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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

The "Virtuous Woman."

Prov. XXXI. 10-31.

"Who can find a virtuous woman?
For her price exceeds rubies far,
The heart of her husband can trust her,
That he needs not the booties of war.
She will do him good and not evil,
All his happy and sorrowful days,
While her hand for the poor and needy
Smooths and softens life's hard, rugged ways.
It was not for her STATION I sought her,
For I boasted no lordly estate;
But she wrought with a strong devotion,
Till her husband was known in the gate.
It was not for her MONEY I wooed her,
But she brought me more wealth than gold;
She came "like the merchant ships"
laden,
With her manifold treasures untold.
For "she opened her mouth with wisdom,
In her tongue was the sweet law of love,
"She looked to the ways of her household,"
And she "feared the Lord" all things
above.
It was not for her BEAUTY I chose her,
But her beauty increased with her years,
Till the day that they bore her from me,
When I scarce could discern for my tears.
But they said, who saw in the basket,
From her white brow smoothed back
her brown hair,
And lips as if kissed by a seraph,
That "an angel could not be more fair."
It was not for "vain beauty" I won her,
For the vanishing gloss of a day,
But I "found a virtuous woman."
With the beauties that bloom mid decay,
Now her children arise up and bless her,
And her husband he giveth her praise;
Though only her memory lingers,
Like the twilight of happier days,
But, sitting alone in the shadow,
There yet lives in fond memory's eye,
That face with its brightness supernal,
And that love cannot suffer to die.
Then "give her the fruit of her doings,
Let her praises her sweet works recall,
For "many have done virtuously,
But thou truly excellest them all."

W. H. P.
Branford, Nov., 1876.

Religious.

"Advanced Thinkers."

The following article from the pen of Rev. Dr. Fyfe, we believe, by the initials, we copy from the *Canadian Baptist*. It is a very proper protest against the assumption and presumption of those who present such unwarranted claims to greater progress than other people:—

This is a phrase which is becoming quite common in certain quarters. It does not so far as we know, belong to any country in particular. We are unable to affirm whether it was invented by critics and lookers-on, as characteristic of a type of thinkers, or whether it was appropriated by a certain class, as the only phrase which could adequately describe and identify them. It is usually employed to indicate a class of semi-religious writers, who have adopted, and uttered some strange and crude notions, in regard to the commonly received views of the Gospel of the Son of God. At the present time there are many of our periodicals which notice, compliment, and flatter men in proportion to the amount of unbelief which they can indicate by their utterances. As if the best proof of advance in thought, consists in the pugnacity of the heterodox flavor a man can give to his writings, or the amount of down right infidelity he can embody in his creed. On all hands we can find many who are ready to laud those who turn aside from the old paths; "The fountain of living waters," and pursue a supposed original path of their own. They are "The deep and earnest thinkers," "The advanced thinkers" of our time. And these wanderers very modestly appropriate the title, take off their hats, and bow to their own greatness.—We are the "advanced thinkers!" Like the French Countess, who would have esteemed pure water a delightful drink, if it could only be flavored with sin, so there are, in our day, many advanced thinkers, who like the Bible, if it can only be mixed with their errors. Under this little phrase, now so com-

mon, whether it be carelessly bestowed by critics or editors of Magazines, or complacently assumed by conceited writers, there lurks a most flagrant fallacy. The parties to whom the epithet, "Advanced thinkers," is attached, we believe, without exception reject a large part of "those things which are most surely believed by us." As the epithet is complimentary, it clearly teaches that the rejectors of scriptural truth and doctrines, by the parties to whom it is applied, are right in the positions which they have taken. This is a clear case of *petitio principii*, a begging of the whole question. We emphatically deny that they have proved their right to reject any part of God's word; and hence they have no right to set up the banner of victory till they have won the battle. And yet the Editor of *Scribner's Magazine*, and many others, are guilty of this great unfairness.

We have been curious when we have read or heard this conceited little phrase to ascertain how the parties employing it justified its terms. At what point do these gentlemen commence their measurements, to ascertain the "advance" they have made? Along what path do they stretch their line? With whom do they, consciously or unconsciously, compare themselves when they speak of being "advanced thinkers?" Do they mean that they have started from the goal which is set up for orthodox Christians, and have outrun them? We deny that they have started from the same goal, or that they are travelling on the same road. Hence they cannot tell whether they are in advance, or in the rear of us; whether they have advanced or retrograded. If they are pursuing an independent track, we do not see any means by which they can compare their progress, with that of those who are pursuing "the old paths;" if, on the other hand, they claim to be on the same paths occupied by orthodox Christians, are they not like the children spoken of by McAuley, sitting upon their father's shoulders and crying, "See how much taller we are than papa!" In every sense we protest against the phrase. It is conceited, it is misleading, it is strictly untrue; and, in the use which is generally made of it, it is almost without exception mischievous.

R. A. F.

For the Christian Messenger.
Home Missions in the Convention.

