

Contributors and Correspondents

LETTER FROM DR. FRASER.

We are indebted to the Knox College Students' Missionary Society for the following letter recently received from Dr. Fraser, and hasten to place it before our readers.

Yoke-fellows in the work of the Lord. Greeting! Let us render thanks to God together, for his abounding mercy to us during another year! Blessed be the Lord our God. And let all the earth bless His holy name, "for his mercy endureth forever." Though we are working in such distant corners of his vineyard, and perhaps will never see each other all the day, yet the night will soon come, and then we will all be in at the reckoning, and enter into the joy of our Lord. May we all work so well that He shall say to us when he calls us home in the evening, "Well done!"

But what a blessed thing it is, though we are on opposite sides of the earth, that we can hail each other, now and then, with a word of cheer! For after all we are only human, and so, fond of, and cheered by human sympathy. Even as long ago as the time of Confucius, men felt in the same way, for we find the second sentence of the first chapter of his analects to be, "Is it not pleasant to have friends coming from distant quarters." I thought of this sentence the other day when your kind letter, dated at Blytheswood, Essex County, Ont., (sometime in Aug., 1876, reached me. It was like a visit from old friends I knew so well, and loved so much, and after I had read it, I'm not ashamed to confess, I sat for a long time musing on other days and scenes recalled by the mention of familiar names and places.

Your letter was a real delight to me, and there is only one thing in it which you must allow me to find fault with; you attach too much importance to, and bestow too much praise on my hastily written and imperfect letter of last fall. I hope you will forgive me for having called attention to some of its imperfections in one of my subsequent letters to the BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN, which some of you might have seen. I shall avoid the necessity of a correction of this, if I can, by writing less and being more careful. Please don't continue to think that you got in my last year's letter a full account of the mission in North Formosa. My letter, being as it was, a mere sketch in which were set down some things of interest, as they occurred to me in the hurry of writing a long letter in a short November afternoon. I shall not attempt a letter on the same plan this year, as Mr. Mackay is the only person from whom you can get a really reliable and valuable account of the work. The necessity of my being in daily attendance at the hospital here forbids frequent visits to the different stations, without which one cannot be very familiar with the work going on at them. And as for giving you an account of my own small work, I am afraid it would not be of much interest to you. Better wait till the end of the year, when I issue my annual report, and I will send you a copy which you will be able to throw on the table in the reading-room, so that none, save those who care to, need be inflamed with bundles of facts and columns of statistics.

The accounts both in the letter of your Secretary and the printed report of the Society for 1875 of work carried on and results achieved are of the greatest interest to me. May God prosper you still more? for I believe what I wrote last year—"It is well to remember that the soul of a Canadian is as precious in God's sight as that of a Chinaman." But you will excuse me if I confess to a feeling of sadness as I read through to the very end of your letter, without finding that any of you had decided to come away to Formosa to preach the Gospel of the kingdom. You "mustn't forget that Jesus died for the Formosans as well as for the Canadians," and that Formosa, though only a speck on the map of the world, is still with its millions of ignorant heathen, part of "all the world," into which Jesus commissioned his disciples to go and preach the Gospel. Don't be afraid of the work at home not being done. One reason why there is so much to do and why it is so often unsatisfactorily done, is, that there are so many engaged in it. Just think of it! Every little community of a few score families thinks it must have three or four ministers, and a social meeting to drink tea and eat cakes, is not considered complete without its quota of divines, who in consideration of the entertainment they afford are allowed to edge in a few serious words of instruction or exhortation, which however, are not generally the portions of their "entertaining and instructive addresses" longest remembered or most appreciated. Isn't it nearly time that Christian people in Christian lands were beginning to feel more generally that they should under ordinary circumstances, be able, in the due measure of God's word to build their own living and grow fat, and that the shepherds who are not needed to nurse and feed the young, to care for the sick, or to

