

The Wesleyan.

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NOTE AND COMMENT.

Instead of winning your friend to Christ by your excessive "liberality," you made him believe that either you or your religion was a sham.—*Nashville Ad.*

Ingenious novelties are commonly suspected by the best exegetes. An "ingenious" interpretation is exceedingly apt to be unsafe. The Bible was meant to be a guide to plain people, and not a mere battle-ground for ingenious critics to fight over.—*Religious Herald.*

"How is it," we once asked a veteran of the cross, "that so feeble a preacher as Evangelist Blank attains so much success?" The answer was: "Because he always hits the mark. A light shot that hits the mark time after time is more effective than a heavy shot which is followed by no subsequent impression."—*Examiner.*

The man who said "he would not peddle the gospel to anybody; if men wanted to hear it from him they must come to his church," has peddled himself out of the pulpit. He found that pastoral visitation was a necessity to success in his work—he confessed himself a failure, and given himself to other work.—*United Presbyterian.*

"There is nothing mean about me, I will do my part," said a wealthy merchant, when applied to for a subscription toward building a house of worship for "the Church of his choice." He gave five dollars. He really thought he was doing a liberal thing. It was ignorance. He had no training in the line of beneficence.—*Southern Churchman.*

The Church dignitaries of Sweden, who broke up the proposed meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in Sweden, are doing what they can to make the meeting in Copenhagen a failure. At least they will not have their own clergy attend it, and have appointed a clerical conference to meet in Stockholm on the same days that the Alliance meets in Copenhagen.—*Independent.*

Mr. Hammond, the revivalist, spoke to a man standing in a crowd in Quincy, Ill., a short time ago. "Do you see anything green?" "No, sir," said the man pointing to his eye, as much as to say he was not a fit subject for conversion. "No my friend," Mr. H. replied, "but I see something red—your nose—and it cost you \$500 to paint it, if you paid for all the liquor you drank."—*Ec.*

A Plain Talk is what one of our Methodist patriots, in a recent conversation with us, called a sermon he had lately heard and liked. His definition is suggestive. Let the definition be that the preacher is talking to them; and it is all the better if "from experience to experience." And then let said talk be level to the comprehension of the hearer, so plain that a "way-faring fool" may understand it.—*Southern Ad.*

The Georgians rightfully claim that their State gave the women of America and of the world the first college. The Wesleyan Female College, created in 1838 by the State of Georgia, adopted by the Methodist Conference in 1840, endowed and remodelled in 1882 by George I. Seney, is to day the monument which marks the earliest complete recognition of woman's claim.—*Columbus Sun-Enquirer.*

The best cure for the sting of ingratitude, the pain of being misunderstood, and the weariness of non-appreciation, is the abiding consciousness that it is "as unto Christ" that we do all our work for men. The assurance of his approval is thus our "exceeding great reward." What may be added from an earthly source should be gladly and thankfully received, but we may not trust to it alone.—*Western Ad.*

Last month a young man was killed on the railroad track near Albany. Some years ago his parents separated, his father taking a daughter, and his mother going with his mother. At the funeral, when the coffin was opened for the last look to be taken, the father stood upon one side and the mother on the other, and as they raised their eyes from the last look upon the features of their dead son, and met each other's gaze, they embraced each other impulsively, and were reconciled over the lifeless body of their boy. It became an occasion of gratitude to God, but how much better if they had never separated, and parents and children had lived together in love as God designed! Faithfulness, forbearance, and Christian principle would save many a household from estrangement and sorrow.—*N. Y. Ad.*

We are glad that Conference has accepted a proposal whereby all candidates accepted year by year will be examined before the July Committee in their knowledge of the Bible. In addition to the purely theological questions, questions will henceforth be set to test the candidates, according to their previous opportunities, in their acquaintance with the English Bible. It is time the standard of attainment in this respect were decidedly raised.—*Meth. Recorder.*

New-York, despite its conglomerate population, is not yet large enough or cosmopolitan enough to support regular religious services according to the ritual of the Greek Church, and yesterday a second attempt to establish a branch of that church in this city was abandoned. The missionary spirit in the Eastern Church is not strong, and henceforth, probably, the Patriarch and the Holy Synod of Russia will leave benighted New-York to its fate.—*N. Y. Tribune.*

The "revenge of history" are finely illustrated, and also emphasized, by the fact mentioned by Dr. Beard, in a letter to the *Congregationalist*, that when the German Emperor rode into the Franco-German war, at the close of the eighty members of his personal staff were descendants of the Huguenots who had been formerly driven from France at the dictates of Papal authorities. It is a long account which France has to settle for the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

As always, the Jews in Toulon and Marseilles have escaped the ravages of the cholera. Of the Jewish community of 4,000 souls in Marseilles, only seven have been seized with this disease. Two of these seven were life-long invalids; another was ninety-seven years of age, and two others had not observed the Jewish law. The *American Hebrew* of this city ascribes this comparative immunity to the dietary laws of Judaism, and lifts up its voice against "the unclean offal feeding things of sea and land" which Christian epicures prize so highly.—*New York Paper.*

The *National Baptist* insists that missionaries should return home at stated intervals, for the restoration of their health, and not less for the good of the mind and soul. They have for years lived amid those who were babes spiritually and mentally. The missionary has had to give, to impart; he has felt virtue going out of him, oozing from his fingers' ends. He needs to receive, to fill up, to recuperate. He needs also to be in sympathy with the churches at home, to be in their atmosphere.

