

Correspondence.

OUR LONDON LETTER.

London, Jan. 1st, 1864.

The year went out last night in a scowl. "Swift-journeing, and by a furious wind, Squadron's," the hurrying clouds ranged the roused sky."

And the New Year comes in cold, dark and forbidding. With that rapid nature, which seems to be an instinct of man, few whose minds are exercised at all, will to-day fail to see the analogy between the state of the physical and political atmosphere. How is it that at this season forebodings of evil are so frequent and so usual? Does the solemnity of the sudden transition from Old to New—the startling excision of a dragging piece of history from the body of the Present—and the fresh ongoing in search of another burden, without any possibility of discerning, until it is reached and must be taken up and borne, what that burden may be—does this give to men at this season a pre-natural nervousness—a power of seeing, as if in the hurried revelation of a flash of lightning, all the dangers without disclosing the opportunities of their position? I know not. But though I have it not by me at this moment, I dare say that my letter of this date last year is full of cloudy apprehensions for the year 1863. The fact is, that Europe is a vast gunpowder barrel, over which a number of people are smoking, and one is continually looking out for an explosion. Coming, as I did, from America, where for many a long year the rumor of war, when it reached me, excited no direct personal feeling of anxiety, but was an extraneous matter which could be calmly and philosophically considered, I find the change very great to a condition in which every telegram is momentous, and every act of a dozen sovereigns is watched and reported with lynx-eyed acuteness and severity. Alas! that America should, by some mysterious Providence, have lost that happy seclusion from war and apprehension!

The international relations of Europe are so curiously varied and intricate, that the slightest complication is apt to derange the whole machinery, and eventually do injury to all its parts. And so people here, when they see that Federal Execution has taken place in Holstein and that after all it means revolution; and see also that this is done in direct contravention of a Treaty entered into by the chief Powers engaged in the execution; and consider that Napoleon is only waiting for some pretext of interference in European affairs, for some opportunity of touching the Rhine with his splendid army—people are very naturally uncomfortable at the aspect of the scene as the curtain rises upon the year 1864.

Here we are! The Western Continent vibrating under the most Titanic struggle of historic ages, with foreign relations so tender that one trembles lest a sudden breath should rend them; a war in New Zealand that may drag upon our energies for many a year, till the unhappy Maories are exterminated; a conflict in prospect with a numberless, a civilized, a powerful and energetic nation of islanders in the far off Eastern seas; another with restive tribes in our golden dominions of India; engagements in China that appal one in the consideration of their incalculable importance and inscrutable eventuality; a problem to be solved in Ireland which puzzles the most confident statesman; an ecclesiastical revolution, surely though slowly advancing in our own community, and the skirmishers of both parties eagerly pushing forward to the fray. With these and a hundred other matters impending, it were no wonder if we entered on this year with cheerless forebodings. You, in America, must share them. However the battle goes with you, your hearts will burn with sorrow over so terrible an episode in your history. Nor can you contemplate unmoved the possibility of a collision with nations most sacredly connected with you by blood, by political feeling, by religious belief. I trust that, on both sides of the Atlantic, moderation and kindness may govern our actions, and blessed peace may be suffered to unite us permanently under her genial sway.

When the three disciples were about to witness the Transfiguration, a thick cloud overshadowed them, and fear fell on their hearts before they saw the glorious vision: perhaps we too, entering with fear and trembling into the mysterious shadow of this year, may, before its close, behold some unexpected Apocalypse of God's love and glory. Let us hope it and enter boldly!

THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

The number of questions in dispute in the Established Church speaks ill for its future. Some want the articles modified, some want the Creed enlarged, some want the liturgy shortened, others want it altered, some want the burial service to be more general in its terms, and so on ad nauseam. Quiet and conscientious men will soon have some difficulty in remaining attached

to a church whose minister and members teach and believe anything and everything; and which is so catholic as to combine within itself any shade of infidelity that may be fashionable.