fight the "grievous wolves," which threaten the safety of the flock, should be away in wilderness and mountains gathering into folds the sheep who have never known a shepherd's care, and who know nothing of the rich pastures they are so well acquainted with. I may be wrong, but I firmly believe that one half the number of ministers in Canada, would do the work that is done, much better, and with more ease, and satisfaction. For with how many is the whole life, one long struggle for existence in the narrow bounds in which their lot has fallen. I don't wish to enter into details, but I know of what I write. Far better some of you come here, or go to India, or Africa, or the South Sea Islands. The fields are white unto the harvest, but the laborers are few. But I have written enough—perhaps too much. If so you must forgive me. I feel strongly and deeply on this subject and write as I feel. And I am not alone, for it was delightful to read in the July number of the British and Foreign Evangelical Review, for this year, an article from I. E. Mathieson, Esq., convener of the Foreign Mission Committee of the English Presbyterian Church, which calls the attention of Christian people to foreign mission work in a very interesting and original style. If you will pardon the liberty of an old friend, I will suggest that said article be read and discussed at one of your meetings, for though there are of course some things in it to which all will not be prepared to subscribe, there is much that is suggestive and profitable.

And now I must stop. I shall expect to hear from you again next year, for though I see in your report, and in accounts of your proceedings which meet my eye now and then in the Record and BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN, many new names, I still continue to think of you as personal friends. And though sometimes it seems like hoping against hope, and the heart grows weary with the long waiting I shall still continue to hope and pray, and expect to see some of you in Formosa. We who are here cannot live forever. Perhaps we shall be suddenly called to rest before the middle of the day. If spared till the middle of the day we should take an hour for recuperation. Who is to take our place? And even if there were no danger of a failure of health, no danger of being called to rest before the sun go down, no necessity of rest and recuperation, what are two in so large a place and among so many people? I hope you will still continue to remember us in your prayers, as we do you. The Lord be with you! Yours in the Lord, and in the work, J. B. FRASER. Tamsui, Formosa, Nov. 24, 1876.

THE MARITIME PROVINCES.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Your correspondent presents his compliments to the publisher for a copy of the PRESBYTERIAN YEAR BOOK OF CANADA. It is indeed a valuable publication. It is so serviceable in many ways. It is quite a boon to have the various enactments of the Assembly which will often be referred to by members of Presbytery and others, made so easy to be turned up. For these matters I expect the Year Book will supplant in a measure the minutes. The Papers on Presbyterian Topics are timely and able, as well as interesting. But may I venture to ask the respected Editor where he got the list of names under the head of "Committee of Superintendence of the Theological Hall, Halifax," at the foot of page 103? It is not by any means the list as found in the minutes, page sixty-one. And who is A. Knight, Professor of Dogmatic Theology in the Hall at Halifax? We in the East know of no Professor of that name. It is not any more correct because it was printed that way in the Year Book for 1876.

That the Churches of the British Isles should not be noticed at all this year, a promise of a fuller treatment than usual next year being given, as the Alliance is to meet in the summer, may not be found fault with particularly, though some notice of their names and statistics however briefly would not have been out of place. That on page 128 is good so far as it goes, but it is neither accurate nor exhaustive. There are Churches not given there larger than some that are. But there is no apology offered for ignoring three or four smaller bodies in the Dominion. Many readers will infer that the Presbyterian Church in Canada embraces all. Your correspondent would rejoice if that were the case, but it is not the case. In the first place there is a Presbytery in the eastern part of Nova Scotia in connection with the Church of Scotland, with ten ministers and twelve congregations. On the borders of New Brunswick and Quebec, partly in the one and partly in the other, there was two or three months ago, another Presbytery of the same name, with two ministers and two congregations. In the third place there is a Presbytery in connection with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland, with four ministers and four congregations. And in the fourth place the General Reformed Synod of the States has a minister and a few small and scattered

congregations, the remnant of what was once a Presbytery. Going west there is a Synod in connection with the Church of Scotland, which according to the Year Book for 1876 had nine ministers and as many congregations. And there is a Presbytery of the United Presbyterian Church of North America. Would it not be desirable to have a bird's-eye view given of the strength of Presbyterianism in Canada and Newfoundland? As it is the publication is wrongly named this year, instead of the PRESBYTERIAN YEAR BOOK FOR THE DOMINION OF CANADA AND NEWFOUNDLAND, it ought to be "Year Book for the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the Presbyterian Churches in the United States."

LEUNAS.

For the Presbyterian.]

IN MEMORIAM.

W. A. M.

Fair as this world is there is fairer far Beyond the aure where the glory hides, We love this well where home and loved ones are, We love that better where our Lord abides.

