

Pastor and People.

The Free Church of Scotland.

When the Free Church of Scotland sprang into vigorous existence in one day, under the guidance of certain great leaders, there were not wanting prophets who confidently foretold her speedy decline and fall when her fit of enthusiasm should be over, and her chief champions removed by death. Yet when Chalmers, Welsh, Gordon, Hugh Miller, and a host of other worthies, lay and clerical, disappeared from the scene, the Church which they had so mightily helped to reconvert to the country and the world continued not the less to prosper. Indeed, though nearly all the mighty men of the Disruption have in swift succession been stricken down on their field of labour, that remarkable religious community to which they gave their strength has never been checked in her career, but at this moment enjoys the highest degree of prosperity. If she has lost more of her distinguished ornaments than any of her neighbours, the Free Church still possesses admirable men on whom have fallen the mantles of her departed Disruption chiefs. Such men guide her councils and conduct her debates in the spirit of Chalmers, Cunningham, and Candlish, while a body of still younger ministers and elders, less eminent, but full of promise, are growing up to be the leaders and ornaments of the Church in the years about to come.

But it is not human leadership, however able or skilful, that has given such prominence and power to the Free Church of Scotland. The Divine blessing has bestowed on her a strength and vitality which can spring from no earthly source. The extraordinary energy and liberality of her members have been nursed and stimulated by the preaching of the Word and the power of prayer. Surely the Great Head of the Church has had a special purpose to accomplish in so calling forth the energies of this body of His followers. We do not go beyond the simple truth when we say that the Free Church of Scotland has already set an instructive example and taught various important lessons to other Churches. Her ministers and people probably have not sufficiently reflected on, or fully understood, many of the ends that have been served by their peculiar testimony and manifold labours. It is not for them, however, to cherish any spiritual elation, or sense of Christian superiority, as they look at their honourable position and unexampled success. Their duty, rather, is to realise the responsibility thrown upon their Church by the blessing she has received, and to carry on, in a spirit of real humility, that great spiritual work for which a true Church of Christ exists.

The late General Assembly of the Free Church marks an era in her history. Her finances were found to be highly flourishing. In spite of the decline of trade that afflicts the Scottish as well as the English and Irish centres of industry, the funds raised during the year amounted to the magnificent and unprecedented sum of £584,450. We need hardly remark that this far surpasses the total amount of State endowments possessed by the Established Church. The Sustentation Fund amounted to £106,427, showing an increase since last year of £2,780. This furnished to the great majority of the ministers a dividend of £108. In a year or two all the ministers of the Church, with few exceptions, will probably receive from this fund more than £200. These incomes, with the manse, glebes, and pecuniary supplements which the ministers variously enjoy, will form at least a fair approximation to a proper standard of competence and comfort. But the Free Church, with all similar Churches which she can either lead or follow, should not be satisfied with less than £800 a year for each of her ordained ministers. Such a provision is palpably within her reach. Her people have only to put their hands a little deeper into their pockets to furnish the requisite funds. Such an adequate support of her ministry is her true policy, as well as her plain duty. The best talent in the country, when allied to piety, should be attracted into the Christian ministry, and justly encouraged by material as well as moral and spiritual support.

The Union of the Reformed Presbyterians with the Free Church is the great event of the Scottish ecclesiastical year. The disjunction of the United Presbyterians in England from the mother Church, rendered necessary by another impending Union, is an event of almost equal importance in a moral point of view; but the entrance of the old time-honoured Cameronians into a Church which they consider the best representative of Scottish Presbyterianism, has for Scotchmen who know the ecclesiastical history of their country, a peculiar and surpassing interest. The moral effect of this Union in Scotland will be enduring. It is a tribute to the national and historic position of the Free Church which cannot fail to impress contemporary observers, and will certainly be noticed by future historians. The Reformed Presbyterians have always had a high character for historical knowledge and ecclesiastical honesty; and if they have recognized in the Free Church the true Church of Scotland to which they and their forefathers have always appealed, their testimony must be received with that deference which it undoubtedly deserves. Neither Voluntarism nor Erastianism commands their homage or records with their principles. Yet they are men of their times, and can speak with respect of Churches with which they decline to be incorporated. With the United Presbyterians especially they have much in common, and they were lately prepared to unite with them on a basis that satisfied the majority of the Free Church.

