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John A. Weir

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ENLARGEMENT OF THE EDITORIAL CORPS.

Among the measures designed to increase the efficiency and attractiveness of our paper at this time, our readers will welcome the new arrangement by which a larger and distinguished corps of writers is added to the Editorial Department. As the designation of these brethren has met the cordial approval of the Pastors' Association of this city, they will be known as

THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE.

Their contributions will be generally accompanied with the initials of the writers. Their names are as follows:—

- Rev. Z. M. Humphrey, D.D., Pastor of Calvary Church.
- Rev. Horrick Johnson, D.D., Pastor of the First Church.
- Rev. Danl. March, D.D., Pastor of Clinton St. Church.
- Rev. Peter Stryker, D.D., Pastor of N. Broad St. Church.
- Rev. George F. Wiswell, D.D., Pastor of Green Hill Church.
- Rev. E. E. Adams, D. D., Prof. in Lincoln University.
- Rev. Samuel W. Duffield, Special Correspondent.

Mr. Robert E. Thompson will continue to act as Editor of the News Department.

Correspondents in every Presbytery and Synod will promptly furnish us with fresh items of news from their respective fields.

THE CHURCH AT WORK.

Much is said and written now-a-days of the work of the Church. A number of good books and tracts have been sent out to tell the Church what to do and how to do it. Everybody admits that the field is very broad and ought to be cultivated. It forms a leading topic for the pulpit. Earnest Christian men talk about it, and pray about it. Stirring exhortations are heard about the necessity of doing more for Christ and his cause. National, State and County Conventions assemble to confer about it and resolve that there is a great work to be done, and that it must be done and suggest methods for doing it. We live in an age of "Conventions" and "Associations," and "Union Efforts." Now all this may be very well. But still we hear the constant cry that the work is not done. Much of the territory belonging to the Church is unexplored and running to waste. "Dry bones" cover the valley and they do not live. May it not be that the local churches are not engaged, each in its own work at home? In the multitude of calls for the attention of the Church abroad is it not true that the work at home has been, is being neglected?

The writer of this article, on a recent Sabbath morning, received ten different notices printed and written, to be read from his pulpit, almost all of them calling his people away from their own home-field, and proposing to use them elsewhere. Now we must remember that the Church is a divine institution. It is here for the salvation of the world. It is divided into various families, and these occupy, each, its own particular field and is held responsible for the work needed there. The local church cannot do its work by proxy. It must address itself to the business, laboring with its own hands, even as God has commanded. The Church may not scatter itself over the range of half the continent, and still fulfill its mission at home. The local work of the Church cannot be done in "Conventions," mass-meetings and great union prayer-meetings, and just so far as these tend to divert the attention of Christians from the home field, they deplete the Church of spiritual power. Every Christian has just about so much zeal, enthusiasm and energy, and if his capital stock is used up in various efforts away from his field of labor, he is quite worthless when he returns. The home field seems very tame and hopeless in contrast with what he has seen elsewhere, and he has little heart to do anything. The Church at work on its own field, each member applying himself with zeal and perseverance, never fails to see the cause of godliness move forward. There is co-operation and harmony of effort—each takes his place and performs his part according to plan and system. Each pastor and each private Christian knows his own appointed field of labor best, and can expend all his strength without waste. And the Church thus organized and at work on the home field is best equipped and will be most effective in its influence abroad throughout the world.

We cannot depend upon books nor resolutions, upon Christian Conventions nor stirring appeals and hortations, but each one in the local church must gird himself about with the strength of faith and go forth to work as if all depended upon his individual efforts, and let him be assured that God will honor and reward him and his work.

MR. BARNES AT THREE SCORE AND TEN.

The First church of this city was crowded on Sabbath morning last, in token of the deep and cordial interest felt by the people in the commemorative discourse to be preached by Mr. Barnes, on the occasion of reaching his three score years and ten. His discourse on "Life at Three Score," preached ten years ago, had made so deep and happy an impression, that not a few were drawn to this last service by their revived interest in the former, and by a respectful curiosity to witness the effect of the ten years, just past, upon the experience and views of the speaker.

We think all who heard the "Life at Three Score" will testify that ten years have not a whit abated the fire and force of the speaker, but rather increased it; while for fullness, ripeness, and vigor of thought, the performance of last Sunday will not suffer in the comparison. The former discourse, we believe, had the advantage in leisurely written preparation over the latter, which was preached, like a very large proportion of Mr. Barnes' later sermons, from scanty notes, and not from manuscript. In literary finish, therefore, it was inferior to the former discourse, but it gave ample proof, that the same or even a greater man was engaged in its preparation.

