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THE CHILDREN'S PORTION.

We do not set a separate table usually for our children, with entirely different dishes, in supplying their daily wants. They sit with us, for the most part, at the same board, and are served from the same joints, by the same hand with ourselves. Perhaps the food is cut into smaller portions, or dealt out in smaller amounts at a time, but it is substantially the same food, taken under the same circumstances with us.

It is presumed that a Gospel feast is spread in every sermon. Young, and middle-aged, and old, are expected to sit down to it. To the Presbyterian churches, we come as to our daily board, by families, not omitting those of tender years. Large numbers of children and youth form part of every one of our ordinary congregations. In some cases, the entire Sabbath school is expected to be in regular attendance. The Gospel feast is indeed spread, but how often there is not a mouthful for the younger part of the congregation. Every thing is arranged and dressed for maturer tastes, for riper intellects, for grown men and women. Sinners and believers, in the walks of business, or under the responsibilities of domestic life, are urgently admonished. There are warnings against temptations likely to befall those from early manhood and upward. The trials and disappointments of mature life are made the subject of many a pathetic disquisition. The allusions and illustrations are drawn from actions and scenes in which men and women took a part, or in which they would chiefly be interested. Almost no reference is, in any way, made to the young, in the matter of form, the subject or illustrations of the discourses. We fear they are scarcely thought of by the preacher, in preparing the plan or the details. The ideal audience before him, in his study, is too often one from which the juvenile portion is entirely omitted; and from the initial effort to the closing appeal of the discourse, men and women—including, of course, young men and women—are the grand object of his efforts.

Men whose business it is to preach the Gospel to the mixed audiences of children, youth, and older persons, which form their congregations, think it no reproach that they cannot talk to children. Teachers and professors in theological seminaries fail to impress their pupils with the idea that the adaptation of truth to the young is as truly a part of their profession as the conquest of any difficulty in exegesis. Standards of eloquence and of rhetoric are set up, and methods of sermonizing are taught, which contemplate audiences of grown men, almost exclusively. It is too much as if a Senate were to be moved, or a jury carried, or a lecture-hall audience to be entertained, that we enter the pulpit, and indeed have been taught to enter it. Theological students should not merely be left to blunder into a conviction of the peculiarity and importance of the gift of speaking well to children: so as it is an art, it has rules, and is capable of being taught. It should be communicated to them among the great, plain, fundamental principles of their profession. Whatever be the tests and standards of eloquence in general, we do not think ourselves over-bold in saying, that no Gospel sermon is complete, either whose very substance and texture is not level to the capacities of the children of the congregation, or which does not admit of and contain some direct reference to them as an important part of the audience.

We do not overmuch admire the practice of setting apart, regularly, some Sabbath, or part of a Sabbath, for preaching to children—"children's church," as it is sometimes called. It is too much like setting a separate table for them in the family. True, such a table is better, far better, than giving them nothing at all, than letting them starve, or pick up a fragment here and there. In fact, we cannot but rejoice that so much attention is given, and so much labor bestowed, by the divines, upon this part of their services. But we cannot admit that they are thereby discharged from all reference to their children in all the other services of the pulpit. The practice of preaching the eighth sermon of the month to children, is a bad one if it results in putting the remaining seven sermons mainly or altogether above their heads.

To us, it seems sound homiletical policy for the preacher to remember the children every time he takes pen in hand for sermonizing, and to suspect every plan of a sermon which does not allow them to be recognized as part of the audience. We do not wish a particle of the true dignity of the preacher to be sacrificed; but we regard it a legitimate and an important part of his office, to provide against the weariness of body and soul under which many of his congregation suffer, from being habitually ignored in the services;—weariness which may and which sometimes does grow into lifelong prejudice and disgust.

LETTER FROM PASTEUR FISCH.

[The following letter to Rev. Dr. Sunderland, late of the American Chapel in Paris, is published not only for its intrinsic interest, but to further the objects of the Society which the well-known and highly-esteemed author represents.]

PARIS, Jan. 3, 1867.

