

The Wesleyan.

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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

There is more genuine happiness in one good class-meeting or love-feast than in a thousand ball-rooms—that is, if your spiritual condition is in harmony with the class-meeting or love-feast.—*Holston Methodist.*

"A reading Church," says the Baltimore *Episcopal Methodist*, "is quite sure to have an active, aggressive and liberal membership, and the pastor will take on new inspiration and preach to them better than ever before."

A writer in the *Christian Standard*, tracing ungodliness on the subject of future punishment to ungodliness on the subject of atonement, says, "You cannot fall out of a fourth-story window and stop at the third story; there is no stopping till you get to the bottom."

A singular misfortune has happened to Rev. Heber Newton, who is repenting of his promise to discontinue his lectures on the Bible: Henry Ward Beecher offers him comfort and fellowship. There is a dilemma in this that will puzzle Newton worse than some of his studies in the Pentateuch.—*Central Ad.*

It is related of the thirteen year-old Boston school girl who died last week, as alleged, of over-study, that, during her delirium, she repeated page after page of history, and struggled with the notes of music, frequently crying: "O, mother, if I could only get these notes out of my head!" This sort of child-murder is going on all over the land. Stop it.—*Nashville Ad.*

Voltaire's house is now used by the Geneva Bible Society as a Repository for Bibles. The British Bible Society's house in Earl street, Blackfriars, stands where, 1378, the Council forbade Wycliffe circulating portions of Holy Scriptures, and where he uttered the words, "The truth shall prevail," and the Religious Tract Society's premises are where Bibles were publicly burned.

Says the Boston *Congregationalist*: "Mission ships seem to be an important part of evangelistic machinery, nowadays. The London Missionary society sends out five large and several smaller vessels, among them the steel life boat on Lake Tanganyika, while five other societies, at least, send out one each. A unique fleet this, and doing no insignificant work. They are admirably fitted up with a full supply of books, tracts, hymn-books, Bibles and Testaments in various languages."

"Fifty years ago," said Earl Cairns, at a meeting of the Church Missionary Society, "if a man had been shipwrecked on some of the islands of the Pacific, he would have been killed, cooked, and eaten; whereas if a man were shipwrecked there now, he would receive Christian hospitality. Miss Gordon Cumming, who is not a missionary, and who did not write for the purpose of crying up missions, declared that while in 1835 the people of Feejee were cannibals, there are now 400 churches and 1,400 schools there. Lady Brassey writes that any body who wants to see the last traces of heathenism in Japan had better go soon, as they are rapidly giving place to Christianity."

The *Herald and Presbyter* says: "Recent intelligence informs us that the whistle of the locomotive engine will soon reverberate among the hills of Galilee, and roll, in echo, along the banks of the Jordan. The preliminary survey for a railroad has been made from the Mediterranean sea to Damascus. It is to cross the Kishon, hug to the foot of the Carmel range, pass close to the hills of Galilee, and detour to the plain of Esdraelon. Nazareth depot will be twelve miles from the town. A fine railroad bridge will be built over the Jordan, crossing which the road will follow the river to the ridge overlooking the western shore of the sea of Tiberias. Thus far the route is determined. The company has secured the right to put steam tugs upon the lake of Tiberias."

An Irish priest has a difficult place, according to the *St. James Gazette*: The other day a priest in Kerry went to his bishop: "I want you," he said, "to give me a general dispensing power for cases of perjury." "For do the people want with that?" "Faith," answered the good father, "they can't get on without it. For, first of all, the Moonlighters come to them and swear that they must say that they didn't know who they were; and then there's the Arrears Act, and they have to take the oath they're not worth a farthing; and you know in the Land Court they can't get a reduction till they say they can't pay their rent. In fact, my lord, the poor people have to perjure themselves at every turn."

Who ever saw a person trying to rise to a position of usefulness and honor that did not receive slights; but who that ever stopped to mind them attained to those positions? One should not condescend to notice these slights, for it is a sure sign that real worth is there.—*Am. Meth. Recorder.*

A miserable lie—which, we regret to say, was not without plausibility—was told by the manager of a theatre about Henry Ward Beecher. It was published that he would go, and afterward that he had gone to see Mrs. Langtry, in *A Wife's Peril*. He was in Boston at the time. One advantage a weekly paper has is that it can wait long enough to sift out the truth.—*N. Y. Advocate.*

The *Catholic Standard's* only reply to our complete disproof of calumnious charges against Luther by publishing the passages in the letter on which the charges were founded, is to say that those "charges are entirely true." If the *Standard* will just reiterate "true, true, true, 400,000,000,000,000,000 times true" its illustration of child's logic will be complete.—*Independent.*

A writer in the *Journal of Education* thinks that "It takes time to make a man." This is his programme: "Ten years I set for the general culture of secondary school and college; three years more for strictly professional and special duties; then a year or two for travel, if your youth is to be a leader of men; and then, at the age of twenty-eight years, I expect to find a man ready to begin to help his fellows upward and onward in civilization."

