

Correspondence.

A VISIT TO THE OIL REGION.

LETTER FROM REV. DR. MARKS.

WASHINGTON, September 10, 1864.

DEAR BROTHER:—I have just returned to Washington from a visit to Northern Pennsylvania and Western New York. I went forth on a canvassing tour for the benefit of the American Tract Society.

After leaving Pittsburgh the signs of improvement were everywhere manifest. I found a new railroad from New Brighton, Beaver county, to Newcastle, and thence to Greenville, in Mercer county, Pa., connecting with the great Atlantic Railroad running from New York to St. Louis.

I was glad to see so manifestly the evidences of prosperity in Newcastle, Lawrence county. It is surrounded with one of the finest coal and iron regions of the west, and now glows by night with the fire of many furnaces. The population of this place is about six thousand, and no place more loyal and patriotic can be found in the land. The town and vicinity has sent more than one regiment to the army, and no men have shown more bravery and heroism in many fields. The citizens are now taxing themselves to the utmost to sustain and replenish the legions in the field.

From Newcastle, the railroad runs up the valley of the Mahoning to West Greenville. This I found one of the most flourishing towns in Northwest Pennsylvania. It contains a population of five thousand. The great Atlantic R. R. passes through it, and it has a railroad and canal connecting it with Lake Erie and the Ohio. The country around it is one of the finest in the west, rich in coal, iron and timber, and being on the margin of the great oil fields. There are many who have become rich by operations in connection with that wonderful discovery.

The country from Greenville to Meadville is very level, now and then diversified by a gentle swell, but many miles are passed over without any rise or fall from station to station.

Here and there are seen in gloomy forests of the heaviest timber, a lake of water, and often a sluggish stream. It is plain that all this country was once the bed of a lake, and not very remotely was a vast morass. The valley of French Creek to Franklin is a fertile and beautiful country, and near Meadville highly improved.

THE OIL REGION.

Within six or eight miles of the mouth of French creek, we see the first signs of operations for oil. The derricks become numerous, and clusters of men are seen every few rods gathered around one of the prospective fountains. French creek is not yet a very productive field, but the entire valley for miles above Franklin is dotted and scarred with innumerable holes and heaps.

The oil here is much more valuable than that of Oil creek, being used for machinery. Its comparative value and recent discoveries have greatly increased the number of explorers and prospectors.

FRANKLIN

Is one of the oldest towns in Western Pennsylvania. Settlements commenced here, and in the neighborhood as early as 1784. It was once the centre of a great lumber trade, but as the timber was exhausted the prosperity of the place declined; but the recent oil discoveries have trebled its population, and its streets are now full of anxious, bustling, eager multitudes.

From this place the distance to Oil creek is about six miles. A railroad is nearly completed. Now the scene at the depot beggars description. There is daily, when the cars arrive from Meadville, the wildest rush amongst the passengers for coaches, wagons, stages and carts. In most places the commotion when the passengers alight is amongst the cab drivers, omnibus men and carriage drivers, for possession of the unfortunate travelers. But here the elbowing out of the way, the unceremonious trampling on corns, without one look of regret or word of apology, the dashing you out of the way and springing into your seat is all on the outside. The pursuit of wealth makes all flesh kin, and the gentleman under the influence of this frenzy loses alike his dignity and magnanimity.

Unfortunately for me, as often in the past, I found baggage was *impedimenta*, for, detained at the baggage car, I found no place for me but the top of an old broken stage. Here perched away up so that I could look into the second stories of the houses, without the least protection, with not one thing to grasp, I was doomed to a most perilous journey. Inside the stage was more than full. I enjoyed the crazy, stormy height alone. The evening had a grey, heavy look, and now and then a few drops of

rain told us what we might expect. With a miserable driver, swearing and whipping, we commenced with a pair of wind-broken, spavined and blind horses a never-to-be-forgotten journey. The mud was fabulous, and into many great chuck holes we descended with a violence that threatened to dislocate my arms, as in the spasm of desperation I grasped the sides of the creaking concern. Then we would all have to alight in order to pull out.

Before we had gone more than half the way to Oil City the darkness of night had come on. The road led along the banks of the Allegheny river, and in the growing dimness of the twilight it lay before us like a dark chasm; but in the impenetrable gloom which followed we could see nothing, and had finally to dismount and feel our way into town. Covered with mud, weary, almost angry, we reached the long, stringy town of

"OIL CITY."

