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"EVEN AS WE HAVE BEEN APPROVED OF GOD TO BE INTRUSTED WITH THE GOSPEL, SO WE SPEAK; NOT AS PLEASING MEN BUT GOD WHICH PROVETH OUR HEARTS."

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THE GRAVE-DIGGER.

BY FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.

It was an old man with his spade
Amid the churchyard's marble throng;
And while the gaping pit he made
He murmured low this mournful song:

"For prince and pauper, small and great,
For man and maid, both young and old,
'Tis I who shut the final gate
And bar it with the turf and mold.

"Oh, she was young, and she was fair,
Her face was bonny as the rose;
She had the sunbeams for her hair,
And for her brow the drifted snows.

"Kind God this mortal flower shall bring
Immortal to Himself above,
When breaks that glad, eternal spring
In all the glory of his love."

The task and song both ended were:
But ere he went, one spotless bloom
He plucked in memory of her
And cast into her empty tomb!

NEW YORK CITY.

THE GOOD THAT MAY ARISE FROM REVISION.

BY JAMES McCOSH, D.D., LL.D.,
EX-PRESIDENT OF PRINCETON COLLEGE.

I AM gratified by the circumstance that THE INDEPENDENT has invited me to speak on the present state of the Revision question. I saw fit to utter a deliberate and long-cherished opinion on the subject immediately after the overture was sent down to the presbyteries. The decisions of the presbyteries have gone very much as I wished and anticipated.

It is now settled that there is to be some change in the symbols of the Presbyterian Church. The majority will not retreat from the position they have taken; and I am in circumstances to know that the young men intending for the ministry are fully more determined than the older men for revision. The men of "square and legal heads" will now have to determine how the change is to be constitutionally carried.

Then the great question arises, What is to be the change? In comparison with this every other question is insignificant. I have been delighted to notice that in the presbyterial discussions the great body of the ministers and elders have declared unequivocally that they wish no revolutionary changes, that they are resolved to retain intact the system of Scriptural doctrine and the whole plan of salvation. With this predisposition the Gospel truth is safe, and the anti-revisionists may give up their fears.

But they have not therefore to give up their activity. I do hope that they will not engage in an endless and hopeless contest with the view of keeping the Confession as it is, with its harsh expressions and its omissions. I cannot express so strongly as I would the desire that the wisest of the anti-revisionists will join us conservative revisionists; or, to express it more becomingly, that they will permit us to join them in resolving to preserve and hand down to coming generations the great saving truths of God's Word which have been committed to us. At no distant date I may find myself joining my neighbors in the theological seminary here in opposing those who would undermine the faith. This overture is made to them, and the responsibility will be upon them if they reject it.

I am bound to admit that there are some ministers and elders who have been speaking very unadvisedly as to revision, and leaving the impression that they are ready to abandon some of the essential truths of religion on which the hopes of Christians depend. They are persons who have not been trained in the severer truths of the Word (we are to "behold both the goodness and severity of God"). A few of them have come from other denominations where they were not taught the sovereignty of God. The greater number have received their higher training in Germany under professors elected, not by the Church but by the State; in other words by politicians, and have no fixed faith in the inspiration of Scripture. The rash and sensational asser-

tions uttered by these men have done more to injure the cause of revision than all the arguments of the anti-revisionists. It is one of my objections to the Westminster Confession that it does not meet the heresies that are coming in among our younger men from Germany. For myself I felt that I could not publish a statement for revision without immediately after issuing a pamphlet directed against those who are surrendering some of the great truths of inspiration. The time has come when those opposed to all revision should unite with those favorable to a revision which will bring the Confession into more thorough accordance with Scripture, in resolutely laying aside those who would overturn the deeper truths of the Word, and thus save our good people from the fears which many of them are entertaining, that we are on the eve of a serious departure from the faith.

It being virtually settled by the presbyteries that there is to be a change, the all-important question now is, What is that change to be? Simply an amendment of the old Confession, or a new and simpler Creed, which, it is to be understood, is to embrace all the truths which have been held firmly by the consensus of the churches, and specially by the Presbyterian churches?

I am most willing that the Confession should be amended in the manner suggested by the majority of the presbyteries, by bringing in a fuller statement as to the love of God in redemption, as to the sufficiency of the atonement and the gracious work of the Spirit, and the omission of some expressions which I might have received had they been used by Paul, but, being devised by fallible man, had better be left out.

But, in fact, it will be found a very difficult work to improve the Confession, which is a logical and consistent work throughout. No changes made upon it will make it fit to meet one of the grand ends of a Confession—that is, to exclude the heresies of the day. It was admirably fitted to arrest the rising Arminianism of the seventeenth century, but has no provision whatever to counteract the more subtle heresies which, to my knowledge, are coming in from Deutschland. But if we are to have an abbreviated Westminster Confession, why not adopt, with possibly a few suppressed expressions, the Shorter Catechism, which is a far better compend of doctrine than any likely to be produced by the revisionists of our day, and has this great advantage—that our children may profitably learn it?

