THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN
AND
GENESEE EVANGELIST.
A Religious and Family Newspaper,
IN THE INTEREST OF THE
Constitutional Presbyterian Church.
PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY,
AT THE PRESBYTERIAN HOUSE,
1334 Chestnut Street, (2d story,) Philadelphia.
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American Presbyterian.

THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1865.

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THE SUCCESSES OF EVANGELISTS.

One of the most difficult and important problems in the work of the ministry is to bring the hearers who are familiar with the gospel, and with the whole matter of personal duty, to a decision. Custom has hardened them to the ordinary presentation of the truth. They take all their pastor's appeals as a matter of course. Whole communities fall into a routine of mere church-going and sermon-hearing They are in no further need of enlightenment; more light is but greater responsibility, a heavier mill-stone about their necks. We remember hearing an earnest preacher, formerly pastor of one of our churches in this city, say that after a long course of faithful preaching to his people without effect, he felt constrained to pause and declare to them, in the midst of another earnest sermon, his dread of the consequences to their souls, if he should go on in the presentation of God's truth while his hearers only seemed to harden themselves under it. He felt as if he scarcely dared to proceed.

Now, it is often under such circumstances, that an evangelist is exactly the man that is needed in the congregation. These are often the very circumstances in which he is most likely to be largely successful. An evangelist's entire mode of operation is aimed at immediate results. The very soul and spirit of his work is the expectation of bringing men to a decision on the spot. He considers himself as accomplishing nothing unless he does that. He, of course, expects to do this, whether he preaches among the neglected and ignorant masses, or among the well-instructed congregations of our evangelical churches. But among the latter he feels that a substantial work of preparation has taken place, and he comes simply to put the finishing touch. His methods are all framed with a view to bring to a final issue the delays of the wavering, to consummate the half-formed purpose, to hasten even the unawakened, but instructed, hearer of the gospel, through the process which he had been expecting to make in a deliberate and dignified manner, or to postpone to "a more convenient season."

All the arrangements of the pastor are those of a settled laborer, identifying himself with his people, laying plans for the deliberate instruction of the people, and the training of their families, and providing for their steady growth in grace, and the maturing of their Christian experience through a generation. All the plans of an evangelist, on the contrary, are those of a man upon a errand requiring haste. He has a few days, a week or two to spend here, and he must pack up and be off. The work he has in hand must be done promptly. He has a message from his Master to sinners which he must deliver and be gone. Will they hear or refuse? There is no time to procrastinate. He is earnest, pressing, importunate. The pastor may fail now, but he will have other opportunities. Not so the evangelist. It is now or never with him. He must concentrate his energies. He must see, and plead personally with the sinners. He must rally around him all the help which the church can give. He must use such special agencies as have been found helpful in accelerating the movements of the sinner, and bringing him to an early decision.

The evangelist's work, therefore, has a special character. Routine, for the time, is dispensed with. An emergency is, as we may say, created by his presence, and God's people feel called upon to meet it by special efforts. And the unconverted feel a new pressure; they have been thinking vaguely, and half-promising themselves, some time, to become Christians; the coming of an evangelist, and the stir he makes among the people of God, must stir their hearts also. An expectation is aroused of something to be done. Why should not they do it? Why not seize this opportunity, if they are ever to be Christians at all? Many minds have come to a certain stage of ripeness but still, as it were, hang and swing to and fro on the tree of old custom. A rap or two from the evangelist brings them to the ground. They were well nigh ready; they promptly give up when he comes.

For that matter, there is probably almost always a preparedness in a well-trained Christian community for a bold, believing laborer, to go in and reap. Men are doubtless ready to receive the gospel in greater numbers than the faint-hearted and low-spirited are ready to allow. The evangelist is a thorough believer in the susceptibility of men to the truth, the fitness of the truth to their wants, and the every day readiness of the Holy Spirit to bless the truth in large measure. Hence he is bold; he makes his way into hearts never suspected of being open to the converting influences of the gospel. He bears down resistance by his own confidence and earnestness. He gains confidence by the frequent testing of his own plan and principles. He has over and over again found men the same, the truth the same, and God the Holy Spirit the same. His faith is strong, it can remove mountains.