The sermon itself, based on Psalm 90, 10: "The days of our years are three score years and ten," was rather a declaration of principles, drawn from experience, than a review of the facts of that period. Yet the few references made to facts, were among the most graphic and powerful parts of the discourse. The occurrences of the last ten years seemed to the speaker, in review, almost like a strange vision. "I have personally seen," said Mr. Barnes in tones of quiet wonder, "this country become a land of liberty. I had not expected to live to see the consummation of my wishes." And his brief allusions to the stand he had long ago taken and uniformly maintained, his defence of law in such times as when Pennsylvania Hall was burned, by a mob, while Mayor, police, and firemen looked on in silence; his fidelity to principle, often at the peril of his place, were doubly interesting when joined with the declaration, "I shall close my eyes on a land of freedom, where there are no more shackles and where the air is too pure to permit a slave." It had cost this country much, but it was worth all it had cost.

As to the significance of his own life, and the marks of an overruling Providence which it presented, Mr. Barnes seemed to have, at this advanced stage, a most vivid idea of a divine interposition, giving it a very different direction from that indicated by others and originally preferred by himself. Turned aside by this Providence from the law as a profession, he had expected in the ministry to be a pastor; but, while his pastoral life had been very unsatisfactory to himself, he had been led, step by step, without intending any such thing, to the career of a commentator; and in the million and more of copies of his commentaries, scattered over the world, he saw proof of a providential overruling of his own plans; "a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."

It was a great thing, said Mr. Barnes, to have lived on the earth these three score years and ten. Born before the death of Washington, his life had been parallel with almost the entire development of the American nation. Life now is practically longer than that of the patriarchs; longer than when it took from two to ten years to transcribe a copy of the sacred Scriptures, which to-day can be printed in a few minutes and bound in a few minutes more. As an author, Mr. Barnes could say with peculiar interest, that, in former times, the writer might be well pleased if a thousand copies of any of his works was distributed in his life-time; now they may go abroad by millions.

But, impressive as was Mr. Barnes' review of the seventy years just passed, while with uncommon ardor and enthusiasm he recounted the imperishable gains for civil and religious liberty made all over the world; far more interesting were his closing words, in which, from his vantage ground of age, experience, wisdom, and piety, he cheered the Christian and the philanthropist with hopes of even greater things to come. Rising from struggles with a skepticism natural to his cast of mind, and triumphing over tendencies believed to be universal with the aged, Mr. Barnes not only recognizes the present as the best of all the ages, but confidently and joyfully predicts that the next will be better still. He believes that society in its progress loses nothing valuable; that the evils which have tyrannized over man are losing or have lost their power; that there is an accumulation of forces on the side of right, in the form of great truths, struck out by science and religion, and that all the great onward movements of the earth are in

connection with Christianity and in the line of prophecy. "I shall cherish these views to the end of life." Thanks! brave old man, thanks from a younger generation, yet in the thick of the struggle. Thanks to that Spirit of the Master that puts it into your heart to utter, what may be your last words to us, in such cheering accents. But may you yet live to tell us of Life at Four Score, and to share with us in those more glorious triumphs which you encourage us to expect, and in the attainment of which your words and example will be no small element of success.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRESENT PHASE OF THE REUNION QUESTION.

The phase which the movement for Reunion has taken in the other branch deserves to be kept before our people. Or, if it cannot be described in any definite terms, that fact itself should be kept in view. Some things are clear. Not only is the Joint Committee's Basis defeated, but a large majority of the O. S. Presbyteries are arrayed against it. "The Standards pure and simple" are not offered to us as an alternative for the Joint Committee's Plan, by those who, in any sufficient number, have expressed a willingness to take that plan if necessary. Perhaps one-fourth of the O. S. Presbyteries are in this latter position; while the large majority first reject the Committee's Basis and then offer what they call "The Standards pure and simple," as the only ground on which they will unite.

Had but a respectable majority—not three-fourths—of the O. S. Presbyteries approved the Joint Committee's Basis, while preferring "The Standards pure and simple," it would have assured the supporters of the Basis in the body of the substantial agreement and sympathy of a majority in the other branch with their own views. And, though the Committee's plan could not have been carried—a three-fourths vote being necessary—it would have been relinquished by our brethren with far less reluctance than now.

But when we pass from the region of facts, and ask the meaning of the rejection of the Committee's Basis, we are left in uncertainty. Our brethren propose union on "The Standards pure and simple." In this proposal they ignore the fact that the Standards, like every other document, inspired or uninspired, are subject to diverse interpretations. They also ignore the fact that parts of the Standards themselves have been regarded by the highest authorities in the Church as "not essential and necessary." They also ignore the fact that all our great difficulties, and especially those we are trying to heal, arose from differences of interpretation, and from an unwillingness to admit that a reasonable amount of such difference is allowable. They have just defeated a basis which frankly admitted these differences; they defeated a basis containing a similar frank avowal a year ago; evidently they either regard it expedient to be blind to the differences, or they wish for a rigorous construction of the Standards, such as the defeated plans would not have allowed, and were intended to prevent.

