand by such principles, but our confidence is being shaken. Surely all are not so blind as that would indicate, political partizanship cannot be the overmastering motive in the minds of all.

Our Synods here meet next week, the one in Halifax, and the other in Charlottetown. Of course the Union question will be up in both. It does not seem as if much were resting on us here respecting that question. If the Churches of Canada (using the word in the old sense) chose to hang up the movement for some time to come, we must bide our time and wait. There is no hindrance of any kind that I know of affecting the Sea Provinces. Very many of the members of at least one of the Churches here are strongly in favor of promoting a local union among ourselves and that whether the other negotiating Churches are ready or not. Of course if the others adopt the Fabian policy as they are doing so far as I see, there will be all the more reason for pressing the local union. We see nothing to wait for. But it doubtful whether the other Church can be induced to go in for the lesser union. This unwillingness will be fortunate or unfortunate in the aspect presented according to the standpoint assumed. It is the smaller body that will withstand if there be a difficulty in the way at all. The ministers and members of that body, or at least some of them, appear to have a suspicion, an utterly groundless one, I am convinced, of the policy that may prevail with the ministers and people of the larger Church. There is no real ground for such a suspicion. Still I have no desire to press the smaller or more local union just now, and especially as the mind of the respective supreme courts of all the negotiating bodies is not known as yet. I will not say what course I will be inclined to take if it appear that no union can be consummated for some years to come.

I accept the correction which your correspondent makes as to my statement about the French colporteurs. I was mistaken I see as to the source from which the young men came. He has mistaken me as to the other point I think, viz., as to the amalgamation of our mission here, with the mission whose headquarters are in Montreal.

He thinks the proposal would be unwise because of the absence which that would cause of local supervision. Now that is the very point which I was careful to guard most sedulously. I never meant that we should give up the local supervision, I was not so foolish as that. I think I reserved that point in the remarks I made—it is certain I intended to do so. I suspect I had a conversation once with the correspondent who corrects me, on the general principle of issue, namely that referring to local direction. We agreed perfectly on the principle then, and we agree still. I have never seen cause to depart from the opinions I held then. But enough of that which is largely personal in its nature.

St. John, 19th June, 1872.

A SUNDAY IN BOSTON.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Sir.—It was my fortune to spend last Sunday in the city of Boston, and as I there and then observed many things which interested me, with your permission I purpose making a brief record of the impressions left on my mind in the hope that it may interest some of your readers as well. It may have been that I have been led to form some conclusions respecting the modes of life in that city which are unjust, from the fact that the city was fast filling up with those who, during the current week, were to take part in the Jubilee services either as performers or spectators. If so, I can only regret the fact; meanwhile my object is to speak of things as I know them, allowing others, who have had more frequent opportunities of visiting New England to convey a more correct impression by striking a kind of average.

Boston being a city replete with Puritan associations, and placed in the midst of a community founded by those whose exile to this continent was partly caused by their persistence in opposing everything tending to dishonour the Sabbath, one would naturally expect that even to this day, Sabbath desecrations would be the exception rather than the rule. We may easily understand how in Chicago and other western cities the spirit of pleasure and illicit enjoyment should be abroad on Sunday, for everything there is kept going at a high pressure rate, whether the object in view be business or pastime. But how public opinion should have undergone such a change in puritanical New England, as it must have done before a Sabbath could be spent as I witnessed it, is well-nigh incomprehensible to me. The preacher to whom I listened in the morning thanked God in his prayer for the quiet of the Sabbath morning; I wondered whether Dr. Webb had been abroad before church time as I was, or whether he had ever seen a real Sabbath observed so as to afford him some means of making a comparison. The late General Assembly of our church spent a good deal of time discussing the important question of Sunday desecration and the best means of putting a stop to it; if any one doubts the wisdom of attending closely and seriously to such a subject, let him go, not to the proverbially guilty cities of the West, but to the proverbially staid and puritanical city of Boston.

I arrived in that city at 6 o'clock a. m., on Sunday morning when everything was silent except in the vicinity of the railway stations. Soon, however, the street cars commenced to run; and when I was making my way, an hour or two later, towards the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association, I found the streets crowded with pleasure-seekers in every direction. Every car and cab appeared to be in requisition, and hosts of pedestrians thronged the side-walk. But worse than this, I soon noticed advertisements about excursions down to Long Island and other places by steamer, and I have no doubt that very many would avail themselves of the opportunity thus afforded for a pleasant sail, adopting the recommendation with which the advertisements invariably closed, to get away from the heat and dust of the city and enjoy the pleasant sea breeze of the Atlantic.