Not very far from the Conference chapel may be seen a clergyman of the Established Church whose attire is notorious and who has been known to prostrate himself before "the altar," and then, when questioned by a parishioner, to explain his conduct by alleging weakness in his back. The parishioner said he thought the weakness was higher than the back, and it is added that the experiment has not yet been repeated. The weakness, however, is likely to continue, and to show itself in various ways.—*London Methodist.*

He is the best Christian who is the most charitable in his judgments of others; and he is no Christian at all who does not exercise that divine charity which "thinketh no evil." Frederick W. Robertson says: "Be sure that it is the severe and pitiless censor of others' faults on whom you may, at a venture, safely fix the charge, 'Thou art the man.'" Harsh judgments prove guilt rather than innocence. It was the impure Pharisee who was eager to stone to death the woman taken in adultery. It was the immaculate Saviour who said to her: "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more."—*Central Ad.*

We occasionally hear of cases of gross superstition in remote country districts. The following "true story" deserves to be classed with them. At a recent meeting of a Board of Guardians, not a hundred miles from London, it was stated that three girls who had gone in to service from the workhouse had all been sent back on account of a clergyman who was present unmarked. "Well, they will be confirmed shortly." "But surely," said one of the Guardians, "you do not think these girls fit for confirmation?" "Oh, I don't know," replied the clergyman, "it may do them some good." This reminds us of a story we once heard of a priest who sprinkled a young Protestant lady in Ireland with holy water, remarking, "If it does you no good, it will do you no harm."—*London Christian World.*

"THE MINISTRY OF THE AXES."

In that fresh and suggestive volume entitled "Studies in Matthew," by the distinguished Welshman, Rev. J. Cynnddylan Jones, there is a chapter on John the Baptist in which occurs this passage:

"And now also the axe is laid unto the roots of the trees." John the Baptist was wielding the axe to cut down with fell strokes the mighty overshadowing trees of Jewish superstition and corruption. Luther also was swinging the axe to clear Europe of the mighty, overshadowing trees of popish superstition and corruption. I am not sure but the great need of the present day is a powerful, ponderous axe; and the next great need a strong, robust man to wield it with a firm, resolute purpose against the colossal falsehoods which bring disaster into trade and dishonor upon religion. O for the ministry of the axes once more!"

This he said in paying tribute to the singularly sincere and faithful ministry of the Baptist. Trained in the wilderness and by immediate communion with his Lord—aloof from the blandishments and deceits of fashionable society—his was a transparent character and an honest purpose. He meant to do an imperative and thorough work. The idea of compromise, condonement, or concealment never occurred to his candid mind. And what his clear, rigid spiritual discernment saw to be evil, he rebuked with vigor and courage. To his honest eye sin was just as sinful under the purple of royalty as under the rags of poverty. The accidents of position or fortune were no protection from his searching glance and withering rebuke. No wonder, therefore, that he suffered imprisonment and yielded up his life a glorious martyrdom to duty. He would rebuke the sin of Herod as readily as the humblest, most obscure peasant. His was a thorough and sincere, not a superficial and perfunctory work. He laid the axe unto the roots of the trees. Sin was not to be bruised, but exterminated—not condoned, but uprooted.

We quite agree with our author that such a ministry is "the need of the present day." Times and seasons do not affect essential truth. Its methods of presentation may vary, but the truth itself must be as prominent, and luminous as the eternal fires of heaven. With the growth of wealth and social refinement, sin becomes more subtle and perilous. Its guastliness assumes a fair exterior, and with almost infinite plausibility it is enthroned in our domestic, social, commercial and civil habits and customs. Think of the methods employed and applauded in political conventions and campaigns, and by professedly Christian men. How devious and devilish are the ways of commercial ingenuity, the inventions of active office-bearers in the Church of Christ. In fashionable high life, the nets and snares that entangle and entice youthful virtue and ambition into prodigality and profligacy are not infrequently woven by the fair deft fingers of artful church-women. To warn and to save the people from these dangers and evils, made more dangerous and deadly by the applause of the multitude, we need "the ministry of the axes." Scarcifying will not do, the diseased limb must be amputated or death will ensue. Pruning a thorn-bush will not make it produce grapes; it must be uprooted and replaced by a different plant. The hurt must not be healed slightly. Nothing less than a ponderous axe laid at the roots of the trees will accomplish the mighty results so much needed.

