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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN THE RETROSPECT.

4. The consciousness of strength and calm self-reliance which we have mentioned as characteristic features of the Assembly, were manifested in nothing more clearly than in the attitude and temper of the body on Re-union. With the kindest feelings towards our brethren of the other branch, to whose representatives a most hearty welcome was accorded, there seemed to be a tacit, almost unanimous, understanding that the subject of union should be passed over in silence, or be dismissed with a courteous postponement. The subject excited almost no interest; not a speech was called forth by the report of the Committee of Bills and Overtures, this being among the last points brought by the committee before the Assembly; and their report, postponing the subject to the indefinite future, was promptly and unanimously adopted. Many reasons conspired to lead the body to this conclusion; such as, the unsettled state of the other branch, the wide division in their own ranks on the subject of union, the intolerance and bigotry developed in certain influential quarters by the union movement—showing the prevalence of all the old leaven and bitterness of supra-lapsarian orthodoxy—and the like; but above all these reasons was the absorbing consciousness of a great charge laid by Providence directly and specifically upon our body, a sort of *totus in illis* feeling, which, in fact, gave us little time to look around at objects or proposals, which might divert us from work so important and for which our organization is so complete. We were entirely without a feeling of need of union. By the blessing of God, we found ourselves as able as almost any of the denominations to do our own work, and enjoying some peculiar facilities, and undeserved tokens of the divine favor.

5. Home Missions have become, it would seem, the peculiar field of action for our church. In fact, the condition of our country is such as to call for special efforts in the work of home evangelization from every branch of the Church of Christ. And the churches are giving themselves, as never before, to occupy and cultivate the wide field. Yet we are inclined to think that our denomination is gaining a kind of honorable pre-eminence in this department of effort—is proving itself, in a very marked manner, an American Home Missionary Society. Its contributions to various Home Missionary objects, year before last, considerably exceeded those reported in the minutes of the other branch, and they bid fair to be far greater, when summed up, for the year just closed than they were in the last. The strongly national feeling of the body, its unanimous and ardent loyalty, its *American Presbyterianism*, may be seen to have a very close relation to the Home Missionary zeal it is developing. Those who deeply love their whole country and whose very church polity and history as a denomination are American, rather than Scotch or British or Genevan, may naturally be expected to show a lively interest and a liberal spirit in the evangelization of America. But even the most comprehensive Missionary spirit might well be overwhelmed with the vast proportions of the work, as spread out before us by the Permanent Committee. Besides the terrible destitutions of our great cities, the feeble churches and needy fields of our older States, the new States and Territories of the West, the Rocky Mountain region and the Pacific coast; besides the German population—in all of which districts of labor we were endeavoring to do our part—we found at this meeting of the Assembly that a new and most needy but hopeful field had opened wide in the loyal regions of East Tennessee,

furnishing a lookout upon the entire white population of the South; and again, that our own share of work among the three million freedmen had been scarcely begun, and that it really waited for us, as best fitted to accomplish, at least, that part. What a bewildering prospect! We thought that, as a church, we had been contributing something substantial and laboring with some remote approximation to the needs of the case. But now our boldest conceptions were dwarfed by the reality, and our largest zeal and liberality in the past were seen to be totally inadequate for the demands of the present. A new world seemed to rise before us, while we were yet closely engaged in the conquest of the old. O, for the zeal of a Paul! O, for the tongues of flame, for weapons mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds! O, for an army of men rising at the call of Christ, of Providence, and of the Church, like the armies that rose for the temporal salvation of the nation, filled with apostolic zeal, crowned with apostolic gifts and graces. O, for the mighty angel flying through the midst of heaven, carrying the everlasting gospel in his hand! Could a quarter of a million of money be raised; could two hundred men be sent into the field; could one-fifth of our clergy go, as they did at the invitation of the Christian Commission for evangelizing the army, and spend each six weeks in some needy locality, it would be but a poor approach to the degree of liberality, enterprise, and self-denial which seems imperatively demanded in the crisis.