So far my impressions of a Boston Sunday were far from favourable. Tired as I was I could not resist the inclination to go to church, and resolved to comply with an invitation to hear the Rev. Dr. Webb, in whose church I could not fail to listen to an excellent sermon and splendid music. The hour for service being 10:30 a. m. I arrived a little late, and found that proceedings had commenced by singing the

Doxology. To my great disappointment the choir, consisting of four singers and an immense organ, were the only performers, absolutely not a single voice, so far as I could detect, joined them throughout the whole of the large congregation. I must confess that, though not willing to see unnecessary restrictions placed on the use of instrumental music in the church, my prepossessions have always been against its introduction as tending to injure congregational singing; and I can assure you my Boston experiences have not done much towards making a convert of me. After a few words of prayer, Dr. Webb read a chapter from Luke. He is a fine looking man, and as a preacher is immeasurably more pleasant to listen to than Dr. Blake, whose efforts in Toronto a few months ago, I am afraid, left but an indifferent impression respecting American pulpit eloquence. Almost everything in the aspect of the place was calculated to arrest the attention of a frequenter of Toronto churches, and make him do what every one else seemed to be doing during the reading, singing and praying, gaze around him and make observations.

The pulpit was of the most diminutive description and scarcely raised at all above the floor of the church. The preacher wore no gown and had more the aspect of a platform orator, both in his personal appearance and surroundings, than of a pulpit-speaker as the latter appears amongst ourselves. Two ornaments to his desk caught my eye as soon as I entered; one was a large red ribbon depending from the top of the pulpit Bible, and bearing a yellow cross surmounted by a crown; the other was an immense bouquet of beautiful flowers, which stood just at the preacher's right hand. However much some good people would deprecate the former, I imagine hardly any one would object to seeing ornaments like the latter placed on our rather bare Canada Presbyterian pulpits, while I am sure they could scarcely fail to be of service to the minister. After the reading came a hymn, sung by the quartette at the minister's back, whose heads were just visible above a wooden screen in front of the organ where they stood, and who, with both organ-player and bellows-blower were entirely obscured from view during all the rest of the service. The exquisitely humorous lines of Oliver Wendell Holmes about the latter most important personage could hardly therefore have been suggested by seeing his performances in Dr. Webb's church. Again every member of the congregation remained silent, and continued seated during both singing and prayer. Another hymn was given out and when I saw the congregation rise to their feet I was in hopes that I was about to hear some of the good music I had been led to expect, but in vain, not a voice but that of the four performers and the organ. The intonations were then read and an excellent sermon preached from the text: "He that hath no hood, let him sell his garment and buy one." Luke xxii. 36. It would be in vain to attempt here to sketch the sermon, which had for its subject the conflict between christianity and the spirit of the world, and the necessity for constant preparation. The preacher dwelt upon the age of this conflict, the victory of sin over man in paradise, and the promised reversal of this victory through the death of Christ. He described the aspects which this conflict is assuming at the present day, laying stress more especially on the terrible skill and subtlety of those who wield intellectual weapons against christianity. He pointed out the dangers arising from a sense of security, and still more from the growth of prosperity in the community, the last being described as of three kinds, a disregard of religious denominational distinctions, political corruption, and individual disregard for the laws of morality, which ought to be always and everywhere supreme. His peroration consisted of an eloquent appeal to his hearers to act in the spirit of the text, and prepare for the conflict in what soever form it might meet them. Another hymn was then given out, and this time, in accordance with a very gentle hint from the pulpit, some few voices here and there were heard joining with the quartette and the organ in praising God by proxy for the silent brethren at their sides. I must confess that I came away from the church dissatisfied with almost everything, singing, and especially postures, except the sermon, which evidently depicted the evils sapping the foundations of religious life in Boston, and as evidently listened to a more intellectual or aesthetic performance, judging from the criticisms I heard around me as I passed from the house.

In some parts of the town rehearsals

were going on all the time for the morrow's concert, and the of band instruments, violins, and clarionets, was only too apt to greet the ear wherever one chose to stay. This state of things was of course exceptional, but much less so was the crowd gathered on the commons, a piece of ground which would be called a Park anywhere else, but which still retains the less ostentatious name in Boston. Most Christian people would like to get rid of the Sunday Park nuisance in Toronto, but the scenes enacted there are quite decorous, and Christian-like compared with what may be witnessed any Sunday evening on Boston Common.

I have not time to dwell upon any of the qualities of Boston character, which I consider refreshing, and therefore I may perhaps be regarded as disposed to be censorious. I may say, however, that the Boston people are apparently sober, industrious, and prosperous; they certainly are exceedingly hospitable, and in every criticism I would like it to be remembered that we can never refuse to Boston the merit of being the musical and literary, if not the commercial and political capital of the United States; in point of fact Boston is the Athens and the Florence of the Great Republic. Harvard College is situated here, and in connection with it we find such names as Longfellow, and James Russell Lowell. But I have already trespassed sufficiently on your space.

Yours ac.

ON THE WING.

Boston, June 17th, 1872.

Sabbath School Teacher.

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS.

Watchfulness.—Matt. xxiv. 12-51.

Prove the evil of anger. Repent Psalm 111. 1-2; Lord's Prayer; Shorter Catechism, 82.

VER. 12.

