

"The Goodwill of Him that dwelt in the bush be with us."

JUNE.

1896.

CHURCH AND HOME



The Magazine of the Presbytery of St. John

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CHURCH and HOME

The Magazine of the Presbytery of St. John.

Vol. I.

ST. JOHN, N. B., JUNE, 1896.

No. 6

Time has increased in value in these days. Men have more to do in the same compass of days than they had before. The people we meet therefore seem always in a hurry. As we read descriptions of old world times their great claim for us lies in the ample leisure the people there had for enjoying life. Letters were few and far between. Trains were unknown. The penny post had not been evolved. Only at rare intervals did anything disturb the even tenor of life. The boundary of the town or country was for most people the boundary of the world. Beyond lay a vague, mysterious, illimitable void, out of which came occasionally strange messages, perhaps of disturbances in another land, or of the death of a hero dear to the national heart. Merchants received their mails at uncertain intervals. Fast steamship lines were unheard of then. Merchandise was wafted across the ocean in ships tyrannized over by wind and storm. Once then answering letters were dispatched the merchant rested patiently for weeks and months without fear of troublesome thunderbolts flashed across the speaking wires. As we glance back to these times we are sometimes tempted to envy the peace and quietude of mind in which our forefathers spent their lives. Yet they doubtless had their own troubles

in the opening up of a new country which to them would be real and quite as heavy as we imagine ours to be. Undoubtedly, however, the pressure of life, the strain upon our bodies and minds is far greater now than ever it was before. We are never off the rack. At any moment a message from the uttermost ends of the earth may wreck our plans and mar our hopes. As Burns said when moralising on the fate of the mouse whose little shield his cruel coulter had so rudely destroyed, "the best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley." To-day a man may be rich and honoured, to-morrow he may stand among the ruins of house and home.

This uncertainty in which we live might have been expected to infallibly drive us back upon One who is unchangeable, so that we might find a happier life in the quiet development of our spiritual selves. On every side we hear constant complaints of the incessant claims of business. Yet those who, according to their own account, are thus sorely harassed, do not seem inclined to moderate their desires, and rest content with a modest competence. The spirit of emulation is ever urging nations, cities and individuals ever forward in an unceasing effort to outstrip the other. The columns of our journals constantly contain

tables showing how our shipping is increasing or diminishing, as compared with that of other nations or cities; or attempts are made to show how in this country or in that our manufacturers and merchants are gaining or losing ground. Even our political combinations are affected by the self same spirit, and parties and candidates are accepted or rejected according to their views on trade questions affecting their constituency. In private life the same spirit is displayed. We must live in the same style and ape all the novelties introduced by those whom we consider to be our equals. Foolish extravagances are thus caused, and many hours of care and worry are in store for us, accompanied by severe suffering on the part of our families and our dependents. This vain striving creates most of our social evils. Bargain hunting is the inevitable result, and "sweating," with all its attendant horrors, is created to crush the life out of helpless fellow-beings who have to say, "my poverty but not my will consents." In this age of material comfort no excuse can be found for the grinding down of the honest poor. This would indeed be a happy world if professing Christians obeyed the great law of self-sacrifice. Is it a mere dream to trust that a time will come when greater emphasis will be laid on the practical fulfilment of the law of love and less stress on the empty parade of the religion whose animating principle it is supposed to be?

No thoughtful mind can suppose that things will remain long as they at present exist. The times are out of joint, for we stand between the old and the new. The old is breaking up. The new is as yet unformed. The result is chaos. A Babel of sounds echo around us. Men turn into devious and obscure pathways in the hope that somewhere they will find rest. In this life hope always flutters between the dim wave and the sky, and even in man's extremity we know and feel assured that out of the turmoil and strife order will one day arise. The spirit of God will brood again over the waters and the light will be divided from the darkness.

