

The American Presbyterian.

John A. Weir

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The Rotatory Eldership question will probably be the first live issue before the United Church. History and reason are alike opposed to giving the eldership a permanency which the pastorate does not possess; and the tendency of public opinion in the Churches, as exemplified in the M. E. Lay Delegation movement, demands that the people shall stand in a more direct and democratic relation to the government of the Church. *The Presbyterian* says:

Even the old, staid, conservative United Presbyterians are disposed to investigate the merits of the proposed change. At least so we judge, from the fact that at the last meeting of the Presbytery of Monongahela a member was appointed to preach before the Presbytery at its next meeting on the following subject, viz: "Should a ruling elder exercise his office in any particular congregation an indefinite time without a re-election by the people?"

—At one of the fellowship meetings of the R. P. church in this city—a sort of organized prayer-meetings held in private houses—an old standby of the meeting was discussing "the origin of evil." "There was," he said, "just three ways that sin could have come into the world. One was with God's will (*Anglice* will). Another was without His will. The third was . . . here he paused and tried to remember his third head, but to no purpose, and was passing on to discuss "Firstly" and "Secondly" when another old standby came to his aid: "I reckon Jamie, you meant *unknownst* to His will."

There is a thought worthy of the attention of next writer on Theodicy, but it is not original with either Jamie or his friend. St. Augustine, like most Platonists, held that sin is not an existence but a defect,—a want—minus quantity. Eriena, a few centuries later, claimed that as God's knowledge embraces all the things that did exist and those only, He could know nothing of sin, as that was a want or defect, not an existence.

—The Cheney case in Chicago is causing great diversity of opinion, among the organs of the various Churches, as to the lawfulness of the defendant's appeal unto Caesar. Only *The Presbyterian* of our O. S. cotemporaries justifies the proceeding, while all the N. S. weeklies do so. The Low Church papers endorse him and Judge Jamieson, with the exception of *The Christian Witness* of Boston. The High Church papers are very emphatic in their condemnation.

Mr. Cheney can plead illustrious precedent. Paul was a member of the Jewish Church according to the best expositors. He attended on its distinctive festivals, and complied with its distinctive usages, in so far as these did not clash with his duty to the gospel. He circumcised one disciple because he was a Jew; he refused to circumcise another although the law of the Jewish Church required it. He was put on trial by the authorities of this very Church, and that while on attendance at her greatest feast. He at once appealed, when he saw no chance of fair play, to a heathen King's judgment seat. Wherein is the parallel deficient?

—One of the concurrent declarations adopted by the two Assemblies in New York reads as follows:

"No rule or precedent, which does not stand approved by both the bodies, shall be of any authority until re-established in the united body."

The Presbyterian has been going over the ground to see exactly what will be the effect of this provision in its bearing on the rulings of the O. S. Assembly. It finds that the decisions affirming the illegality of marriage with a deceased wife's sister, and the nullity of Romish baptisms, will stand, as virtually common to the two Churches. But the decisions of the O. S. Assembly as to the quorum of Presbytery, the participation of elders in ordination, and that condemning standing in prayer and reading of sermons, are probably rescinded by the declaration, as never having passed the N. S. Assembly. The controversy as to the scriptural authority of Church Boards, and the later discussions and decisions on slavery are dead, while the acts of 1861 to 1866 in regard to requiring profession of repentance from rebel ministers and elders, and dissolving Presbyteries which received to membership the signers of "The Declaration and Testimony," are, by this declaration, repealed, as they "have no correspondent action in the proceedings of the New School Assembly," and "by large numbers of that body the theory of the powers of the Assembly involved in these proceedings is distinctly repudiated."

We are surprised to see that our cotemporary has passed by another series of "deliverances," which certainly "have no correspondent action in the proceedings of the New School Assembly." We mean the exciting acts of 1837, "vexatious and divisive regulations" (to use

The Presbyterian's words), which "are repealed by the act of union, or cease to have any force after the union. The precedents established by these proceedings are not likely to be re-established in the United Church, and the question in regard to the powers of the General Assembly will probably arise in some novel shape, and be again discussed and settled."

—We have recently been solicited to exchange with a Sunday paper. We must decline. We know what these papers have to say for themselves. "All the work of editing, itemizing, composition, &c., for their columns, is done on week days, and they are freer from the reproach of Sunday labor than nine-tenths of the papers issued on the secular days of the week." All of which is true. And yet the whole work of the Sunday paper is avowedly to culminate in a Sunday sale and a Sunday reading. The whole week's business is only a preparation for a Sunday traffic, for a public desecration of the day. The very names, too, which they bear, prove them, as secular prints, to be in open defiance of the Fourth Commandment and in contradiction of the sacred and divinely appointed purposes of the Sabbath.

