Original Communications.

PRESBYTERIANISM IN BOSTON.—I.

There are at the present time six Presbyterian churches in Boston. Of these one is connected with the Reformed Presbyterians, or Church of the Covenanters, as the body is better known. Three belong to the United Presbyterians, and two are connected with the Old School branch of the Church.

These churches are mostly small. The two Old School churches are the most flourishing, being self supporting, and having houses of worship. The Church of the Covenanters is also self-supporting, but it is destitute of a house of worship. They are making the effort to erect a church edifice, but have hardly the pecuniary ability to warrant them in undertaking such a work. The three United Presbyterian churches are not, as yet, self supporting, nor do they have houses of worship. They receive missionary aid, and worship in halls.

These churches, although belonging to three different Presbyterian bodies, have in them very much that is common. They all have a family likeness. A stranger could see but little difference between them, except that the Old School churches have been so far modernized as to sing the hymns of uninspired men in the place of Rouse's version of the Psalms. They are all churches in which there is a good deal of religious life, and their members will compare favorably with the members of other churches in piety and morality.

The members of these churches are, for the most part, foreigners, who have emigrated either from the British Provinces, from Scotland, or the North of Ireland. They are strongly attached to the Church of their fathers, to its doctrines and to its mode of worship, and do not readily affiliate with our Congregational churches.

There is no reason to doubt that all these churches, though some of them are now quite small, will, in time, become large and flourishing. The progress which they have made within the last few years is as encouraging as could have been expected, and gives the promise of greater and better results in coming years. There is abundance of room for them, and the field is wide enough for all the work they may wish to bestow upon it. And not only is there room enough for them, but they are needed. They are not, indeed, needed for our New England population, and they cannot expect to make any proselytes of this class, or gather into their churches from it; for the ground is entirely preoccupied by a kindred body, which has in its favor all the prestige which age, social position, and a strong hold on the hearts of the people can give. But they are needed for our foreign population. There is a continuous emigration to Boston from the British Provinces, of Presbyterian families and others, familiar with the usages and forms of the Presbyterian Church; and from this class of emigrants these churches may have a large growth.

The first of these different Presbyterian churches, and the one from which all the others, with the exception of the Church of the Covenanters, may be said to have sprung, is the United Presbyterian church of which Dr. Blaikie is the pastor. Dr. Blaikie is entitled to the honor of having been the pioneer in this Presbyterian movement. Coming to the city in May, 1846, he found a number of Presbyterian families without a religious home. He at once began to act as their pastor, visiting them in their houses and preaching to them on the Sabbath. After laboring among them until December of the same year, a United Presbyterian church was organized. This church, owing to the poverty of its members, has always labored under the disadvantage of not having a house of worship. This disadvantage is now in a fair way of being remedied. A church edifice is in process of erection, the lecture room of which, it is hoped, will be completed this fall, and which will be sufficiently large to meet the wants of their present congregation.

The other churches have all been formed since; in one or two instances by secessions from Dr. Blaikie's church, owing to dissatisfaction with him and with his management of church affairs. In other instances they have been formed because of the distance of so many of the members from Dr. Blaikie's church.

Some of these churches which have gone out from Dr. Blaikie's, have been more successful than the parent church. This has been especially the case with the two Old School churches. The Old School Church in East Boston, notwithstanding many discouragements, has had a fair growth; while the Beach St. church has one of the finest houses of worship in the city, and, at present, tolerable congregations. There was during the past winter a revival in the last mentioned church, which added to its members and its means. There has been, recently, too loud a trumpet blown over this church, but there is no question but that it has seen, apparently if not really, a year of considerable prosperity.

It is proper to say of all these Presbyterian churches, that they are still in their infancy. Their combined membership cannot exceed 800 or 1,000. The influence which they exert over our New England people is as yet scarcely perceptible. Their congregations are made up of foreigners, and it is doubtful whether they will be composed of any but foreigners and their children, for a long time to come. The Congregational churches have the ground. This alone will interfere with the introduction of Presbyterianism, to any great extent, among our own people. But if there were no Congregational churches to compete with, the character of the Presbyterianism brought here is such that it would very slowly strike in its roots into the soil of New England. The prevailing influence is that of the United Presbyterians and the Covenanters.

