

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

By Rev. J. Monro Gibson, M.A., D.D.

While we Presbyterians in England never allow ourselves to forget that we are little among the thousands of Judah, we think we have a mission here, with an important work to do and a great future to look forward to. It is true historically that the main impulse of the movement to revive the old Presbyterian Church in England and to multiply the congregations, which marked the middle of the last century, was the duty of following our brethren who were leaving the Scottish and Irish Churches to make their homes in the South. But this was a motive which was stronger and more operative then than at is now, when lines of doctrine and ecclesiastical distinction are much less sharply drawn, and it has in consequence become much easier and more natural to worship and work with people of other Churches.

We shall always reckon it a duty and a privilege to provide congenial Church homes for immigrant members of the great Presbyterian family, but none of us would be content with such a limited sphere and outlook. We believe that we are called, not merely to tend a delicate exotic, but to furnish an efficient force for the great service in which all the Churches are engaged, the bringing in of the kingdom of God, the building of "Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land." In a work so gigantic there is no fear of our finding ourselves a supernumerary force; and we are greatly encouraged by the cordial welcome which all the Evangelical Churches have given us, and the brotherly spirit in which they accept our co-operation. We are not only treated as brothers, but it often seems as if special consideration were shown us beyond what numerically we have a right to claim, which may be partly due to the feeling that, though we are small in England, we represent one of the largest and strongest Churches of Evangelical Christendom.

Besides this share in the present work of the churches, we believe that we have a special contribution to make to the great Church, or Federation of the Churches, that is to be. We do not expect the future Church to be a reproduction of the Presbyterianism which was set aside in the seventeenth century; but we do expect it to include all the best elements of the Presbyterian system, which we firmly believe to be truly apostolic. We look forward to a great Church re-union in England, truly catholic because free from sectarian exclusiveness, acknowledging as brethren all of every name and clime who are faithful followers of the one great King and Head of the Church; and to this we have our contribution to make. We have learned much and gained much from other Churches; and other Churches may not be without debt to us. We believe that there is some value towards the constitution of the Church or Union of Churches that is to be, in our high standard of education for the ministry, not only in arts and general scholarship, but in thoroughness of theological training; in the realization of ministerial brotherhood, a proof of which may be seen in the working of our "Sustentation Fund"; and in our strong Church position, not recently taken up, but held from the beginning, for we have never unchurched ourselves by accepting such negative designations as "Nonconformists" or "Dissenters." We are the more likely to be of service that we are quite ready to confess our faults, which we trust we have forsaken, or are forsaking—our rigidity, sometimes frigidity, our slowness to move, our hyper-Calvinism of the old time, and the spirit, now happily extinct, which gave Milton, in his time, only too good cause to say, "New presbyter is but old priest writ large." And we cannot help noticing that, while we are moving towards ideals which other Churches have kept more in view

than we have, they, on their side, are moving towards ideals of ours. Of this kind is the movement which was headed by the late Dr. Parker towards the consolidation of the Congregational Churches; and the same or a similar goal was in view in the remarkable speeches of some of the leaders of the Baptist Union at its recent meetings; while the negotiations in progress among our Methodist brethren (already Presbyterian in Church government) point in the direction of a further assimilation to our system in the matter of lay representation and administration.

Our numerical and financial progress, though not quite so rapid in proportion to our size as in the days of what we may call the Presbyterian Revival, is still steady and encouraging; we have men of the greatest promise in the younger ranks of the ministry, and the success of our college at Cambridge, where we are training Englishmen for the English pulpit, gives us great hope for the future; though on account of our limited resources, we have no immense central missions which appeal to the eye and to the imagination, we have a large number of faithful, self-denying men doing excellent service in the darkest places of the home field; and our foreign work, we believe, larger and more successful in proportion to our numbers and resources than that of any other Church in Christendom, with the single exception of the Moravians. We have suffered financially in common with other denominations during the past years of depression, but the general liberality of the Church has been maintained; and this year the magnificent gift of £50,000 by Sir William Dunn for Home and Foreign Missions, and the training of the ministry, has given a new impulse to our energy and hopefulness. We look eagerly forward not to the triumph of Presbyterianism, but to the coming of the kingdom of God and the establishment of a truly catholic and apostolic Church or Federation, which will include all the Churches of Christ that are true to Him and to His gospel of redeeming love.

KIND TO ANIMALS.

