

The American Presbyterian.

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18 July 67

New Series, Vol. IV, No. 31.

Genesee Evangelist, No. 1106.

\$3 00 By Mail. \$3 50 By Carrier.
50cts Additional after three Months.

PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 1867.

Ministers \$2.50 H. Miss. \$2.00.
Address:—1334 Chestnut Street.

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THE PROVIDENCE AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THE HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH.

It is worth considering how large a proportion of our additions this year, have been retained and have entered into the structure of the Church. Reckoning the losses by death at two per cent. per annum, and not noticing the fact that perhaps more than one-half of the additions by certificate are mere transfers from one part of the Church to the other, it can be shown that we have utilized, so to speak, 14,146 of the 20,889 additions, or 68 per cent. The usefulness of the previous year's work, with 17,238 reported additions, may be represented, by 56 per cent.; in 1865 we utilized 69 per cent. In 1864, when we added a total of 10,834 we utilized 47 per cent.; in 1863, only 37 per cent.; in '62, 43 per cent.; in '61 we saved but 27 per cent., losing nearly three-fourths of the reported additions. In 1860, with nearly ten thousand additions, we did not make up our losses by death and removal, being weaker at the end than the beginning; in 1859, with a large total of fifteen thousand reported additions, we lost in numbers still more largely, the decline, after allowing for deaths, being 118 per cent. of the reported additions. It must be remembered that it was in those two years we finally cleared our minutes of the Southern secession.

If we survey the whole field, as presented in these statistics, from the triennial Assembly of 1846, down to the Assembly of 1863, when the dead point was finally passed, and when the Old School showed their sagacity, no less than their fraternal feeling, by sending us their first delegation; we shall have a period of twenty years, in which we calculate that one hundred and fifty thousand were added to our numbers from the world and from other Churches, with a net result of a loss of nearly five thousand in the returns of 1863, as compared with the minutes of 1846. In other words, allowing for three thousand deaths per annum, we have a total of ninety-five thousand reported additions, which, or the equivalent of which, we have given away to other denominations. From ten to twenty per cent. of these probably went to the Episcopalians; perhaps ten per cent. fell away, in that time, to errorists of various sorts—Millerites, Morrisites, &c., or sunk away in the remote West, in California or in the mining regions, silently losing their place upon the registers of the churches, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. But the lion's share of these spoils has fallen to the South, to the Old School and to the Congregational Churches. In these three directions, we have sent from 60,000 to 70,000 members in the twenty years just indicated. Fourteen thousand Southern members left us in a body in 1857. No wonder they thought they were grinding us to powder, and expected soon to come in to a general inquest and casting of lots upon our remains. But all the while there remained a stubborn kernel, a kind of anvil of about 135,000 members, which sent off a good many sparks in the beating, but which was never visibly moved by the process. And while the un-congenial, unbelieving, unenduring, undiscerning elements were peeling off, the observers of Providence and students of history and friends of Calvinistic orthodoxy without rigidity, the men of Issachar in our body, were quietly organizing, planning, consolidating, and embodying the true genius of the Church in proper modes of denominational activity; disentangling it from unpropitious alliances, and at every step of the way calmly seeing churches, presbyteries and synods falling away under the trying process; until the War and the Proclamation of Emancipation suddenly revealed the extraordinary sympathy between the spirit of the age and the position of the New School Presbyterian Church. In the year 1863, we had finally parted from all that did not belong to us, had reached the lowest point, numerically, of our history of twenty years, had got down to the rock of New School principles, and found the masses of our countrymen and the policy of the nation gravitating to the same broad principles. We went out from the Church of our ancestors as a protest against ecclesiastical tyranny and Southern domination; under the martyrdom of unpopularity and ill success, we

bore our testimony, for a quarter of a century, to the value of a just liberty of opinion in the Church and against human slavery; when God, in the providence of war, seemed graciously to mark his approval of our principles and gave us the great onward impulse we are now enjoying.