MY DEAR DR. SUNDERLAND:—I am charged by the Synod of Nimes to send its best thanks to all the friends who wrote to us for the occasion of our recent meeting. It was a blessed assembly. Every thing added to its interest. It was in that great centre of the old Huguenots, near the spot where Calvin and Beza had preached. It was in a chapel newly erected by a church newly admitted into our Union. We had large crowds of attentive hearers, and we know that the general impression was most beneficial. Twelve new churches were admitted to the Union. We had there a large gathering of deputies from abroad. Unhappily Dr. Eldridge, who was to represent the N. S. Presbyterian Church, was prevented from going to Nimes, but we had Professor Emerson for the Old School, and representatives of the Scotch and Irish Churches, of Switzerland and Italy; all having come in the name of large and important churches, some of which number thousands of congregations, and they came to hail the small beginning of our infant Church. But the infant will grow; we know it, every one feels that the future of France in religious respects, lies with our principles of Church emancipation from the State.

I have to thank you for the news which you gave me of dear America. As we followed with anguish and fervent prayer your great national warfare, we look with great interest to the present turn of your affairs. Of course, we are all for your Congress. President Johnson has not one supporter in France, and those who would be inclined towards him, because they sympathized formerly with the secessionists, are disgusted by the ungentlemanly way in which he speaks to our Government in order to repay for his former mistakes. We in France are very uneasy about the future. Commerce is very dull. Food is scarce and dear. The inundations have done enormous mischief. Poverty is very great. This new year opens under very solemn impressions.

But these last days, cheering news have reached us from our several stations. A new movement is felt; may it be lasting! O pray, pray much for the work of our Evangelical Society. You have attended our committee meetings. You know of our difficulties. Evangelization in France is a hard work. Every stone requires innumerable blows to carve it out of the quarry. It is a work of unmovable perseverance. Our French minds do not understand that nothing may be effected without that enduring patience. They get tired of a work which does not show immediately a ripe harvest. Our converts from papacy in the country districts, require a long training before they learn to support their own ministry. We must remember the depths of ignorance from which they were lifted up.

I assure you that leading our Evangelical Society is a great burden and a constant exercise of my weak faith. I wrote to-day to Dr. Campbell, to remind him of the scheme which we devised, with you, to lay before the American and Foreign Christian Union, viz: to give, every year, the collection of several churches to our Society. The interest, being concentrated upon the special wants of France, would be awakened more thoroughly. You promised us, dear Dr. Sunderland, to use all your influence towards the adoption of that scheme. We reckon upon your kind interposition. We look confidently to our friends of the United States.

The Evangelical Society is the only one founded upon the principle of separation of Church and State. Where should we look for friends, if not to the only country where our principle is realized?

Now, my dear Dr. Sunderland, I must close this long letter. The Lord bless you and your dear Church and your dear nation. Very sincerely yours, GEO. FISCH.

CHURCH ERECTION.

The Church Erection Committee have received from the churches since the middle of December, \$8173.26—one-fourth of which was contributed by a single congregation. Of fifteen hundred churches, but one hundred and twenty-one have taken collections for this cause.

The amount received has been appropriated to those feeble churches—twenty in number—whose applications had been earliest received, or were most urgent in their character.

In the appropriations thus far made, the amounts given have necessarily fallen considerably short of what was recommended by the Synodical Committees. This brings sore disappointment to the struggling churches. It is also a matter of painful regret to the Committee, who desire in all cases to act upon the liberal policy which the new plan contemplates and which the prevailing sentiment of the Church now so clearly demands.

There are still thirty-eight churches to be assisted, and the number is constantly increasing. These unanswered calls amount to \$40,000, while the treasury is empty.

Where shall the responsibility rest? As members of the Committee we make no complaints, but, having done all we have the means of doing, we are compelled to lay these remaining burdens at the door of those churches which have not contributed, and to renew with deeper emphasis the appeal which we have already made so often and in so many forms within the last few months.

All the issues of the Church Erection cause are now reduced to a single point. The question is *one* merely, and very simple. Will or will not the Presbyterian Church (N. S.) take her place among other denominations, Protestant and Catholic, in the great work of supplying the waste places of this continent with houses of religious worship? Will pastors interest themselves in the cause? Will the people contribute to such an object?