It is announced from Paris that the decree "authorizing" the worship of the Catholic Gallican Church has been signed by the President of the French Republic, and is therefore now in force. If we mistake not, the "Catholic Gallican Church" is just now in this country, and consists, as a secular paper says, of Pere Hyacinthe, his wife and son. It is something like the army of one of the insignificant little German Duchies, which was reported to consist of a Major-General, a Brigadier, Colonel, Captains, Lieutenants, etc., and six privates.—*Presbyterian.*

"A Sunday funeral," says the *Christian Intelligencer*, "is an evil, that often assumes a magnitude that amounts to Sabbath desecration. It dissipates thought, develops curiosity, and disqualifies for devout worship. Christians should protest against Sunday funerals as subversive of the purpose, comfort, peace, and sacredness of the Lord's Day; and pastors and church officials should be slow to consent to have the appointed hours of divine worship interfered with by a great funeral pageant."

Mrs. Booth thinks that women ought to preach, and would bring other people to her way of thinking by reminding them of woman's graceful form, her natural eloquence, and her wealth of emotion. Where such an argument is "convincing," there may be supposed to be a strong predisposition to be convinced. The nursery, the family, the class-room, and the chamber of sickness find work enough for women which they can do better than men; and there is no lack of men for the pulpit.—*London Methodist.*

The *Episcopal Register* says:—"Where we find a layman who is at his post in Church on Sunday and week day as if it was his business to be there, we know at once that his personal influence is valuable in the Church. A very few such men make a live Church, for there is nothing that draws more than the fact that this or that Church is known as frequented by such men. The value of a layman's example in a business-like punctuality at every religious service is the greatest prize that God can grant to any church next to a faithful pastor."

CHURCH MUSIC.

BY REV. R. BRACKEN, A. M.
Brief comments by Canon Hoar on artistic singing in church, inserted by you in the last issue among the two columns of very interesting brevities that you give us on the first page of the *Wesleyan*, have stimulated me, wisely or unwisely I know not, to put pen to paper on this subject. All will concede that music is a power with sage or savage. Moreover, we instinctively conceive that it is as universal as the universe. It can only be limited by the duration of dependent existence. Song is as immortal as time, or thought, or being. Creation began in song, and Revelation discloses the harmonies that swell like the many sounding sea when redemption is complete. Of the first creation, and of the new creation it might equally well be said: "Through all the compass of the notes it ran, The diapason closing full in man." All sacred music between the epoch of history signified by Job. xxxviii. 7, and Rev. xiv. 23 must be variations on the sublime chords then struck; often, it is true, amidst the sadness of sin pitched in the minor key, but still breathing something of hopeful triumph. The popular titles of some of the greatest compositions of the great masters are suggestive: The Creation, the Messiah, the Gloria, the Hallelujah Chorus and many biblical oratorios. No secular music is for a moment comparable with sacred music, because secularism cannot inspire a master. We wish in this round about manner to suggest that the great use of church music must be for purposes of worship and as responses to the theme of the pulpit—Redemption. What then are the criteria for the suitable matter and execution of church music? John iv. 24, "God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." 1 Cor. xiv. 15, "I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding also. See also Colos. iii. 16, Jas. v. 13, Ephes. v. 19, Math. xxv. 1-30, and Psalm lxxxi. 1. According to these and other Scriptural criteria, church hymns and anthems should be spiritual and the music by which they are expressed worshipful and soulful. We can readily apply these criteria to matters of present and practical import.

We can find nothing in the Bible opposed to, and much by implication in favor of the assistance which suitable instruments give in supporting the voice. The subject is hardly debatable now. The prejudice against organs as instruments of Popery which Butler in *Hudibras* satirized has passed away.

"It is an antichristian opera Much used in midnight times of popery." We must cordially agree with what Leigh Hunt says the "gusty organ" is capable of doing:

Comforting the ascending hymn, With notes of softest seraphim. However, the pealing organ, so helpful, may be made a hindrance by drowning the human voice with a Niagara of sound unless there be a full voiced choir. Everything should be made subservient to the idea of congregational worship. In the Greek church no organs are used and the vocal music of the imperial choristers of St. Petersburg is incomparable in sweetness and effect. For some reason, unaccountable to me, which must lie in the abuse and not the use, the introduction of an organ sometimes marks an era of decline in congregational singing.