"The ministry of axes" preaches the gospel of conviction of sin. Men are not flattered with the idea that sin is a slight spiritual aberration, but a transgression of the law of God worthy of eternal death. And just here is the secret of so much superficial religion in the Church. The depth of conviction is the measure of faith

and consequent zeal. If the axe is laid unto the root of every tree, and conviction is thorough, vivid, and profound, conversion will be clear, fervent and active. St. Jerome has wisely said: "He that hath slight thoughts of sin never had great thoughts of God." Our appreciation of a Saviour is measured by our perceptions of sin and its infinite consequences. We call ours a great salvation, because it rescued us from imminent and great peril.

Revivals of religion are only born of such preaching. Men must first know that they are sinners before they will fly to a Saviour. Sin must be seen and heard in order to appreciate and love the peaceful brow of Calvary. We plead, therefore, for a revival of "the ministry of the axes."—*N. O. Ad.*

THE AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY.

The impulse given to the circulation of the Scriptures in most of the languages and dialects of the world by two great Bible societies, the American and British and Foreign, is hardly appreciated. The American Society has had a career of usefulness covering nearly threescore and ten years, and has circulated almost forty-four million copies of the Scripture, while the British and Foreign Society has given no fewer than one hundred million copies. Other British and Continental societies bring the grand total up to over one hundred and eighty millions. The amount of money expended by these societies in their work is enormous.

There is little of interest in the reports from the various states; but those from foreign countries are well worth reading. Concerning Cuba, it is stated that in former years the intolerance of the rulers prevented any organization for Bible work; but agents and colporteurs are now doing an excellent preparatory work there. In some places the agent, the Rev. Thomas L. Gulick, was welcomed, and invited to preach by the mayor himself, and he found all parts of the island accessible to colporteurs. He was surprised to find the people so willing to buy books and listen to the preaching of the Gospel. In Mexico the most effective work is done by colporteurs, two of whom are believed to have been killed, as they have not been heard from. An agent, who made a tour of the western coast of South America, found everywhere a ready sale for the Scripture, and people anxious to hear the Gospel. None of the civil authorities offered any obstacle; on the contrary, in some places they facilitated the work of the agent. In Brazil, as usual, the colporteurs have met with ridicule, abuse, and opposition. Some of the Bibles were at once destroyed at the instigation, in every instance, of priests; but the results of the year were not discouraging.

In Russia the bishops and other ecclesiastical authorities have expressed themselves as greatly pleased with the munificent aid the American Bible Society has given to the Russian Bible Society in the circulation in Eastern Siberia. The total distribution the past year amounted to about 90,000 copies. The work in Esthonia has also been very encouraging. In Austria the priestly influence is strong and vigilant against the introduction of the Bible into families, and not infrequently people are so prejudiced against it that they will not even touch it.

The report for Turkey, after speaking of the difficulty in obtaining the Government permit for the reprint of the Scripture in Arabic, states, as a noteworthy fact, that there has been a large increase in the Turkish and Arabic Scriptures. The demand for the Arabic Scriptures is chiefly among the Christian population, but the sale to the Moslems of Syria and Egypt is constantly increasing. The hostility of the Government, however, to the spread of the Bible is increasing.

The Greek Government has not fallen in its desires behind the Turkish, and has in some respects effected more of hindrance, succeeding, in some places, in driving the colporteur from his post. Egypt has signalized its freedom from the thrall of an exclusively Moslem government by an increase of more than 4000 copies of the Scriptures in its circulation.

In Persia both the nominal Christians and the Moslems are bitterly opposed to the spread of the Bible, there is but little religious liberty, and the Mohammedans are very illiterate. These are the chief difficulties. There is not much that is encouraging. In the other countries of Asia, India, China, and Japan, Bible work forms an important part of missionary progress, as also in the South Seas and in Africa.

CONSCIOUS SALVATION.