Whether the union just consummated at Edinburgh will hasten the advent of that wider union which was postponed a few years ago may be a matter of some uncertainty; but in the nature of things one Presbyterian Union in Scotland will prepare the way for others that are still to be desired, and are within the range of possibility. Since 1820 no less than five unions have taken place between various sections of Scottish Presbyterianism. The four first of these have been entirely successful, and there is every reason to believe that

the interesting union just formed will turn out fully as well as any of its predecessors. If the respective principles and testimonies of the Free and the Reformed Presbyterian Churches have been found no obstruction to union, there is surely little reason to fear that the difference between the Free Church and the United Presbyterians will continue to be regarded in any influential quarter as an impassable gulf. Events will prove more powerful than arguments in bringing about another and greater Presbyterian Union in Scotland. What has just taken place at Edinburgh, and what is about to take place at Liverpool, will do more for the cause of union than formal debates or protracted controversies. — Weekly Review, (organ English Presbyterian Church), London.

Sunday in Japan.

Hitherto, in Japan, their holidays known as *Ichi-Roku* days, have been held on the 1st, 6th, 11th, 16th, 21st, 26th, and 31st of each month, being on the days which have a 1 or a 6 in their ordinal numbers. They have thus had from six to seven holidays per month, on which all public business was suspended. It was found that this arrangement conflicted with the practice of all Christian nations, and was productive of great inconvenience, especially as many Christians in the service of the Japanese Government claimed Sunday as a day of rest. We learn from the Japan Weekly Mail, of March 18, that a notification has been issued by the Japanese Prime Minister, abolishing the *Ichi-Roku* holidays, and proclaiming a forthcoming substitution of the first day of the week, or the day of the Christian Sabbath instead. The Mail gives the text of the "Notification," as follows:

[NOTIFICATION 27]

(To In, Sho, Shi, Cho, Fu, and Ken.) "It is hereby notified that up to the present time, the 1st and 6th days have been observed in the government offices as the days of rest. But from the 1st of April next, all government offices will be closed on Sunday, and will be open only until noon on Saturday.

SANJO SANEXOSHI, Prime Minister." It is a remarkable circumstance that at the very point of time, when the friends of the Sabbath in this country have been literally passing through a fiery ordeal in defence of the Christian Sabbath—an ordeal, by the way, which is likely to be renewed by those who, on various pretexts are eager to convert the Sabbath during the Centennial, into a day of demoralizing traffic, and unrestrained indulgence in pleasure seeking—it is remarkable, we say, that at this very juncture the heathen empire of Japan should have determined to adopt the observance of the first day of the week as a day of rest. This notable and unexpected occurrence should supply an additional motive for the Christian people of America to stand by the Sabbath, and a new incentive to extraordinary efforts to defeat the exertions of those who are striving for selfish motives of mere gain to degrade that holy day from its supremacy.

Mistakes.

It is a mistake for a pastor to suppose that he can have his people take an interest in the religious movements of the day without having a religious periodical circulated among them. It is a mistake for a pastor to suppose that his people can be acquainted with the progress and wants of his own denomination, and contribute liberally to the support of its institutions, unless they are readers of a paper devoted especially to the interests of that branch of the Christian Church. It is a mistake for any one to suppose that he can, by the same expenditure in any other way, bring as much religious information before his family, as by subscribing and paying for a well conducted religious paper. It is a mistake for a man to begin to practice economy by stopping his religious paper. To do this is to deprive himself and family of a great benefit. It is a mistake to suppose that a paper can be made exactly what every one would like it to be. The general taste and wants must be consulted. It is a mistake for any one to think that editors can, by any possibility, admit to their columns every article that is sent to them. They must often decline contributions ably written, because space is demanded for something of present interest, of which the church and the world wish to read. It is a mistake for one who can compose lines containing a certain number of syllables to suppose himself a true born poet.

