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CORRESPONDENCE.

Letter from Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA, Nov. 4th, 1880.

Messrs. Editors.—The meetings of the various Synods have been engrossing ecclesiastical attention amongst us during the last week. A feeling appears to be developing in the Northern Church that the Synod, as now organized, is a "sort of fifth wheel" in the machinery. When meetings happen to be cold and unspiritual, the brethren feel this more emphatically, and disperse with a pretty strong conviction that a great deal of precious time has been wasted in much ado about nothing. I do not wonder, therefore, that this feeling has already shaped itself in an overture from the General Assembly to the Presbyteries respecting the reorganization and enlargement of Synodical powers. We are not in sympathy with any of these radical changes, and especially are we sensitive to anything that looks toward limitation of the representative idea or centralization of power, but feel acutely, nevertheless, that some judicious increase of the work of the Synod, by which it will accomplish something more than simply a presentation of the work of the several Church Boards, is required if it is to enjoy the estimation which should characterize so imposing a court of the Church.

The chief point which came out in the discussions of the Philadelphia Synod was **The Alarming Diminution of Candidates for the Ministry.**

At a time when social and political revolutions have paved the way for the spread of the truth to a degree which has had no parallel since the first Christian ages, this is an exceedingly serious matter. Thirty years ago our laborers were confined to the borders of heathen lands, but war and revolution, diplomacy and commerce, discovery and invention, have contributed to open up these lands to the heralds of the cross almost without exception. In our short memory, China could be approached only by Hong Kong, Japan was closed against us, and no man dreamed of opening it. Africa was an unknown jungle, and her historic rivers were hidden in the depths of her unexplored regions. The islands of the South and West, with a few exceptions, were unknown and inaccessible to the messenger of glad tidings. Lo! what a change. The whole heathen world is open from sea line to mountain base! Japan, Siam, China, India, Africa, welcome the missionary. Within the last quarter of a century the Papacy has experienced stupendous changes on the continent. Austria has burst the fetters of her concordat, and wrested the control of education from the priests. Italy has broken the temporal power, and the Waldenses bear witness that the persecuting Church is disarmed by preaching in the eternal city. And France has trampled into the dust the yoke of Ultramontanism, and by insisting that her sons and daughters shall be educated, takes precaution against all future fetters of superstition. Now with such openings the world over for the progress of the gospel—surely the Church will be multiplying her exertions. With such universal importunity for laborers the number of men in preparation for the ministry will certainly show great increase. Instead of this being the case, however, the aged Dr. Bushnell must needs return to Africa—and die on the voyage, because none offer, and the Secretaries of the Foreign Missionary Board ask in vain for workers in the foreign field, commensurate with the demand. In the last ten years the students under the care of the Church have decreased from a little over 800 to a little over 400. Union Theological Seminary begins the year with a decreased attendance. Princeton Seminary would also show a marked decrease but for the accession of Southern theological students, owing to the arrest of the Seminary at Columbia.

The cause of this state of affairs is not difficult to discover. It began years ago in the writings of J. G. Holland and

Scribner's Magazine, and soon found its way into the pulpits, and thus reached the mass of the church-going people. I mean the conception that to help young men into the ministry was a mistake, that it multiplied ministers beyond the power of the Church to assimilate them, lowered the tone and the character of the recipient, and altogether flooded the Church with an inferior class of preachers who were unsuccessful, and deservedly so. Religious newspapers took up the discussion, and their readers were filled with suspicion, if not with positive antagonism, to this particular channel of Church benevolence. It does not require any great amount of suspicion to cause a man to close his purse strings. And this vague feeling of a difference of opinion existing in the Church upon this subject, soon diminished its benevolence and affected materially the revenues. Worse than all, the young men were discouraged, and many a youth who after educating himself and exhausting his means, would gladly have consented to be helped by the Church, was deterred from accepting that help lest he might be placed in the category of those whose manhood was suspected. What marvel that the Church is now reaping what it has sown and is crying aloud because of the diminution of the ministry!

