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Contributors and Correspondents.

NOTES FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN BROOKLYN.

BY REV. JOHN LAING, M.A. DUNDAS.

A few notes by the way, may not be without interest for the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN. Mr. Croil and myself, in accordance with the commission of the General Assembly, duly made our appearance at Brooklyn last week. We found that the delegates from corresponding churches, would be heard by the Assembly there on Thursday the 25th, and waited accordingly. Of our reception as delegates I suppose nothing should be said, until we report to the General Assembly in Toronto. Still, much that transpired at the several meetings are of a general interest and some of them may properly be referred to.

The Assembly appointed Dr. Vandyke of Brooklyn, Moderator by a majority vote in preference to Dr. Talmage, in whose church, the spacious Tabernacle, the meeting was held. The selection was due to a variety of considerations. Chief among which, Dr. Vandyke himself places his well-known Southern sympathies, manifested at a time, as he himself said, when it cost some thing to cherish and express such sentiments in the North. There is a very general—I think perhaps unanimous wish to have fraternal relations between the churches again established, and while it is the opinion of the wiser and cooler men that the proper policy on the part of the church North at present, is "Silence and waiting," the first appearance of desire on the part of the South for the establishment of friendly relations will be enthusiastically met and acted upon. Meanwhile the South is moving, and under the leadership of Dr. H. Robinson, so well known in Toronto, it is confidently expected, will this year make some movement in that direction. The appointment of Dr. Vandyke, therefore, may be regarded as a mute expression of good will to the South. Apart, however, from any such consideration, Dr. Vandyke is the best man for a Moderator. Prompt, firm, and decided, but dignified and courteous; full of resources and thoroughly acquainted with forms, as well as with the business of the Church, he conducts the affairs of the Assembly efficiently and satisfactorily. In one respect the U. S. Assembly has much the advantage of us, at this and other points of difference it may be that our usages are better adapted to our circumstances than theirs would be. The matter to which I refer, is the rules under which discussion proceeds. No speaking is permitted without a resolution being presented first. Then amendments are allowed, but as in parliamentary debate, there can never be more than one amendment to the motion, and one amendment to the amendment before the court at the same time. Each amendment is voted on separately, yea or nay, and disposed of. Then the motion, or the motion as amended, is put yea or nay, and the discussion closes. They thus know nothing of the confusion, which so often comes among us, from putting six or ten motions successively against each other, and accepting that which is last carried by a majority as the decision. To witness the prompt manner in which obnoxious amendments are voted down without touching the motion; or proper amendments are made which modify the motion, and to see the order thus survived would convince the most obstinate conservator of ecclesiastical usages, that our system is capable of improvement, and should be at once assimilated to the rule of parliamentary debate.

The spirit of the Assembly is as admirable as its order, only once did an allusion of a censorious character, which imputed motives, escape from a speaker, and it was promptly suppressed by the Moderator. The extent of country represented makes it impossible for members of Assembly generally to know each other, but a love and respect for the brotherhood is apparent. The Home Mission discussions were most important, and presented to a large extent the same general features as among ourselves. The depressed state of the funds calls for retrenchment, and it has been done, although some must suffer as the consequence. There is great diversity of opinion as to the Sustentation Fund—we should call it Supplemental—and the majority seem to favour the old plan, viz., to have a committee of fifteen men to administer the Fund as they deem best, according to the demands of Presbyteries made by them. The plan has its difficulties and

objections, but many of those who speak from experience, declare that the attempts to substitute a fixed pastor, instead of stated supply has not succeeded, and that the benefits which are advocated are likely to follow from "sustentationizing the Home Mission Scheme," may be secured under the old method.

The Board of Publication and Sabbath School Superintendence also evokes much discussion, and the jealous fear of two great centralization in all matters of administration, finds expression quite as often as the conviction that centralization is a benefit.

The Foreign Mission Report is something magnificent. I will not attempt analyses, although such an article given to your readers could not fail to quicken their missionary zeal. The speaking to the report was deeply interesting and edifying. As the venerable and kindly Dr. Colquhoun, who for forty years has laboured in Syria, and for thirty-two has dwelt on Mount Lebanon, told us of the marvellous success of the Syrian Missions, of churches established in Damascus, in Galilee and Jerusalem; of the Bible and Shorter Catechism thoroughly learned in all their schools and Christian families; of individuals being converted and brought up in the Christian Church, married and having children now teachers of the glorious Gospel; of missionaries going forth from their schools to north, south, east and west; of perils to which the missions have been exposed and the massacres of the Daises through which they have passed unscathed; then told us that he wished to die on Lebanon and have his bones in a cypress grove, which he had nourished; when this heavenly minded man spoke to us with a countenance that fairly beamed with glad joy and glorious hopes, I felt that Christ's kingdom was indeed coming, and the conversion of the nations is a possibility. Other missionaries also made our hearts burn within us, quickened faith and stimulated hope. From China and Brazil, Persia and India, and from the Pagonas of North America, in New Mexico, California, similar good and hopeful tidings come, and we have cause to praise God for the marvellous success which He is vouchsafing to the church's work in every part of the mission field.