Some of our O. S. brethren would scorn the idea of such a rigorous interpretation of the Standards. They will know that it is not insisted on among themselves. These brethren believe our differences to be unimportant, unlikely ever again to create difficulty among us, and therefore, needing to be consigned to oblivion as fast as possible.

These brethren say, in a circular lately issued, and sent with apostolic formulas to the Presbyteries:

5th. That it is our conviction that the various Presbyteries, in voting for the foregoing amendment to the Doctrinal Basis, [reversing the Smith and Gurley clauses] are to be regarded as giving an assurance to our brethren of the New School Presbyterian Church, of their willingness to unite with them, in good faith, on terms of perfect equality, feeling that their confidence in, and love to the ministers, ruling elders and people of that branch of the Church is such that they can live with them harmoniously in the same ecclesiastical connection, without the assurance of mutual guarantees; and we do moreover assure them that this is the spirit in which the present action is taken.

These are agreeable expressions truly. But what is their practical representative value? Is it the spirit of the governing forces; of the available majority of their Church; that here finds utterance? A proposition involving the explicit declaration of the principles of doctrinal liberty, most characteristic of and most dear to our branch, has just been voted down by a decided majority of their Presbyteries. Some of the very Presbyteries joining in this circular are fresh from assisting in this defeat.

The way in which they, and the majority could best, most frankly, and most emphatically show their confidence in us; in fact the only unquestionable way, they refuse to take. And they come to us with words of confidence, introduced with apostolic greetings.

We confess we are puzzled. Amid many surmises, we are fain to ask whether the meaning of it all is not, to conciliate and retain the defeated minority at Albany, while promoting union with ourselves? Is not that minority practically governing the O. S. Church at this day, and are not these brethren with their apostolic greetings, consciously or unconsciously their instruments? That minority is also prepared for reunion on "The Standards pure and simple." What they mean by that expression is not in the least doubtful. Hear one of their out-spoken organs on the subject. We quote from the N. W. Presbyterian of Nov. 26th, which, after graciously assenting to the new scheme of reunion, thus discourses:

On the other hand, there are difficulties, serious and almost insurmountable, in the way of the speedy consummation of what all regard as most desirable when practicable. Our New School brethren, in all these negotiations, have never yet gotten beyond the "toleration principle." We will agree to tolerate you as you are, if you will agree to tolerate us as we are. The Old School in twice rejecting this basis agreed upon by the Joint Committee, have said, with an emphasis that is unmistakable, we will not tolerate the doctrines heretofore condemned. The language of the action of the Old School Presbyteries is that previously embodied in the Hall resolution. The question now is, will our New School brethren agree, intelligently and permanently, to give up those doctrines which the Old School have persistently condemned, and which many of them declare, in the statements of them as charged against them, they have never held. Are they willing to come into a union, in which it is expressly understood that no young man holding, and avowing, the views, in the form in which they have been condemned, shall receive license or ordination? Are they willing to come under the rule of "examination, the right to exercise it whenever, and to the extent deemed necessary by the various Presbyteries, being conceded, as it has never been denied, by either Assembly. Are they willing to join hands with Old School men, it being solemnly understood that discipline is to be administered against any one, be his standing what it may, who openly promulgates any of those doctrines which the Old School men have always declared to be inconsistent with a proper subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechism, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures? If so, they have only openly and frankly to avow such willingness, and Old School men, with the utmost alacrity will hail such avowal as the harbinger of a lasting and blessed reunion. Will they do this? This is the way in which Old School men will understand them, in accepting the Standards pure and simple, after all that has passed between the two bodies. With such a surrender of the toleration principle, abandonment of doctrines so long by us condemned, acceptance of the right of examination and enforcement of discipline on their part, we would be willing to surrender our imperative rule of examination, although by us deemed less invidious and more just and equal, and to risk our Seminaries, list of publications, and to grant certain indulgences, as to benevolent contributions, although in them may be contained some of the seeds of all our past difficulties.

CHRISTMAS AND THE JEWS.

"You know Christmas is nothing to us," a young Jewess said to me, as we were talking over arrangements for the coming holidays. "We give the children presents, because all their little friends get them, and we cannot explain it all to them, but of course the day is nothing to us."