The Burial service is now discussed in public letters. Some men's consciences will not allow them to declare that their dead brother is consigned to earth in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection. Others have such tender consciences, that they would even hope the best for their departed brother, and whatever his life, insist that it is impossible to say whether a man died safely or no. Let any honest and pious man who has stood by the dying beds of sinners, declare whether there is generally much difficulty in judging in what frame a man dies. I am in favor of some modification, and I think the point will be carried.

Another thing which troubles our literary Churchmen, is the decline of the profession in the eyes of University men, and the increasing number of persons who are admitted without having had a University education. The latter are termed *literate*, and in your university man's mind, this means *illiterate*. The educated wordlings in the church measure man's fitness for the ministry more by his learning than his spirit, more by the originality and elegance of his sermons than the sterling vigor and piety of his exhortations. The very idea of taking to the Church as a profession, and not on a belief in a special call from God, shows how little the persons understand the nature of the office respecting which they speak so dogmatically. Mr. Justice COLERIDGE asks *The Times* to-day whether the *literate* do not pass as good an examination as the University men: the *Times* acknowledges that they do, often a better. But, says this sage paper, their minds not having been as well trained as those of University men they are apt to have narrower views and stronger theological prejudices. So that the argument for the University men is also one in favor of latitudinarianism! Not one I trust that will go down in England.

I half promised, last week, to give you some account of the Young Men's Societies attached to many of the Presbyterian Churches in London, and indeed throughout England and Scotland. I do so the more readily because, knowing well the habits and wants of young men in America, I have thought that similar societies might be established with immense advantage, in connection with your great city churches.

These bodies are not exactly similar to, nor any way connected, with the Young Men's Christian Association, but have a more local and denominational interest. Their avowed object is rather social and literary than religious, yet the latter gives the tone to the former, and proves, after all, to be the most influential. The society is generally composed of all the young men of the Church, of any station, with others who cannot call themselves young, but find a profit and a pleasure in intellectual converse with their juniors. It is generally expected that a man should be a Presbyterian in sentiment, though not necessarily a member of the Church, in order to enter the society.

They generally meet once a week, from 8 to 10 o'clock, to hear an essay read, and to discuss the subject. This subject is selected by the essayist from a large number agreed to semi-annually at meetings of the Association; and a programme of the lectures and questions is prepared every six months. It is not necessary nor usual for the subjects to be religious: History, Biography, Philosophy, Science, in fact any moral question is admitted.

At Dr. Hamilton's Church in Regent Square, the Society has over 80 members, and essays of great ability and interest are sometimes read. In this Society, there is a good arrangement; namely, that the meeting which precedes the Communion shall be a devotional meeting. The Pastor of the Church is the President, and sometimes attends the discussions, and always presides at any of the social meetings. The Chair is taken by Vice Presidents, who are usually elders or deacons in the Church, and who hold office for three months. This maintains order and discipline, and at the same time brings the session into acquaintance with the rising talent of the Church. This is one of the important benefits of the arrangement, for it is quite common for the deacons to be selected from among the most diligent and prominent men in the Society.

But the chief advantage is to be found in the fact that they bring the young men of the Church together—that they are attractive places of resort for youthful strangers in great cities—that when young men come up they are sought out by the officers, especially if their friends have been judicious enough to give them introductions, and are assisted and advised in respect of situations, lodgings, society, &c., and not having a distinctly religious character, they retain and bring under good influences men who might otherwise be quite lost to the Church, and perhaps

to themselves. There is no question that the interest manifested in these societies by the office-bearers of the churches is one of the prime causes of their success. I was at one the other night, at which two elders and two students in divinity spoke, besides some deacons. You will understand by this, that these are not mere young men's debating clubs, but really able and useful institutions. For preserving men in the Church and securing them friends in an unknown city, they are invaluable, since it is only necessary to take letters, or even to introduce oneself to one of the officers, and if a man has any credentials he at once makes the acquaintance of a number of persons who are willing to aid and encourage him. The Societies in the different cities correspond freely with each other, and thus facilitate the means of mutually introducing the men. I have thought that in America, where the transition of young men from city to city is not unfrequent, and where we lose many from the churches in consequence of their coming under foreign influences, such societies would be highly beneficial. In literary importance and usefulness their value cannot be overrated.