The world is to be saved by "the foolishness of preaching," and the supply of preachers is the vital question at all times and in all churches. In the hour of our need in this, as in all respects, there is but one resource—

Prayer.

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he may send forth laborers into his harvest." A good minister of Jesus Christ, more than any other gift of God, is an answer to prayer. I was once told by the mother of a minister whose history has been a remarkable one, that she had consecrated him to God before he was born. From Samuel until this day, those who are wise to rule in Israel and win souls, have first been given to God in sacrificing prayer and then given back in blessing tenfold to the giver and the world. I am persuaded also that

The Personality

of the minister of the gospel himself has a great power in attracting young men to the ministerial calling. A man like the lamented Dr. Plumer, over whom Dr. Hoge spoke such fitting words, draws more young men into the ministry than he is aware. Youths at school, at college, at home with great, vague aspirations stirring within them, are helped infinitely in the choice of a calling by hearing such ministers of the gospel. No young man of piety and reverence can listen to a gospel minister, of noble personality, wholesome in his nature, hearty in his consecration, without feeling the stir of an emotion within him which seems to say, "I also would be a minister."

As for the influence of the beneficial system upon the character of the recipient, it is a mere matter of experiment and not of theory. It is the old charge against the gospel method of a gracious salvation that to be saved by charity—to take the benefit of Christ's substitution as a gift—in fine to be redeemed without winning redemption oneself—is degrading to manhood; whereas it is found experimentally to be the highest inspiration of true manhood known amongst men. So judged by the facts, young men educated by the charity of the Church instead of being lowered in tone are elevated—instead of showing a dwarfed manhood manifest the loftiest manhood. The post of heroism in the modern church is not in the pulpit of the lofty-spired church, it is in the fore-front of the fight with heathenism. The missionary who for Christ's sake gives up the amenities of home and country and civilization, and exiles himself among strange faces and unsympathetic peoples—and who attacks single-handed the colossal superstitions of heathenism, is the real modern hero. And as a matter of fact he is, in the majority of cases, the preacher who has been educated and equipped by the benevolence of the Church. Judged therefore by the highest test of disinterestedness the theory that deserving young men should be helped by individuals and by the Church into the ministry is not a mistake. "By their fruits ye shall know them." L. M. C.

Dr. Plumer's Church Membership.

CHARLESTON, W. VA., Nov. 3, '80.

On last Sabbath night, Rev. J. C. Barr, pastor of the First Presbyterian church of Charleston, preached to his congregation on "The duty of the Church to provide an able and faithful ministry." In connection with the discussion of the subject, he gave a brief sketch of the life and labors of Dr. William S. Plumer, to show what could be accomplished through the labors of one able, consecrated, man of God. The illustration had a peculiar interest to the congregation from the fact that Dr. Plumer came to this place (Charleston) in his youth, here learned to love his Saviour, and united with this church. When he went to Lewisburg, afterwards to Lexington, then to Prince-

ton, he never removed his membership, so that he went into the ministry from the communion of this church. One of the present elders was the companion and intimate friend of his youth, another was his pupil in school, whilst a number of his relatives are amongst the most devoted and active of our members. The pastor said it was a great honor to this church that they had given such a man as Dr. Plumer to the ministry, and if they would give their sons to the Lord, and train them for his service, He might raise up from our midst many more such men.

Letter from China.

SOOCHOW, CHINA, Sept. 20, 1880.

Messrs. Editors.—Some of your readers may be interested in the following particulars: The work of building a church in Soochow is about to be begun. Dr. McIlwaine has stated in the *Missionary* that he has sent me a thousand dollars to be used in obtaining larger premises for the work of Mrs. Davis and myself. Part of this came from friends of missions in Virginia, and if they should see this, let them be assured that their gifts are doing good. The "Hamner Davis Society of Boys," Fredericksburg, Va., (named after an earnest child of the covenant, a youth of great piety and promise, who died at the age of seventeen years,) sent \$20, and two little girls, Mary and Bessie J., of Alexandria, Va., sent \$5. These gifts came through Mrs. E. H. Brown, who is so well known to all who love the *Central Presbyterian*. The latter sum was sent to be used in providing Mr. and Mrs. Davis with a garden. It is deeply appreciated.

