

Miscellaneous.

WELSH PREACHING.

A correspondent of The Nation gives the account of a Sabbath which he spent a few miles inland from Cardiff, among the mountains of Glamorganshire, to which he had retired from the former place for the express purpose of finding a genuine Welsh village, and hearing a specimen of that celebrated eloquence, the eloquence of the Welsh pulpit. He says:—

Dropping into a stream of villagers along the road, and listening to the incessant click and rattle and bang of their Celtic words, I was told by a man to whom I addressed myself, that the best preacher in the place was he of the Baptists—a verdict of rare sectarian magnanimity, as the man was going to another congregation. A brisk walk soon brought me to the Baptist chapel, and as I approached I was made aware that the work had begun in earnest. The two doors were open, a very fervent prayer was being uttered, and many of the congregation had risen and turned about in their pews, bowing their faces upon the pew-backs. Several of them, who were not too far apt in prayer to perceive a stranger standing in the vestibule, condescendingly peeped through their fingers at me, and then pointed to a seat.

The room was nearly square, with a lofty old pulpit at the end opposite the doors, and a gallery running round the other three sides. It was well filled in every part. The minister was a young Welshman, with thick black hair parted in the middle, with dark, massive, and tough features, and an intense expression. His voice was incisive and sharp. The hard Welsh words were hurled from his tongue like stones from a catapult. There were the Celtic fire and passion; the unconsciousness that, in the simple minds of his hearers, he was invested with mysterious authority, an appearance of invincible earnestness and determination. I could easily accept him as a very likely young Druid—if Druids were ever young.

The congregation seemed composed of plain country-people, shopkeepers, miners, farm laborers; and one portion of them, from first to last, enchain my attention. Directly in front of the pulpit was a large square pew, capable of holding about thirty persons, obviously a place of eminent and solemn honor; and on this occasion it was filled with men, mostly old men, all of them apparently being the more advanced and redoubtable saviors of the community, the veterans and senators of the spiritual host. The lesser saints and the average sinners were accommodated with subordinate sittings at the sides and back of the room, or were comfortably stowed away in the gallery; but into this great central box, as into a sacred enclosure, had gone the potent, grave, and reverend seniors of the flock; and I found that their function in the exciting exercises of the service was a very important and picturesque one.

Some of them were men of strange visage; they seemed a group of the seventeenth century Puritans, confessors, and religious heroes; they had grim, iron old faces, stiffened into pretentious rigidity by the awfulness of their Sabbath occupation, and by the two or three centuries which they had evidently lived; altogether they had the air of men who fasted and prayed; who defied the world, the flesh, and the devil; who kept the eye fixed on one thing with a gaze to be distracted by no terror and by no fascination; who came into the world on purpose to be prophets, apostles, martyrs, and Baptist deacons.

All this time the prayer was going on. Not one word was intelligible to me, and I was left to give my whole attention to the strange tones of the preacher's voice, to the anatomy and cadence of his sentences. There was something weird and impressive in it all. His utterance did not flow, it came forth in jets and gushes. Then at every clause a series of inarticulate guttural sounds issued from the midst of the great pew, and occasionally from other parts of the room. At last, the audible character of the prayer underwent a sudden and startling change: it rose high above the already fervent level, at which I had first heard it, into a sort of ecstasy, and then followed the wildest and most electrical sounds I had ever known. The speaker's voice became transfused by a terrific enthusiasm, the words leaped forth in torrents; they were not a vulgar shriek, they were not a canting bellow; they were a real old magnificent Druidic chant, the sentences taking their places in perfect rhythm, flowing and ending with a cadence so wild, so poetic, so mysterious, that it made the blood thrill in one's veins. The effect on the congregation was wonderful. From the depths of the great pew the responses heaved aloud, swift, distinct, and impassioned; they were re-echoed all round the room, and even in the gallery; and when, at last, this devout ecstasy of prayer lapsed into sudden silence, the cries from the whole congregation of amen, and of certain Welsh ejaculations, continued for nearly a minute, like the lingering and passionate reverberations of the speaker's own voice, or as if the people would storm heaven with a love and a desire that could not give over the supplication.