One of the most sensible ways of employing an organ is that adopted at Talmage's Tabernacle in Brooklyn, where the organ accompanies and a preceptor mounting the preacher's platform leads the whole congregation as if they were the choir. For the playing of instrumental voluntaries before and after worship I can devise no good reason, and can find no precedent in sacred history. If pathetic in style and executed softly they are at least innocuous, and may even possess some positive benefit, but with the full power of stops and pedals to begin some airy performance so soon as the benediction is pronounced, and solemn appeals have been made, and prayers offered up is not only out of taste but positively injurious in its influence. The very power of music ought to make us jealously guard against mischief. It has always seemed to the writer that singing some song of Zion would be more in harmony both as a prelude and postlude to worship.

Ought solos to be sung in public worship? We think they may occasionally with good effect. The gospel may be sung as well as preached by a single voice. Sankey often sang alone in Moody's meetings with good effect.

But then the practice in public worship should, we think, be rare and well guarded. Very few are qualified by either gifts or grace to take such a part. Everything approaching to a performance, whether by single singers, or choir, or player, or preacher or prayer leader, is an offence to good taste and an insult to the Almighty. When I want the recreation or pleasure of listening to a musical performance I will attend a Music Hall on some week night. I go to church to get spiritual good and to worship God.

The ideal of public worship is not reached until all the people praise God. A congregation cannot worship by proxy. A choir cannot offer up the praise of a congregation vicariously. Just as well might the preacher and his leaders do all the praying for the people. Our congregations are becoming too much like spectators and auditors rather than an assembly of worshippers. Arifugal with responsive readings and responsive prayers degenerates into formalism, but it is preferable to absolute silence. Where are the hearty ejaculatory prayers, and the hearty singing of our fathers? Have we taught it to others and lost the art ourselves? God forbid! No singing is comparable with congregational singing in its religious effect, whatever it may be as viewed from the standpoint of an artist. Could the singing of "God save the Queen" by a professional quartette touch the strings of loyalty in the soul like a whole assembly singing it with all their might? Apart from the worship can the rendering of any anthem by a skilful choir reach the effect produced on the heart by a whole congregation singing "Coronation"?

Congregational singing is above criticism. If there are discordant individual voices they are marvellously transformed in the blending of the whole. They are like the sound of many waters which the storm sweeps into melody. Canon Farrar says "even discords can be wrought into the vast sequences of some mighty harmony." Oliver Wendell Holmes expresses delight in "the unsophisticated blending of all voices and all hearts in one common song of praise: Some will sing a little loud perhaps, and now and then an impatient chorister will get a syllable or two in advance, or an enchanted singer so lose all thought of time and place in the luxury of a closing cadence that he holds on to the last semibreve upon his private responsibility; but how much more of the spirit of the old psalmist in the music of these imperfectly trained voices than in the academic niceties of the paid performers who take our musical worship out of our hands!" We must not enlarge, but simply add that tunes which demonstrate their own fitness by voicing the praise of God's people all over the world and through many generations are the best. A good tune can never quite wear out, and they become valuable by their associations clustering around a life from the cradle to the grave. The "Ranz des Vaches" exerts its wondrous spell over the Swiss solely by its early associations.

The Discipline places the responsibility for the method of conducting worship in the hands of the minister in charge of a circuit. But no Methodist minister will lord it over God's heritage. He will gladly consult with his leaders and take their advice. And it would be well if the preacher could always consult with his choir previous to the Sabbath, so as to have as much harmony as possible between the service and the subject. The singers who often give much time and pains to this part of God's work will be only rejoiced to thus co-operate. As to the method of giving out hymns, whether by verse or on bloc, my private opinion is that there should not be any cast-iron rule. The method is best determined by the nature of the hymn and the circumstances. There are advantages in both systems, and all hymns should not be treated alike. I would vary the method.

MAN'S PART IN SALVATION.

The work of the Holy Spirit upon the mind is very mysterious, and we ought not to spend time in endeavoring to comprehend it, nor to indulge in any speculations about it. Our Lord declares it to be a great mystery, where he says to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John iii. 8.) We see the effect of the winds, but we cannot account for the change in the atmosphere. So it is in the conversion of a sinner.

The work of the Spirit is not intended to supersede the use of our faculties, but to direct them aright. He does not work without us, but by us; he does not change and convert and sanctify us by leaving us idle spectators of the work, but by engaging us in it. Hence the admonition of the apostle to the Philippians, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 13.) God's working in us is a motive for our working. It is the breeze that waits the ship along, but then the mariner must hoist his sail to catch it; it is the rain and sunshine that cause the seed to germinate and grow, but the husbandman must plow and sow; for though the seed cannot grow without the influence of the heavens, neither can it grow without the sowing of the husbandman.