The bill of exchange which Dr. McIlwaine bought in the United States for a thousand dollars was sold in Shanghai for a thousand and seventy-eight dollars and thirty-one cents—Mexican dollars. The Chinese all use "Mexicans" and will take no other kind.

If I am not molested I hope to be able to finish the work that I am now doing by the middle of December. So far there has been no trouble. Everybody—among both people and mandarins—who is at all interested in the affair, knows what I am doing, and there has been no opposition to my plans. But as we never know what a day may bring forth, I earnestly ask for the prayers of all your readers that this work may not be interrupted in any way. Yours very truly,

JOHN W. DAVIS.

Dr. Plumer's Ministry in Petersburg.

A large assemblage gathered in the Tabb Street church, Petersburg, on Sabbath evening, October 31st, to participate in the joint services by the pastors of the Presbyterian churches of the city, commemorative of the life and ministry of Dr. Plumer, who during his earlier years of service was for some time pastor of what was then the only Presbyterian church in the city. Rev. Mr. Jones, pastor of the Old Street church, being providentially absent from the city, the services were conducted by Dr. Witherspoon and Rev. Mr. Winn, of the Second Presbyterian church. The address was made by Dr. Witherspoon, and the introductory portion of it having reference to Dr. Plumer's ministry in Petersburg, is published for the sake of the interesting historical facts which it contains.

Extract from a Memorial Address by Rev. Dr. T. D. Witherspoon.

It is just fifty years ago in this month of October, that in compliance with an invitation from the Session of what was then the only Presbyterian church in Petersburg, a young minister came to labor as stated supply for six months with a view to settlement as pastor. I say a young minister for it was then only three years since he had received ordination at the hands of the Presbytery of Orange in North Carolina. But these three years—fit precursors of all the succeeding ones of his honored and useful life—had been crowded with active and varied service. Whether as an evangelist, toiling over the hills, and through the pine forests, and along the bridled ways of North Carolina, or in the young and growing town of Danville, laying the foundations of what is now one of our best and strongest city churches, or in the country charge at Briery, doing stated and systematic pastoral work, he had already exhibited those characteristics of breadth of intellect, fervid zeal, indomitable energy, profound acquaintance with men and with books, wise forethought, and whole-hearted, single minded devotion to his ministerial work, which gave him such influence and power in later years. I do not know that there are any here to-night who were present when his first service was held in the old church that was over the way—held, as we learn from a manual prepared by his own hand, on the 1st Sabbath of October, 1830. But if there is one who was present on that occasion, I am very sure he has not forgotten its impressions. His memory still recalls the young minister of tall and commanding presence, as with impressive but quiet carriage, he moved up the aisle to the

pulpit. He remembers the bright eye that now quietly twinkled, and now flashed with fire from beneath the heavy overarching eyebrows. He remembers the voice that was now softened to a whisper and now rounded in tones of thunder. He remembers above all the man who realized his commission as an ambassador of Christ to dying men, and who seemed absorbed in the one purpose of carrying home to the hearts and consciences of his hearers, the great truths of redemption.

Let us try for a moment to picture to ourselves the state of the Petersburg church as he found it. It was then comparatively in its youth, seventeen years before it had been organized by the faithful labors of Rev. Dr. Benjamin H. Rice. For sixteen years he had served them until the little organization of 20 had grown to a strong body of more than 200 communicants. Then he had been torn away from a devoted people by a call to the Pearl Street church, New York.—After a few months interval Rev. John E. Annan had been called and settled as pastor. Scarcely had the words of installation been pronounced before he was stricken down by disease and in a few weeks laid in the grave.

