

The Presbyterian Review.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 25TH, 1886.

"AN ADMIRABLE PAPER, AND REMARKABLY CHEAP."

In the daily course of business we receive from subscribers their subscriptions many kind words of encouragement to all of whom we are necessarily unable to make individual reply. For all encouraging words we take occasion to state here that we are deeply grateful.

"A near town reader writes: 'In conversation with a brother Presbyterian the other day I learned that he did not take in any church paper, for the reason, as he said, that they are all too dear. \$2 a year does seem high, I must confess, when we get large city weeklies and excellent local papers like the Packet for \$1; but, as I explained to my friend, there is an admirable Presbyterian paper published in Toronto—the PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW—at the same rate, only \$1 a year. Now I shall take it a favour if you will mention this fact in the Packet, as do doubt many Presbyterian readers of your paper will be induced thereby to send for specimen copies, and ultimately to subscribe.' We have much pleasure in complying. The REVIEW is, as our correspondent says, an admirable paper, and remarkably cheap. Specimen copies may be obtained by sending a post-card to PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, Toronto."

ANOTHER KIND ACT.

The following letter addressed to the Manager speaks for itself. As a bit of good missionary work it deserves special mention and imitation:

1133 DORCHESTER ST., MONTREAL, March 19th, 1886.

DEAR SIR,—I have much pleasure in enclosing five dollars for gratuitous circulation of the PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, as suggested in a paragraph of this number. Yours very sincerely, A. E. MACKAY.

NEW LIGHT ON THE BIBLE.

LAST Saturday there was delivered in University College, Toronto, the first of a series of lectures that mark an epoch in university studies, and link together in a manner that must be gratifying to all interested in the education of the country the truths of the Christian religion as revealed in the Bible, and historic truth as revealed by science. Dr. McCurdy, the newly appointed Lecturer in Oriental Literature, who has lately delivered, as our readers are aware, the "Stone" lectures with pronounced success at Princeton, has been induced to repeat in a condensed form the most important facts and principles enunciated in the lectures. We had the pleasure of being present at the lecture and were much impressed by the evident interest taken in the subject by the public, as manifested by a representative and most appreciative audience.

The subject of the lecture was the History of Assyria and Babylonia, with an Introduction on the Geography and Ethnology of Old Testament lands. The condensed character of the lecture and the vast array of facts presented pre-

clude the possibility of our giving anything like a full analysis of it. Moreover, even the fullest report would be wanting in one essential feature of the occasion, unless there could be presented at the same time an outline of the large and beautiful historic map specially prepared for the elucidation of the geographical basis of the facts and arguments. We shall therefore content ourselves with calling attention to one or two salient points as indicating the general scope of Dr. McCurdy's discourse.

Although the lecturer took evident pleasure in showing how the inscriptions throw light on many passages of classical history and mythology, yet the audience did not fail to understand that the main value of these monuments consists in their illustration and confirmation of Sacred History and Prophecy.

It was made evident, for example, how many important chronological data have been afforded by the cuneiform records for the supplementing of the confessedly defective traditional chronology. More important still is the clearing up of many obscurities and difficulties in the Old Testament history, due to the fragmentary and purely theocratic character of Old Testament historical composition. For example, the biography of the Father of the Faithful receives its historical background and setting from contemporary inscriptions only lately recovered. The relations between Syria and Israel in the critical times of Ahab and Jehu are set in much fuller and clearer light, Ahab being shown to have been actually an ally of Syria against Assyria, and the arrogant and impetuous Jehu being presented in the light of a fawning suppliant before the Assyrian monarch. The most important epoch in the political history of Assyria, namely, the new policy introduced by Tiglath Pileser II., in 745 B. C., appears as the great determining factor in the whole subsequent history of Israel and Judah. The essence of that policy was the treatment of tributary and subject states; the system of deporting conquered rebels to distant parts of the empire, and colonizing the desolated provinces with the inhabitants of other subjugated districts, explains the fate of Samaria in its fall, and even the character of the Samaritans up to the time of Christ. It explains also the checkered history of Judah from the time of Ahaz to the end of the Babylonian exile. In connection with the fall of Samaria it may be observed the inscriptions fully confirm the fair inference from Biblical statements, that there was no wholesale deportation of the people of Israel, and thus give the death-blow to the Anglo-Israelite theory.

The paramount value of the inscriptions for the elucidation of Prophecy is conspicuously shown in the fulness with which they treat the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah, Isalah and Sennacherib. The incidental rays of history meet, as it were, at a focus to set in a vivid light the revelation of Sennacherib, to indicate the supremacy of the Word, and to attest the sacredness and verity of the Prophetic Word. The most important part of Isaiah's earlier prophecies cannot, it is perfectly evident, be at all properly understood without a knowledge of the political relations of Assyria, Babylonia, Palestine and Egypt, to which the inscriptions furnish the key. The prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah with regard to the fortunes of Egypt find their only historical confirmation in the Babylonian records. Perhaps the fullest and most surprising of all the new disclosures of these monuments is the information which they afford respecting the early history of Cyrus, and especially his conquest of Babylonia and the capture of the city of Babylon, events which are narrated by Cyrus himself with circumstantial minuteness. While the old classical legends with regard to this greatest of all the rulers of the East are thus completely disproved, the revelation which is made regarding his origin, his life-work and his character, gives the only true explanation of the striking prophecies of Israel concerning him and of his divinely-guided and momentous action in restoring the people of God to their own land and the seat of their ancient worship. Finally, the prophecies respecting the fall of Babylon, which echo on even to the close of the New Testament revelation, receive new significance from the picture which the inscriptions present of Babylon in the days of her glory and her pride, and of the moral causes which led to her unexampled fall.