We watch the windows of the curtained scene That ray the glory down the dome of night; How the heart pants to clasp the things unseen, And step within the veil where all is light.

Oh! this is ecstasy, that we at last Shall share his chosen's heritage above, And gaze as John did at the paschal feast, With wondering worship in the face of Love.

And shall we grudge when one we dearest hold, Loops from our clinging grasp with joyful eyes? Is it aught strange that souls of heavenly mould Should spring exultant to their native skies?

We walk together down the vale of life, And think no love can e'er with ours compare; Our claim Love questions: sharp and short the strife, The crown of love 'tis Love alone must wear:

He calls them and they follow, as the two Who left their father on Bethsaida's strand; Ah well we know who beckons them, and so Fearful and mute in meek submission stand.

We too would go if only He would call, We too will follow when the call will come, And join our brother in the banquet hall, In endless fellowship with Christ at home. New Edinburgh. C. I. C.

REVIVAL WORK AT COBOURG.

For the last five weeks a work of Evangelisation has been going on in the town of Cobourg, which has reached such dimensions as to attract very general and deserved attention. Two English ladies, Miss Logan and Miss Beard, who have already labored with gratifying success in Quebec, Sherbrooke, and elsewhere, came to Cobourg, and on the invitation of the Y.M.C.A., agreed to conduct Bible Readings and to hold public meetings, which were attended not only by females, but the community at large.

Many circumstances conspired to secure for them a ready hearing. Their own social position—their undoubted ability—the culture and refinement which characterised all their utterances and bearing—but above all their unaffected piety and persuasive earnestness, gained them willing and ever-increasing audiences. Members themselves of the Church of England, nothing sectarian found a place in their addresses, but all breathed the spirit of most Catholic charity, whilst the Gospel message was pressed with winning tenderness on the acceptance of young and old. The distinctive doctrines of the Gospel have been most clearly taught, and from week to week the attendance was only limited by the size of the place of meeting. Miss Beard's health gave way under the continued strain, and for the last ten days the burden has rested on Miss Logan. On Sabbath, 11th February, "Victoria Hall," (one of the largest in the Province), was occupied, and since then every day has been crowded by a deeply attentive and solemnized audience. At one meeting held on a Sabbath afternoon for the "Fire Brigade and Sailors," it was computed that nearly one half were Romanists, who listened with eager attention to the message of truth. One of the features of these wondrous gatherings is the mixture of classes, and professed creeds all alike attentive and impressed. "I saw you at the ladies meeting," said a Romanist to a Protestant neighbour the other day. "Yes, and I was surprised to see you there." "Well," said the Romanist, "I went first through curiosity, and now I cannot stay away. I attend every meeting." Who can calculate the good done by such services! Certainly no minister has ever had in Cobourg so "open" a door as now stands before these unassuming godly women. Men may differ as to the propriety of women in ordinary circumstances addressing mixed audiences even on religious subjects, but no Christian man can attend these meetings and see the wondrous power exerted over the audience—the hushed expectancy with which every word is heard—the solemnity of the whole service—and the known results in many instances of the Simple Truth received, without wishing that our land was full of such workers. Last Sabbath closed their public addresses in Cobourg, and on 26th inst. they are expected in Peterborough.

[The above was crowded out of last issue. —Ed. B. A. P.]

He who knows all things, knows I long, I pant, to love Him perfectly, and to live every moment to His praise, and to fill eternity of my powers.

The Church and the Theatre.

A noted Presbyterian minister recently preached a sermon to actors from the text, "Desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre." On the same day, by a singular coincidence, a prominent Unitarian preached in favor of the drama, taking from the same passage an equally fanciful motto, "The whole city rushed with one accord into the theatre." As swimmers leave their clothes on the bank before plunging into the stream, so both these clergymen wisely laid aside their texts before they "adventured themselves into the theatre" of discussion. We cannot help thinking that Dr. Talmage's appeal to the actors would have been more powerful had he refrained from making a personal explanation for the purpose of conciliating them. This weakened his cause, as it seemed too much like an apology for the severer terms in which he had before denounced the theatre.

