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John A. Weir
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PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 1869.

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THINGS MISCALLED AMUSEMENTS.

The popular amusements of the day are grievously misnamed. They should be called *excitements*. The Anglo-Saxons and the Celts, the races that give character to our American civilization and religion, know little of amusement in its proper sense. It does not content them. The dance, the evening party, the card table, the theatre and opera, the race course, the billiard saloon and the ten pin-alley are either in their very nature, or by their almost invariable associations, excitements of the most unwholesome, inordinate and pernicious sort. Such a party as that given by a prominent New England Representative in Washington some six weeks ago, when, after the usual gayeties and feasting and drinking had extended to one o'clock in the morning, we are told "the German" was commenced and kept up till near daybreak and the whole was finished by a champagne breakfast—could this be rightly called amusement? By no means. It was a piece of real business, of the hardest and most trying nature, cruel to body and to soul, as severe a draft upon the nerve-force as a forced march, or a total route and pell-mell retreat of an army. Nay, we believe the downright butchery of a battle-field is less barbarous and more truly amusing than the orgies of such a first-class all-night party at the Metropolis. The theatre is also the scene of wearying, demoralizing, embroiling excitement, more enfeebling and corrupting than a miasm. The fierce passions, the gorgeous lewdness, the unmitigated sensuality of spectacle and costume and situation and plot of the staple performances of the drama,—what refreshment is there in all this? What refreshment indeed on the very crater of hell, inhaling the sulphurous fumes of the pit? Men do not go to those places for the innocent and wholesome thing properly called amusement, they go for excitement. They go not to be entertained, but to be inflamed.

So in games, which of themselves are innocent and pure, as billiards and nine pins, (we cannot include cards, as the element of chance enters too largely into the game;) Americans are not content until, by connecting the excitements of betting, loss and gain of money, and above all, drinks, with the play, they have fairly shut it out of the list of amusements and made it a snare to character and possessions, a swift path to dissipation and ruin.

Amusement, relaxation, innocent gaiety, hilarity, sportiveness, is a Gospel duty. There is a time to laugh. But it is one of the gravest mistakes of our age and country, that it knows so little of amusements, and has gone almost exclusively into dissipation in their stead. With that, the true Christian plainly has nothing to do, but to discountenance, and if the way is hedged up against reformation, to withdraw from it utterly. Dissipation is not among things indifferent. Gay parties lasting till past midnight, in which everybody is over-dressed or under-dressed, in which dances handed down from those of the children of Israel around the Golden Calf, are the main attraction; theatres, operas and races, these are not things indifferent, these are not amusements, but gross abuses, by which, in the false guise of amusement, body and soul are damaged, spirituality rendered impossible and our eternal well-being put in jeopardy. Towards all these, a Christian has but one simple duty. Touch not, taste not, handle not. Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.

TREES. II.

By Rev. E. E. Adams, D.D.

Trees grow in Paradise. There were "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," and "the tree of life." The notion that these trees were one and the same is confuted by the sacred record. "Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that was pleasant to the sight and good for food—the tree of life also, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." That is to say, both these trees were in the midst of the garden, standing side by side, fit types of the world's history, in which good and evil are not widely separated, however distinct in their natures.

The latter tree was to be the test of character in our first parents. Their knowledge of good and evil became experimental when they partook of "the forbidden fruit."

Paradise was the garden of delights. The stately forms, the varied fruits, and rich foliage of trees were sources of pleasure. "Every tree that was pleasant" grew there, and all sweet influences pervaded the happy abode.

"The landscape glowed with holy joy, Zephyrs, with wing dipped in the well of life, sporting through Eden, scattered living dews. The flowers, the spicy shrubs, the lawns, refreshed, breathed their selectest balm, breathed odors, such as angels love; and all the loftiest trees, Cedar and Pine, and everlasting Oak, Rejoicing on the mountains, clapped their hands."

It is our purpose in these papers on trees, to give our ideas of the "tree of life," about which so many views inadequate and conflicting have been entertained. And in order the better to discuss the subject, it is important to ascertain whether we are dealing with *allegory*, or with fact.

If the first chapters of Genesis are only *figurative*, our inquiries may as well be suspended at once. But we regard them as historical. Their language is not that of fiction, nor of poetry, but of sober prose. Its structure, its style is historical. It gives the impression to every unbiased reader, of being a record of facts. We have equal ground for rejecting any other portion of Biblical history, as for this. We can be sure of no historical facts in the Sacred word, if there be none in these chapters. Moreover, taken as history, they present a consistent, rational account, the only one, of the earliest facts—such as the creation of the earth; the origin of man; the institution of the Sabbath and of marriage; the division of time; the introduction of sin and misery; the natural sterility of the earth and necessity of labor; the subjection of woman to her husband; and the natural antipathy of man to the serpent. It has been well said, that if we reject the historical character of these chapters, we have only a series of allegories—the man, the woman, the creation, the temptation, the fall, the trees, and Paradise itself, are all myths; or each is allegorical, and therefore we have no reliable account of the origin of things—no safe record of what we now *know to be facts*. The historical character of these chapters is proved by allusions to them in other portions of the Bible. Our Lord quotes from one of them in His address to the Pharisees, on the subject of divorce:—"Have ye not read that He, which made them at the beginning, made them male and female? for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh."