It was to a people thus doubly bereaved within a year that Dr. Plumer came. He served them as stated supply until March 10th, 1831, when he was unanimously elected pastor. He was duly installed in July. Rev. William J. Armstrong and Rev. A. Converse, committee. He found an eldership consisting of six honored names, Benjamin Harrison and Francis Follet, who had been elders since the first organization in 1813; W. M. Atkinson and A. S. Holderby who had been elders for six years, (since 1824); and Abel Head and Hugh Nelson Clerk of Session) who had been elders five years (since 1825). Grand men they were—men with whom any pastor might feel it a privilege to sit in council—men between whom and Dr. Plumer the utmost mutual confidence and affection continued to the end. They have all gone long since to their reward, but their memories and their influences still abide. He found a diaconate of three, Thomas Shore, Harry B. Gaines, and A. G. McIlwaine, for the latter of whom especially it was reserved to render a service to the church first as deacon and then as ruling elder, running over more than half a century—a service so efficient and so honorable that it might well fill the full measure of ambition of any man who desired to live in the memory of the work he had done for Christ. Dr. Plumer found a communion roll of 210, of whom only seven remain with us to the present time. The rest are fallen asleep. His ministry in Petersburg continued four years, terminating in 1834 by a call to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian church in Richmond, which greatly to the sorrow of his people he felt it his duty to accept. During these four years 129 persons were added to the communion of the church, of whom only eight remain. He administered baptism, as the records show, to 97 infants, many of whom have since come up to be office-bearers and communicants in the church, whilst one or two are in the ministry of the gospel.

It was our purpose to invite him to come and spend the first Sabbath of October with us, and thus celebrate the semi-centennial of his settlement amongst us. But before that time came, he was prostrated with the disease which terminated his honored life. May that death-bed, which so illustriously displayed the power of divine grace, and was so luminous with the light of heaven, preach to those amongst us upon whom his hands were laid in baptism, and who listened to a voice they will never hear again on earth. May counsels long since imparted, and prayers long since offered, now ripen into fruitage in their conversion to God.

42 BIBLE HOUSE, NEW YORK,
November 1st, 1880.

The American Bible Revision Committee has completed the revision of the English version of the New Testament and transmitted the result of their labors to England. The British Committee will meet in November for final action, and the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge are expected to issue the revised New Testament in February, 1881. The Old Testament will be published two or three years after.

The American Revisers have given their time and labor for eight years without compensation. The necessary expenses have been provided for by voluntary subscriptions.

Any friend of the great undertaking who will contribute towards the expenses ten dollars or more before February next, will receive a memorial copy of the first University edition of the revised New Testament, handsomely bound and inscribed. The money must be sent to the President (Rev. Dr. Schaff) or Treasurer (Mr. Andrew L. Taylor) in the "Bible House, New York."

The American Committee of Bible Revision hereby announces to the American public that only those editions of the New Revision, including the marginal renderings, which are published or approved by the University Presses of England, will be recognized by us as the authorized editions. PHILIP SCHAFF, President. GEORGE E. DAY, Secretary.

—The peanut crop this year amounts to 2,025,000 bushels, valued at \$2,150,000 against \$1,500,000 last year. Virginia alone produced sixty per cent of the crop.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES.

Presbytery of Memphis.

Presbytery met in Covington, Tenn., October 13th, at 7:30 P. M. There were present during the session eight ministers and eighteen ruling elders. The exercises were opened by an appropriate sermon by Rev. J. H. Weaver, from Isaiah xxi: 11. Rev. J. O. Steadman, D. D., was chosen Moderator.

Rev. E. E. Bigger was received from North Mississippi Presbytery, and Rev. J. B. Carne from Western District Presbytery. Licentiates Todd, of Paducah Presbytery, and Sydenstricker, of Greenbrier, were taken under care of Presbytery.

