

Original Communications.

REV. A. M. STEWART'S LETTERS.—XXI.
San Francisco, Cal., Oct., 1868.
SYNOD OF ALTA CALIFORNIA.

My first opportunity for attending an ecclesiastical court this side the continent, was enjoyed the past week in this city. During the five preceding weeks my face had been turned from middle Nevada towards the meeting of our Pacific Synod—known as Alta California, travelling meanwhile on horseback, by stage, railroad and steamboat; and preaching in half a dozen different places.

It was a great pleasure thus to meet, and generally for the first time, these ministerial brethren and elders; and hear their discussions; see their manner of doing things; learn their sympathies, their hopes, their fears, difficulties, trials, disappointments and triumphs. Their modes of transacting ecclesiastical business correspond in some measure to the rugged, irregular, yet direct manner of the new region. Earnest, good men are here in the Master's work. The meeting was not large; a goodly number of the members being absent. Two causes were named for the absent number.

The small pox has been almost an epidemic in San Francisco the present season; hence those away and troubled with delicate sensibilities, felt the imagined odor not to be inviting. The bounds of the Synod are all this side the Rocky Mountains—immense territory. Travelling by stage, rail or steamboat, as compared with similar Eastern facilities, is enormously, even exorbitantly high; nor has a reduction in favor of ministers become an item of the Pacific public conveyances. Reports were that a number of dear brethren with very limited salaries had not the means to come.

Our church is not strong on this side the continent; not even so large and vigorous as supposed. This is not meant comparatively with others, but numerically. Almost the half of our ministers here are not pastors or evangelists; not preaching regularly; some not at all, but engaged in other avocations. This calamity can be less easily borne here, than in older and more established localities of the church. A secularized ministry, in the eyes of such communities as these, is a great hindrance to successful church extension. But few of our churches are as yet self-sustaining. A long, heavy, uphill business it is to reach, the acme of large, well organized self-sustaining and missionary churches among so new, heterogeneous and changeable people. A number of these difficulties which still press heavily here have already been noticed in my letters.

Among its decisions, Synod resolved, after mature deliberation, that a district Secretary for the Pacific coast was much needed. One to have in hand the general interests of the church, to visit weak places, open up new fields and keep the advisory Committee here constantly posted on all matters relating to church extension. Without any previous intimation or even thought on his part of such a result, Synod unanimously recommended your correspondent for this honorable, responsible and important position. The committee here have united in this recommendation and ask the Eastern Committee to confirm. In a choice of ministerial work, my preference would be for the settled pastorate. Should this matter come before me for decision, it will receive all the consideration its importance demands.

Synod held its session in Dr. Souder's new church. To my liking, though not the most costly, yet in every way it is the most agreeable hall for public worship heretofore seen. It will seat twelve hundred people. A neat, ready and most convenient arrangement for extra seats, when crowded, we noticed and commend to church builders. The same may be in other churches, but has not hitherto been seen by the writer. In the end of each pew next the aisle is a handle, looking merely as an ornament. When an extra seat is needed, the handle is taken hold of and pulled, when a board with a back for a seat turned down, is drawn out about eighteen inches; the little back is turned up and a cozy seat is ready. When done using, the back is turned down, the seat pushed in and the simple ornament remains.

When the fine building was completed, the trustees were forty-six thousand dollars in debt—California currency—coin. A somewhat novel mode of liquidation was successfully carried through during the past week. Even more than the forty-six thousand were raised—the surplus being for the erection of a Sabbath school room. The annual income of the congregation exceeds its outlay about five thousand dollars. All this, however, was required to pay the interest on the debt without lessening the principal. It was proposed that the members and hearers, all to be done within the congregation, loan, without interest to the trustees sufficient to pay the debt and thus stop the interest, and to be paid back, if desired, by the annual surplus. It proved more than a success. The church is free from debt, and from its present prosperity we are persuaded will soon become a fosterer of weak and new mission places in the rapidly growing city.

I leave this week to visit some new localities along this end of the Pacific Railroad; after which go again for a time among the mining towns of Nevada.

A. M. STEWART.

MANSES.

Rev. T. Dwight Hunt of the Presbytery of Kalamazoo, sends the following synopsis of a Report on Manses, adopted at the late meeting of that body.