Their circulation is one of the clearest proofs of the laxity and hostility of sentiment on Sabbath observance in any community. We say nothing of their intrinsic character—some are better, some are worse, particularly the latter; but ministers, Christian people, friends of public and social morality, and believers in the importance of a well-kept Sabbath to an orderly and prosperous community, should give them a wide berth,—as we propose to do, now and henceforth.

THE LIPS OPENED.

So rarely is the beauty of a living piety set forth in the daily life of the family and in the common talk of friends; so generally are spiritual things allowed to drop into the back-ground, except at set times, and when veiled in form and ceremony, that we have come to regard the successful effort to introduce them among familiar topics with surprise. It can be done, we are prone to believe, only by gifted Christians. While true piety proves its efficacy in a thousand other ways in the household and in society and in business, while it burns a pure and living but a retired flame, upon a thousand altars; while it pursues its leavening way hidden, as in the measures of meal, and passing, almost unobserved, save in times of high religious excitement, from heart to heart, proving itself the salt of the earth and the light of the world, it too rarely reveals itself among the social interchanges of men, too rarely gives tone to conversation, too rarely is a recognized and a welcome source of mutual interest and ground of open and happy confidence between members of the same household.

As the stiff and ungenial formalities of a pious life in Puritan communities have been swept away, it is matter of deep regret that worldliness and fashion are to so great a degree allowed to furnish the topics and set the tone of social and domestic intercourse, even in truly Christian circles. This is not the substitute that we want; we despise ourselves for suffering it. If the recitation of speculative Catechisms with long proof texts is to be ruled out, we don't want Christ and His Word and His Truth to go with it. We want them all with us, nearer and dearer than ever; we want them to mingle openly, familiarly, generally with our daily life and conversation; without stiffness and awkwardness; without the instant chilling of social confidence and sympathy upon their mention. We want to see reserve between parents and children, between husband and wife, between brothers, sisters, friends dissipated. We want the salt of grace seasoning our conversation, and the charm of a sincerely spiritual atmosphere and the electric spark of a living spiritual sympathy filling and quickening our whole social lives.

Among the many rare excellencies of that sweet saint, the late Rev. Wm. Marsh of England, was the spiritual freedom, elevation and beauty of his daily social and domestic life. Endowed with peculiar charms of person, natural disposition and manner, he was called "the St. John of the Church of our time," much rather from the refinement, the holiness, the love that breathed in all his words and looks and actions, both in public and in private life. Everywhere, in every society and conversation, in every letter, call or interview, his Lord and Master's name, uppermost in his own heart, found an entrance, and not a forced or injudicious entrance, "out of season." He had the faculty to convert it into, "in season."

His domestic life, hallowed and beautified by religion, as drawn by his daughter and biographer,

is a charming picture. He rose every Sunday morning with such a fresh spring of spirits, that his hallowed joy seemed to spread to every inhabitant of the house, nor could visitors escape the contagion. And the Sunday evening with their parents, was the happiest time of all the week with the children. He met his children every Easter morning with the customary salutation of the early Christians—illuminating his face, as well as uttered by his lips: "He is risen, He is risen!" To one of his daughters at school, he writes on religious topics: "I am glad you have spoken your mind freely. In our family, where love is the rule and motive, I trust, there should never be any concealment in any matter." "Always speak your mind freely, dearest love, and tell me anything in which I can promote your happiness, consistently with your highest and your future good."

Married to a lady in high standing in society, her large family connection brought many influential persons within the family circle, and many mingled with profit in the charming social evenings at his home. "The chief interest of those evenings," says Miss Marsh, "was found in the play of animated conversation, elevated to the highest subjects with so much taste and grace, that no strain was felt even by those to whom the turn it took was a new thing. . . . It would be impossible to put into words the peculiar charm of his conversation. There mingled with the stores derived from his incessant reading in almost every branch of literature, a certain flexibility of thought, which again would relieve the strain of prolonged religious conversation by some ready illustration, pointed anecdote, and touches of holy fullness, which his profound reverence for sacred themes preserved from being ever out of season. They sparkled like sunlight upon the sea, relieving the depths of feeling which lay below."

Such powers of conversation, on any subject, are rare; but on religious subjects are an accomplishment worthy of the ambition of every Christian. Why should they not be cultivated with assiduous care? Why might not and should not appropriate religious topics be made to shine, in the conversation of the most brilliant social circles?

But even those not possessed of Dr. Marsh's gifts, may cherish his genial Christian spirit and beautify the home and social circle in which they move. O Lord open Thou our lips in daily life, and our mouths shall show forth Thy praise.

THE GREAT SOLAR ECLIPSE.