But my notes are long enough. I am now enjoying the hospitality of Dr. Atwater, Editor of the Princeton Review, a gentleman of the highest culture, and most varied attainments, and characterized by overflowing kindness and urbanity of disposition. Calvin's theology and social morality will not suffer while his hand controls that old quarterly. I have seen Princeton College with its celebrated President Dr. McCosh, surrounded by an efficient faculty. The improvements made in this institution are very great. I also to-day saw the illustrious Hodge and some of his associates in the seminary; and visited in company with Dr. McCosh, the graves of Edwards and Witherspoon, of the Alexanders, Millar, and other great men of Princeton. This is a place great in its history.

Princeton, May 27, 1876.

(For the Presbyterian.)

EDINBURGH TO ROME.

It is not my purpose now to give even the briefest description of places of interest visited in London, Paris, Geneva, or of the peerless scenery of the Alps, Mount Conis, etc., however much one may be inclined to do so. When the contour of the chief cities of Europe has been completed, a few notes may be transferred to you for selection. There are many objects of historic interest to your youthful readers, especially at Geneva—e.g., pictures, autographs of the reformers, theologians, etc., Calvin's church and grave, which may be noticed again. One party had the pleasure of hearing Pere Hyacinthe preach, in what is called the Christian Catholic church, a small edifice not far from St. Peter's Cathedral (Calvin). The audience appeared to be composed chiefly of Germans and Swiss. His sermon or rather address was grandiloquent. He seems to have the power almost of Beecher. But passing Turin, Genoa, Pisa, etc., for the present, I hasten to give a few impressions of the eternal city on the "seven hills." Easter season is always lively in Rome, if an interminable round of Pagan-like mummeries under the name of religion, can be thus designated; there was also a grand illumination by the civic authorities on the night of the 22nd inst., in honor of the founding of Rome. The coliseums, ruins of the old Roman Forum, and other places, were lighted up.

The sublime and ridiculous meet most strikingly in this city—the grand in art, the absurd in religion. It beats the world for fine churches, and foolish and idolatrous services in them. The city seems

wholly given to superstition. If one had any doubts about the utter rottenness, the worse than Pagan idolatry, and unmitigated brand of the Romish system, a visit to this city would for ever dispel them. It is in the department of so-called sacred relics of Christ's Apostles, Saints, Martyrs, etc., that the climax is reached,—on the one hand of bare-faced transparent imposition—and on the other of the incredible extent of human gullibility.

The most ludicrously impossible things are exhibited as genuine—e.g., the well at which Christ talked with the woman of Samaria—the mark Peter's head made on the stone of the prison wall, etc., etc. No wonder that the great mass of young men of Italy—at least those of any culture—has relapsed into sceptical indifference. The Protestant churches seem to have made little progress—and that only with the lower class.

The Italians though meriting their reputation for mendacity, yet have many admirable traits; like the French they are exceedingly polite and courteous to strangers. While wine is so abundant, they are less addicted to drunkenness than the same classes in Britain.

The weather is delightful; flowers in bloom, oranges and lemons ripe on the trees, wheat and oats just shooting out of the blade.

The Chamber of Deputies or Parliament is in session—an intelligent looking yet rather noisy assembly. Victor Emmanuel, the Crown Prince of Prussia, down around the city to-day—the King and Queen of Greece are here also. Garibaldi on Sunday witnessed the veteran soldiers march through the gates in honor of his victories.

You will have noticed in the despatches that a Council of Cardinals here is trying to induce the representatives of foreign governments to acknowledge the Pope's spiritual independence.

Philip Phillips is here now (singing) on his way back from Australia. Madame Ristori is also engaged. Like in France and Switzerland the Sabbath in Italy is a day of business and pleasure—shops open, bands of music playing in the streets and parks, to amuse the surging crowds. Except on five days, the Pope and his two secret Cardinals, seven or eight thousand Bishops, Priests and Monks, with a mixed following of pariahs, seem to have the business to themselves. The remainder of the 245,000 does what seems good in its own eyes seven days in the week. The best symbol of the whole Papal system is perhaps the 8,000 skeletons of monks in the basement of the Capuchine church; the skulls and other bones are piled or strung in all sorts of grotesque figures on the floor or walls of five rooms—the whole being exhibited to raise money for the church.

