

American Presbyterian.

THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 1866.

OPEN-AIR PREACHING.

The reality and the greatness of the revival, through which all the Evangelical churches of our land are passing, will assuredly appear in more decided efforts for the evangelization of the neglectors of gospel ordinances. Those who cannot be induced to come within the walls of God's house—and they are the masses of our city populations—will be followed outside. We do most thoroughly believe all our methods defective, so far as they do not include or contemplate these outside classes. The missionary quality—that essential element of a living Christianity and of all true labors for Christ—is wanting, if they are overlooked. It is justly claimed that the church which is content, without making efforts for the salvation of the heathen, is in a declining condition. It is, without doubt, equally true, that a high state of piety will show itself in vigorous efforts for evangelizing the heathen under the eaves of our churches.

Out-door preaching is bringing to bear upon the masses God's own appointed chief instrumentality for spreading his gospel and disciplining the nations. Tract visitations and efforts with individuals are of the highest importance; but the Holy Spirit plainly indicates the assembled congregation, with the solemnities and sympathies of public worship, as his chosen scene of activity and triumph. It is no ordinary success to bring the unthinking, the worldly and the Sabbath-breakers, who avoid the house of God, to gather around the rough stand in the open air, and listen to the story of the cross. There are features of such a service well adapted to meet their case. There is a peculiar absence of constraint and formality, there is no deadening familiarity in the surroundings. The truth there seems more evidently preached for its own sake. Motives of speakers are less liable to suspicion and cavil. Religion appears more real and more akin to those interests of life, which draw all sorts of men together in sympathizing crowds. The idea that ministers and the church are really in earnest; a conviction, apt to disturb the conscience, that the irreligious cannot get altogether out of the way of truth and its ministers; a remote sense that the kingdom of darkness has found its match in the all-pervading nature of the kingdom of Christ,—these are some of the favorable elements of out-door preaching, so far as the hearers are concerned.

And the preacher himself must receive great profit from the practice. In carrying out thus, to the fullest extent, the commissions of his Master, he feels a contentment and satisfaction, which the occupant of a pulpit merely cannot be expected fully to share. Some, many perhaps, are constrained to restrict themselves to what may be called the in-door department of preaching; but it is only half of the range of the divine ordinance. The ministry at large have no right to remain satisfied while so small a part of the capacities of their profession is brought into use. It is adapted for the way-side. It is fitted to reach the wandering and perishing masses. Out-door preaching is the true compulsive form of the invitation to the gospel feast, and without it, the feast is not announced as widely as the Master wished. The very title of the principal discourse in the whole Bible is an argument for out-door preaching, as a leading part of the duty. Nothing delivered in synagogue or temple is so famous as Christ's "Sermon on the Mount." And the most remarkable discourse preached by Paul was that on Mars Hill. These preachers understood their profession. They did not suffer its wide adaptations to be undeveloped. Consider what would have been the result, if Christ and his apostles had confined their preaching to synagogues and to schools like that of Tyrannus, or had waited for the erection of churches before they began to preach? Evidently, for the extension of Christianity, out-door preaching is a prime necessity; and a Christianity which is not struggling by all available means to extend itself, is a dying Christianity.

We need the open air to take off the edge of formalism and stiffness and sectarian narrowness from our preaching. A form of worship and a style of preaching which will not bear exposure to the open air, but must hover around altars and churches, must lean on paid choirs and instruments of music, must listen in comfortable cushioned pews, and go and come in carpeted aisles, must have a marble pulpit and an audience attentive, deferential, and solemnly silent, is not without its uses. It

has a beauty and an impressiveness without which society would be poorer. In fact we are dependent for the preaching of the gospel, now-a-days, almost entirely upon these methods. But we submit that they often encumber and embarrass the truth. They beget stiff and formal ways. They are apt to make a breach between the sanctuary and the every day sympathies and habits of thought among men. Sermons tend to become essays. The preacher's privilege of an ever deferential audience tends to paralyze a whole branch of his energies.