Unembarrassed with pastoral cares he is elastic, less nervous about giving offence, more free to devote himself to the single work of dealing with souls upon the narrow, simple business of conversion. He may concentrate his sermonizing upon this one topic. He may most thoroughly prepare himself on each and every one of the very limited number of sermons it is necessary for him to preach, and thus far exceed in oratory, in fullness of illustration, in ease and familiarity with his subject, and in general effectiveness, what he or most preachers might have reached under ordinary circumstances. And he certainly must gain a large and most valuable experience in dealing with the heart under serious impressions, anxiety, conviction of sin, doubt, and that whole class of feelings connected with a time of awakening. He must acquire facility, must be able to communicate a spiritual *momentum* to the inquirer, and accelerate his progress to the desired crisis by superior skill. According to Mr. Barnes' language, written thirty years ago, he becomes a practical theologian of the highest character. "He," says Mr. B., "is the best theologian who is best apprized of the proper means of conducting a revival of religion; who, under the inexpressible pressure on his spirit of a revival, has been urged to the Bible to know what is to be done to save trembling sinners."

These things help to explain the sudden and large successes of evangelists, and relieve their work of any necessary suspicion of mere excitement, or agency foreign to true religion. Evangelists form a distinct class in the ministry, recognized as such by inspired authority, by the appointment of Christ himself, and vindicated by the experience of the Church at its origin, and in all missionary enterprises. In a community already Christianized, their gifts, rightly exercised, are a help to the pastor. "Let no one fear for a moment," says Dr. Arnot, of Glasgow, "that the recognition of this extraordinary evangelistic work supersedes the ministry. It supports the ministry in two points of view; first, it gives us more work in the way of directing the awakening and watching the converts; but further, it will make our sermons more appreciated and more in request. A man who has been awakened by an extemporaneous, unstudied address, does not want to sit and hear such addresses always. The ordinary ministry is more needed and more valued."

In England the services of evangelists are freely recognized and extensively employed. A Conference of more than two hundred of these laborers, with their friends, was held in London, in the room of the Young Men's Christian Association, January 24th. Lord Radstock, Hon. Somerset Maxwell, and other persons of rank, were present and took an active part in the proceedings, which were marked with a very ardent and importunate spirit of prayer, and were prolonged until midnight. Instead of being afraid of this instrumentality, the good people of England accept and guide it.

THE LATE ENCYCLICAL.

HOW THE ORGANS OF ROMANISM RECEIVE IT.

So far as we have seen, the Roman Catholic journals of this country, submit to the late Encyclical with the abjectness of thorough Ultramontanes. Whatever may be hoped for in France, the minions of the Pope in this country evidently did not expect any thing else from his Holiness, but denunciations of modern progress and antagonism to every principle of freedom, both of religious belief and of civil government. They are not surprised or grieved at the tone of the letter; they applaud it, and it is for them to show how they can be loyal citizens, while they maintain the most solemn supreme allegiance to a spiritual sovereign maintaining such sentiments. The material part of the Encyclical and the comments of French and other continental journals upon it, will be found upon our inside pages. We give below extracts from the *Universe*, Catholic organ of this city, premising that the paper has fallen into disfavor with the authorities of the diocese for its advocacy of Fenianism. It is showing the virtue of meekness, so common with subjects of the Pope, in thus swallowing the Encyclical entire. The *Universe* says:

"Forget not to read, and read again, the Encyclical of the venerable Head of Christendom. It is the most important manifesto of the age. When the messages of other Princes will be forgotten, it will be full of life. The Church is eternal. All its acts last forever. And the Bull is almost as remarkable in the vigor of mind that permeates it, as in the authority by which it has been declared. The grand old Pontiff speaks with all the strength, and clearness, and decision, and boldness, of a man of thirty-five."

The Boston *Pilot* thus expresses its exalted opinion of the document:

"It will have been seen by our readers that the letter deals with all the great heresies and dangerous extravagances of thought and action that characterize the age, and it strikes a direct and telling blow at the disorganizing influences that have dared to array themselves in opposition to established order and sacred institutions, that have their foundation in the divine law of right, and truth, and justice."

SAVANNAH, COLUMBIA, CHARLESTON, WILMINGTON.