This verse may be explained and applied in a variety of ways:

I. Over what we are to watch. (1) Our lips. The tongue moves so fast that unless we form the habit of guarding it we shall be sure to sin. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." Ps. cxli. 3, 4. (2) Our hearts. The lips may be right, yet the heart wrong. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Prov. iv. 23. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. (3) Our lives. "He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul." Prov. xxviii. 26.

II. What are we to watch against. (1) The evils of our own nature. Weeds in spring grow faster than flowers, and they need to be kept down daily; so the evil of our hearts strives hard to grow into strength, and must be watched daily, Heb. xii. 15. (2) Outward temptations. It is the bad practices of our own times and country that we need most to watch against. The Israelites were warned against the idolatry of the Canaanites; this was their temptation. Ex. xxxiv. 12; Deut. vii. 25. Falsehood, fraud, enmity, blasphemy, unbelief, sinful pleasures of all kinds, these are our dangers, Prov. vi. 27, 28; 2 Pet. iii. 17.

III. How we are to watch. Like a sentinel. An Indian in the war with America dressed himself in the skin of a bear, and imitated its movements so well that he got close to a sentinel and killed him. This happened several times. At last, one more vigilant than the rest, not liking the way the supposed bear was approaching him, fired and killed the Indian. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. v. 8.

IV. For what we are to watch. For the coming of your Lord. So Christ comes to us in any affliction, in any trial, and at the hour of death, as well as at the great day of account. He comes unexpectedly. "Behold I come as a thief." Rev. xvi. 15. He may come at any hour. If he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, blessed are those servants whom the Lord shall find watching, Luke xii. 37, 38. How suddenly did he come to Nabal after his surfeit! 1 Sam. xxv. 2; to Belshazzar after his feast! Dan. v.; and to the rich man after he had pulled down his barns! Luke xii. 20.

VER. 13, 14.

Who is the goodman of the house? The owner of it, the master of the house. What is meant by "in what watch?" The meaning is, at what time? On shipboard, the day and night are divided into watches of four hours each. This was a common practice in ancient times, Matt. xiv. 24; Ex. xiv. 24. Why does the thief conceal the hour of his attack? Why does Jesus conceal from us the hour of his coming? That we may not delay our preparations. Many people defer all concern about their souls till they come to their death hour; if we all knew when we were to die, a great many more would do the same. We should fly to Christ now, repent now; believe in Him now, and so be saved now.

VER. 15-17.

What post has this servant? What are his duties? How does he know his duty? What does his lord expect him to do? v. 16. What does he reward him for? How does he reward him?

LESSONS. 1. We are all to be God's servants. Our time, and money, and talents are to be devoted to him, Eph. vi. 6.

2. Each has his own work to do. A child has his lessons to learn, and his parents to obey. A servant must obey his master.

3. We learn our duty from the Word of God. The servant learns his duty from his master, and in obeying him he does his work; so we are taught in Scripture how to serve God, Deut. iv. 1.

4. Faithful service is never forgotten. We are not saved for the sake of our works, but only for the merits of our Saviour, but we are rewarded according to our words, Ps. xix. 11; Hos. x. 12; Col. iii. 24.

VER. 48-51.

What are the faults of this servant? (1) He is a tyrant; he smites his fellow servants. (2) He is dishonest; he spends his master's money as if it were his own. (3) He is debauched; he eats with the drunken. How comes he to be so wicked? v. 49. How is his iniquity discovered? v. 50. How is he punished?

LESSONS. 1. All our sins will one day be brought to light, if we do not forsake them.

2. Our sins may be punished at any moment; "In an hour that he is not aware of."

3. Our sins, if not forsaken, will be terribly punished. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Apostasy begins with littles; it is called dragging back, not running back; beware of "an evil heart of unbelief."

I think half the troubles for which men go slouping in prayer to God, are caused by their intolerable pride. Many of our cares are but a morbid way of looking at our privileges. We let our blessings get mouldy and then call them curses.—Beecher.

If we keep looking at our feelings, and say, "Well, now, is this right?" It is like stopping a watch to see if it is going, or as children pull up beans to see if they are growing, and stop their growth; so people pull up their experiences to look at them, and stop their growth.

Some can walk very well along the plank sidewalk of God's gentle providences, and over the smooth pavements of prosperity. But when their path is steep and stony, their feet stumble and they faint by the way. Like Peter, they sink when they tread the boisterous sea of trouble or sorrow.

If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.—George Eliot.

Love is a universal master, whether clothed in magnificence or poverty, it is a species of omnipotence. If a man have love in his heart, he may talk in broken language, but it will be eloquence to those who listen. It is a want of surcharge of Divine grace in the heart that makes men lean, barren and unfruitful.

The little things which you may do for those about you will fall back upon your heart as the summer dews fall upon the vineyards. What if it is nothing but a kind word to a school-boy crying in the street; it dries his tears, and the aching heart grows light and glad again. Who knows what cloud of darkness one kind word may dispel?