

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

CHAPTER XV.

PASTORATE IN AYLESFORD.

(No. 10.)

As it has pleased the Lord to preserve me in life to the commencement of the year 1870, it seems to me proper to continue my Sketch to the close of 1869.

In the early part of the year I attended some series of meetings in several sections of my field. Though it has generally been beneficial to my health, as probably it is in the case of most persons, to toil with constancy, yet such efforts as break up my regular course of living, have usually tended to produce indisposition. Accordingly in one series of meetings, as they were frequently held till late in the evening, and then in some instances I went a considerable distance in bad roads and stormy weather, health became much impaired. My indisposition, principally dyspepsia continued for some months. Though it is still necessary for me to be more cautious than formerly with reference to diet, yet, through Divine goodness, my health is now materially improved. Indeed in only one instance was I unable to fulfil an appointment in the course of the year 1869. That was at a time in which I should otherwise have baptized nine candidates. This service, however, was obligingly performed by my esteemed Brother Obed Parker.

I would gratefully acknowledge the continued kindness of the Most High toward me, that in the course of the year I was enabled to travel 2800 miles—including 110 in cars and 60 in a steamer—to preach 127 sermons, attend 49 conferences, and 116 other meetings—together 292—and to make 542 family visits. I have also in the course of the first ten days of the present year, without injury to my health, or inconvenience, visited the different parts of my extensive circuit, in bad roads, and sometimes in rainy weather, preached 8 sermons, attended 2 conferences, and 5 prayer meetings, and made 27 family visits.

Though I have now been endeavoring to labor in the Lord's vineyard nearly 54 years, yet I seem to myself to have done so little for the advancement of His cause and the good of my fellow men, that, as remarked at the close of last No. of this Sketch, I still feel disposed to continue my efforts so long as physical and mental ability admit of my doing so to any profit. At my entrance on the work of the gospel ministry, I regarded myself as 'enlisting for life;' and that purpose has not been relinquished. So long as it may be deemed proper to allow me a salary for my services, it will be in my power to do more in the way of beneficence than I otherwise could; as I have long conscientiously acted upon the fixed principle of devoting at least a tenth of my income to religious and benevolent objects. It is, however, my settled purpose, as it was from the first, to labor in the service of Christ and for the good of the children of men, as much as may be in my power, whether any earthly compensation be made me or not.

In August, 1869, it was my privilege to attend our Convention in Halifax. The season was in many respects a pleasant one. It is known to many, however, that a Resolution passed with reference to our Foreign Mission was a source of deep affliction to me. So far as the intents of my heart can be scanned by me, this did not arise in any measure from a want of interest in the success of the American Baptist Missionary Union, nor from an ambitious desire to have an independent Foreign Mission fully established during my secretaryship; but it proceeded from a painful apprehension, and full persuasion, that the measure passed, however well intended, would operate very unfavorably in relation to the putting forth of efforts by the Baptists in these Provinces for the dissemination of the gospel of Christ among the perishing heathen. When, however, it appeared that, owing to peculiar and untoward circumstances, I, with my brethren of the Foreign Missionary Board in general, was out-voted, I promptly did all in my power to have the Resolution of the Convention carried into effect without any avoidable delay.

Through the kindness of Providence it was also in my power to attend the Western Association in September, at Hebron, near Yarmouth. The Session was one of interest and comfort. The devotional meetings were spiritual and cheering. Old acquaintances were renewed with pleasure,

and some agreeable new ones were formed. It seems, however, that in general 'to the end of the chapter' we must 'take the bitter with the sweet.' Some unpleasant discussions were quite painful to me, as also to many others. It is my hope, however, that henceforth peace may prevail.

Near the close of the year, Dec. 21st, 22nd, and 23rd, by request I attended the first Session of our Ministers' Institute, in Wolfville, and delivered a Lecture. My brethren having agreed that the senior Minister should at that time be the Chairman, placed me in that position. This Meeting, which continued three days and evenings, was happily an exception to the general rule noted above; for it was all sweet. The Lectures—to say nothing of my own—appeared to me instructive, and adapted to excite us to increased devotion and diligence in our great Master's cause. The discussions were conducted in a truly christian spirit. Undoubtedly all that came from abroad were very kindly entertained. For myself, as at the Convention and Western Association, excellent accommodations were furnished adjacent to the place of assembling; and special kindness evinced.

I remember to have thought in the days of my boyhood, some sixty years ago, whether there could not be some way devised to propel vehicles on the land without the use of horses, oxen, &c., but certainly I did not dream that I would ever be conveyed, as on the occasion just mentioned, by steam with great speed, sitting at ease in a beautiful saloon, with cushioned seats, and all desirable accommodations. It has, indeed, been allotted to me to live in a period of remarkable progression. May all the increased facilities for transit be made subservient to the acceleration of the spread of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God!"

