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"Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good Will toward Men."

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Poetry.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Commend'd thy ways, O mortal!
And humbly raise thy sighs
To Him who, in his wisdom,
Rules earth, and sea, and skies.
He who for all has found a spot—
Wind, wave, and ocean dread—
Will find a place, oh! doubt it not
Thy foot can likewise tread!

In him alone confide thou must,
Ere he will bless thy deed;
In his word must thou put thy trust,
If thy work shall succeed.
Murmur, and vain repining,
And effort—all will fail;
God will not listen unto these—
Prayer can alone prevail.

All means and ways possessing,
Whate'er he does is right;
His every deed a blessing,
His steps one path of light.
To thee it is not given
The tempest's rage to quell;
God reigns supreme in heaven,
And all he does is well.

True, it may seem a moment
As though thou wert forgot,
As though he were unmindful
Of thine unhappy lot;
As though thy grief and anguish
Reached not the eternal throne,
And thou wert left to languish
In sorrow and alone.

But if, though much should grieve thee,
Thy faith shall ne'er have ceased,
Be sure he will relieve thee
When thou expect'st it least.
Then hail to thee victorious!
Thou hast, and thou alone,
The honour bright and glorious,
The conquest and the throne.

—*Gerhardt.*

From the London Freeman.

THE BAPTIST BI-CENTENARY.

NO. IV.

Sectarianism—Union.

The most unamiable feature of the age we are considering—the age of the Commonwealth and the Restoration—was, without question, its love for religious wrangling. Never, surely, did personal abuse, and the employment of hard language to one another, ever disgrace, to an equal extent, the professed disciples of the Lamb of God! Never was a higher importance attached to comparatively trivial differences of opinion, or those differences maintained with a more pertinacious zeal.

Mr. Stanford, in his valuable memoir of Joseph Alleine, gives an amusing description of the annoyances his hero experienced in Ilchester gaol from the conscientious hostilities of his Quaker fellow-prisoners; and pictures him to our imagination as attempting to preach and pray "amidst the clatter and tinkle of tools plied by industrious Quaker fingers 'for a sign,' and the war of crossing voices at the same time raised against him 'for a testimony.'" No doubt the picture is very truthful, and the scene was characteristic not merely of the spirit of the Quakers, but of the spirit of that age. The most fervent and earnest piety was too often degraded and its comeliness marred by an indulgence in vituperation, and in hair-splitting oppositions of argument that would now hardly be tolerated in political, to say nothing of religious, discussion. The *odium theologicum* was then, at all events, a very sad reality, and no mere aspersion thrown upon Christians by an ungodly and unsympathising world. And if Clarendon can be trusted, the Baptists were in no degree behind their brethren in this unlovely accomplishment. He has preserved a curious document, professing to emanate from certain Baptists in London, and addressed to Charles II. when an exile, in which these discontented brethren offer their services to the King, and stigmatise the Protector in the following select and polite terms:—"We have been led, cheated, and cozened, and betrayed, by that Grand Imposter, that loathsome Hypocrite, that detestable Traitor, that Prodigy of Nature, that *opprobium* of Mankind, that Landskip of iniquity, that Sink of Sin, and that Compendium of baseness, who now calls himself our Protector!" No doubt political feeling was mixed largely with all the religious animosities of the times, and in this diatribe it probably had a predominant share; for the party that next to the Episcopalians had chief reason to deprecate Cromwell's severities was undoubtedly the Baptists; but religious controversies were too often conducted in the same acrimonious style.

But we need not wonder either at the impassioned language which commonly prevailed, or at the multitude of sects that then started into existence. The history of the three previous generations explains it all. Until then a despotic power had been wielded both in Church and State, and the thoughts and opinions which since the Reformation had become current with large classes of the community, and had vehemently longed for utterance, had been tyrannically smothered by the strong hands of the King and the Priests. Did men wish to reform the Church? They could only do it by Separation, and they could only separate by flying into exile. On English ground there was to be no such thing as the free expression of religious thought. And now that the battle of freedom had been fought and won, it is not wonderful if opinions clothed themselves in a somewhat grotesque garb, if they spoke with extravagance, and denounced each other with violence. The stream that had been so long dammed up had burst its way through, and was rushing tumultuously along. Nor was it unnatural that strong resentments should now be discovered, or that sufferers under Inquisitions and Star Chambers should cry out passionately, half in pain and half in anger, smarting from the cruel wrongs that they had borne during long years of persecution.