In the cities and towns of this country cruelty to animals often furnishes occasion for paragraphs in the newspapers, not very complimentary to those people who ill-treat dumb animals, and who sometimes carry cruelty to the extent of ill-treating human beings—Chinamen, for instance. They should learn a lesson from the Chinamen. In no country in the world are dumb animals better treated than in China. A writer in "Our Dumb Animals," says: "They never punish; hence a mule that in the hands of a foreigner would be useless or dangerous to those about it, becomes in the possession of a Chinaman as a lamb. We never beheld a runaway, a jibing or a vicious mule or pony in a Chinaman's employment, but found the same rattling, cheerful pace maintained over heavy or light roads, by means of a turr or cluk-k, the beast turning to the right or left, and stopping with but a hint from the reins. This treatment is extended to all the animals they press into service. Often have I admired the tact exhibited in getting a large drove of sheep through narrow, crowded streets and alleys, by merely having a little boy lead one of the flock in front; the others steadily following. Cattle, pigs and birds are equally well cared for." When Mr. Burlingame was U. S. Minister to China he was asked whether a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals ought not to be formed in China. His reply was that there was no such thing in China as cruelty to animals; the Chinese were about the kindest people in country.

The patent of nobility within the kingdom of Christ is the towel with which a man girds himself for service.—G. Campbell Morgan.

THE MIDDLE AGES OF JEWISH HISTORY.

By Rev. J. L. Sieber.

The dark picture which the Apostle Paul gives us in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans is not too dark to describe the ruin and despair into which the pagan world had fallen prior to the coming of Christ. The great herd of gods to which they bowed down were only a license for sin. "It were better," cries the pagan Pliny, "to have no religion than to have such a one as ours." But it was to that peculiar people, the Jews, who lived shut off from the rest of the world by mountain and sea, that Jesus came. Never was any nation better equipped with civil and religious institutions than the Hebrew people. Never has a nation by a history so terrible illustrated the insufficiency of these things to save a people who are not wise and virtuous to maintain them. Under Joshua, the successor of Moses, Israel inherited the promised land. The tribes dwelling therein, although never entirely destroyed, were brought into subjection. But when Israel had no foreign foe, they fought among themselves. "There was no king in Israel; that which every man did was right in his own eyes." A wild revenge obliterated the tribe of Benjamin, while many crimes were unpunished. At length, the judges, the people sought relief, not by returning to God, but by imitating the nations about them. Against the commands of God, Samuel granted them a king, and under Solomon the nation out-rivalled its neighbors in a false glory which, like the magnificence of autumn leaves, was only indicative of approaching death. In the reign of Solomon's successor ten tribes seceded, and the nation was rent in twain. A new capital was established at Samaria, and hereafter the history of Israel flows in a dividing stream. Israel at Samaria and Judah at Jerusalem. After two hundred years of increasing wickedness Israel was carried away into Assyria. Judah remained, but practiced a false religion, and, soon out-rivalling her sister in wickedness, was carried away into Babylonian captivity. Finally after long years of night the day came. Like the prodigal son, Judah had spent herself in idolatry. She grew tired of her empty husks, and coming to herself she arose and returned to Jerusalem. Under Nehemiah the walls were rebuilt. Under Ezra the law was read before the people. They were once more a nation with a divine law and worship in their midst. But, alas! the nation did not long survive. Soon they were subject to Alexander, and then Rome seized the reins. Her governors sat on the throne of David. Her soldiers were in every province. The chafing people were kept in subjection to the corruption of Rome. The Church out-rivalled the State in its degeneracy. Her priesthood, greedily, disolute, and infidel, demanded unlawful fees for every temple service, disgraced the religion they professed by the wickedness of their lives, and became the disciples of Sadduceism—a materialistic philosophy which denied the immortality of the soul and the reality of the spiritual existence. The temple was rebuilt, but its true glory had long since departed. For four hundred years no prophet had been heard in the land. The Scriptures had given way to a body of oral traditions which were the work of human hands, and which for the most part were composed of trivialities. Judaism remained. The nation retained its name, but not its national life. The Church held on to its form, but, without the life of piety, it resembled a tree in winter stripped of its foliage and frozen at its roots. The world was ready and waiting for a better day. In the meantime Herod was unconsciously fulfilling the prophecy of the ancient patriarch, "The sceptre will not depart from Judah nor the lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."—Lutheran Observer.

The name of Principal Rainy was on the 8th inst. formally removed from the roll of the Presbytery of Edinburgh of the United Free Church, of which he had been a member for more than 50 years.

Property estimated at over half a million sterling has been destroyed by a fire in the Chinese quarter of Bangkok. The fire is said to be the largest that has ever occurred in the Siamese capital.