Mr. Alger's discourse was a plausible and fallacious argument in defence of the stage as a more efficient educator than the pulpit. He said that the instruction imparted by the drama is of such a nature that it cannot be acquired from any other source, and it reaches certain classes who would otherwise remain in ignorance of its wholesome teachings, that it reproduces human life as it passes through the various stages of its existence, its special object being to enforce virtue by showing good and evil in their true light, to uncover and expose the tricks of vice, to warn the guilty and strengthen the innocent by exposing the iniquities and evils of the world.

These pretentious claims have no foundation in reason or experience. We know of nothing in morals or manners which the theatre can teach that is not better taught by the pulpit and the Sunday-school. The advocates of the theatre cannot point to a single family or individual that has ever been rescued from vice, ignorance, and poverty, and made virtuous, intelligent and thrifty, by frequenting the theatre, while thousands have found it to be the wide gate and the broad road to ruin. No young man has improved his business prospects or his character by attending the theatre, but on the other hand shrewd merchants begin to suspect the honesty of their clerks when they hear of their being found there.

No Christian man or woman has grown in piety under the influence of the drama. A regular theatre-goer, and a regular attendant at the church and the prayer-meeting are seldom found united in the same person. Such a combination would be a rare curiosity. Who that has watched the course of the drama for years past, and has noticed its advertised attractions, can deny that the most popular plays and exhibitions, with few exceptions, have been demoralizing. Such, it is said, was the piece which lately prepared the way for that fiery tragedy which death brought so suddenly upon the stage of the Brooklyn Theatre. In fact, the testimony of the best and wisest men of all ages has been adverse to the existing drama. The cry has always been, the drama is not in itself immoral or injurious; it can be purified and made a most valuable aid and ally of morality and virtue. Then why has it never exhibited this character? A pure and elevating theatre is like the philosopher's stone, or perpetual motion. It exists in the imagination. It is an abstraction. We want to see that high-toned, moral drama that is to take the young from paths of vice, and shield them from temptation, and train them for high and noble spheres of life on earth, and fit them for a happy existence hereafter. Let the actors combine and establish such a theatre, and the church will hail it as a friend. It has never been done, and we fear it never will. Plato said that "plays raise the passions and pervert the use of them; and by consequence are dangerous to morality."

Aristotle said that "the law ought to forbid young people the seeing of comedies."

Plutarch thought plays dangerous to corrupt young people.

The Christian Church from the earliest ages has condemned the theatre as the representative of paganism. A council in Spain in the year 805 ordained that "it shall not be lawful for any woman who is in full communion, or a probationer for baptism, to marry or entertain any comedians or actors on pain of excommunication."

Tertullian says: "We have nothing to do with the phrenias of the race-ground, the lewdness of the play-house, or the barbarities of the bear-garden."

Those professors of religion who attend the theatre and think they are secure from spiritual harm should ponder these words of St. Chrysostom: "Let us not only avoid downright sinning, but the tendencies to it. Some indifferent things are fatal in the consequence, and strike us at the rebound. And who would choose his standing within an inch of a fall, or swim upon the verge of a whirlpool? He that walks on a precipice shakes though he does not tumble, and commonly his concern brings him to the bottom. The case is much the same in reference to conscience and morality. He that wont keep his distance from the gulf is oftentimes sucked in by the eddy, and the least oversight is enough to undo him." We cannot see, therefore, how the church and the theatre can be friends except by the purification of one or the corruption of the other. Mr. Alger proposes to solve the difficulty by turning the whole subject over to science. "Then," says he, "will these two great agents of civilization go hand in hand in building up a higher idea of human action." The church as a divine institution receiving her laws from the Bible is not yet ready to bring her differences with the theatre before the tribunal of science for adjudication. The man who places the church and the theatre on a level as mere agents of civilization does not understand his subject, and certainly his proper place is not in the pulpit.—N. Y. Christian Intelligencer.

Rev. JOHN STEPHENSON, of Dublin, says:—"The Lord has given to every man his work, and we might as well speak of a drummer as of an idle Christian. Yes, we might as well speak of a cheating, lying, swearing Christian as of an idle Christian."

Prayer a Power in Business.

The article on this subject in a recent number of the Central Presbyterian, headed "Touching Incident," interested me very much, and brought to mind a somewhat similar incident, related in my logging, some years ago, by a merchant, who for nearly half a century was engaged in business in the city of Richmond. This honored citizen passed through all the panics and financial crises that occurred between the year 1823, and the close of the late war, and though, at times, like many others, hard pressed, I think it safe to say that no draft or note of his was ever dishonored or protested.