In some of the weekly journals recently received from Britain there seems to be raging a controversy as to whether written or extempore sermons have the most effect in leading men to higher things. Arguments pro and con have been advanced on both sides, and yet the question seems hard to settle. In Scotland not so very long ago the man who ventured to look even at a scrap of paper in the pulpit would have been considered worse than a heathen man and a publican, but a change seems to have taken place in the minds of the people, and many of the celebrated preachers, who draw large audiences, use the "paper" without any let or hindrance on the part of their hearers. Certainly it stands to reason that of all the sermons preached from our pulpits on

any given subject, the one that is carefully written and delivered with only occasional use of the manuscript must of necessity be superior to the one given extempore, headless and noteless. Such an one becomes nothing short of a harangue in the hands of most ministers who try it—an endless and resultless repetition of meaningless phrases—euphonisms that tickle the ear, but do not feed the soul. The other must, of necessity, reasoned out as it is in the quiet of the study, with the thoughts of others around to counsel and instruct, with the time for silent communion with that source whence our first thinkers and writers drew their inspiration, be more useful to the edification of the hearer. It is given only to a few pulpit orators to stand up and enlighten men on the great truths of our religion without the careful and prayerful preparation we speak of.

“Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man,” wrote Bacon. What manner of man, then, must he be who combines all these, who reads that he may be full of useful thoughts and ideas for the benefit of his hearers; who writes that he may give these exact expression in the line of truth without extravagance; and who, having done all this, confers with his people, having a good conscience, that he is not, before them, “loud, high-sounding, empty.”

Rev. D. M. Gordon, D. D., Professor of Theology in Halifax College, has been elected Moderator of the General Assembly.

Shediab.

Knox Church :—We have to record with regret the deeply felt loss sustained by our Church in the removal of Rev. Mr. Morton from our midst.

On the evening of May 24th Mr. Morton delivered a farewell address to a very full church. Choosing an appropriate text, after a brief discourse, he spoke with regret of his leave-taking, and warmly expressed his gratitude for all kindness received; but it was listened to by those who feel that any kindness shown has been but slight in return for the great and good work done among us by him, who laboured unselfishly in the name of the Master.

On the Friday evening previous a social gathering was held in the basement of the church, a short musical programme was prepared, and ice cream served.

During the evening the following address was read, and a purse presented to Mr. Morton by the congregation:

TO REV. ARTHUR S. MORTON:

Rev. and Dear Sir,—We regret that you are about to sever the tie that has for too short a time connected us, and that the pleasant relations of pastor and flock that has existed between us for the past eighteen months are to be brought to a close.

You came to us bearing a name that is almost a household word in the Christian homes of two hemispheres, on account of the Christian zeal, devotion to duty and eminent ability of your parents, and the coming among us of their son, could not fail to awaken in us high expectations. We rejoice to say we were in no wise disappointed, and the eminent success of your pastorate is abundant and indisputed evidence that

our highest anticipations were fully realized.

You have, sir, under God, been the means of doing much good among us during your short stay, which we all fully acknowledge and appreciate, and we beg to assure you that in going away from Shediac you leave behind you none but friends.

We ask you to accept this purse as a slight mark of the love and esteem in which you are held by this branch of your charge.

We hope that your health may be benefitted by the change of residence you propose to make, and trust that wherever your lot may be in the future, God in His infinite Providence will guide and protect you.

Wishing you bon voyage, we are, on behalf of Knox Church congregation,

Yours very faithfully.

The best wishes and fervent prayers of our people go with him, and we cling to the hope of parted friends to meet again in God's good time.

In behalf of the Point DuChene Sabbath School I tender sincere thanks to the Sabbath School of St. Stephen's Church, St. John, for their kind gift of books, presented through Mr. John Irvine.

JAS. FRIER, Supt.

How we Conduct our Prayer Meetings.

[Free Church Monthly.]

IV.—IN A MINING VILLAGE.

The first question I had to face when I was ordained some six years ago, was, Is it possible to have a week-night meeting at all? There had been for some time no such

prayer-meeting. For the men were chiefly miners, and miners keep early hours both at night and morning; and the young women were chiefly factory-workers, going by train every day to their long day's work in a neighbouring town. As for the mothers, prayer-meetings were not to be thought of. We resolved, however, to make the trial. An early hour of the evening was fixed upon, and the girls were invited to come as early as they could. Sometimes they were a quarter of an hour behind time; but as the first part of the meetings was occupied largely with praise, their entrance did not distract the others. The result was most encouraging. For some time the attendance was equal to half the number of communicants. Our Sabbath attendance was in those days not much over two hundred, and I have seen one hundred present frequently on Wednesday evenings. This, of course, settled that the people could come if they chose. Ever since, it has been my custom to insist that this is so, and to intimate from the pulpit the *congregational* meeting in the middle of the week. And though time has worn off the novelty, and diminished considerably the proportion of Wednesday night to Sabbath day worshippers, the congregation has never forgotten the lesson, and the meeting has kept up wonderfully.