So the outward splendor of the Romish church, seems but like flowers on a grave or a mantle on a corpse. As to the grandeur of many of the churches—of which there are upwards of 880, allow a quotation from Mendelssohn's description of St. Peter's. "The building surpasses all powers of description. It appears to me like some great work of nature—a forest, a mass of rocks or something similar; for I never can realize that it is the work of man. You strive to distinguish the ceiling as little as the canopy of heaven. You lose your way in St. Peter's; you walk in it and ramble till you are quite tired." With all her splendor, Papal Rome is but the shadow of the glory of Imperial Rome, judged even by her ruins as seen in the remains of the Palace of the Cæsars, B. this of Caracalle and Diocletian, Aqueeducts, and especially the Coliseum. This last gives one in a glance a more adequate and overpowering idea of the greatness of the Cæsar's than a life-time of study. Figures fail to give a reader any idea. Travertine stone walls, oblong diameters 620 feet and 518, circumference 1,820, height 160. Room for 100,000 spectators. 10,000 gladiators fought at once on the arena, in the centre, a Trojan's triumph. Aply might Byron write of what another poet calls the "enormous amphitheatre—mountainous pile."

"White stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand when falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall! And when Rome falls, the world!"

Rome, May 1st, 1876.

The DUNKIN Act has either already been adopted, or preparations are made for it in every county from Kingston to Toronto, a district of over two hundred miles across the Province.

The Emperor and Empress of Brazil and suite numbering sixteen persons, have left Philadelphia, where they have been busily inspecting the Centennial, and have gone west. They intend visiting the Mammoth Cave, thence to New Orleans, and afterwards to Niagara Falls, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec, the White Mountains, Boston, Saratoga, Albany, and New York.

(For the Presbyterian.)

THE THREE P'S

MR. EDITOR,—We test candidates for our pulpit in the following manner. We are vacant, and as a congregation, regard ourselves of more than ordinary importance. We conferred the favour of a "hearing" on some twenty of our more eligible clergy, and then selected five choices out of the score. These were to be specially favoured with a re-hearing. Being an important congregation, we determined to proceed systematically. As each re-appeared, we took stock of him in his pulpit efforts with closer scrutiny than on his first appearance. The pulpit is P. No. 1.

Now, you know, sir, that in an important town like ours, a minister should be able to figure creditably on the platform as well. On public occasions we do not wish it said, that our minister could be outshone by any minister or layman on the platform. So we determined to request each one of the choice five to deliver a public lecture, on a week evening, on some popular topic. Thus we measured our man by putting him on his noddle on the second P.

But, Mr. Editor, you know that it not infrequently happens that a minister may display considerable talent in the pulpit and on the platform, and yet be somewhat ungainly and awkward in the parlor. This would be decidedly objectionable in an important town like ours. To ensure ourselves of a shining parlor ornament, we arranged that two or three of the leading families should make a social party during the week, to which would be invited the supplying minister and the elite of the congregation. He was thus *tea'd* round till he became astonished at our hospitality. All these social parties, the ladies in particular, narrowly eyed all his movements; and with the quickness and correctness of perception which characterize the gentler sex, the observations were soon made, the notes compared and the verdict rendered. This is our third P. One Christian lady suggested a fourth, viz., piety; but we pronounced her old-fashioned, and concluded that it would be unreasonable to expect perfection in any mere man.

Such then is the three-fold test to which we subjected the most eligible candidates for our vacancy. Any one who could run the three P's without stumbling would be the man of our choice. But it so happened that some stumbled at the second P., and some at the third, while one refused to re-appear on the scene. We are consequently vacant still. Our ingenuity will surely commend itself to you and to the readers of your valuable journal. Let other vacancies go and do likewise and we shall soon raise the standard of our clergy.

F. L. R. X.

Anomalies in Presbytery Rolls.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—There are names on some of our Presbytery Rolls which have no more proper right to be there than the names of various others. I refer particularly to the names of ministers, and partly to the names of elders. In referring, however, to the names of ministers, I do not refer to our Professors or our Church Agents, but to those who have simply relinquished pastoral charges, whether they occasionally preach or not. How comes it, or how can the thing be defended for a moment, that these should have power in our Church Courts, while others who have only taken the same course are declared to have no Church powers? Strange, surely, that some who have ministered faithfully and successfully for thirty, or even for forty years, should lose at once their former status, while others who have laboured, it may be for a shorter period, have their former status continued to them? There is no need to enlarge on this, so very anomalous and wrong is it. I am glad that it has been occupying attention of late, and that overtures to the approaching General Assembly (unless consigned to the basket of delayed causes), will bring it up for open discussion, and in all probability bring about a reformation. Whether, as proposed by these overtures, all retired ministers should retain seats in our Church Courts, I have not the slightest wish to determine; I am rather inclined to say no. But this I do not hesitate to say that if such a status be denied to some of them, let the same status be denied to all of them; and so the converse; we must keep hold of our Presbyterian parity. And then again as to Presbytery elders. It is surely anomalous for three pastoral charges to be severally represented by two elders (as the Rolls testify), while other pastoral charges are severally represented by only one elder. I know it will be said that previous to the Union of 1861 the dual representation was not disputed, and that even at said Union it was tacitly, if not more formally sanctioned. But one might suppose that at this time of day, and without interference from the higher Church Courts, the sessions referred to would resolve to be like their neighbours, and be satisfied severally with the appointment of one member. Probably, however, the general question will come before the General Assembly, and be issued in the manner just indicated. Yours truly,

O. P.

May 29th, 1876.

