

## Original Communications.

## A NIGHT AT GREAT ST. BERNARD.

Who has not heard of St. Bernard—of its venerable and famous Monastery, its "pious Monks," its faithful dogs? And who would be willing to leave Switzerland and not see all this? I at least could not forego the pleasure. So while at Martigny we made our arrangements for the excursion. We left the hotel at 7 A. M. in a nondescript wagon, drawn by a mule and a horse, and carrying four persons besides the driver. Any other unoccupied space was filled with ladies' saddles and bags of hay, and other provender for the animals. There was the usual mountain road up the valley, generally very good, sometimes following the stream close to the banks, then by zig-zag parallels up the hill-side to attain a greater height. In this way we soon left the bottom of the valley far below. The sides of the mountain, where not too steep to allow of soil, are terraced by stone walls and highly cultivated—the road being cut into the side,—and far up the immense heights and down the profound depths the terraces continued, and the spaces thus protected from the washing and the wearing away of the rains, were planted in grains and potatoes, for we had left the region of vines at Martigny. In two or three places on the route, up the valley, the stream had cut its way to a great depth through the rocks, and from the height at which we viewed it, the scene was picturesque in the extreme. We stopped to rest the animals and feed them, as well as to dine, at Liddes (pronounced Lid) a most dreary, dusty village. While waiting for dinner I examined the old church, but there was nothing in it of interest. It had its banners and crucifix, its chapel for prayers for the dead, and for funeral services with the bier, no pews but hard seats and kneeling places, the tops of which were covered with candle, tallow, and in many places burned by the expiring candles which each worshiper brought.

The journey from this place to where the carriage road terminates was delightful, except when the road led through the villages. These are frightfully dirty. In nearly all Swiss houses, the lower rooms are given up to stables for domestic animals, not necessarily so, but it has always been so, and they know nothing better. All the premises about the dwellings are, therefore, simply like a very untidy American farmer's stable-yard, and as the people all live in villages, (except for a few months in summer in the mountain chalets) and as the street of the village is so narrow that carriages pass each other with difficulty, a ride through such streets is anything but agreeable.

When we had gone as far as carriages could go, we found extra mules, one for each, and started for the Great St. Bernard. The first part of the way was over a sort of plain for nearly a mile—then the ascent of the Pass again. The bridle path lay along the course of a mountain stream clear and beautiful, dashing down its rocky bed, leaping from rock to rock, breaking into cascades and waterfalls, and settling in clear deep pools through which you could see the shining pebbles at the bottom. As we ascended higher and higher the air became cooler, especially as the sun was occasionally obscured by a cloud—and the glaciers and snow fields came into view, apparently very near us. The vines, the grains, the potatoes and all other forms of agriculture, we had left far below, and the short thick grass—so valuable for pasturage, had taken their place, and the tinkling bells of the cows on the mountain side, made sweet music in the still air. But higher up yet, the grass grew shorter, and the mosses and lichens were mingled with it, and the Pass grew more and more narrow, and the high and bare grey rocks frowned gloomily on the scene. Backwards, the view grew very beautiful, for the sun approaching his setting, gilded the snowy peaks of the distant mountains and shed a golden light over all that part of the heavens. In an hour and half from our taking the saddle, the Monastery or Hospice came in view, at a turn in the path, and in a few minutes, at 5 P. M. we dismounted at the door. A mile or two below we passed two houses, one of which had been used as a Morgue, the other as a refuge for belated travellers who might not succeed in reaching the Monastery. They were built entire of stone—roof and all, and are monuments of the Christian charity of the Brotherhood.

The Monastery stands at the very highest point in the Pass, and is nearly eight thousand feet above the sea. It is built of stone, is five stories in height, in the form of a parallelogram with a wing at the end for a chapel. It is very plain, without any ornament whatever, and resembles a large barn as much as anything else. The lower story of all is used as a stable for the many mules and horses they must take care of; the next floor above is used for offices of the household, servants and guides, and the upper floors for the entertainment of guests and for the brethren. We were received at the landing near the dining-room door, second story, by M. Besse, one of the monks, who conducted us to our rooms. As soon as we could, we made our appearance in the dining-room, where we found a wood fire blazing in a large fire-place. As it was very cold we enjoyed this extremely. The table for dinner was set on two sides of the room in the form