Partly to meet it, the committee suggested and the Assembly recommended the appointment by the Presbyteries of suitable persons as *lay-helpers*. This is a highly important step, one throwing great responsibility on the Presbyteries, but destined, we think, to lead to valuable results. To meet the present emergency, unusual measures will be necessary. Happy is the church that both perceives what is needed, and that is not afraid to follow the leadings of Providence when once manifested, even if pointing out an unusual course. The word has been spoken: LAY AGENCIES bearing the commissions of the Presbyteries, are authorized by the General Assembly. And we have reason to believe that we shall ere long hear of the entering of godly and zealous laymen thus commissioned upon the work. That such persons are competent largely to make up the deficiencies in the supply of our ordained ministry, the history of colportage and of the work of the Christian Commission in the army, abundantly proves. Let them go to organize prayer-meetings and Sabbath-schools, to read sermons, to distribute religious literature, to look after the wandering and the neglected, to pioneer for the work of the regular ministry. We know not why some might not give their lives to such work. Devotedness, prayerfulness, and humility, with ordinary intellectual endowments, would, in this sphere, insure a large measure of usefulness. The topic is so fruitful and suggestive that we must leave it, with any thing more we have to say on Home Missions, to another occasion.

6. As usual, the Trustees of the Church Erection Fund, by referring to the charter of the Fund, by proving that they had no intention of oppressing the churches indebted to it, by appealing to the business instincts of the members against a loose dispensation of charity, succeeded in keeping down the lid of their chest for another year. As usual, when the body came to the point of voting on a proposal for a change, which was not, we believe, until the very last day of the session, the requisite two-thirds of the members on the roll could not be found in the house. And we do not know but that the feeling that the Fund had a very specific object, and was well adapted for that, namely, the encouraging of feeble churches to build simple edifices clear of debt, and that it would be impolitic, even if allowable by the charter, radically to alter that feature, grew upon the Assembly. But the idea that a church so active, and occupying such needy fields as ours, should have \$60,000 raised for Church Erection lying unemployed at its side in New York City for years, was one to which no eloquence of Committee-men, and no array of figures could quite reconcile that General Assembly. Hence, two measures were adopted: one, that legal advice should be taken on the question whether the interest of the original fund, now amounting to \$24,000 might not be employed, at the discretion of the committee, for exceptional cases; and secondly, instructing the Permanent Committee on Church Erection to engage at once in the effort to secure a *supplementary fund*, which should be employed gratuitously* under the limitation

tations suggested by the special committee in their printed pamphlet. Those conditions provide, first, for the raising of the fund without a paid agency; second, that only such churches be aided as cannot derive aid from the permanent fund; and third, a good and unencumbered title must be shown and no debt remain upon the church. We do most heartily rejoice in this action, as fitted to remove the only source of serious disquiet in the entire working of our church machinery. We rejoice that the liberal character of our church is no longer to be veiled, in such an important particular as church building, behind an inoperative fund of large figures and few results, and that the shadow of an endowment is not to be suffered to chill the benevolent impulse of our givers, or to dishearten our enterprising but feeble organizations in laying the foundations of the house of the Lord in the waste places of the land. The fund can still go on in its own important but peculiar work, and no better, more faithful, or more painstaking men can be found to manage it for these ends than Mr. Benedict, Dr. Spear and others in the present Board of Trustees. And it was stated on the floor of the Assembly, that the late Hon. Otis Allen, an eminent legal gentleman and late ruling elder of the church in Albany, after carefully examining the papers of the Board in their rooms in New York returned to his home, and, as it has since transpired, did them the honor of making the Fund residuary legatee of his estate. This is the first bequest ever received by the Church Erection Fund. We earnestly hope it is an omen of greater activity and enlarged usefulness to the Fund. With this, and the supplementary fund, arrived at in the action of the Assembly, we doubt not a healthy stimulus will be communicated to our yet houseless churches on Home Missionary fields, who will see in these measures a prospect that they need not long remain without a local habitation and a name. In the light of this action, we think we can see them looking into one another's face with the joyful cry: Let us arise and build. The church which has encouraged them to organize in the name of Christ, and which has supplied them with preachers, is equally ready to encourage and help them in the indispensable but frequently arduous enterprise of providing even the simplest place of worship. All appearance of cold indifference to true brethren struggling with difficulties on the frontiers, in new settlements, or in the suburbs of our cities is removed by this wise, though it must be called, tardy action.