What do you think of a Presbyterian minister in London last Sabbath advising his people to stay away from midnight meetings to see in New Year, because they were only *Popish* ceremonies! If the Presbyterians are going to bring their old fashioned stringency into England with them, they had better shut up their churches at once, so far as Englishmen are concerned. ADELPHOS.

SACRED SYMBOLS.

VI.—VOICELESS PREACHERS.

Ps. 19: 3. No speech nor language, their voice is not heard.

No spectacle affords us more exalted views of the beauty, order and magnificence of the Creator's works, than the starry heavens. "Though all preachers on earth should grow silent, and every human mouth cease from publishing the glory of God," the voiceless stars would speak for him. Those burning gems set in the infinite dome of the sky by the hand that built the worlds, maintain the same position which they held when man's inquiring gaze was first turned towards the heavens. They shine on us with the same brightness with which they gladdened the hearts of the Chaldean shepherds on their mountain tops. There they stand, retired to such a distance within the silent and awful depths of space, that human thought cannot travel so far. While all earthly things fade and pass away, the hosts of heaven are marshalled forth on the high fields of immensity, in the same bright armor that they wore of old. The whole order and aspect of things in human society, have been repeatedly changed, revolutionized and set up anew, as the flood of ages sweeps along. But the clouds and the tempests of earth, have not dimmed the light of the stars; the shock of armies, the thunder of a thousand battles, has not shaken a gem from the diadem of night. Arcturus and his sons are still circling around the pole, as they were when the Almighty challenged the complaining patriarch to lead forth that prince of the ethereal host upon his destined way. At his appointed hour, Orion still climbs the steep ascent of the heavenly path to the zenith. The sweet influences of the Pleiades are still unbound. The signs and seasons are still graduated upon the glittering belt of Mazzaroth. They have no speech nor language, their voice is not heard; and yet the tribute of praise which they render to the great Creator by their beauty, order and everlasting silence, as clearly makes known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom, as they could, were each permitted to send through the universe a voice loud as mighty thunders and exultant as the shout of nations,

"Forever singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine."

Go forth like the sacred Psalmist at night, and consider the heavens, the starry splendors of the firmament which God has made to declare his glory. Lift your thoughts above all the change and conflict of earth, and strive to attain greatness and serenity of mind, by the devout contemplation of the constancy, the divine order, the sacred silence of the countless worlds above you. Suddenly you are startled by what seems the brightest of all the host of heaven, rushing across the sky with furious speed, breaking the relative order and harmony of the disciplined host, withdrawing attention from them by its own terrific light, perhaps giving forth a sound as of rushing waters, or of distant thunder, and then disappearing in darkness. That strange appearance forces upon your mind the fearful question: "Can that be a lost world? Is it thus that the Almighty hurls the rebellious sons of the morning from their thrones of light? Has some incendiary arch-angel kindled the torch of revolution and discord again upon the plains of heaven?"

Saddened and shuddering at the thought, you turn to look for the space which has

been left void and dark by the fall of the most brilliant of the starry host. But the night has not lost a gem. Not a single ray has faded from her ancient glory. She still moves on with the same solemn silence, her train still glittering with the same magnificent garniture of worlds. That strange light was only a transient meteor, kindled and quenched in the earth's stormy atmosphere, and it is only the mistaken glance of the moment which transfers the disorder and ruin of this groaning habitation of man, to the serene and unchanging heavens. That apparent star, which dimmed all others with its dazzling light, and which emblazoned so wide a track across the sky in its fall, was no more in distance or dimensions when compared with the least of the real stars, than the dew-drop of the morning which scarcely bends the blade of grass, is to the ocean which rolls its measureless waters upon the shores of every land. And after its brief passage when the eye looks calmly into the blue depths of night, you can still see far beyond the region where the meteor flames and expires, far beyond the path of the solar light, the same stars shining with the same serene and awful silence still.

