

THE ONTARIO EVANGELIST.

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"Go ... .. speak ... .. to the people ALL the words of this Life."

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No. 11.

POETRY.

"HELP THOU MINE UNBELIEF."

Yea, though, O Lord, in thee I trust,
And seek thine aid in all my grief;
My thoughts still linger in the dust;
O do thou help mine unbelief!

Ridgetown.

WHILE WE MAY.

The hands are such dear hands I
They are so full; they turn at our demands
So often; they reach out,
With trifles scarcely thought about
So many times; they do
So many things for me; for you—
If their fond will mistake,
We may well bend, not break.

—The Independent.

ORIGINAL.

CHINA LETTER.

Last Spring Bro. Saw and I set out on a trip
from Nankin (over land and by canal) to Chifer
in Shantung Province, and some of the sights
and experiences may not prove uninteresting to you.

As we had a head wind we were two days
sailing down the mighty Yangtse Kiang—here
over a mile wide—to Chinking, in a foreign
yacht. We were hospitably entertained by Mr.
and Mrs. Woodbridge, of the Southern Presby-
terian Church, for the night, and next morning
went down to the boat "Hong" or office to
engage a boat. Although the boats seem usually
to be owned by private boatmen, they are hired
through an officer, to whom the boatmen are
responsible. We spent considerable time making
a bargain for the boat, as the Chinamen think

we foreigners are rich and desire a larger price
than is their due. We are rich compared with
the ordinary Chinamen, as laborers only earn
three or four dollars a month, and teachers from
four to six dollars, and John can live as to his
meals on 80c. or 90c. a month. For a six days
trip on a good sized boat manned by three men
and two women we pay four dollars and a half.

March 24th. In the evening, we sail across
from Chinking to the mouth of the Grand Canal
almost directly opposite and anchor just above
the mouth; our men had to row pretty hard as
the flow is rapid into the Yangtse Kiang. I felt
the grandeur of the canal somewhat diminish
when I saw the width about fifty yards, but it
makes up in length. The mouth of the canal
was filled with boats, and after the clamor of the
various boatmen for anchorage was over, all
settled down to prepare and eat the evening rice.
After eating most retired, and but for singing
accompanied by a sort of guitar from some of
the boats, silence reigned. Our boat had a small
stern compartment or poop much contracted by
the rudder in which the two women and the
master of the boat lived, two middle rooms
furnished with a table in the centre and benches
at the sides for seats in the day time and beds at
night. These two rooms would be together
about twelve feet long and six feet wide, having
movable sides and a screen between them. We
have our own bedding and some foreign food
and we eat a hearty meal and retire.

March 25th. We set out early in the morning
and as the boat proceeds up the canal slowly
towed by the men and women in turns—men
seem to work as hard as women in China, thus
differing from our Indians—we land and proceed
along the bank, which is a dike fifteen or twenty
feet high and about twenty feet thick at the top,
and double the thickness at the base. There are
sluices at intervals protected by masonry in case
there should be too high water, when it can be
slowly drained away toward the East. We pass
numerous villages and we sell copies of the
separate Gospels and explain them as we pass
through. After dinner we pass a seven storied
pagoda and anchor for the night at Yangchow,
a city whose wall is ten miles around and popu-
lation 300,000. This is occupied by the China
Inland Mission who have several converts.

March 26th. From Yangchow the canal be-
comes very irregular as we proceed north, the
east bank being even but the west is broken by
a large lake from which further north it is diked
off. In the villages along the way as we go the
houses are made of reeds and mud and are mere
tents. The land to the east is all a level plain and
it is hard with the eye to decide whether or not the
water in the canal is on a lower level than the
land outside the dike. It is now low water season.
The only thing to remind one of home is the
telegraph line which follows the canal as far as
we go and runs to Peking, a branch going to
Chifer. We anchor at Gao Yii for the night and
stop over the next day and keep Monday for
Sunday by mistake, as we have not a calendar
with us and we have been so busy with our boat
and with preaching and distributing books that
we have forgotten the flight of time. We were
doing good work on Sunday, though we had not
intended to travel on that day, and you may
imagine the surprise it was to us on arriving in
Ysman two weeks and more later to find that we
had kept two Mondays for two Sundays. Gao
Yii is a good sized, walled city, and has a Catholic
Church. We preached to some people and gave
a few books to them, not desiring to sell on Sun-
day.

