

Contributors and Correspondents.

POLITICAL THEOLOGY.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Dear Sir,—In the "Presbyterian Sabbath School Visitor" for the 15th of the present month, an article appears to which I would call your attention. It is the first article in the number, and is entitled "The Young Voyagers." Two young men are represented on a trip up a river through some new and wild part of the country, and struck with the beauty of the scenery, they fall into a conversation on the course of divine Providence in the settlement of this continent, and especially on the fact that although many attempts were made by Roman Catholic nations to gain possession of it, the best portion of the continent was reserved for England, the great Protestant nation of the world. One of them says: "Great efforts were made by France and Spain to hold Florida, Louisiana, the great North-west and the Canadas, while events occurred to bring all these regions finally to become a portion of our own great country except in the case of the Canadas. These last, it is true, are still a province of Great Britain, but it seems highly probable that, at no distant day, they too will become a part of the United States of America. Indeed so far as we can read the future, it looks as if the United States would hereafter be co-extensive with North-America." This is certainly a very quiet and summary way to dispose of the future of Canada, and no doubt to the writer and many others in the States, it is "a consummation devoutly to be wished;" but with all due respect to the earnestness with which the sentiments are written we must take exception to them. We can readily believe that the writer had no ill will to Canada, and, indeed, that questions of international policy had very little place in his mind at the time. I can give him credit for writing with a sincere intention to stimulate feelings of thankfulness and godly patriotism in the minds of the children in his own great country, but what remains? That unconsciously he ignored our existence as a nation. That he is so steeped in what we may call the doctrine of annexation that his ideas on all subjects come forth colored by it as with the dye of nature. And, indeed, the best that charity can do is to believe that the article was admitted into the paper through the same unconsciousness of anything wrong.

Now, Sir, we are well aware, of course, that many Americans cherish the idea that it is their destiny to absorb the whole of this continent, and so long as it is kept as an idea or even expressed in legitimate ways we can have no ground for objection, but we must decidedly object to having it taught in our Sabbath Schools or embodied in our creed. Scarcely anything could be more insidious than to have such views disseminated among children as religious instruction in the form of attractive and interesting narratives. Patriotism is good, and godly patriotism is glorious. We can sympathize fully with the motive that would lead the people of any nation to teach their children to grow up filled as by an inspiration with the conviction that in the providence of God, a great destiny is before their country. But for the very reason that we so respect and honour this feeling, we would refrain from that which would interfere with it in the cases of others. With all respect for what is good and noble in the United States, and appreciation of their immense influence in the cause of freedom and religion in the world, we feel that we also have our place, and believe that Providence has appointed a work and a destiny on this continent perhaps co-extensive with, or it may be even greater than theirs. And the union, the annexation which we wish to see is that of sympathy, each working in our sphere for the advancement of civil and religious liberty, not that of absorption. Our own church possesses in its doctrines and organization the means of becoming one of the strongest bonds in such a union, but this cannot be if we see our political annihilation taught as a part of the religious instruction in the Sabbath Schools. What guarantee have we that we may not soon see an American Edition of Calvin's Institutes with an appendix containing the formula of the annexation of Canada to the United States?

This subject is of the greater importance that the publications of the Presbyterian Board are so widely circulated among us, and are received with a confidence which has been well merited. It may be said, these works are published in the States, and that we are going beyond our sphere when we interfere with them, but this defence can scarcely be urged.

The publications are intended for circulation in this country as well as in the States, and common fairness as well as Christian charity between two branches of the same church demands that anything so obnoxious should not be unnecessarily brought in. And however worthy of reliance these works are theologically, if they should be found to contain what is to us political heresy of such a kind our confidence would soon be shaken.

Yours very truly,

G. BRUCE.

OVERTAXING THE BRAIN.

BY GEORGE M. DEARD, M.D.