It is an obvious duty to repent and to believe, and also to do this at once, and not merely desire to do it or attempt to do it; but, such is the depravity of our nature, that we shall never do it till God influences us. What we have to do, therefore, is immediately to obey the command to repent and believe; but to obey in the very language and feeling of that prayer, "Lord, help mine unbelief." We must obey, not only believing that it is our duty to obey, but believing also that we shall be assisted. Hence the very essence of religion seems to be a spirit of vigorous exertion, blended with a spirit of unlimited dependence and earnest prayer. An illustration may be borrowed, as recorded Matt. xii. 10, from the case of the man with the withered arm. Our Lord commanded him to stretch forth his hand, and he did not say, Lord, I cannot, it is dead; but relying on his power who gave the injunction, and believing that the command implied a promise of help if he were willing to receive it, he stretched it forth; that is, he willed to do it, and was able. So it must be with the sinner; he is commanded to repent and believe, and he is not to say, I cannot, for I am dead in sin; but he is to believe in the promised aid of grace, and to obey in a dependence upon Him who worketh in men to will and to do.—*Standard.*

ENGLISH METHO DISM.

"Cyrus" writes to the *Central Christian Advocate* on several topics. In alluding to the *Methodist*, he remarks that "its projectors were a company of younger men, some of them preachers, who held liberal views in politics and religion, and who did not hesitate to call themselves Dissenters. That is a designation which Mr. Wesley always disclaimed and disowned; and the leading members of the Legal Hundred in Methodism do so to this day. Methodism really holds a middle place between the Episcopal Church and dissent; and it may be, that before the end of the present century, the Methodists in England may become the dominant Protestant Church in this land, outnumbering either the communicants in the Church of England, so called, or in the Dissenting Churches. The liberal men in Methodism have had a smart struggle in the past to get their views ventilated within Methodist circles,

especially those opinions which include the separation of the Church from the State. Methodists in England generally believe that such a separation will be realized in the near future, but the conservatives in the body want the change to be brought about without Methodist influence being exercised in that direction. Preachers who held those liberal views were for long years deemed ineligible for official positions in the Methodist Conference, but that exclusive feeling is dying out, men of enlightened views, with leanings toward dissent are now occupying prominent official positions, and no longer will it be needful for a preacher to tell the quarterly meeting of his circuit, that his vote given at Conference, contrary to their opinions, was because the President desired it. Preachers do now speak and write their religious and political convictions freely, without the fear of Conference censure.

On another point he says: The Primitive Methodists are anticipating a dilemma which they fear will materially modify the itinerancy of the preachers. A slight modification of the time limit has recently been made by the Conference, which gives stations and circuits where they are unanimous, the privilege of retaining their ministers more than three years, and which also permits preachers to be invited to any part of the Connexion, instead of to a limited district. From the Minutes of the last Conference it appears that there are seventy ministers staying a fourth year, and six are in their sixth year of location, and two are in their seventh. From the invitations given to preachers at the December quarterly meetings, these prolonged locations are more numerous than ever, and the leading men in the Connexion are anticipating a difficulty. At present it does not exist, possibly it may never come in the form in which some timid men are now anticipating. It may turn out that the advantages, the money saving from off removals, will outweigh what are only present imaginary evils.

A CAUTION.

A little thing may divert the holy fire, and conduct it away from our souls. It is reported that in a certain place in Japan, the telegraphic wires refused to convey the electric message. Diligent search was made, and for a time the cause could not be discovered. It was observed, finally, that at one point a vast number of small spiders had spun their gossamer webs from the wire to the earth, and that these webs had become conductors of the electric fluid, drawing it off from its regular circuit. So soon as these were removed, the messages sped on their way as usual. Let us cut off every earthly connection which diverts the fire of God from the soul, and wait until we are all filled with the Holy Ghost. "The want in this age, above all wants," says the eloquent writer last quoted, "is fire. God's fire, burning in the hearts of men, stirring their brains, impelling their emotions, thrilling in their tongues, glowing in their countenances, vibrating in their actions, expanding their intellectual powers more than can be done by the heats of genius, or argument, or party, and fusing all their knowledge, logic, and rhetoric, into a living stream."

This we need more than wealth, or learning, or gorgeous churches, or imposing ceremony, or fashionable congregations, or eloquent and sensational preachers. The Holy Ghost in those who minister, and in those for whom the ministry is provided, is the crying need of the times. Oh for a Pentecost to come, right speedily on the Zion of God!—*Christian Witness.*

Dr. J. W. Webb says that when God gets a dollar out of a man's soul it makes a hole that permits the divine light to shine in.

Richard Rev. H. D.D.