In Cardiff, afterwards, I was told that this stage of vocal and emotional ecstasy is the necessary final act of all Welsh prayers in public, and, as I soon discovered for myself, the necessary climax of all the important passages in the sermon. For ages the people have been accustomed to it. They await its coming as the sibil might have waited for the rushing descent of the god. Their fiery Celtic natures are inflamed and electrified by its magnetic delight. It is a tempestuous spiritual intoxication to them, a spasm of devout frenzy, a rhapsody of heart and brain struggling toward the Highest in an agony of prayer and praise. The Welsh ministers themselves, from childhood accustomed to observe its manifestations, unconsciously cultivate the art of reaching this rapt, impassioned stage. They learn to work themselves up to it whenever they preach or pray, like the lions referred to by Montaigne as gazing themselves into madness by the lashings of their own tails. Yet, concerning these Welsh preachers, I do not mean to imply anything affected or

disingenuous in their habit; and I can testify that its manifestations are as far as possible from being repulsive.

Next came a hymn. It was abominably sung; nay, it was not sung. Through linked discord long drawn out, it was simply twanged; the venerable patriarchs in the large pew, more especially, employing their great, ancient, sonorous noses as if they thought them originally constructed by the Creator for speaking-trumpets and organ-pipes, and that to contravene the Divine ordination would have been impious.

At last came the sermon. The preacher began in a low, almost inaudible tone. His manner was so quiet and informal that I supposed he was "giving out the notices." Soon, however, his words became more clear, his tones more earnest; and this fact was immediately signalized by the responses of the assemblage. Thus he proceeded for about ten minutes, gradually swinging into his theme, and warming with his thought, accompanied at every step by the audible sympathy of his audience, until finally he seemed to reach the vantage-ground from which to bound forth into what I have indicated as the ecstatic stage. Now came once more those strange wild notes, that hurricane of oratorical rapture, those indescribably impassioned and rhythmic sentences which I have spoken of as concluding his prayer, only in the sermon borne onward by greater freedom of gesticulation on his part, and of bodily movement on the part of his audience. In this torrent of Celtic eloquence he stopped suddenly as before, and began the next article of his sermon in the same quiet tones. This process of storm and calm was repeated, though at shorter intervals, five times in the course of his address. I have never in any other religious assemblage observed such excitement as was manifested in this little rustic congregation. Moreover, long before the conclusion of the service, I saw what efficient allies the preacher had in the venerable lay senators of the large pew. Their devout and even sepulchral mien cast a sort of subduing shadow over the whole assembly. Their heads were the first to nod and sway, in confirmation of the preacher's statements; their voices led the ceaseless rumble and shout in response to every sentence which fell from his lips. Those hard, iron faces became molten, and gleamed with enthusiasm. The first notes of the hymn rose from their midst. They were, in look and speech, in act and attitude, the coryphæi and exemplars of devotion.

The sermon lasted but thirty minutes. I had been able to recognize only four words—Jericho, Jerusalem, and Christmas Evans; but I am bound to confess that it was one of the most interesting, exciting, and profitable sermons I have ever listened to. And the foregoing account is, I believe, a fair description of the general spirit and method of the Dissenting congregations of Wales.

PILGRIMAGES AND CHOLERA.

During the bygone year, as is well known, the Egyptian Government has propounded the view that the cholera, which from time to time carries terror, and no slight destruction, through Europe, is generated, or at least greatly increased, by the vast gatherings of Mohammedan pilgrims at Mecca; while France has suggested a sanitary conference or commission to inquire into the subject. The writer entertains no manner of doubt that there is a good deal of truth in the Egyptian statement. It is probably too specific, but still it is very far from being a wild or unfounded conjecture. There is, we think, evidence to show that, in certain circumstances, pilgrimages can actually originate the disease; while in all they powerfully aid in flinging the seeds of death broadcast over the several lands through which the devotees travel or their journeys to and from the sacred shrines. India, as most people are aware, is generally held to be the native country of the cholera. All up and down its widely extended territories, too, so-called sacred places abound. Not a year elapses without vast assemblages of pilgrims at these holy spots, while ever and anon the cholera breaks forth among the worshippers, inflicting on them the most fearful destruction. The connection between Indian pilgrimages and cholera is then an essential department of the inquiry which it is proposed to carry out. It is the object of the present article to bring together a variety of facts and reasonings on the subject.

