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Provincial Wesleyan.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 26 1874
THE UNKNOWN GOD.

It pleased Immanuel Kant, some ninety years ago, to stake out the limits of the knowable, or to show what could and what could not be certainly known. Outside those limits he placed the Deity, if there be one, concerning whose nature, he thought, inquiry must ever result in uncertainty and disappointment. Before his day and since it has been the practice of philosophers to speculate much upon the nature of God, to little purpose. Systems of natural religion were frequently formed and shaped out so dexterously as to seem a very excellent substitute for revealed religion. Many accepted them as such, and argued that, as we can gather so much of the nature and will of the Deity from the constitution of the universe, we do not need a revelation. It was quite overlooked by the advocates of these systems, that the principle doctrines of them were borrowed from the Bible, that their authors were ecclesiastical not inventors, that their minds were already imbued with the morals of Scripture, and that they had become familiarized with the doctrines of the divine unity and the immortality of the soul.

But "the world by wisdom knew not God." Kant was right. He did not design to agree with S. Paul; neither do the scientists of to-day. But it seems that the highest reach of modern science confirms the statement made to the Corinthians sixteen centuries ago. The apostles of modern science, Spencer and Tyndall, distinctly affirm that their philosophy teaches the nothingness of God, his nature, or even his existence. They construct their systems without him,—a pure materialism with no efficient cause. They do not indeed teach dogmatic atheism. They do not affirm that there is no God. But they say "we know not any," and so science has had its say out, and confessed its ignorance on a point most vital to human interest. It is time for some one else to speak.

Theologians, long ago, based an argument for the necessity of a revelation upon the impossibility of knowing God from nature. They appealed to history. They showed the grotesque and absurd notions of Deity held in ages and lands when and where the Bible was not known; they pointed out the diversity of opinion on grave questions of morality, arising out of ignorance of God; and they cited the uncertainty which enveloped other matters of momentous importance. If then, it was rightly argued, man by searching cannot find out God, there is strong presumption that God will reveal himself, make known his nature, and exhibit his government, nay, that he has done so, and that the Bible is a divine communication. It used to be considered a sufficient reply to all this, that the world is wiser now, and more capable of discovering those great and mysterious truths. But it seems, from the confessions of to-day that man is as incapable as ever.

It is a long time since "To the Unknown God" was inscribed upon a Grecian Altar; long since the great Apostle declared him whom the Greeks ignorantly worshipped. We have been accustomed to think that Paul's words carried a kind of conviction with them, and that, now, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, the eternal power and Godhead of Jehovah, his wisdom, justice and benevolence were well known. But it would seem from one of our philosophers, that if we are to worship at all, we must place upon our altars the old Aethiopian inscription, and worship we know not what.

If we can gather any thing from the writings of those men, it is the government of God they hate. A divine Ruler taking cognizance of human actions is an unbecomable idea. A God who "will bring every work into judgment" cannot be tolerated. A punisher of sin must be dismissed from the government of the universe.

It is easy to dismiss God from a system of philosophy; it is difficult to overturn His throne. It does not annihilate the Deity to disbelieve His existence. He lives whether he has a place in science or not. His government is a fact though silly man may deny it as a fable. The universe is His Kingdom though man declares, "we will not have him to reign over us." His revelation may be rejected, his mercy despised, his commands disobeyed, his warnings disregarded. But his righteous government moves on in its wise and beneficent march through the ages, dispensing blessings and penalties with a just and impartial hand. Happy they who can despise the exigencies of philosophy. Who have seen "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," to whom the Father has been revealed by the Son. (Matt. XI: 27.) to whom

"Faith leads its walking light"
dispersing the shadows and bringing the invisible to view.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

There is a charm about the scenery of the Hudson River which no pen can treat with any degree of justice. Beyond anything we have ever seen are two or three of its choicest landscapes. "Oh, let us go ashore here," was on every one's lips. Nestling in among the trees, heavy hills for their back ground and that grand river at their feet, were the homes of Authors, Pro-

fessors, Millionaires, Scientists, Senators, in short of American nobility. The residence of the lady who wrote "Queechy," and "The Wide, Wide World," for instance was on a little island, joined to the main by a narrow and picturesque strip of land, everything seeming to lead inspiration to the beholder. As one wonder passed another appeared, till the vision was actually satiated with natural splendors.