of the letter L, leaving a large space for the guests around the fire. It was a large room, nearly twenty five feet square, with moderately low and paneled ceiling, plainly furnished, but comfortable, containing a piano (the gift of the Prince of Wales) and a cabinet organ. There were some fine engravings on the walls, not Roman Catholic, but such as might be found in any family room. The dinner was plain—four or five courses well served and fresh from the fire. Every item of the dinner, except the meats, was brought up from the valleys below on panniers. One of the monks stood and devoutly asked a blessing, but it was in so modest and humble a manner that not many at the table heard him. About thirty persons in all, including two or three of the brethren, sat down at the table, and some few persons came to a second table, who were probably couriers. There was a bottle of common red wine to every four seats. The conversation was more general than is usual at an ordinary Table d'Hôte, for the guests seemed to feel that they were not so much in a hotel as in a private house, and the restraints of etiquette were lightened.

After dinner, the guests gathered around the hearth in a large circle, much as persons do in company, but not quite so sociably—then one of the monks, M. Besse, asked that there might be music. Several ladies played and sang, and among other things there was a verse or two of "Mine eyes have seen the coming of the glory of the Lord," and a burlesque of Longfellow's "Excelsior," &c. Between the playing and singing of the visitors one of the young monks performed two or three pieces splendidly.

Later in the evening, tea was served around to the company as they sat, several of the brethren mingling with the guests as the host and hostess do at an entertainment, making themselves agreeable and striving to make others at their ease, and at about 9 P. M. we all retired to our rooms. The passages in the house are all of stone,—floor, walls and ceiling, resembling the corridors of a prison. My room, shared by a fellow guest, was a long, narrow, vaulted chamber, with white-washed walls and ceiling, and wooden floor, with three beds, three chairs, and three wash-stands, terminating in a small window, double-sashed, to protect the lodgers from the cold. There were no pictures on the wall—no crucifix (in Lucerne I had three), and nothing whatever to obtrude or even to indicate the character of the house. The night was very cold—a patch of snow still lay near the road below the house, but there was plenty of bed clothing, and I slept comfortably. I cannot help thinking how many persons, and under what varied circumstances, had slept in that room. Possibly the great Napoleon himself had lodged there—for it was over this Pass of St. Bernard that he led his army into Italy in the year 1800,—when he was compelled to receive, both for himself and his troops, the hospitality of the house. I don't remember anything remarkable in my dreams, notwithstanding the peculiarity of the situation, but I awoke at 5 o'clock to attend the 6 o'clock service. The chapel is a large one for the purpose, and in some respects, well decorated. There was a humble copy of Raphael's Madonna, a picture of St. Bernard, the founder, and his dog, and some others, and a fine monument in marble bas-relief of the death of Desaix, one of Napoleon's generals, who fell at Marengo, and who was assured in his dying moments by his master, that he should be buried in the highest pass of the Alps. The service was the usual mass, performed at three side altars simultaneously, for there were two strange ecclesiastics, who had arrived the night before, while the other members of the brotherhood occupied stalls in the choir, taking part in the responses. This was followed by a part of the service chanted by the monks, with the organ accompanying them. The chapel was very cold. We could see our breath, as the children say; but notwithstanding the discomfort, the service was somewhat impressive. The monks were evidently sincere (there was no large congregation to look on, the whole audience was composed of ten or twelve of the guests, and as many more servants, guides, &c.) They were all young men, many of them having fine countenances, good looking, in the best sense of the term, and the offices of devotion seemed not so formal and dramatic as we sometimes think them. Why should they not be devout? They are shut up here in this cold and barren region for no other purpose than to succor the poor people in these mountain villages, and others in passing, in the winter, from Switzerland to Italy, and vice versa. The winter season, with them, is eight or nine months of the year. The brethren come to this house at a very early age, say 18 to 20, and the climate is so severe, and the air so rarified, that ten or twelve years is the longest time they can spend here. They are then relieved and seek another field of labor in a less rigorous climate. I was glad, therefore, to indulge a feeling of profound respect for the men who give themselves to the work of the Lord, as they understand it; at all events, to the good work of Christian charity, so unselfishly and so thoroughly, and I could not but feel that we Protestants cannot claim all the virtues.

Before leaving the chapel, I remembered that the entertainment had been gratuitous, and I dropped into the box a sum not less than I would have been charged at a hotel, for like accommodations.

