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THE CITY WHICH HATH FOUNDATIONS.

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It is now some four or five years since the first appearance of the well-known little book, entitled "Gates Ajar," which, from the nature of its subject, and the fascination of its style, has numbered so many readers and excited so much interest, both in Great Britain and America. The dangerous tendency of most of its theories, seductive though they may be, and mingled, as they are, with thoughts both true and beautiful, has excited a good deal of criticism from the Christian Press. As a more permanent reply, or antidote to its subtle dangerous influence, a little volume, called "The City which hath foundations," by Arabella M. James, with an introductory letter by Sir John Coleridge, Attorney General of England, has recently been published by William Macintosh, Paternoster Row, London. Anything from the pen of Sir John Coleridge, is sure to be worthy of attention, and his introductory letter is sound, sensible, and thoroughly Christian in its tone. Of the authoress of "Gates Ajar," he says,—"She is an entire stranger to me, a woman, and an American; she is a person of considerable abilities; and she has written a book some times very touching and tender, and I will not doubt, with the best motives. All these combine to make it painful to say anything which, if she sees it, may give her pain. The fault in her character, as it seems to me, and which I mention only because I see in it, the main source of the faults in her book, is, I will venture to say, a national one—want of reverence. Of course there are many and great exceptions, some remarkable ones. I have the happiness to know well. But I speak of the Americans as a nation, and it seems to me, that their history, their constitution, their wonderful material progress and success, the education of the young, and the domestic habits of their educated classes, all conspire to this result. Unfortunately it prevails, as indeed might be expected, even in regard to subjects and persons whom it is good for those who have to deal with them, that they should approach with especial reverence." He then notices her theory in regard to the occupations, enjoyments, &c., of a future state, as being a mere continuation or amplification of those most congenial to our natural tastes,—even "telling 'the little child,' because 'the principle joy in a child's life consists in eating.' " "that she will still have her 'ginger-snaps' and her playthings;" and all this because she cannot bear the 'uncertainty of an indefinite heaven, or the monotony of a prayerful one. All must be made definite, and levelled down, as it should seem, to the present capacity or desires of each one of us." To this he replies:—"The spirit living with God, in joy and felicity, is not this or that? Do we require, beyond this, to know where, how, clad, what doing, with what tastes, faculties, or powers? If we have not this further knowledge, shall we be bound to consider ourselves, as she terms it, merely 'puffs of gas.'" While he rejoices to believe in the communion of Saints, and that "the intimate union of saints with saints on earth, is not separated by death," he strongly objects to Miss Phelps' theory, that a still unbroken, though invisible intercourse, exists after death. "In her theory it seems to be forgotten, that a bereavement by death, is not intended to be only a misfortune under which we are to be consoled, but also a dispensation by which we are to be disciplined,—by which we may learn to submit our hearts cheerfully to God's good pleasure." We feel that our separation, if we do but hold to our Blessed Master, is for a time only; that it commences by the will of the most loving Father, and will end by His ordinance when it is good for us; and so comes resignation—more than resignation—perfect peace.

"We would not constrain the unbonded spirit, into bonds again." And can it be doubted that it is good for us thus to dwell awhile in the house of mourning? Is all that Miss Phelps holds out to us worth this sober certainty of lasting joy? He concludes with a question from a very beautiful letter, by Jones of Nayland, written after the death of his wife, his beloved and constant companion for forty years, which ends thus:—"Nevertheless, if the Word of God be my companion, and His Holy Spirit my guide, I need not be solitary till I shall once more join my departed saint,—never more to be separated, which God grant in His good time, according to His word and promise in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

The little book itself follows up very satisfactorily the keynote struck in the preface. While far from depreciating the good intention of "Gates Ajar" in so far as it seeks to excite a more vivid interest in the "better country," by investing it with attractions, more likely to appeal to the capacities and tastes of people in general than the more Scriptural teaching about "Jerusalem the Golden;" the authoress regrets that Miss Phelps should have tried to lower the tone of our explanations to an unscriptural level, instead of teaching that our hearts and powers will, and must be

