

THE
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THE LITERARY CHARM OF THE PILGRIM'S
PROGRESS.

EVERYBODY knows "The Pilgrim's Progress." The works of . Shakespeare, Sir Walter Scott, Burns, and Byron are not better known ; yet these are read and loved in every quarter of the globe. Perhaps with the single exception of the Bible, there is not a book in the English language more widely spread. And the reason is obvious ; they are spread together. Nor is this at all to be wondered at ; for "The Pilgrim's Progress" is not only one of the first, and certainly also one of the most beautiful English offsprings of the Scriptures, but it is so like them in style, language, imagery, and sustained fervour, that it might be taken as an appendix to the Bible. The tale so glows from beginning to end with the Eastern imagery and fervour of prophets and seers, that it may be viewed as an English flower grown upon a Jewish soil. Its language is the direct, simple, sublime language of inspired evangelists and common people. The inspiration of disciples and apostles has given inspiration to the poetical tinker, and his whole "Dream" is so full of their sublime imaginings that it comes upon the reader as an apocalypse of the Apocalypse. Therefore, for this reason, if for no other, it has followed the Bible from land to land ; but it has followed it as the singing of birds follows the dawn. Everywhere it is welcomed. In well nigh every English-speaking household, from London to New York, and from New York to Melbourne, this quaint medley of a dream is still treasured ; for it shines as sweetly to-day, not only in every cottager's hut, but even in the high and secluded realms of classics, as when, two centuries ago, it emerged like a star from the gloom of the Bedford Gaol. Its earnestness, its purity, its bright cheerfulness, its winning simplicity, its faithful portraiture of the deep and abiding facts of life and character, have been in no way obscured, either by the marvellous triumphs of science on the one hand, or on the other by the glorious succession of poets, novelists, essayists, historians, and

MISSIONARY PRESBYTERIES.

WE would gladly see all evangelical Christians so united in the work of foreign missions, that, as the fruit of their labours, there should be only one Church in each country. Under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we may certainly look for uniform doctrinal belief, for general uniformity in the experience of Divine grace, and perhaps for a large amount of agreement as to the government and order of the Church, among all the followers of Christ our Lord. Then there will be external union, springing from inward and gracious convictions. In the meantime, the golden rule requires our different denominations to help each other, and thus more may be done for the spread of the Gospel than if all were united like the conflicting sects of the Romanists in one external organisation. The various members of our Presbyterian family may especially be expected to dwell together in unity, even if separated in denominations, and to work together in missionary service as brethren. They will seldom wish to perpetuate abroad divisions which, for the present, seem without remedy at home. The words Scotch, Dutch, and American seem misapplied when spoken of Churches in Japan, India, or China.

I.

In order to secure Catholic Presbyterian work in foreign missions, it is needful only to adhere to the first principles of our own system. But unhappily a diversity of opinion exists as to some practical matters. Some of our friends do not favour the organisation of Presbyteries in our foreign missions. Others advocate this measure, but restrict the membership of the Presbytery to native ministers and elders, the foreign ministers remaining members of their Presbyteries at home. Others still, and the greater number, approve of forming Presbyteries abroad very much as at home, but differ somewhat in minor things—connection exclusively with the home Synod or Assembly, greater liberty of union with presbyteries in the field of other Presbyterian denominations, changes in the representation of native Churches in the General Assembly, limits of appeal, &c. These minor differences of opinion, on close study, may be regarded as divergent rather than conflicting.

The first and most radical opinion, as to having no presbyteries, is held by esteemed brethren who do not hesitate to organise their Churches on the theory of our body; and in this instance we may reverse the usual formula, and believe that the less includes the greater! The principles of authority and representation involved in forming a church and its session are equally applicable to the organising of a presbytery. For this venerable body, the "mission," so called, is an inadequate substitute—especially in the ordination of ministers and the superin-

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tendence of churches. 1. According to Presbyterian ideas, the "mission" is not a Scriptural ordaining body. It is but a committee, chiefly for business purposes, of the Missionary Board at home, itself seldom clothed with any Church power. 2. It does not represent the native churches in any way; rarely, if at all, are these churches responsible for its action. 3. It cannot satisfactorily watch over the Christian walk of native ministers and churches, nor exercise needful discipline in cases of misconduct. Indeed, the "mission," so far as Church work and order are concerned, is but an expedient which our Independent brethren have to adopt in the absence from their system of any organised authority except that of the local Church,—a needless expedient, and one open to serious objections when it invades the province of the Church, according to the lowest conceptions among us of the constitution of the Church. We all believe that we have in presbytery,—in the principles on which presbytery rests, which are of Divine appointment,—a safe, comprehensive, and sufficiently flexible means of watching over and fostering the interest of both ministers and Churches in the best way; and we doubt not that eventually presbytery will be welcomed by all.