We know of nothing so certain to make all the devices of Protestant worship natural in tone, than to perform them in the open air, to a company gathered and held together by the miscellaneous motives which influence a crowd. All the apparatus that tended to keep formality in countenance has vanished. We now come face to face as men. Our surroundings now tell of the every day practical wants and interests of men. Is our message really adapted to them in these practical and common sense relations? Or is it fit only for consecrated places, and for peculiar associations remote from the affairs of men? Can the preaching of the Gospel be shown to be a power apart from these associations, which would, of course, give any doctrine great advantages in the presentation? Is the Gospel something which may be brought to bear upon the mind as directly, as individually, and as simply upon its own merits, as the political questions which men love to have discussed before them in the open-air?

We are taught, as it seems to us, by open-air preaching, the necessity of relying upon the truth alone. And we shall not be pardoned or borne with by the miscellaneous multitude, as by a decorous and friendly congregation, for dullness, for tedious and intricate speculations, or for want of earnestness. If we wish to discover how our preaching has, perhaps for years, been lacking in elements of interest, just let us go and try one of our ordinary sermons upon a miscellaneous crowd in the open-air, and as the assembly melts away before our eyes, we may think what a patient people ours must be, to sit, week after week, in respectful toleration of such dullness; and what intrinsic power there must be in the Gospel, which, in spite of such unattractive and inefficient instruments, continues to make its way into the hearts of the people.

Open-air preaching will, we believe, act most favorably on in-door preaching. It will bring the fresh atmosphere into the house. It will render impossible many of those vices of manner, and those stupid and erroneous methods of presenting the truth, which are apt to grow up under the comparatively easy circumstances of in-door preaching. It will encourage true oratory, and develop and strengthen vocal powers, now so frequently and disastrously failing. It will impart life and animation, it will cultivate simplicity and directness in preaching. It will give to the preached Gospel its rightful place among the public instrumentalities most effectually acting upon the masses of men. Whatever else is capable of interesting the accidentally gathered crowd, it will be seen the Gospel has equal fitness to that end.

This is a most seriously practical matter. How is the Gospel to reach those who will not come to our churches; those for whom empty seats are waiting in our churches; those for whom there is no room in our churches if they should come? We believe there are one hundred thousand persons in this city, aside from Roman Catholics, and from those detained at home by age or sickness, who are waiting for the Lord's messengers along the highways and hedges, to compel them to come in. Tract Visitors and Church Associations reach some of them, and a vast work of good is going on through these instrumentalities; but open-air preaching alone will bring the Gospel, in its divinely appointed form and highest efficiency, to their ears.

HOW THE HOME MISSIONARIES STRUGGLE THROUGH.—Readers will not overlook the Report of the Ladies' Missionary Society of the First Church, published on an inside page. It reveals the secret supply, which, like Bunyan's man pouring oil behind the chimney, keeps up the fire of domestic comfort, which low salaries and high prices have well nigh extinguished upon the health of many a Home Missionary.

THE ADDRESS OF Dr. Nelson, as delegate to the other Assembly, and the response of the Moderator, Dr. Stanton, will be found upon an inside page. They are both important as revealing the animus of the bodies on the question of their mutual relations.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1866.

A general review, giving in outline the spirit and acts of the late General Assembly of our Church, will be acceptable to our readers.

The very distant point which was the place of meeting, had no sensible effect toward reducing the number in attendance. The roll (some 225 names) was about as large as it has generally been during the last few years, which have been remarkable for a pretty full representation of the Presbyteries. This, in considerable part, results from a greater confidence in the Commissioners' Fund, which of late has proved a good reliance, up to a certain point, for the expenses of Commissioners, ranging from 75 per cent. to the entire amount required. It fell, the present year, to 73 per cent., which in view of the long and expensive journey from the most populous quarters of the Church to St. Louis was better than was generally expected.

The strain upon the hospitality of the Christian people of St. Louis must have been hard, but it was gallantly sustained. When it is remembered that the two Assemblies were to be entertained by a city which, though having a census of about 200,000, has less than 12,000 attendants on Protestant Church worship, and that our churches were obliged to furnish hotel and boarding-house accommodations to no inconsiderable number of their guests, it may well be believed that there was more than usual sincerity in the vote of thanks for the cheerful hospitality with which the Assembly was entertained.

The opening sermon, by the retiring Moderator, Dr. Shaw was promptly published in our paper. We presume it was generally read; indeed we happen to know what does not at all surprise us—that some have re-read it, and laid it aside for other readings in days to come. It was full of unction and timely, evidently the product of a mind skilled to adjust the Christian graces to the spiritual events of the day. It was a rare exhibition of good sense, to forbear frequently coveted opportunities for bringing out something beyond the ordinary line of pulpit performance, and content oneself with a plain and fervent exhibition of an every-day truth, belonging to the vitalities of Christian life and enterprise.