[The following graphic and edifying letter from the pastor of old Pine Street Church, to his flock, will be found of general interest. Dr. Allen, it will be seen, was within the area in which the sun was seen in total obscuration.]

MY DEAR PEOPLE:—I hoped to have been with you to-night, but find I shall not, and therefore send these lines instead; and with them would invoke the blessing of God upon you all.

Since writing my last, I have witnessed a wonderful scene in the heavens: I refer to the great astronomical phenomenon of the SOLAR ECLIPSE. It was grand and sublime beyond anything I had conceived. It would be utterly impossible to describe to you my feelings during the wondrous scene. The day was beautiful, cool and cloudless—it was a day that seemed made for the occasion. At the very moment announced by the astronomers, the moon appeared like a dark and oval slide slowly coming over the face of the sun. There was a solemn thought which impressed my mind, when I noticed how exactly to the very second of time, as predicted by science, the Eclipse commenced. And I thought how surely will God's word be fulfilled. Years and centuries may intervene, but at the appointed time all will be fulfilled to the letter. When time began, God fixed the moment of that Eclipse, and after thousands of years it happened, and at the very moment. When each of you were born, dear hearers, the moment of your death was fixed, and surely and certainly that moment will come.

We watched with increasing interest the slowly but surely increasing shadow of the moon, and the diminishing light of the sun. When half the sun's face was shut off, a pale, yellowish, unnatural light fell over the earth. The air began to grow cold and damp. A few moments more and the shadow of the approaching darkness was perceptible on everything around us. The breeze which had been blowing began to lull, and the air grew cooler, the trees of the surrounding forests, and all vegetation, even the grass, assumed a weird appearance, and the sky looked unnatural. No wonder! The glorious sunlight was being shut off. How dreadful the thought to me, that the light of the gospel and the cross should be shut off from any of you before you make your peace with God. Oh! brethren and friends, "walk while you have the light."

Looking at the sun again I found it was nearly obscured. I looked on the faces of the dear ones around me, and noticed how haggard and unnatural they looked beneath the waning light. A number of fowls had huddled together evidently alarmed at the strange, approaching darkness; four little canary birds which hung in a cage near us, sought their perch. A number of little wild birds now flew wildly around eager to find a shelter; they seemed like frightened children caught from home by sudden night. Turning to the heavens we saw the sun had now disappeared. The scene at this moment was beyond description. The moon appeared distinctly in its spherical form, like a great ball in front of the sun. All around it was a brilliant crown of light, giving me the only correct idea I ever had of a crown of glory. Oh! it was beautiful beyond the power of mortal tongue to describe. The stars came out as if to look on the wondrous spectacle. Away to the South and South-west lay a dark shadow in the sky, like the region of death—to the North and East the sky was lit up in purple and gold and greenish colors, more brilliant than the finest sunset I ever witnessed, and well calculated to remind one of Emmanuel's Land. As I looked on the dark shadow in the South, and then on the golden sky of the North, I could not but think of the realms of endless night, contrasted with the beautiful regions of eternal day.

This continued with us but one minute and seven seconds, when the light of the sun burst forth—not gradually as I supposed it would, but as a great ball of light suddenly shot from a cannon. The return of light was grand, and brought out only as God can do it.

1st. The darkness led me to feel more than ever the worth of light. May we all learn more to love the light of the word!

2nd. The return of the light impressed me with the goodness and love of God. May we all feel it in the glorious light He has sent to us in His Son Jesus Christ who is indeed the light of the world.

3rd. And now my dear people, may each of you be at last crowned with a light brighter than that which encircled the moon, even a crown of glory that fadeeth not away. If a moon crowned with sunlight called forth the wonder of the world, what will millions of souls crowned with glory call forth?

"When that illustrious day shall rise,
And all Thine armies shine
In robes of victory through the skies,
The glory shall be Thine."

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," is the prayer of your pastor,

E. H. ALLEN.

Elizabethtown, Ind., August 9th, 1869.

FINANCIAL PROSPECTS OF THE AMERICAN BOARD.

There is reason to fear that the Prudential Committee will be obliged to report a considerable deficit to the next Annual Meeting. During the eleven months of the present year, Sept. 1, 1868 to August 1, 1869—the donations and legacies have fallen \$12,708 below those of the corresponding period last year. The loss in donations is \$16,814, nearly all of which occurred in July!

The Committee are disappointed, but not despondent. They have entire confidence in the ability, as also in the willingness, of the churches to save the Board from pecuniary embarrassment. Their only fear is that the needful endeavors will not be put forth. They beg leave, therefore, to request all pastors, and others who look after the benevolence of the churches, (1) to obtain, if possible, a contribution equal to the one made last year; and (2) to forward it to the Treasurer by September 1, or at the latest September 6.