Brain-work is healthful. Statistics show, as far as statistics can reach a subject so complex, that in our modern society those who live exclusively or mainly by mental labour—clergymen, lawyers, physicians, artists, and men of letters—live, on the average, ten or fifteen years longer than those who live exclusively or mainly by muscular labour. Clergymen especially—as I long since pointed out, and the discovery has been confirmed by many observers—live about as long as farmers and very much longer than mechanics and artisans. The causes for this greater healthfulness and longevity of the intellectual classes are manifold. Better sanitary knowledge, more careful obedience to the laws of mental hygiene, high social comforts, and freedom from depressing surroundings—all these factors go hand in hand with the inherent healthfulness of brain-work to make a high standard of longevity among brain-workers. The great and wonderful increase in average longevity under civilization is explained in a similar way.

There is a point, however, at which brain-toil becomes a dissipation, and, instead of being life-lengthening, it is life-shortening. This point varies with different individuals, and with the same individual at different times.

One of the great and growing evils of our time is the temptation that continually besets our mercantile and literary classes, especially in our large cities, to pass this safety point, to go beyond the limit where labour of the brain is healthful.

Without attempting to exhaust a subject which is large enough for a volume, I may here give one or two practical suggestions, derived from my experience in the treatment of nervous diseases, that may perhaps be of service to the very large class who suspect that they are overtaxing the brain, and to the much larger class who are doing so without suspecting it.

1. Persistent sleeplessness is a symptom that should always bring home to us the query whether we are not in some way overworked or overwinded. Inability to sleep is one of the most constant precursors and accompaniments of cerebral exhaustion and decline. I have been informed by excellent and direct authority that Mr. Greeley stated during the last campaign that for fifteen years he had not had a good sound sleep. To those of us who have been accustomed to see him dozing on the horse-cars, in the omnibuses, and at church this statement seems quite surprising; but it is probable that by these extemporaneous naps he sought to make up for the wakeful hours of the night.

Sleeplessness is oftentimes the prayer of the cerebral lobes for relief from work and worry, it should never go long unanswered. Some of the greatest and healthiest natures of the world—like Goethe and Thorwaldsen—have had a "talent for sleeping," which made all their other talents shine at their best for the brain is never so brilliant as just after fully awaking from sound repose. Sir Walter Scott found by experience that his mind was clearer for thinking out his novels just after rising, and for that reason he took pains to prolong as much as possible his morning toilet; and in the same way we may explain the fact that Calvin loved to compose while lying in bed.

In great and pressing crises, when our work and our causes for worry are troubled, the temptation is very strong to cut short our hours of sleep; but these are just the occasions when, if possible, we should sleep the most. General Grant is credited with the statement that he owed the preservation of his health during the late war to the fact that, come what might, he always would have his eight or nine hours sleep. At one time, during the Vicksburg campaign, I believe, he began to suffer. Gladstone has declared that when he enters his home he leaves the cares of state behind him.

Sleep is food for the brain. If a penny saved is a penny earned, then to economize nerve-force by rest is, within certain limits, to supply nerve-force by eating and drinking.

The motto of the overtaxed brain-worker should ever be: More sleep, more sleep, and as much as possible of folding of the hands to sleep. By day or night, after meals, or before, early or late, in the horse-car or on the ferry-boat, we should welcome each desire to doze as an angel from Heaven. The habit of very early rising—which, under the old dispensation, before the era of the telegraph, steam-power, the press, and other agencies that rob us of our nerve-force, was a virtue—we in this year 1873 should with all our might avoid. Early to bed and late to rise makes the modern brain-toiler healthy and wise.

2. Mental despondency and moral decline, especially in old age, ought to cause us to look well to our ways and see whether we are not doing and suffering too much. The moral and reasoning faculties constitute the crown of humanity. They are the highest and most complex development of the mind; and, consequently, they are the most delicate to receive impressions of evil, the first among the mental powers to hang out the signal of distress when the brain is in danger.

When a man who has previously been kind, affectionate, happy, and hopeful suddenly or gradually becomes irritable, ugly, excessively depressed and despondent, and when these symptoms continue as though they had come to stay, then we may be well assured that something is wrong in the upper story. Some slight trouble it may be; but one which, neglected, may lead to physical bankruptcy.

The meaning of such symptoms is: Resist that worrying station; call in the aid of younger brains, let that book you hoped so soon to launch rest longer on the stock; take in a reef—a double one, if possible—and prepare for a storm that may tax all your skill and patience before you are safely through it.