The views of brethren who would restrict all church organisation to the natives also require careful study. They advocate missionary presbyteries, but hold that foreign missionaries should not be members of them; these must retain their connection with presbyteries at home; but, while standing outside of the native church-sessions and presbyteries, they should act as their counsellors and guides. Even on this view, would not their influence be greater and happier if they were identified with their native brethren? The native Churches require the support of their foreign friends, and they will need it for many years; but if it be left to mere personal or "mission" administration, serious difficulty will be encountered by both parties, in cases of discipline and in the work of the ministry. The foreign minister, especially, will be embarrassed with duties involving the episcopal prerogative which we consider inherent in presbytery rather than in prelacy, and so our plain Presbyterian minister will have to become a quasi bishop. He will be tempted to overstrain his legitimate influence, and take upon himself duties properly belonging to the native Church. He will, moreover, be virtually an Independent minister, as well as a half-way bishop, for his presbytery at home can exercise little supervision over one of its members whose life and work are so far beyond its bounds and personal observation.

Some of our brethren claim, indeed, in reply to such views as these, that missionaries are evangelists, of the order of Timothy and Titus, and are, therefore, not to be identified with the native ministry and Church. This theory is too large for consideration here, but it may be suggested that the framers of the Westminster Standards, like the Reformation ministers generally, did not regard evangelists as among "the ordinary and perpetual officers in the Church;" and some of the most eminent of later ministers considered Timothy and Titus not as evangelists, but

as agents of the apostles for special services, so that, when the apostolic office ceased, their office came to an end. By several Fathers of early time who refer to evangelists, their itineratory work seems to have been viewed as the chief feature of their ministry; but most modern missionaries are dwellers in stations, and are chiefly occupied with settled labours. Or if the title, as in the case of Philip, the only evangelist so designated in Scripture, refers rather to the work, or one of the functions, of a minister, then we find his followers in our regular ministers in some of their various duties. Some of our ministers may be ordained to foreign or frontier work, without pastoral charge; but we do not find, in Philip's example, that the ordaining of ministers and superintendence of churches, apart from the presbytery, are their proper functions. In new countries, and especially in the United States, it is often deemed expedient to ordain, as ministers, men in whose call to the sacred office the voice of the Christian people is not heard; and this may be a reason why so many ministers are afterwards found in these countries no longer engaged in ministerial work. All that the exigencies of modern evangelism require is obtained by the ordination, in special cases, of missionaries, not as evangelists, but as ministers at large. And then they must order their ministry by the usual law and supervision of the presbytery with which they are connected, which should be, if practicable, a presbytery on the ground where their work is to be done. We cannot think that calling missionaries evangelists exempts them from the usual conditions of our ministry. Abroad, as at home, let presbyteries be constituted, whose members shall consist "of all the ministers and one ruling elder from each congregation within a certain district." As the office of a minister includes that of a ruling elder, there is no theoretical difficulty in the way of organising missionary presbyteries at first, without either churches or ruling elders. Examples of this kind may be found frequently in the history of the American Presbyterian Churches, and we presume in that of Presbyterian Churches in other countries.

To emphasise these views, even at the risk of some repetition, we can see no warrant, in our principles of Church government, for the position of foreign ministers separate from their native brethren. All live in the same district, and are engaged in the same work. They are brought together, in presbytery, in the best relations to each other. The foreign minister has the superior education and general knowledge,—the native, the better acquaintance with his own people and all their ways; so that, in official counsels and acts, both parties are benefited by their being in the same body. Particularly is this advantage gained in cases of difficulty which unhappily will arise. But the almost special advantage of these common presbyterial relations is found in their benign influence in bridging over the chasm which too often exists between the foreign and the native labourers, to the serious loss and injury of both. And hardly less important is the bearing of these joint relations on the great ques-