It is not the Presbyterianism of the Old and New School churches that we have here. It is wholly an importation of the Presbyterianism of the British provinces. While two of the churches are connected with the Old School Assembly, they were at first, if not in their Church relations, certainly in heart and spirit, United Presbyterian, and formed a connection with the Old School Church, not from choice, but from necessity. In character, intelligence and culture, these two churches do not represent the Old School churches of the Middle and Western States, or the Old School churches of New England. The standard of pulpit service required, is not of a high order. The preaching which meets with the most approval is the extempore and the hortatory. A style of preaching at all intellectual would be attended with failure. Members of the Presbyterian Church in the Middle and Western States, in removing to Boston, would not find these churches like those they have left. They would see a difference, even if it should be difficult to tell in what it consisted. They would find the Congregational churches much more congenial to them. In fine, the foreign character of all these churches, of the Old School with the others, stands in the way of their progress among the American people. And then the rigidity with which they cling to every thing that is old, their want of flexibility, the close communion of the United Presbyterians and the Covenanters, the opposition of the two last named churches to organs and all instrumental music, and their persistence in singing Rouse's version of the Psalms exclusively, will necessarily repel from them those accustomed to our New England mode of worship. And it is doubtful, whether, with the removal of these, to us, objectionable features they would be able to bring into their fold many who have been nurtured in the Congregational churches, or who have been at all familiar with them; while it is certain, that without these very peculiarities, they would lose numbers of the Irish and Scotch.

These churches will, of necessity, in a few years, be affected by the customs of the religious societies with which they are brought in contact, and will acquire greater liberality and breadth, which will do away with many of these peculiar traits. But for the present, it is better that they hold on with such tenacity to Church usages and modes of worship that have long been obsolete in this latitude. The Scotch and Irish emigrants from the Provinces find in these churches exact copies of the churches in which they have been born and brought up. The likeness which they see in them to the Church of their birth, pleases them, and attracts them. For this large and steadily increasing class of our growing city they meet a want, and furnish a home, and will yet do a great deal of good among them.

In this account of Presbyterianism in Boston, no allusion is made to any movement except the one which began with Dr. Blaikie. Another letter will give an account of Presbyterianism in the city from its first beginning down to the year 1846.

AXTELL.

THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN INDIA. I.

DEAR BROTHER MEARS:—In previous communications I have spoken of our Hindu Reform Party, known by different names in different parts of India, and more particularly of one branch of it—the Brahmo Somaj of Bengal, which is constantly growing in interest and importance. I gave you extracts from the prayers and public addresses of their acknowledged leader, Baboo Keshub Chunder Sew, fully recognizing the one, true God, and universal human brotherhood, and denouncing caste, infant marriages and idolatry, with the courage of an iconoclast, and the zeal of a true Reformer.

Some time ago, the grave charge was brought against the Baboo, that he allowed his followers to worship him. This accusation was so far accepted as true by some good men, that they regarded the Baboo and his party with diminished interest, and some even abandoned all hope of good from them. Editors took up the matter, and some challenged the Baboo to deny and disprove the charge; but, engaged in his self-imposed labors, he kept on with his work, giving no heed to this challenge. Some interpreted this silence as a tacit admission that the accusation was true, and that the Baboo was ambitious of divine honors as a new incarnation. Others saw in his silence the self-respect, conscious integrity, magnanimity and earnest purpose of the true Reformer, intent on his great work, and resolved not to be turned aside by petty personal calumnies. It now transpires that this was the correct interpretation—his original accusers coming forward to acquit the Baboo of all blame. It seems, the charge originated from the use of terms of respect applied to him by some of his friends, which terms are also applied to God, though in a higher and more divine sense—just as we speak of a good man as *pure-minded, perfect, just*, or *guileless*, though implying less than when we use the same terms in speaking of God. Here was little ground for so grave a charge, surely; and yet it is in evidence by one of his original accusers, that even these terms of respect are distasteful to the Baboo, and he seems to prosecute his work with a simplicity of character and earnestness of purpose almost puritanic.

