

Correspondence.

OPEN AIR MEETINGS.

BY EDWARD PAYSON HAMMOND.

No. VII.

At the tumult at Ephesus, occasioned by the preaching of Paul, "the whole city was filled with confusion, and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with them into the theatre. Some therefore cried one thing and some another. And the most part knew not wherefore they were come together."

But when another, a "Jew," would have made his defence unto the people, all with one voice, about the space of two hours, cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

A scene somewhat similar to this occurred at an

OPEN AIR MEETING IN CHICAGO.

A few ministers, on their way to one of the nightly meetings held on the "north side," last June, stopped at the corner of one of the principal thoroughfares and commenced to speak to the passers-by of the things of eternity. Their strong voices, together with the sweet singing of the children, collected quite an audience. Each speaker had for his pulpit an old chair, borrowed from the drinking saloon, at the very door of which the meeting was held. All passed off quietly that night, and the next, and large numbers, who had perhaps not heard before of the nightly meetings in the church near by, were for the first time induced to attend them.

These out-door meetings were entirely impromptu, no notice of them having been previously given. But the second night it was announced that a similar meeting would be held the next evening. When the hour arrived, a tumultuous throng assembled. The chair which had before been granted from the low drinking saloon was denied. We soon saw that we were in the very worst part of the city of Chicago. "The lion in his den" was there. How to conquer him was the question.

It seemed as if the scum from the whole city had flowed thither. The nature of the motley throng was unmistakable. The rumsellers, whose "craft was in danger," had been busy. The meeting commenced as usual with singing, but the oaths of drunken Irishmen, at times, were heard above the songs of praise. One of the speakers, for about twenty minutes, addressed the heaving mass of wretched men and held them still, I say men—for there was scarce a woman ventured nearer than the outskirts of the crowd. Just as another minister began to preach the gospel, the cry of fire in the distance attracted every ear, and soon hundreds of stentorian voices around us re-echoed Fire! Fire! Fire!!! Whenever this tremendous uproar for a moment lessened, the speaker, who was the Rev. Mr. Harsha, of the O. S. Presbyterian Church, attempted to make his voice heard above the yell. It was of no use. They only shouted the louder, Fire! Fire! Fire!!!

Mr. Ryder—the stage actor and Jew, who had just been hopefully converted, and who is now under the patronage of Dr. R. W. Patterson's church, studying theology, tried in vain to tell of the wonderful work of God's Holy Spirit bringing him from darkness into "marvellous light." There was no Ephesian "town clerk" there to "appease the people." Not a policeman was to be seen. Thus, not for "the space of two hours," but till their throats must have been hoarse, they cried, Fire! Fire! Of course "this great outcry brought together new crowds from all the locality, though "the greater part knew not wherefore they were come together." It was estimated by some that three thousand were thus called together, and every door and window was filled far and near.

But Satan and his allies, for once at least, were defeated in their purpose. They expected to break up the meeting convened for the preaching of Christ and Him crucified. But the Lord had a purpose beyond all their power to reverse. He can cause the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder will He restrain. He permitted these wicked men to help gather this great concourse that they might hear of Jesus and of his "finished work."

Thus far only men had been addressed. No attempt had been made to call upon God's name in prayer. To the surprise of many, when a loud but solemn voice was heard supplicating the throne of Grace, all was at once still. The mob seemed "suddenly" quelled by a power more than human. Those miserable bar-tenders, drunkards, gamblers, and Arab boys seemed spell-bound. We read in Acts 4 that "when they

had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together," and I have reason to know that there, in the streets of Chicago, in answer to the prayer of faith, some stubborn hearts "were shaken."

After this prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to quell proud hearts, there was not another attempt to disturb the meeting. The prayer was followed by a few searching, solemn words. A hymn was sung and large numbers, still singing, moved towards the edifice opened for worship. One of the leaders of the mob came to the house of God and sat quietly during the whole service. If I mistake not, he was among those who tarried for conversation and prayer.

Two months later, while passing down the aisle of the Illinois Street mission chapel, Mr. Moody pointed me to a man who, he believed, was led by that open air meeting to see himself as a lost sinner, and Christ as the only Saviour. As I approached, he at once gave me a hearty shake of the hand. During a most satisfactory conversation with him, I learned these facts: In Germany he was an infidel. In this country he had for some time lived a Mormon. The shouts of the opposing throng had attracted his attention to our meeting in Chicago. And if I mistake not, for the first time in his life he there, in the open air, heard the story of the Cross. With a countenance beaming with love and gratitude to God, he said: "I shall never cease to be thankful for that open air meeting." If each of those Christians and ministers who took part in that strange gathering could have seen this converted infidel Mormon, and heard him, with tears, speaking of the "dear Jesus," they would have felt a thousand times repaid for all their efforts.