Of Albany, where tourists leave the steamer in proceeding West, we have but one well-defined recollection. A member of our little party succumbed to the fatigue, heat and changefulness of our journey. A doctor's advice was necessary. In the warmth of his sympathy, one proceeded to search for a Methodist minister, sure of obtaining guidance, prompt and energetic in his emergency. A reverend man was found. After taking in fully the situation of our little party, he deliberately stroked his venerable beard and expressed his opinion. He had never been sick himself, not he! Though thirty-eight years in the ministry he had never employed a doctor, and never intended to. But he believed there was a man round the corner who did some doctoring. Was it the intention of the party to remain over Sunday? If so, would they preach for him? All this with a strong touch of Irish accent. The messenger retired not a little perplexed and indignant; the doctor prescribed and restored his patient; the person of Albany doubtless stroked his venerable beard once more, and betook himself to his Albany comforts, moved only by one consideration—that he failed to get clear of a Sunday appointment. This transatlantic air has surely some transforming influence upon human nature; for how otherwise could the warm-hearted Irishman, whose hospitality is proverbial, thus become a heartless priest "walking down the other side" while his neighbors bruised, and distressed, by the highway?

From Albany to Buffalo is a long ride, requiring a full day, though travelling at great speed. The Sabbath here brought us into contact with American preachers and preaching once more. Two features presented themselves which to us were more objectionable than ever; the manuscript and the quartette choir. Hampered by a most slavish habit of clinging to each written sentence as to life itself, there was no spontaneity and little old-fashioned Methodist fire on the part of the minister. And what little soul was left in the worshippers was almost sure to be extinguished before the close of the service by the sumpings and vocal contortions of these paid musicians. O, let us back to the fervour of our fathers!

Niagara! Most of our readers will expect a description of it. This is the fashion in writing for journals. Well, in regard to Niagara, we are restrained by our small medium of common sense. We can only say that, on first view, the cataract seemed to us a pitiable affair over which to exhaust the sentiment of all people and all ages,—that, in short, it was a shoddy piece of scenery. But as we crossed the Suspension bridge at a height of some two hundred and fifty feet from the river, and threaded our way along the Canadian banks, stopping here and there to take a glimpse around, the Falls began to grow upon us. In an hour or so our chest began to expand unconsciously till we found ourselves breathing faster and deeper than usual. Climbing to the face of the cliff, which overhung the crags where we stood by ten or fifteen feet, and seemed manured with heavy tresses of ivy, like the brow of some immense giant, we found a path at length leading to and behind the thundering cataract. Thither we proceeded. And now, what of Niagara? The most awfully impressive revelation we ever received of God through His works, we received there and then. Words can never express what one feels at such times. Perhaps there may be a language in the other and more advanced state suited to a true communication of those emotions which sweep over the soul, vast as Niagara itself; but with our present capabilities, silence becomes all save the gifted children of genius and art.

To-day (Wednesday) we are in the first stages of General Conference proceedings. There is a marked difference, one sees immediately, between this and ordinary Conferences. An ex-Governor elevated to the Chair, pro tem! Lawyers, leading merchants, mechanics, bankers, farmers,—here they are in scores, mixed with most delightful disregard of all proprieties of olden time, and bringing their strength of intellect to bear on the affairs of our Church. It seems but as yesterday that we gave notice of motion in a Charlotte town Conference for opening the doors of our annual Conference to the public. That resolution actually lay on the table for six years, so fearful were we of losing its object by any attempt at bringing its principle into discussion. And now, here we are with laymen swarming into our Conference like June bees into a choice garden! Thank God! There is no mistaking the ability of our lay delegates. From the commencement they more than justified the opinions of those who legislated to admit the laity into this chief council of our Church. Our own ex-Governor Wilnot, Dr. Allison, Hon. S. L. Shannon, and others took high ground immediately as wise and eloquent men. It was specially refreshing to hear

