

Miscellaneous.

A SCOTTISH PROFESSOR ON THE AMERICAN CHURCH AND NATION.

Address delivered by Rev. Prof. McCosh, L.L.D., D. D., before the Evangelical Alliance Bath, England, Oct. 18th.

(CONCLUDED.)

WIDE DIFFUSION OF EDUCATION.

I am led into a kindred subject. That country owes its greatness to its wide-spread education. The truth is, the Constitution of the United States, with its universal suffrage, would not stand a year; it would be shattered into fragments, but for the intelligence of the people. The greatest difficulty of government there, arises from the influx of ignorant Europeans, who are flattered and misled by a class of politicians—lower than any we have in our country. I am persuaded that without their schools, lower and higher, the United States would soon get into inextricable confusion, like the South Americans, or fall under a military despotism, like France. But with its high and universal education, the country has as fair a prospect of stability as any nation on the earth. Surely the progress made, and the power acquired of late years by Prussia and the United States, the two countries in the world in which the mass of the people receive the highest education, is a clear proof that it is knowledge that is power in a nation, as well as among individuals. The fact should read a lesson to us who have not yet, amidst the contests of classes and of sects, been able to establish a thoroughly good national system of education. The education in the United States is happily (what can scarcely be said of the Prussian) a Christian education. The system originated in New England, but was extended over all the States, except indeed, in the South, where it was found incompatible with the continuance of slavery. The laws favor education—in some States make it compulsory,—but in fact it is mainly promoted by the spirit of the people.

The young people remain longer at school than they do in this country, and, as a rule, the common people are all well-educated. The artisan class there, both male and female, like the middle class here, can talk with you on the topics of the day, and they know the history of their own country and of ours, and the elements of science, mental and physical. In every town there are not only Elementary Schools for younger children and Grammar Schools in the higher branches of English, but there are High Schools for classics, mathematics, and science, all provided by the States. The colleges are very numerous, and are found far west on the very outskirts of civilization, as in Iowa and San Francisco. Some of them are yet in a state of infancy, but they are healthy children, and promise in due time to be vigorous men. Some of the older colleges in the East are quite equal to our own; except, indeed, that they have not yet such large rewards for higher scholarship, and that their hardworking professors are disgracefully underpaid. I can speak on this subject with confidence, in consequence of having visited some fifteen of their colleges, and inspected some of them in a very careful manner. At the commencements as they call them—that is, on the occasions of conferring degrees—the principal people of the various States annually assemble to countenance the colleges and mark their progress; and it was one of the greatest privileges enjoyed by me in the States that I was invited to attend and take part in the proceedings by the presidents, the professors and the students of a number of colleges, and I had there an opportunity of conversing with the leading men of the country, with not only the ministers of religion, but their judges, their generals, their physicians, their merchants, and manufacturers. As a proof of the interest taken by the people in their institutions, I may mention that, during the late war, when the wise men of this country were predicting that the nation was going on to bankruptcy and ruin, no less a sum than five millions of money was contributed by philanthropic people to the establishment and extension of universities and theological seminaries.

INTELLIGENCE AND THRIFT OF THE WORK-PEOPLE.

The consequence of this is, that there are an intelligence and physical comfort among the common people, not to be found in this or any European country. I wish I could convey you all to a New England village of the better sort, such as I lived in once and again. I reckon it the finest sight in America, one of the finest sights in the world, to a philanthropist. The houses are not in close streets like ours, but are separated from one another, each embosomed in trees, with a garden, and each with four, five or six apartments. There is sure to be a school and a church or churches in the village, but possibly no public house within five or ten miles. Nearly every man there reads his daily newspaper, and many of them see a monthly religious or literary magazine. I was in villages with several hundreds of a population in which there was not a single family to whom you could offer a piece of cast-off clothing, or of bread, without giving offence. To my unspeakable gratification, I found like communities springing up all over the West, in Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, and away beyond the Mississippi, in Minnesota and Iowa. The rich land there is being occupied mainly by New Englanders, and by the most industrious of the English, Scotch, Irish, German, and other European settlers, who carry with them the best virtues of the Old World to find in the New World a fitting field for calling forth their talents and their activities.