Mr. A. H. Todd, after a highly satisfactory examination, was solemnly ordained to the full work of the gospel ministry.

Rev. J. B. Carne, having received a call from the Covington church, a committee, consisting of Rev. Messrs. Daniel, Wilson, and Cochran, was appointed to install him over the church at such time as may be agreed upon.

The Home Mission committee reported through Rev. J. S. Park that, after strenuous efforts, Rev. Messrs. Todd and Kealy had been secured by the churches in the southern part of Presbytery. But still there are great destitutions and a loud cry for more preachers.

The colored churches presented an urgent petition to Presbytery for help in securing an additional minister to assist Rev. Samuel Park in his arduous labors. Rev. J. H. Weaver and Ruling Elder J. W. Linn were appointed a committee to look out and secure a suitable man. Augustus Merriman (colored) was taken under care of Presbytery as a candidate for the ministry. There are now under care of Presbytery two colored and three white candidates.

The Presbytery of Enoree

Met at Rocky Springs church, three miles from Laurensville, on the 14th of October. Ten ministers and eighteen elders were present. Four ministers and thirteen churches absent.

Rev. J. S. Bailey was elected Moderator. Piedmont church, recently organized, was enrolled. Three of our weakest churches, Warrior's Creek (the name of which was at this meeting changed to Old Fields), North Pacolet, and Mt. Calvary, reported reorganization and a better outlook. Several new preaching points were reported as recently occupied, with prospect of organization at an early day. A whole day was spent in conference on the state of religion within our bounds.

Mr. C. L. Stewart was examined with reference to ordination, and arrangements were made to install him pastor of New Harmony and Piedmont churches.

About 70 accessions to the churches were reported as the result of the "summer campaign." The next meeting of the Presbytery will be held with New Harmony church, on Thursday before the 2d Sabbath of April, at 11 A. M. S. C.

The Suffolk Church.—I acknowledge with pleasure the receipt of five dollars for this church from A. M. N., of New York—initials familiar to many of us through frequent and generous benefactions to the various causes of our Southern Church. I would remind your readers that the sixty days are rapidly passing by. I hope we shall receive sufficient contributions to secure the generous ones already conditionally pledged. T. D. WITHERSPOON.

We append the following:

To the Elders of the Valley.—An elder from the Valley of Virginia last week read the notice of Suffolk church in the *Central*, and sent me ten dollars to aid in the erection of a church building at that point. It occurs to me that there may be other elders in that rich section of State, who would be glad to help to erect a plain, cheap house of worship in this most destitute section of Virginia. The only way to extend our Church in this section is by building just such churches as the one now proposed to be erected at Suffolk. Two hundred and seventy-five dollars contributed now will ensure the building of a church worth \$1,000, at a point where preaching is urgently demanded. THOMAS L. PRESTON.

Rev. R. A. Webb, of Nashville, Tenn., has accepted an invitation to supply the church at Albany, Ga., and will enter upon his labors there on the second Sabbath of November.

Rev. Robert P. Kerr, who has been acting as Supply at Columbus, Ga., has received a unanimous call to the church at that place. It is not yet known whether he will accept the call.

Tuscaloosa Institute.—The prospects of the colored institute at Tuscaloosa, Ala., have never been so good as at the present time. The institution is promising in every respect. The committee propose, ere long, to purchase a house and lot as a permanent home for this interesting enterprise.

Mr. T. P. Walton, licentiate of West Haver Presbytery, Virginia, was received into the Presbytery of Missouri at its late meeting, and ordained as an evangelist to labor in Charlton county.

Rev. J. S. McElroy, of Missouri, has accepted a call to the church at Stanford, Ky., and has taken a letter of dismission from the Presbytery of Missouri to the Presbytery of Transylvania.

Rev. P. R. Law, Evangelist of Orange Presbytery, North Carolina, has received a call to the Presbyterian church of Brandon, Miss. We are not advised as to whether Mr. Law will accept.

(Continued on 4th page.)