The Rev. E. J. Brailford, of Edinburgh, in speaking in the British Wesleyan Conference about Methodism in Scotland, said: The iceberg of Calvinism may be out of sight, but the air in many places is terribly cold, and the way in which Methodism proclaims a free, present, a full salvation is very warm and welcome. I have again and again been thankful that the teaching of our Church was so explicit regarding the assurance of salvation by the witness of the Spirit. I have met with many who have been brought up even in evangelical Churches who have never realized the glorious privilege of conscious salvation, and I have seen them receive the glad tidings. There are many beautiful sights in that glorious country, but none more beautiful than to see the cloud of doubt lifting from one and another as the sunshine of conscious acceptance with God came pouring in. The class-meeting, too, I have learned to value. I have valued it as the safe enclosure for rescued souls. After Mr. Moody's visit the ministers of the city were summoned to consider what had best be done with the new converts to prevent their relapse into the world. There was much embarrassment, and I felt thankful that when the Master sent to our Church any great catch of fish in the Gospel net we had tanks of living water to put them in. It is true that Scotch people in many places are not in sympathy with the class-meeting as a condition of membership, but wherever there is true spiritual life there must be by the laws of affinity an expression. They who fear the Lord must speak often one to another. I have one member who comes every Tuesday twelve miles to attend the class-meeting, and the fresh, sincere, Bible-woven experience of the Scotch Methodist would do even the Lancashire or Yorkshire Methodist good to hear. But, above all, the way in which Methodism can deal with anxious souls must ever give us an important place even in the presence of the splendid Presbyterian Churches of the land. Whatever the Methodist preacher may be able to do, he is credited with an unerring power of pointing the penitent soul to the wounds of the Redeemer. Some years ago a poor woman, some miles from Edinburgh, in great distress, could find no relief, and at last asked advice of a Presbyterian elder, who sent her to the Methodist chapel, saying, "There they understand these things." She went. Thomas Akroyd was preaching; and she found Him whom her soul sought for. I saw her a few weeks ago. She is almost blind, but endures, as seeing Him who is invisible. The memory of what Dunbar Chapel was in the days of A. M'Aulay is still fresh in Scotland, but indeed that is what every Methodist chapel has been in some degree—a place where the anxious soul is directed by the shortest way to the foot of the Cross. Not all—perhaps few—of those brought in are enrolled as members with us; but what of that? Al- though many sheep that are brought back from their wanderings pass into the fold without the Methodist mark upon their shoulders, I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

THE CHURCH PAPER.

"My people mortify me. I cannot get them to take the Church paper, and as a consequence, they know but little about the Church and take but little interest in it." This is the utterance of an old and faithful pastor, who knows the value of the Church paper among his people. His experience is sadly the experience of many others. The reading Christian is the efficient one—the leader, the helper in every good work. We pity the pastor who has to serve a non-reading people. His work is hard, unsatisfactory, and barren of the results that should flow from the preaching of the Word. However good the seed, the harvest will be but a scanty one unless there is good, well prepared soil for its reception. However intelligent the people may be about the markets, politics, and all secular matters, there is barren soil for the Gospel unless they are readers of the best Church literature. Ignorance here is ignorance of the highest demands of nature.

Intelligence is one of the greatest needs of the Church to-day. Religious intelligence cannot be procured without reading. The man who makes the discovery of an agency by which our people can be made a reading people will have built himself a monument. Much can be done by the ministry in an active canvass in each congregation. A mere mention from the pulpit amounts to but little. Devise means to put the paper into the hands of the children; this secures them as active workers in the Church of the future, and paves the way for standard literature. This is the most hopeful soil now before God's husbandmen. A gain here has the promise of future as well as present good to the Church.—*Richmond Chris. Ad.*

THE PRAYER-BOOK.

A growing section of clergy and laity in England are striving to promote the revision of the Prayer-book. A Bill is to be introduced into Parliament at the instance of the Prayer-book Revision Society. It proposes to cancel the Ornaments Rubric immediately preceding the Order for Morning Prayer, and to enact instead of it a provision that ministers saying the public prayer or administering the sacraments or other rites of the Church shall wear a plain white surplice with black scarf, and, if graduates, the hood of their degree, but no other vestment or ornament whatever. In all places where the words "priest" or "priests" occur the words are to be changed into "minister" or "ministers" except in passages of Holy Scripture, or where the order of the ministry, as distinguished from the diaconate, is intended. In the former case no alteration is proposed, in the latter the words will be changed to "presbyter" or "presbyters." The title of the Absolution in morning and evening prayer is to be altered thus: "A declaration that God pardoneth penitent sinners," and in the declaration itself the words "power and" before "commandment to His ministers" are to be omitted, while, instead of "absolution, and remission," there are to be substituted the words "free and full forgiveness." In the first exhortation in the Communion Office the words "absolution, together with," before "ghostly counsel and advice," are to be omitted. The form of absolution in the Communion Office is not to be altered, but in the rubric preceding it the words, "Then shall the priest (or the bishop being present) stand up, and turning himself to the people, pronounce the absolution," are to be changed thus, "Then shall the minister (or the bishop being present) stand up, and turning himself to the people, say as follows." The rubric in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick regarding the administration of the Sacrament, together with the absolution itself, is to be entirely omitted. In the Ordination Service, and also in the Form for the consecration of Archbishops and Bishops, the words, "Receive the Holy Gospels," are to be altered into a prayer. No alteration is proposed in the baptismal service for either infants or adults.—*Eccl. Churchman.*