1. The convenience which results both to pastor and people. First, in making sure some suitable home in the parish for the minister, a thing often very difficult to do, and sometimes impracticable, when a house is to be hired; and second, to make sure the location of his home in the place best suited to his work. The right kind of a parsonage in the right place removes every difficulty connected with the suitable and immediate settlement and location of the pastor elect.

2. The pecuniary comfort and advantage to the minister himself. Rent is a great bill out of an ordinary minister's salary. Rent day comes painfully often, causing the minister more anxiety and planning, and trouble, than any other item of expense. Rent, too, is often advanced without a corresponding increase of salary, causing increasing straitness and perplexity. Moreover, in a hired house the minister is subject to constant removals, arising from sale of property; removals always wasteful and expensive. Two or three removals have sometimes been forced upon ministers during a single year.

3. The advantage to the minister and family in giving them a home. The parsonage gives them a fixed habitation, at least during the period of their settlement. Changes of pastorate are so frequent that, under the most favorable circumstances, the cultivation of the home feeling is difficult. Ministers feel and deplore this, especially when, to the necessary changes, there is superadded those required by moving from one hired house to another.

This ought not to be. In other professions the ministry could locate permanent houses, and it is due to them from the churches and to mitigate the evil of their homeless state as far as possible, by providing a suitably fixed abode for them while with them.

4. The religious influence of the parsonage. It tends to make the minister feel at home among the people, and so to love them more, and thus to render the pastorate more profitable and permanent. It tends also to domesticate religion among the people. Especially is this true when time shall cluster about the minister's home all the sacred associations of years and generations. New England parsonages were in this way scarcely less inspiring than the church edifice itself. Of course the right kind of a parsonage is urged, and one kept in good repair, one suitable every way to the wants of minister and people; not the cheapest and oldest, and most out of the way place, which the least money will buy, of which the church and people are ashamed, and in which it is unreasonable to expect the minister to be contented.

ANOTHER LEAF FROM THE BRAINERD TREE.

In the summer of 1866 was announced the death of Thomas Brainerd, D. D., which occurred at Scranton. Few events could have cast a deeper shadow over this community. A zealous and able minister in the branch of the Church to which he belonged, Dr. Brainerd rose far above denominational limits. Christians of every name mourned when he was dead. We remember seeing, among others, a venerable Roman Catholic come to take a farewell look of the form of the departed while his remains lay in their narrow bed. Of three score years and ten, somewhat stricken by the effects of a second attack of a foe whose touch seldom needs repetition, yet retaining his natural force and rarely equalled physical proportions without much abatement, bending over the face of the dead—his junior by ten years—the living shook with irrepressible emotion, while he endeavored to minister a word of comfort to those who had been bereaved.

Dr. Brainerd was equally distinguished as a citizen and a patriot. His heart would swell, and his spirit become intensified, as the destinies of the country approached their crisis. The soldier ever found in him the sympathies of a father and a friend. Disloyalty, whether lurking in the form of neutrality, or undisguised treason, never found "aid and comfort" in his presence. Like Satan in his descent from heaven, such enemies might well have exclaimed, "farthest from thee is best." We went into Chestnut street together on Sabbath night, as the news of Lee's surrender threw our quiet city into delirium. Parting with him, at a late hour, in front of his own door, his whole being seemed to glow with gratitude. "Good night," said he, "you won't regret this walk; we have never seen the like of this before, and will never see such a night again." The transition from national joy to national grief came quickly. On the night of Good Friday, April 14th, 1865, Abraham Lincoln was slain. A night of darkness, of longer duration than that which fell on Egypt in the days of Moses, shrouded the land; and there was no light in our dwellings. Without manuscript, and almost without a selected text, Dr. Brainerd, on the Sabbath morning following the sad event, entered old Pine Street Church, crowded, unexpectedly to him, to its full capacity, and for an hour and a half, preached with an unctious and power, such as are never wielded except by the great in intellect and elo-

quent in speech. Indeed he spoke as though some miraculous agent had sustained him. We never knew a man more bountifully endowed to equal every emergency which, in the course of Providence, he was called to fill.