After a plain breakfast of bread, butter, cof-

fee and honey, we were shown the Bibliothèque or Library, a room nearly as large as the dining room, with books around the walls, and, in the middle, cabinets of coins and antiquities, many of which were found on the ground where the Monastery now stands, which was indeed the site of a temple to Jupiter, built by the Romans. Then we visited the Morgue, where we saw the remains of persons who had perished in snows. They were standing or leaning against the walls in horrid ghastliness, with their tattered clothing loosely hanging to their shriveled and bony forms. The floor was covered with skulls and other bones of human beings, and outside, in a stone enclosure, was another large collection of bones. There is not soil enough here to bury in, and the air is so destitute of moisture, that the wasting of bodies is not offensive. Returning to the house, we saw and admired the famous dogs, only five in number—splendid creatures, large, strong, with most honest and amiable countenances; and having taken leave of M. Besse, our polite and hospitable host, we bid farewell to the Monastery of St. Bernard. B. B. C.

## DEMOCRATIC IDEAS PERVADE THE CHURCHES.

The great Democratic movement of modern times is forcing its way into all the Churches. Methodism, which began with conferences of lay preachers, and needed no lay representatives, because all were such in John Wesley's Episcopal and clerical eyes, has been forced to reconstruct her system and admit real laymen to the seats long monopolized by what had become a really clerical caste. The Church of England in the colonies and in our own country, has admitted laymen to seats and votes in her synods, conventions and convocations. Bishop Selwyn, translated from a New Zealand to an English diocese, has called a diocesan conference of both lay and clergy. The old clumsy English convocation has been supplemented by Church congresses, in which both classes meet for free discussion. Even in the Romanist Churches of the Continent, the laity are pushing forward. All the leading laymen of the German diocese of Treves,—some of them University professors—have petitioned the Pope to draw it mildly in the Council which meets in December, and to revive the old system of diocesan synods so as to secure the local-independence of the various parts of the Church, and the voice of all classes in its government. In Hungary the laity are moving to secure the right to elect their own bishops and priests, and to sit in the Church synods. To come back to Protestant Churches, the newly liberated Church of Ireland decides that lay and clergy shall have equal voice in her councils, and that too when doctrinal questions are voted on. Irish Presbyterians feel the impulse of the example, and confess the need of giving the members of the Church a freer voice in Church matters. To this end they need only restore their own system to the Republican freedom which it possessed in its native home, the Republic of Geneva,—a freedom which it lost in the lapse of centuries in aristocratic Scotland. A rotatory eldership chosen periodically—say triennially—by the membership of the Churches, would secure the end desired, and change Presbyterianism back from the elective aristocracy that it has become, to the moderate democracy that it once was.

Last of all, the most aristocratic and least popular Church in all Protestant Christendom, is waking up to the signs of the times. Steps have been taken—very cautious, very Toryish steps, of course—to introduce lay representation into the Episcopal Church in Scotland. Years ago the thing was proposed, but hooted down. Now at last, resolutions suggesting the change to the House of Bishops, have passed the synod of Glasgow and Galloway with a unanimity that promises general assent in other synods. The speeches made referred to what was taking place in Ireland, and what had taken place in the Colonies and "the States," and one veteran Tory warned them that the Church must "go with the times or give way." The fact that this Church more than any other in the world has been starving with a rich laity, was accounted for by the fact that the clergy had been talking and acting as if they were the Church, and not trying to elicit any lay interest in Church matters. The timid and fearful ones added a clause to the resolutions: "in a manner not inconsistent with Catholic custom, and the practices of the primitive Church." They were evidently under the impression that that made the resolutions somewhat milder and more cautious, while just the reverse was the fact. The congregations of the primitive Church chose their bishops by acclamation, and sometimes in the open forum. Ambrose was thus elected bishop of Milan, while at the head of Roman soldiery, trying to quell a sedition that broke out between the friends of two candidates for the Episcopal throne. He urged peace with such Christian eloquence that the people of both parties united on him—an unbaptized official of the empire. Those democratic municipalities of that day carried their democratic ideas into the Church.