A loss of moral enthusiasm in advanced life has been noticed in a number of our prominent statesmen and public men, who have overtaxed the brain and have not

needed the warnings that Nature gave them to repose. Daniel Webster and Horace Greeley illustrated very forcibly in their later days the sad effect of constant mental excitement and anxiety on the moral nature. It was exhaustion of nerve-force very largely that caused these two eminent Americans to desert, in their declining years, the principles to which they had devoted their lives. Both died of broken hearts; but the brain was wearing out long before the heart was broken. If Mr. Greeley had worked and worried less in his early manhood and in his prime, he could have done more and better in his later years. The very violence of his enthusiasm for moral reform caused him to lose that enthusiasm prematurely. Had he been less devoted to the Republic, he would now be living, and would have been able to devote ten years more to her service. It was the very excess of effort that was required to establish the party of moral ideas that caused him to desert that party in his old age.

The defections of men like Sumner and others from principles to which their lives have been consecrated may be similarly explained. Through the very excess of their young enthusiasm they early wear themselves out.

To work hard without overworking, to work without worrying, to do just enough without doing too much—these are the great problems of the future. Our earlier Franklin taught us to combine industry with economy; our "later Franklin" taught us to combine industry with temperance; our future Franklin—if one should arise—must teach us how to combine industry with the art of taking it easy.

THE WORLD WITHOUT SUNDAY.

Think how the abstraction of the Sabbath would hopelessly enslave the working classes, with whom we are identified. Think of labor thus going on in one monotonous and eternal cycle, limbs forever on the rack, fingers forever straining, the brow forever sweating, the feet forever plodding, the brain forever throbbing, the shoulders forever dropping, the loins forever aching, the restless mind forever scheming.

Think of the beauty it would efface, the merry-heartedness it would extinguish, of the giant strength it would tame, of the resources of nature it would crush, of the sickness it would bring, of the projects it would wreck, of the groans it would extort, of the lives it would immolate, and of the cheerless graves it would prematurely dig! See them toiling and moping, sweating and frothing, grinding and howling, weaving and spinning, sewing and gathering, moving and repairing, raising and building, digging and planting, striving and struggling—in the garden and in the field, in the granary and the barn, in the factory and in the mill, in the warehouse and in the shop, on the mountain and in the ditch, on the roadside and in the wood, in the city and in the country, out at sea and on the shore, in the day of brightness and of gloom. What a picture would this world present if we had no Sabbath!

AN AFFECTING STORY.

About twenty years ago I was called out at midnight to the bedside of one of my parishioners. About sunrise I stopped to the door facing the "negro quarters" for the morning air. I had been standing there but a moment when my attention was arrested by a very old colored woman with a staff in one hand, and clinging to the side of her lowly cabin with the other, her body bent almost in a horizontal position. With great difficulty she sunk down on her stool in front of the door, and raised her hands and eyes very devoutly to heaven. I went where she was, and I think I may safely say such language I never before or since heard fall from mortal lips.

It seemed inspired. It was more the language of a seraph than of a poor, ignorant, untutored slave. I have a thousand times reproved myself that I did not take it down as it fell from her lips, but it is impossible for me to recall it now. She gave me an outline of her history. Her master lived in Maryland; he was unfortunate, and his property, including his slaves, was put under the hammer. "My husband and children were all sold and torn from me, and when they took my youngest away, clinging to my neck, it did seem my very heart would break. All alone I was brought out into the wilds of Kentucky. I was lonely and wretched. I lived in a dark world and had no light. One day the thought came to me, maybe if I had religion it would comfort me, but I had no one to teach me. But I thought I would pray. This only seemed to increase my darkness and misery. But one day it did seem to me that the glory of God filled my soul with light and joy." For a moment she paused, as if that happy day had once more dawned on her memory, and then added: "Sir, you may think I harbor bad feelings toward those who took my husband and children from me. No, no," as the tears started from her eyes, "if they had known what I know, they would never have done that. So far from being angry with them, I pity and forgive them, and pray for them night and day. Last night, sir, I did not close my eyes in sleep, but spent the whole night in prayer and praise, and at times I am so overpowered with a sense of the love and grace of God, that I have to pray the Lord to stay his hand, lest I faint or die under the wonderful displays of such an exceeding weight of glory." Here was the devoutest saint and the happiest human being I ever saw—one of God's hidden ones. I had never heard any one speak of her. I asked the family about her. "Oh," they said, "old granny has been going on in that way for the last forty years." For the last twenty she had been amid the brighter glories of the third heavens. T. H. C.