God's unaided hand holds up the heavens with their millions of worlds; he preserves the order, the harmony, the ineffable beauty of his great empire throughout all ages; he brings forth troops of stars upon the fields of light to show us that our little world is not the whole of his kingdom, and that he would not want for subjects to celebrate his glory, though the whole race of man should renounce his service and madly say, "there is no God." Nation may rise against nation; and kingdom against kingdom. The earth may shake with the march of armies, and the day be darkened with the cloud of battle. It may seem to us that the foundations of order are broken up, and that no voice can speak peace to the troubled elements. Yet all the while, the night in orderly succession shall marshal forth God's host, with all their beacon fires still burning upon the battlements of heaven. The calm unchanging immensity of worlds shall look down in silent and reproachful pity upon the pride and passion, the struggle and agony of man's vain life.

"Look up and read the lesson to which God's finger points upon the star-illumined scroll of the night. The earth of thy habitation is but a mote among the millions of worlds with which God's creative hand has strewn the skies; he could make a million more for every particle of dust that clouds the air when the whirlwind sweeps the desert. For uncounted ages he has held them all in his hand unwearied, and maintained for each the same rank of subdued or superior brightness. His upholding word alone has kept the fiery orbs from rushing upon each other in mutual wreck and conflagration, or fleeing away to hide themselves in utter darkness. And this great host of worlds, these mighty and many-throned powers of light, God brings forth in calm and awful silence upon the plains of heaven, to teach all generations of men the great lessons of peace, humility and trust. This great Being who displays such power and glory in the government of the material universe, is thy Father, and thou hast only to trust him with filial confidence, and his boundless kingdom shall be thine inheritance, and his love shall be thine exceeding great reward."

Soldier's Scrap Book.

TENTH SCRAP.—MORE ABOUT HARD WORDS.

I told you last of the Sergeant's plea in excuse for profanity, that everybody in the army swears, and that, with swearing on every hand, there was no way for the soldier but to come to it. He even went so far as to say, that it was necessary to save him from the scorn of his comrades.

I delayed speaking as I might of the harmlessness of the scorn of his comrades, in comparison with the wrath of an angry God. I was in haste to meet his sweeping assertion with a case in hand, which had come to my knowledge only a few hours before, and which now seemed to me like a Providential provision for this interview. So I asked him, "Has Dan—been obliged to come to it?"

He started, as if strategically taken, but only said, "You appear to know something about our regiment, sir."

I continued, "Does Dan—find any difficulty in keeping a clear tongue? Or does he suffer the scorn of his comrades because he will not swear?"

"Then you know Dan, do you?" was the response.

I did not know Dan, the praying soldier as he was called. I had never seen him, and, as I above intimated, had only heard of him a very short time before. I recollected that he was an Ohio boy, and that the number of his regiment was the same as that on the tap of the soldier by my side. Indeed, as the last told me, they belonged to the same company.

I had learned respecting him, that he

was a young Christian soldier, about twenty years old, slender in form, and gentle in manners. His piety had withstood every seduction and every open opposition of camp life. In fact all the latter was effectually conquered by the charm of his goodness. He had ceased to be the object of coarse opprobrium when he refused to play cards with his mess, or shrunk away abashed and grieved at the voice of profanity. No one was left to speak derisively when he stole away into some corner for communion with God, but there had been some, his first Lieutenant included, to ask him there to remember them. All this, and more which I had before heard, was confirmed by the Sergeant with whom I was now talking.