The Worship of Beneficence.

There are a good many Christians, excellent people too, who think beneficence is no part of religion, and hence feel little or no responsibility in regard to it. We once met a man who thought it a great sin to lift collections on the Sabbath because it was introducing worldly matters into the religious exercises. The poor man had never been taught to feel that it was as much a duty to give to the cause of God as to sing psalms and read the Bible; but he was only representative of a large class. They have thought that the real worship consists in the preaching, singing, and praying, with communion now and then, and that the money side of church service is much of a temporality, introduced as a necessity for keeping up the other, without embracing in it-of any religious character. Let all men and women remember that to give to the Lord is worship, and that a sermon, or even communion, with this part of the obligation denied, is likely to be fruitless, since it is not worshipping God with the whole heart.—United Presbyterian.

The habit of secret prayer furnishes to ourselves the best test of piety. There is the least temptation to its performance from improper motives of all the duties of religion. A man may preach merely to be seen of men; for the same reason he may give largely to objects of benevolence; and for the same reason he may be abundant, and loud, and long in public prayer. Such men were the Pharisees. But no such motive can reign in the closet.

The Pen Folk.

An English Baptist writes to the Christian World the following, which he wishes American Baptist papers to copy:

Robert Hall declares that close communion is "of the very essence of schism;" and Mr. Spurgeon, in a recent sermon, uttered words not less true than they are eloquent when he said, "The pulse of Christ is communion, and woe to the Church that seeks to cure the ills of Christ's Church by stopping its pulse." A story is often a more effective instrument than an abstract argument, and I am tempted to give an anecdote or two that I find related by a man of genius in the current number of the Scottish Baptist Magazine. In Paisley, at the beginning of the century, there existed a Baptist Church, whose history has been related in a wonderful little Book called "The Pen Fold." Its members held, in one sense, most Catholic views on the subject of Christian brotherhood, but, forgetting that the harmony of variety is more complete than that of uniformity, they contended that all Christian people of every tongue would ultimately come to see eye to eye with them. They were like the American Baptist editor, who, only the other day, denied that "it is good for the world that there should be any other Church than the Baptist in existence." One of these old Paisley Baptists, who is said to have been gentle beyond ordinary matters apart from his creed, became an object of ridicule to all his sensible neighbors from his exclusive spirit on that subject. He was arguing on one occasion with a Presbyterian seceder, when the latter, wearied with the continual iteration of the question, said, "Weel, weel, Thomas, we'll get that and many other things explained to us when we gang up by." "O yes," answered the imperturbable Thomas; "we'll be all Calvinists and Baptists in heaven, William." The same conceited spirit appeared in other forms. For example, at funerals they refused to rise from their seats, as the custom in Scotland is, during the prayer then offered, if it was offered by one belonging to other connections than theirs. They came as a society to hold a doctrine of "personal assurance," and this led to results in some of their own households that were infinitely pathetic. In one family the wife could only express a hope that she had entered the straight gate, and though she wisely abstained from disturbing her family peace by dwelling on her doubts, and was most docile and painstaking in all her duties as a wife, her husband brought her doctrinal unsoundness before the Church, and procured her separation from the Connexion. In the evening of the same day she handed her husband the books, as her custom had been on the Sabbath evenings; but he declined to worship with an unbeliever. On the following morning he, for the same reason, refused to give thanks at breakfast, and the poor wife, unwilling to forego that privilege, took such viands as she required to a place apart. They never broke bread together afterwards; but the gentle woman's heart was broken, and she did not survive long. The Church's action, and her husband's unbending orthodoxy, threw her into a decline. The only words she was known to say having reference to his treatment of her were, "His Judge shall be my Judge, and my Judge his Judge." Other cases of a similar kind occurred in that little Paisley Church, but none quite so pitiful. The husband of one matron attempted to do like the one I have spoken about; but his wife, without words, removed her food to another table when he refused to say grace along with her. However, he rose and placed her tea-things beside his own, saying, "Let us be as we have been, lass." She, with a smile, replied, "Thy heart's a good bit bigger than thy head." He withdrew from the Baptist Church shortly after—and soon there was no church to withdraw from, for the conceited spirit proved disastrous. And the reason why that little Scotch Church came to an end will, I believe, work in America to precisely the same issue, unless the close communionists are warned away in time from the revolting attitude in which they at present stand, separating themselves from the great universal Church of Christ.

