

Pulpit Criticism.

A WEEKLY SHEET.

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"THE METROPOLITAN" CHURCH.

It is generally acknowledged that persons who are unconnected with a family can recognize likenesses among the several members of any family more readily than do the members themselves; it is, therefore, to be hoped that *absolution* in some sort will be extended to the writer if he stops to indicate certain lineaments in the Methodist grandchild, which manifested themselves some fifteen centuries before she saw daylight, in her Papistical grandmother, and which disclosed themselves in the Church of Rome, because they are inherent in human nature. There are four of these: (1) Metropolitanism; (2) appeals to the senses, as illustrated by elaborate musical display, &c.; (3) assumption of the dogmatic in teaching; (4) the habit of treating all comers to a great extent as if they were Christians. The latter practice may be said to have been symbolized by the prominence of a font in the church. In making the foregoing remarks, the writer would not be understood to imply that these several descriptive characteristics are in any degree *monopolized* by Methodism.

The service at the Metropolitan Church, on the morning of the 12th inst.,

was conducted by the Rev. Dr. Potts. In the opening prayer, which was presented in a tone and in terms which were calculated to elicit an echo from the hearts of the devout, there were sentiments expressed which tended to disturb the gravity of some members of the congregation, owing to an item of information which they happened to possess; *such* parents were referred to, in pleading with the Heavenly Father, as "knew how to give good gifts to their children," and as 40,000 acres of the Temperance Colonization Society's land have lately come into the possession of a certain Doctor of Divinity who need not be named, the inference was natural that he at least thought he knew how to bestow good gifts on his children; the suppliant continued to pray that we might "lay aside every weight," and again it is to be feared, the *bass* accompaniment to his tenor (in some of our minds) murmured, "40,000 acres are not easily laid aside, nor the possibly 'besetting sin' which sought their possession." The hymns used throughout the service were exceptionally good, and the circumstance of Methodists singing of "the chosen seed," possessed at least

the charm of novelty. The first portion of Scripture read extended from Gen. vi. 5 to the end of the chapter; that portion contains one of the most perplexing statements in the whole Bible, but that statement was passed without comment; the passage occurs at the 6th verse, "It repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, it even grieved him at his heart." The only explanation of the passage that seems possible is the following: as God is unchangeable (Mal. iii. 6; Jas. i. 17) and cannot repent (Num. xxiii. 19; 1 Sam. xv. 29), such expressions are used of Him to denote that He resolves to act as men do, when they repent of a thing, and seek to undo it. To repent is (primarily) to change one's mind. Dr. P. selected the ninth verse of Gen. vi. on which to base his sermon—"These are the generations of Noah; Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." This verse is naturally divisible into two parts—what Noah was, and what he did, and a fluent phraseologist could and did find much to say on the subject, without saying anything that was not known probably to all his hearers before. He combated the common notion of a *just* man, as being inadequate to express that idea of *righteousness* toward God and man, which is the meaning of the passage. The word "perfect" occurring in the text, served as a peg on which to hang certain observations on a favourite Methodist tenet, styled "perfection"; but divided, and subdivided as the simple historic portion, "Noah was perfect in his generations," may for pulpit purposes be, it is reducible to "Noah was upright in his day," and the "perfection" of Abraham, Job, &c., admits of similar explanation; the marginal rendering of Gen. vi. 9, gives the word "upright." The favourable judgment of Noah, notwithstanding his recorded fall, as was in some measure explained, is traceable to his being regarded from the point of view of grace, or of pardon; Noah's sacrifice, in common with that of all other persons, testi-