Within two short months commencing on Christmas day, and ending with Washington's birth-day, these four cities have been wrested from the grasp of the rebellion and restored to the national authority. Five hundred cannon, forty or fifty thousand bales of cotton, stores and amunition, which no one, it would seem, has found time to reckon up, huge fortresses and elaborate lines of defence upon which years of labour have been expended, and hundreds of lives sacrificed to maintain them, railroad lines and centres vital to the communications of the rebellion, vast tracts of country teeming with slaves and with supplies, are among the fruits of these unparalleled successes, crowded into less than two months. Nay, so potent was the strategy of Gen. Sherman, backed by the energy of Terry and Schofield, that in five days, all three of the last named cities became ours; Columbia on the 17th, Charleston on the 18th and Wilmington on the glorious 22d of February! The three great States of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia are almost absolutely at our feet. Indeed, of the three, the guiltiest is most completely in the power of the Union. A single regiment of union soldiers could probably march in triumph over the length and breadth of this prostrate member of the "Confederacy," and execute the entire measure of a nation's vengeance upon its lately defiant and truculent population. Its fierce leaders and preachers of secession fled with the feeble women of the rebel treasury department, whose movements constitute the chief item of intelligence from South Carolina in the Richmond papers. No last rally of brave and desperate souls to stay the foot of the invader upon the thrice sacred soil of South Carolina, no last struggle of men who would sooner die than suffer dishonor, no ambuscades on the flanks, no guerrillas in the rear to harrass the army whose advance they cannot stay, but headlong inglorious flight—this is all the tale the papers of the rebel capital have to tell of South Carolina,—the flight of the female employes of the treasury, accompanied by the chivalry of the State who fled quite as fast as they.

"Like a Tyrian emperor triumphing" has been Sherman's progress hitherto through the heart of the Cotton States. The inhabitants, so fiercely belligerent while he was at a distance, have most obsequiously and peacefully submitted to his presence. The armies of the rebellion have kept at a respectful distance, their tactics being simplified to the single movement of retreat. The burden of rebel news is the details of his progress. The rebels furnish his supplies, remount his horsemen, yield up their lines of communication to his use, and gazette the various stages of his advance. They have kindly relieved us of all those little duties to Sherman's army.

Some have intimated that there is deep strategy in all these movements of the rebels. It is the strategy of weakness, conscious and unveiled weakness. The seaboard cities, the great railroad centres and the vast territory teeming with slaves and supplies necessary to the support of the armies, are given up for the plain reason that we, by the blessing of God, especially since the utter rout of Hood's army at Nashville, are too many for them. Their "policy" of concentration is nothing but the result of their confessed weakness. The enemy is on every side of them. They have but one direction in which to retreat—towards the centre—and they dignify the movement thitherward by the name of "concentration." We suppose a flock of frightened sheep huddled together will hereafter be spoken of as "concentrated."

We by no means intend to make light of the power of the rebels, thus aggregated, to do mischief. They are not sheep though huddled thus together. And if there is any measure of desperate courage or energy left in them, we shall probably soon see an exhibition of it. But we do not believe the various forces which Sherman has swept before him in his triumphant advance, are formidable though united into one body. Beauregard has resigned the command over them, and Johnston, the same who vainly endeavored to stop Sherman's march to Atlanta, has been put in his place. Our armies too can pursue the same policy of concentration, and as there are far more of ours to concentrate, the result must be as great, if not greater, numerical advantage than before.

But even if Sherman is "checked," and if by concentration the rebels can achieve some temporary successes, or, if forgetful of Gettysburg, they venture some desperate enterprise of Northern invasion, the capture of the entire Atlantic seaboard with every seaport, and the whole line of railroad, remains as a permanent and decisive advantage, and a magnificent trophy of the winter campaign, in our hands. Like a huge but gradually weakening reptile, the rebellion is relaxing one claw after another of its hold upon the coast, until only two remote and feeble points of contact remain, to be loosed whenever the forces of the Union are ready for the undertaking.