7. In the report of the Committee on Publication, and in a series of resolutions prepared by a committee of the last Assembly—two papers, whose authors had no means of communicating with each other—the subject of the *Weekly Religious Press* was considered and acted upon by the Assembly, for the first time in its history. Both of these papers will be found in our columns this week. Amid a multiplicity of other and more pressing topics, there seemed no opportunity for discussing the subject, especially the interesting question submitted by the committee of the previous Assembly, as to the *thirty thousand families* of our churches believed to take no paper of the denomination, viz:—"Do they take no religious papers?" However, discussion was not needed, and the opportunity for it if granted, would not have been employed where all were agreed. The Assembly, by two solemn and unanimous declarations, made known its earnest wish that the known and recognized "denominational organs," (such as called the PRESBYTERIAN, the EVANGELIST, and the HERALD) should circulate in our churches to the exclusion of unfriendly sheets which, under various guises, have stolen into our circles. We believe the Assembly reflected a growing and practically developing sentiment in the churches in this action, which will be still further strengthened and developed by it. On the strength of this action, let every pastor constitute himself an agent for one or more of the papers named, and he will find his reward speedily in the enlightened and loyal character of his people.

We have not by any means satisfied ourselves in this review of the annual council of our church, nor do we think our readers will take it ill if we return to the subject in at least another number. Especially does it seem incumbent on us, to pay some special attention to the highly encouraging views presented by the Narratives of the eighty-four reporting Presbyteries. For the present then, we content ourselves with adding that, with the exception of Foreign Missions, the position of the church was advanced by the late Assembly in every branch of denominational effort; that high

courage, practical zeal, thorough cordiality, and mutual confidence marked all the proceedings of the body; that the influence of the grand era of struggle, sacrifice, and victory through which we have passed, has been felt in our church like iron in the blood, and that an era of vigor, prosperity, and hope arose on us, in and coincident with, this Assembly, almost beyond the highest expectations of the best friend of the denomination.

HAS A CAPITAL CRIME BEEN COMMITTED?

The American people and the civilized world are waiting with some anxiety for the development of the policy of our Government towards the conquered leaders of a conquered rebellion. As yet, we have had plenty of strong expressions in a general way, but beyond the close confinement of the arch-rebel and his immediate suite, we have no practical intimation of a purpose to deal with these guilty conspirators as they deserve. It is just two months since Abraham Lincoln fell a victim to a policy of excessive leniency, and we find prominent men in the ranks of the reputed loyal, urgently advocating a re-initiation of the awfully mistaken policy which produced such results. The assassination of Mr. Lincoln, added to the frightful crime of deliberately starving our soldiers and massacring our colored troops,—are, it seems, insufficient to satisfy these men of the incurable malignity and wiliness of the rebellion, and they have ventured to raise their voices, in concert with the London *Times* and with the few unoppressed or restored rebel sheets, for merciful dealings with the leaders of the Southern rebellion. Meanwhile the Government delays to act, and the minds of the people are unsettled. Just as Mr. Lincoln, in the first month of his first term, seemed to hesitate about fighting the rebels, so, Mr. Johnson seems to hesitate about punishing them. Rebel leaders, whose names were a tower of strength to the cause during the four years of direful struggle, remain unmolested in their chosen places of abode, or even venture into the national capital, and are suffered to approach the President for conference; or they go North and seek out those who made themselves notorious through the war as sympathizers with their rebellious plans. The Baptist Association of Virginia, composed of unrepentant traitors, is allowed to meet in Richmond, with the renegade Burrows as its leading spirit. In this association, Dr. Burrows is reported as making a speech, in which he boldly repels the charge, that the Southern churches, who went into the rebellion, are to be held as "religiously" guilty, and defends them as conscientious in their acts. The same Dr. Burrows is allowed to preach and publish in Richmond, a sermon on the death of the President, in which he makes profession of loyalty to the new order of things, but at the same time indignantly repels the assertion that the South, or that slaveholders, or the "Confederate" Government, or any resident of any "Confederate" State, had anything to do with the assassination, and this as lately as the first of June. In the same sermon, to comfort his deeply dyed rebel hearers, who perhaps have some conscience left, and were beginning to dread divine, as well as human judgment, he is allowed to say and print such things as the following:—"What are called so flippantly rebellion and treason against human governments, may be stigmatized as the worst of crimes by statesmen and politicians, whose standard of judging is simply political; but God's decisions of right and wrong are measured by no such standard. . . . Among the noblest and purest men morally the world has ever seen, have been many who have been denounced, condemned and executed for treason and rebellion, yet from the scaffold their pure spirits, justified through righteousness of Christ, have ascended to receive the smiling approval and blessing of their infinite Judge and Father."