Amongst his greatest pulpit efforts, perhaps, may be regarded his sermon, "We all do fade as a leaf." A sermon, which the writer of these lines has thought, in one of its aspects at least, as singularly inapplicable to himself and members of his family who have passed "the cloudy region." The leaf withereth; the chilling blasts waft away its sap and its verdant coloring; seared and yellow, it decays and falls from the tree.

Dr. Brainerd had four children. Fever, in early life carried off two—a son and daughter of rare brightness and beauty. The messenger accomplished his errand. But the early slain lay in death like flowers retired than faded leaves. Dr. Brainerd himself retired to rest without premonition of approaching dissolution and awoke in heaven! Sixty years had scarcely made a wrinkle, or the north wind its mark. Two of his little grandchildren, who preceded him to the skies but a few days, took their departure after a very brief ordeal of suffering. While writing we have before us a short message, received to-day from Scranton, announcing the departure of the third child of Dr. Brainerd—Mrs. Emma G. Boies, who died on Sabbath morning at 3 o'clock. Mrs. Boies was not called away instantaneously as was her father. She had two days in which to look forward, with Christian submission and hope, to the certain and expected approach of death; but we may say of her also, that when, in the full bloom of womanhood, she took her farewell of earth, her transition was rather like the flower taken to bloom in the paradise of God, than the leaf which fades from the branch in autumn.

Philadelphia, Nov. 2, 1868.

A LETTER.

I sat down the other day to write a letter. After I had written the date and the address, a thought came across my mind, which held my pen suspended above the paper for several minutes. It was not a suggestion of any thing new, striking, or valuable; only a sudden realization of the wonderful nature of some very familiar things. Such a realization would come to us often if we paused to think of a thousand things which we do as a matter of course, daily—nay, almost hourly.

But this was my thought. Here is a perfectly blank sheet of paper—meaning nothing to any body except just that. I make a few black marks upon it, and behold, what a change! I send it a hundred miles away, to a dear friend. It carries ideas from my mind to hers. It tells her my thoughts, occupations, interests. It breathes my love into her heart through the medium of her eye, almost as if I were close to her, whispering it into her ear. How the cold, blank, lifeless paper is transformed into a warm, living, loving thing, by a few strokes of my pen! So warm and so loving it may be, that the receiver can but show her joy and answering love, by kissing the senseless paper as if it were indeed a thing of life.

Is there nothing wonderful in this, when we take it out of the great bundle of habits, and look at it for a moment!

And surely this power of speaking to the hearts of absent friends, in a form, too, that is more enduring even than words uttered by the voice, is one to be wielded carefully, in the fear and for the service of our blessed Master, to whom we and all our powers belong.

WRONG AT THE START.

In common with the rest of my sex, I, Dorcas Hicks, am much given to the practice of knitting. While reading, either silently or aloud, I am in the habit of aiding my perceptions and employing my otherwise idle hands, by making my needles fly and my stocking grow. To this habit of mine the reflections are due which will be shortly set forth.

Every woman at all skilled in the noble art of knitting, understands what is meant by *ribbing*. To others the word may have different meanings—to a knitter it bears but one. She knows that if one or more stitches are knit alternately plain and seamed, (there again the *connoisseur* will understand me) it produces raised ridges at even distances, running lengthwise of the work. Thus far by way of explanation. I, Dorcas Hicks, was peacefully pursuing the double employment of reading and *ribbing*, the other day. I was nearly across the needle, which had a good many stitches on it, when I chanced to look at my work, and saw that my ribbing was not going on as it should. I was *seaming* when I should have been knitting *plain*. I picked back two or three stitches to find my mistake. Still wrong. Two or three more. Wrong yet. I pulled the yarn out of several more, without finding the one wrong stitch for which I looked. I ran my eye along all the stitches in the row. Ah!—thought I—wrong at the start; that's it. So out came the needle, and down went all the stitches to the beginning of the row. There was the mistake, I began with knitting *plain* when I should have seamed. This was soon set right, the stitches taken up, and the work resumed. But my mind instead of going back to the book I had been reading, dwelt unawares on the words "WRONG AT THE START."

How easy it was for me, when I found where my error began, to whip my work all out quickly and start right! Would it were always as easy for those who begin wrong, to take out their mistake and start again right! The errors of a life often come from being *wrong at the start*—from want of proper care and training at the beginning—from setting out with false principles, or with none at all, from not realizing the importance of starting right.