At first it was my habit to intimate the subjects on the preceding Sabbath, and these were as a rule not closely connected with each other. After a time, however, a course of study was tried, and I believe with better results. It is better for the minister, because his mind is not distracted till close upon the time of meeting searching for a subject; and the people like it better, for it supplies a much-valued element in their religious life—instruction in Biblical knowledge. My first course was

both deep and difficult—the Gospel of John; but it was most beneficial to our souls, even if we did pass the depths rather lightly. Bunyan kept us engaged for some delightful months with his “Pilgrim’s Progress” and “Holy War.” No subject ever commanded such interest and attention as the “Pilgrim,” and I would give almost anything for another such book. We also tried our hand at Jonathan Edwards’ “History of Redemption” with great benefit. And at present we are engaged on a study of the “Life of Jesus” as recorded in Matthew. At times we turn aside to consider what the church is doing among the heathen, on the Continent, in the Colonies, or for the Lord’s ancient people the Jews. And at other times we have made attempts to deal with work among the young, so that Sabbath-school teachers may feel an interest in our week-night meeting.

Arrangements by which the choir has its weekly practice of sacred music on the same night, and business connected with the Sabbath school also, have induced the young folks connected with these departments to take an interest in the meeting. Long ago we concluded that it was unwise to have a multitude of meetings during the week in congregations outside the city, at any rate when the meetings are such as to attract the same people night after night. Even cottage meetings tend to distract, although they are in themselves valuable aids to congregational life and work, and as a means of bringing in the non-churchgoing are probably unparalleled. Many find it to be impossible to spare more than one night a week from home, and it is not always wise or safe to urge them to do so. Surely all our meetings are intended ultimately to make the home more Christian, and to enable the worshippers at them to

fulfil their home relations more effectively. It is no small test of the genuineness of her profession of Christ, when a mother or daughter stays at home from lively and interesting meetings to attend to the humbler and quieter work of the home. My experience has been, however, that there are comparatively few who found it impossible to give one night when they had made up their minds to try it.

Having been urged by some to throw open our prayer meeting, and make it more of a conference, I yielded, and we gave it a trial. I am bound to say that it was not successful. For a time, it is true, a new interest sprang up, but very soon the speaking was left to two or three, who made very little preparation, and had rarely anything fresh to say. We also tried this plan in a somewhat modified form, by allowing a quarter of an hour for remarks after or before the minister’s address, with equally unsuccessful results. Our final plan is something like this, and it has proved itself on the whole the least objectionable: the first half-hour is wholly given over to praise and prayer; it is the prayer meeting pure and simple. After the opening hymn, the minister leads in prayer; then another hymn, followed by two short prayers, and so on until the time is up. The second half hour is occupied with exposition or exhortation, followed by a closing hymn and the benediction. After some lengthened trial this plan approves itself above all others. People seem to enjoy it. They have been working hard all day, and come together not to talk but to rest and think and pray; and if we could but give them such food as their soul desireth, we think there would be no lack of people at the mid-week meeting.

(*Concluded.*)

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MR. EDITOR :

I would like to call the attention of your readers to the peculiar needs of one of our Mission Stations. The field referred to is one that should be well known in our Presbytery, and hence need not be described. Any one who has any interest in Home Missions will not need any introduction to Waterford, situated eight miles from Sussex. It is needless to repeat the history of this little mission station, which has been struggling for existence for years, and supplied only in the summer months by catechists.

At last, however, the people have decided to make an attempt to form this field into a congregation in the near future, having over it a settled pastor, and they have been highly encouraged in this undertaking by friends around them.

The people are now erecting a neat little church, and are subscribing most liberally for that purpose, as they have begun to realize that this is the first step that is necessary for their advancement.

Despite their earnest efforts some external aid will be needed in order that they may complete the building which is now under course of construction. I know it is only necessary to mention this fact to the different congregations in our Presby-

tery and they will be only too glad to send at least a small contribution to help on such a worthy scheme.

In time this field may be a self-supporting congregation, and if some help is rendered now, there will be no difficulty in having our hopes realized.