For the Christian Messenger.

PROFESSOR ELDER'S LECTURE.

On Friday evening Feb. 18th, according to announcement, Prof. Elder lectured before the Acadia Athenæum, on "The Poetry of Alfred Tennyson." The well established reputation of the Lecturer both as a thinker, and particularly as a gentleman of very rare poetic taste, together with the exceedingly inviting theme proposed for discussion, tended of course to raise high expectations as to the quality and interest of the Lecture. In this age, as in every age, the human heart will appreciate and admire the rich effusions of a genuine poetic mind.

No utilitarianism can permanently affect this inherent principle in man. It is this principle, indeed, which indicates the noble—the true—the Godlike.

Alfred Tennyson will be read, studied and admired, because he is endowed with sparks of true manhood,—because he sees the facts of existence, and feels with true sympathetic power, the emotion and passions of the human soul.

The Prof. opened his beautiful lecture by a rich gem from his gifted Author, unfolding with rare beauty and power the poet's heart. He then proceeded to consider, How far Alfred Tennyson is entitled to be regarded as a poet. This point he discussed briefly but forcibly, demonstrating in one or two elegant sentences beyond doubt or cavil, the superlatively elevated character of Tennyson's genius. He referred to the subjects of his poems derived from nature and real life: his "Idylls," taken from the old legends or first records of a nation. In "Enoch Arden" he mingles with the lowly, and "finds, not makes, heroes among fishermen." In "In Memoriam" we obtain more of the inner life of the poet himself.

The learned lecturer then considered the enquiry, "What is poetry?" It was no mere metrical arrangement of words or studied jingle or smooth flowing rhythm,—not a mere intellectual effort: it flowed from the soul. It was the result of inspiration. It could not be defined, no, not by the High Priest of Geniis. It is a living principle. It unfolded the connection between "Man's world and God's world." It is the Poet's highest work to weave into the dark tissue of human affairs, some tints of that heavenly light which may show their relation to God.

Referring to past times, we can afford to give up our Drydens, Popes, Byrons and "never ending Wordsworth." We can see in our own distinguished laureate the elements of a higher and purer inspirator. a more blessed appreciation life's real object.

Coming to the Poet's heart we find that he is a lover of Nature—delights in all her forms and beauties, He is a lover of the sea—of "Old Ocean with his briny acres." The poetry of Tennyson abounds in beautiful descriptions of

external objects, yet these are not his real object. They are the pure gold in which is embedded some gems of spiritual light.

The Lecturer then proceeded to recite some of the shorter poems of Tennyson as exhibiting clearer than any description that could be given the cast of his mind and the sentiment of his heart. He first selected "The voyage." This although an Allegory, shows admirably the ways of the world. The Poet's mission is to raise mankind to a higher view of life. There is through Tennyson's poems a good and healthy tone, calculated to impress men's minds with the realities of existence and raise men to a higher appreciation of the wise, the virtuous, the good and the true. "The Palace of Art" was next examined with its "halls and corridors and rooms suited to every mood of mind," and the great lesson of life that is to be learned from this sublime Allegory was beautifully unfolded. There is in Tennyson a strong faith in human progress—a belief peculiarly dear to our times. When the seeds are sown the earing and the harvest have not failed to follow since time began: He has likewise a marked sense of human goodness—that not only are men not what they seem, but better than they seem. There are heroes all around us,—who day by day are making noble sacrifices and self-denials, where generous deeds will never be known or recorded.

Some times Tennyson wields the scourge, and applies the lash in cases of wrong or insincerity, but this is not his general way of dealing with men. His poetry embodies the sentiment that it is better to fight for the good than rail at the ill. "The Golden year," illustrating the dignity of labor, and the "Lotus Eaters" exhibiting the Poet's power of description, were recited by the Lecturer.

But the Poet had not reached his highest excellence not fulfilled his highest mission, who merely indulged in brilliant speculations about man's dignity and destiny. This would not reach the necessities of mankind. He may predict the future glory of the race,—What of the individual? Man must have realities in this world of ours. Instead of the mere sport of chance, he is the inheritor of Immortality—the child of God.

The Lecturer then recited some of the fine passages of "In Memoriam" which indicated the depth of the Poet's feeling—his earnest struggles—his sincerity, and above all his faith in the government of Heaven. This revealed his high spiritual nature, and his insight into the great mysterious reality of life. We cannot read all the parts, but we all can read the three greatest. The myriad-minded—the greatest tragedian who ever wielded the pen—Shakespeare; that sublime Author who wrote the first christian epic—indeed the first christian poem—Milton; and that gifted and noble genius who is the light of our age—Tennyson. In conclusion, Tennyson's greatness consists not in his present celebrity, or his future fame and glory, but in endeavoring to do much for the substantial good of the race, and the elevation of the common brotherhood of man.