The incident referred to occurred during a time of great financial embarrassment. He arose one morning troubled and anxious in regard to the payments for that day. A large amount was due in bank, to be paid by three o'clock, and nothing in hand, and little or no prospect of raising the requisite sum. The matter was made a special subject for prayer in the closet, and he repaired to his place of business. After the usual routine in the counting-room he started out to make the necessary "raise." On going up Main street towards the bank, he met a friend, who either uncollected, or when the matter was mentioned to him, offered a loan of one half the amount. On getting to the bank arrangements were (very unexpectedly) made by which the balance was secured, and thus in a few minutes, and early in the day, the burden was lifted, and the praying merchant returned to his office with a grateful heart.

Now many perhaps would say that was chance, or merely happened so, and that the money would have been forthcoming whether the pious merchant had prayed or not. To this I would reply that the case here mentioned was not an isolated one. Such difficulties and burdens (and they were many and frequent) were no doubt always met in the same way, and, as events proved, in this way, always overcome.

I know the habits of this man. He was eminently a "man of prayer." He believed in its efficacy in all the concerns of life. God's promises apply to our temporal as well as to our spiritual conditions. If we look to Him in the exercise of faith, using proper efforts, then who can say that help will not come in the very way desired? If not in that way, it certainly will come in the sustaining grace of Him who has promised, "I will never leave nor forsake thee." To business men of all classes I would say, let the exercises of the closet be the first exercises of each day. Let such burdens and trials as have been referred to, (as well as all other trials) be cast upon the Lord, before entering upon the business of the day. Let prayer go before, or with all our efforts, and we may confidently expect help in time of perplexity and need, and a good measure of success in the prosecution of our business.—Central Presbyterian.

Sabbath Readings.

God has made the mind of man so that a peculiar deliciousness resides in the fruits of personal industry.—Wilberforce.

Nothing can be love to God which does not shape itself into obedience.—F. W. Robertson.

Being taken into Christ as a drop of water into the ocean, I lose myself in Him, and find in Him my all for time and for eternity!

There is a gift that is almost a blow, and there is a kind word that is munificence; so much is there in the way of doing things.—Arthur Helps.

Prayer is a strong wall and fortress of the Church; it is a godly Christian's weapon which no man knows or finds, but only he who has the spirit of grace and of prayer.

As we look to Christ in prayer, and converse with Him through his Gospel, we shall find new, and better dispositions growing up within us; holier habits of thought collecting and increasing,—a power over sin that is an earnest of future triumph,—a pleasure in studying the divine dispensations, and discovering fresh traces of wisdom and goodness,—and an activity in every duty to God and man.

A TABERNACLE is not an abiding or durable building. The present tent-life is not to continue. The earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved. Hence as we advance in time our souls should be ever looking upward, and clinging less and less to this world, which must soon be left. This short and changing life may be to us as the first step of a ladder, the top of which is lost amid the transcendent glories of heaven. Blessed are those who through grace are enabled to make it so.

The future of a primitive Christian was bright with one object and one event, the Lord and his advent. They knew that he was to come the second time, but they did not know when. So they not only longed and waited, but they watched. His words concerning watching were always in their ears, "Watch, for ye know not when the Son of Man cometh." This is the posture in which it becomes us to be, "looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God." Whatever would interfere with this, must be evil. Anything that would lead us to say "My Lord delayeth his coming," must be wrong.

Nowhere, we are ashamed to say, is the bad taste of ostentation in dress more conspicuous than here. It seems as if, with many, the Sabbath were the grand occasion for display, and the church the place for self-exhibition. In no other country have we seen so much show and tinsel in the churches as in some of our own cities. In Europe—not only in England, but on the Continent—such display is rigidly forbidden, not by law, but by the recognized canons of good taste. Nothing is considered more vulgar—a more certain mark of low breeding—than this kind of ostentation in a place of worship. It is only the "new rich"—what we should call the "shabby"—that try to exhibit themselves in the house of God. But as that class is larger in this country than any where else, we have more of these wretched exhibitions.—N. Y. Evangelist.