There have been, especially, three critical periods of our history, in each of which the hand of God was signally manifest. (1) The forming period; that time, when in fear, and yet with the inspiring sense of manly resistance to a great wrong, the sixty thousand of the Excoinded Synods with their forty thousand friends, went forth from the venerable fold, and essayed to preserve that genuine American Presbyterianism which had fallen into such unmerited discredit and suspicion there. Would the movement show any vitality? Could it hold its own against the prestige of orthodoxy, legitimacy, and possession, enjoyed by the other body? God answered the question: by the revivals of 1842 and '43. The scarcely formed Church, half doubting whether it had a right to be, suddenly found converts like doves flocking to its windows. In the 33,000 additions by profession made to the churches in the first five years of our existence, the Lord seemed most opportunely and graciously to recognize our right to a place among the acknowledged instrumentalities for extending His kingdom. In 1846, eight years after the organization, the communicants numbered 145,416, showing a gain of 45,000, exceeding the figures of any but the last two years of the Church's history, and exceeding in amount any gain made in any other given period.

(2) The Southern Secession of 1857. At that gloomy day, every oven was believed to be against us. Our speedy dissolution was confidently predicted. The utterances of our enemies were never more oracular. The virus of slavery, which we had endeavored to extract, seemed to be everywhere, like a cancer. A new conflict had to be inaugurated with such of its representatives, as to our sorrow, elected to remain among us. The AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN is one of the landmarks of that conflict. Five Synods, 20 Presbyteries, 150 ministers, 263 churches, and 14,000 members, as nearly as can be calculated, left us at a single occasion, while many of the opposite extreme forsook us, because the measures which were sufficient to drive away the South, were not sufficiently ultra for them. The plans of denominational action, with the exception of the Church Extension Fund, were in their formative stage; Home Missions were represented by our Church Extension Committee with an income of \$3000, and an existence barely tolerated by the body. The numbers of our highest court sunk, in two years, from 225 to 187.

But at this critical point came the great revival of 1858 and '59; when, in one single week, as many as fifty thousand conversions were reported over the whole country. Our own Church entered with alacrity and zeal upon the blessed work. The Assembly of 1858 met when it was at its height; and the Narrative of the State of Religion then adopted, shows how utterly fears and doubts were swallowed up in heavenly joy at that time. "The millennium," says that impassioned document, "may even now be breaking upon our enraptured vision." "This blessing came to encourage her [the Church's] members and her ministry, and to inspire them with new confidence in the power of Christ. . . . This vital force sets all the machinery in the Church in motion, for the Spirit of the living God is in the wheels. . . . A lively interest is expressed by the Presbyteries in the plans adopted for extending the borders and increasing the efficiency of the Church, that she may meet her weighty responsibilities." In two years, our churches, of which the Northern ones only reported, received 19,833 members on profession, just double the number received in the two years following, and more than making up losses by secession and by death. This great spiritual impulse was like a preternaturally high tide to a vessel stranded where ordinary tides were of no avail. It helped us over the bar. It gave us strength and cheer instead of despondency and gloom. Coming the very next year after the secession, it was so opportune as to seem a special Providence to our Church.

(3) The third instance of Divine interposition, is that which we are actually experiencing at this time, and which is common

to the experience of most bodies of Christians in our land. It is the recovery from the depressing effects of the war. Our numerical strength was less in the first year of the war, than in any time for twenty years. And in the first three years we gained less than one thousand members. In 1862 we had the smallest number of additions by profession ever reported. But, mingled with the closing scenes of the war, came the news of a new and glorious visitation of the Spirit. The Dove of Peace and Salvation came, back and brooded over the agitated churches. The wastes of war were repaired by the fruits of righteousness, as the gory battle-field is transformed by the waving harvests of the following summer. In two years from the close of the war, we find ourselves in the enjoyment of greater gatherings than ever before, and far exceeding in numbers and in all the elements of denominational strength and vitality, any previous attainment of our Church.

Thus it appears, that the Providence of God, in the form of revivals, has brought us timely and indispensable succor in critical seasons; has met us as we patiently shaped our policy, and has filled the channels of activity just when they seemed dry, useless and likely to be abandoned, with the rushing tide of His own spiritual life and energies. Revival influences, utilized by the denominational machinery we had prepared for them, have been the very condition, the *sine qua non* of the existence of a Church, which, like our own, has been bearing martyr testimony to unpopular truth, through all its history. The Holy Spirit must needs pour oil upon the fire behind, while so many streams of water are being directed upon it in the front.

Owing thus more to revivals, perhaps, than any other denomination, or at least being able to trace their necessary connection with our existence and prosperity more readily than any other, it would seem to be the dictate of Christian wisdom in our people, to pray for revivals, to study their nature, and, as far as human instrumentality is to be spoken of in this connection, to labor to promote them in all our churches. Especially should we labor and pray for what the Narrative of 1858 hoped was already to be seen in the Great Awakening of that year: "the inauguration of a grand and perpetual REVIVAL ERA."