purified and developed, to fit them for the far higher and purer enjoyments of heaven. Though poor Deacon Quirk is made to come off so much the worse in his argument with Aunt Winifred, is he not strictly in harmony with Scriptural teaching, when he says,—"I expect to be transformed by the renewing of my mind to appreciate the glories of the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God!" We would object—the authoress of "The City which hath foundations," observes—to delude a little boy with the idea that his grown up life would be a mere prolongation of the enjoyments of the nursery. We should feel that to tell him, for instance, that the houses of Parliament and Congress are places where men "joke and play," as they did in their nursery days, would not be likely to raise high aims in his mind, or be a very judicious preparation for the earnest work of life. And as the difference between the capacities of a child and an adult is as nothing compared with the difference between our minds as they are now, and as they shall be developed in the higher life to come; is it not a terrible mistake to try to level our expectations of future happiness, to our present, and it may be very far from spiritual tastes? "Of one thing," says the authoress, "we may feel certain, that in heaven every true aspiration will be perfectly satisfied. Every craving of our nature for beauty or for knowledge, for usefulness or for rest, and above all for love, will find its perfect fulfillment. But need it be in the same ways through which we have been groping here? And is it true that many, even of the most uneducated, or whose time is exclusively given to some one employment now, would really find so much encouragement in the hope that the same occupation, in some form or other, is likely to be theirs for ever? Are not the far greater number of those who 'labour and are heavy laden,' far more attracted by the idea of rest? There are many among us, in every station of life, who find it difficult to press on with their duties from day to day; who have known too much of suffering in connection with the necessary effort of fulfilling those duties, to feel any comfort what ever in the thought that we should find here an merely an improved edition of this world. Rather do we want something wholly different."

The poor Deacon might have urged that the digging of potatoes was in itself sometimes wearisome; and that, when the hour should come for time to cease digging for ever, he had every reason to expect that the nature which had hitherto been so much occupied with his farm-work, would be changed and ennobled; that, in fact, he should certainly not go to join in the song of adoration "just as he stood there in his field." In reference to the theory that we shall "talk and laugh and joke and play," she says,—"It cannot hardly be supposed that any one ever seriously imagined the general belief to be that we shall not have the full use of our powers of speech in heaven; but whether we shall then care to employ them in the way she thus describes is quite another thing. We should say, that unless the interests and pleasures of another world fall very far short of the deepest feelings of this present time, it is altogether improbable that we shall wish to do so. Undoubtedly there are times now, and they are usually the times we love best to remember, the sweetest and happiest moments of our lives, when laughing and talking and joking of this kind would fall upon us painfully. Such hours, or minutes, may not have been very plentiful, but, surely, those passing touches of exceeding sweetness have come far nearer to the joy of heaven than any time of merriment."

Besides, such 'joking' &c., implies a need of recreation and amusement, which "cannot possibly exist where all hearts are satisfied." In regard to children and the supposed gloomy impressions of heaven which they are apt to receive, she observes,—"They receive their impressions much more from our manner of speaking about the 'better country,' than from any particulars of pleasure or amusement that we can promise them there. And it has generally been found by those who dearly love children, and care to direct their thoughts rightly in this respect, that their hearts are far more susceptible of a desire for heaven, than those of older people."

She then proceeds to discuss Aunt Winifred's way of comforting her bereaved niece by her assurances of her dear brother's continued companionship, encouraging her to make the thought of what would please him still the guiding principle of her actions; thus leading her to continue the idolatry which she had lavished upon him, while alive, and on account of which her merciful Heavenly Father had perhaps removed her idol for her greater good. In answer to the idea that because we so long for, and feel or think we feel our need of our lost treasures, therefore they are still, though invisibly, with us, we have the following reply:—"If the strength of our own longing for what we consider to be blessings, is to be taken as a sign that God must grant them to us, where is there to be any real submission to His will? where any yielding of our imperfect judgment to His higher knowledge? Surely the rest and comfort of the words, 'your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things,' would be wholly taken away, if we felt that He would be constrained in the use of that knowledge, by our short sighted desires." "Ah, says Mary when Aunt Winifred speaks of having consulted them, i.e. her departed husband and her Saviour, about her future residence—'it is simply real to her!' Real! thank God, most real is the communion which our Lord holds with those who abide in Him. But if this communion would be divided between Him and the spirits of departed friends, could we be assured of their presence; let us be most deeply thankful that we have no warrant for such belief."