Any who may be anxious to contribute will please do so as soon as possible, forwarding their subscriptions to

A. H. CAMPBELL,
 Waterford, Kings Co., N B.

To the Editors of Church and Home :

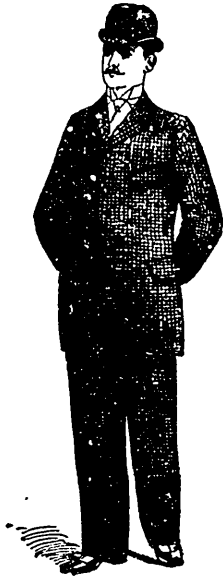
Sirs,—I was a little surprised to read in your last issue that I am "again" unable to attend to my duties through sickness. Permit me to say that I am, and have been for a long time, in excellent health; that during the last winter I got through more hard work than I did, in as many months, in all my life; and that, excepting a few days when I was induced to "nurse a cold," I never felt in better condition for work.

I am, etc.,

A. A. MACKENZIE.

St. Stephen, May 19th.

With regard to the above note,



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REV. ROBERT LAING, M. A., President,
HALIFAX, N. S.



which they take pleasure in publishing, the Editors regret that any item in their news columns should have caused the friends of Mr. McKenzie any uneasiness. They can only say that they got their information from the St. Stephen's notes in the St. John Daily Sun, and published the item in good faith.

SUSSEX congregation has been making rapid strides under the faithful ministrations of the pastor, Rev. J. S. Sutherland. It is gratifying for us to hear that at the last communion 66 were added to the roll. Improvements have been made in the church building, and a new school house is in course of erection. The former pastor, Rev. T. Stewart, assisted Mr. Sutherland in the communion services.

Presbytery met in Nashwaak, May 26th, to consider its action with regard to Mr. Mullen's pastorate there. Deputations were heard from the various sections of the field, and after a prolonged discussion Presbytery agreed to refer the whole case simpliciter to the Assembly.

The Offense of Religious People

BY IAN MACLAREN.

When any man is neutral towards religion, he usually feels it necessary to justify himself, and he can offer various reasons, first to his conscience and then to his world. He may find his stumbling-block in the Bible or in the Christian Creeds, but the chances are that his hindrance is the character of religious people. This is the way in which he puts his point on every occasion and to all kinds

of hearers: "Do not suppose that I deny the religious instinct or the function religion has fulfilled in many lives. I am quite persuaded that Jesus is chief of all masters, and that His way is the best to follow. It would be sheer profanity for me to criticise Jesus or belittle His teaching. Let it be also granted that certain of His disciples have given us most perfect lives and rendered the world lasting service. This is past history; and had I lived in the days of St. John, or Thomas à Kempis, or John Wesley, or had I known General Gordon, perhaps I should have been a Christian. What staggers me is that the Christians I know, with a very few exceptions, are very different from Christ, and that they are at least not one whit better than their neighbours who make no profession." Then he will go on to show that in many cases they are really much worse, and quotes a long and accurate list of religious rascals—men who prayed and preached, and broke banks and swindled friends. Very likely he will conclude by explaining how he himself suffered at the hands of one of this canting fraternity, and narrowly escaped ruin through a firm who gave largely to missions. That is the reason why he is not a religious man.

Before examining this position, one may be allowed to congratulate our neutral on his insight in discriminating between Jesus and His disciples, and to emphasize this vital distinction. So far as argument goes nearly, although not quite, everything is gained when Jesus himself is approved, and He is not besmirched by other men's conduct. He at least is spotless in His life, doing all He commanded and setting before the race an example that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Religion has been once vindicated, and in the Person of

Jesus makes a claim not only on respect, but also on obedience, which no honest man can escape by citing her failures and disgraces. Let it be laid to heart that it is not religion that creates rotten and loathsome character, but the want of religion. Has any more faultless picture of high living ever been painted than the sermon on the mount? Has anyone ever rated wilful evil-doers with more scathing contempt than Jesus? And if Jesus had singled out one class and put them in the pillory unto all time, it is the swarm of religionists whom He used to call whited sepulchres. It is not enough, therefore, to say that Jesus was not like these men, nor to frankly admit that He is in no way responsible for them. Our neutral must go farther and do honour to Jesus, because He openly washed His hands of the very kind of people which this objecter now makes an excuse for not being a Christian.