It was announced that the second lecture, which will be illustrated with the sciopticon, will be delivered on next Saturday at 3 p. m., on the subject: "The Babylonian Civilization, Literature and Religion, with the Biblical Parallels, illustrating chiefly the opening chapter of Genesis." From what the New York press has said of this lecture, we should judge that it presents to all scholars many features of special interest.

CHURCH UNION.

IN view of the recent concerted action at Ottawa of Presbyterians and Methodists in Home Mission work, and the statement of what has been done through Presbyterian union in Japan, Dr. Wardrop's paper, reproduced from The Independent, on union in foreign mission work, will be read with much interest. The story of what has been accomplished in China and Japan has naturally raised the question of union in mission work in the various evangelical churches of the United States and Canada; and the enquiry naturally arises, Why should there be any longer an effort on the part of the Christian Church at work in the Foreign Mission field, to make those to whom they send the Gospel, "Reformed Presbyterians," or "Cumberland Presbyterians," and not simply, Christians

The lack of unity amongst the various organizations at work in the foreign field, and the perpetuation there of the differences and rivalries that mark them at home, are acknowledged to be stumbling blocks to the heathen, and the source of great loss of energy and means to the whole Christian Church.

Everywhere at home the evils deplored by missionaries are seen in an intensified form. Every town and hamlet has its four or five denominations, doing at great expense, and often with unseemly rivalries and jealousies, what could much better be done by one. As Dr. Wardrop's statement, that in places with not more than fifteen hundred or two thousand inhabitants are to be seen an Episcopal, a Methodist, a Congregational, a Baptist, and a Presbyterian church, is certainly true of hundreds of places in Canada, and no doubt is equally true of the United States, it is not much wonder that the profane person and the scoffer should often have occasion to turn into a taunt the words, "See how these Christians love one another." The attitude of the different denominations towards each other in the same town is often most deplorable. There are envyings, jealousies, backbitings, detractions, and everything that tends to destroy the Christian graces. It would often appear as if the natural guides of the people in religion took measures to perpetuate these divisions, and thought it their duty to break down all approaches to comity and union. Hence the strange spectacle is often witnessed of the various sections of the Christian Church becoming more and more widely separated from one another. It is not much wonder then, that good men, without any diminution of loyalty to their own particular church, should enquire if there is not among the various branches of the Christian Church some possible ground of union upon essentials, and that what has been so successfully accomplished amongst the scattered branches of the same denomination should not be aimed at amongst the denominations themselves. The Independent, in commenting on Dr. Wardrop's paper, can see and does see but little difference in the theology of the five or six churches that go to make up the religious population of one of our towns. Nowadays there is not, it is urged, so much enquiry into the basis of denominational belief as once prevailed. Controversial works are but seldom read, and take no hold on the minds of the young. From controversy the pendulum has swung to practical religion, and the influence of the movement is seen everywhere. It is most significant that many leaders of opinion everywhere are seeking to find common standing-ground, where but a few years ago they were looking only for missiles to fling at each other. If the denominations should continue to grow, as Dr. Wardrop asks, is to hinder two or three of the churches from being combined together, and in the Home Mission fields the churches thus united, instead of continuing to be the recipients of aid from mission boards, from becoming not only self-supporting but aiding. Union in the Home Mission field would, it is thought, produce union in the Foreign Mission field, and these being consummated, the Christian Church would move on, conquering the whole world for Christ.

Such is the picture that rises before the minds of men who see in this method a plan for the accomplishment of the Lord's design for His people, "That they may all be one." To the realization of this plan there are of course immense practical obstacles, but to hold this before us as an ideal is certainly desirable, as it would infuse hope and courage into the hearts of those who yearn and labour for the ultimate union of all branches of the Church of Christ. We do not think it at all probable or practicable that a union of all the denominations will take place in the near future, but we can see no reason for not hoping that in time the number of the denominations will be much reduced.

THE LENGTH OF SERMONS.

THE Globe of Saturday has an article on preaching which is worthy of attention. It ventures to assert that there is as much unrest in the churches as in the world, and that radical reforms are as necessary in the one sphere as in the other, but after all only condescends to mention one great cause of dissatisfaction among church-goers, namely, the length of the sermon. Now, we do not know where the writer of that article worships, but we are quite confident he can find no preacher in this city who preaches longer than thirty or forty minutes; and we know further, that the average length of sermons in our day, in any of our evangelical churches, will scarcely touch the half hour. Does it not strike the Globe as a little peculiar that there should be such a demand for short sermons among a people who accept without a murmur such intolerably long speeches as continually fill its columns? If audiences can be found to listen to political harangues for two or three hours, it cannot be from any mental inability that they weary of a half hour's sermon.