And however this thought may be used to bring about certain results with fictitious characters, there is no doubt that in real life, it must have a practically dangerous and idolatrous tendency, "if we suffer our hearts to rest on the idea of their being always present. It will only be a change, and certainly not an improvement, in the form of our idolatry." Aunt Winifred herself acknowledges that, if the silences were broken, which was the only drawback to the intercourse she believed in herself to enjoy, if she could actually hear her husband's voice, her life would become one long defiance to the first commandment! Does not this show at once, the tendency of her system?

The authoress then earnestly presses home the most important truth, that it is God alone whose invisible presence in the soul can make us strong; that though the mourners may seem to be sooner comforted by thus being led to believe in the continued possession of its idol, we shall make no real advance by assuming so false a position, and attempting to hurry God's gradual work in the soul. She wonders, too, whether the authoress of "Gates-ajar" ever had "known what it was to feel," after the loss of a dear friend,—as troubles and difficulties afterwards arise, most deeply thankful that the loved one was at last free from them all; at rest in His presence, where there is fullness of joy.—If so, she would rather bear anything herself than hold them back, much more would she rather "bear it all" than bring them in any sense into their troubles again. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord,—that they may rest from their labours."—No! let us rather

"Praise God the Shepherd as so sweet!
Praise God the country as so fair!
We could not help them from His feet,
We can but haste to meet them there!"

One is tempted to make too many extracts from this admirable little book, which we trust, may be reprinted in America, so as to bring the truth which it contains to bear on the hearts of many of that great company of mourners among us, who have found the theme of "Gates-ajar" so intensely fascinating. In this little book they will find "a better way" of more lasting comfort. The authoress concludes by dwelling on the all-sufficient, all-satisfying love of God, which is as individual as it is extensive;—of which the love that brighten our pathway here are only partial emanations; which can fill, and more than fill, with its infinitely tender consolation, the gap made by the loss of any created being.

And is not Love, after all felt to be the highest happiness of which our human nature is capable. If "a man would give all the substance of his house for love," and "it would utterly be continued," would even the most enthusiastic machinist or artist, who had once tasted it for himself, barter for it the most unlimited success in his favourite pursuits? And so, if Aunt Winifred had shown Abinadil Quirk that there was an infinitely higher part of his nature to be satisfied, than that which concerned itself with inventions and patents;—and to "clotily" that her Saviour's love could be more satisfying a possession than a piano, or even a human lover, it might have brought to both a far truer peace. In real life how often has it done so? Even with regard to children, the same rule holds good. We entirely object to the statement of Miss Phelps that, "the principal joy of a child's life consists in eating!" We have known real parents shocked and grieved by such a bold assertion, and real children, very little ones,—who would not be bribed by any amount of cakes and candy to leave "mama" for an afternoon, or to give up the society of a dearly loved playmate. We have known infants of less than three years, and whose little hearts broke with grief, when separated from a very indifferent mother, though abundance of good things were provided as a consolation! Which is the crossing joy of a happy child's home, or the most sorely felt privation of a neglected one—the presence or absence of the ginger-snaps and "gum drops," or of the love and caresses which are the very sunshine of a child's life? No! it is a slander upon child-nature which one cannot but be surprised at meeting from a pen which can paint child-life so tenderly! Even a very young child may be led to feel that there is a high or joy in sharing its cake or candy with another than in eating the part it keeps. Why then can it not be led to think of the perfect love which shall glorify the heavenly country, as its brightest attraction, without the doubtful addition details of "ginger snaps and playthings?"

"I'm apt to think the man
That could surround the sum of things, and
spy
The heart of God and secrets of His em-
pires,
Would speak but love: with him the bright
results
Would change the line of intermediate
scenes,
And make one thing of all, Theology!"

CANADENSIS.

Rev. W. C. Van Meter worked a hand-press himself, to print the first 10,000 Testaments in Rome, for which American Sunday schools provided the means. The work is just completed, and now they need funds to print 40,000 more at once.

The London Christian World announces that a magnificent offer has been made of two prizes of 250 and 150 guineas respectively for about \$1,250 and \$750 in gold, for the best essay on "The Temperance Reformation, its Claims upon the Christian Church." Essays are to be sent to Hodder & Stoughton, 27 Paternoster Row, London, before December 15, 1873. Dean Smith, Prof. Calderwood, and Rev. G. W. Oliver of Battersea College, are the judges.

STATISTICAL AND FINANCIAL REPORT OF THE PRESBYTERY OF STRATFORD.