MINISTERIAL RELIEF FUND.—We would say still another word for this youngest, but not least important, enterprise of our church. We cannot better do it than by quoting the following, from a correspondent of the *New York Observer*, which appeared in the last number of that paper. "I have," says the writer, "on my table while writing, a letter concerning one of them, [aged ministers in indigent circumstances,] in the remote West, who has labored so long that he is almost old enough to be 'turned out.' At the beginning of the war he had four sons, three of whom entered the army. One of these was shot dead; another died of diarrhœa contracted in the camp; and the third was so desperately wounded as to be crippled for life. The fourth son, now nineteen, has been a sufferer all his days from a fall received in infancy through the carelessness of his nurse. To give employment to this son, (who is able to do some work), and to enable him to aid in the support of his aged parents, the father purchased on credit, a few acres of land for the invalid to cultivate. The father is such a victim to neuralgic diseases, that he is sometimes carried to the pulpit, and is obliged to sit while delivering his sermon. Though the pittance of two hundred dollars promised him by his people is unpaid, his labors are suspended only by the failure of his health. In a lettter to a clerical friend, he writes:—'Although the roads in this region are rough, and the weather is cold, I have been able thus far to meet my appointments. I suffer from the thinness of my garments. My undercoat is three years old, and my overcoat four; but I am determined to preach as long as I can stand. This cruel war has bereaved me of my sons, as well as cut off my pecuniary supplies. I hope to meet my boys where, though human relationship is unknown, yet human affection is renewed and perfected.'"

TESTIMONIAL TO AN EDITOR.

Editors are frequently called upon to give publicity to acts of appreciation and kindness towards others. At last we have to record an instance of most generous regard to an editor himself. We clip from the *Christian Work* for February:

"A testimonial fund having been recently raised for Dr. John Campbell, the editor of the *British Standard*, well-known among the Congregationalists as a leader of what may be termed the Conservative section as regards theology, a numerous company, presided over by Lord Shaftesbury, recently assembled to present it. The amount raised from persons of different denominations has been 3000*l.*, besides a sum of 500*l.*, given by Congregationalists alone."

REV. A. M. STEWART'S LETTER.

CITY POINT, VA., Feb. 23, 1865.

Dear Brother Mears:—Once more in the Army of the Potomac, and surrounded by associations, scenes, noises, bustle, wondrously familiar! For some time I have been meditating a run to and through the lines before Petersburgh, and am now carrying out this resolve. Have been here now five days, and have passed along the lines several times; once to the extreme left, near Hatcher's Run. During past years, some effort has been made to convey to your readers, by the pen, some just conception of camps, marches, and battles. The effort will not be renewed at length now.

CITY POINT, which before the war was but a lonely landing on the James River, comprising two or three decaying rebel houses, is now an actual, live, bustling city. Here are all the appliances, not of productive, but consumptive human life. Twenty thousand people are here, with only soldiers sufficient to guard and keep the multitude in order. The headquarters of General Grant, with their appendages, constitute an entire ward of the city. Then, offices of quartermasters, commissaries of subsistence and of ordnance, with lower grades in the same direction, uncounted. Sutlers, purveyors, and *sutlers*, eating houses, oyster saloons, and news depots—long ranges of warehouses, hasty of construction, yet beautiful in appearance—wide acres of hospitals, tents and wooden structures—stables, corrals, cattle pens, wagon yards, carpenter and wagon-maker shops. The Christian Commission has a village in itself:—hotels, stables, offices, ware-rooms, reading-rooms, with church and church-going bell to call the worshipers to prayer. The Sanitary Commission has also here all its extensive appliances for benefitting the bodies of our suffering soldiers. Add to all this an immense fleet, riding in a capacious harbor, with vessels of all shapes and sizes constantly coming and going, and we have a real modern city. As by seeming magic the city has arisen, so by the same process it may soon be dissolved. Within a month this place may be left desolate as before; lonely as Sahara, without an inhabitant.

PROGRESS IN THE ART OF WAR.

Each succeeding year gives evidence of our advance both in the science and art of war. The long, long lines of the army, with its almost countless encampments, are substantially the same; yet are the breastworks higher, and rifle-pits deeper now than heretofore—the forts stronger and more capacious; the soldiers' quarters more roomy and comfortable; the cooking operations more home-like, and the soldiers more healthy; the discipline and morale of the army more perfect; hospitals better arranged, attendance on the sick and wounded more careful, and surgery more skilful. A thorough military people have we become. Dangerous elements these. When the present war is over, we may be too ready to provoke, or too quick to accept war from other directions.

While no general battles or decisive engagements are being fought here at present, yet are there daily and nightly cannonadings with continual picket firing in various places; and none of these altogether bloodless. Last week I received in Washington a telegram brief but intelligible:—"Your nephew of the Roundhead P. V. mortally wounded." Was off by the next boat, but on my arrival in the Ninth Corps, learned he was dead and buried. Cruel war! I had his body raised, embalmed, and, by Adams' Express, sent North to sorrowing friends for a Christian burial. This is but an instance among thousands.