This Baboo is not to be regarded as preaching and laboring on a true Christian platform; but in undermining Hindu superstitions, and hastening the downfall of this gigantic system of idolatry and caste, he and his party are doing a service for which we may well thank God and take courage. Their number is constantly increasing, and conscious of growing influence and power, they are becoming able to disregard the remonstrances and threats of the old orthodox party, and to furnish society and protection to the more enlightened and bolder spirits, as they gain courage to leave the old ranks and join this party. A card has recently appeared in our Bombay papers, saying that some leading spirits at Bangalore have just sent a message to the Baboo, that some five thousand Hindus there are wishing to desert their old faith and join his party, and begging he will come or send some of his helpers to aid them in this movement.

The Bombay Branch of this Reform movement is also showing more life. They have long been preaching, but with no corresponding practice. Their first practical movement is the remarriage of a Brahman widow. Married in infancy, her husband died when she was about eight years old. She is now about seventeen. A well-educated young Brahman, employed as Head Master in a Government High School, encouraged by the leaders of this Reform party, resolved to disregard the curses of the orthodox Brahmans, and marry this young Brahmanee. The Bombay leaders of the Reform party corresponded widely with kindred spirits, and secured the pledges of some hundreds of like-minded Brahmans, to favor the marriage and continue to dine and associate with them and the parties to be married, despite all orthodox maledictions. The marriage brought together some one thousand or more of this Reform party, and the agitation it has caused in the native community throughout all Western India, is hardly conceivable at your distance. The taking of Vicksburg in the progress of your great war of the Rebellion, could hardly have excited either portion of your country more than this event has excited the entire native community of this Presidency. In every city, town and village of any note, the orthodox Brahmans have gathered in council to consider and devise measures of protection from this bold assault on the immemorial usages of Hinduism. The Reform party rejoice, and mark their sense of the importance of the progress achieved, not only by words of mutual gratulation, but by more substantial gifts. *The Chief of Jamkhandi*, whose estate is near us here in this Southern Mahratta country, on hearing that the marriage was consummated, at once sent a check of 1000 rupees to the bold bridegroom, and several smaller sums have been given him by others. The old orthodox party, seeming not to think their social penalties and excommunications potent enough, appealed to the legal power, and brought several of the Reform leaders into court on the charge of disturbing their assembly when they met to excommunicate these leaders. The charge was unsupported and thrown out of Court. Now these Reform leaders have obtained summonses against several of the orthodox leaders on the charge of getting up an unlawful assembly for the express purpose of inflicting pains and penalties on respectable citizens guilty of no crime or offense recognized in the penal code. The issue in the latter suit is now pending.

R. G. WILDER.

LETTERS FROM THE HILLS. IV.

Some years ago when Professor Mitchell's lectures on the outlying and popular facts of astronomical science had created a general *furore* in favor of the study, a society was formed with this view in the Smoky City. The dense cloud of smoke that lies between them and the stars was no obstacle, for high above this cloud rise the hills that form the rim of the bowl in which Pittsburg and Allegheny are situated. On the hills above the latter city, they chose a site for their Observatory, procured some instruments, and then made the discovery that telescopes are not peep-shows, and that the science demands the most exacting attention, and the largest sacrifice of time. Their ardor cooled off so quickly that the funds were not forthcoming to pay the last instalments on their Observatory property, and soon the society were over ears in debt. The Observatory remained as the only tangible result of their enthusiasm, and the liberality of some friends of the University secured it for that institution. The building has been enlarged, the apparatus increased, and the whole entrusted to a gentleman who is not lacking in enthusiasm for his profession, but all these things have not made it an Observatory in the proper sense of that word. As he himself remarked, people seem to regard astronomical instruments as a *fetiche*; if you build a house and put them in it, they think that the machine will work spontaneously. To do the work of a British or Continental Observatory, there are needed a good site, sufficient apparatus, a competent master of the science and at least six assistants, who have nothing else to do.

This fact is a sufficient comment on the complacent offer of the Astronomical Professor of the University of Chicago, who volunteers to assist the German astronomers in making out their new catalogue of the stars, in which every star down to the twelfth magnitude is to be recorded, and the smallest discrepancy in different observations are to be corrected. How the zone that he has undertaken will fare may be judged from the facts that he is busy teaching in the University by day, and that his only assistant is a student from one of the classes.