A few years ago, when as yet there were no railways in India, a missionary preparing to march from the coast into the interior of the country was sure to be presented by some Christian physician with a bottle, ominously labelled, "Cholera Mixture," to which were superadded directions how to act if the epidemic broke out among the attendants who were accompanying the traveler on his way. If, however, he showed ordinary prudence in the choice of encamping grounds, it very rarely did break out; the reason, under God, being that the party, which probably did not exceed ten, fifteen, or twenty, was too small to invite the assault of the mysterious destroyer. It was much more likely to fall upon a regiment removing from one cantonment to another; and yet there was a simple precaution known, which was often perfectly effective in warding off the danger; it was to make the regiment cross the country "by wings," or in plain language, to divide it into two portions, sending the one forward a few marches in advance of the other. The principle involved evidently was, the greater the number that march or encamp together, the greater the danger of the outbreak of cholera. An army, again, was more liable to the assault of the disease than a regiment, and many a fine military force has suffered more from the unseen pestilence than from the sword of the enemy. For instance, in the first cholera epidemic that attracted European notice in India—that which some still hold to have been the origin of the disease, though more profound investigators believe it to have existed among the Hindoos from the remotest antiquity—we mean the outbreak in the delta of the Ganges in the year 1817, a portion of the Anglo-Indian army suffered very severely. The central division of the troops then brought together for the Pindari and Mahratta war was suddenly assailed by the mysterious destroyer; and according to Professor Horace Hayman Wilson,

"during the week of its greatest malignity, it was ascertained that seven hundred and sixty-four fighting men and eight thousand followers perished." Careful study of these numbers will enable us to advance another step in the argument. The camp followers are to the soldiers of an oriental army as four to one; so that to ascertain how many human beings are crowded together in an encampment, it is needful to multiply the fighting men by five. Asiatic combatants have in every age had a host of retainers; and when we read that Xerxes led two millions of men across the Hellespont for the invasion of Greece, we ask permission to employ the ordinary divisor five, and are in a moment ready with the quotient—400,000 fighting men, a much more credible number than the larger one, when the latter is held to stand for the actual men of war. Analyzing now the numbers that perished in the central division of the Indian army in 1817, namely, 764 fighting men and 8000 camp followers, we find that the latter suffered far more severely than the former. Had the camp followers perished only in the same proportion with the fighting men, then there would have died of them only 764x4=3056. But in place of this there were 8000. And why so vast a difference in the rates of mortality? Because the one body were thoroughly disciplined and compelled perforce to attend to sanitary care, the others were left very much to their own courses, and did not live in a manner conducive to health. But the mere habit of associating with disciplined men makes even camp followers in some faint measure observant of the laws of health. They never would think, for instance, of carrying with them putrescent corpses on their travels, as is done year by year by the Mohammedan pilgrims to the shrine of Hoossein at Kerbella, in Persia. Though this would scarcely be tolerated in India, yet even these pilgrims and holy men in general look with supreme contempt on the laws of health, and when journeying to or from the sacred places, are swept away in far larger proportions than soldiers, sepoys, or even camp followers on a march. The late Rev. Adam White, the missionary, has several striking passages on the subject of pilgrims and cholera in his "Notes of Successive Visits to the Shrine of Vithoba, at Punderpoor." Take, for instance, the following, of date 1st November, 1862:—