One point ought at once to be granted without any rebate or grudging, and that is that religion must be judged not by faith, but by works. What a man believes or feels is between him and God. What he does is before man. If Christians do not as a rule live on a higher level than their fellow-men, then it may be fairly contended that their religion fails of its purpose. If on the whole they are slightly purer, kinder straighter, holier, then one is bound to acknowledge an unseen source, as he believes in a bulb when the scent of the hyacinth fills the room. Jesus was not afraid of this test, and did not concede it with qualifications. He boldly proposed it again and again, and insisted on its application. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Christianity ought to produce her credentials without pressure, and ought to be ashamed of any attempt to avoid the moral judgment of the

world. It was a poor business to say, "Here is a perfectly designed and finished engine, but we distinctly decline trial trips." Within the Gospels and Epistles Christianity is a nobly conceived religion; outside amid the billows and currents of life, Christianity demands yet greater admiration. The dangers of the trial have been much exaggerated. Is it really the case that religion has such a strong claim in the shape of authority, and makes such a poor show in practice? Are Christians as a body a down draught on Christianity? If this were really the case, and for nineteen centuries Christians has been more or less disreputable people, then it may be taken for granted that there would have been at least one religion less in the world. Indeed, it is not an extravagance to say that if any impartial person made a careful observation of one hundred Christians in the spirit of religious science, he would be astonished not at their utter unlikeness, but at their distinct likeness to Christ. Were I, however, at the ear of our friend when he is selecting his specimens, I would make a suggestion. Do not, if you really wish to get a reliable result, include among your hundred or your ten a certain portion of obvious hypocrites. Any shrewd person can distinguish between this kind of a man and a true Christian as easily as between silver and silver plate. It is bare justice to exclude such characters from this trial, since religion is no more responsible for them than a manufacturer for the adulterated goods which are sold under his name, but which he has never produced. Religion has been badly treated in this affair, for she has been held responsible both for her own prodigals, whom she must not disown, and then for other peoples prodigals she did not rear and heartily dislikes. You may

find an unworthy medical practitioner in a great city, but you do not on that account condemn a noble profession. You may see the name of a merchant on the board of a bogus company, but you do not therefore conclude that every merchant is a swindler. It is not usual to judge any body by its camp followers except the Church of Christ, which toils under half the reprobates in the country. It is preposterous to assign every cheat and vagabond to religion, and to assume that all irreligious people are high-minded and honourable. Your hundred may, of course include a Peter who will on occasion deny Christ, a John who on occasion will call down fire on a Samaritan villiage; those are imperfect Christians. They must be accepted but we firmly repudiate Judas.

Let our friend also remember that no one hates their faults so much as Christians do themselves. Here actually is a religious person, he says, who is cursed with a fiery temper; here is another who has a forbidding manner; here is a third who is not always straightforward. Amazing discovery! These people are not perfect, and yet dare to call themselves Christians. One would imagine that a sweet temper and gentle courtesy and perpetual candor were the rule over all the world. Worse failings than these may be admitted—that there are Christian men who by nature are revengeful, selfish, lustful. But all this is beside the question. Who ever said that Christians were perfect or expected to be very rapidly perfect? The Gospels make no such claim. What is contended is simply this, that every religious man is ashamed of his faults, and is fighting against their power with all his might and with the help of his Saviour. Have you been as quick to see the fight as you have been to see the fall? You

have seen him yeild; do you know how often he has resisted? You have not gone home with him and entered his room with him, and seen him on his knees and heard his cries for mercy and for deliverance. 'Tis the hard and strenuous struggle after better things which proves religion. It proves life. If you see a piece of wood carried down a stream, you think nothing of it; 'tis a log going down with the current. It would be strange if a log did otherwise. But if you saw a log making its way up stream, however slowly, you would take notice, and say, My eyes have deceived me; this is not a log. What goes against the current, patiently and perseveringly, is something else than a log; it must be a living thing. Going with the stream is nature. Going against the stream means grace. Take the most glaring and painful fault of any religious man in Bible history as an illustration—David's fall. You can look at this lamentable event from two sides. Condemn David for treachery and falsehood and impurity; you have simply said he was very like other kings of his day. But there is another chapter, and you must not close the case till it be read. It is the fifty-first Psalm. By universal consent there never was such a burst of repentance heard of in the world. Here is the peculiarity; other men have sinned as David sinned, but has every man repented like him? The fall is easily accounted for; it is human; but the repentance—can you account for this? It is divine.

