

THE FRATERNAL.

The Editor will be glad to have the offer of short papers on matters of interest to men in the ministry, and also brief communications in the form of correspondence. The latter must be really brief and to the point. Short reports from county and other fraternal societies will be especially welcome.

Vol. III., No. 9.

SEPTEMBER, 1909.

Editorial Notes.

The Sabbath month is over, and most of us are back at our work. A slight feeling of stiffness is apt to pervade the first Sunday's work, but it soon wears away along with the bronze of our faces, and the normal round of life begins again. May the Lord of the vineyard bountifully help his labourers during this season of work just beginning. Let us go into the new tasks or the old routine with the old happy rallying cry, *Sursum Corda!* There is no better practical motto for the working pastorate.

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A few brethren have responded to the suggestion concerning outline sermons on John iii. 16. The specimens submitted are now in the hands of the arbiter, and the result of his reading will be announced in our next issue.

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We may venture to plead for something more than a passing notice of the topics suggested for willing contributors in our last issue. They are practical and urgent matters, all of them, and are deeply perplexing some of the brethren. Because there is no one conclusive answer to them, let it not be thought that discussion is vain; there is actual help in exchange of thought in such things. The contribution of Quartus in the present number calls attention to one very important issue; other brethren may perhaps have something to say upon that subject.

Those who have memories of the fine meetings held in Reading in 1893 will look forward to the Autumn Assembly there with the certainty of having a good time. A glance at the first draft of the programme shows that in addition to arrested progress in the churches, we seem to suffer from a lamentable fewness of men who can be trusted to face the Assembly and to add anything to the weight of its discussions. Charles Lamb sang moodily of how "All, all are gone, the old familiar faces"; this could never be said of our Assemblies. It is not desirable either that the old faces should be missing. Nothing is more impressive in such a gathering than the presence of weather worn men who have matured in years of toil. It will be an evil day for all spiritual assemblies when such men are missing. But the Baptist Union is longing and needing to hear the voices of those who for the greater part of a generation have been honoured in their counties where they have done memorable service.

It is not alone that the Union would honour the men in hearing them, it would do far more than that; it would enrich its own common fund of high impulse and fervour. And if the common level of oratory should be below that of the tried and trusted whom we now hear, the loss would not be without compensations. Our Assemblies are not intended to be a feast of rhetoric; and the play of epigram and the other devices which stir a meeting, could well be spared, if the Assembly could be brought for a few minutes into contact with men who behind a less facile speech, carried a career of sterling worth; such men as in many country towns have made the name of Baptist, beloved and revered.

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One thing may be hoped for from Reading, and it will depend upon the delegates and not upon local conditions—we may hope for a discussion of the great scheme, which shall be as perfect in temper as the speech in which Mr. Shakespeare introduced it in

April last. Whatever opinions may be entertained concerning the wisdom or the practicability of the scheme, as then outlined, no one can have failed to be impressed with the tone of the speech of its chief exponent. We may devoutly hope that every delegate present will do his utmost to maintain the level.

The Pulpit and Politics.

Notes of a paper recently read at a meeting of the North Cotswold Ministers Fraternal.

This subject is one of perennial interest and deep importance, but the events of recent years have deepened the interest and intensified the importance attaching to it. The division between sacred and secular has become less marked; the complaint that the church is impractical, is loud-voiced, and the demand that she should enter into the great social and political problems that press upon us is insistent. Then again, the publication of an article in the January "Fortnightly Review," entitled "Nonconformity and Politics," followed by a book bearing the same title and from the same pen, brought the subject prominently before the world.

But our subject is not *Nonconformity* and Politics. I cannot understand the Nonconformist who is not a politician. The message of Nonconformity is that the spiritual should dominate all life, and the Nonconformist who is not prepared to play his part as a citizen, and work for the physical and moral betterment of his people is, to me, an enigma. What we have to consider is rather the *Pulpit* and Politics.

Let us at once admit that the subject is a difficult one, possibly more difficult than many think. Dr. Guinness Rogers says, "It is painful, sometimes, to see with what remarkable aplomb some of the gravest matters in the work of our Churches may be handled."

This is a grave matter, and we need to pray much and to "think hard" that we may be led to right views upon it. In college days we were taught that correct definition is essential to all discussion. It would be well, therefore, for us to attempt to define our terms, especially as those terms may not be fully understood. By some the pulpit is looked upon as being quite apart from ordinary life, whilst politics is regarded by many as an evil thing, and one which cannot be separated from party bitterness and strife.

The pulpit stands, we think, for the making known of God's will, and the application of that will to every department of human life. Cowper describes its occupant, in words familiar to us all:—

"There stands the messenger of truth,
There stands the legate of the skies."

Not merely is he to declare the truth, but he has also to win men to its obedience.