"I learned from them [some officials of the town] that on the present occasion there will be but a small gathering of pilgrims—not much more than a fourth of the ordinary number. The causes assigned were the fear of cholera, and the high prices prevalent. . . . This year but little, if any, cholera. The authorities have directed that every possible precaution should be used to hinder the approach of the disease; but the folly of the pilgrims themselves constitutes the great obstacle. One instance of this was given me by the Foudar [official judge]: The rains are hardly yet over, and the sky is threatening; should heavy rain fall, the river would rise and sweep away the tents and property of the hordes of pilgrims encamped in its bed. To avoid this terrible risk, it was proposed that the pilgrims should encamp, not in the bed of the river, but close by, at another place; but the pilgrims were determined to be at the feet of the Vithoba on the holy sand of the river. Being warned of what might be the consequences, they said, 'Well, let us lose all, even our own lives, but let it be at Vithoba's feet.' They are accordingly on the sand, in many places, ready to be swept away, unless the God of all long-suffering restrains the storm. May He be pleased to prevent such a catastrophe! It was also proposed to bury and burn the dead at the other side of the river. When cholera bursts forth, as it did, for example, last year, the air is loaded with the stench of the burning dead; but the fear is that the madness of the pilgrims will be a barrier to this reform. They look on death at Pundapoer, and burning or burying in the bed of the river, as a sure entrance into heaven." The scene at the temple itself on the great day of the feast, is thus graphically described:—

"If any one could see the awful crushing of Vithoba's worshippers in his temple; while they sit huddled together, waiting their opportunity to enter into the narrow temple-dens in which the images of Vithoba and his wife are set up; if he could see them rise at the first chance, like a wave of the sea, and rush forward to the narrow passage, crushing, trampling, elbowing, fighting, and crying, in indescribable confusion, in order to get in; if he could see them, as I have done, subjected to blows, right and left, from Government sepoys, and from temple officials—blows which descend on their bare backs, their heads, faces, and whatever part came uppermost in the confusion, in order to drive them back; if he could see them dragged out by neck and heels by these officials, or hurled back upon the pavement of the temple; or, if he could see the keepers of order running with the instruments of chastisement in their hands, over the shoulders and heads of the thousands sitting too close to allow any other way of progress through them, and beating them in all directions to quell their ardor, and this all at the moment considered by these worshippers the most solemn in their lives;—truly, he would be ready to bless God for the light of the Gospel, and to appreciate, more than ever, his own quiet opportunities and high privileges." In his report for the next year, 1863, he states that the number of pilgrims at Punderpoor, at the time of the great festival, varies from fifty to a hundred thousand. The following extracts, to our mind, leave no doubt of the very intimate connection between pilgrimages and cholera. "Men think Vithoba's favor better than life, and expose themselves to fatigue, expense, hardship, disease, and death, in order to behold him, and participate in the benefits of his worship. In a flowing stream, in thousands they pass on to the shrine from every direction; weary and worn they then encamp near the town, mostly in the bed of the river. Some have tents, some light cloth sheds, many nothing at all to protect them. First comes a day of fasting, distinguished by eating either nothing, or else unwholesome trash, and by shouting forth by day and by night, with clasp of the limbs and violent gesticulations, up of the yamb ebb of strength, the names of Vithoba and his wife, and their 'saints,'

Add to this that the whole atmosphere becomes frightfully tainted from the first, so that one cannot walk anywhere, far or near, without being sensible of the most sickening odors. Can it be wondered at that cholera is very often generated at the place? But the peculiar seed plot where that pestilence first generates, remains to be described. It is believed that it is the very temple of Vithoba itself, a small stone room, with no aperture but a small door, into which, perhaps, 50,000 persons, in the course of a few days, force their way, and in the immediate neighborhood of which, in the temple court, may be seen thousands of men and women, closely packed, waiting for their turn to enter. So polluted does the air of the temple become, that the vapor from the breath and bodies of the worshippers condenses on the image, thus giving rise to the idea that the god miraculously perspires. The sub-assistant surgeon, now appointed by Government to Punderpoor, stated to me his belief that the disease in its first origin could usually be traced to that spot. "The day after I left Punderpoor, cholera in a bad form manifested itself among the pilgrims, but yet many did not die. The disease might have died out, if it had not been cultivated. But the same pilgrims immediately resorted, as is their wont, to Alandi, near Poona, and there it met with a favorable field in which to grow. The seed sown at Punderpoor ripened gradually and fearfully at Alandi; and the grain was then scattered broadcast over the length and breadth of the land by pilgrims on their way home. Poona was one of the first places to suffer, and vast multitudes died in it. The moment the returning pilgrims reached my field of labor, the disease appeared, and the people began to die."