But if thou seekest thyself, thou shalt surely find thyself, but to thine own destruction.

If thou shouldst see another openly sin, or commit some heinous offence, yet oughtest thou not to think the better of thyself; for thou knowest not how long thou shalt be able to stand.

HEROES WANTED.

Dr. Jolia Hall thinks there are opportunities in every day life for deeds of courage amounting to heroism. He says:

We venture to suggest a few quite-accessible situations, in which, as the notices say, "enterprising persons of both sexes" can distinguish themselves, and benefit the community in a greater or less degree, according to circumstances. The list of openings can be extended indefinitely.

1. Let all youthful smokers conquer the growing habit; and all masticators of the weed spare their mouths and public highways. It is unnecessary to discuss here the propriety or otherwise of these indulgences. It is enough that the victory over them demands coolness and courage, to which many are not equal.

2. Let all young men who have begun to enjoy a "friendly glass" forego it at once, even though it be presented by the fairest hands, on the gayest holidays, or urged with varied bantering and entreaty at the most brilliant table.

3. Let all ladies whose tastes and judgment revolt against absurd fashions ignore them. Why should free Americans be ruled by the caprices of a few modistes, or ordered how to dress by the magazine writer? Why should they submit in grumbling discontent to irresponsible tyranny, obedience to which is ruinously costly? Why should Miss Smith be required by fashion to drag silk, at five dollars a yard, through the mud, while Mr. Smith is at his wit's end about the grocer's bill?

4. Let young ladies dare to go home at rational evening hours. Their color, health, spirits, lives, in some instances, will be saved by such courage. We do not sympathize with the cynic who approves of this absurd inversion of night and day, on the ground that the silly women who practice it are thus killed off, to the gain of society. Many who are capable of good things suffer in the multitude. Here is a fine occasion for feminine courage to rescue endangered lives.

5. Let young men wear old gloves, hat, and coat, till they can honestly afford the new. It requires uncommon courage, but it will have good results. Men schooled to such deeds of heroism will refuse to endorse bad bills, will not vote for scamps, nor kneel in the mud to scoundrels who give lavishly what they have gained lawlessly, nor take with pride the hand of a villain, however exalted.

6. Let men refuse their names to all papers, the contents of which they cannot personally vouch for, including testimonials. Any man actually out of Sing Sing can get a testimonial, and you may see a dozen names testifying to the excellence of one whom each of the dozen signers will own to be worthless. How are they caught? By being taken in detail, and each one told what the rest are going to do. No one likes to be the one to refuse. Here is a splendid field for heroic deeds!

WHY?

A little boy returned from school one day and bounded into the house, after the harum scurum fashion of healthy and happy little fellows.

"This is my home! This is my home! This is my home!" he exclaimed, as he tossed off the apron his sunny curls.

His mother said, "Why is it your home, Willie? The house next door is almost exactly like this. Suppose you go in there and hang up your cap in the entry; wouldn't that be your home then as much as this?"

"My home! No, mamma, no, of course not!"

"But why?"

"Why! Why you don't live there, mamma! 'Spose any place would be home without you?"

WHAT A CLASS OF LITTLE BOYS DID.

At one of our large religious meetings in the country, there was received a beautiful note. On opening it we found ten names of ten little Sabbath school boys, and ten dollars. The note said, in substance, that "one year ago I said to my class of little boys, Can we not do something for the salvation of the world? I propose this to you: Each boy bring each Sabbath two pennies, and I will keep your accounts for you, and we will see how much we can do in one year for Home Missions." The little boys went to work with a will to save up and earn all the pennies they could for their missionary work. The result was an offering from that class of little boys, of ten dollars. This came just from a little thoughtfulness on the part of that teacher. How many teachers will go and do likewise? Train your children for Christian work as you are training them for Christ. He has no use for idlers in His kingdom.