How shall I describe the place? Imagine a long, meandering river of mud, and on the left hand, hanging over, suspended on the side of an almost precipitous mountain, a line of disjointed houses; fancy from this mountain many streams constantly descending and keeping the mud in a charming fluidity; imagine all smells lost in one, and the entire atmosphere saturated with oil; imagine here and there amid these scattered houses an oil well, with its puffing engine and flowing stream; imagine the houses on the opposite side a little lower than the street, and hanging over the broken banks of the river in the rear; the weather-boarding and windows in the second story covered with mud, and every few feet oozing streams of mud lazily creeping up and sleeping on the plank walk.

The houses are small, hastily built, not for comfort but for shelter and business. And certainly I have seen no place, not even in the far West, where housekeeping is attended with such unpleasant publicity and vexatious embarrassments. The street is crowded from the earliest dawn to the latest night with traders, speculators, swindlers, oil purchasers and sellers. The boatmen and teamsters are a large class who in great numbers block up at various points the sidewalks. Hundreds of wagons and vehicles of all names crowd and jam the streets, some loaded with barrels of oil, others with lumber, others with marketing, and others with gentlemen travelers and explorers. These last are often seen returning from a travel through the floods of Oil creek, and the ever recurring mud, in such a bespattered condition that they might meet and pass their most intimate friends without being known.

One idea possessed all this mass of heaving and intensely active humanity: "We may become fabulously rich in an hour." At the stores, hotels, livery stables, &c., there is but one subject of conversation—oil! oil! oil! As one passes along he hears ever recurring expressions of this kind: "Splendid show!" "Poor as a donkey yesterday, worth a million to-day;" "Bought a thousand acres on speculation;" "Five thousand dollars and half the oil;" "Flowing well—three hundred and fifty barrels a day—worth \$800,000;" "Gas and oil come rushing up like thunder," &c. &c. No one talks of the state of the country; no one cheers at the tidings of victory; no one defends the administration, nor eloquently pleads the merits of General McClellan. Even from church, and from singing

"A charge to keep I have,"

men go out to talk of wells, to make contracts and lay plans for boring to-morrow.

But this is not all of Oil City. On its heights there are enchanting spots, and new homes and charming scenes and a wide prospect of beauty. This town contains six thousand inhabitants, has churches, banks, school houses and newspapers. And there are a great number satisfied with daily bread.

The Presbyterian churches, under the care of the Rev. Messrs. Moore and Pinkerton, are both prosperous and putting up houses of worship. Mr. Moore is the pastor of the Old School, and Mr. Pinkerton of the United Presbyterian church. Both are valuable and faithful men. The zeal demanded in such a community must be apostolic.

I preached in the hall of the United Presbyterian church on Sabbath evening, and on Monday evening delivered a lecture on the state of the army, in the Methodist Episcopal church, which was most kindly opened for me by the pastor, the Rev. Mr. Whitely, and the trustees. Rarely have I seen congregations of greater intelligence, and nearly all evidently intensely hopeful in regard to their own future.

For a full description of the oil country, the wells and population, from Oil City to Titusville, I must ask you to wait for another letter.

J. J. M.

FROM OUR LONDON CORRESPONDENT.

London, August 26, 1864.

This place is now in its most desolate and vapid season. Little to see, less to hear, and no one to tell. Yet the weather for the last few days has not been such as to encourage country rambles, except for the strong and active. It has been quite cold, windy, and at times inclement; very much like a Philadelphia March.

Political matters, both here and at Paris, appear to be at a stand-still. Napoleon is watched by his own subjects, and by us, with great curiosity. He has not spoken, and we cannot tell what will be the Autumn development of his policy. The rumor that the young Prince of Sardinia, Umberto or Humbert, was about to visit Paris, with the intention of arranging a match with the Princess Murat, created some sensation amongst our vivacious allies, who gave to the suggestion very grave conjectures; but now we have it from the government organ at Turin, that there is no truth in the report. It was believed that such a union would lead to closer political convention between France and Italy, and to some important action at Rome.

Rome is the pulse of Europe just now. Whatever agitates that quivers through the whole frame. Who can fathom the injury; who can measure the wrongs; who can conjecture the evil done to liberty and truth, in Europe and through the whole world, from that nest of iniquity? With what indignant memory do we survey the past, and view the black, dead, devastating line of Roman progress; along which it has rolled through the history of mankind, like a vast juggernaut, wherever it went leaving the ineffaceable impress of its ponderous destruction; everywhere crushing down the life and health and beauty of religion and life! How difficult it is to forbear rising to the inspired passion of the ancient prophets, as they rejoiced in pre-vision of the punishment of God's enemies. "How art thou fallen O Lucifer! Son of the morning! How art thou out down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the North; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit!" Such was the energy of the ancient religion. It is unfashionable now. But we know that the long-delayed stroke shall come, and Babylon become the abomination of the whole earth. Let us not stay our hand against it; let us not withhold our efforts for its weakening and destruction; for it is cursed of God, and blessed is he that lifteth up his hand against it. I am sometimes shocked at the apathy, and frightened at the complacency with which many Christian men look upon the signs of Papal progress in England and America. No brute force; no brawling mobs; no desecration of sanctuaries; but by all means let the preachers thunder, and the laymen work and press against the lying faith, lest by winking at its follies we ourselves become partakers in its guilt.