The Assembly was opened with the usual formalities. The choice for Moderator fell upon one of the tried worthies of our Church. Such certainly he ought to be, in eminent degree, to justify the rather singular course of calling one to follow, in immediate succession, another of the same immediate neighborhood, and with only a small interval of time, still another from the faculty of the same institution. The duties of the Chair were sustained with dignity, and if on any point, the Moderator particularly excelled, it was in giving tone to the hours of devotion, and carrying their spirit forward into the business proceedings.

The most remarkable feature of the business of the Assembly was the absence of anything remarkable. But for the little collision of feeling on the "Church Erection" topic, and a slight ruffle of the surface in the matter of the report on the construction of a section in the Constitution relating to judicial trials, the meeting would have been almost oppressively quiet. More of discussion would have been an improvement upon the character of the sessions. It was needed to rouse thought, to impart liveliness, and to afford members higher views of each other. The great enterprises of the Church, of which the Home Missionary is an example, should not have been cramped within a five minute rule, but should have brought into the field the power for holy excitements which was certainly possessed by not a few of those who were sent there, not merely to sit watchfully and see that everything was done correctly, but to make themselves felt as an element of strength in the glorious and now widely extended work which, as a Church, we have received from God. We believe that, in the passing away from our Assemblies of the discords and collisions, growing out of the self-purgating process of former years, and in the happy settlement of all our Church plans for extension and usefulness, we have passed too far out of the region of excitement. We believe it would, have been better, had we, in our public councils, transferred the zeal and vehemence through which we wrought the clearing of ourselves, into the fields occupied by our Permanent Committees; not for controversy, but to arouse and provoke to love and good works. True, it might have extended the session, but Commissioners should go prepared for this. It is a vice of all our ecclesiastical meetings, from the Assembly down, that so many of the real interests of the Church

must bend to the desire of members to go home.

The following catalogue comprises, in mere outline, the principal doings of the Assembly:—

1. The fixing of times for hearing the reports of the Permanent Committees, and of the Standing Committees to whom they should be referred. In this arrangement the "Church Erection" subject was taken out of its regular place, the last, and made the first. This was done, because no change can be made in its Plan, without an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the whole number enrolled, a thing almost impossible of attainment near the end of the sessions.

2. The creation of a new Permanent Committee to take in charge the general interests of Sabbath-schools. Rev. James B. Shaw, D.D., is Chairman of this Committee, and Rochester, N. Y., is the seat of its operations.

3. The reception of the Report of the Trustees of the Church Erection Fund. Loans for the year, \$4675; donations, \$750—total \$5425. Receipts from churches on account of loans and donations, chiefly the former, \$7210 87. Present amount of the fund, accretions from interest included, \$127,489 52. Subsequently, on the recommendation of the Committee to whom the report was committed, the Plan was amended. Principal changes—The increments to this date consolidated with the original fund, making the amount as above, to be invested, and its interest to be used to aid feeble congregations in erecting houses of worship: The loan system to be abolished, and grants to become an actual gift, subject only to this incumbrance, that, if the church shall become alienated from this General Assembly, or its corporate existence shall cease, the property shall be liable for a return of the donation with interest: The sum granted any church may reach one-half instead of one-third the amount contributed and secured by them for house and lot: The Board are to appoint a Corresponding Secretary, whose duties shall be similar to those belonging to that officer in the Permanent Committees.

4. Provision for raising annually, by collections, a supplemental fund, to be added to the interest of the Church Erection Fund, and with it expended, as occasions arise for the same purpose: Recommendation that at least \$35,000 be raised for that purpose the present year, and that collections be made on or before the third Sabbath in December.

5. The reception of the Report of the Permanent Committee on Foreign Missions. Contributions from churches in our connection to the American Board, during the past year—about \$140,000, an advance upon any previous year. Falling off in the number of those missionaries of the Board in connection with our Church, from fifty-six to forty-seven. The Committee to whom the Report was referred, recommended renewed activity in all the agencies for the promotion of Foreign Missions, and made prominent the peculiar work of the American and Foreign Christian Union.