No. 3.

A REJOINDER.

I would be sorry to have this correspondence regarded merely as a passage at arms between an unknown contestant and myself, and the chief matter to be decided who has the best of the argument. And I would be equally unwilling to write for the mere purpose of gratifying the curiosity of one whom I am supposed not even to know. I think a great question is under consideration. It is doubtful if among us there is another of as much practical importance. Certainly we have none unsettled that is. And this being so, I wish all that can be said on the other side, to be said, and in the most effective way possible. I think it fair to presume that this is now being done; I also wish my own mind and the minds of your readers generally to be kept so free that every utterance will have its due effect. If I need toning down I want to be "toned down," while I am equally anxious to help tone up those who may need that.

J. M. has seen reason for giving his objections to Home Missions in the Convention. I propose to look at these objections in his own order, and so far as I am able, ascertain their real weight.

"1." As to his first point of course, we are fully agreed. No one supposes that any system of working will of itself "increase the means" to work with.

"2." But whether "Mr. Porter's plan will increase benevolence" is in-

deed another question. Now I do not hesitate to say that if it is the right and best method it will. Both Moses and Paul—and Solomon, too—were organizers. What successful man in any age has not been? They believed in combination and co-operation, and that as large as the circumstances would admit. Their views and action were in accordance with the Divine mind, and great results followed. Let our people feel that this question is at last settled and Home Missions put where they belong and where they can do their best, and why should it not increase the feeling of interest and confidence, and proportionably the contributions? Beside, the more efficient the organization the more effectively can "the cause be presented."

J. M. says an "exhausted treasury has always been followed by the cry of combination." Very well, what then? The unanimity and invariableness of this cry by an intelligent, enlightened and Christian people is, it seems to me, strongly indicative of two things: first, that something essential is wanting, and second, that combination is needed. The general and decided feeling of a Christian public is seldom a mistaken one. Looking at the changes that have taken place in our Home Mission movements as the natural steps from chaos to order, then each apparent failure, instead of being gloomily regarded as "the tide receded as far as ever," becomes only the retreat of the wave preparatory to its further advance. Reforms are usually gradual, and progress is not always apparent. "We walk by faith, not by sight."

"3." "The larger organization implies more difficulty in management." And suppose it does. What is greatest and most efficient is generally most difficult. But J. M. ought to be aware that bringing Home Missions into the Convention does not necessarily imply one Board. What is to hinder that body appointing just as many as the wisdom of the Denomination might deem best? But my friend's objections to one Board I do not regard decisive. Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island are just as accessible from Fredericton or St. John as from Yarmouth, and no more so from Yarmouth than are the most remote parts of New Brunswick. I think, too, it might be true economy to have the whole time and energies of "one man" employed in superintending this work, and he—the most efficient missionary of all—be supported by missionary contributions. Why not? Has such a thing never been? The chief reason of the unpopularity of paid agencies thus far has been that the field of operations has been so limited, their support has cost too large a proportion of the whole amount raised. As to "doing the work gratis," wherever anything has been accomplished it has always been found necessary that some one be paid for overseeing. At present either of the existing Boards has far too much for any one man to do with much else on hand. Indeed, I think much of the failure complained of might be easily accounted for in view of the fact that pastors with their hands already full have been the ones upon whom has devolved the chief burden of this work with its "myriad of letters," &c. By what rule we can require that all this be done "gratis," I have never yet seen. As to Denominational Education and Foreign Missions in the other Provinces, New Brunswick for over thirty years maintained such an Institution as she wanted, and what is there to hinder her sustaining a Foreign Mission? Prince Edward Island is out of the question, it having always been denominationally a part of Nova Scotia. I have little sympathy with the idea that our failures actual or hypothetical, are due to our weakness; I think we must look elsewhere for the cause. At the same time I fully believe that the united efforts of our Provinces is essential to the highest efficiency of the College and Foreign Mission. On this all are agreed, while I, with many others, as firmly believe that the same is true of Home Mis-

sions. This is what I am after, nor do I at all agree with J. M. that it would be as well for New Brunswick and Nova Scotia each to "sustain a half mission" as for them to unite in sustaining a whole one.

"4." As to "individual effort coming short by the long combination," I admit the danger. It exists in any combination, and needs to be carefully guarded against. No plan will succeed that is not worked, but the better worked the more the responsibility is thrown upon individuals. I do not think there is a less number engaged in our present combined Home Missionary operations than have been at any past period, or than would be were they subdivided to any extent. Beside, I have already shown that the long combination in no way interferes with the short one. J. M. has clearly shown that it does not in the support of the College, and it certainly does not in Foreign Missions. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick undoubtedly have "each a home feeling, a Provincial sentiment." Has it never occurred to our friend that for people related as we, it is possible to be too much under that influence? In the circumstances ought Provincial lines to have any place in our denominational work? In the past I fear they have not been wholly obliterated, even where professedly they were. We have been none too "willing to combine when necessary." That we may be more so is what I am after.