THE ANTI-CAPITAL PUNISHMENT HERESY.

The Independent, in its leader of July 4th on the Fate of Maximilian, announces itself opposed to all capital punishment, whatever its language is:

Ever and everywhere, we are opposed to capital punishment; whether for high crimes or low, whether upon small offenders or great. We hold with Jeremy Bentham that "the worst use you can put a man to is to hang him." We desire the universal abolition of the scaffold—the universal interdiction of the death-penalty. In some of the states of the American Union a better system of public punishment prevails; We hope to see it prevail in all. The hangman's rope is not an instrument of civilization; it is a relic of barbarism.

It then proceeds to argue that if ever capital punishment was deserved, it was by Maximilian, and classing Jefferson Davis with the late Emperor as the two greatest criminals of the 19th century, it adds:

The only vindication possible to the American Government for its release of Jefferson Davis is a consistent policy by the Government, in future, of non-punishment of any and all criminals by death.

Thus at length, the ill-concealed religious Universalism of the Independent finds appropriate expression in open opposition to capital punishment.

The Independent believes the worst use to which you can put a man is to hang him. Suppose we hold the Independent fast to that declaration. Its real meaning is the plain, literal one, viz: that the community does worse in hanging a murderer than the murderer did in slaying his victim. It means that the solemn judicial act by which the community shows its just abhorrence of crime, is worse than the stealth, the malignity, THE CRIME of Murder. It means that the real criminal is the public conscience, the law and its executors, while the true object of commiseration is the murderer, suffering the penalty of his crime.

Our opinion is somewhat different. We believe the worst use you can put a man to is to expose him to the peril of murder by relaxing the rigor of the law against the crime. The first concern of society is, and should be, with the lives of good and law-

abiding citizens. The treatment of criminals is wholly subordinate to that end, and not a field chiefly for the display of a humanity as false and dangerous as it is weak.

Ever since the woful failure of our government to bring to condign punishment the leading rebels of the South, and its indiscriminate use of the pardoning power, we have felt certain of the disastrous effect of such a policy upon public sentiment. Nevertheless, it is our opinion that the large majority of the North are untainted by this most perilous of political heresies. Nine-tenths of the readers of the *Tribune* tolerate its anti-capital punishment articles, as the mere private crochets of a concern, which on the whole, is the best newspaper in America, and therefore to be borne with in these whims, though utterly repudiated as doctrines. We believe the case will be found to be the same with the readers of the *Independent*.

THE PRINCETON REPERTORY ON RE-UNION.

The closing article for the July number, just issued, is devoted to the General Assembly, which met at Cincinnati. It upholds the action of that body upon the Declaration and Testimony, but it argues at length, and in the genuine style and spirit of Princeton, against the Re-union measures acted upon in that Assembly. The writer of the article maintains that "the very principle which constitutes the sum and substance of the plan of union" is "that men should be allowed to say they adopt our system who notoriously do not adopt it." He specifies three ways in which the formula of subscription to the Confession of Faith has been and still is interpreted. First, Subscription to every proposition contained in the Confession; Second, Adopting "the system of doctrine;" Third, The view that by the system of doctrine contained in the Confession, is meant the essential doctrines of Christianity, and nothing more.

With a degree of arrogance, which would be amazing if we did not know it of old, the writer undertakes to show that the New School branch of the Presbyterian Church in this country have practically adopted and still hold this latter view of subscription! We can scarcely bring ourselves to believe that the writer, be it Dr. Hodge or any other person of ordinary good sense and information in that branch of the Church, credits his own astounding and mendacious assertion. Its falsehood is too transparent to need exposure. The appeal may safely be made to the general religious public, who instinctively recognize the Calvinistic position of our body, and whose ministers know full well that an *ex animo* subscription to the Calvinistic system, as laid down in the standards of our Church, is a necessary prerequisite to admission into our Presbyteries.

It is but a short time since the matter was fully tested in a well-known case in this city. An Independent Methodist preacher, of decided ability and popular qualities, with a numerous and respectable congregation, felt his way for admission into our body; but before he reached the threshold of any of our Church courts, he learned from interviews with two of our most decided New School men, that the attempt would be utterly futile, and he desisted. Such would be the inevitable result in every case, where the grand principles of Calvinism were not plainly recognized by the applicant.