There was good as well as evil in it all. The Bible had become every man's own possession, and every one was full of his own discoveries in that exhaustless mine. He had searched for it himself, and was eager to present to others his own special truth. If the mutual relations of truths were not distinctly perceived, who can wonder? Who can blame them? They did the proper business of their age, the word God had given them to do, in bringing out to view truths that had long been forgotten. If they maintained them too rigidly, if they marked out the boundaries too sharply, if they assailed each other's weaker points too impetuously, we at least ought to forgive them who have received as an heirloom the priceless truths which they contended for, and established, and transmitted safely to our hands.

Yet Sectarianism is a sin and a curse, whilst zeal for the truth is a grace and a blessing. And although every fragment of Truth is most precious, we pay a high price for it if we are under bond to keep it for ever as a fragment, or if we are to renounce the use of that sovereign plastic, Love, by which alone the shattered figure can be restored to its proper unity and beauty. If it was our forefathers' duty to discover truths, it is surely ours to unite them; and this the more because the hindrances to union are growing less and less. We can at least see more clearly, after two hundred years' experience, the proper relation and the relative importance of the truths we severally hold.

And what demand is there we should sacrifice charity at the shrine of truth? Gur Lord prayed that we all might be "one." The Holy Spirit predicts the time waen we shall "all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man." And the hearts of the most faithful disciples have ever beat in sympathy with this prayer and this prophecy. How often have the holiest men been found, not in the forefront of sectarian strife, but afar off in solitude, *praying*—because they could not fight in the ranks of their brethren—praying, "Thy kingdom come!" Nay, how often have the most vehement disputants themselves retired from the hot arena of controversy, and breathed out in plaintive hymns like Toplady's and Wesley's the deeper aspirations of their souls for the unity of the Church! Do we not delight to recognise holy men of all sects as belonging to the Church—*our* Church? Are not Augustine and A'Kempis, George Herbert and Jeremy Taylor, Leighton and Usher, Baxter and Rutherford, Toplady and Wesley, all of the same church as Canne and Keach, Bunyan and Denne? Are they not all of one mind in loving the Lord Jesus with a passionate ardour, and with a paramount conviction of His unapproachable worth? Are they not all *one* in the mystical union of Christ with His Church? "What, therefore, God hath joined together let not man put asunder!"

There are sweetly consolatory proofs in all our ancient Records that this spirit of unity was truly and profoundly our Father's spirit. In their letters and diaries we find them more deeply imbued than ourselves with the feeling that all are one in Christ Jesus. "I desire you for the Lord's sake," says Grantham to his church, "to walk together and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as Christ hath commanded you." From his dungeon in Exeter gaol, Cheare writes words of comfort to "*the poor lambs*" he has left behind at Plymouth. The brethren at Caxton gracefully yield, after much importunity, to the request of the church at Canterbury that their "beloved brother," Henry Denne, should leave them for a season, "fearing lest through the love of ourselves we should in anywise hinder the honour of God or the good of His people;" and the letters of the church in Coleman-street, London, to that at Hexham, are full of loving sympathy, and desires after their spiritual welfare.

But we need not vindicate our Fathers. The more their true history is brought to light, the brighter, we are sure, will be the lustre of their graces. If they were ever foremost in the strife for the purity of Christ's ordinances, it was not because they took pleasure in strife; and had their lot fallen on happier days, their energies would have been employed with equal zeal in cementing together the broken columns and walls of Christ's mystical temple. But this is the work they have bequeathed to us!

And *how are we performing it?* Let us confine our attention to the limits of our own denomination; and let us ask again, What are we doing,—what have we done in the two hundred years gone by,—to promote union, and to bring the Church of Christ to the stature of a "perfect man?" We have, it may be, two thousand churches walking in the same, or approximately the same, faith and order; How does our unity appear in the eyes of the world? Or, to look deeper, what *spirit* is breathed in our intercourse with each other, and what efforts do we make to strengthen the bond of fraternal love?

As soon as the fierceness of their persecution had somewhat abated, our Fathers bethought them of the necessity of closer union amongst themselves. The love which they had cherished in their breasts through so many fiery trials, must now be exhibited to the world, and be more formally and fully expressed. And accordingly, in 1677, Kiffin, Knollys, Keach, and others, resident in London, called a General Assembly of the Baptists, which issued a Confession of Faith. We know not the number that were able to congregate amidst the difficulties which then encircled them, but in 1689, when we rejoice to see the same honoured names still leading the roll, the churches that were represented numbered more than a hundred.