Doubtless in some cases contributions which will come in due time, have been necessarily delayed. We hope, however, that all possible promptness will be observed in forwarding the sums collected, as the applicants are often pressed by builders and contractors for their pay, and the more common assumption is that the cause of delay is to be found in the tardiness and neglect of the Committee.

Let it be understood that where applications are made in due form, appropriations will be promptly made just as soon as the churches shall furnish the means.

And in order that all applications may be made regularly at first, and no time be lost in corrections, &c., the Committee would request all members of Presbyteries and Synods to examine carefully the Assembly's rules and requirements, and, inasmuch as the demand must, in any case, be greater than the supply of means for a time at least, it is desirable that the Synodical Committees shall reduce the amounts recommended to the lowest possible figure. The Board cannot of course be pledged to appropriate all that such Synodical Committees shall name; the want of funds may render it impossible. But it will in many cases greatly mitigate the disappointment of applicants, if the Committees of their own Synods will thoroughly acquaint themselves with the merits of each case, and make their recommendations with close discrimination.

It will reconcile the feeble congregations to the limits and necessities of this Committee, and tend to promote general confidence and harmony in all sections of the Church.

In the circumstances, as above stated, it will be seen that our work is a difficult one. We know not what further to say to the anxious inquiries which come from the Great West by almost every mail. Will not the churches come up to our help, and that promptly? A collection "next year" will not meet the case. Each future year will have its own host of appeals. We earnestly entreat every

pastor and every session to consider this matter.

And we can only leave it with the churches and with the great Disposer of all hearts. SAMUEL SPEAR, WALTER S. GRIFFITH, EDWIN F. HATFIELD, STEPHEN H. THAYER, SAMUEL D. BURCHARD, JESSE W. BENEDICT, JOSEPH FEWSMITH, GEORGE W. LANE, WILLIAM A. BOOTH, FRANK F. ELLINWOOD, (Corresponding Secretary.) NEW YORK, Jan. 25, 1867.

OUR WASHINGTON LETTER.

The first movement by the municipal authorities towards the practical consummation of free suffrage in the District of Columbia, was made during the past week. The Mayor of Georgetown advertised three days, when all persons claiming the right to vote under the provisions of the late act of Congress, could have their names registered. The authorities of that ancient town were careful not to allow the announcement to appear over Sunday, lest the colored population should make use of the means which their churches afforded them, of circulating the notice. But when the days for registration came, they found the blacks as well organized, and as well informed in the matter, as the whites. The officers, however, sought to rule out many of them by a catechism, which, they said was sustained by a statute of the city, forbidding any person to vote, who had ever been imprisoned. The question was put to every colored man as he came up, "Have you ever been in jail?" and if he replied in the affirmative, his name was refused. Before the days of emancipation in the District, a negro was put in jail for being out after nine o'clock at night. Many were guilty (?) of this offence, which is no longer a crime now that they are free, and ought not to militate against them.

On the other hand, men who had left the District to join the confederacy, and did all in their power to destroy our government, were permitted to register themselves without being questioned. But these petty subtleties cannot arrest the progress of this great revolution.

The colored people do not expect to carry their ticket at the coming election, but they will be able to present a respectable opposition to the old regime, and in due course of time, when the condition of things is more favorable, will be able to have a voice in the management of the city government, and the division of the school tax. Close to free suffrage, it does not appear the hideous monster that it did afar off to the former slaveholders of the District. And after the right has been exercised a short time, they will wonder how they ever opposed it with so much bitterness.

The President is sustained in his extreme leniency towards the rebels, by the recent decisions of the Supreme Court. They have declared the act of Congress prescribing the test oath, to be unconstitutional. They are rapidly removing every thing that punishes treason, or makes it odious. At no distant day, no disability whatever will rest upon recent rebels.

The President has deserted the Freedmen, and the Supreme Court will follow. It would surprise no one, if this eminent tribunal should soon declare the Civil Rights bill unconstitutional, for they have impugned the most important acts of the government put forth in defense of its vitality, during the rebellion. Congress now fights alone for the results secured by the war, against a majority of the Supreme Court and the Executive.