Paul refers to facts first recorded in these chapters, when speaking of the serpent beguiling Eve, and of Adam being first formed and then Eve. If these allusions are correct and the inferences from the facts just, they actually took place, and are recorded historically in the first chapters of Genesis. We may therefore be satisfied, that the "tree of life" was a real tree in Eden. What then was its use? What did it signify? What religious lesson does it offer us? Did it serve an actual purpose in regard to the dwellers of Eden? Had it any relation to their temporal or spiritual life? any significance for us in this Christian age? any typical import regarding our Lord, or the future of His Church? These questions will be considered in our next paper.

METHODIST AFFINITIES AGAIN.

The *Methodist Protestant* of Baltimore, copies at length our article of a month ago upon "Methodist Affinities for Presbyterianism," and comments upon it in that fraternal and generous spirit which we should have anticipated from that branch of the Methodist Church. In all our intercourse with them, personal and professional, we have yet to come upon a trace of bigotry. Being without bishops, and always, if we mistake not, having had lay representation, their form of government may be called Presbyterian in its character, and its accommodation of language. Their method of work, however, involves them in the same difficulty about probationers with the other sections of the Methodist body, and their standards of doctrine are the same.

The opening paragraph of the *Methodist Protestant's* article is as follows:

"The foregoing, from the *American Presbyterian*, published in Philadelphia, is written in such excellent spirit, and is so well adapted to promote the fraternal feeling which ought to prevail among the various denominations of evangelical Christians, that we transfer it to our columns, both as an expression of our pleasure, and as a means of bringing into more intimate relations of mutual respect and Christian co-operation, those members of the Presbyterian and Methodist families who are seeking to maintain 'the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.'"

In reference to the disappearance of probationers, it says, with no little justice:

"And, considering that Methodism from the beginning, has sent its missionaries into the 'highways and hedges,' is it more remarkable that delinquencies have characterized Methodist probationers, than that they have been discovered among the accepted members of Calvinistic Churches, who, in the main, have been more highly favored in their early training and in the

surroundings of their maturer years? While both Methodist and Presbyterian Churches include in their membership persons from every class of society, the Presbyterians have a greater proportional number from the well-to-do middle classes, Methodists more from the poor and illiterate."

The closing parts of the article are as follows:—"As to doctrine," we may remark that 'divine supremacy' has never been denied, to our knowledge, by intelligent Methodists, nor need the Calvinist 'to loosen his grasp on the iron pillars of the Divine decrees in order to become a good Methodist.' We believe in the 'divine decrees' as firmly as our Calvinistic brethren—with this reservation: we believe that God has no secret decrees or purpose at variance with His declaration that he 'hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;' that Jesus Christ 'gave himself a ransom for all,' and that He 'will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.' Election, Predestination and the Perseverance of Saints are component parts of our theology, as well as theirs, with this difference—we explain the terms differently. Our philosophy is not their philosophy; but the texts that are precious to them are precious to us also. Calvinists can adopt our articles of religion; we cannot adopt theirs. If Presbyterians have considered 'the Arminianism of Methodism' as 'its weak point, leading to evanescence of results,' and 'disastrous reactions,' Methodists have considered the Calvinistic view of election and predestination as the weak point of Calvinism, leading to presumption, blasphemy, or despair, according to the different temperaments of men—yet in defiance of all our philosophizing, on both sides, both Calvinists and Methodists have been humble, earnest, loving disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ; abounding in good works, yet receiving salvation as the gift of free grace; 'working out their own salvation with fear and trembling,' yet acknowledging and rejoicing that it is God who 'worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.'

"What then is the 'conclusion of the whole matter?' It is this: 'We be brethren.' Then let us 'love one another, with a pure heart fervently.' It is grateful to us to find Methodist endeavors and Methodist achievements recognized by Presbyterians. We believe that Methodists and Presbyterians will appreciate each other more highly when they understand each other better. Both are 'set for the defence of the truth.' Each is doing a great work. Let us try to understand each other, and so remove occasion for contention. Methodists cannot subscribe to the Westminster Confession. Presbyterians cannot accept our views of disputed doctrines; but both Methodists and Presbyterians can labor, in their separate Providential allotments, for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, each respecting the other, and both saying from the heart, 'Grace be to all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.'"