The sermon we find in the *Commercial Bulletin* of Richmond, a new daily paper, of singular character, seemingly trying to adapt its tone to the new order of things, yet with small enthusiasm and with indifferent success. An editorial in the same number with the sermon, written with extreme caution, on the exceptions to the amnesty act which it says will affect only the eight hundredth part of the Southern people,—expresses the wish that all may be pardoned. It speaks of Jeff. Davis, uniformly as "Mr. Davis," and religiously gathers up every scrap of intelligence about his condition, and especially the foreign comments in his favor. A long article, flattering in the highest degree to rebel military pride, is copied from the *New York Daily News*. The same paper informs us that the pertinacious *Christian Observer* resumed publication on the 1st of June, having suspended on the 30th of March last. We may gain a clue to the

character of the *Commercial Bulletin*, as well as a measure of the degree of toleration enjoyed by subdued rebels in Richmond, by consulting the *Bulletin's* notice of the resumption. In that he says:—"Is editor, the Rev. Dr. Converse, occupies a high position both socially and in the church, and is eminently qualified to fill the position which he has so long adorned. Our thanks are due to the *Observer* for the very favorable notice of our sheet in its issue. We shall ever strive to merit the good word of such an evangelical and devoted paper as Dr. Converse gives weekly to the public."

These various phenomena are unsettling the public mind. The question is rising in their minds, whether after all it was so enormous a crime to be an active rebel; and whether any great difference is going to be made between the men who did all they could with every imaginable concomitant of barbarity to overthrow the Government, and the men who periled life and limb in honorable warfare to maintain it. The public are asking, to what extent is this toleration of revived treason to go? How long are these Catilines to abuse our patience? How many religious organizations, unpurged of their treasons and rather proud of them, are to be allowed to resume their operations? How many defunct rebel organs are to be allowed resurrection? How many public fountains of poisonous sentiment shall be permitted again to flow through the community, besides the countless private and domestic ones, which must perforce be borne with? How many farces of elections are to be suffered, in which rebels dislodged from power by the bayonet, may regain it with the ballot?—Must we wait until a new Sumter is fired upon, or until a new horror of assassination, or city poisoning, or fever importation, or some unknown monster crime has fallen upon us like a thunderbolt, before are nerved to a proper degree of firmness? We trust not. We believe our Government really designs to mete out justice, in this high, solemn, historic settlement of the demerit of rebellion. We do not believe that the manumderings of Gerritt Smith or Horace Greeley, or any anti-capital-punishment, or universalist sentimentalist, or any whine for the life of the chief conspirator from foreign sympathizers, will move Mr. Johnson from his purpose. There is no such thing as crime if the leading conspirators in this rebellion are not guilty. Processes of law and courts of justice are mere farces, if they are not called for in these cases. Let us say we have been grievously mistaken in calling any man to account for the single crimes of murder, robbery, perjury, cruelty, lawless violence, if we have no account to settle with the authors of a rebellion which has combined and intensified them all through four dreadful years of war. Let us open all our prison doors, cut down every gallows and proclaim a jubilee to the vile and the criminal of every grade.

No! never! The nation, after such unparalleled sacrifices of blood and treasure, and such overwhelming successes on land and water, is in no mood to tolerate the impudent assumptions of men who would ignore these facts. Their attempts to maintain their old corrupted and treasonous organizations, and to revive their pestilential organs of opinion, and thus to continue to be teachers of the people, and guides of the sentiment they have so criminally misled, without acknowledgment and retraction of the wrong they have done, cannot be suffered by a Government which designs to secure permanently the dearly-bought results of victory. The capital punishment of some of the rebel leaders is needed just now, to convince these obstinate men that we are in earnest, and that they themselves are living with a halter about their necks.

Of one thing we are certain, the Congress to assemble next December, if not earlier, will make up for any deficiencies which may meanwhile appear in the administration of any other department of the Government.

THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN FOR EAST TENNESSEE.

We have received the following responses to our appeal for aid in sending the paper for six months to the returning churches of East Tennessee.