And now, two centuries later, what is our condition? What progress have we made? Without pretending to estimate with exactness the numbers that gather at *our* Annual Assemblies, we are quite sure that they bear no corresponding proportion to the total aggregate of our churches. To what standard do they flock? Around what centre do they rally? Or even the metropolitan churches alone, what cohesion have they? To what focus do they converge? What bonds unite them together?

But is not the time ripe for union? If not, when will it arrive? Our fathers had to contend with the rolling billows of a stormy sea, and it was hard indeed for them to steer a straight and steady course. We may pardon them if they sometimes lost their way, or at any rate, their temper. But we have not, and dare not, plead a similar excuse. Our sea is smooth—too smooth, perhaps—and our course is plain and clear. They had to bear not only the malice of their foes, but the captious and carping, if not malicious, suspicions of their brethren, when such a tender-hearted man as Flavel could write bitter things against Philip Cary, and Delaune could be left to perish in prison, though the moving of Calamy's finger might have given him liberty and life. But we have nothing to bear, excepting to bear with one another; and shall we find that too hard for us? Let us copy the virtues of our fathers without adopting their faults, and seek for Puritan wisdom without Puritan rigour; let us put away all self-seeking; let us cease to make a brother "an offender for a word;" let none arrogate to himself the right to judge his brethren, or denounce them as sowers of false doctrine, because they cannot see with his eyes; let none envy or disparage another because he has discovered, by gift or by grace, a happier pathway to success; let not the "high" look down upon the "low" as a heretic, nor the "low" avoid the "high" as vulgar; let us contemplate, in this our clear, calm, untroubled day, the deeper unity which underlies us all, rather than the boundaries that divide us; and, in fine, obeying the Lord's command, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST'S sake, hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of GOD as dear children; and walk in love, as CHRIST also hath loved us, and has given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."

Yes; Christ alone must be our Central Sun; and we as the planetary orbs must not only rejoice in His beams, but must marshal ourselves around Him, and in order due revolve and shine, a glorious and harmonious firmament—

"For ever singing as we shine,
The Hand that made us is Divine."

We are "to shew forth the praises of Him who hath called "us out of darkness into His marvellous light," not less by our oneness than by our brightness; for so our Saviour prays—"that they all may be one,"—"that the world may know "that Thou hast sent me."

Doubtless, the spirit of unity is yet more essential than the form; but the form has its uses. It is in assembling together that they who have the mind of Christ learn to know, and because they know to love one another, and therefore we plead for the form as well as the spirit of union. Surely, surely we have more in common than we suppose; at least let us gather together and see. We ask for no compromise. We desire no false and hollow truce. We would not be of the number who blindly murmur Peace, Peace, when there is no peace. But in the assemblies of those who are one in Christ Jesus there *must* be peace, unless indeed there be a grievous deficiency of wisdom.

The presence of but *one* Christ-like soul is refreshing and grateful, and sheds over us an atmosphere redolent of heaven:—

"When one that holds communion with the skies,
Has fill'd his urn where those pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis even as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fil's the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied."

And an Assembly of such, meeting for holy purposes, would be, we are persuaded, a scene alike acceptable to God and precious to mankind. It would be a seed-sowing for the harvest of the world; for "The fruit of righteousness is "sown in peace of them that make peace." Oh, then for a General Assembly of all the Baptists in Great Britain and Ireland! We should hail it with unspeakable joy, and foresee in it the commencement of a brighter era. *That* would be a worthy Bicentenary of 1662.

THE AMERICAN UNION AND ITS FAILURE.

The April number of Blackwood's Magazine contains a review of a recent work by Mr. JAMES SPENCE, on "The American Union: its effect on national character and policy. With an inquiry into Secession as a constitutional right, and the causes of the disruption." This review contains some sharp things, and a number of home truths, as to the workings of Democracy in the States, which have greatly excited the ire of our touchy American cousins who can bear nothing said of themselves, or their institutions, unless couched in the language of unqualified praise.

Blackwood begins by declaring it would perhaps be too much to say, that the tendencies of the British Constitution have been checked by the tattered and insolent guise in which Republicanism appears in America.—The right instinct and good sense of the country, has already preserved it from following the Reform leaders in their downward strides to that declivity which overhangs chaos. No demagogue has been sanguine enough not to perceive, that the attempt to begin a series of changes, by which "rascaldom" was to be rendered the dominant element in the British Constitution, must be postponed to a more convenient season.

