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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

Hope.

I lay in grief,
And Hope drew near to where I tossed
alone
Without relief,
And paused a moment when she heard
that moan;
Then raised her glowing eyes and met
mine own.
Never a word she said,
Yet still I gazed and still was comforted.
Then bending low with wondrous grace
She laid her hand upon my eyes,
Her cool hand on my burning face,
And at her touch bright visions rise,
Fresh woods and streams and unimagined
skies.
In softest tone
She sang the song that has no close,
That deathless song which no one knows,
Save she alone;
The song that leaves no memory,
The song of endless victory
And future love;
And as I listened to the voice above
I felt as one returning from the dead;
Slowly I rose and raised my drooping
head.
All the Year Round.

Religious.

Is the Romish a Christian Church?

Those who attended the late General Assembly of the Presbyterians in Saratoga were as much interested in this question as in any that came up for discussion. The debate was even exciting. It could not be otherwise in a body composed of men so highly intellectual and so earnest of purpose. It is a matter that has perplexed the grand denomination of Calvin and Knox for many years, and from the tone of the controversy and the conclusion reached, we infer that it will continue to be a subject of agitation for many years to come.

The Assembly of 1835 declared that "the Catholic Church has essentially apostatized from the religion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and cannot be regarded as a branch of the Church of Christ." This would seem to declare that Romish baptism and Romish ordination are invalid. If so, Calvin and Knox and other founders of the denomination were never baptized or ordained, for they knew no other baptism or ordination than that of the Roman Church. If so, all Romanists joining the Presbyterians must be baptized again. These difficulties, and others, led the Assembly of 1875 to recognize the validity of Romish baptism, in a deliverance which is in some respects in conflict with that of 1835. The Synod of Baltimore asked the Assembly at Saratoga to settle the conflict, to reaffirm or rescind in express terms the deliverance of 1835, and to reverse the action of 1875 declaring Romish baptism valid.

The report of the committee to which the matter was referred declined to say that the Romish Church is not a church of Christ and that Romish baptism is not valid. The question of rebaptizing converts from Rome is remanded to the local sessions to be decided by each session for itself. In some sessions, therefore, Romish baptism would be recognized as sufficient; in others it would be set aside as worthless. Of course, when this report was presented a storm arose. It continued till half-past ten at night, when adjournment was had. It was renewed the next morning, when the Assembly came together. Finally, a compromise was adopted with considerable unanimity. The compromise resolution reaffirms the deliverance of 1835, and also interprets it. The Roman hierarchy, that is the Pope, cardinals, bishops and priests, is condemned as falsely claiming to be the Church, while the laity, over which it usurps supreme control, is recognized as "a large part of Christ's Church." The Pope, the cardinals, the bishops, the priests, are not in the church; the laymen are in it. Nothing is said about Romish baptism; and hence, so far as this is concerned, the deliverance of 1875 is in force, and each session will continue to decide for itself whether to rebaptize.

Of course, this is no settlement of the question, and the battle will be renewed in subsequent years. The singular conclusion that the Romish laymen are in the church and the clergy out of it cannot stand. The doubt cast on the validity of Calvin's baptism and ordination cannot be permitted to exist always. The perplexing difficulty about anabaptism in the case of those who come from Rome must be solved in some way.

The debate is specially interesting to Baptists, who, by their habit of appealing to the Scriptures, are saved from such controversies. It is interesting as proving the value of this habit. No speaker on either side appealed to the New Testament for a definition of the church or of baptism. Such an appeal would have settled the controversy in a moment. The Scriptures use the word church in but two senses. First, it refers to "a congregation of faithful men in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance." Second, it refers to all the chosen of God, whether on earth, or in heaven, the followers of Christ in spirit, wherever they may be. There is no use of the word other than these. Hence a denomination is not a church. Nor can it be a branch of the church. An appeal to the Bible for the definition of baptism would be equally decisive. It knows no baptism but the immersion of a believer on a profession of his faith.

The discussion, though not settled on scriptural grounds, may, though not settled at all, though only postponed, is a sign of progress which every Baptist must welcome. We think we are not in error when we say that the Presbyterians are the only pedobaptist people who have entertained the question. All the great reformed denominations recognize Rome as a true church of Christ, and maintain the validity of her baptism. The Lutherans, the Episcopalians and others of the same class are agreed on this subject. It is a source of gratification to find that one of the greatest of the pedobaptist denominations does not agree to recognize Rome as a true church and her baptism as a valid sacrament. We predict that it will find no rest till it consents to repudiate Rome and her sacraments. And we predict that other denominations will be compelled by the force of events to reach the same conclusion.—*Watchman.*

How to Retire Gracefully.

Would it not be well to have it a part of the duties of our theological professors to teach the students how to leave a pastorate gracefully, profitably to themselves and the church, as well as to secure and maintain one honorably, usefully? The renewals of pastors are frequent; and it is a fact as painful as it is notorious that many leave the churches in a fearful state, often rent in twain,—friends alienated, the enemy full of joy and hope; the usefulness of years is swept away in a few days; the minister, no less than the church, suffers sadly in character and reputation. Strong churches become weak, often almost helpless.