LOVE'S QUESTION.—A little girl often followed her father, when he came into the house, with the question, "Father, what can I do for you?" And never was she happier than when he gave her something to do for him.

Once he said, perhaps tired with her asking, "Child, why do you ask that question so often?"

"O, father," she answered, with two great tears swelling in her eyes, "because I can't help it."

It was love that put the question, and her readiness to undertake what he set her about was proof of the genuineness of that love; she wanted always to be doing something for father.

People are sometimes in doubt whether they love God or not. I will tell them how they can find out. Are you always asking your heavenly Father the same question this little child was asking her earthly father? Is it one of your first thoughts, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And do you keep on asking because you cannot help it?—Christian.

A WORD FOR THE CHILDREN.

Children, make your mother happy, Make her sing instead of sigh, For the mournful hour of parting May be very, very nigh.

Children, make your mother happy; Many girls she has to bear; And she worries 'neath her burdens, Can you not those burdens share?

Children, make your mother happy; Prompt obedience cheers the heart, While a willful disobedience Pierces like a poisoned dart.

Children, make your mother happy, On her brow the lines of care Deepen daily—don't you see them?— While your own are smooth and fair.

Children, make your mother happy, For beneath the coffin-lid, All too soon her face, so saint-like, Shall forevermore be hid.

Bitter tears and self upbraidings Can not bring her back again; And remorseful memories Are a legacy of pain.

Oh, begin to-day, dear children, Listen when dear mother speaks; Render quick and sweet obedience, For your highest good she seeks—

Loves you better than all others— For your sake herself denies; She is patient, prayerful, tender, Gentle, thoughtful, true and wise.

Never while you live, dear children, Though you search the rounded earth, Will you find a friend more faithful Than the one who gave you birth.

—Christian Observer.

BEGGING FOR WORK.

"Can you give me any work, sir?" said a travel worn lad one day to a Cincinnati merchant.

"Got all the help I want," was the short but kindly spoken reply of the busy merchant.

"It's hard," rejoined the lad, "that a fellow who is willing to work can't get a job. I've been all over this city, and into all the stores, and nobody wants help."

"Why did you come to Cincinnati?" queried the merchant, looking askance at the desponding lad.

"Because I want to earn enough to help my widowed mother and sister, who live in Illinois. They depend on me mainly for their support."

This reply, with the peculiar manner of the lad, somewhat moved the merchant's feelings, and he asked:

"What are you willing to do?"

"Anything, sir. Anything in the world that I can do."

"Well, go and take hold with the men," replied the merchant, pointing to the hoistway, up which the bags of coffee, barrels of rice, and other heavy packages were ascending.

Without hesitation, the lad pulled off his jacket and began pulling lustily at the rope. Clearly, he meant to do the best he could. Toward night the merchant said to the foreman:

"How is that strange lad working?"

"Like a beaver, sir. He is killing himself," responded the man.

When work was over the merchant offered the work worn lad a dollar. He pushed it back, saying:

"No, sir. I've not earned a dollar. Give me half a dollar, sir. It's all I've earned, and I will buy me a supper and a lodging."

This was uncommon honesty. It pleased the merchant. He bade the lad come again in the morning. He did so. During the day, in the absence of the foreman, he wrote down the weight of several packages as they were weighed off. His figures were so beautifully formed that the merchant noticed them, and inquired who wrote them. Finding them to be the work of the stranger, he called him in his office, and bade him write a line as a specimen of his handwriting. The writing was so beautiful that the merchant readily admitted him not only to his employ, but into his confidence and affectionate regard. So that this poor boy became, successively, his servant, carrier, clerk, book-keeper, partner and heir.

UNIFORM LESSONS FOR 1873.

Table with columns for Quarter, Lesson Number, Title, and Reference. Includes sections for First, Second, Third, and Fourth Quarters.