The words struck me strangely and painfully. It had never come to me just so before. It was sorrowful enough to know that there were any to whom Christmas was nothing—any to whom there would be no tender thoughts of the wonderful gift, no sweet, glad thoughts of the glorious future, connected with that day. But that those to whom Christ Himself declared He was specially sent, those with whom had been the divine promise of His coming, of whose race and nation He was—that these could say "Christmas is nothing to us," seemed more than sorrowful.

It was not that they do not keep the day, for the uncertainty of its identity makes even many Christians regard it lightly, and some even look upon its observance as a relic of Popery. But it was for all that the words meant, and for all that the day means. Christmas is nothing to us. It meant that Christ was nothing to them;—it meant that the holy sufferer on that middle cross, was to them an impostor, ending his life in desecrated ignominy;—it meant that, driven from the city and temple, outcast, wandering and despised, the remnants of scattered Israel still lifted their eyes in the darkness, looking forward to a coming Messiah, even as Abraham and Moses and David looked. Still wept as by the rivers of Babylon, sending up their sad complaint, "why doth He yet tarry?" It meant that still, He who came for healing and for saving, was despised, rejected, crucified. His own believing Him not.

And then, as I pursued these painful thoughts, the question came to me, "What are we doing—we to whom Christmas in its glad significance is everything—to make it what it should be to the Jew? Who prays for the Jew? Who labors to show the Jew his long looked for Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth? Who cares for the race and nation of whom the Redeemer was born? Who remembers and pleads those wonderful words of Paul, so full of meaning—"Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more, their fullness?" And "if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?"

Oh Christians, let us remember these, who, according to the flesh, are Christ's brethren, and plead with Him that they may also be His brethren, according to the spirit, so making the glad Christmas-tide, to them as to us, a time full of the most precious memories and most joyful hopes.

K. H. J.

THE SENSATIONAL DRAMA.

It is a remarkable fact that dramatic representations from the beginning have carried the seeds of their own demoralization with them, so that among the earliest notices of the theatre are the protests of the moral and good of those times against the corrupt tendencies of the drama even in classic eras. In our days it has come to pass that the presentation of a play at all tolerable to decent people is rather the exception than the rule. Dramatic critics who, as a class, have been disposed to blame the moral and religious part of society for abandoning the drama and the opera to the less respectable classes, are now found criticizing, heralding, commending and puffing the intolerably obscene performances which hold possession of the stage for a month or even a quarter at a time, treating them in fact as quite legitimate performances, and refraining from one wholesome manly and indignant word in the name of the outraged and imperilled morals of the community. We believe one of our city critics did happen to mention that, at the opening performance of one of these vile plays, the audience was composed almost exclusively of men. And this is the most these critics, who doubtless have respectable mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters, and who know something of virtuous homes, have to say against representations that exceed in villainous those of the lowest theatres in Paris, and that are sweeping us all towards an era of debauchery and crime.

We are glad to notice that the Chicago Ministerial Union has had this matter under consideration. It has come up, as we learn from the New York Sun, in the form of the following preamble and resolutions. The first two resolutions were adopted, after a brief debate. The third was under consideration when the meeting adjourned.

Whereas, The continued existence of a republican form of government depends upon the prevalence of a high degree of morality among the people; and

Whereas, Theatrical exhibitions have, in every age, proved powerfully inimical to the virtue of both actors and spectators; and

Whereas, The spectacles now become common in theatres and opera houses have reached a pitch of degradation, both in their visible indecencies and theatrical immoralities, unprecedented in our own country, and hardly equalled in any other, and are making fearful inroads on female delicacy, youthful purity and public morality; therefore,

Resolved, That this Ministerial Union respectfully invite the attention of the pulpit generally to this fearful and growing evil, and solicit the forthputting of all its influence to shield religion and morals from its ruinous influence.

Resolved, That we beg our Legislature to interpose some effective check to the growing indecencies and immoralities of stage exhibitions, which are making constant and fearful assault upon the very foundations of our political system.

Resolved, That we beg our secular press, that yields so vast an influence over the public mind, to characterize these spectacles as they deserve, and to discourage attendance upon them.

Rev. E. P. Hammond and wife landed at Boston, from the Cunard Steamer, Tripoli, on Monday, Nov. 30th, joyful and grateful for the divine protection they had experienced by sea and land. But immediately on landing, a telegram dated Nov. 28th, from Towanda, Pa., was handed to them, stating that Mrs. Overton, mother of Mrs. Hammond was at the point of death. On the afternoon of the same day she went to be with Jesus, and her children only reached Towanda in time to take part in the funeral services.

The Christian World of London contains a very full and very favorable report of Mr. Hammond's closing labors among the children in Mr. Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. His friends in London (we see by the Revival) presented him with a purse of fifty guineas, and an illustrated work on Syria and Palestine. His address will be Vernon, Conn.