For myself, I think that the time has now come when we should contemplate the formation of a simpler and shorter creed, which should be known to all, to young as well as old, should be taught to our higher Sabbath-school classes and be shown to other denominations, such as Episcopalians and Methodists, as fitted to remove the prejudices which they entertain against us. It might consist of twenty or thirty articles, drawn out clearly and easily understood; and all members of the Church should be familiar with it, which they have never been with the Westminster Confession. It should not attempt to embrace all the truth revealed in Scripture, but all that is necessary to the great end of Scripture, the revelation of Father, Son and Holy Ghost and all that is essential to the salvation of sinners.

It is not necessary that this work should be completed this year or the next. I will be satisfied if it is done in five years or in ten years. In order to do it, a communication should be opened up with all other evangelical Presbyterian Churches throughout the world. In the end we shall have one brief, comprehensive Confession, common to all Churches. Having corresponded with these Churches when forming the Presbyterian Alliance, I know that our overtures will be well received. The Presbyterian Church North, being the largest Presbyterian Church in the world, might, without presumption, open the correspondence.

I anticipate great good from the Revision, of which it is now certain that it will not be revolutionary or undermining. First, it will relieve the consciences of some who are not sure whether all the statements of the Confession are in conformity with Scripture. I could name (but I will not as my information is confidential) four young men who within the last few years came to Princeton College with a view of entering the ministry, but who, tho' pious men, have turned aside to other professions because of difficulties connected with the Westminster Standards. But I look forward to other and wider results.

First, it will draw the Churches closer together by removing obnoxious statements which are hindrances to union. The Westminster Confession has never been an irenicon. It has in it some very sharp points which have been felt to be repulsive. When these obstacles have been removed the Churches will know each other better, and love each other more, and will co-operate in an immense number and variety of good works which cannot be overtaken by any one Church.

Second, and most important of all, it will greatly help to bring about a federation of the Churches so as to secure that the Gospel, according to Christ's command, be preached to every creature throughout our land. This is not done at present, and the responsibility and consequent sin lies upon the Churches. There are wide districts in all our large cities, and scattered districts in our rural districts where the Gospel is as little known as in the heart of Africa, and where thousands are perishing for lack of knowledge.

It is evident that the work of meeting the evil cannot be successfully accomplished by any one Church; it will need all the Churches. But there is no prospect whatever of an immediate union of the Churches. Sinners are dying while the Churches are cherishing jealousies. If we cannot have at present a full union, let us have what is next best, and tends toward the full union—a Federation of the Churches. The Churches may so understand each other that to every minister there be allotted a district in which he has to see that the Gospel is made known to every one, rich and poor, old and young. That minister's care should first be over his own people who come to him, but like his Master he has to seek in order to save that which is lost. He is to have no authority to hinder another minister to visit in his district, but the obligation is laid upon him to see that in that district every sinner knows that there is a Saviour. As these districts or parishes are allocated over the land, it will secure that the whole land be covered.

It is this consideration which mainly makes me feel so deep an interest in Revision. At my advanced age it cannot be expected that I should live to see the work completed; but I trust to see it hopefully started, and to have the privilege of advocating it as long as I am in the body.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE GERMAN NOVEL.

BY PROFESSOR H. H. BOYSEN.

I.

DELIGHT in epic narration is not a distinctly Teutonic trait; it is a human one. Savage life, as soon as it reaches a certain stage of development, is sure to have its novelist, whose works perish with the memory of those who hear them. The Icelandic scalds and sagamen of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were such primitive novelists, and were only more fortunate than generations of their predecessors in having found somebody to save their tales from oblivion. The metrical form was undoubtedly, at first, merely a mnemonic device—an aid to memory; and alliteration served the same purpose. The initial word or letter of a song, when cut into a runic staff, would be likely to suggest the remainder of the line; and as the weighty word of the second line had to commence with the same letter the mind would be, as it were, borne along by the suggestive force of the sound. The songs or narratives themselves, were nonsense; not songs, in the modern sense, but merely rude recitatives, or a kind of intoned rhythmical speech, similar to that which, according to travelers, may yet be heard among the rhapsodists of Greece.

Tacitus alludes to the existence of such songs among the early Germans, and adds that they celebrated the deeds of departed kings and ancestors. Thus, sitting at the festal board, or around their camp fires, before the battle, the warriors recited the deeds of Arminius, who delivered them from the yoke of the Romans. The remnants of these primitive songs, which Charlemagne, with intelligent zeal, had collected, were deliberately destroyed by his bigoted son, who hoped to save his paltry little soul by exterminating these last vestiges of heathenism. If Iceland, too, had had a sufficiently attractive climate to make it worth while for Italian priests to despoil her, we should probably to-day not have a single complete specimen left of these early pagan songs. But fortunately the Icelandic priests were natives and understood the national value of the sagas;