Presbyterianism.

The Rev. Andrew Black has been expounding Presbyterian doctrine and church polity in the Cambridge Independent. He concludes his last letter as follows:—"The Hon. Arthur Ayrton, M. P., not long ago went the length of saying that he believed that 'Evangelical Presbyterianism was to be the salvation of England.' The late Dean Alford, shortly before his death, asked if the people of England would require to go north of the Tweed for their ecclesiastical polity; he was so tried at beholding the unsatisfactory state of matters that obtained! That the principles of Presbyterianism are to be found in the New Testament, no one who reads it with unprejudiced eyes but must acknowledge. Mr. Spurgeon is a Presbyterian; he rules elders. I once heard him testify that he was, and that he beloved Presbytery to be the form of church government outlined in the New Testament. A number of Congregational and Baptist ministers are Presbyterian in principle. Many of these have suffered so much from their want of a sufficient church polity that their craving for a more satisfactory one is not to be wondered at. The foremost Congregational layman in England acknowledged to me that among the Congregationalists there undoubtedly was the lack of a sufficient link between the minister and his church. In civil matters in this country, the conduct of persons is adjudicated by competent authorities and in a dignified way. Is this always the case in the ecclesiastical domain?"

There are lessons to be learned on earth which cannot be learned in heaven. The sneers of worldlings at the ministry are cheap as well as mean. It is very noticeable that when urgent appeals are made for sufferers near by, or missions to those far away, the responses from obdurate are prompt and large out of all proportion to their mean.

"To-day Thou Livest Yet."

"To-day thou livest yet; To-day turn thee to God."

A young student of law had settled himself in lodgings in Berlin. He felt ill; and a friend of his own, a young doctor, attended him, and watched over him with much self-denying love and patience. But both of them were far from God, and strangers to His promises of grace.

As the young student's illness increased, the doctor ordered his bed to be moved as far as possible from the window, that the strong light might not hurt him. So the sick man lay in the corner of his room, close to a very thin partition which divided his room from that of the master of the house. His bed had not long been removed before he heard, first in a low voice, then more distinctly, these words:—

"To-day thou livest yet; To-day turn thee to God; For, ere to-morrow comes, Thou mayest be with the dead."

These words were repeated again and again. He heard others too, but they did not fix themselves in his memory as these did. He could not get quit of them; it seemed as if they had been written on his heart in letters of fire, that could not be extinguished.

When his friend, the doctor, next came to see him, he took his hand, felt his pulse, and asked him kindly how he felt. But the sick man only fixed a piercing look on his face, and answered every question with nothing but—

"To-day thou livest yet; To-day turn thee to God; For, ere to-morrow comes, Thou mayest be with the dead."

"What is the matter with you?" said the doctor; "what has come over you? you are quite changed; what is the meaning of it? Were it not that the fever has abated, and your pulse is much quieter, I should say that your mind was wandering, and you were raving."

The only answer that he got was,

"To-day thou livest yet; To-day turn thee to God."

The doctor left him unwillingly; but on his own way home he could not get the look and the voice of his friend out of his memory.