Ruskin, in his "Stories of Venice," whilst speaking of the magnitude and magnificence of Continental pulpits, descants upon the mission and power of the pulpit. He speaks of the preacher as "a man sent with a message to us, which it is a matter of life or death whether we hear or refuse, . . . as set in charge over many spirits in danger of ruin, . . . he has but thirty minutes to get at the separate hearts of a thousand men, to convince them of all their weaknesses, to shame them for all their sins, to warn them of all their dangers, to try by this way and that to stir the hard fastenings of those doors where the Master Himself has stood and knocked, yet none opened, and to call at the opening of those dark streets where Wisdom herself has stretched forth her hands, and no man regarded—thirty minutes to raise the dead in . . ."

Politics may be defined as "the science of government," or, as Chamber's Encyclopædia puts it, "that branch of ethics which has for its subject the proper mode of governing a State, so as to secure its pros-

perity, peace and safety, and to attain as perfectly as possible, the ends of civil society."

Is there, then, no connection between the two? There must be, for God's will surely has reference to the government of a nation. The prophets of old were constantly uplifting their voices against national as well as individual sins, and whatever was in opposition to the will of God came in for their denunciation.

The pulpit stands for the spiritual, but it may legitimately deal with everything that is opposed to the spiritual. Whatever references there may be to politics should be for spiritual ends. We do not agree with the author of "Nonconformity and Politics" when he says (p.p. 98, 99), that whereas "The political activity of Nonconformity was for spiritual ends before It is political activity for political ends now." It was for spiritual ends that we engaged in the Education controversy, and until that controversy is satisfactorily settled we must continue to engage, and the same reason must lead us to take our part in the Dis-establishment campaign which must sooner or later be waged in this land.

But our chief difficulty arises from the party system with which our political life is bound up. We do not see how else a country is to be governed except on party lines. It is only natural that those who think alike should draw together. But it is a great pity when party feeling is so strong that it blinds one to any virtues which may exist in the opposite side. We shall probably all agree that mere party politics should have no place in the pulpit. We did not denounce the Education Act of 1902 because it emanated from the Conservative party, nor did we welcome the Bill of 1906 because it came from the Liberal Government. During the last election the same test questions were put to each candidate, and seeing that the Liberal party took up our side, we were bound to support them. In doing this we have laid ourselves open to the charge of being agents of the Liberal party. This we cannot

help, but the fact that Passive Resistance is still being continued shows that it was not a party move.

In a circular, relating to the subject of Peace, sent out by the Society of Friends, these words occur, "The Christian Church, which is so often regarded as unrelated to politics, has in reality a high part to play in them, not indeed by descending into the arena of party strife, but by resolutely bringing the issues of national life to the test of conformity with the will of God, and by unflinching witness to the Christian spirit."

The anonymous author referred to before, says (p. 114), that politics is a question of method, and proceeds, "It is a question whether an aim held in common by all serious politicians—the good of the nation as a whole—may best be realised along the lines of this programme or of that." He thinks that, "even in regard to the current licensing problem," the Opposition has for its object the "good of the nation as a whole." It is difficult to believe that the House of Lords was actuated by such a desire when they rejected the Bill, and that such desire was at the bottom of the Brewers' Demonstration is too much to accept. But what he calls his "strongest argument" against corporate Nonconformity taking part in politics is that "State action is non-Christian" (p. 175). This, it seems to me, proves too much, and if such reasoning were followed out it would carry us a great deal too far. It is true that our aim is the production of individual goodness, but surely we are to oppose whatever prevents the development of such goodness. Such argument would have killed the agitation against slavery, and it would do away with all restrictions regarding the Sabbath, etc.

But, in whatever we do, we must be careful lest we lose spiritual power. Even in the restricted use of politics that I have mentioned there is a danger of doing this. Dr. Guinness Rogers, in a "Fortnightly Review" article of February, says, "The danger has proved to be more serious than I had anticipated, and

while I do not propose to share the views of a 'Non-conformist Minister,' I feel, and feel very strongly, that he has given abundant reason for the exercise of an extremely cautious policy. It is, in a word, not easy to exaggerate the evil which would come to Nonconformity if it were to lose its spiritual inspiration, and become a mere contention for political rights." The minister is, or ought to be, an expert in the spiritual life. The name so frequently applied to the prophets should be his pre-eminently—"a man of God," existing for God and His purposes in the world. His message should be such as to inspire men to holy living and noble deeds, to go forth to the discharge of all their duties in life dominated and governed by the spiritual. And among those duties are the duties of citizenship. It is a pity that the full meaning of the word "Poli-teuomai" is obscured in the English rendering of Phil. i. 27. There we read, "Let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ," but would it not be better and truer to the original to translate, "Let your conduct as citizens be worthy of the Gospel of Christ." Had the Apostle been thinking merely of behaviour, or conduct, or manner of life, there were other words which would have served his purpose. But he is exhorting the Philippian Christians to exercise their citizenship in a manner worthy of their Christian profession. To quote Dr. Rogers again, "The preachers were, in fact, to be builders of character. It was impossible to build character without exercising a very real influence upon society. The preachers inspired the men, and the men affected the society."