Certainly a person may begin all fair and well, and fall into dire mistakes and snares afterwards; but with a due knowledge of what is true and right, and a purpose with the help of the Mighty One to keep in the good way, one is more likely to go on well to the end, than if he begin his course in indifference, error, or sin.

Another thought that came to me was this: If we find ourselves involved in wrong or trouble caused by our own acts, we had better not be satisfied with smoothing it over and trying somehow, we know not exactly how, to bring it out right. No—we shall probably find that we were *wrong at the start*; and we had best go to the root of the matter at once—undo all that we can of what has been wrong; alas! often that is not much, and start right again if possible.

We form a plan for pleasure or for profit. It does not prosper or succeed in its object—it grieves and disappoints instead. Perhaps we started wrong, in not asking the blessing of God upon it; in not being sure that our motives and our means were pure and generous. It may be that it was all fair, and that for some other reason our plans have failed. But it will be wise to look well into it, and find out whether we started right.

There is one great comfort in all these reflections. We may have been altogether wrong at the start, have gone wrong ever since, and be in a dark wilderness of perplexity and doubt. We feel that we cannot undo our errors as we can our knitting—in their consequences to others or to ourselves; and the thought weighs upon us. But the comfort is, that our lives cannot be so dark, or so wrong, or so harmful, that the sunshine of God's love cannot reach us. Although we cannot go back and begin our work over again, we can have all its sin and evil washed away from record by the blood of Jesus; and we can start anew from this moment to "do what our hands find to do," with light and strength beyond our own votechsafed to us.

All this we can have for the simple asking in faith and humility for Jesus' sake. Then, however *wrong at the start* we have been, we may be sure, through our blessed Saviour's merits, of being **RIGHT AT THE END.**

DORCAS HICKS.

ORTHODOXY IN HIGH PLACES.

The following, from the *Methodist Home Journal* of this city, is a deserved tribute to our noble Chief Magistrate. We understand it is from the pen of Rev. G. D. Carrow:

In the proclamation of His Excellency, Maj. Gen'l John W. Geary, Governor of this State, appointing the 26th inst. a day of Thanksgiving, the following passage occurs in the last clause of the document:—"And that our paths through life may be directed by the example and instructions of the Redeemer, who died that we might enjoy all the blessings, which temporarily flow therefrom, and eternal life in the world to come."

It is well known that a very large majority of the people of this country are not only Christians in name, but subscribe to that grand formula of Christian doctrine which distinctively recognizes Jesus Christ, in His death on the cross, and intercession in Heaven, as the sole medium through which a holy and just God can communicate with depraved and sinful men, and bestow upon them the temporal and spiritual blessing necessary to their happiness in time, and eternity. In the face of this open fact, however, both State and national proclamations of thanksgiving have been so worded as to completely ignore the Christian sentiment of the people at large. Speaking for the Christian masses of the country, I may say that we are not bigots—that we stand pledged to maintain unrestricted liberty of thought, speech, and worship; but we are neither Deists nor Mohammedans, and we have a right to expect that our Rulers, when speaking on Christian subjects, and recommending the performance of Christian duties, shall neither contradict nor ignore what they know to be our sentiments. I may be mistaken, but I believe this to be the only instance in which a Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has summoned its people to prayer and thanksgiving in perfect accordance with their religious views and aspirations. If it be the first, may it not be the last! If it be a rare exception, may the exceptions become the rule! If we be neither Deists, nor Mohammedans, may our Rulers have the honest, conscientious courage to say so! Governor Geary, as soldier, Chief Magistrate, and statesman, has many and great claims upon the confidence and gratitude of his countrymen, and they will trust him the farther, and esteem him the more for his fidelity to that Redeemer, "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which

is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

CONSISTENCY.

VISIT TO CHESTER VALLEY.

Chester County, Pennsylvania, is one of the most attractive portions of our State, and no less renowned for the hospitality of its people, than for the fertility of its soil, and the beauty of its scenery. Here is a rich valley, thirty miles in length by six or seven in breadth, bordered on both sides by bold ranges of hills, and intersected by glittering streams, while in all directions white barns and farm houses peep through the foliage, dotting the green landscape with their inviting forms, until the eye can at some points wander to a distance that seems interminable. To this peaceful valley we came a few weeks since, and the kindness lavished upon us by the warm-hearted people was literally unbounded. Their hearts, their houses, and their pulpits, were open to us, and such a response was given to that noble cause which we represented, that is, the cause of the Saviour, as cheered and gratified our hearts.