fied to his faith in the promise of a Redeemer, hence the Almighty speaks of him in terms corresponding to those in which He spoke of Israel, of whom, notwithstanding their habitual transgression, He was pleased to state that He "beheld no iniquity" in them. Num. xxiii. 21. The Apostle Paul, on the same principle, speaks of the Corinthian Church, spite of its seething corruption, as an "unleavened" lump. 1 Cor. v. 7. There are circumstances connected with the genealogy of Noah, of sufficient interest to warrant digression, in order to explain them; the story of the fall, with a comment thereon, is traceable in the meaning of the names of the first four of our progenitors, as they successively appeared on the stage of the world—Adam—*man*—Seth—*placed*—Enos—*in misery*—Cainan—*lamentable*. The narrative of the recovery, though less distinctly traceable, is probably in some sort conveyed in the names which extend to that of Noah. To return to the consideration of the sermon which, though elaborate, and of a high order, the writer has not deemed it necessary to reproduce, it must suffice to observe that it naturally concluded with an exhortation to imitate Noah in "walking with God." This course would necessarily involve reconciliation and communion on our part, and guidance in the effort to attain to holiness of life; guidance in regard to work undertaken for God, and ultimate guidance to His immediate presence. It tells a sorry tale for the intelligence and culture of that section of the citizens of Toronto which frequents "the crowded house" (and we might say *houses*) to the north of "The Metropolitan," that such masses of the people should prefer the indecorum and impurity of the one, and the haberdashery of the other, to the solid and eloquent disquisitions of the pastor of "The Metropolitan." In concluding this notice, the writer must however remind his friend that he lacks Biblical authority for praying *to* the Holy Spirit, and wishes him God speed at the same time.

MARRIAGE WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER.

A review of a pamphlet on the above-named subject, by Professor Hirschfelder.

Legislatures, like the individuals of whom they are composed, on two important subjects, depute other men to think for them; matters relating to health of body or mind are, therefore, relegated by such assemblies to certain persons who, for a consideration, kindly undertake to stand sponsor for them. The evil consequences of such a condition of things exceed the power of human ken to estimate, but they will best realize them who have experienced the *blandishments* of an average step-parent. Professor Hirschfelder has given his readers the benefit of his intimate acquaintance with the Hebrew language, and of his extensive research in relation to the subject of the pamphlet. The force of his argument may be said to culminate, as it originates, in one weighty prohibition, "Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister, to cause jealousy or enmity . . . in her lifetime."—Lev. xviii. 18. Prior to entering on the discussion of the subject, the author adverts to the circumstance of Abraham having married his half-sister, as recorded in Gen. xx. 12, and to that of Jacob having, under exceptional circumstances, married one sister during the lifetime of the other; and this the writer does in order to show that, anterior to the promulgation of the Mosaic law, there was little or no regard paid to considerations of consanguinity. The chief difficulty of the question arises from the fact of a man being forbidden to marry the widow of his brother (Lev. xviii. 16, and xx. 21). This was a fundamental law, admitting, however, of an exception, in the case of a married brother dying childless (Deut. xxv. 5-10). It would appear that we must be content in this matter to repose in the wisdom of Him who ordained the laws, and to reflect on our own ignorance.

It appears from Gen. xxviii. 6-11, that the custom of a man marrying the widow of a deceased brother, when that brother died childless, obtained in the days of the patriarchs; this custom was subsequently engrafted into the Mosaic code. Moses, therefore, in view of the existing law which forbade such a union, explains the reason for this exception—"And it shall be that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is