THE Catholic institutions in Berlin, schools and convents, are to be closed by the Government.

THERE are seventeen periodicals published in the United States in the interest of the Young Men's Christian Associations.

The Christian Use of Christmas.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—I do not intend to reply in detail to the last letter of "An Old Fashioned Presbyterian." I was quite aware beforehand that he was not open to conviction, and as he does not bring forward a single argument other than his own assumptions, to show why we should not meet for a religious service on any convenient day, whether it be Christmas day, Good Friday, or Thanksgiving day, I do not think it necessary to waste time and labour in replying. Nothing that he has said has affected the position taken in my last letter; and I am quite willing that your readers should think the matter out for themselves.

Two remarks, however, I should like to make. One is, that when we speak of the Incarnation of our Lord as the "greatest of all events," we of course include all the purposes for which God was "made manifest in the flesh," including both His life and death, "to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins." If, however, your correspondent merely means that the associations of Good Friday are more solemn and affecting than the more joyous ones of Christmas day, I fully agree with him. The other remark is, that although the frequent recurrence of communion seasons makes it impossible for us to have many preparation days, this is no reason why we should not have one. And if there is one free day which we can most appropriately use for this purpose, just as the Edinburgh fast day was and is observed by all classes of the people, what reason is there, *save prejudice*, for our not availing ourselves of it? And what are we to say of a prejudice which stands in the way of what might be a precious means of spiritual improvement, and intensifying and strengthening the solemn impressions of one of our Communion seasons, at least.

As our correspondent has not shown us why it is less appropriate to thank God publicly for spiritual than it is for "temporal blessings," why a Christmas or a Good Friday service should be will-worship any more than a Thanksgiving one, or what an intelligent Christian Service has in common with such superstitious observances as the use of holy water and the adoration of the "Host," he has in no wise removed the question from the ground on which I have maintained that it stands, that of Christian expediency. To all such questions the principle laid down by St. Paul regarding "days" undoubtedly applies. If your correspondent feels that his spiritual life is more truly promoted by spending Christmas and Good Friday in "worldly occupations" than by joining his Christian brethren in thanking the Lord for His great salvation, then he may rest assured that no one will interfere with or condemn him for so doing. But if others feel that God hath given them all things richly to enjoy even the leisure and opportunities of these "Christian festivals" if they feel that their love and faith are quickened by devoting a portion of these days to commemorating their touching and heart-stirring associations by an act of social worship—if they see no reason why such seasons should not be made the season of spiritual benefit to many, instead of mere days of idleness or amusement, then let your correspondent not dare to judge or condemn them in walking in the light of their own consciences and in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free? For "why should my liberty be judged of another man's conscience?" Yours etc., A MODERN PRESBYTERIAN.

"Emotional Theology."

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—I observed in an extract lately published by you from another paper, the term "emotional theologian" used, evidently, as one of disparagement. I wonder whether it ever occurred to the writer in question, how large a portion of the theology of Scripture is "emotional theology." In fact if you remove all the "emotional theology" from the New Testament, how much is left? Love,—the highest and most intense of all emotions is made the very condition of the knowledge of God, which is the object of theology. On love to God and love to man,—Christ tells us,—"hang all the law and the prophets." The things which "the natural man" (i.e. the unassisted intellect) cannot discern,—are "spiritually discerned," we are told,—and this "spiritual discernment is much more closely connected with the state of the heart, with the sanctified exercise of our highest emotions, than with any keenness of intellect or closeness of reasoning, both of which we know have often led "unspiritual" men into most erroneous conclusions. "Emotional Theology" is therefore, in the light of Scripture, the highest and purest kind of theology; and no one speaks more forcibly on the point, than the "beloved disciple" himself, who seems to have loved his Master best, to have most fully imbibed His spirit. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for John is love." I fear that had the Apostle John written in these latter days, he too, would have been set down as an "emotional theologian."

And, to pass to an uninspired writer, it was no shallow mind or unspiritual heart that wrote:—

"'Tis apt to think the man That could surround the sum of things and spy The heart of God, and secrets of His empire, Would speak but love; with him the bright result Would change the hue of intermediate scenes, And make one thing of all Theology."

"Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away, but the greatest of these is Love." Yours truly, A BIBLE READER.