Prof. Langley of the Pittsburg Observatory was introduced to me at the University, and kindly offered to show me what was to be seen in his peculiar charge. About the time he fixed, I toiled by various zigzag paths up toward the rounded dome that indicates the whereabouts of an equatorial telescope, and overtook him on his way thither by a shorter route. I am afraid even to put on record the exceeding kindness with which he exhibited and explained his instruments, lest it should bring him annoyance and intrusion from mere curious sight-seers. But as none of your readers are of that class, I will just say, that nothing more could have been done to make my visit profitable and pleasant.

The central part of the Observatory, in which the Equatorial is mounted, was erected by the society to which I have referred. Since the building became the property of the University, two wings have been added, in one of which is the entrance. The first room contains the two last invented instruments, and in some respects the most curious.

The *Chronograph* is the only important astronomical instrument that has been invented in America. The European Observatories are supplied with it by the American patentees. Its object is to fix the exact time,—down to a very small fraction of a second,—at which an observation is taken. A sheet of paper is spread around a cylinder revolving once a minute. A glass pen describes on this a helix line, by slowly moving past the cylinder as it revolves. By wires this pen is connected with a battery and with the ratchet wheel of an astronomical clock. Every time a tooth of the ratchet wheel is set free, the "connection" is completed, a magnet on the chronograph acts for an instant, and draws the pen a little aside, making a notch in the inky line on the paper. At the beginning of the clock's minute, the ratchet wheel has no tooth, so that a double length without a notch shows where the minute began. The observer, stationed at his instrument, holds in his hand a little board, connected by wires with the chronograph, with two keys, by touching one of which, he brings the same magnet into action, and makes a notch in the same inky line. Counting shows exactly the minute and second at which this notch occurs; by measurement, the exact *part* of the second is ascertained also. The great difficulty in the construction of the instrument, was to secure the regular motion of the cylinder, using a pendulum as a director. The pendulum, if directly connected with it, would move it by jerks; but by a very ingenious combination of delicate mechanical contrivances on the principle of the friction brake, a regular motion is secured.

The *Spectroscope* is an object of still greater interest, and that in the Pittsburg Observatory is one of the finest in the country. The scientific fact on which the instrument is based, is that the white light of the sun, if passed through a prism—say of flint glass—is broken up into the variously colored rays. In a rain-storm, when the observer stands between the shower and the sun, the multitudes of particles of water act as prisms, and the whole result combines to form the rainbow. The ray in the spectrum is just the same in its colors and their order as is the rainbow, only more distinct. Frauenhofer, a German optician, observed that the spectrum, or analyzed ray, was crossed by various dark lines, in some places, a great number close together; in others, one or two by themselves. These lines remain always the same for the sunlight, and are as clear and straight as if drawn with a pen and ruler. Closer examination and comparison with the rays of light emitted by other burning substances, showed that these lines correspond to various substances in combustion. In this way it was ascertained that the light of the sun indicated the presence of sodium, magnesium, hydrogen &c., in a state of combustion in the sun. To illustrate this, Professor Langley brought the two dark and heavy lines, which cross the orange ray, and correspond to sodium, just between the hair-lines that cross the centre of the glass, through which the spectrum is viewed. Then, shutting off the sunlight, he lighted an alcoholic lamp, on whose wick he had placed common salt (a compound of chlorine and *sodium*). At once two bright rays shone across the now darkened spectrum, and that just between the hair-lines, showing that the dark lines in the solar spectrum were only comparatively dark, and were the imperfect light given out by sodium burning in the sun.

In shape the spectroscope is like an arm of brass, bent at the elbow to the angle at which light is refracted by a prism of glass crystal. This is expanded into a small *camera obscura*, and the light enters where the arm would join the shoulder, and is seen at the wrist. By turning a little screw, the various parts of the spectrum are made to pass before the eye, and are brought between the hair-lines. At night, the instrument is unscrewed from its stand and screwed to the telescope, for the purpose of determining the chemical elements whose combustion produces the light of stars, *nebulæ*, etc.

[CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT]

EXEGETICAL ITEMS.

—The printers of our version have smothered an old Saxon word in 1. Tim. ii. 9. For "Shamefacedness" read "Shame-fastness," a word purely Saxon and formed like "steadfastness." The Saxon form is scam-fæst-nes, from sceamu—shame, and faest—firm or fast.