"5." "Is there room in the Convention for Home Missions?" I say, emphatically, there is! There is not a word in the Constitution about breaking up Tuesday night. And I say further, that by the Constitution they are already in constitutionally. How can you consider "the general interests of the Denomination" and leave Home Missions out? "Is it advisable to keep the delegates together another day?" And why is it not in every way economical and desirable to keep them together till the work is done that needs to be done? It must be done some time, and if not by the whole body, then you entrust it to less than the body; if not by the body together, it must be by the body dismembered. Is that doing justice to the work? Is it doing justice to the body? "Can attention be kept up for another subject?" And why cannot attention be kept up for a subject in which we are interested and which "is to us of primary importance?" "With the people's minds full of Acadia College and Foreign Missions, will the time not be inopportune?" And why might not that question be just as forcibly asked with reference to either of these two objects in its relations to the other, as an argument for having but one of them in Convention? To a cup full of water may be added both salt and sugar without overflowing it. If a heart full of love to Jesus has room for Acadia College and all the world, certainly a corner ought to be found in it large enough for home. I think we should not forget that it is possible to disproportionately exalt both Acadia College and Foreign Missions, and in the same degree underrate the importance of our home work. Even J. M. thinks there is among us "a greater dearth of Home Mission spirit than of Foreign." And why is this? And how comes it that the people's minds are full of Acadia College and Foreign Missions? Will J. M. ponder these questions? If the existence of the Convention in its present form causes the College and Foreign Missions to occupy a disproportionate importance in the mind of the body as compared with Home Missions, ought we not to apply the remedy by according to Home Missions an equal consideration? But is not that just what I am after? True, "when we are full it becomes us to pay more attention to the starving than to ourselves," but what are we to do when our own "Missionary ship is well nigh stranded?" But these three objects act, reach and interact upon each other. To me there is meaning in the fact that the first step in the present advance movement for College

Endowment it was reserved for the centre of the enlarged Home Missionary work in Nova Scotia to take. And now, even while I write, comes the intelligence with equally suggestive force that the next has just been taken in immediate connection with a new effort on behalf of Home Mission work in New Brunswick. What we do for ourselves helps and inspires us to do for others.

"6." J. M. says, "I believe that Home Missions might very well be managed by the Associations." And yet he thinks "that too much business, Board business, has always been, and still is, done at Associations." Does he mean to tell us that the Board arrangement is too "long a combination," and endangers individual effort? But he adds, "I do not expect the return of those dark ages." My dear brother, I am glad you don't; "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed." In this I think you are in perfect accord with every intelligent reader you have. But you "still cherish their memory." Some people revel in the past. With them "the former days were better than these." Even the Hebrews on their way to Canaan sighed for the flesh-pots of Egypt. I know some Christians that get all their hope out of a past experience. I prefer the present joined with the assurance that "its" better on before." I don't believe that ever "there was more real missionary work done than now;" "the regions beyond reached oftener," or, "more hopeful interests started." With all our failures, I do not believe that our denominational work is all going to the bad, that the "Associations have been unsettled, shorn, whittled down to a fine point," or that "the Associational tree is now lopped of every branch, with nothing but the bare pole as a landmark" and "that it will by-and-by topple over!" A man who sees things in that light may well be in despair. Let such a spirit become general and we may bid good-bye to all progress. The croaking bird doubtless has its uses, but for myself I love neither its color, its note, nor its diet. J. M. has not held out any hope for our "well nigh stranded" Home Missions. He does not believe in the present arrangement; he has no faith in the Associations ever performing the work, and he is quite sure we have already progressed much too far in the way of intelligent organization. Let those who sympathize with his views bear this in mind. Doing so, and looking fairly at things as they are, I think they will see that we have reached a point where we cannot long remain, and from which there is no retreat, and but one way to advance. The hindrances and objections to this step, we have had presented, and seen how much there is in them. Brethren, before you is set an open door, and no man can shut it.

This is a great question as to Home Missions. It is no less important in its relations to the cause abroad and Education. But it is so chiefly because of its bearing upon our interests as a denomination. To me it is a somewhat remarkable coincidence that the Rev. John Clifford, M. A., LL. B., before the Baptist Union recently held in Birmingham, England, should give utterance to such sentiments as the following:—

"But it seems to me that over and beyond the methods generally recognized and often urged, our principal need is a living and operative conviction throughout all our members that we are really what we profess and call ourselves—a body of Baptists, and not a fortuitous concourse of immersed atoms—and that, therefore no part of the body, however remote or insignificant, can suffer without the whole being weakened; and the one next need is the wise and speedy adoption of all our action, pre-eminently our action for the evangelization of England—so as to incarnate that principle of unity, and effectually secure the solidarity of the Baptist life of the nation."

Now, as Baptists, we have developed our individualism till it is as sharp and ragged as a saw. We have so exaggerated our rights to independence and