It is not expected that all church members will be wise, especially when dissatisfied with their pastor. Neither are his friends always excessively wise, and he should seek to have wisdom enough for all that are deficient, both friends and enemies, so that Satan shall get no advantage. How beautiful to be wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove! With him an ounce of wisdom is better, more successful in preventing difficulties, than the wisest of counsels can be for healing them; Almost any minister can lead a church into difficulties, but a wise one cannot always lead it out of them.

We should all be careful, lest Satan help us and we know it not, when we change our field of labour. At such time he is especially helpful, so that we may think our wrongs greater than they are, and our favors less. He goes for divisions, alienations; we should

go for peace. Some go to outsiders for sympathy, who have never lent them assistance in their labors, or sympathy. That always works ill every way, especially to the minister. No faithful minister ought to expect to be treated by all the brethren as he deserves; Christ was not, John was not, Paul was not, but they did not revile, go in for general destruction. We should take the more excellent way, urge our friends to be peace-makers, peace-preservers, to forgive as they hope to be forgiven to love as they would be loved.

It is inexpressibly sad to see an ex-pastor absent himself from the prayer-meetings, sabbath meeting, forsake his old friends and fellow-laborers for the truth, affiliate with the enemies of the cause, who have delighted, to thwart his endeavours for good for years, when they could. Good and faithful men of God have ever suffered in the days of adversity, but they suffer the least when they walk with God, pity and pray for their erring brethren, and seek for the things which work for peace, and thwart the intentions of the great enemy.

P. S. With an experience of nearly forty years in the ministry, I have found the churches uniformly kind, considerate, the deacons good men, often the best. I had one in one of the churches that I served that was not quite perfect, but the fault it was thought, was with his wife, and you know some of our people do not believe in perfection even in the ministry. But I had another that came near being too good in spite of the deplorable faults of his wife to make it. In every church with which I have labored, I have found some members that were, occasionally, thorns in my flesh, but when they pricked too hard, instead of finding fault with the church, and perplexing the deacons, I quietly removed, left hosts of friends, left the church able to seek another pastor without let or hindrance, even of a debt, and when I visited the place, even the thorns seemed pleased to see me.

My experience in the ministry has been more than satisfactory; all I lament is that I have done so little for Christ and the perishing. I have never wanted troops of friends or money in time of need. I think a good minister of Jesus Christ is the most favored man on earth, in more respects than one. I should be glad to have all my sons as I am, except my imperfections. Brethren, let us praise and serve the Lord heartily, be kind, patient in trial, faithful to God, to duty, to souls; be generous, discreet, wise, for we have a subtle enemy to deal with, and varied tastes and opinions among our good brethren. Never go to the enemy for sympathy or counsel to the grief of the faithful in Christ; though they may not do as we think they ought, they view things from a different standpoint. When you remove, though in sorrow, with many tears, do it cheerfully, kindly, feeling that God may be in it though you cannot see it, and then you can visit old friends and stand again in the old pulpit and talk of the wonderful salvation with great pleasure; even the thorns will bloom with flowers. F. M.

—*Watchman.*

Irish Presbyterians.

We find the following in one of our English exchanges:

"The Irish Presbyterian Church has just finished its annual Witenagemot. The report on the state of religion drew attention to the alarming decrease in the number of young men preparing for the ministry, and urged on parents to educate their sons with an eye to the pulpit. The Assembly reputed its congregations as 566, and its sittings as 228,000. For many years the communicants have been falling off at the rate of one thousand per annum. This year there has been an increase of six hundred. There has been a decrease in all the funds of the Church. Nine thousand babies have received the sign and seal of 'ingrafting into Christ.' Happy innocents! The Connaught