This is a very imperfect sketch of one of the loftiest and finest Lectures ever delivered before Acadia Athenæum. All present were not only delighted, but raised to a higher appreciation of life and life's aims.

STUDENT.

Acadia College, Feb. 19th.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE FREE SYSTEM.

READER'S FOURTH ARTICLE.

"The present method of conducting our church finances, is, we believe, growing into a greater and greater barrier to the gospel, both by hampering pastors, and by prejudicing the poor against it; and thus the very means which we are adopting professedly to further the gospel is working directly against it. The whole matter of church finance needs a prayerful and thorough reconsideration."—The Pulpit: Dr. Graves in Baptist Quarterly.

"There is now in Europe a general tendency toward the separation of church and state. When the independent churches build they do it in the most simple style. There are no carpets, no cushions, no gilded chandeliers, no velvet on the pulpit. But on the other hand, there are no debts, (which a church ought never to have); no private pews; no sale of them; no auction. Every one who come to church is welcome, and takes his place where he chooses. The church truly belongs to its members; but none of them appropriates any part of it to his own use. Thus there are no churches built by speculation. Truly, this does not prevent them from being living churches. Is there not in this

picture of the churches in Continental Europe something to imitate? Are they not nearer to the spirit of the apostolic age, than a great many churches in our midst?"

"The Central Congregational church, Washington, D. C., have leased a building which is intended to be a church for the people, and all are invited to come freely to this magnificent hall to meet the common Saviour. Free seats and voluntary contributions are among the distinguishing features of the place. Its prospects are excellent."—Christian at Work.

"It is a significant fact that twenty out of the twenty-eight Episcopal churches in Maine are supported by Sunday collections."—Watchman and Reflector.

"It is pleasing to observe that ample provision has been made in the case of the Broad Street church, Toronto, for the carrying on of missionary work in parts of the city remote from the present centres, by the adoption of the weekly offering system last July. Other churches in this vicinity, have recently adopted this system, and thrown open their pew doors to the public with equally encouraging results. I am glad to see that a movement in the same direction is going on in the East. The question is worthy of serious and prayerful consideration, whether the throwing open of our houses of worship upon the free rent principle, would not tend, both by removing stumbling-blocks and occasions of offence, and by the reflex influence of the purely voluntary principle upon church members, to the furtherance of the Gospel."—J. E. WELLS, in Christian Visitor.

Your correspondent, "Enquirer," of Jan. 26th, has discovered in the remarks of "Disciples," Jan. 5th, "that there are too sides to this question," novel to him. I had always supposed that this was true of all questions; and it has occurred to me that it might materially aid your readers to sound conclusions and correct action, to give the substance of what has been adduced upon the subject, pro and con, in parallel columns, so that they may see at a glance the present position of the entire argument. Thus:—

THE PEW SYSTEM.

For.

Against.

1. It is in accordance with the great law, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

2. Makes it "convenient for families to sit together."

3. Renders it possible for "every individual to be found by his brethren," and for "the minister to know if he is present, or, if absent," to learn the reason.

4. "Gives persons the opportunity of inviting their friends and others to" their seats.

5. Enables persons "to know where they may find their own books, &c."

6. Enables each "family to have its own place, and every individual his seat in the house of God."

7. The churches of such men as Spurgeon and Beecher are "crowded, with rented seats."

1. It is believed to be unsupported by Scripture, opposed to Bible principles, and positively sinful.

2. Encourages speculation in chapel building, carries the idea of barter and sale into the church, and gives some an exclusive right to a portion of God's house.

3. Exerts a baneful influence upon the ministry, and gives a secular and money idea to preaching.

4. Prevents the poor from aiding to support the gospel; makes improper distinctions in God's house, tends to separate the poor and rich in churches, and hinder the former from attending worship.

5. Operates against giving for the support of the gospel either conscientiously, or as an expression of love or liberality, or upon the principle of equality.

6. Prevents the growth of congregations, and consequently, of churches.

7. Has failed to support the church, and has, in many instances, after long and faithful trial, been abandoned.

THE FREE SYSTEM.

Against.

For.

1. "Large number have gone to other churches because unwilling to have their families sit in contact with people with whom they are not acquainted."

2. "Only a few of what are called first families will support it."

3. "Is difficult to sustain."

1. It enables all to attend Divine worship who wish to, especially the poor and friendless, doing away with moneyed distinctions in God's house, and leaving the "unchurched masses," without excuse.

2. Satisfies conscience, increases the stability of the pastoral relations, the liberality of the rich, the contributions of the poor, and the size of congregations.

3. Saves collectors' expenses, avoids the friction and annoyance of the pew system, and is regarded by those who have tried it as the surest, easiest, simplest, most profitable, most Scriptural, and best method of meeting expenses.