Of the hundreds of open air meetings which it has been my privilege to witness, this was only the third where there was the least disturbance; and even there we could, with Paul, speak of a seeming defeat as "having fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."

As we turn our eyes upon the uncared-for masses in our cities, can we not hear Him who, as he "looked upon the multitude, had compassion on them," calling to us, "Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest. Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

Ho! reapers of life's harvest, Why stand with rusted blade, Until the night draws round thee, And day begins to fade!

Why stand ye idle waiting For reapers more to come? The golden morn is passing, Why sit ye idle, dumb?

Thrust in your sharpened sickle, And gather in the grain; The night is fast approaching, And soon will come again:

The Master calls for reapers, And shall he call in vain? Shall sheaves lie there ungathered, And waste upon the plain?

FIRST EVANGELICAL GENERAL SYNOD IN AUSTRIA.

[PREPARED FOR OUR COLUMNS.]

At the summons of the youthful but wise Emperor of Austria, the representatives of the Protestant churches of his empire—Reformed and Lutheran—met in general synod in the capital city, Vienna, closing their sittings on the 9th of July last. The body was composed of 41 Lutheran and 21 Reformed Delegates, with other officers and secular members. The delegates of the two confessions organized separately, but afterwards united into one synod. The chief business of this council was to settle the principles and draw out the details of the Church Constitution, under which they might permanently organize to enjoy the fruits of their new-found freedom. The fundamentals of such a constitution had already been given them in outline by the government, but the whole subject was thoroughly examined, and the following conclusions reached:

The Pastor, or his vicar, shall be chosen by vote of the entire body of church members capable of exercising the franchise. Associated with him shall be a body of from six to thirty-two Elders, endowed with the usual functions, and wherever necessary a temporal officer, called a Curator, shall be elected, who shall take the oversight of temporal matters and be the secular head of the session. The Curator and the Elders shall be chosen by the entire body of voters in churches of less membership than five hundred; in larger churches they shall be chosen by a representative college. Several churches associated together shall be called a Seniorate. The Senior is chosen from the pastored, by a vote of the majority in the collected church sessions, and holds office for six years. His position therefore resembles that of the Prussian

"Superintendent." A Convention of the Seniorate (*Senioratsversammlung*), consisting of the pastors, delegates of the church sessions, and a representative of the educational faculty, is associated with him, altogether constituting the higher Session or Presbytery. Two other officers, one called the Con-Senior, the other the Curator, are chosen by the Presbytery, and form, with the Senior, the Committee of the Seniorate, which attends to current affairs of business, and especially is charged with instituting inquiry in matters of discipline. All the Seniorates of one, or of several provinces (*Kronlander*) form a Superintendency, [corresponding somewhat to a synod in the Presbyterian Church.] The Superintendents are chosen in the same manner as the Senior, by vote of the Sessions, subject to the imperial approval. The office, however, is for life, and so far introduces a prelatial element. He retains his existing pastorate; hence the seat or capital of the Superintendency may be alternately, in widely different parts of the district. Associated with the Superintendency again, is a Convention of the Superintendency, or, as it might be termed, a Provincial Synod, consisting of the Seniors, the Curators of the Presbyteries, two spiritual and two temporal delegates from every Presbytery, with delegates from the higher and lower Educational Faculty (Professors and Teachers) In this Provincial Synod, or Superintendency, we again have a Curator and an Executive Committee. Finally, for the entire Slavo-Germanic country a General Synod was established, to meet once in six years, to consist of the Superintendents and Seniors, and their Curators, of one spiritual and one temporal delegate from each Superintendency (Provincial Synod) with delegates of the theological faculty only. So far as their decisions refer to Doctrine, Ceremony, Festivals, Hymn Books and the like, they require no approval from the ministry to give them authority; the assent of the Superior Evangelical church-Court or Council, (*Evangelische Ober-Kirchenrath*) is required, yet this may be dispensed with, should the decisions to which the court objects be reiterated in the next General Synod. These arrangements as described, hold good for both branches of the Protestant church, the Reformed and the Lutheran, who are not united by them as in Prussia, but maintain distinct organizations. The Superior Church Council, however, whose members, spiritual and temporal, and named by the Emperor, is common to both Confessions; yet in the treatment of denominational matters, it divides into two Councils, called the "Superior Council of the Augsburg" or "of the Helvetic Confession." On the other hand, the two General Synods may discuss matters of common interest together, each retaining its identity as a denominational body. The General Synod is not allowed to tamper with the Confession of the Church. In arrangements pertaining to the choice of pastors, regard is paid to the denominational peculiarities of the parties. The members of the Synod take oath that "in their Synodical acts they will seek the inward and outward prosperity of the Evangelical church, (of either Confession) according to the best of their knowledge and ability, and will see to it that the Church in all its members grows up into Him who is the Head—Christ."