Recent events in America, says Blackwood, have made a deep impression on the public mind in Great Britain. Warnings might have been uttered through an entire generation, without producing a tithe of the effect produced by the spectacle of a floundering Democracy, exhibited at a moment when British radicals were complacently inviting attention to the superior merits of the model Republic. The only result, at present, of a proposal to Americanize British institutions, would be merely to induce a belief that the proposer was insane.

Those habituated to abstract political speculation, have long foreseen that an explosion must take place in the Great Republic; and to such persons it seemed a marvel, that a structure based on foundations so false, should have endured so long. Yet, many could see no defects in a system which was so enormously prosperous. The territories of the Republic were constantly extending, until there seemed no apparent limit, but the bounds of the vast continent. Its imports and exports increased by millions every year, and every census told of enormous additions to its population, while no expensive establishments existed to counterbalance these proofs of property, or any national debt to depress the energies of the nation. Where could the English demagogue find so forcible an illustration of the excellence of his theories? To what purpose talk, to those who viewed it in this aspect, of the evils of Democracy? It was only the more philosophic minds that could discern its real evils through the adventitious splendours that obscured them. To these, it presented the phenomena of decay. The progress of the nation was material only; intellectually and morally it was receding. The growth of conflicting interests, the decline of the controlling power, the establishment of the tyranny of the majority, and the spread of political corruption, were so many signs of coming dissolution.

"We hear the praises of the Constitution," says Mr. Spence, "sounding and resounding so loudly, that we fall into a differential kind of acquiescence, and yield ourselves to be swept along by so irresistible a torrent of applause."

But advocates of progress have begun to look beyond American proclamations of perfection, as proved in wealth, territory, and population. Comparisons have been instituted between the Union of to-day, and the Union of the time of Washington and Franklin, and its present statesmen with those of the infant Republic. Inquiries have been made whether its boasted liberty is a reality, and whether in what constitutes the true greatness of a country, it has kept pace with old nationalities, that were grey before it was born; and on all these points, the verdict is against it.

The results of the Republican system are of vast importance just now to England, and the Civil War has caused that system to become a subject of the greatest interest. Now that all eyes are attracted to America, it becomes a duty, Blackwood asserts, to place in as strong a light as possible, an example of which such important use may be made.

The subject of Mr. Spence's book may be broadly and conveniently divided into two portions, the one of which treats of the effects of American institutions on the nation, the other of the motives and causes of disruption.

In the first place, it is necessary to compare the Americans of the present time, with the men of the period of Washington.

The great men of those days had been developed AS ENGLISH COLONISTS, not as American citizens. They were the fathers, not the children, of Republican institutions. Those institutions worked well, so long as they were administered by the minds that framed them. Those minds not only displayed wisdom and public virtue in an unusual degree, but they also possessed commanding influence. So long as the governing power is eminent for virtue, energy, and sagacity, the people, whether they live under a hereditary monarchy, an oligarchy, or a democracy, will enjoy practically all the benefits of freedom. Any Government administered by such men would work well; any Government administered by corrupt and incompetent men, must work ill. That system is the best which brings the best men to the service of the State. Conversely, a system which does not bring superior men to the public service, but absolutely excludes them, must be irredeemably bad.

The American Government has degenerated, because a succession of Washingtons Adamses, Jeffersons, and Madisons, were necessary to its continued efficiency. In his farewell address, Washington besought his countrymen to exercise the moderation and virtue on which the Republic depended for its support. But to what purpose were his precepts framed, and hung up in places of public resort, and taught as lessons of inestimable worth to succeeding generations, when the practical results of the system are, a modern President, a modern Cabinet, and a modern Congress?

"The race of American statesmen," says De Tocqueville, "has evidently dwindled most remarkably in the last fifty years."—"And if this observation," says Mr. Spence, "could be made by an acute observer, when Webster, Clay, and Calhoun, were still upon the stage, it would appear as if there were some impoverishing and exhausting principle at work, when at the present day, we search in vain for one single name that may be termed that of a statesman. Politicians cover the land; statesmen seem to have become extinct. At the commencement of its history, no country produced a larger proportion of men of the highest order of ability; indeed, it would be difficult to find elsewhere, the record of so large a number in an equal population. * * * The names of Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, Madison, Marshall, and Jefferson, are universally classed amongst the names of men of eminent ability. They have been succeeded in our day, by the names of Van Buren, Tyler, Polk, Fillmore, and Pierce. The contrast is too obvious to need any comment; and when we inquire into its causes, we shall find as accompanying this decline in the talent of public men, a similar decline in the standard of political morals."