As our cotemporary does not stop to say what are the differences in explaining the terms: Election, Perseverance and Predestination, we shall not spend time in conjectures on the subject. We no more believe that God has a secret decree contrary to the plain declarations of His word, and especially to the passages quoted, than do the Editor of the *Methodist Protestant* and his associates. But we do believe that, in some way utterly inscrutable to human reason, and consistent with the infinite purity of the divine nature, sin and holiness, the glory of the redeemed and the misery of the lost, the free will of men, of angels and of devils are included under the infinite supremacy and sovereignty of God. We admit that this is a deep, a fathomless mystery, one under which the human spirit well nigh sinks. But if the free will of man and the fate of the sinner are put outside of this sovereignty, we have the far worse and more intolerable alternative of dualism, or indeed of an endless number of independent existences, as many as there are free wills. Our Methodist brethren may have Atlantean shoulders broad enough to bear the ponderous burden, but since the times of the Manichean heresy, it has generally been regarded as too heavy for orthodoxy to carry.

Does not every difficulty, after all, arise from the unwillingness of men in both schools of thought to submit their intellects to the mystery of unavoidable facts? For our part, we believe in the sovereignty of God and the free will of man, both taken in the broadest sense, without sophistical qualifications or vain efforts at logical reconciliation, which never signify anything at all in solving the problem, but merely mar it by robbing from one of the terms some part of its essential qualities.

Meanwhile, we cordially reciprocate the friendly sentiments of our cotemporary, hoping for even more than is embraced in its aspirations, that we may yet be able not only to cherish sympathy in spirit, but so to apprehend each other's doctrines as to see their contradictions swallowed up in the greater truths and sublimer mysteries of the Gospel.

It appears now that none of the Professors in Allegheny Seminary participated in the meeting in Pittsburg which issued the "Fraternal Address."

FIRST CHURCH OF AUBURN.

From our Rochester Correspondent.

Last Sabbath was a day of solemn and tender interest in the First church of the beautiful city of Auburn; a day of farewell to the old church edifice, which is now being pulled down to give place to the new stone building already in process of erection. The old building was erected in 1817, enlarged in 1829; was a wooden structure, in that earlier day, but was the home of very sacred associations, not only to that congregation, but to many others in various parts of the land.

It was in this edifice that Rev. Dr. Lansing preached with his silvery eloquence for twelve years; Dr. Josiah Hopkins was pastor for sixteen years; Dr. Nelson ten years; and now Dr. Hawley has served them twelve years. But the edifice was even more memorable and more sacred, perhaps we may say without offence, from the fact that the sessions of the famous Auburn Convention of 1837 were held within its walls. It was here that such men as Drs. Richards, Cox, Beecher, Patton, McAuley, Hillyer and one hundred and fifty other leading ministers and laymen, assembled to consider what should be done in those times of trial and perplexity. It was here that the course was resolved upon which resulted in organizing the New School General Assembly, in 1838; here that famous declaration of doctrine was made which the New School body has always held, and which the Old School Assembly, at Albany last spring, so handsomely endorsed; a paper drawn up by Rev. Dr. Luther Halsey, digested and adopted by the whole body, and sacredly cherished by all our ministers and churches. It was indeed a venerable edifice, but it has done its work, done it well, and must now give place to another and better.

In the morning, the pastor, Rev. Dr. Hawley, preached an admirable historical discourse, covering the period of nearly fifty-eight years since the organization of the church. The sketch embraced notices of no less than sixteen general revivals of religion, commencing with that of 1817. The whole number who have belonged to the church from the beginning is 2,596, of whom 1,449 were received on profession. The church has been served by thirty-nine elders and thirty-three deacons, among whom some of the ablest and best men of western New York are to be reckoned. In no case of discipline has an appeal ever been taken from the decisions of that session, and in none has a decision been reached by a divided vote. We doubt if many churches can be found of whom this can be affirmed.

In the afternoon, the church held its communion service, in which the Second and Central churches, its children, united with them; and nine persons were received to its fellowship, just the number which constituted the church at its original organization, in July, 1811. An aged man, in his 79th year, who has been an attendant at this sanctuary ever since it was dedicated in 1817, and a lad nine years of age, were among those received at the time.

In the evening, another union meeting was also held, with prayers by the older members of the First and Second churches, and addresses by Profs. Hall and Hopkins, of the Theological Seminary, and by Rev. S. W. Boardman, pastor of the Second church.

It was hoped that Dr. Nelson would be present to participate in the day's services. His duties in Cincinnati, however, forbade that, and so he wrote a letter of tender and touching reminiscence, which was read at the meeting in the evening. And so they bade a respectful and affectionate farewell to the old building of the past.

The new chapel is nearly finished, and after a Sabbath or two more, the congregation are expecting to occupy it for their Sabbath assemblies until the new church edifice is completed.