In considering this Constitution we must remember that it is not the spontaneous expression of the will of the churches. Their representatives were obliged to work within certain imperial limitations. Exactly what these were were not informed. But notwithstanding its close connection with the State, the Presbyterian elements in the constitution of the newly-formed church, are numerous and important enough, to bring it within the Presbyterian family. These elements are: I. Representative government of the individual churches by Elders in a session. II. Affiliation of the churches in Presbyteries and Synods. III. Inferior and superior Church Courts, in each of which the laity is fully represented, and which embody the entire church and set forth its unity. IV. Parity of the Clergy. The Seniors, elected for six years, and the Superintendents elected for life, with the imperial upper Council itself, appear to be endowed with no special authority, and serve merely for business purposes, as Presiding Officers, Heads of Committees, *primi inter pares*. They are nowhere called Bishops; nothing is said of any power residing in them alone, to lay on hands, &c.

In the General Synod the representation is quite limited, it is true. But it is still the principle of representation, the Provincial Synods—Superintendencies—and not the Presbyteries—sending the delegates. In the first Synod, of which we are writing, there were sixty-two delegates from both denominations, besides "temporal" or "worldly" mem-

bers, making, with Seniors, Superintendents and Curators, probably two hundred persons in all.

The presence of a considerable worldly element, in the Curators and the lay delegates, is a much greater departure from Presbyterianism, and indeed from any proper government of a spiritual body, and it proceeds not from aversion to Presbyterian government, but from the remaining dependence of the church on the secular arm, the German and European laxity of opinion on church membership and discipline, and the latitudinarianism brought in by the Rationalists, who everywhere raise the cry of intolerance, when the church would maintain her spiritual identity, vitality and existence by excluding the manifestly unregenerate from her membership.

Before the Synod adjourned, it drew up and presented to the Emperor a paper which showed him how his political concessions to the spirit of religious liberty had thoroughly aroused and whetted the appetites of his long-oppressed Protestant subjects, but which he received with a courtesy that showed him to be sincere in his large and noble purposes to all classes in his empire. The paper was, in fact, a bold protest, on the following points:

1. Against the denomination of *non-catholic*, which is the term used in the decrees and ordinances of the political authorities to designate the adherents of the two Protestant confessions—the Augsburg and the Helvetic; 2. The Synod demands that those obstacles which, in some parts of the monarchy are still presented to the establishment of Protestant congregations, shall be removed; 3. That bookellers shall be allowed to deal in Protestant books; 4. A community of cemeteries; 5. The admission of Protestant pastors, as of priests, into houses of retirement and charitable institutions, to exercise their functions in them; 6. The establishment of the equality of the Protestant and the Catholic festivals, in order that the authorities may be bound to protect the festivals of the Protestants in the localities in which they are the most numerous; 7. The Synod protests against all interference by subordinate political authorities in Protestant schools; 8. Against ordinances prohibiting Jewish children from going to Protestant schools, and Catholic children from enjoying the care of Protestant foster parents; 9. Claims a share of the funds of the normal school; 10. The admission of Protestant teachers in the medial Catholic schools; 11. The institution of Protestant catechists in the schools; 12. The incorporation of the Protestant Theological faculty into the University of Vienna; 13. The representation of the Evangelical Church in the Diet and in the municipal council.

Though the Emperor gave the paper a gracious reception, he returned no positive answer to the requests.

THE SYNODS.

The following summary of the proceedings of several Western Synods was crowded out of our last issue:

SYNOD OF WESTERN RESERVE.—The annual meeting was held in Atwater, Ohio, commencing October 14. The *Sin of Ingratitude* was the subject of the sermon of the retiring Moderator, Rev. Ebenezer Bushnell. Rev. Franklin Maginnis was chosen Moderator, and Rev. François A. Wilbur, Temporary Clerk. Much of the attention of the Synod was occupied by the great benevolent enterprises of our church, including the new one of the Ministerial Relief Fund, which was cordially commended to the churches for generous support. Sabbath evening was given up to the cause of Foreign Missions, the presence of District Secretary Ballantine and Rev. L. Bissell, missionary at Ahmednuggur, adding greatly to the interest of the occasion. A Synodical communion was held on the Sabbath, and throughout the sessions the devotional exercises were frequent and interesting. The churches were exhorted to increase the salaries of their pastors, commensurate with the increased cost of living, and the following minute on the subject of Temperance was adopted:

Believing, as we do, that intemperance prevails to a fearful extent within the bounds of this Synod, and all over our land; and that much more may be done than what is doing to stay its ravages, it is hereby recommended to our minister to preach oftener on the subject. And as the final triumph of temperance in our land, and throughout the world, will, under God, depend mainly on the education and training of children to avoid and hate intoxicating drinks, we earnestly entreat all persons, and especially parents and teachers in Sabbath and weekly schools, to inculcate with the utmost diligence, the principles of temperance to all under their care.

SYNOD OF INDIANA.—Vevay was the place of the annual meeting, and the session was continued from October 13 to 17 inclusive, embracing a Sabbath for Synodical communion and other religious services. Beyond this, we have seen no account of the proceedings, but learn that the session was harmonious, lively, and deeply interesting to the people in Vevay.

SYNOD OF OHIO.—This Synod met in

Ripley, Oct. 28. A large number of the members, on their way up, held a Christian Commission meeting in the cabin of the steamer Magnolia. Speeches were made by Rev. Messrs. Chidlaw, Hussey, and W. M. Cheever. Patriotic songs were sung. The *Christian Herald* says that it was a meeting which would have made the soldiers glad, if they could have looked in upon it.

In Synod, Rev. W. M. Cheever was chosen Moderator, and Rev. Messrs. J. I. French and H. V. Warren, Clerks. The appearance of Rev. Dr. Monfort and Elder A. E. Chamberlain as delegates from the O. S. Synod of Cincinnati, formed a feature in the proceedings. An hour was appointed for their reception. The *Herald* says that when this hour arrived, the house was filled; for the people had heard of this novel and interesting proceeding, and wanted to know what the representatives of these two branches of the Presbyterian Church would say to each other. The addresses of the delegates and the response of the Moderator were all excellent in sentiment and spirit, and showed that if not yet quite ready for reunion, we have a growing mutual confidence and affection—that God is drawing our hearts together.

Strong and unequivocal resolutions in behalf of the Government were adopted. On Saturday evening a sermon on the doctrine of eternal punishment was, according to appointment, preached by Mr. Cheever, and the Synodical communion was held on Sabbath morning, after a sermon by Prof. Allen.

BROWNING'S DEATH OF SAINT JOHN. FIRST PAPER.

The spiritual pride so generally accompanying literary power, and success is unfavorable to evangelical faith. A sentimental glow, bearing remote resemblance to true devotion, not unfrequently imparts a religious tinge to the productions of poets, who would repudiate all the specific doctrines of revealed religion. That style of unbelief which rejects the facts of revelation and which professes to receive its ideas only, and that skeptical habit or vice of thought, which seems too weak to grasp with firm and joyous faith the full circle of revealed truth, are represented in some of the leading literary productions of the day. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn* will abundantly illustrate the prevalence of this spirit in the literature with which our readers are most familiar.

Robert Browning is a poet whose communings with the human spirit have ever been too profound to be of interest to the busy public. He has grappled closely with the questions raised by Revelation in the innermost recesses of that spirit. He is a thinker of a high order, and it has been a problem for him to solve, whether a mind endowed with such capacities could work freely and make progress in the channels prescribed by evangelical faith; whether intellect would lose its power, and imagination its discriminativeness when subjected to the restraints of revealed doctrine and duty; whether, in short, Christianity can be represented by, or find expression in, the highest forms of Modern Poetry. The question arises whether in Robert Browning the age has found its believing, devout Christian poet. Have we in this remarkable thinker and writer, the man of the time, who shall mould into the highest forms of which our language and modes of thought, and imagination are at this day capable, the grand, specific, vital truths of Christianity? We shall honor the author of the poetic faculty by wreathing its fairest products into a garland of praise to his Christ, the Redeemer of a lost world, to his Grace, his Sovereignty, his Justice, his Holiness, not sacrificing a feature or prejudicing an attribute or obscuring a Truth, or pandering in any degree to the proud reason, or the selfish will of unregenerated man.

