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OUR ENGLISH LETTER.

PRAYER FOR SABBATH SCHOOLS.

DEAR MR. EDITOR.—The general observance of the day of special prayer on behalf of the Sabbath schools connected with the Church of Christ, calls for remark, and is a cause for profound thankfulness. Early prayer-meetings were held in the schools, and the teachers came to these, after a season of private devotion in which each child was mentioned by name at the throne of grace. Sermons were very generally preached having special reference to the conversion of the young, the necessity of their being gathered into the church and the means to be employed to further these gracious results. The afternoon services in the schools were made to bear directly upon the conversion of the children. The prayer-meetings held after the evening sermon were also set apart to the one great object of the day. Indications were not lacking that very blessed influences were resting upon the young people, many were converted, and in some instances special prayer-meetings were through the following weeks found necessary for the carrying on the work of revival. The results of last year's day of intercession have been exceedingly gracious, and we feel assured, that in answer to the urgent, widespread, believing supplications of the Churches, our Heavenly Father will yet more copiously pour out his Spirit upon our offspring, and the present year shall be as the past, and even more abundant.

THE MINISTERIAL CONVENTION

of the Wesleyan ministers connected with the London Districts was held in the Jewin street chapel on Tuesday last. The pressure of business in the District meetings is so great and overwhelming that very little time can be found for devotional and purely ministerial objects. On the present occasion the whole day was devoted to a consideration of the requirements of the ministry and the efficient discharge of their great work. The programme had been arranged with great care and thoughtfulness, an hour was allotted for the consideration of each topic, and much prayer was offered throughout the whole proceedings. A minister had been engaged to introduce the subject and this was done in some instances orally and in others by carefully prepared written papers. It would be difficult to say which method excelled, for in every case the presentation of the subject was so effective and powerful that comparisons were not thought of. Conversation upon the topic was open to all and very many wise and profitable deliverances were then called forth. There were very few complaints, no special wails upon the old grievances, but fine, manly, brave utterances and words of cheer, and hopeful interpretations of Divine prophecy and the signs of the times. It was my privilege to be present, and I felt it to be a season of much blessing to my own soul and to the brethren who were assembled. I enclose the programme, which I would like you to reproduce in your columns, as it will inform your readers of the special object of the convention, and perhaps suggest material for your ministerial gatherings in the Provinces.

MORNING SESSION.

10 to 11. Devotional exercises and conversation on "Ministerial Devotion to Christ," introduced by the Rev. John Harvard.

11 to 12. Conversation on "The Faith essential to Ministerial Success," introduced by the Rev. Dr. Jobson.

12 to 1. Conversation on "Divine Union for Ministerial Service," introduced by the Rev. W. M. Gibson, B.A.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

2 to 3. Conversation on "The Claims of Young People to the Pastorate," introduced by the Rev. John Walton, M.A.

3 to 4. Conversation on "The Promotion of the Devotional Life," introduced by the Rev. Richard Green.

4 to 5. Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, administered by the Revs. John Farrar and James H. Bigg, D.D.

MR. GLADSTONE IN IRELAND

has been one of the leading themes of the past fortnight. His progress from place to place has been watched with unflagging interest, and it has been found that our great Liberal statesman is immensely popular in the sister Isle. He has found it impossible to avoid publicity, or to decline the reception of honors, or to remain silent. The great parties in England have followed his journey with intense eagerness; Liberals gather hope for the future; and Tories like not to discover the hold he has upon vast multitudes of Irishmen.

ROMANISM IN SCOTLAND

is said to be increasing, and reports are freely circulated that immediate steps are to be taken for setting up a Roman Catholic Hierarchy in Scotland, and that ere long Romish Bishops with high sounding titles will be set up, with trains of priests and followers, in the leading cities of Protestant Scotland. There may be much of sound and good in all this, but yet we fear that they are gaining hold slowly but surely in England and Scotland, and are multiplying orders of Nuns and Monks, establishing schools, building costly edifices, and in many subtle ways consolidating their present hold in the United Kingdom.

FICTION OR NO FICTION

is a question which his just now is sorely exercising the minds of responsible officials, Editors and Book Committees in many Churches. The perplexity is felt in our own esteemed Connexion Book Directorate, and calls forth not a little diversity of opinion. The conclusion has not been definitely arrived at, but it will not be a hard and fast line. Great care will be exercised, but well-written tales will not be vigorously excluded, and our valuable literature will keep up to the popular standard attained during the past year, and will at the same time continue to prove worthy of the support of the families of our people. No change is contemplated in the form, name or price of our publications for the ensuing year. They are all valuable, they appear to meet the needs of all ages and ranks of our people, and are worthy of a greater increased circulation. "B." Nov. 12, 1877.

SMITH'S HISTORY OF METHODISM.

This book has been everywhere very favorably received. We quote from notices which have appeared.

(From the *Guardian*.)