GEO. A. AMBROSE.

The Manse,
Bourton-on-the-Water.

Plenty are ready to die for Christ; what is needed now is men who are willing to live for Christ.

Putting on the Coat!

"I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?" So speaks the Spouse in the Canticles, and the same question is heard on the lips of those who are returning from the shores and moors of England, where they have been keeping holiday, and who will have to "settle down to the collar" of hard work again.

God means us to have our times of "putting off the coat," our seasons of rest and refreshment and relaxation. The ground must at times lie fallow and have its holiday; the old law of the land which ordained that every seventh year should be its "sabbath of rest" is significant enough. The sea pauses between its ebb and its flow. And for men the law of rest is embodied in the fourth commandment, which is remarkable for its scientific proportion of labour and leisure. In the rush of our modern life brain and body cry out more urgently than ever for their spell of rest, and wisdom decrees that they shall have it. The bow-string must relax its tension or snap; the machinery which has got out of gear must be re-adjusted and oiled afresh; it is no waste of time to carry our scythes to the grindstone that they may be whetted to a finer sharpness for a better service. "All work and no play makes a dull boy." God means us to be His bright and happy children and to have our play hours as well as our work days.

Oliver Wendell Holmes tells us of a certain gloomy pleasure-hating acquaintance of his, and says that when he has met him "I have begun to sneeze on the spot, and gone home with a cold dating from that instant. I don't doubt he would cut his kitten's tail off if he caught her playing with it. Please tell me who taught her to play with it?" Well, God intends and makes provision for our enjoyment, and when the organ of our life gets out of tune through the rough touches of the world's fingers on its keyboard, we may be re-tuned by the skilled hands of the bounteous, beautiful Nature which He spreads in gracious profusion around us. We hear His voice inviting us to "come apart by ourselves and rest awhile," and we climb His solemn hills, as His busy Son was wont to do, or we go down to the

beaches of His ever sounding sea, goldened by the sun and silvered by the stars for "the sea is His and He made it." I have no doubt but that Peter was the better for his brief sojourn in the house of Simon the tanner. "which is by the sea-side." It is not, however, everybody who understands the art of enjoyment. Sir John Lubbock once insisted that a clerk of his should take a holiday: much to his surprise, he found the man next week standing at the counter. Sir John's remonstrance only brought the confession—"I could think of no better way of amusing myself than by watching someone else do my work."

But now the time has come for "putting on the coat." Peter enjoyed the vision on the Mount, and would have made tabernacles for a long tarrying, not hearing the voices of the valley which his Master heard. That, however, cannot be either for him or ourselves. Let us be thankful for our summer vacation, and without shrinking take up our appointed tasks again. The question is "*How* shall I put on my coat again?" The members of our churches are gathering home once more, full of pleasant memories and happy experiences; we hope both they and we are returning full of a holy determination to make the coming Autumn and Winter memorable for aggressive Christian work. The holiday is not an end in itself, nor is it merely a recovery from the strain of the work which went before it; it must be a preparation for a completer consecration; the priests of the Lord have received an anointing—we trust physically, mentally and spiritually—for a mightier ministry of usefulness, whether in the pulpit or the pew. We will, therefore, "put on our coats" with determination and faith, with earnest hope and steady endeavour, that we may extend and build up the kingdom.

The joy of holiday lies in the consciousness of rest well earned; the idle man never has a holiday. There is a great holiday yet to come which men call Heaven—may we be worthy of it! A life of strenuous service for our Lord is the best preparation for "the rest which is to come." While we are thankful for our little parentheses of peace here, we would not unduly prolong them. Was it not Whitfield who used to say, when urged to rest, "Rest? We shall have *time enough for rest in heaven!*"

H. F. GOWER.

From Under Vine and Fig Tree.—3.

What work, then, is specially helpful to a discouraged minister? The duty of the day is always best, but not always obvious; and all work may be distasteful in times of depression. Slackness is then a man's easily besetting temptation. No wonder if hands hang down when little fruit of his labour appears, or none; when blossoms, that fall in all gardens, are followed by blight in his; when the elementary conditions of outward and visible success seem wanting in the church, Sunday-school and congregation. But if indolence follow discouragement the minister's ruin is complete. It is hard even for one who labours honestly with God and for God to keep a cheerful courage in the cloudy and dark day, but it is possible. There is a work which keeps the channels of the soul clear for the inflowings of such heartening grace; it will remind us how impossible real failure is to the faithful, and bring us face to face with men who have found it so, and who tell us freely how they held on through failure to success, and through defeat to victory.