When you are in New England I recommend you to visit some of their best factories, as, for example, the Pacific Mills, as I saw them at Lawrence, in Massachusetts.

There are four thousand workpeople, and it is a beautiful sight to see them so neatly dressed as they go into and issue from the mills. The females in one department receive a dollar and fifteen cents a day, and in another a dollar and forty-five cents. The unmarried girls live in boarding-houses, which I visited. They have a common sitting-room, comfortably furnished; they have a separate dining-hall, where I saw them seated at as comfortable a meal as the middle classes have in this country; while every two persons have a neatly-furnished bedroom. The skilled workmen get towards \$1000 a year, and the foremen (section men) towards \$1500. These foremen have houses provided for them—houses for which they pay one hundred and seventy-five dollars a year, and these houses are each three stories high, with a front door and eleven apartments. Connected with the mills are a reading-room and a large library, for which each worker has to pay a small sum. In the town there is a hotel for travellers, but I saw no public house for drinking. It is proper to add that I found the work-people in a like state of comfort in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and other places, South and West.

NOT ALL DUE TO THE ABUNDANCE OF LAND.—THE SABBATH.

It will be said that all this is owing to the unfiled-up condition of the country, and that we cannot produce such a state of things among us. I admit at once that the Americans have here an advantage over us. But there was a time when our country was in a like waste and empty state, with no such elevation of the people, because of the absence of education. In South America there is as much uncultivated land, with as fine a climate but without the intelligence and comfort of North America. It is the religious training of the people which has enabled them to take advantage of the circumstances in which they are placed, and which will enable them to do so for ages to come.

Intimately connected with the elevation of the people is their mode of observing the Lord's day. In some of the great cities, as in New York, filled with the lowest of our European population, or with Germans trained to wrong views of the Divine obligation of the Sabbath, and accustomed to go to beer-gardens, the day is kept very much as it is in our English cities. In Chicago, I heard of many thousands employed in labor on the Lord's-day, and the masters of these people were excessively rejoiced when they heard of a celebrated doctor in this country proving that the Sabbath has no Scriptural foundation. But in places not thus situated, I found the Sabbath observed in a manner which might make even Scotland blush. A new England village of the better class is a perfect picture of peace on the Lord's day. I saw no signs of harsh or self-righteous Pharisaism. No doubt the States or municipal authorities do in many places insist that the railway and public street cars should run only six days out of the seven; but that "go-ahead" people feel that they can do quite enough of work and travel on the six days, and that they themselves, and their railway officials, need the seventh as a day of rest.

In the country places and villages the people, when not at the house of God, spend the day quietly in their homes, or around their dwellings, and in pleasant family intercourse. I found much the same state of things in the larger cities, so far as they are not flooded by strangers. Thus, in Baltimore, with 300,000 inhabitants, I found all public conveyances stopped in the streets, and the great body of the people enjoying a day of rest and religious instruction. The longer I live I am the more convinced that a quiet Sabbath, affording leisure for reading and for thought, is an essential element to the elevation of a country, even in respect of intelligence and liberty, and much more of religion. And hence the interest which I take in the struggle at present going on in New York. English travellers have given us a picture of the state of things in that city, of its disgraceful saloons with their female waiters, and its drunkenness on the Lord's day. No steps were taken to suppress these by the Municipal authorities, who owe their election to Romish Irish, and a degraded population, the refuse of all countries. But the State of New York, with its high-toned country population, interposed, and passed a law to stamp out these places of wickedness and temptation. During the two months—May and June—of the execution of the law, the arrests diminished from 1,078 to 501; that is, one-half. Some petty legal difficulties have been interposed to stay for the present the execution of the law; but these, it is confidently expected, will speedily be removed. And then will come the struggle to which all who wish to see our great cities elevated will look with deep anxiety, and with fervent prayers that the effort may be crowned with success. I have given this account, because I strongly suspect that the very writers who have cast reproach upon New York, because of its disgraceful saloons, will turn round and ridicule the efforts made to suppress them.