March 28th and 29th. We continue on our
course, spending a good portion of our time on
land, selling numerous portions of Scripture in
the villages, and preaching. We pass numerous
large villages, and Bao Ging and Hwaigan good
sized, walled cities. The plain though flat is
beautiful, as the villages though poor are sur-
rounded by trees, which are just putting on the
verdure of spring, and the wheat is sprouting in
the fields. On the canal are long rows of large
rice junks carrying tribute rice to the Emperor
at Peking. Very few of the people who fill this
great plain have heard the Gospel as yet. "The
harvest truly is plenteous but the laborers are
few."

March 30th. We land at Ysingiang, the
terminus of our canal journey, a large and im-
portant business centre, perhaps 150,000 or
200,000, and occupied by the China Inland
Mission, and since our trip by two families of
the Southern Presbyterians. Soon, for many
miles around, shall the people hear the truth.

Yours in Christ,
W. M. MACKLIN.
Nankin, Nov. 26th, '87.

SELECTIONS.

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH AND THEIR
PERMANENT OBLIGATION.

The discussions over the vexed question of
marriage with a deceased wife's sister, which have
been going on for a considerable time in the
ecclesiastical courts of the Presbyterian Church
in the Dominion, are coming rapidly to a head,
and promise to issue at no distant day in practi-
cal action. That these marriages are condemned
by the Confession of Faith as accepted by all
Presbyterians, is not denied. Indeed no denial
of the kind would be of any avail, for no
language could be more unmistakable than that
in which this Confession condemns such unions
as incestuous. There was a time when this
article of the Presbyterian Creed was universally
and with entire bona fides accepted by all its ad-
herents. And accordingly every minister of
that denomination in Canada solemnly declared
upon ordination that such was his conviction.
It was only because he did so that he secured
his ministerial status at all and became entitled
to either manse, stipend or pulpit. A saving
clause has been added for weak or sensitive
consciences in reference to the power of the
civil magistrate in matters of religion, but none
so far as the forbidden degrees of marriage are
concerned. Time, however, has come and time
has gone, and now the outward avowal of the credo
in very many cases does not at all accord with
individual convictions. Many Presbyterians, lay
and clerical, both think and say that they see
nothing wrong in such marriages, and that they
cannot conscientiously censure those who form
them. What then? Can such conscientiously
remain in a Church whose doctrinal standards
declare such marriages to be utterly abominable?
And still more, can they allow it to be believed
that they still hold that which they in other days
"confessed," and by "confessing" which they
got their license and secured their "livings"?
One would scarcely think so. On the contrary,
it might be supposed that in each case, when the
opinion changed, the Presbytery would be in-
formed of the fact and freedom would be asked
or withdrawal would be offered. Conscience in
every case would have to be kept clear, whatever
the consequences. If room for convictions could
not be found within the Church, then the needed
liberty could always be sought and secured out-
side. This has not been the course pursued in
this marriage matter. The credo has been left
unchanged. Adherence to it has been demand-
ed and rendered on the old lines. So far as any
official intimation is concerned, the absolute
unity of belief on the point still remains unbroken.
But the actual fact is different. There is not
only many doubts on the subject; there is a
wide consensus of positive disbelief. A large
majority of those who individually have without
exception declared in the most solemn possible
circumstances their conviction that the marriages
in question are forbidden by the Word of God,
are now persuaded that they are nothing of the
kind. Instead, however, of confessing their
change of view and offering to go out if not
allowed this liberty of change, they propose to
use the majority they have undoubtedly secured
in order to change the Confession of Faith to
outvote those who have kept the original compact
and have not changed their views on the point at
issue; and to force these latter either to be silent
when what they believe to be incest is committed,
or to go out of a Church which they have built
up by their labors and their contributions, and
to whose Confession of Faith they have strictly
and honestly adhered, and do so still.