schools were reported flourishing—1,500 children, of whom 500 are Catholic, in 40 schools. After these reports had been received, and other business (principally routine in character) transacted, the venerable body addressed itself to the due consideration of three momentous questions—First, shall the Assembly sanction the selection of a few hymns for occasional use in public worship? Secondly, shall the Assembly permit some metrical paraphrases and five hymns, which for one hundred years have been bound up in the Psalm-book, any longer to reappear in the same covers with their revised psalter? Thirdly, shall the Assembly sanction the use of "instruments of music" in the Sunday church services? Over these queries occurred a scene of mental and physical heat which baffles description. Divines and elders, streaming with perspiration and flushed with excitement, wrangled and screamed, at times unheard amid a confusion that would have delighted "the country party" in the Commons' House. Cries of "Sit down!" "Put him out!" "Donkey!" "Won't be gulled and fooled!" "More a clown in a circus than a Christian minister!" "Encore!" "Retract!" "Romanising policy!" frequently accompanied with "tremendous stamping and shuffling of the feet" at intervals. At times the intensity of the din cured itself, for its creators, in despair, had to sit down and let quiet return. Almost every column of the newspaper account has its continuity marred with notes of "confusion, frightful confusion, interruption, uproar, etc." In one of these *melees* the moderator said pathetically to an applicant, "Dear sir, you see that we are both equally helpless." Even the Boanerges of the Assembly, Robinson, of Broughshane, was made to feel a mortification to him unusual, arising from having to stand and shout amid a clamour of voices which outdid his own. The end was that the Assembly ignored hymns and paraphrases, and barred the use of instruments in the public worship. The best joke which survives those two days of excitement was that of a member who could not find a seat. While speaking on one occasion some one called out, "Sit down," to which he responded, "Of my *locus standi* in this court I have no doubt, but alas! I do not possess a *locus sedendi*." Two stories also came to the top. One was about a country congregation who refused the services of an old and excellent precentor after he had got in some front teeth, because they said he sung instrumentally. The other occurred in the speech of a somewhat upsetting laic. He said, "It is amusing the equanimity with which the anti-instrumentalists monopolise conscience: It reminds me of a story which is partly theologic and partly gastronomic, and, therefore, peculiarly appropriate for a convocation of clergy. The late Daniel O'Connell was crossing to Holyhead. At dinner he saw on the table before him a fine salmon trout. The day being Friday, the air keen, and Daniel being sharp set, he transferred the entire delicacy to his plate, remarking apologetically to his fellow-passengers, 'Gentlemen, excuse me, this is a fast day in our church.' A cattle-driver seated opposite had also been eyeing the dainty trout, but had been too modest to be the first to ask for a portion. He was dumbfounded for a moment at the coolness of O'Connell's procedure, but anon recovering his wits, he seized knife and fork, and stretching across the table, severed the fish, and bore off the larger half, exclaiming 'Bad manners to you! Do you think no one has a soul to be saved but yourself?' So sir, I would ask the anti-instrumentalist, 'Do you think no one has a conscience to protect but yourselves.'

The result of each division were received amid the greatest excitement. The anti-hymnists and anti-instrumentalists rose to their feet and cheered vehemently for several minutes. After one of the divisions, a reverend gentleman called for three cheers for the elders of the Irish Presbyterian body.

These were given with stunning heartiness. Yet the rural eldership of this body is emphatically its peculiar opprobrium. Dull, dead, and bigoted to the last degree, everything unprogressive finds in them its cordial friends.

The Pessimistic Theory of Morals.

Let us test this pessimistic theory in a field where statistics can be furnished. It is hard to measure morals; the standards are not easily applied. But the devotees of the good old times always assume not only that the moral condition of society is worse now than in the former generations, but that the race is degenerating physically; that our fathers lived longer and more healthily than we do. Of that the Church of the Preterite is abundantly convinced. "Of course it must have been so," they will tell you. "Our fathers lived much simpler lives than we live; their habits were more regular, they were not in constant whirl of excitements; they were not addicted to the extravagances and luxuries that are destroying our lives; of course they must have lived longer. Besides they were better than we are; and long life is not only one of the rewards promised to the righteous, it is a natural consequence of virtuous living; therefore they must have been healthier than we and must have spent more days upon the earth."

That reasoning seems entirely conclusive, no doubt but it happens that there are figures at hand by which we can test it. Dr. Edward Jarvis of Boston—who is not a Preterite in any sense of the word, but who takes hold of the future with a faith that glorifies his gray hairs,—has been at the pains to collect the statistics from old bills of mortality and life tables and annuity reports, and city registers, and here are some of them:

Not including the mortality from the plague, the annual mortality in London two hundred years ago was one in twenty of the living. Including those from the plague, the deaths were one in twelve and a half of the living. Now the rate is only one in forty-two.

In France, in 1781, the deaths were one in twenty-five. In the five years, 1861 to 1865, the annual rate was one in forty-three.

Eighty-eight years ago the mortality in Berlin was one in twenty-eight; it is now one in seven and a half.

The rate in Dublin was one in twenty-two in the beginning of the eighteenth century and one in thirty-eight in the middle of the nineteenth.

In England and Wales the mortality decreased two-fifths from 1720 to 1820.

In Boston, from 1728 to 1752 the deaths every year were one in twenty-one of the living; in the twenty years, 1846 to 1865, they were only one in forty-two.

We have neglected some of Dr. Jarvis's fractions and have sometimes condensed his language; but these specimen figures, out of a great mass of statistics which he furnishes, will give some idea of the truth respecting the increase of human life. It is proved therefore that in the good old times people were not so healthy as they are in these times and did not live nearly so long. And—let us see—what was that argument? That long life is a proof and a reward of virtue? But how does it apply to these figures, and what is the inference from it respecting the comparative morality of old times and new? We will not push this argument, for we do not think it would be fair; but we hereby serve notice on Doctor Paulo Post and the rest of the Church Preterite that they had better not use it any more. It proves quite too much for them. And it may be that if they will give a little careful study to the history of the good old times they will find that the belief in the superior morality of the men of a former generation is no better founded than the belief in their longevity.—*Sunday Afternoon.*

Keep ahead rather than behind the times.