It is not necessary to prove by argument or quotation, the degeneracy of the public men of America. Not even the violent political crisis, which is such as rarely fails to elicit whatever of vigour and ability may be latent in a nation has been sufficient to produce a single man who can be recognized as a leader. The tendency of the system has been not only not to encourage men of ability, but absolutely to exclude them; this is clearly true, and is thus explained by Mr. Spence:—

"That ability should no longer form the ground of selection for the Presidential office, appears injurious enough, but the evil extends much beyond this. Under the system that now prevails, is a certain ban of exclusion.—It proved so in the case of Webster, of Clay, of Calhoun, and in the last election of Seward. The fact is so difficult to realize, that it becomes necessary to consider how these elections are really conducted in America. The theory of the constitution is, that the President shall be elected by the people; and in order to avoid the difficulties arising from wide dispersion, it provides that they shall first appoint a College of electors, to whom ample time is afforded for deliberate choice. This is the theory; in practice the whole power has passed from the people into the hands of a knot of professional politicians, and the electoral college has become a useless form. The electors are now denied the power of choice, and are reduced to the reality of mere instruments for recording the votes they were from the first appointed to give."

It is said by Blackwood, that we have but to consider the conditions on which only, an American can become a statesman, to perceive that high qualities are as effectualy excluded from the Legislature, as from the Executive. The first condition is, that a candidate must in the most fulsome and loathesome manner, flatter the people. He must do this, either directly, by telling them with all the hyperbole he can command, that they are the greatest, wisest, most infallible, and most admirable of all mankind—or indirectly, by placing other people; and their institutions, in contemptuous contrast with those of America. It is not easy to find a high minded, cultivated, and able man, who is able to comply with this primary necessity. But if he can bend to this, who are his competitors in the ignomious contest? They are men who have been induced by the salary paid to legislators, to make politics a trade. They start in the race free from the scruples which must hamper the man who retains his self-respect.

But here we must pause for the present, with the intention of making further remarks on this interesting subject on a future occasion.

From the Amoor River.

The Russian Government has opened another line of communication to the ocean by the way of the river Onsurec, which debouches into the Amoor, about six hundred miles above its mouth. The Onsurec from its junction with the Amoor is the eastern boundary between Russia and China in that direction, which gives Russia all the country lying east of the Onsurec to the Strait of Tartary and the Sea of Japan. Following up the course of the Onsurec to Lake Hinka, the division line traverses that lake, and crossing at a low point in the coast range of mountains, follows a small stream to a point touching the northern boundary of Carea, and thence to the Sea of Japan about 42 degress north latitude. This prolongation of the Russian frontier to the south, brings Russia down to a mild climate, and good harbors open and approachable the year round.

This is greatly advantageous to Russia, as it gives her harbors of refuge for her North Pacific fleet, where she may refit, repair, and even build vessels if necessary. Mineral, coal and timber suitable for shipbuilders, are found upon the coast and the climate and soil are represented as favorable to agricultural pursuits. Along this frontier, from the Amoor to the ocean, following up the Russian policy, a line of Cossack post stations for the double purpose of protection and communication, are being established, so that in this line, as well as upon the Amoor, communication will be had with the whole interior of the Russian Empire. This absolutely incloses the Tartars on three sides, and cuts them off from any communication with the sea north, east or west, excepting through Russian possessions.

Blasgoveschenck, the new capital of the central Amoor region, little to the west of the river Zae, has already assumed considerable importance, and steam communication with Nicolaivsky, mouth of the Amoor has been laid out. During the last year the Russian government has made considerable progress in telegraphic communication eastward from Kazan. The line has been extended to Perm, and will most probably be opened to Omsk, in Western Siberia, the coming spring. The last point is twenty-five hundred miles east of St. Petersburg, on the route to the Amoor.

MONTREAL, May 21st.

The Government was defeated yesterday on the military bill 54 to 61. When the House adjourned a dissolution was anticipated. The bill is popular in the country and it is probable that the ministry will be supported in the event of a new election.

The Coroner's Jury returned a verdict of *Manslaughter* against Wm. Mackay, for causing the death of John Fitzgerald, the keeper of a sailors' boarding house.—*Ib.*