—Another obsolete Saxon word in our Bible is "earing," which occurs three times in the Pentateuch with a reference to agriculture; *viz.* Gen. xv. 6; Exod. xxxiv. 21; Deut. xxi. 4. What is "earing-time?" Most readers think of the time when the grain begins to ripen in the *ear*, and in Saxon *ear* means the head of wheat, while an animal's ear is *eare*. But this is not the meaning of "earing-time." It comes from the Saxon word *erian*—to plow, or *ered*—plowed. "Earing-time" is plowing time, and "a valley neither eared nor sown" is one that has been neither plowed nor sown.

—The Preacher says: "The words of the wise [are] as goads, and as nails fastened [by] the masters of assemblies, [which] are given from one shepherd." The second clause of the verse is often quoted, but what does it mean? Did the moderator or chairman of Hebrew assemblies keep order by "punching heads" in that style? Sharpe, in his Revision of the Authorized Version, translates it thus: "The words of the wise are as goads, and as stakes fastened by the owners of the flocks, when they are given up by a shepherd." This makes better sense, and does not bring in chairmen of meetings between the ox driver's *goad* and the shepherd.

—"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." 1 Tim. v. 17.

This is a stock text in defence of Presbyterian order. It divides the presbyters of the Church into three classes, (1) elders who neither ruled nor preached; (2) elders who ruled and did not teach or preach; (3) elders who both ruled, preached and taught. Everything in controversy turns upon the duties of the second class. The word "ruling" is in Greek proëstōs, and means "standing forth." It occurs elsewhere, as in Rom. xii. 8, "He that ruleth, [let him do it] with diligence." Our translators seem to take it as implying the management of Church business and the administration of Church discipline. In classic Greek it certainly sometimes has such a meaning, but no passage in the New Testament fixes that sense upon it. Justin Martyr (who died A. D. 165) in his "First Apology" describes the weekly worship of the primitive Christians. He says (cap. lxvii.): "When the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts." Again: "The President offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen." Again: "What is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows." Again (cap. lxv.) "There is then brought to the president of the brethren (*τῷ προεστῶτι τῶν ἀδελφῶν*) bread and a cup of wine mixed with water, and he taking them gives praise and glory to the Father of the Universe, and offers thanks at considerable length," &c. These extracts show the true sense of proëstōs. He was the presiding officer of a Christian assembly, while the worship of God was celebrated, and took part in the instruction of the Christian people. "Let the elders that preside well," &c., is Paul's meaning.

—"When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine," &c. 2 Cor. xiv. 26. Paul is here rebuking the disorders of the Corinthian church. How was such disorder as this possible? How could it be that "every one had a psalm"? To understand this we must lay aside for a minute our Occidental conceptions of poetry and music. (1) The early Christians had no strictly metrical, much less formal and rhymed poetry. The poetry of the Bible has neither metre nor rhyme. A free and irregular rhythm and a construction in parallelism is all that formally distinguishes it from prose. It was as easy to extemporize a psalm as a prayer, and probably as common. (2.) They had no fixed tunes, of necessity, in singing such psalms. Indeed they did not sing at all, in our sense of the word *sing*. They chanted or intoned them in a tone varying in pitch and rapidity according to the meaning of the words. Most probably their prayers were uttered in a tone somewhat similar. It is not probable that either our speaking tone or our singing tone was ever heard in these Oriental churches. The old Scotch Covenanters in their delivery of sermons, and the modern Ritualists in their prayers, preserve the fashion. The close line drawn between prayer and praise in the West, was not known in the East, as every reader of the Book (or rather the Five Books) of the Psalms must have seen. The second of the Five Books closes with the words, "The *Prayers* of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." Prayer in Eastern worship differed little from praise. It was thrown into the same rythmical form, uttered in the same style of chant, and responded to with a Hallelujah or an Amen, by the mass of the people. We have got farther on in the matter of uniting all voices, but only be banishing the extemporary element out of praise. Our Americans of African descent, in some parts of the land, still adhere to scriptural usage, and the leader extemporizes the hymn while the people join in the chorus.