The Presbyterian Church of East Whiteland, New School, made a donation of \$50 to constitute Rev. A. M. Stewart, their pastor, now absent on the Pacific Coast; a Life Director of the Penna. Seaman's Friend Society, and promised the additional sum of \$15 from the Sunday School for the purpose of placing a library on board one of our ships. The Presbyterian Church of Reeseville, New School, made a donation of \$50 to constitute their pastor, Rev. Thomas J. Aiken, also a Life Director, and promised \$15 from the Sunday School for a Sea Library. The Presbyterian Church of Great Valley, Old School, made a donation of \$50 to constitute Rev. Edward Payson Heberton, their pastor, a Life Director of the Society. Long life, peace, and prosperity to the kind inhabitants of Chester Valley.

D. H. EMERSON.

RE-UNION ITEMS.

In the Assembly of 1837, the before loosely charged errors assumed shape, in sixteen propositions, brought to the attention of that Body, through the memorial proposed by the convention, which preceded its meeting. In reply to these propositions, the New School placed them in one column, and in contrast with them, in an opposite column, their *real* opinions. So great was the difference, and so plainly the contrast was made to appear, that no alternative was left but to admit the charges were erroneous; or to deny the moral honesty of the accused. The latter was unfortunately adopted. That expose (the true doctrine, in place of the error charged) received the sanction of the entire New School party then; and a second endorsement, after a year's reflection, by the same body, in a large and full representation at the convention at Auburn. By that expose they are still willing to stand. And if they are to receive the credit due to respectable christian men, we can now predicate of them no differences in doctrinal views, from the opinions of the Old School, which should prevent their reunion; or which are at war with the "Calvinistic system," or the terms of adoption of the Confession of Faith.

The New School had denied they held the opinions ascribed to them. They demanded judicial investigation according to the legal forms of the Church. Two men, supposed to be representative men, were selected and prosecuted. They yielded full obedience to all the constitutional forms, and by their Presbyteries first, and by the Assembly as the highest court and last resort, in Mr. Barnes' case were acquitted! Their real opinions were disclosed in these processes; and by the decisions those opinions were officially and judicially declared to be consistent with the "Calvinistic system"—with the Confession of Faith, and the terms of subscription. The General Assembly is the highest tribunal known to the Presbyterian constitution. Its decisions carry the weight of the denomination, for here the wisdom and grace of the whole church are supposed to aggregate; and it is the received doctrine of the Old School church, that its authority covers, and demands the respectful acquiescence and submission of all the other judicatories and the people of the denomination.—"Common Faith" in *The Western Presbyterian*. [O. S.]

If then each School, after so much deliberation, can sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as each now has them, because they contain the *system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures*, let reunion be consummated. We shall still go into it with some trembling, but yet heartily. We do not, as our readers well know; regard it as the best thing possible, but as it would seem, as the best thing practicable. If each church was in a normal condition, each contented and happy, holding and enjoying its own peculiarities, but fully devoted to the Master's cause, and filled with love and a co-operative spirit, greatly more would be accomplished by our continuing in two organizations, than by our becoming one. But we are not in that condition. We are agitated. Some, reckless they may be, but they have influence, are determined on reunion, and will open neither ears, nor heart, nor understanding to anything else; like Raehael, when she said, "Give me children, or I die;" and like Israel, who said, "Give us a king;" and like an inconsiderate daughter, who says, "I must and will marry the man." Then, taking things as they are, let there be reunion, provided only that it be on right principles—on the principles above indicated. "First pure, then peaceable." Truth we must conserve and propagate. But past unpleasantry we will not needlessly recall. We will sink, if permitted; all historical distinctions. Let the reunited church be one homogeneous body, each member becoming assimilated to the perfect one, and each cherishing charity, and esteeming other *better* than themselves." Then the enlarged church may grow yet larger, and purer; and more attractive; and better accomplish the end of her high and holy calling.—*The North Western Presbyterian*.