We have just received from the Methodist Book Room in Halifax, a History of the Methodist Church in Eastern British America, a goodly volume of four hundred and ninety-one pages, by Rev. T. Watson Smith, which we believe will be read with much interest and profit by many of our readers.

It is now the first volume, which we suppose is to be followed in due time by a second volume.

(From the *Presbyterian Witness*.)

evangelistic zeal and enterprise of the Methodists deserves to be had in everlasting remembrance, and it may very fairly be used to quicken the zeal and draw out the energies of other Churches. Mr Smith has done an invaluable service to the

Methodist Church in thus presenting in a very readable form their early history in this country.

Many incidents are related illustrative of the varied phases of evangelistic work peculiar to those olden times, doubly interesting to those who have grown up with the country and are able to contrast the past with the present, and pregnant with practical and suggestive thoughts for those who live in the enjoyment of the political, social and religious advantages of the Nineteenth Century.

(Fredericton Reporter.)

The first volume of a History of Methodism in Eastern British America by Rev. T. W. Smith, has been received from the Methodist Book Room Halifax.

The work itself must meet with a ready sale, valuable as it is as a book of reference to all Methodists. It traces the origin and character of Methodism in these Provinces, and in Bermuda, and its progress to the year 1877.

The *Halifax Reporter* has given a review so discriminating and exhaustive, that we must reserve it, to be given in full next issue.

FICTIONS AND ERRORS, is a pamphlet of 82 pages by Judge Marshall, in review of Dawson's "Origin of the World." Geology is a youthful science, and ought to be very reserved in its judgment. Not unfrequently it has been obliged to confess its errors, and to offer new theories instead of some which had been very confidently advanced. And here is the vulnerable point with men who make a special study of the subject, when they have recourse to the inventive genius in order to supply links in their speculations. Judge Marshall follows Dr. Dawson very closely and persistently to the end of his book. He insists upon the literal apprehension of the scripture narrative of the creation, and perhaps does not sufficiently admit the honest intentions of scientists and the advantages of their writings.

We will give two or three specimens of the Judge's style next week.

MINISTERIAL PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY.

The substance of "A Charge," delivered at the ordination of the Rev. Messrs. Freeman and Pratt, in the Methodist Church, Carbonear, Newfoundland, on the 19th June, 1877. By Rev. C. Stewart, D. D.

II. The mention of the Apostle—"Take heed." This is a word of energy it summons our attention. It indicates danger. It enforces vigilance and preparation. It is here as elsewhere, a fitting prelude to instruction of the greatest moment. "Take heed to yourselves." This watchful progress in regard to self must be first of all—foremost in time, and highest in importance. We must save ourselves, if we hope to save those who hear us. Our fathers in the gospel have been accustomed to put the greatest stress upon the possession and maintenance of earnest piety, in order to the success of the Christian ministry. In this undoubtedly they were right; and it would be a sad day for us as a people, when for any reason a change in this respect should take place. I make no apology, therefore, for enforcing upon you, as of supreme value, the constant and careful cultivation of the life of God in your own souls. You will have trials peculiar to your own condition. Never forget that the arch enemy will most sedulously watch for opportunities to ensnare and destroy you. But to yield to temptation, to take one misstep, and especially to fall into open sin would be a calamity more terrible, and, in its consequences, far reaching, than it is in the power of language to describe! "Stand in awe," therefore, "and sin not." But more than this, your religion must not

merely be preserved from decay, it must also become more vigorous and perfectly developed, continually. Rest not at a common level. You are called to be "examples" not only to a godless world but even to "the believers" in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (1 Tim. iv. 12.) But how are you to attain and exemplify so pure and perfect a character? By no other means than those which our Lord and His Apostles have prescribed to men in general. You must train and regulate your conscience, and stimulate your faith and hope by a daily study of God's blessed book. You must be earnest in prayer, and particularly in private prayer. You must watch against the insidious approach of evil; and daily you must deny yourselves, take up the cross, and follow the Lord Jesus. For you, for us, there is no royal road to perfect purity of heart; therefore, "Stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls." (Jer. xi. 16.)

"Take heed" to your intellect. Endeavor by wise and persistent study, to promote its enlargement and thorough cultivation. If your ministry is to prove instructive to others, you must constantly seek instruction for yourselves. Keep abreast of the best literature of the day; but do not ignore the great masters of the past. Of course you will familiarize yourselves more and more with the works of Wesley, of Fletcher, and of Watson, but to these you may most profitably add the writings of such men as Richard Baxter, John Howe, of Hooker, and Parson, and Barrow. Above all, seek to be mighty in the Scriptures; for to meet the ten thousand exigencies of that human nature with which you have to deal, there is no book like the Bible. Lay it up in the store-house of your memory, and its wisdom will prove a never-failing counsellor.