To this point matters have come. Last Assembly
adopted certain resolutions not only forbidding

the exercise of Church discipline in the case of
all who had contracted the marriages in question,
but also so far changing confession itself as no
longer to require the assertion that a man may
not marry any of his deceased wife's relatives,
who are as near of kin to her as his own are to
him. The question is now before the different
Presbyteries. It was discussed on Tuesday in
the Toronto one, and the proposed change was
sanctioned by a vote of 11 to 4. If a majority
of the Presbyteries follow the same course, then
the change will be made and the question will
come up, "What then?" Is the minority who
have kept by the original compact either to go
out and leave all their Church property behind
them, or to stay in and acknowledge by their
acquiescence that that which they really believe
to be the devil's lie a God's truth? Or is the
majority to say frankly and honorably, "we have
changed and we therefore go out? Or is there
to be frank acknowledgment by both sides, "We
are not agreed and therefore cannot walk together.
According to the mere letter of the contract all
the Church property we have unitedly gathered
ought to go to those who have kept by that con-
tract. But we are Christians and must act fairly,
with no faith in legal quibbles, and with no re-
course to mere secular bonds, and therefore let
us part peaceably and let us divide our accumulat-
ed property on terms of equity, as an impartial
arbitration may decide."

We say nothing of the merits of the controversy.
We do not pretend to forecast what would be
the decision if it came to be a question of law
in the civil Court. But the question as to how
far a man or a Church can change his or its
doctrinal opinions and shift from the original
ecclesiastical position without forfeiting either
the emolument or prestige which but for the
original contract would never have been secured,
is a nice and important one, involving as it does
far higher issues than those of mere property.—
Globe.

MIRRORS.

We are mirrors. We cannot help being re-
flectors. We reflect in our characters every
influence that touches our lives. I am intro-
duced to you. You speak one sentence—I know
that you are an Englishman, or an American, or
a Spaniard. You are a combination of reflec-
tions. We become like those with whom we
associate. Two boys in a University in England
roomed together for eight years. Toward the
end of that time these two boys were so much
alike that it became remarkable. They had re-
flected and reflected until one was almost the
image of the other. If you called on one, and
found the other one instead, you might talk to
him on the same subject and expect to receive
the same answers that you would from the other.
I once knew a girl who was growing so saintly
that every one wondered. No one guessed her
secret. She became very ill, and a dear friend
of hers obtained permission to open a locket
which she wore constantly about her neck.
There she saw engraved on the inside of the
locket the clue to the secret: "Whom having
not seen we love." If we reflect the glory of the
character of Christ, we shall be changed from
glory to glory—that is, from character to
character. How this is I cannot tell. Had Paul
written in these times, he would probably have
used the photograph instead of the mirror as a
symbol. I cannot tell how the impalpable shadow
which appears on the plate is fastened there—
no one can. And I cannot tell how character is
changed. We reflect Christ for a time, and then
we are changed, and then we are changed again,
and then again, and so on from glory to glory.
First the blade, then the ear, and then the full
corn in the ear, and after that it doth not yet
appear what we shall be. Do you not see the
infinite possibilities of this? We are to go on
and on. We are to be God's reflectors in this
world.—Professor Henry Drummond.

A young lady said: "When I find Christians
who are perfectly consistent, I will become one."
In these words she pronounced her own con-
demnation. For if she knows what it is to be a
consistent Christian she knows her own duty, and
tries to cover her sin by the transgression of
another. To her Christ says, "What is that to
thee? Follow thou me."—Christian at Work.