Some late poems of Browning's, published in his volume *Dramatis Personae*, lead us, as they have led others to hope, that the writer has at length, after some wavering, taken his stand upon the platform of Evangelical Christianity, and that he wishes the literary world to regard him, in his poetic character, as positively enlisted in its defence. Not only incidental expressions as in the concluding lines of "Gold Hair"

'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart At the head of a lie—taught Original Sin, The corruption of Man's Heart;

but the entire argument of leading poems puts him in deliberate and, we must suppose, conscious antagonism to the fashionable heresies of the thinking cultivated classes. The poem entitled "A Death in the Desert" is in fact an argument of singular beauty, force and appropriateness, against the current critical and philosophical cavils of unbelief, and if it is to be interpreted as revealing the poet's own convictions, it

at once draws a broad line between Browning and the semi-believing Tennyson—that "infant crying in the night and with no language but a cry"—the Socinians Longfellow, Whittier and Bayard Taylor; the Pantheist Emerson, and that whole class of transcendentalists who at Boston, Cambridge, Concord, and elsewhere, arrogate to themselves all the "insight" vouchsafed to man, and look down upon believing Christians, as beings lamentably deficient in culture and independence of thought.

The title of the volume "*Dramatis Personae*" does indeed suggest a sort of exhibition of different characters, who, upon the platform of the Poet's art, are suffered to present their own views to the reader, and the Poet himself may have no intention of judging their correctness; and as we pass through the smaller piece, we confess we are startled with the very title of one, written upon the sights at the Dead House in Paris, and entitled "Apparent Failure." Of the poor suicides he speaks in such wise

"I thought, and think their sins atoned;" And again:

"My own hope is, a sun will pierce The thickest cloud earth ever stretched; That after Last returns the First, Though a wide compass round be fetched; That what began best, can't end worst, Nor what God blessed once prove accurst."

Here doubtless appears the besetting sin of over-cultivated human intellect, an unwillingness humbly to receive those darker truths of the Divine government which seem incompatible with its own limited views. Here John Foster hesitated; and upon this Bible dogma of eternal punishment mere literary men have concentrated their scorn and proclaimed their repugnance to the whole evangelical system bound up with it. The *Independent*, in its last issue of the year 1862, published a Poem of John G. Whittier's, without note of comment or dissent, in which the anti-Scriptural doctrine of Restoration was plainly taught. And Tennyson, with great cautiousness it is true, hints his own belief in the same doctrine, in the 58d canto of *In Memoriam*:

Behold! we know not anything; I can but trust that good shall fall At last,—at last, to all, And every winter change to spring.

But he quickly adds, as if unwilling to give the sanction of his sober judgment to the opinion:

So runs my dream: but what am I! An infant crying in the night: An infant crying for the light: And with no language but a cry.

However the piece "Apparent Failure" may seem to associate Browning with these poets, in the "Death in the Desert" we find ourselves in an entirely different atmosphere. Here, a soul imbued with the very spirit of the Gospel, anticipates by prophetic insight, and skillfully handles, the subtle philosophical objections which modern times would raise against the credibility of the Christian system:

"On islets yet unnamed amid the sea; In some enormous town Where now the lark sings in a solitude; Upon blank heaps of stone and sand Idly conjectured to be Ephesus."

We will analyze the Poem, and present the reader with extracts which will account for the disposition felt by some to proclaim Robert Browning as THE CHRISTIAN POET of the age.

WILL IT PAY TO RAISE TOBACCO?

Peculiarly, I have no doubt of it; morally, I think not. Yet that all will get rich who raise tobacco seems to me problematical; and that in the long run it will prove profitable, either physically, morally, or politically, I do not believe. That it exhausts the soil and impoverishes the farm admits not of a doubt. If there are doubters, let them travel from Annapolis to Drum Point, along the Chesapeake Bay, they will see a tract of land originally as beautiful and as finely located as can be found in America, now a barren waste, thousands of acres producing nothing but mullens and other weeds. Let them inquire of the inhabitants for the cause of this state of things, and the uniform response will be, "Killed by raising tobacco." So in every part of Maryland and Virginia.

But we Yankees know better how to keep up our land. Admit it. Whence comes the manure? Is it not furnished at the expense of all the rest of the farm? Does not every other crop suffer? There are towns in this valley into which twenty years ago a bushel of corn had probably never been imported, and but very little wheat, which now imports and consumes fifty to one hundred thousand bushels of corn annually, besides most of their breadstuffs.

To pay for this will require lots of tobacco. To pay for extra imported manure, for extra help, of which there must be no stint, for extra shed room—ten acres requiring a building covering as much surface as Solomon's temple—will require lots more.

But admitting that it does pay better than any other crop, there are some moral considerations which, it seems to me, ought not to be overlooked. God sends down upon us light, heat, and moisture, that, by cultivating the soil, we may obtain sustenance for man and beast. Have we a right so far to pervert these blessings as to allow our fields to produce nothing but a hurtful poison? —New England Farmer.