At a meeting recently held in Mitchell, the Presbytery of Stratford instructed its statistical and financial committee to prepare for circulation in the congregation under its charge, a synopsis of the annual report, then submitted. In accordance with the instructions then given the following abstract has been prepared, and is now sent forth in the hope that it will promote acquaintance with, and interest in the work of the Presbytery and church at large, and that the facts which it contains will strengthen the hands of those who are doing well, reneo others to a sense of their shortcomings, and stimulate all to greater efforts and sacrifices in the cause of Christ.

There are in the Presbytery 16 pastoral charges, and these are all provided with settled ministers. It has under its care 1,671 families, 2,646 communicants, 1,066 Sabbath School scholars, and 709 young people in its Bible Classes. Its work is carried on by 16 ministers, 92 ruling elders, 108 Sabbath school teachers, and 161 managers or deacons. Its churches provide accommodation for 7,586 worshippers, 27 weekly meetings for prayer have been sustained during the year, and 9 associations exist for collecting money for the missions of the Church. During the year there has been an increase of 80 families, 128 Sabbath school scholars, 90 Bible class scholars, 2 ruling elders, 2 missionary associations, and 316 sittings in its churches. The number added to the roll of those in full communion was 255, to 208 last year.

Though there appears to have been decided progress in the Bible classes, the Sabbath school work remains in an unsatisfactory condition. 7 congregations report an increase of 119 scholars, and 5 a decrease of 116, showing a net gain of 3 for the year. The apparent increase of 123 is due to returns having been received from all the congregations this year, while one failed to make them last. The number of Sabbath school teachers has fallen from 214 to 198, and the number of vols. in Sabbath school libraries from 5,076 to 5,069. These are facts which should arrest attention. Our church has long been distinguished by the attention which she has given, and the success which she has enjoyed in training the young, and her future prosperity depends largely on this department of her work. In the present decline there is a loud call to those who have the work of Christ and of His Church at heart, to give their aid in reviving interest in and promoting the efficiency of our Sabbath schools.

Turning now to the finances of the Presbytery matters are, on the whole, in a very satisfactory condition. In every department there are proofs of progress. For the first time in the history of the Presbytery the average rate of contribution per communicant, for all purposes, exceeds that of the Church. It has risen from \$6.55 last year, to \$10.60 now, while that of the Church is \$9.88. The amount paid in stipend was \$10,746, an advance of \$1,119 on last year. There has been a very marked increase in the expenditure on church and manse building, the amount having risen from \$2,954.88 to \$11,892.73, due largely to the amount expended on the handsome church, now nearly completed in Stratford. The incidental contributions have risen from \$1,885.84 to \$2,788.98, those to the schemes of the church from \$1,921.80 to \$2,267.80, and those for all purposes from \$17,425 to \$28,058. It is very gratifying to find that the contributions to the schemes of the church continue to increase steadily, both absolutely and relatively. All the funds, with one slight exception, show progress. But while it is highly encouraging to find that the Presbytery is advancing in these contributions, it is to be deplored that it still falls considerably below the average of the whole church.

There is no satisfactory ground on which the fact can be accounted for. The district governed by the Presbytery is wealthy and prosperous. It includes several towns and villages of importance, and its congregations are for the most part large and unnumbered. Yet the average rate of contribution a year ago was 68c, while that of the Church was \$1. At present it stands at 85c, while the rate of the Church as a whole remains \$1. This humiliating fact is due to the conspicuous failure of several large and wealthy congregations. Eight charges might be named, embracing more than one-half the membership of the Presbytery, which, taken together, only contribute \$604 of the \$2,267 given within the bounds for these purposes, or in other words, though more than half in number, they contribute little more than a quarter of the amount. The following table shows the rate of giving in the Church Presbytery, and each congregation, for the schemes of the Church, and for all purposes:

Schemes of the Church		All Purposes	
Church	8 c.	Church	8 c.
Presbytery	1 00	Presbytery	10 00
1 North Easthope	2 04	1 Stratford	3 04
2 Burns Church	2 02	2 North Easthope	24 04
3 Shakespear	1 53	3 Harrington	11 00
4 Millbank	1 38	4 Burns Church	14 35
5 Millbank	1 38	5 Burns Church	9 76
6 Millbank	1 38	6 Burns Church	9 76
7 Stratford	8 01	7 Stratford	9 23
8 Stratford	8 01	8 Stratford	9 23
9 Stratford	8 01	9 Stratford	9 23
10 Stratford	8 01	10 Stratford	9 23
11 Stratford	8 01	11 Stratford	9 23
12 Stratford	8 01	12 Stratford	9 23
13 Stratford	8 01	13 Stratford	9 23
14 Stratford	8 01	14 Stratford	9 23
15 Stratford	8 01	15 Stratford	9 23
16 Stratford	8 01	16 Stratford	9 23
17 Stratford	8 01	17 Stratford	9 23