Rochester, Mar. 13, 1869.

—It is a common objection of those who are urged to commence the Christian life, that they are afraid they will not hold out. Grant that the fear is well-founded; grant that a man who sets out in earnest upon a journey may never reach the end; that may or may not be the case. But it is absolutely certain he will not reach it if he never sets out at all. Heaven and salvation come to none, who do not earnestly set about obtaining them. And for what infinitely lower prizes do men struggle and agonize when they have but the faintest chance of success! It is said there are twenty applicants for every important mission in the gift of the government. Tut! all that men really mean, when they make such shallow objections to entering on the Christian race is, that they have not the remotest conception of the value of the prize.

CURRENT TOPICS.

—A friend writes us from Chicago: "The *Northwestern Presbyterian* is for sale. Would you like to buy?"

—An esteemed correspondent writing on the subject of reunion and contemplating the efforts of the O. S. brethren to get at "a pure and simple" basis, suggests as a solution of the whole case, that we unite *without any terms at all*, saying nothing about "the standards" or anything else. Would it not, he asks, be "more simple" and "expressive of mutual confidence" to unite without any terms at all, and let "the Standards" as well as all other matters run the chances in the united body? At all events, we would then be done with what begins to be wearisome and trying to all many persons, the multiplication of schemes on the part of some of our O. S. brethren, designed to accomplish anything and everything but a frank recognition of the true status of the New School body in the Reunion.

—The *Presbyterian* O. S. of this city in reply to the *Evangelist*, denies that it would tie us to one set of words and phrases in the statement and exposition of doctrines, and says:

"May we not hope, then, that as they will find us much more lenient than they seem now to expect in the matter of subscription, we will also find them much more ready than is at present confessed, to yield the exercise of a right which was often acknowledged to exist in the Presbyteries in times preceding the division, and which, by the adoption of the Basis containing the Tenth Article, by the Assembly at Harrisburg, and its subsequent adoption by nearly all the Presbyteries of the New School Church, has been again acknowledged as a right inhering in all Presbyteries?"

If *The Presbyterian* means anything at all by this, it must be at least as willing to have the disputed clauses of the 1st Article stand, as the whole of the Xth.

—A granite drinking fountain for man and beast, has been pouring forth its crystal supplies, like the water from the smitten rock, at the corner of our two great thoroughfares, Broad and Market Sts., for some months past. The thirsty horse need no little urgency to induce them to thrust their heated muzzles into the basin, that we were surprised a few mornings ago to see the reluctance of one of these noblest of brutes to partake of the refreshment. He backed off, he snorted, he balked in a surprising way; when a look at the wagon solved the mystery. It was inscribed "MALT HOUSE!" It flashed upon us as a revelation. The noble creature had been degraded, *humanized*, by his business, and he didn't like drinking fountains.

—The signal appropriateness of President Grant's appointments is nowhere more manifest than in restoring Gen. Sheridan to the Department of the Gulf, with Headquarters at New Orleans. We all know that he was removed from that position by our accidental President, solely because he would not be the tool of the rebel reaction, which wished to crush by every sort of injustice and violence, not excepting assassination, the white and black loyalists of the State. His wholesale and unhesitating removals of that class of officers, from Governor Wells down to a parish justice for admitting to five hundred dollars bail the white murderer of a negro, were the offences which led to his removal in August, 1867. That was one of the few occasions of a political character when General Grant found his tongue, and when, perhaps, if all were told, it would appear that he was getting one of his lessons in Radicalism. It was enough to make the dumb speak. And now he wishes to make good the confidence he then declared in the intelligence and fidelity of General Sheridan and in the conformity of his course to the laws of the land.

—"The Recreative Religionists" is the name by which the Sunday League of London have been licensed, and under which they now seek to evade the laws which hitherto have prevented their projected Sunday Scientific Lectures and Concerts of Music. Very recently the opening lecture was delivered by Mr. Slack, a London Editor and scientific man. A correspondent of *The London Christian Times*, Feb. 26th, says:

"The subject was the Relation of Physical Science to National Progress. The great charm of the lecture was its brevity; clearly on such a subject he might have discoursed many hours. In reality he was not much more than half an hour, and as it was, more than one of his audience was fast asleep long before he got to the end. Mr. Slack comforts the people much the same way as Dame Quickly when Falstaff was dying. The passage is worth transcribing. "How now, Sir John?" quoth I; "what, man, be of good cheer." So 'a cried out—"God, God, God," three or four times. Now I, to comfort him, bid him 'a should not think of God." Next Sunday night Dr. Charles Mackay lectures on Science and Religion as Exemplified in the Philosophy of George Combe. I had thought George Combe had been exploded long ago. We all know Combe was of Dame Quickly's way of thinking. After the lecture there were selections from the oratorios."