THE RIOTS IN BELFAST.

Belfast has been the scene of atrocious riots between people who pretend to be fighting for religion, but doubtless care very little about it. The Orangemen were foolish enough to get up a demonstration in ridicule of the O'Connell demonstration in Dublin. I do not see why one was not as permissible as the other. The difference was, that in Dublin the Protestants made no objection; but in Belfast, when the Orangemen proceeded to burn the Liberator in effigy, and to bury his ashes, the Roman Catholic ire could not be suppressed, and both parties went to work, at first hesitatingly, but gathering courage and fervor as they went, at last came, to most tragic and disgraceful battles. A large number of military and police have succeeded in parting the combatants, but so thoroughly has five or six days' riot and fighting aroused their passions, that the most serious apprehensions are yet sustained. In the general hospital at Belfast alone were fifty serious cases—some certain to die, others maimed for life. Schools attacked, churches "wrecked," factory girls maltreated, navvies and ship carpenters challenging each other to mortal combat; these are the scenes which "religious" factions is able to evoke in the streets of a large civilized town.

PEABODY GIFT—TENEMENT HOUSES.

Turn from this sad sight to a more pleasing subject. The Peabody gift is not being dined and drunk away; but is helping materially in a great social revolution. The supply of good houses for the poor is now an object most energetically pushed by our chief philanthropist.

The Corporation of the City of London has recently set apart a valuable plot of

INDIVIDUALISM IN THE CHURCH.

BY REV. E. H. GILLIOTT, D. D.

It is the privilege not only, but the duty of each local church, to seek fellowship and co-operation with others. To stand aloof, to take an isolated position, to assume even the attitude of indifference, is a violation of the spirit of the Gospel. It is inconsistent not only with the unity of the Christian body, but with the principles on which every local church is established. So thought the fathers of New England, although their substitution of State control for Presbyterial supervision displaced the legitimate organization by which the fellowship of the churches might be expressed, and left them, when the former was withdrawn, to a state of isolation or independency expressly disapproved and disavowed by the New England synods.

There is not only municipal and civil law, but there is also the law of nations. A people may be independent in its own sphere, and there may be no superior visible tribunal by which it may be called to account. But its relations to other people imply mutual duties, and some of the ablest thinkers have elaborately considered these, and given us the result of their investigations in volumes that are quoted as authority in courts of law. Even against their present manifest interest, nations, with fleets and armies to enforce their will, have been constrained to pay respect to the mutual obligations of different governments.

And so it is, only in a more emphatic manner, in respect to local churches. But in their case, the analogous difficulty which the nations of the world have to meet, but for which they are unable to provide, may be overcome. They may have tribunals of reference and appeal, and they may have a common law to which they are voluntarily subject, and these tribunals and this law, disclaiming all resort to force, may be armed with all the moral power which the case requires.

In such circumstances, the organization and mutual relations of the churches should be well understood and defined. Cumbersome methods and mechanism are unnecessary. The utmost simplicity consistent with the ends to be gained, should be studied. Organization for its own sake is an impertinence and superfluity. The churches need mutual protection from unwarranted teachers, arbiters to whom they can appeal in case of internal divisions, and channels for benevolent operations over which, by a common representation, they can exercise control, and thus secure and maintain the confidence necessary to invite charitable contributions.

To these ends the Presbyterian system is wisely and well adapted. It runs into neither extreme of individualism or of consolidation. It respects the rights of the local churches and exercises only the control necessary to secure order and soundness in the faith. No despotic pressure is allowed, and if it were attempted, the remedy in a land where state-churchism is repudiated is not far to seek. It binds the churches together, not by authority or power, but by moral forces to which they voluntarily submit. It provides against local injustice, or defection from the faith on the part of its ministers, by a system which harmonizes with itself, and the excellence of which has been testified to by experience. It gives each church the privilege of representation, and in its methods of common benevolent effort, it gives the supervision and control into the hands to which it properly belongs.