6. The reception of Reports on the condition of Union, Auburn, and Lane Theological Seminaries.

7. The reception of the Report of the Permanent Committee on Home Missions. The whole working force in the missionary field has been three hundred and eighty-five men; fifty-eight more than last year. Six of these have died. About fifty churches have been formed, three thousand five hundred souls converted; three thousand two hundred and forty have united with the churches. Contributions during the year, about \$92,000; expenditures \$106,000. On the recommendation of the appropriate Standing Committee, the Assembly subsequently determined that an effort should be made to realize for this cause at least an average of \$1 for each church member, in all about \$120,000, counting, we suppose, only known and resident members.

8. The reception of the Report of the Permanent Committee on Publication. Advance in contributions; increase in the issue of books and tracts; many new works; the *Presbyterian Monthly* established, and several editions of the *Social Hymn and Tune Book* disposed of. The field widening. The Assembly, on recommendation of the Standing Committee, recommended the inauguration, by Presbyteries and Synods, of a system of colportage, and the employment of unemployed ministers, students, and Christian laymen as colporteurs. A special Committee of five was appointed to prepare fresh tracts and books, and, if thought desirable, translations in the German language. The Permanent Committee was directed to consider the expediency of publishing a Ger-

man religious newspaper, adapted to the wants of the German population of our country.

9. The reception of the Report of the Permanent Committee on Education. Funds about the same as last year. Increase in the number of candidates aided, thirty-five per cent. Advance of thirty-three per cent. in the amount of aid bestowed, which now ranges from \$100 to \$160 per year. The Assembly recommended that this amount be continued, and also, on a supplementary report of the Standing Committee, recommended Maryville College and other educational institutions under the care of the Church in East Tennessee, to the churches for material aid.

10. The reception of the Report of the Permanent Committee on the Ministerial Relief Fund. Six thousand three hundred dollars was the sum contributed this year against \$3600 given the previous year. One gentleman has donated \$3400 to be given at the death of a near relative. One hundred and thirty persons were helped last year against forty-four helped the year before. The Committee had been able to give a prompt and cordial response to all applications properly brought before them. The balance in the treasury was \$1605. By subsequent action, in the report of the appropriate Committee, the Assembly cordially commended this cause to the Churches for more general attention and liberality.

11. Reception and adoption of the Report of the Special Committee on Manses and Ministerial Libraries. Out of seven hundred churches addressed by circular, containing inquiries, etc., one hundred have replied. One-fifth of these have manses, and one-tenth ministerial libraries. All express hope that the subject will be pursued. Presbyteries were directed to send letters of inquiry and suggestion to their churches, and to report information obtained to the next Assembly.

12. Reception of the Report of the Special Committee, appointed by last Assembly, to answer an overture asking for the proper construction of Section 13 of Chapter IV. of the Book of Discipline. Committee reported that the structure of the section, together with the known principles of judicial proceedings, imply that the *ex-parte* examination is intended for trial and final judgment. On a motion to adopt the report, the subject was discussed, but through haste for adjournment, left unfinished. The sentiment seemed largely in favor of the report which was well labored and exhaustive.

13. Reception of proposal from the General Assembly of the O. S. Presbyterian Church, sitting in the Second Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, for joint devotional meetings and sacramental communion. Committee of arrangements appointed, to act conjointly with a Committee from that Assembly. The proposal fully carried out to the great delight of all participating, by a devotional meeting in Second Church, on Monday evening, May 21, and communion service in the First Church, (the place of meeting of our Assembly,) on Wednesday evening, May 23.

14. Appointment of a Committee on the State of the Country, and the reception and adoption of its report. The Report recognizes the occasions for gratitude for displays of God's overruling hand in our late national troubles, and reaffirms the deliverance of the last Assembly as to the rights of colored men, on the same conditions with the whites, to the right of suffrage. It holds it to be the solemn duty of our National Executive and Congress to adopt only such methods of reconstruction as shall effectually protect all loyal persons in the States lately in revolt. It declares it due to the vindication and satisfaction of national justice, that the chief fomenters and representatives of the rebellion should, by due process of law, be visited with condign punishment. Ministers and churches are exhorted to constant and earnest prayer for the President, his Counsellors, Congress, Judges of the Supreme Court, and all in authority. Members of our churches are urged to lay aside all partisan and sectional aims, and, in every sphere of service, do the full duty of Christian freemen.