Adams' Express is an institution—drives now an immense business with the dead. Perhaps twenty rough boxes per day are transmitted North; each box six feet long by one and a half square, and containing the dead body of a soldier. What material for sackcloth, mourning, and tears. Yesterday, while I was in the Ninth Corps, a twenty-four pound solid shot came across from the enemy, tore through a group of Michigan soldiers, instantly killing three and mutilating a fourth. The soldiers will all be glad when these long watchings and exposures are over, and the decisive battle fought.

Very many things of interest are noted to be embodied in future letters.

A. M. STEWART.

American Presbyterian.
New Series, Vol. II, No. 9. Genesee Evangelist, No. 980.
PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1865.

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REVIVAL IN BLAIRSTOWN, N. J.

The news of the remarkable work of the Holy Spirit in Hackettstown, of which the AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN contained an account a few weeks since, caused the hearts of Christians in all this region to pray for like blessings on their own churches.

Rev. Mr. Riley, the pastor of the Old School Church in Blairstown, invited Rev. G. C. Bush, the pastor of the Church at Hackettstown, to give his people an account of the Spirit's work among the people of Hackettstown. It was found that Mr. Hammond, while on his way to Detroit, could spend one day at Blairstown. He came therefore, on Wednesday the 16th, and remained for only a day and a half. But oh, what days of blessings they were!

Four meetings were held in the Presbyterian Church. The academy, where young men are fitted for college, suspended its usual exercises, and we learn that not a few of the students were blessed. People came for miles to attend the meetings. The district schools all around were closed.

Mr. Hammond finished preaching Thursday night, a little after nine o'clock, and gave out notice that any who wished to retire could do so. But none moved from their seats. Weeping was heard in different parts of the crowded church. Oh! it was a night over which angels must have rejoiced.

No one seems to have had time to make an estimate of the number of probable conversions. We hope the good work has just begun. Christians are beginning to believe that God answers prayer; and we pray that the work may go on till hundreds shall have found "peace in believing." Rev. Mr. Bush, who rode sixteen miles to assist Mr. Hammond, stated that fifty-nine had joined his church, as a part of the fruits of the revival in connection with Mr. Hammond's labors with them. He still thought there were over two hundred children and adults, who were led by the Holy Spirit to accept of Christ, during Mr. Hammond's three days' visit.

Mr. Hammond intended to have commenced a series of meetings in Detroit, on Sunday, the 19th, but the very deep snow, blocking the railroad, seemed to render it impossible for him to reach there, even if he had set out. He now expects to be there next Saturday. May the Holy Spirit attend his efforts.

He often repeated the words in Zech. iv. 6: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." May the Lord ever help him to realize this great truth, and never allow him to trust in his own strength, which he must find but weakness.

He has now gone to Succasunna and to Newton, in this State, in which places he expects to spend but a day or two. May the ministers and christians find that the God who converted three thousand in one day, is still the same, "Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders."

A LOVER OF REVIVALS.

A HOME MISSIONARY recently appointed in a destitute region of Michigan, in a county containing but one other ordained minister—a Methodist brother—writes to know if some benevolent person will not pay for several copies of the AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN to be circulated among the people. He says, "it would do much for our church here." He adds:—"Error is rampant, Adventists abound, and are doing much mischief. I preached recently fourteen miles from here, walked home yesterday, can't afford to keep a horse. My most distant appointments are eighteen miles apart. We are in the midst of oil and salt excitement here. A company is organized, with $60,000 capital, who will commence to bore for oil and salt early in the spring. We need the salt of divine grace here."

Who will aid this laborious and self-denying missionary in his efforts to leaven this needy community with the truth, by furnishing him with ten dollars worth of PRESBYTERIANS?

LANGE'S COMMENTARY.—Orders for this great work have come in with such rapidity that the publisher, Mr. Scribner, has been unable to fill them. The third edition is now coming from the press, when those who have been waiting will be supplied. This will explain the delay experienced by some of our friends who were expecting the book as a premium.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

ILLUSTRATION.—"The evacuation of Charleston should rather inspire cheerfulness than gloom."—*Richmond Dispatch.*