"Take us in the lump, said he, "our company is made up of pretty hard cases; but for all that, praying Dan is our pet. Poor fellow! we were hard enough on him for a while, but, sir, the man who has anything to say against him now had better not come among us. Our boys would soon turn him into a first rate case for the hospital."

"Well Sergeant—to go back to what we were talking about—it does appear then that a man can be a soldier without swearing, and be honored all the more for it, even by what you call the hard cases."

"O if he is like Dan, that alters the case. He is an exception to all rules. He has got religion, sir, and it's the right stuff, and we all know it. There is no hypocrite about Dan: if there is any religion in the world, he has it, sir."

"You think then, if you had Dan's religion, you could get along without swearing?"

"If I had Dan's religion!" he exclaimed, with about the same astonishment he would have shown if I had proposed to him to go alone with his musket to take Richmond.

"Yes, if you had Dan's religion. What is there so extravagant in the supposition?"

And so I spoke to him of the truth that Dan was no more born holy than himself; that just like himself, that praying soldier once needed converting grace, and that, through the mercy of Christ he might aspire to every lovely Christian accomplishment which had so deeply impressed those profane men with the religion of Dan, as the "right stuff." But the point which I especially urged, was the same which I commend to every soldier reader who may have the blasphemous tongue, and who thinks that, in the army, there is no help for the habit.

The Sergeant was right in giving to Dan's religion the chief credit of his being so well able to get along without swearing. He would have been twice right if instead of saying there was no help in his own case, he had shielded himself behind the same breast-work of prayer and love for Jesus, and there held temptation at defiance. He was rolling in his mouth a sin which sparks the highest contempt of God; which made sport of the eternal threatenings of his law; which would clothe the faces of his best friends with shame on his account; which would cause him to return from the war, if he should return, an object of virtuous loathing; and for all of which there was not one compensating good. It was not only a heaven-defying, but a useless sin. He was giving himself up to this as an army necessity, while the sovereign means of reformation were all the while before him.

One word tells the whole. Soldier, without vital religion your safeguards against vice are few and feeble, and you are only too likely to wreck your moral character, fling away your self-respect and become spiritually desperate. With the grace of Jesus in your heart, you are armed with the strength of heaven. Neither in the land of war or peace has Satan enough power to make swearing a social necessity to any one, soldier or civilian, who has put on that panoply. Dan was but one of thousands in our army who pray from the heart, and therefore cannot swear. He was not "obliged to come to it," and so you will find it for yourself, if you will exchange profanity for prayer.

So I told the Sergeant. He listened silently, respectfully, and it seemed to me thoughtfully. I besought him to try the experiment. He gave me no promise, but he thanked me, and told me that if my track ever crossed the camp of the 4th Ohio, to inquire for Sergeant—, Co.—, and we should see.

His hour for duty had arrived and we parted—he to the soldier's ever unknown destination, and I to the bank of the Rappahannock to join those who were trying the power of prayer against profanity, and drowning the notes of vile rivalry in the music of the songs of salvation. B. B. H.

WILKES, THE LONDON DISSENTER.

Soms of our readers have heard of Wilkes, a distinguished but eccentric preacher and theological tutor among the London Dissenters, seventy years ago. His manner was severe and dictatorial, and often gave offence. It was rare that any one dared attempt a retort when he poured upon them his scalding rebukes. On two occasions, however, he was silenced, or nearly so, by replies that he could not reasonably meet.

Walking one morning in the fish market of Billingsgate, he heard one of the women indulging in a terrible strain of profanity. He immediately stepped up to her with the thundering announcement, "Woman! stop that talk, or I will be a swift witness against you at the day of judgment!" "Very likely," she replied, looking at him with a sneering air, "I have always heard the greatest rogues turn king's evidence."