The whole history of Church government has been a history of adaptation. The ecclesiastical and the civil constitution of Christian society have always—when let alone—fitted to each other in the long run, like a glove to a hand. The Church at Pentecost took no trouble to de-

vised a new constitution for the Church. The materials at hand were used. The offices—and it seems the very officers—of the synagogue were continued in the Christian assemblies, the terms overseer (or bishop), elder (or presbyter), and minister (or deacon) being transferred from the Jewish to the Christian Church. Not until the complaints among the Hellenists made it necessary to choose deacons for their widows, were any new officers elected, and all the persons chosen bear Hellenist names, the other wing of the Church having been supplied already from the synagogue. The deacons thus elected seem to have been divided into presbyter or elder deacons and neoter or younger deacons,—the former—who were generally called presbyters or elders simply—taking charge of the Church's spiritual interests; while the latter—called elsewhere either deacons simply or young men (νεωτεροι) or younger men (νεωτεροι)—took charge of its temporal affairs. The need of some one man to preside seems to have marked out one elder above the rest, and thus led to the congregational episcopacy which closely corresponds to our Presbyterian system, and seems to have been almost universal after that the death of the apostles deprived the Churches of their oversight.

As the Church cut loose from Judaism and came into closer and wider contact with the Roman Empire, it began to conform itself thereto. Smaller episcopal sees were systematically suppressed, and their charges absorbed, until the episcopal jurisdiction grew from the parish (παροικια or district around the house of worship) to the diocese. Presbyterian episcopacy became prelate, and the elders of the Church session were themselves exalted into independent pastors under the jurisdiction of the bishops. Bishops themselves were subordinated to archbishops, and these to patriarchs, and the whole constitution of the Church was avowedly conformed to the provincial system of lower and higher officials of the Empire. Such was the origin of that Diocesan prelate, which to day would unchurch almost all Protestants as departing from the apostolic order.

A curious state of things existed where the Church had stepped beyond the limits of the Empire. In Ireland for instance, a Roman army had never landed, and as Patrick probably knew very little about the system which prevailed on the Continent, the new Church was left to crystallize into whatever shape it would. There again it was "hand and glove" with the State. The civil clan was reproduced in the clan ecclesiastical; a chieftain ruled the former, a coarb the latter; the bishop sunk into a subordinate place, corresponding a good deal to the bard of the pagan tribe. Bishops were so plenty and so insignificant that a village would have from half-a-dozen to a dozen, and a monastery as many as it chose to support. They flocked over to the Continent where special canons were passed to forbid their exercising their functions. The attempt to reconstruct the Irish Church and State after the models which existed in other parts of Europe, was begun by Henry II of England and his Normans, at the direction of the English Pope Boniface VIII. The abolition of the English Church and the English land tenure in Ireland will be among the concluding acts of that drama.

This old law of adaptation is making itself felt in our own time, and in the movement towards lay delegation above described. The Presbyterian Churches will not escape its influence. The dissatisfaction with some parts of our present system grows daily wider and deeper. The restoration of the eldership to its old station seems to be among the first duties of the Church. At present, the eldership has a permanency which the pastor has not: if a pastor proves inefficient or unworthy the people may get rid of him, and too often do for much slighter reasons. An elder, once elected, is settled on the people for life. Unless he chooses to resign, or is guilty of some offence which makes him amenable to severe discipline, he may drag along his whole life, possibly as a dead weight on the Church's energies and a reproach to her good name. He is in no way dependent on the people: he may adopt the most obstructive and unpopular policy with impunity. He is a member of a life-aristocracy, and may be as negligent of the duties of his position as aristocrats often are.\* And yet the "Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church" recognized by both Assemblies, and a part of the "Basis of Reunion," declares that elders are the representatives of the people. It confesses, then, that they have a right to be represented, and if our existing system does not secure them that right, it becomes our duty to ask what lawful changes are necessary to do so. The plan of a triennial election of the session, universal in the German and Dutch Reformed Churches, manifestly meets the whole case. It

\* The Form of Government takes notice of the fact, that "an elder or deacon" may become, through age or infirmity, incapable of performing the duties of his office; or he may, though chargeable with neither heresy nor immorality, become unacceptable, in his official character, to a majority of the congregation to which he belongs. "In either of these cases," it adds, "he may, as often happens with respect to a minister, cease to be an acting elder or deacon." This cessation from active duty, however, cannot be an officially recognized fact, without the consent of the individual in question, "unless by the advice of presbytery." Of course it is implied that, with such advice, the concurrence of the majority of the church, with its session, acting in conjunction with the presbytery may set aside from active duty, (not depose or disgrace) any of the elders or deacons.

has been adopted in quite a number of the New School and in a few of the Old School Churches, and is found to work admirably. It no more entrenches on the sacredness of the eldership, than does the dissolution of the pastoral relation on that of the parsonage. The elder, whenever set apart to his office, remains an elder for life, though he may not be called upon to exercise his office in the church with which he is connected. He is at worst but "W. C." In most cases, the session would be elected and re-elected without exception until death; and in many cases a sore burden would be quietly and inoffensively dropped. R. E. T.