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tion of self-support by the native churches ; this will best be promoted by the common counsels, sympathies, and prayers of brethren who are united in the same Church organisation. It is not found to be a serious objection to this joint agency, that, after a while, the native members would outnumber the foreign. So far as the control of funds appropriated by the Missionary Board is concerned, the foreign members would of course be entrusted with their expenditure, according to rules approved by the Board. Certain questions of representation in the General Assembly, and also of appeals to that court, would need limitation ; and then the sooner the native ministers outnumber the foreign, the greater our thankfulness to God. Signal examples could be cited to show that our Church system works well on heathen ground in these matters, as, for example, in the Presbytery of Ningpo, China. But these must be passed by for want of space ; as also any remarks to show the happy influence, in various ways, of the missionary presbyteries in the Church at home with which they are connected. The somewhat divergent opinions in minor matters among the friends of presbyterial organisations must be barely mentioned. Differences as to matters of doctrine we do not class as minor, but it may be suggested that the creeds of infant Churches among the heathen need not be as complete or extended as among advanced Christian nations ; the idea of the Church as bearing witness to the truth, does not, we apprehend, require the same standards to be adopted by all, irrespective of their Christian knowledge. As to differences on points of Church order, they can be harmonised by the adoption of a good method, one founded on Scriptural principles, and one which should fairly represent all sides of the case—a subject which remains to be considered. For some of the matters thus far outlined, and for others relating to the subject, the writer of this paper may be permitted to refer to two articles in the *Princeton Review*, of April, 1864, on the Superintendence of Foreign Missions, and of January, 1876, on Church Questions in Foreign Missions.

II.

The method of forming Missionary Presbyteries should have respect to the ministers and churches with their ruling elders in each country, and also to the mother Church by which they must be supported for a time. It will differ in its provisions, according to the sole or the joint occupancy of the field. The method recommended to the General Assembly which met at Saratoga last year, is the one which was prepared by a previously appointed special committee of the Assembly, and is substantially the same as that of a preceding committee of the same body, after careful consideration by each. It is here inserted for examination by our readers. If not deemed satisfactory, it may suggest a better method. It is as follows :—

Your Committee, before considering the plan in detail, and after full discussion, unanimously adopted the following :—

“ *Resolved.* That wherever a Presbytery is constituted on missionary ground,

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the foreign missionaries, with the native ministers within its bounds, should be members of such Presbytery, with representation of the several churches by ruling elders, as provided by the Form of Government."

The plan as amended and submitted for adoption is as follows :—

" I. In countries occupied by the Board only.

" 1. The native churches in the missions may be organised into Presbyteries, and eventually into Synods, if not already so organised, at their discretion as to the time of organisation, and according to their convenience as to boundaries.

" 2. Each Presbytery shall consist of all the ministers, native and foreign, not less than five in number, and a ruling elder from each church within its bounds.

" 3. Native as well as foreign ministers and elders of such Presbyteries may be sent as commissioners to the general Assembly; but overtures contemplating changes in church matters in this country shall not be transmitted to any of these missionary Presbyteries for their votes.

" 4. The Presbyteries may look to the General Assembly for all needed direction, counsel, and support until they become prepared to be independent.

" 5. Appeals from church judicatories shall for the present terminate with the highest judicatory in each country, excepting that the foreign missionary members, in cases affecting their personal character or their ministerial standing, may appeal from the highest local judicatory to the next highest judicatory in the United States to which they are constitutionally amenable.

" 6. The Presbyteries and the Synods, wherever formed, should send to the General Assembly copies of their Minutes, Narrative of the State of Religion, and Statistical Reports.

" II. In countries occupied by the Board and by the missions of other Presbyterian denominations.

" 1. Missionary Presbyteries and Synods which hold the same faith and order should be encouraged to enter into organic church relations with each other, in any country in which the missions of more than one Presbyterian body are conducted.

" 2. When such relations are formed, the connections and relations of the churches and members of Presbytery with the General Assembly shall be in the manner and to the extent set forth in the preceding paragraph of this Minute, with the proviso that the Assembly will sanction the principle of distributive representation, and that only such ministers and churches of such judicatory shall be recognised by the Assembly as entitled to representation therein as would be so entitled if they were upon a field occupied by the Board alone.

" 3. Missionary Presbyteries and Synods formed on a union basis shall have full powers to decide finally on all cases that may come before them, having relation solely to native members, office-bearers, or churches.

" III. In regard to Church Standards.