It is true its rules are drawn up and published in printed form. They ought to be. And yet objections are sometimes made, the staple of which is prejudice against "the book." It seems to some as if a printed rule were tyrannical, when one that has grown up unwritten out of traditional usage is regarded, while just as imperative, in a very different light. But a candid examination will lead to another conclusion. Barbarous nations have no written law. Are they then more justly governed and controlled by moral influences? Is there less of hard-stern coercion, or less rigidity of penalty? Written laws imply civilization, progress. They show that the mutual relations of individual States have been considered and defined. They provide against difficulties which unwritten law finds insoluble except by appeal to force. But will it be said the church is a voluntary organization based on the principles of mutual charity and forbearance? This is true, but even the church must have order and system, and must exercise discipline; and sometimes its judgments will carry a force and excite a terror which are not possessed by civil tribunals. Neither should it be forgotten that it is composed of weak and fallible men—men who sometimes unconsciously will be

disposed to question the wisdom of rules applicable to themselves, which the judgment of others approves, or to push the authority of which they are possessed—unless previously defined—beyond due limits. Indeed, Montesquieu, in his great work *Esprit des Loix*, remarks that it is "invariable experience that every one who has power is tempted to abuse it, pressing it to its very limits. Who would say it? Virtue itself has need of limits." In such a case "the book" is simply the printed collection of commonly recognized principles. It fixes "limits" which it is no disrespect to virtue to say that it needs. The appeal to it is, as far as possible, the end of strife.

Nor is this all. To the ends of peace and order, it is important, if not essential, that these principles should be accessible to all, as well as clearly defined. Every man then can study them and judge of them for himself. He recognizes the fact that they are not of private interpretation, that they are not partial or designed for any special case, or any particular party. At all junctures, they are also ever at hand, and their direct tendency, as in the case of the well-known laws of any social or civil organization, is to anticipate and prevent strifes. Principles that will not bear definition, might as well at once be discarded as objects of appeal, and when defined they are not less authoritative and sacred. The constant tendency of the most chaotic condition, whether of church or state, will ever be to organization, and that can only be wisely conducted on fixed principles that must necessarily assume the aspect of laws, and which certainly cannot suffer by being defined.

SENSIBLE SUGGESTIONS FROM THE RIGHT QUARTER.

Those who have witnessed the character of the proceedings usually attendant upon camp meetings in the vicinity of our cities, will appreciate the following calm and judicious views which we take from the *Christian Recorder* of this city, the organ of the African M. E. church. They are more worthy of note from the fact that the camp meetings held for the colored churches have eminently suffered from the presence of a crowd of white visitants whose only object, in general, is frolic and rowdiness. The *Recorder* says:

We have never seen the necessity of holding camp meetings within a radius of ten miles of such large cities as Philadelphia, especially when it is considered that churches, preachers, and preaching abound within such circuit. Camp meetings within the space named, become a resort for the low, vulgar, and vicious of society. But even this might, and ought to be tolerated, when we consider that "It's sinners Jesus came to call," if professing Christians did not still pander to the depraved appetites of these sinful comers, to gratify their greed of gain, and thus destroy all the good that might otherwise be effected. How far the moral influence of the Church is compromised in the minds of those who riot in wickedness, I leave it to those judges who study the effect of influences upon the human mind. We have seen enough to convince us, that the camp meetings of these times are not conducted with the strictest regard to morals. Whatever may be the desire of those who lead in them, the inducements to hold camps are not always of the highest order.

Sometimes the circuit may be indebted to the preacher, and the members desire to have a camp in order to raise the means for paying him. Sometimes the preacher comes money-hunting, in preference to everything else; he never preaches nor prays without the ring of money in every utterance; he must have camp, if there is any prospect of money. When these things are uppermost, the means resorted to induce people to attend, and the privileges given to vendors of commodities, are not the most commendable. The selling of tent privileges to unscrupulous persons, to cover camp expenses, ought never to be allowed in any Christian community; and yet it is done at our modern camps. I have known persons who owned woods and taverns contiguous, to offer woods gratis, and one or two hundred dollars, to preachers, on condition that they should hold camp meetings; and we know that these offers have not unfrequently been accepted—the preacher lending himself to demoralize the Church and community, and to make the worst possible use of camp meetings. This is especially so near large cities, where the spirit of money-getting possesses in a large measure the souls of both preacher and people. The spirit to pay debts, is commendable—especially so in Christians; but to sell out to the devil to pay debts, is very like doing evil that good may come. When we consider that there are vast demoralizing influences to be counteracted and held in check, it becomes the Christian Church to tighten down and interlace the flood-gates of vice, especially where aggregation of numbers increases the facilities for crime.

We remember many things we should forget, (as injuries, disappointments, &c.) but forget what we should remember; viz: God and our souls.

They that presume most in prosperity, are soonest subject to despair in adversity.