M. W. Baldwin,	\$100 00
A. Whilldin,	100 00
Thomas Potter,	100 00
John A. Brown,	25 00
W. E. Tenbrook,	20 00
Samuel Work,	20 00
John W. Dulles,	5 00
A. Manderson,	5 00
John B. Stevenson,	5 00
	\$380 00

We hope our friends will complete the \$600 required in the coming week. We have already commenced sending the papers.

The churches of this city have also engaged to furnish the amount required for supplementing the salary of seven Home Missionaries on that field, at \$250 each, as follows: Pine Street Church, one; Calvary Church, four; and Green Hill Church, two. With a moderate degree of effort, the remaining three, proposed to be sent out by our Permanent Committee, can be provided for among us. Where are the First Church, North Broad Street, Buttoood Street, and a half-a-dozen others, which might each take one?

THE MINISTERIAL DELEGATION TO EAST TENNESSEE.

The readers of THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN must have been gratified at the proceedings of the Assembly, touching every question which pertained to the South. But few of them can imagine the scene when, appearing on the floor of the Assembly, two clergymen and two elders, from East Tennessee, one of them, John Caldwell, Esq., seventy-eight years old, six years older than the State itself, asked in behalf of three Presbyteries that once were with us, comprising more than eighty churches, that they might become connected with our church again. They were received with joy and thanksgivings to God, and the Synod of East Tennessee constituted and again enrolled in our ministry.

But the best of all was when Dr. Adams, of New York, spang to his feet and moved that the Committee of Home Missions be instructed to appoint ten of the best ministers in our church to go to East Tennessee and spend three months preaching the gospel and administering the ordinances of religion among the people. This was one of the happiest thoughts of the Assembly. The importance of such an undertaking grows as we think of it. This great number of destitute churches, nearly all of whose pastors sympathized with the rebellion, who are still prowling round trying to steal into the fold again; the value of giving these loyal people a personal illustration of Northern sympathy; the bearing of such an effort on religious and social reconstruction at the South the worth of such an example; the effect on the churches at the South and the reflex influence at the North, make the enterprise, if successfully carried out, one of the grandest that can be conceived.

In accordance with the order of the Assembly, the Committee of Home Missions, at an unusually full meeting last week, selected ten men aiming to represent fairly all parts of the church. They appointed Rev. Thomas Brainerd, D.D., of our city; Rev. William Adams, D.D., of New York; Rev. Howard Crosby, D.D., of New York; Rev. S. T. Spear, D.D., of Brooklyn, New York; Rev. James B. Shaw, D.D., of Rochester, New York, late Moderator of the Assembly; Rev. G. W. Heacock, D.D., of Buffalo, New York; Rev. Herriek Johnson, of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania; Rev. W. H. Goodrich, D.D., of Cleveland, Ohio; Rev. W. Hogarth, of Detroit, Michigan; and Rev. R. W. Patterson, D.D., of Chicago, Illinois.

The people of East Tennessee are a religious people; the delegates represent them as very anxious for the services of the house of God again. It is the intention to arrange twenty or thirty Sacramental-meetings continuing three or four days, to which the people are accustomed and which they all love, and where the gospel may be preached and the truth enforced day after day. With the blessing of God, there can be no doubt of the result. It is such an opportunity as may occur only once in a life-time. We hope every man appointed will see his way clear to go. It is indeed "a glorious beginning." Let it go on. Let the people pray that it may be a great success.

A GOOD DAY AT OLIVET CHURCH.

We had a happy day at Olivet Church yesterday. We received twelve persons, mostly heads of families, by letter, and ten by profession of faith. Of these last, eight were young persons from the Sunday-school—three lads and five girls. Besides these, five were taken under the care of the Session. The church was full, and we felt that the Great Shepherd was with us.

PHILADELPHIA, June 12, 1865.

DEATH IN THE MINISTRY.—The old School Church has sustained another loss in the death of Rev. Wm. Chester, D.D., of this city, the veteran Corresponding Secretary of its Board of Education. He died at Washington, on the 23d ult. He was a laborious and efficient laborer in his field, and highly esteemed also for his general Christian worth.

DIED.—In Hartford, Conn., June 11, Mrs. Lydia H. Sigourney, the poetess, aged seventy-six years.