Besides, let our friend not fall into another mistake in forming his judgment. Do not take an irreligious man at his best, and compare him with a religious man at his worst, and then say there is nothing in religion. This is a piece of shameful injustice. There are mean moments in every man's life, when the mercury goes

down to zero; there are occasions when a second-rate man arises into nobility. One reading is no indication of what the average is. You must take the whole man, not one side; his whole life, not one bit. The most outrageous pattern that ever offended the eye and agonised the mind of any human being might give one inch of really good colour, and out of the most exquisite web you might get an inch of very bad colour. One must not judge by inches. Hang up the web twenty feet square, and then no one can be mistaken. What a miserable appearance Abraham made at the court of Pharaoh when he declared Sarah was his wife and was rated by the Egyptian king for falsehood. Abraham stood at his lowest when he lied to Pharaoh and Pharaoh stood at highest when he judged Abraham. Suppose one of us had been present and taken up his parable. "You may talk as you please of Abraham's faith, but did you hear his lie? you may call Pharaoh a pagan, but give me his keen sense of honour." So acting on our principle of common sense and plain downrightness and what not, we should have put Pharaoh first and Abraham second, and we should have been very shortsighted people. Nobody knows anything about Pharaoh; but Abraham is the most majestic figure in ancient history. We have heard all this sapient deliverance. "A may be a religious man, but if you had seen him in a temper yesterday." And "B may not be a religious man, but I saw him give ten shillings to a poor man to-day." So A is condemned and B approved. It would be wise to gather a little more about A and B before deciding. How they live at home; how they carry themselves in business; how they bear affliction; how they serve their fellow-men. One would then have some confidence in his judgment. Neither let it be forgotten that Christianity chooses the miserable, the worthless, the bad subjects of the world. To-day some of the worst stuff inside humanity may be found within Christ's Church, and, alas! some of the finest material which came from the hand of the Almighty outside. There are Christians who would be in jail to-night had it not been for their Christianity. Will

you condemn Christianity because it has received publicans and Magdalenes and mean and stupid people? Will you say there is no use in religion, because here and there you see a man who is a hero and yet an unbeliever? This argument does not run on fours; it is unequal. Christianity should be approved because it has taken such miserables and made so much of them. Every one has drawn a contrast between Esau and Jacob. Esau was so straightforward, brave, kindly, manly, a big, fine animal. Jacob was so deceitful, false, timid, disagreeable, a despicable fellow. Agreed. What came of Esau? What did he grow into? Nothing: a mere hunter and desert chief. But religion made out of that unpromising Jacob a prince and a saint, and in the end a very noble and lovable man. It is nothing to get a harvest from the rich plains of Lombardy, but it is a feat to wrest corn from a bare hillside in Scotland. That is agriculture.

Above all things, let our neutral remember in judging religious people that the work of religion is not yet finished in them. Far from that, it is only begun. There is this difference between the plan of a religious man and the plan of a secular, that the one is on a much larger scale than the other. When a man has not faith, his culture is bounded by time. The man of faith is being trained for eternity. It is a villa in the one case, in the other a cathedral. From one point of view a well-finished villa will always compare favourably with the rough foundation of a gigantic building. You must imagine, you must anticipate, before you judge. Here is a child with the most regular and finished features; we say, What a beautiful woman she will be. Are we sure? We have seen all we will see. Here is her sister, unformed and irregular in face and features. How plain? Look more closely; here are capabilities and promises of beauty that will put her sister in the shade. It is so with character. We see estimable men every day, fair-minded, clean-handed kind-hearted men, who are complete. Nothing more will come of them. Their character is a product of time, and has no power of expansion. We see by their side very crude and incomplete men, but we have vast hopes of them. They are men seeking after God, men following Christ, men fighting spiritual battles, men with their hopes in eternity. They are not shrubs, but oak saplings, and it will take ages to bring them to maturity. What a man may come to without religion can be seen in this world; what a man may come to with religion can only be judged in eternity.—*The British Weekly.*

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