It was the custom of Wilkes to question his students on Monday about their Sabbath performances. They met him in his study and gave account of their exhortations, or sermons in the neighboring villages or towns. On one occasion a young man was asked the subject and place of his morning sermon. The text was given and the place in which he preached. "And where did you preach in the afternoon?" continued the tutor. "At such a village." "And the subject?" "The same, sir." "And in the evening what did you talk about?" "Why, the same text," rather slowly responded the student. "What!" burst upon him, with a voice of thunder, "couldn't you make more than one sermon for the whole day? I'm ashamed of you, sir. Never let me know of such idleness again." The student was sorely vexed with the tone and character of such a rebuke, and resolved to give the old gentleman a "hit" when opportunity might occur. It was not long before the day of retribution arrived. It was known to the student that Wilkes was to preach in three different places on a certain Sabbath. He therefore resolved to be his hearer all day. In the morning the text was announced—"I am ready to halt." In the afternoon the student followed him, and heard the same sermon, and again the same in the evening. On the way home the tutor's horse stumbled, in consequence of which the hour of meeting in the morning found the stern critic sitting by the fire with a bruised leg resting on a chair. As the students entered they saluted him and consoled with him on his misfortune. At length the most interested of them all opened the door and appeared before his venerable teacher. "And, pray how are you my dear sir?" "Oh sadly, sadly!—returning last night from service my horse stumbled, and I have bruised my leg." "I quite expected something of the kind," replied the student, "for I heard you say three times yesterday that you were ready to halt!" "And haven't you anything better to do than to follow me about all day—I should like to know?" said the tortured invalid, fixing his keen eye on the exulting youth!

REV. E. E. ADAMS.

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MOURNING APPAREL.

We have always had grave doubts of the propriety of putting on sable garments at the death of Christian friends, and the following remarks by Rev. Dr. Butler, of Washington, are worthy of careful consideration by every Christian.

You will permit me, with all respect to the sentiments of others, to utter my very long and matured convictions upon it. Its evil seems to me to be manifold. It looks like a uniform of organized rebellion against the providence of God. It sheds gloom over the streets, through the churches, and in the house. It creates an impression in the world of absence of comfort and consolation. It helps to perpetuate sorrow, when the Christian duty is to cultivate peace and joy. I respect the sentiment which leads those who are bereaved to put away gay colors, and wear those which are gloomier. But let not the fancied respect for the dead, or fear that one may not seem to mourn enough, lead us into the egotism of obtruding our sorrow into the world, and a wrong against Christianity by making it wear a livery of despair, and a wrong to the world by being objects of gloominess, when our present peace should be a perpetual testimony to the high joys and the sufficient consolation of a Christian faith.

PROGRESS AMONG THE MENONITES.—It is well known that this religious persuasion has not only neglected ministerial education but has actually opposed it, regarding it as detrimental to the efficiency of the ministry, and derogatory to the Holy Ghost, upon whose immediate and special aid the ministry must rely in preaching the gospel. They have at last learned their error, both as regards the value of education in the ministry, and the nature of the aid to be expected from the Holy Spirit in pulpitations, and have taken preliminary steps for the establishment of a literary institution in Ohio, designed for the education of the young men, who purpose devoting themselves to the preaching of the gospel in their denomination.

SUCCESSOR TO ARCHBISHOP HUGHES.—The N. Y. World says: "Immediately after the funeral services of Archbishop Hughes in the Cathedral, the suffragan bishops of the archdiocese met in council, and, in accordance with custom, sent forward to Rome three names for the successorship to the archbishopric—Bishop Bailey, of New Jersey, dignus; Bishop Timon, of Buffalo, dignior; and Bishop McCloskey, of Albany, dignissimus. The latter will undoubtedly be chosen. He was formerly coadjutor of New York, with the right of succession, which was changed when the new see of Albany was created. He is a learned and eloquent prelate, and is a native of this State, having been born in Brooklyn."

ACCESSIONS.—Eight persons were added to the 2d Church in Coopersville, O., January 17th. The whole number added to this church, during fourteen months past, is thirty-eight.

In St Paul, Minn., there are from 7,000 to 9,000 Catholics, and 1,245 Protestants.