Mr. Wilnot rasping off the sharp edges of old Toryism, as it quibbled and haggled over technicalities, to the serious loss of good men's time and temper. Dr. Ryerson's speech on taking the chair was very graceful; but in the absence of that executive experience which gives a Chairman authoritative strength, he will require one or two veteran High Sheriffs to hold the assembly well in awe. The first day was spent in clearing away masses of such confessional underbrush as usually confronts all pioneers. After this, we have every hope, there will be every facility for forwarding the important business of the Conference.

warding the important business of the Conference. The Rev. Gerrase Smith from England has arrived. A hearty, cheerful, able man. His introduction was that of a brother stranger to his brethren rather than of a stranger to strangers. We are cherishing great expectations from his speeches and sermons. Dr. Sargeant from the M. E. Church South, is also here. One of the sweetest of men in temper, and most popular as a visitor.

Correspondence.

OUR ENGLISH LETTER.

"WORK FOR CONFERENCE COMMITTEES."

DEAR MR. EDITOR.—The late Conference has remitted an unusually large number of important questions to the consideration of Committees, which are to meet during the year, and bring in their reports at Sheffield in 1875. Want of time made this mode of dealing with business, an only alternative; but a desire to gain time for enquiry and full consultation, and avoidance of hasty and immature legislation, led the Conference to entrust to special Committees for another year.

The mere enumeration of those questions will reveal the extent of work which is opening up for the Conference of the future. The relation of those to the Wesleyan Church who do not meet in class and the terms of their admission to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is the question of voting by ballot in Conference, and so voting as to secure for the elected a real majority of the votes which are given.—The temperance question, and especially in regard to the formation of a Connexional Temperance Society, and the question of the removal of all offensive and Romanizing phraseology.—Constitution of the Committees of Review assembling before Conference; and especially a proposal to have one Committee to whom all business proper to such a body is to be submitted.—The whole question of Lay Delegation and Representation in the General Conference, in the Irish and French Conferences, and in the Annual District Meetings.—The pastoral oversight and care of vicarage parishes connected with Kingwood and Woodhouse Grove schools, as to site, equality, and mode of Government.—The relation of the Children's Fund, and that for the support of the schools above named, and finally a Committee comprised of our very ablest men to inquire into the work of the London Book Committee on the preparation of a new Hymn Book for the Connexion.

This distinguished society of philosophers and eminent men has met at Belfast, and has secured even more than its accustomed share of public attention. Its President for the year is Professor Tyndall, who delivered an inaugural address of remarkable depth and interest, which will be read with deepest attention by all classes of thinkers and every section of theologians. It is earnest and even reverent in its tone, but claims that all scientific investigations be pursued without reference to received positions of Biblical truths and untrammelled by fixed opinions. He led his hearers far down towards the beginning of all things, matter and life, but did not satisfy the craving of the soul by any assertion that He who in the far dim distance of the uncountable ages of the past, made all things, is God. With all the amazing skill and learning of the learned Professor, he does not appear inclined to lead any new crusade against the religious world, neither has the Christian any cause of fear from his far reaching and profound investigations. The general business of the association has been of practical utility in many of the requirements of life, and its work has been decidedly useful. The fields of study on every hand appear to widen, and old conclusions demand fresh enquiry and more elaborate study from the student and scholar.

"THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION."

The controversy between the farmers and their men has almost died out, the victory to a large extent, being on the side of the masters. The men in many instances were compelled to renounce their connection with the union and give up their tickets of membership. It was found that plenty of men could be secured for harvest work, and the Executive determined to stop its weekly payments to the locked-out men, placing before them the alternatives of seeking work in other localities or leaving the country as assisted emigrants to any of the many islands on their way to Queensland or Canada. It is not possible for the agricultural laborer to slip back into the abject and degraded position in which they were found when this agitation began. Their condition has been materially improved. The work accomplished by Mr. Arch and his co-workers has been decidedly beneficial, and yet greater results will follow as the working men become better educated and more self-reliant.

"THE HARVEST OF 1874"

It is pronounced to be an excellent one, full in quantity and superior in the quality of all kinds of grain. It ripened rapidly and early. The past summer having been unusually dry and hot, the harvest came on early and was secured in a very short time. The hay crops were protracted drought. The root crops are now receiving assistance from "the latter rains," and may yet recover from the effects of the heat and drought, but the Corn Harvest is secured and is so good that men's fears are relieved, and general thanksgiving are being offered everywhere to the Great Lord of the harvest.