In comparing these figures with those of last year, it is found that Hibbert and Fullerton are the only charges whose contributions to the schemes of the Church have fallen off. The rest have advanced. In the case of Burns Church, Millbank, North Easthope, Harrington, Mitchell and Biddulph, the gain is considerable. North Easthope, Burns Church, St. Marys Shakespear and Mitchell contribute to these schemes at a rate considerably above the average both of the Presbytery and Church, while Milvorton, Linstead, Hibbert, Elma Nissouri, Stratford, Wollsey and Avontou sink far below the average of both.

In total contributions for all purposes, Stratford, North Easthope, Harrington, Hibbert, Burns Church, Millbank, Biddulph, Avontou, Nissouri and Avontou show a considerable advance on last year, though Fullerton, Nissouri and Avontou still continue to occupy a very low place. St. Marys and Shakespear show a decided decrease, though both still occupy a medium position. The averages in two cases, those of Stratford and North Easthope, are very high, due, no doubt, in large measure to the special efforts in which they have been engaged.

Though there is evidently much work to be done before the Presbytery takes its proper place in the Church, this survey affords ample ground for thanking God and taking courage.

J. W. MITCHELL, Convener.
Mitchell, Jan. 7, 1873.

THAT "POOR PAPIST."

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR.—When I first read the letter of "A Poor Papist," I laughed and thought that was all it deserved, but on further consideration, I concluded to make a very few remarks on that epistle. (1.) Christ did rake up the ashes of past centuries, for the benefit of a Church who opposed all change on the ground that she could not be wrong. Matthew xxiii. 35. (2.) Christ's Apostles did "unearth the fossils of deeds of wickedness" murder to show up the fruits of a false creed.—Romans i. 18, 32. (3.) It will become a "poor papist," who bows down, (Ex. xx. 4, 5) to the "images" of canonized murderers, to find fault with us for merely venerating the memory of those great and good men who lived, labored, and died, to secure to us liberty and life. (4.) The Romish, or rather the Papist Church claims to be, and to have been infallible; and therefore makes herself responsible for "all the ashes of the past centuries," which she was the means of making—and, Oh! she has made much "ashes," for it is matter of historic fact, that the Papist (so called) Church has murdered more than thirty millions of the human race! (5.) We Protestants have "a wader resource to draw from" than the "poor papists" have, for we have all the Bible besides. I am well acquainted with a Papist Congregation of 2,000 souls, many of whom told they knew of only one copy of the Bible in the whole parish, and that copy it in the possession of one who has lived much among Protestants, and who, but for that fact, would have been as ignorant of God's word as the rest of the Congregation are. That man, who is still a Roman Catholic, told me last summer, that he both keeps and reads that copy of the Roman Catholic Bible, both contrary to, and in defiance of the Priest's expressed orders! While reading it one day in my hearing, a neighbor came in and heard him read Acts iv. 12; 1 John i. 7, when the neighbor, rejoiced his hands and indignantly exclaimed, with an oath, "that can't be in our Bible!" (6.) Why should the follower of an infallible guide be so much afraid and ashamed to look behind him? What has an unchangeable and infallible Church to fear from those who "rake up the ashes of past centuries." The Church of Rome used to burn people to death, then "rake up their ashes," and throw them into the Rhine; has the unchangeable changed? Has the infallible fallen from her ancient practices? (7.) We can tell "A Poor Papist" of a large number who left Rome for Reason, Babylon for the Bible, the reign of the "man of sin," for the Gospel of the man "without sin," because he abominations of the Confessional had been fearlessly "raked up," and truthfully exposed to public execration.

Yours, &c.,
A RICIR PROTESTANT.

The Council of the religious body which calls itself the Free Church of England has informed a clergyman, who had asked its views on the subject of a surpliced choir in his church that they do not approve of such an institution, and will withdraw their sanction both of minister and church, if it should be introduced.