THE AMERICAN CHURCHES.

As to the religious denominations, I found them exhibiting everywhere the American energy, and marching on with the population over their extensive country. I regretted, however, to find that the stipends paid to the ministers had not risen with the wealth and prosperity of the country, and in proportion to the increased expense of living, which has doubled since the war. The people who were giving their workmen, skilled in manual labor, 1,000 dollars a year, were, as a general rule, in the country districts, giving their pastors a like sum, or more commonly, a less sum. I was glad to find that some of the churches are becoming alive to this evil; and very special inquiries were made of me as to the mode of supporting the ministry in the Free Church of Scotland by a general Sustentation Fund, bringing ministers in the poorer districts somewhat near those in large towns. I found, also, in-

conveniences arising from the multiplication of churches and the rivalries of sects. Thus, in one little town, of a few hundred inhabitants, lying beyond the Mississippi, I found a Methodist, a Congregationalist, a Presbyterian, a Baptist, and a Campbellite interest already established, and preparations made for adding a Free-will Baptist. The evils thus arising, of course, very much disappear when the population increases, and gives scope for all. The sects in America, as a general rule, live on good terms with each other. No sect is allowed to assume a tone of superiority over others. The ministers of all Evangelical Churches, including Episcopalians, preach for one another, and unite in joint prayer-meetings and philanthropic efforts.

The churches, as a whole, so far as I could judge, are becoming more orthodox. No doubt the same questions are being stirred in America as in this country; but the practical people there are less troubled with speculative difficulties, and they settle questions in a more common-sense manner than is done by the subtle critics of Germany, or the refined scholars of Oxford, who may know all ancient learning, but are entirely ignorant of the actual workings of human nature; as exhibited in the hearts of men and women round about them. Certain it is that I found everywhere among the professors and the students a growing attachment to the doctrines which are visibly inscribed on the Word of God, and which have been held all along by the people of God. My intercourse was chiefly with the Presbyterians of various sections—such as Old School, New School, United Presbyterians, Reformed, and Dutch Reformed, and with the Congregationalists; and I found them gathering around them a large body of the intelligence of the country, and their ministers preaching in an intellectual style—perhaps, at times, too intellectual a style for the common people. But I mixed with all other Evangelical communions. The Episcopal Church has great and I believe growing influence, and is not troubled there with Puseyism or with Rationalism (it has no Bishop Colenso,) and very effective steps are taken to keep down exclusive High Churchism wherever it appears. The Methodists are a very numerous body, and I found them everywhere, North and South, East and West, diligent in preaching the Gospel to the poor and ignorant. I heard a coloured Methodist bishop preach a sermon of great fervour and feeling. At the time I was there, the body was preparing to celebrate the Centenary of their establishment in America with their accustomed zeal. The Baptists have an enormous following, and set before them a high standard of zeal and activity. I visited with deepest interest their admirable schools for coloured people in Richmond, and addressed a congregation there, which has no fewer than four thousand black people connected with it. I had fewer opportunities than I could have wished of meeting with Quakers; but from Levi Coffin, and others, I learned what they have done in time past, and what they are still doing, for the negroes.

CHRIST'S MISSION.

Jesus came to seek, as well as to save the lost. His was a personal ministration among sufferers. He began at home; he went to the ignorant, the prejudiced, the despised. He sought the lost, and he will prove the benefactor of all kindreds, nations and tongues. Let us go, then, after the manner of the Saviour, and seek, in order that we may save lost men, women and children; the ignorant, that we may instruct them; the abandoned and neglected, that we may receive them into educational homes; the hungry, that we may give them food; the thirsty, that we may supply them with drink; the vicious, that we may reform them; the aged, that we may be their staff; the sinful, that we may win them to God; the oppressed, that we may stand by them in the vindication of their rights; the dying, that we may soothe their pillows, refresh their parched lips, sustain their sinking hearts, and direct their troubled minds to peace and immortal life. True Christian love opens every door. The coals of its fire melt the most obdurate heart. Its benevolent eye, its friendly outstretched hand, its genial liquid tones, none venture twice to resist.