## REV. A. M. STEWART'S LETTERS, NO. XLV. TREASURY CITY, Nev., Sept. 1869.

## TREES AND RAIN.

On the wide spread, almost boundless valleys of Nevada, Utah and other portions of the Great Basin, it virtually never rains. In our present mountain retreat, two miles above the sea, we had rain almost every day during the month of July and part of August—a little rain. A thick, dark cloud would suddenly gather on or close over the summit range of our Treasury Mountain, thunder and lightning grandly, leave some heavy drops of rain fall; sometimes quite a shower. A breeze or gale would come and carry the cloud from the mountain. But no sooner would it be borne over one or other of these wide valleys at either side of the mountain, than it was immediately dissolved. The thin, dry, heated air from the treeless valley far beneath was too much for the cloud.

## TREELESS VALLEYS.

No trees exist in any of these wide-extended valleys. And in any vast treeless region there is little or no rain. Trees are not only earth's greatest adornment but also God's agency to keep it from universal barrenness and desolation. They maintain the equilibrium between earth and sky. They are water rods to draw down the moisture from above as well as suck it up from the earth beneath.

One cause no doubt of the extensive drought along the Atlantic slope during the present season is the ruthless destruction of her vast and beautiful forests. Farmers, instead of cutting down more trees, should go to planting them in every spare and available place.

Various causes may be assigned for the general absence of trees from the Missouri River to the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Almost any kind of tree, belonging to the latitude, will grow in almost any part of this vast region; especially in these great valleys, if but fairly started. Here seems to be the real difficulty. Nor are trees the only things in creation which here and there fail to get successful starts. Multitudes of men and women are apparently all their lives trying to obtain a fair start in the world, and never seem to get it. Seeds and seedlings find it an equally difficult matter to obtain a successful start in such a soil and climate as are found in these valleys. Generally they perish the first or second summer. Had, however, seeds or young trees, man's fostering care, in occasional waterings, for a few seasons, until their roots went deep enough to reach the moisture beneath, groves could thus be started, and will be no doubt, eventually, to cover all these now dry and treeless regions. When this shall be accomplished, the clouds will no longer be instantly dissolved when borne by the wind over these wide, long valleys; but pour down upon them copious rains.

## MORMONS—TREES AND RAIN.

Conversing with intelligent Mormons on the subject of trees and rain, when at Salt Lake City in the month of June, they assured me, that when commencing their settlement there twenty years ago, their valley of the Jordan was as dry and destitute of rain as any other in the Great Basin. But since, by artificial watering from mountain streams, they have cultivated a large portion of the valley, and started into vigorous growth immense numbers of both fruit and forest trees; each succeeding year rain clouds from the mountains have been drawn farther over the valley with refreshing showers. And the present season, until the middle of June, rains were so frequent they had but little need for artificial watering.

## SIMILAR FACTS

are elsewhere developing. "The dryness of the Egyptian climate is such that rain never falls in the upper province, and not more, formerly, than five or six days a year in the Delta. But Mehemet Ali has planted twenty million trees in these districts and the annual average has now increased to forty days."

By successes of this kind in Algeria, some enthusiastic Frenchmen propose, by means of Artesian wells, to turn the great desert of Sahara into an Oasis.

How grand, ornamental and useful a triumph, should the Pacific Railroad Companies, by the needful expense and painstaking, succeed in having a row of forest trees grow on each side their road from Omaha to the Sierras! The thing is entirely practicable.

## THE PROPHET'S TIME HASTENING.

Then literally, "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose—the glory of Lebanon be given unto it with the excellency of Carmel and Sharon—the parched ground become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water."

All this, however, shall not be fully brought to pass until in these wastes of Nevada, as well as in all other such localities, "Trees of Righteousness, the planting of the Lord be multiplied,"—until "every tree which the heavenly Father hath not planted be rooted up"—with the Tree of Life, once again as in Eden, growing beside all waters, with its monthly and varied fruits, and leaves as medicine for the nations.

A. M. STEWART.