dead, that his name be not wiped out of Israel."—Deut. xxv. 6. The author comments on the practice of "loosing the shoe" on the part of the widow, when repudiated by her brother-in-law, in the following terms: "The loosing the shoe had its inception from the custom of a man taking possession of landed property by going to it and standing on it in his shoes, thus asserting his right to it; when property was renounced, therefore, it was customary to transfer the shoe to the new owner (see Ruth iv. 7). This custom also prevailed among the ancient Germans. When the shoe was removed by the widow, the act indicated that the brother-in-law forfeited his right to the property of the deceased; the widow was also to *spit out before him* (not to 'spit in his face,' as in the authorized version); this spitting out before a man was an Oriental mode of signifying extreme detestation or contempt—the practice obtains among all classes of Arabians at the present day." Inasmuch as an attempt has been made by an eminent but heterodox scholar, to obviate the difficulty attaching to this question by tampering with the sacred text, the effort on his part has led Professor Hirschfelder to give Biblical students some valuable information relative to versions of Scripture which confirm the reading of the Hebrew text; the Greek version (the Septuagint), the author observes, is generally supposed to have been begun in the time of the early Ptolemies, about 280 or 285 B.C.; *the translation of the Pentateuch was executed first*, and the translation of the other books was undertaken at uncertain intervals subsequently. Aristobulus, who lived in the second century B.C., says that "*the Pentateuch was translated very early*." This version was highly esteemed both by the Egyptian and Palestine Jews, who read it in their synagogues; the version perfectly agrees with the present Hebrew text in regard to Lev. xviii. 18. The Chaldee version, commonly known as the Targum, also confirms the accuracy of the Hebrew text; it dates from the commencement of the Christian era.

In addition to all the foregoing testimony, we have that of the Syriac version, the rendering of which agrees word for word with the Hebrew, so that we have in this case, three independent witnesses to the genuineness of the Hebrew text, and each of them of the highest value. The reviewer eliminates the *testimony* accumulated in this

pamphlet under the conviction that the subject of which it treats is rather a matter of testimony than of argument as between the *apparently* parallel case of a man and his brother's widow, and that of a man and his deceased wife's sister. Under the head of testimony, therefore, we have that of the ancient Hebrews, who *encouraged* marriage with a deceased wife's sister. When one reflects that the books of the law were habitually read and expounded by the Levites in the public worship of the Israelites, it is impossible that so practical a subject as that we are considering could have been omitted, and equally impossible that the instruction in relation to it could have lacked illustration. Among individual witnesses to the practice of the Jews in this respect, the first in importance is Philo Judæus, who lived in the first century of the Christian era. He interprets the prohibition of Moses on this subject, as applying only to the sister's lifetime, as otherwise the marriage of the sister of the wife, during the wife's life, "would endanger the love and harmony that ought ever to exist between sisters." The testimony of the *Mishna* (second law), which the Jews believe to contain the *oral* instructions Moses is said to have received on Mount Sinai, is in harmony with all the foregoing testimony on this subject.

One more Jewish testimony must suffice, and that is the testimony of a treatise relating to marriage in the Babylonian Talmud: "If a man, whose wife is gone to a country beyond the sea, is informed that his wife is dead, and he marries her sister, and after that his wife comes back, she may return to him. After the death of the first wife, he may, however, marry again the second wife." In view of such a mass of testimony as the foregoing, and more to the same effect which might be adduced, it is a matter of small moment what opinions on the subject were and are entertained by a church which began to corrupt itself ere it was out of its swaddling clothes.

The council of Illiberis (not Illiberal) about A.D. 305, excluded from communion for five years, those who married a deceased wife's sister. St. (?) Basil visited them with the ecclesiastical penalty fixed for adultery. A canon of the convocation of the Province of Canterbury prohibited such marriages in England in 1603, &c., &c. Luther, the late Dr. Alexander McCaul, and many other real scholars, have maintained the correctness of the Israelitish interpretation, and this has met with an echo at the deathbed of many a married sister.

TRANSLATION of a Greek inscription, found on a stone which was built into a wall in Jerusalem, and all but entirely covered with earth at the time it was discovered:—

"No stranger is to enter within the balustrade round the temple enclosure. Whoever is caught will be responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue."

"When you go through these first cloisters, to the second (court of the seven temples), there was a partition made of stone all round, whose height was three cubits; its construction was very elegant. On it stood pillars at equal distances from one another, declaring the laws of purity, some in Greek and some in Roman letters, that no "foreigner should go within that sanctuary."
—Josephus.

The subjoined verse is from one of the midnight prayers of the Jews of Jerusalem:—

'In mercy, Lord, thy people's prayer attend ·
Grant his desire to mourning Israel.
O shield of Abraham, our Redeemer send,
And call his glorious name Immanuel.'