The article closes with a paragraph which sounds like a threat to the Union men of the other branch. The heaviest artillery has been reserved till the last. The writer says:—

"If the view of this subject given above be correct, it necessarily follows that the Old School would be guilty not only of a great moral wrong, should it accept of the proposed plan of union, but would forfeit the moral right to all endowments whether of churches or boards or seminaries. . . . We say nothing of the legal question. That is beyond our province."

We are informed that there are those in the other branch who do consider the legal question within their province, and are contemplating action in accordance with the above views.

"WHEN THE CAT'S AWAY, THE MICE WILL PLAY."—The value of the moderate on-the-fence Bishop Potter is likely to be realized in the diocese which he has left to attend the Pan-Anglican Council in Lambeth. During his absence

Rev. Stephen H. Tyng, Jr. preached in a Methodist Episcopal Church in the diocese of New Jersey, in spite of the repeated remonstrances of a neighboring Rector, who it seems has a right to dictate what shall or shall not be done by a brother Episcopalian in a Methodist Church if it lies within the bounds of his parish. The case has been laid before the Standing Committee of the Diocese of New York, and is to be made the ground of a canonical prosecution. The absurdity of the whole matter is plain from the fact that the Protestant Episcopal Church has authorized no local division of its dioceses, and as an old High Church rector in this city has often said, "the parish lies within the four walls of the Church."

If, however, the High Church are in earnest in wanting to fight it out, on this line, we have no doubt that they will have enough to do all the rest of the summer.

"My belief is, that the New-school Church, as a body, hold the Calvinistic system that is here defined—that they hold it just as we do, considering them as a body, and that on the basis of this system, in its fair historical sense, we can stand together. There are individuals in that Church, and there may be individuals in our branch of the Church, who hold views on certain points not in harmony with the system, but they must look to that in the two great bodies prepared to be united, and to be organically one, and we can then be governed by such interpretations as shall then prevail."

So spoke the moderator of the last O. S. Assembly, Dr. Gurley, commenting upon proposed terms of Re-union, especially the doctrinal basis contained in the second article. And no man in the Assembly of the other branch has seemed more fully to understand the true exigencies of the case, or more closely to approximate the position of toleration of minor differences on which alone re-union is practicable, than he. And yet the closing words of the extract from his address, which we have italicized, show us that explanations are still necessary, even if Dr. Gurley and his associates persuade the mass of their branch to take the liberal ground which they occupy.

We do not like the implication contained in these words, that a different interpretation of the standards may prevail in the re-united body, from that which is recognized in the negotiations for union; nor the implication that we may find ourselves "governed by" such an interpretation, when we have cut loose from our old organizations and lost their protection. The simple principle of reunion must be, that every man now standing *rectus in ecclesia*, in either branch of the Church, must be guaranteed an equally good standing in the re-united Church, and must be assured of such good standing, so long as he does not depart from the received interpretation of those standards at the time of re-union, in the branch of the Church to which he then belonged.

It is of course impossible to bind the Presbyterian or any other Church to any peculiar development of doctrine in the future. But it is possible to bind men to respect great and palpable rights of conscience, and of church standing, existing at the commencement, or at any stage of such development. If the two branches of the Presbyterian Church are united, it is possible that new and better views of truth will prevail; but it is also possible that the development may be in the direction of greater rigor, as it has been in times past; the "Old School" are fifty per cent more numerous than the New; such interpretations as shall then prevail, are most likely to be tinged with the views of the majority. Be it so; the point we make is, that those whose views on doctrine do not accord with the majority, shall not "then be governed" i. e. be liable to be disciplined by the majority; as Dr. Gurley's remarks would seem to imply. If we have misinterpreted those remarks, we shall be glad to be corrected. Meanwhile, as utterances of perhaps the fairest and most satisfactory man who has been heard on the subject in the other branch, they seem to us to demonstrate most effectually the need for more explicit terms in the doctrinal basis of re-union.

Methodist.—The Methodist congregation in the Trappe district, Somerset county, Maryland, has severed its connection with the Philadelphia Conference, and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church South. In the Philadelphia Preachers' Meeting it was announced that church property in Accomac county, Va., which was seized by the M. E. Church South, and which is valued at \$60,000, would in all probability be returned to the M. E. Church to which it rightfully belongs. More money, however, is required to defray the expenses connected with the prosecution of the suit. The case was referred to a Committee.