" It shall be referred to the missionary Synods, or, if there are no Synods, to the Presbyteries which contain at least three foreign members, to take order concerning Articles of Faith, Government, Discipline, Directory of Public Worship, and Rules for Judicatories. It shall be left to their judgment to determine the parts that ought to be included in their action on these subjects, having a wise reference to the degree of Christian knowledge and advancement whereunto the native churches have attained; but the condition

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is herein expressly made, that, in these Standards, nothing contrary to the Standards of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America shall be adopted. It is further required that copies of the Standards thus adopted shall be transmitted to the General Assembly for approval."

This plan was not adopted in all its parts by the General Assembly, but the paper adopted is an admirable one as far as it goes. It is contained in the minutes of General Assembly of 1879, page 620. It is feared by some that the Assembly's minute does not sufficiently provide for certain practical cases; for this reason, further consideration of the subject is invited. It is not needful here to enter at any length into a discussion of the case. An inspection of a plan is often better than a long argument on its merits, especially to such readers as are likely to examine this paper. We may state briefly that the parts of the report which were not favoured by the Assembly relate to appeals, to representations in cases of several missions in the same field, and to the Subordinate Standards of Faith. As to the last, and indeed to all three, it may be stated, without any doubt, that nobody was in favour of the third section from any tendencies to change the doctrinal standards of the Church at home, and certainly not in any "Broad Church" sense. A shorter and simpler creed seems best at first for churches amongst heathen peoples of low intelligence, most of whose ministers and elders are little advanced in their knowledge of theological questions, and who will, moreover, have to confess their faith in view of conditions very different from those in which our admirable Confession of Faith was formed,—indeed, under conditions not unlike those of the earliest Christian Churches, whose creeds were models of simplicity and brevity.

The paragraph restricting the right of appeals rests on the practical difficulties of the case if the usual course were pursued,—difficulties growing out of difference of language, distance, &c.; and also on the ground that the proviso here recommended would, for the present, answer all practical purposes. The paragraphs relating to representation in the home Church, it is hoped, will receive careful study. Where but one Presbyterian mission is in the field, the proposed arrangements for this purpose are at once simple and such as are usual among American Churches of our order; but where three or four missions are in the same country, the case is more difficult, and also more urgently in need of adjustment. In Yedo, for example, missionaries of three Presbyterian bodies, holding the same views of doctrine and church order, are conducting their evangelistic work among people who speak the same language, live in the same streets, and often are connected closely by ties of kindred and family. It is unreasonable to expect that the native ministers, licentiate preachers, candidates for the ministry, churches and schools, should be divided among three foreign denominations. We are told, indeed, that the Churches at home must first be united, and then their missionaries and their converts will follow their example. As well might we insist that Germany and Ireland should become one country

before their emigrating people could become American citizens ; or else that these citizens of foreign birth should set up here their former divisions.

It is understood that the reason of chief weight with the General Assembly, adverse to the method recommended in the Report of its Committee, was a grave doubt of the constitutional power of the Assembly to make such changes ; and, certainly, in this country, such changes could be made only in the prescribed way, by overture to the presbyteries. But is not the case abroad a different one ? We respectfully suggest, that the Constitution of each Church, including its legal charter, is limited to its own country, and has no ecclesiastical or legal force in foreign countries, excepting in its application to its own ministers and members, such as its foreign missionaries. These lose no home rights by going abroad, any more than the consuls and ambassadors of the government represented by them. In strict theory, "the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America" has no jurisdiction over Presbyterian Churches in Japan or China. Chapter xviii. of its Form of Government contains ample warrant for our foreign missions, so far as their origin and their support are concerned, and also the superintendence of its own ministers and members engaged in these missions. With these, in strict construction, its constitutional power terminates, as we suppose. But there is still a large province in which its Christian wisdom may be invoked for aid. Questions of moment in our foreign work may often well receive the consideration of our Church Courts, for counsel, sympathy, and direction within certain limits. The greatest reason of all justifies such action on their part. These things appertain to the missionary work, which concerns the glory of Christ our Lord, and therefore concerns His Church. We should say that this is specially true of infant churches planted by our missionaries. For the present, they need the fostering care of the mother Church. After a while, they will be able to walk without help, and then let them set up for themselves.

A good method has much to do with our success. This we may too readily forget, in our deep conviction that the knowledge of Christ, faith in Him, a holy life, a blessed entrance into heaven, are the great things—yes, the greatest. We cherish them above everything else. And [it is for their sake that we prize the best way of seeking their possession and spreading abroad the knowledge of them among all nations. We have long been persuaded that in our own Church we have the best method of missionary labour, at any rate the best for us. May it ever be moved by the indwelling Spirit of power and grace !

JOHN C. LOWRIE