REVIVAL SPIRIT.

It would be wrong in me to conclude without a reference to the manifestations which fell under my notice of the progress of spiritual religion. I heard on all hands, that the late war, though accompanied, like all other wars, with much recklessness and profanity, had had, as a whole, a religious tendency. It was pleasant to listen to the reports given every where of the blessing which had attended the work of the Christian Commission and the ministrations of chaplains in the camp and in the hospitals. At the close of the conflict a very solemn feeling was left on the minds of all. Ministers in the South, whom I could trust, assured me that the dreadful calamities that have come upon the people there have not been without a sanctified blessing, and that many were turning to the Lord in prayer. In the North and West I saw in many places, and I heard in all places, of a good work of revival going on, silently, but surely. I had the pleasure of listening to very interesting testimonies in behalf of such a work, given by respected ministers of the two General Assemblies at St. Louis. I heard of such a work of grace in Illinois and over the West. In some congregations all the young men had given themselves simultaneously to the Lord. In the East I had authentic accounts given me of an operation of God's Spirit, accompanied with fervent and frequent prayer, in several of the colleges. I cannot forget that a general revival in America in 1858 was followed by an awakening in Ireland, and in parts of Great Britain in 1859. May the God of all grace grant that the revival in America in 1866 may also be followed in this country by a like time of refreshing from before the presence of the Lord!

DELIVERING GOD'S MESSAGE.

"There are two ways of regarding a sermon, either as a human composition or a divine message. If we look upon it as the first, and require our clergymen to finish it with their utmost care and learning, for our better delight, whether of ear or intellect, we shall be necessarily led to expect much formality and stateliness in its delivery, and to think all is not well if the pulpit have not a golden fringe round it, and a goodly cushion in front of it, and if the sermon be not fairly written in a black book, to be smoothed upon the cushion in a majestic manner before beginning; all this we shall duly come to expect; but we shall at the same time consider the treatise thus prepared as something to which it is our duty to listen without restlessness for half an hour or three-quarters, but which, when this duty has been decorously performed, we may dismiss from our minds in happy confidence of being provided with another when next it shall be necessary.

"But if once we begin to regard the

preacher, whatever his faults, as a man sent with a message to us, which it is a matter of life or death whether we hear or refuse; if we look at him as set in charge over many spirits in danger of ruin, and having allowed to him but an hour or two in the seven days to speak to them; if we make some endeavors to conceive how precious these hours ought to be to him, a small vantage on the side of God after his flock has been exposed for six days together to the full weight of the world's temptation, and he has been forced to watch the thorn and the thistle springing in their hearts, and to see what wheat had been scattered there, snatched from the wayside by this wild bird and the other, and at last, when breathless and weary with the week's labor, they give him this interval of imperfect and languid hearing. He has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of all their weaknesses; to shame them for all their sins; to warn them of all their dangers, to try, by this way and that, to stir the hard fastenings of those doors where the Master himself has stood and knocked, yet none opened, and to call at the openings of those dark streets, where Wisdom herself hath stretched forth her hands, and no man regarded—thirty minutes to raise the dead in—let us but once understand and feel this, and we shall look with changed eyes upon that frippery of gay furniture about the place from which the message of judgment must be delivered, which either breathes upon the dry bones that they may live, or, if ineffectual, remains recorded in condemnation, perhaps against the utterer and listener alike, but assuredly against one of them. We shall not so easily bear with the silk and the gold upon the seat of judgment, nor with ornament of oratory in the mouth of the messenger. We shall wish that his words may be simple, even when they are sweetest, and the place from which he speaks like a marble rock in the desert, about which the people have gathered in their thirst."

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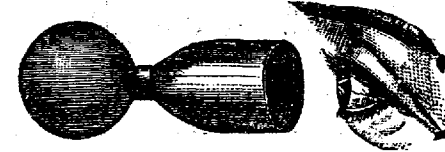
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