"Take heed" to your bodily health. It is desirable that you should live long and labor for many years. Do not therefore suffer any of the sources of your vitality to go to waste. Study economy here. In regard to food and sleep, to labor and rest, to the length of your sermons and the loudness of your voice, be guided by the dictates of prudence, and do not allow intensity of feeling ever to get the mastery over your better judgment. Strive to acquire and then to maintain perfect self-control.

Then "take heed" to the flock, and to all the flock. It is an interesting view which is here given of the Lord's people. They are "the sheep of His pasture," of different ages and conditions, and consequently requiring individual attention, but withal a "flock," associated together, and having mutual interests, so that the benefit or the injury of one—of any one—will be a help or a hindrance to all the rest. Let your first effort therefore be to make the acquaintance of all the members of your charge, and then continually to stand in a sympathetic relation to them. Each one needs some special adaptation of ministerial oversight, and each has an accessible side, by means of which the heart may be reached. There are the young, with all the aspirations of their budding life; gently guide them into the ways of righteousness, where peace and pleasantness can alone be found. Hope for the church of the future, and that is hope for humanity, in the widest sense of the term, is involved in the thorough Christianization of the rising race. For them put forth your very strongest efforts. Win them for Christ, and you secure them for all that is pure in morality, generous in philanthropy, and scriptural in religion.

Tenderly care for the toiling men and women of your flock. And these though embracing what are usually called the working classes, are not, by any means, confined to them. The trader in the store, and the merchant in the counting house, no less than the artisan, the fisherman, or the day-laborer, experience the full force of the words, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground," and it will be for you to make them feel that whether their labours are of the body or the mind, whether their cares be for the plainest food and the homeliest apparel for themselves and their families, or for the honest management of a business upon which many

households depend, they have in you a brother who can appreciate their difficulties and who is willing to share their burdens with them. Yet do not fail to inculcate upon all, that honest toil is honourable, and that industry and frugality are essential parts of true religion. On these topics, there is undoubtedly a vast deal of misconception in our day—and in quarters too, where it might be least looked for. Who are the really well off—the happy people? Let the infallible word be heard in reply. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." Your word of encouragement too may often fall with soothing or strengthening effect upon the ear of some "mother in Israel" all but overwhelmed with the responsibilities of the miniature kingdom over which she presides. Like the presence of your Master in the family circle at Bethany, so may your visit bring a savour of heaven into the homes of your flock, and strive to remind them that there is danger even to the souls of those whose only fault is to be "encumbered with much serving." But above all, in this connection let me remind you of the duty which you owe to the sick, to the aged and the poor. Whoever, through stress of other engagements, may for a time be overlooked, these must never be forgotten. Debarred as they may be from the public services of the sanctuary, esteem it one of your highest privileges to carry into their solitude a part of "that feast of fat things," which the Lord hath prepared for all people. Bear, if need be, very patiently, with even the unreasonable exactions of the afflicted. We may but perfectly understand the strain which is made upon their feelings by severe pain, protracted illness, or great weakness itself. In all such cases, let your "love abound, yet more and more." "To visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and to keep unspotted from the world," are essentials of that "pure religion and undefiled" of which you are to be no less the exemplars than the teachers. The better off among your people will, at any time, I am sure, excuse your apparent forgetfulness of themselves, if they know that you are putting the work time into such duties as these. And the exercise will be found as profitable to yourselves as to others. It will help to bring you into more perfect conformity to the mind and the life of Christ. It will give you evidence of the perfect adaptation of the gospel to the deepest needs of mankind. It will ensure to you the special blessing of Him who is not ashamed to call the least of these his brethren; and who has said that even a cup of cold water given to a disciple in His name, shall not lose its reward. A young minister, eminently gifted and devout, whose labors of love are cherished in many grateful hearts along these shores, and whose early removal from our midst we all still lament—the Rev. A. W. Turner—a short time before his death wrote, that if he had to begin his ministry again, he would make this his strong point, to visit and comfort the sick and the poor. Let this voice from the confines of paradise be a word in season to us all.

III. But let me now turn your attention to the principal direction of the text, and to the considerations of paramount importance involved in it. The duty specially inculcated is to "feed the flock of God," or of "the Lord," as it is now generally admitted the text should read. Here, St. Paul does but echo the command of the Saviour Himself, who, to St. Peter at his restoration used the same word, "feed my sheep." The term is of extensive meaning. It embraces not merely setting suitable food before the flock, but guiding and controlling their movements, conducting them to the best pasture, guarding them from danger, and defending them from destructive enemies. Thus according to the tenor of our Lord's command, and the injunction in this place, of his apostle, the Christian minister is invested with similar responsibilities to those which the Saviour assumed towards his church. He is the "good shepherd," who "callest his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." You are under shepherds—not hirelings—whose affection and efforts are unsparingly to be devoted to the flock, for whose benefit if need be, you also should be willing to lay down your life.

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