The chief town in Mr. White's district was Sassoer, which was fearfully ravaged, losing twenty-five a day, out of a population amounting at the beginning to no more than seven or eight thousand. The reason is not far to seek. For, hear what the missionary says:—

"It is customary among the natives to burn the dead, if possible, by the side of a stream, and then cast in the ashes when all is over. At Sassoer the stream is shallow and narrow. The various heaps of the ashes of those who died from cholera nearly choke the stream at the place. It cannot be said that burning always perfectly consumes the remains. I saw a man, for instance, burning his father's hand separately, the pile not having fully done its work. Through such heaps, then, of fresh mortal remains was the water running and percolating to be used for drinking and washing a few hundred yards down by the people of Sassoer." The wave of death, propagated first from Vithoba's temple at Punderpoor, received a new impetus from causes like these as it passed to Sassoer; and among those whom it swept away was the devoted evangelist who penned the paragraphs here extracted. No doubt, we think, can remain of the close connection that subsists between pilgrimages and cholera.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" asks the opponent of modern missions. "If fanatic pilgrims will defy all sanitary laws, why they must suffer for it; and if they do, it does not matter." Nay, friend, it matters a great deal. For, putting aside for the moment all higher arguments, there is one which appeals to the instinct of self-preservation. Whether we like it or no, we are linked together with all men in a certain common brotherhood; and if one member suffer, all suffer with it. As then it may be used as an argument for home missions that infectious disease, generated among the neglected poor of St. Giles' or Bethnal Green, may find their way to the aristocratic districts of the metropolis; so may the prosecution of foreign missions be recommended, if on no higher grounds, at least by the consideration that the gathering of untold multitudes of pilgrims and devotees of false faith in Arabia, in Persia, or in India, may set in motion a wave of death which, ere its course be run, may sweep over every European land, or even the world at large, sending many in every locality prematurely to their final account, and leaving behind, wherever it has passed, mourning, lamentation, and woe.—Christian Work.

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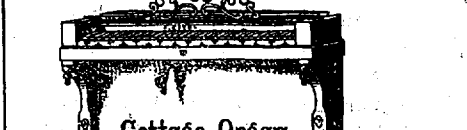
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
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"SHOULDER SEAM SHIRTS,"
Guaranteed in every case to give entire satisfaction.

31  31
Wm. L. GARRETT,
No. 31 South 2d St., above Chestnut, East Side.

Has constantly on hand a large assortment of Men's Boots and Shoes, City, Silver, Nickel, and Steel Spectacles, Eye Glasses, &c., has nearly furnished a room in connection with the factory, for RETAIL PURCHASERS, who need not be troubled with any description may be obtained, accurately adjusted to the requirements of vision on STRICTLY OPTICAL SCIENCE.
Sales room and factory
No. 248 NORTH EIGHTH STREET, Second Floor. 991-1y

HENRY HARPER,
No. 520 ARCH STREET, PHILADELPHIA,
Dealer in and Manufacturer of
WATCHES, FINE JEWELRY,
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AND SUPERIOR PLATED GOODS.

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Manufacturer of Gold, Silver, Nickel, and Steel Spectacles, Eye Glasses, &c., has nearly furnished a room in connection with the factory, for RETAIL PURCHASERS, who need not be troubled with any description may be obtained, accurately adjusted to the requirements of vision on STRICTLY OPTICAL SCIENCE.
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