The fact is, the difficulty does not lie in the pulpit but in this, that the bulk of the church-going people are not really interested in the subjects discussed. If men only desired a literary treat or a good moral essay, of course they would want it short and sweet; but if they really desired to become citizens of Christ's kingdom, and truly felt their need of the great salvation, they would not measure the sermon by minutes but would listen with such eagerness as would make them utterly oblivious to the flight of time. Suppose the writer of Saturday's article attended church last Sabbath big with the consciousness of having set forth to the world the great cause

of unrest in the churches, what prospect, we venture to ask, was there of his receiving benefit from the sermon? First, we fear he would look at his watch the moment the sermon began, instead of looking into his Bible to see where the text was. Then he would find in the minister's style and slips of grammar and of language the promise of new opportunity of cracking the editorial whip over the head of the poor preacher. Then he would find himself sweetly nodding assent—in his sleep—to the earnest exhortations which brought the sermon to a close, and would wake up to look at the watch again and mark the fact that the sermon had actually occupied forty minutes, a circumstance so shocking as really to be worthy of the strongest protest.

But, seriously, let us ask the Globe is there any other kind of public speech that is so measured in our day as it wishes to measure sermons? Are the lawyers limited in advocating their clients' claims, or the politicians in defending their principles, to a maximum of thirty minutes on pain of wearying their audiences? Is it not the case that the importance of the subject and the gravity of the issues at stake settle the minor question of the length of time to be occupied? Surely the preacher of the Gospel has the right to demand that these same factors should settle the question of the length of the sermon. Dull sermons, however short, will weary the people. We have never known of an audience complaining of the length of a sermon which really interested them. If the Globe wishes to help in settling this question let it grapple with the questions we have raised, and ask for remedies for the carelessness, indifference and pre-occupation of the sermon hearers, and then the other matter will give it little trouble. If even a Globe writer were grappling with the great themes discussed in the pulpit, we question if he could do justice to them in less than from thirty to forty minutes.

DR. JOSEPH COOK, in the prelude "Low Morals in High Places," in a recent Boston Monday lecture, drew special attention to the agency for good in the organization known as "The White Cross League." The founder of this organization, as many of our readers are doubtless aware, is the Bishop of Durham, who has been greatly assisted in their establishment by Ellice Hopkins, Josephine Butler and other well known philanthropic ladies. The object they have in view may be seen from the pledge. "I promise by the help of God: 1. To treat all women with respect, and endeavour to protect them from wrong and degradation. 2. To endeavour to put down all indecent language and coarse jests. 3. To maintain the law of purity as equally binding upon men and women. 4. To endeavour to spread these principles among my companions, and to try and help my younger brothers. 5. To use every possible means to fulfil the command, 'Keep thyself pure.'" There ought to be room for a White Cross League in every public school and high school in the land.

THE United Presbyterian Magazine states that the withdrawal of the Bible as a reading-book from the State schools of Victoria, Australia, has come to be regarded as a calamity, the so-called voluntary system, whereby those children whose parents approve attend at a particular hour for Bible reading, being generally regarded as a failure. There is therefore a growing movement in favour of an amendment of the law so as to restore the Bible to its former place as a class-book in State schools. The League has lately been formed with this object, and the Presbyterian Assembly lately unanimously adopted a motion by the Rev. Dr. Ken, toul in favour of scriptural instruction in the State schools of the colony. In these schools are at least 50,000 children who are not receiving any religious instruction whatever.

THE American Presbyterian Church has suffered a great loss in the death of Rev. Dr. James Eells, Professor in Lane Theological Seminary. Dr. Eells was a native of New York State, a graduate in Arts of Hamilton College, and he received his theological training in Western Reserve and Auburn Theological Seminaries. After pastorates in various parts of the Union he was from 1877 to 1879 a Professor in the San Francisco Theological Seminary. Since 1879 he has been Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology in the same theological seminary. Dr. Eells was Moderator of the General Assembly of 1877.

THE Legislature of Massachusetts has recently passed a law prohibiting the sale of tobacco to minors. We would very much like to see such a law in force here. The use of tobacco in addition to being a pernicious and wasteful habit, as many inveterate smokers admit, is a source of positive injury to the health and development of growing boys. We fear that the smoking habit is on the increase even among young children. The cigarette is not the least temptation to which our boys are exposed.

ALREADY through the daily press many of our readers have learned with deep regret of the death of the venerable Dr. James Ross, ex-Principal, and Professor Emeritus, of Dalhousie College, N. S. On Monday night, 8th inst., while engaged in secret prayer he was struck with paralysis and expired at noon on Monday, the 15th inst. We shall give some particulars of his life and labours next week.

—What do you think would be the result if every member of the Church increased his subscription to the Mission Scheme.