And they are constrained to ask such of their friends as the God of missions has especially qualified to, devise "liberal things" for the heathen, whether they are not called to a higher privilege in this regard. A serious indebtedness, at the close of the present year, will be particularly unfortunate and embarrassing.

S. B. TREAT, Home Secretary.

Missionary House, Boston,
August 12, 1869.

—A Southern Baptist paper publishes a lying report in regard to Mr. Geo. H. Stuart, charging him with presence at and participation in a dance at a ball given in Annapolis, Md., at the closing of the Naval Academy. It asks if this is not "carrying loose communion forward to perfection." Mr. S. was in fact at home in Philadelphia on the occasion.

We mention this rumor in order to fix the responsibility of it on the right shoulders. *The Press* of this city was the first paper in which the slander appeared. It professed to give special telegrams from Annapolis with full details

of the ball in question, mentioning that Mr. Stuart danced, and giving the name of his partner. To this day we have never seen any correction of these mis-statements in its columns. We would fain believe that it acted in good faith and was deceived by some malicious or criminally careless reporter.

REV. A. M. STEWART'S LETTERS. XL.

TREASURE CITY, NEVADA, July, 1869.

Far away here in the central portion of that vast and generally uninhabited portion of our territory, which very modern Geographers call the State of Nevada, perched on a little spur or lopped off branch of a great mountain range, Treasure City is built, being two miles above the sea, high again as Mount Washington in New Hampshire, on which our New England friends think themselves so elevated. The air here is so light that the lungs require to be expansive and expanded in order to inhale sufficient oxygen to keep the body comfortably heated from its internal fires. So high up, that the pot over the fire boils at so low a temperature that some difficulty is experienced in thoroughly cooking meat and vegetables; and where even the fire does not burn with the facility it shows under the pressure of heavier air. Light, joyous sensations are engendered—we are up in the world—perchance a little nearer heaven.

This is the first place, off the Overland Railroad, designated for a visit in my mission of Church Extension west of the Rocky Mountains. It is in an important and lately discovered mining section, called White Pine, of which something was written during my running visit last fall. The District is about ten miles square, though with boundaries not well defined. As no surveys have been made by Uncle Sam in all this boundless region, squatter sovereignty is left free to designate boundaries in the most capricious manner.

Parallel ranges of mountains and valleys stretch far Southward from the Humboldt River. Along one of these valleys runs the stage route from Elko to Treasure City, a hundred and twenty-five miles. In making this journey, one gets, in modern style, a taste of the grand old stage-coach riding, in which our fathers felt so much of pride, ease and dignity. We made the distance in sixteen hours—speedy, rough, hot and most magnificently dusty—not your common, tame, tasteless Eastern article, but fine, tasteful and penetrating as that sprinkled by Moses in the air of Egypt—an impalpable powder, from alkali, soda, borax, salt, limestone and quartz.

As White Pine District has lately and suddenly become the great representative mining region of the Pacific side; my proposed stay here of two or three months will afford time and occasion to write of many matters and things which may be of general interest.

MINISTERIAL EXCURSION.

I see by late Eastern papers which have reached me, that our Chicago brethren, both of the Old and New School, propose the visit of a Presbyterian delegation party, to be composed of a hundred ministers, elders and laymen, in order to convert this entire Pacific side, by the dash and eclat of a large excursion pleasure party. By all means let the party be organized and the pleasure excursion made. Don't fail, Mr. Editor, to be one of the party. Your pleasure and renown will both be thereby enhanced.

Won't it be grand? Don't, moreover, fail to make the alkali dust ride from the railroad to White Pine. Being the only Protestant minister within two hundred miles of this Treasure City, won't I shout, clap hands and sing on the arrival of said delegation? Won't all manner of wickedness, as ashamed, hide themselves in dark corners?

My suspicions, however, are that Satan is too well entrenched this side of the Continent, and too old a Master of positions, to yield all his strongholds hereabouts to a single ministerial onset, though its dash be never so grand. To accomplish all this it will most likely require a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether, accompanied with prayer and prolonged fasting, which the excursion party might be unprepared to enter upon. Nevertheless, by every commendable persuasive, urge the coming of the party.

A. M. STEWART.

"THE CAPTURE OF 'DERRY.'—What do our North of Ireland readers say to the stupidity of the Atlantic Cable agent in telegraphing of "the celebration of the capture of 'Derry'?" None of our secular dailies knew enough to correct his blunder. What was commemorated on Friday was the shutting of the gates of the city by the 'prentice boys, in spite of the traitorous orders of a faint-hearted governor, and in the faces of the emissaries of King James. That act began that heroic resistance which Macaulay has so vividly described, a resistance which ended, not with the capture of the city, but with the retreat of its baffled assailants.