September 14, 1874.

Miscellaneous.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST GENERAL CONFERENCE.

OF THE UNITED WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH OF CANADA.

FIRST DAY.

A majority of the members of Conference were in their places at nine o'clock. As no hour had been appointed for the opening of the Conference, the Rev. R. Jones moved that the open time, and Dr. Jeffers moved in amendment that inasmuch as the Annual Conference sometimes had not opened till ten, that that be the hour. The amendment prevailed. The intervening time passed in pleasant social intercourse.

At the hour of ten o'clock, Sheriff Patrick moved that ex-Governor Wilnot, of New Brunswick, take the chair, pro tem. The motion passed unanimously, being considered a compliment to the brethren from Eastern British America. On taking the chair Mr. Wilnot, who is a gentleman of fine personal appearance, and of remarkably fluent and elegant utterance, in a few well chosen remarks acknowledged the compliment paid him.

The Rev. A. Sutherland, of Montreal, was unanimously elected Secretary, pro tem, and B. Hopkins, Esq., Assistant Secretary, pro tem.

The 37th hymn of the Wesleyan collection—"Jesus, the same high over all," well, so north, or sky,

was then heartily sung; the Chairman read the 122nd Psalm, and the Rev. Dr. Jeffers led in prayer.

A telegram was received by one of the delegates, W. W. Dalgleish, Esq., that his son had been drowned last night. The sad news, which profoundly sympathized with the bereavement of the afflicted parent.

Some degree of misapprehension existed as to the mode of organizing and proceeding to the business of the Conference. A short discussion on the subject took place, in which Dr. Rickard, Judge Deacon, Rev. Jones, and others took part.

The Chairman hereupon, in a playful and humorous manner, remarked that he thought they were hypercritical in anticipating the difficulties which reference had been made. They were not a set of sharpers but a company of Christian gentlemen, and he trusted they would be authorized person thrusting himself upon their deliberations. If any one did so he would be detected at once. Every man there was a moral policeman. He recommended the utmost liberality of interpretation of the constitution consistent with the legal organization of the Conference.

It was finally agreed that the Secretary read from the Minutes of the old Wesleyan Conference the names of the delegates attending this Conference, and the Rev. D. Savage, J. McMurray, H. Pope, James D. Currie, and J. B. Howard, respectively of the New Connexion, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland Conferences, read the names of the delegates from those bodies.

The Rev. Dr. Rice moved that these persons whose names are now read be the accepted Delegates and constitute the Conference.

Dr. Green moved that the Roll be called and that the members respond to their names. The names were then called and a very large majority of the members found to be present.

After singing part of a hymn, Dr. Douglas engaged in prayer, and the Conference adjourned until 2 p. m.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

Precisely at 2 o'clock, the Chairman of the morning session, Hon. Judge Wilnot, took the Chair and announced the 48th Hymn, which was sung, and the Rev. D. Savage led in prayer.

At the opening of the morning session were read and confirmed.

Rev. J. A. Williams called for the exact number of the delegates to be announced so that it could be known whether there was a majority present or not. The list of delegates was not complete, as the names of some of the delegates had not yet arrived; but it was agreed that the question of a sufficient number present to make all the decisions that might be arrived at, legal, and therefore on the motion of Rev. I. B. Howard, the Conference proceeded to ballot for the President. The names of the candidates were distributed; it was clear that there was no small amount of anxiety as to who should be the successful Candidate. At the first ballot, the numbers stood thus: Dr. Ryerson, 63; Dr. Rice, 48; Dr. Douglas, 40; Dr. Wood, 6. A few others scattering, with these, made the total number of votes cast 127. 81 votes were requisite for an election, and no candidate had received this number, the work of balloting was again gone through. Some of the members of the Conference thought the Chair should decide as to which of the names should be considered as properly being before the house for election; but the Chairman replied that it was the business of the Conference to drop or elevate as they may see fit, and called upon the result of the second ballot was Dr. Ryerson 79; Dr. Rice, 51; Dr. Douglas, 30; a few others scattering, with these, made the total number of votes cast 160. 102 votes were requisite for an election, and no candidate had received this number, the work of balloting was again gone through. 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