15. Reception of the Report of H. A. Nelson, D.D., of the fulfillment of his appointment as Commissioner to bear the fraternal salutations of our Church to the General Assembly of the O. S. Presbyterian Church, with a pleasant account of the welcome received.

16. Reception of a fraternal letter from the Free Church of Scotland, conveying proposals for correspondence by interchange of delegates. Reception of Rev. James McCosh, LL.D., member of the Irish Church, and commended to the Assembly by special letter from several of

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eminent Scottish ministers. Report of the Committee on Church Policy, recommending the correspondence proposed, and adoption thereof. Appointment of a Committee to draft a reply to the Free Church, and reception and adoption of their report containing draft thereof. For these very interesting proceedings in *extenso*, see *American Presbyterian* of May 31 and June 7.

17. Reception of Rev. P. D. Gurley, D.D., and ruling elder Hon. W. Clark, as Commissioners from the General Assembly of the Old-school Presbyterian Church, bearing proposals for the appointment by each body of fifteen persons, (nine ministers and six elders,) to confer conjointly "in regard to the desirability and practicability of reunion, and if, after conference and inquiry, such reunion shall seem desirable and practicable, to suggest suitable measures for its accomplishment, and report to the next General Assemblies." The proposal cordially acceded to, and Rev. Drs. T. Brainard, E. F. Hatfield, W. Adams, J. F. Stearns, P. H. Fowler, J. B. Shaw, H. L. Hitebock, R. W. Patterson, and H. A. Nelson, and ruling elders Hon. Joseph Allison, Hon. E. A. Lambert, Hon. H. W. Williams, T. P. Handy, Esq., R. W. Steele, Esq., and W. H. Brown, Esq., were accordingly appointed on the part of the Assembly. Our paper of last week has a full and interesting account of this proceeding, with a copious report of the remarks of Dr. Gurley and Judge Clark.

18. Narrative of the State of Religion. The materials were copious, refreshing, and arousing. God has wrought wonderfully with us in his salvation, and our course has, in all respects, been an onward one. All this was well told, and the Assembly sends forth no more cheerful document than its Narrative of the State of Religion.

We have not room for giving separate places in this catalogue to several other and minor parts of the Assembly's proceedings. The Committee on Bills and Overtures brought in replies to certain questions of more or less importance. Reports of delegates and reports from delegates from the Assembly, other than those above mentioned, belonging to our correspondence with other ecclesiastical bodies had their usual odor of fraternity and pleasantness. The fraternal and complimentary matters of the closing service were a well-arranged and becoming finale to the harmonious and devotional character of the General Assembly of 1866.

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY.

Commencement at this Institution, which was formerly known as Ashmun Institute, will occur on Thursday, June 21st. Major-General O. O. HOWARD, Superintendent of U. S. Freedmen's Bureau, will deliver the address. An excursion from this city will leave the depot of the Philadelphia and Baltimore Central Railroad, Thirty-first and Market streets, at 7:30 A. M., and returning, will leave the University Station at 5:45 P. M. Fare for the round trip \$2.

It gives us especial pleasure to call the attention of our readers to this interesting Institution. All who are interested in the moral and intellectual culture of the African race, will no doubt enjoy the opportunity of seeing what is here being done in its behalf. All are cordially invited.

SABBATH-SCHOOLS AND THE NEW MISSIONARY SHIP.

PHILADELPHIA HOUSE, 1334 CHESTNUT ST.,
Office American Board of Christian Missions.
Sabbath-schools wishing certificates of stock for the new *Morning Star* or copies of the history of the old ship, can have the same by sending the amounts donated, with a statement of the number of blank certificates and books needed, either to L. S. Ward, Treasurer, Missionary House, Boston, or to this office.

Our schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and District of Columbia very generally and gladly took part in building the first *Morning Star*; we hope they will all, with like zeal, lend a hand in building this second missionary ship. We feel quite sure they will. It is important that the collections be made as promptly as possible.

It will be remembered that ten cents secures a certificate for one share of stock, and that fifty cents secures in addition the neat little book giving a history of the first *Morning Star*, by Rev. Mr. Bingham.

Any schools that have not received specimens of the certificates or the volume can be supplied, if they will send name and address as stated above.
J. McLEOD,
Dist. Sec. A. B. C. F. M.

THE CHURCH EDITOR in Andover, Allegheny county, N. Y., was burned May 24.