The engrossing subject of impeachment has hitherto been avoided in these letters, as but little that was reliable could be learned about it. The committee to whom Mr. Ashley's resolution was referred are very reticent, and know how to keep their own counsels. Attempts have been made in some quarters to awaken sympathy for the President, while in others, Mr. Ashley has been severely criticised and denounced. All this was to be expected. When Thomas Benton, rising in the Senate, offered the famous "Expunging Resolutions," and said, "Solitary and alone I set this ball in motion," he was assailed by all the weak-hearted and over-cautious throughout the land. But success gave him fame, and art has transmitted the scene to posterity. No less worthy of a place on canvass, is the scene enacted by the Representative from Ohio.

Some assert, that the measure will make

a martyr of the President. If the matter were one that affected the President alone, it would not be attempted. It is not so much to punish him, as to secure the country against gross official misdemeanors. The President himself affects great indifference on the subject, while his friends pretend that he would pass the ordeal unscathed. But it is known that he stands in mortal dread of it. Nevertheless, he is bound to his "policy," as Mazeppa to his steed, and is hurried on, powerless to resist.

Some think his offences do not warrant such extreme measures. Others discountenance it on the ground of party expediency. If his offences have not been numerous or aggravated enough to justify the measure, then the American people are willing to grant their executive officer a liberty bordering upon license. Persons have been impeached for smaller crimes than he has committed: for giving bad counsel to a king, for advising a prejudicial peace, for purchasing offices, and especially for putting good magistrates out of office and advancing bad. To abuse the patronage of the government, or the power of removal, to the base purposes of gratifying a party, or administering to one's own resentment, Mr. Madison, one of the most distinguished framers of the Constitution, declared to be such acts of maladministration as would be impeachable.

When Mr. Johnson took the oath of office as Vice President in a state of beastly intoxication, several members of Congress considered it their duty to call for his impeachment, and were only dissuaded from pressing the matter by the earnest entreaties of the more cautious of their party, with assurances that there would be no further cause for apprehension. But since that hour, each week has developed some high-handed move in his "policy" of handing the government over to those who sought its overthrow, until the country is startled by nothing he may attempt.

Some who think the measure was never intended in earnest. But I cannot believe that the one hundred and eight members of Congress who voted for this resolution are only fooling the country. They are in earnest in the matter, and grow more and more so by the revelations of each succeeding day. The times are too earnest for boy's play, and the men who favor the measure have too much regard for the good name of the country abroad to treat so serious a matter in levity, or for the sake of party policy. The statesmen who provided so wisely for every exigency of the country during the four years she was assailed by millions of her rebellious sons, are capable of managing one, who seems to disregard her interests, notwithstanding the immense patronage he wields.

RETAIN FAITHFUL OFFICERS.

The friends of good municipal government in our city cannot but feel surprise and alarm at the attitude of the new city Councils, especially in regard to the proposed removal of the most experienced and most successful of all the heads of the departments, the Chief Engineer Birkinbine. They still wait for an explanation of the secret and sudden manœuvre by which this measure was carried through the caucus. The strict economy, the annually increasing profitableness, the wise and admirably executed extensions of the water works of the city during the six or seven years of Mr. Birkinbine's administration, and the keen observation and sagacious proposals of the Chief for a future supply, are such conspicuous proofs of his fidelity and integrity, as well as his undoubted engineering capacity, that no one for a moment seriously intimates a deficiency in these respects as the cause of his proposed removal, or deceives himself with the idea that a person of superior or of equal qualifications has been found to put in his place.

Mr. Birkinbine is an office-bearer in one of our city churches, a man of piety and a friend of the Sabbath and of Temperance, an ardent and unwavering adherent of the loyal cause. His official transactions, his contracts, have been invariably managed on the highest principles of Christian integrity, solely for the benefit of the city, as all applicants for personal favors have long ago discovered. One or the other of these reasons may influence the Sunday papers and some others not much above them in moral tone, in their opposition to Mr. Birkinbine, but we most earnestly request our city fathers to show themselves guided by a true regard for the interests of the city and for the merits of one of its most faithful and competent officers.