When he visited him again the next day, he found him much better and calmer; but changed, grave, and earnest, Bible in hand, his former carelessness all gone. The work of grace had begun in his heart. And the doctor, too, opened his heart willingly to the Holy Spirit, who by the mouth of his friend had first spoken to him, and now strove for an entrance to his soul.

What a marvel of grace! It had so happened that, on the day that the sick man's bed was moved, the son of the master of the house had not learned his lesson at school. It was a lesson from the hymn-book, and consisted of that hymn, some words of which we have given. The father put the boy in the corner to learn his lesson there; and that was the very corner beside which the fever-patient had that morning been placed. The rooms were only divided by a very thin partition, through which the words of the boy's lesson had reached the sick man's ears, and by God's grace pierced his heart.—Translated from Appenzeller Sonntagsblatt.

Growing Old.

A man may die at three score and ten, and die all too early for his eternal peace. He has not wrought the will of God. On the other hand, a child may drop out of life, and not too soon. It had more true wisdom than the man of many years. The prediction of the prophet may be fulfilled, "And the child shall die a hundred years old." Years of time are not the measure of life. The truest life brings eternity into its embrace. There is a depth and broadness about it which time cannot span.

I think I can imagine the feeling of a man, when the consciousness that age is creeping on, first impresses itself upon him, when he says for the first time, "I am getting old; the morning of life is all gone; the best part is past. I am on the downhill side of life—only the remnant remains." A sad moment for him who lives for this world living for the world, and the world going from him—the best part gone. The idol slipping from his grasp, the while the worshipper clutches it, and he has nothing besides. Withering for the grave, and yet life's real work undone, and not begun; the very purpose for which God put him into the world cast aside. A sad state, nothing more sad! What solemn, dreary things must birth-days be to such a man! So many strokes of the death-knell heard beforehand! But Oh, not sad to the Christian to grow old! His work is done. The past has been given to God, the future dedicated to Him. And if he dies, immortal youth is before him. In reality, the Christian does not grow old. The earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolving, that is all; but the spirit is young. It has but just entered upon its immortal life, and it will grow young without ceasing. The clock cannot tick the moments of eternity, and that the spirit has already begun. Listen to what the late Dr. Guthrie says of his advancing years: "They say I am growing old, because my hair is silvered, and there are crows feet upon my forehead, and my step is not so firm and elastic as of yore. But they are mistaken. That is not me. The brow is wrinkled, but the brow is not me. This is the house in which I live; but I am young, younger now than I ever was before." O, blessed religion, which can make a man look down into the abyss of the grave and out into eternity with such a spirit as that!—Rev. John K. Allen.

At first they called them gin-mills, then bar-rooms, then sample-rooms, then parlors. Recently an advertisement read:—"A drink of the best whiskey in the world can be had at my picture gallery." An advertisement of a prominent whiskey dealer, now before us, states that he is still "taking orders for goods," and invites "patrons in his line to examine his list of articles." This is capital; and we shouldn't wonder if, by and by, at this rate of progression, grogeries should get to calling themselves ministers, public libraries, academies of sciences, or even homes for the friendless.

Plain Speaking.

Mr. Gladstone was abused through all moods and tenses by the Roman Catholic and ultra Liberal organs when he published his famous pamphlet on "Vaticanism," because, forsooth, he had clearly indicated the logical bearings of the new dogma. We observe, indeed, that the days of abusing him are not yet ended; for at a meeting of the Catholic Union in London, a few days ago, that new convert, Lord P. G. Osborne, had a passing shot at him; and yet, after all that has been said and written against him in reference to this matter, it is abundantly manifest from the occasional deliverances of even Roman Catholic dignitaries that he did not write or reason without book. Hear, for example, the utterances of an American bishop. Writing, some time ago, to a Romish journal of the United States, called the *Shepherd of the Valley*, Monsignor Kenrick, of Philadelphia, who most boldly advocated the dogma of Infallibility, said: "We confess that the Romish Church is intolerant—that is to say, it makes use of every means in its power to extirpate error and sin; but this intolerance is the logical and necessary consequence of its infallibility. It alone has the right to be intolerant, because it alone is the truth and possesses the truth. The church, therefore, tolerates heretics where it cannot do otherwise, but at the same time it hates them mortally, and exerts all its endeavours to annihilate them. For the same reasons princes truly Christian extirpate heresy radically in their kingdoms, and Christian states expel heretics as much as possible from their territories. If at this moment we abstain from persecuting heretics, we repeat it aloud, it is simply because we feel ourselves too weak for it, and because we should deem it yet more injurious than useful to the church we serve, being provoked to persecute." This certainly is explicit. Dr. Manning is not speaking so plainly yet, but the day is fast coming, it seems, when he won't need to be afraid.—Plain Words, Dublin, Ireland, April, 1876.

Proselytism.

Few things are more fitted to damage a community than an endeavor to draw aside individuals from the Christian brotherhood to our own sect, party, or church. There are surely greater things and lesser things in religion. It is very blessed to see ministers and people of all denominations meeting for prayer, counsel and fellowship. Now, what is more likely to interfere with this than the influence of the spirit of proselytism? and that one should be saying to another, "Here is the best place;" "Here is the right man to listen to; you ought to come with us?" I do not doubt that ten or twenty persons or more may, under such influence, be induced to detach themselves from one Christian community and to join another, but what will this be at the expense of? It will be at the expense of sowing mistrust over the entire spiritual fraternity. There will be mutual suspicion after that. Proselytism will break up our beautiful assemblies. In our meetings we must stand out against such courses. Whatever be our zeal for the truth, let us beware of interfering with the united company of the disciples. Let us take those to us from outside, for whom there is nobody to care. In that we shall add to the churches, and prove a true blessing to the land.—Rev. A. N. Somerville.

Random Readings.

ALL the vigour of our obedience is found in the realizing of our adoption.

WHATSOEVER tends to untune the heart for praise may you and I be led to avoid it.

By trusting your own soul you shall gain a greater confidence in men.

The heart too often like the cement of the ancient Romans, acquires hardness by time.

The thing which an active mind most needs, is a purpose and direction worthy of its activity.—Dove.

SOME people cannot drive to happiness with four horses, and others can reach the goal on foot.—Thackeray.

The sweetest month in the world is one that says civil things pleasantly, and talks no scandal.

The Gospel is not a remedy for a disease taken up on the occasion, but a gracious plan provided before the disease. God cannot be taken unawares.

CHRIST is our life: think then of Christ. He came to suffer, but also to be glorified; to be despised, but to be exalted also; to die, but also to rise again. If the labour alarm thee, seek its reward.

If you have not the faith of assurance, practice at least the faith of adherence. That, at least, is in your power. Cleave to God exactly as if you were certain of being accepted of Him at last, and thus, fulfilling His own conditions, you will be accepted of Him whether you are assured of it beforehand or not.

AND now, out of the writings and sayings and deeds of those who loudly proclaim the "rights of man" and the "rights of liberty," match me, if you can, with one sentence so sublime, so noble, one that will so stand at the bar of God hereafter, as this simple, glorious sentence of St. Paul's, in which he asserts the rights of Christian conscience above the claims of Christian liberty:—"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."

HERESIES are Satan's masterpieces; they are bulwarks to his throne, and pillars to his synagogue; all his deepest craft, all his most subtle and refined ingenuity seem devoted to them. He is the author of confusion, and in heresies he so commingles truth and error, that those who have not their senses exercised to discern between good and evil," cannot distinguish one from the other. The ignorant fall an easy prey to the heresy; while others timidly keep aloof, alike from the truth and its associated falsehood.—C. E. Fraser-Tyler.