Reading and meditation, seriously pursued, is such a work, hard, timely and wise; it is the duty of the day, and of every day, for every man of God, but especially for every religious teacher. Who can tell which minister needs it most, the man who seems a great success, or the man who seems to himself, and possibly to others, a failure? But to the discouraged man who has been called into the ministry by the Master this work will be an inspiration. It will lead him away from the dull routine of drudgery and prove a mental and spiritual holiday. For while excursions into all great literature involve toil, like long strenuous walks in Switzerland, they provide change of scene, knowledge of men, bracing air, mountain heights, great horizons, fruitful visions, and sometimes quiet places of rest and refreshment. In the diligent study of the best book, and the best books, we lift up our eyes to the things that are as far above our trivial cares as the stars are above the clouds. Sometimes the reading leads us into holiest ground where green pastures are, and still waters; or to the Mount where our Lord is transfigured. When that happens everything is transfigured.

life and death, His and ours, home and church, hard duties and saints unlovely as yet,—all undergo a change “into something rich and strange.” Everything is seen in a truer light, and in due proportion. First things take the first place, and little things begin with shame to take a lower room. The few things the man has to be thankful for are miraculously transformed into a “multitude of God’s loving kindnesses.” He grows quite severe with himself for having been fooled so much by the shows of things, now that he is entranced by their inner realities; for he has been looking at things seen as though they were eternal, and at things unseen as tho’ they were but temporal; and yet has preached several times at least on this as the height of folly. He remembers now that when the Psalmist meditated in the law of the Lord day and night he was spiritually like a tree planted by the rivers of water, with timely fruit and unfading leaf. The burden and heat of the eastern day no doubt tried *him*; but the fierce heat of the sun made the fruit sweet and abundant because the roots were drinking all day long of the rivers. Since his day grace has made the law of the Lord a vaster and sublimer place for meditation, and the waters of life are sweeter to the taste and more fertilizing to the soul ever since their source was traced for us to the throne of the Lamb. Reading and meditation in these wider and richer “realms of gold” have not lost but gained in power. They go to the root of leafage and fruitage still. But is this ancient practise of the saints becoming a lost art or a forgotten panacea? A panacea it is, for it leads to the highest fellowship, and into the holiest places; it furnishes the mind and clears it of clouds, and impels the soul to all other wise and fruitful labours. Let no discouraged man miss this divinely prescribed medicine for depression, but take it morning, noon and night. It never fails. Let me still further commend it, but briefly, next month.

SAMUEL VINCENT.

By service and succour of men, we win to the grace
of the Lord;
By this, not by rosary, gown or prayer-mat we earn
our reward.

“Crude, Cheap and Common.”

In the last number of “The Fraternal,” the Editor, knowing that with many of his brethren the great need is that of a text, considerably suggested a variety of topics, with the hope of arousing the *furor scribendi* in some of his (ought-to-be) contributors. As the writer was looking through the list, one of them, “Is Anglicanism gaining at our expense?” at once linked itself in his mind with a statement recently made by Dr. C. F. A. to an interviewer on leaving for New York at the end of his recent visit to the scenes of his former activity. “It is to be hoped Nonconformists may rally sufficient support to push Disestablishment. I don’t think it is realised how Disestablishment would alter and improve things, and I must say that after the luxury, wealth and aesthetic culture I have seen in America the churches here strike me as crude, cheap and common.”

These last words are not pleasant reading, and will probably, in some quarters, arouse a storm of indignation with the speaker. We shall be wiser, however, if we take them as a characteristically candid utterance of an impression, genuinely received, for which there must surely be some sufficient reason. The United States, by common consent, is a land of wealth, and the absence of a privileged ecclesiastical caste has left the way clear for that wealth to be expended as lavishly on the non-Episcopal as on the Episcopal churches. The Baptist or Methodist minister finds himself on an absolute equality with other leaders of the Christian church. His access to circles of culture and influence is equally free; the financial support on which he can rely in his work is equally generous; the buildings in which that work is done are equal to others in beauty, dignity and fitness. And the net result is that a candid observer, returning to England after an absence in the States of two years, finds our Free Churches in England “crude, cheap and common.”

Our Editor asks, "Is Anglicanism gaining at our expense?" It is very doubtful whether, on the whole, it is gaining. But there is undoubtedly a tendency on the part of some of the younger generation to prefer Anglicanism to Nonconformity, due to some extent to mere snobbery, but which in part certainly springs directly out of the feeling which Dr. Aked has expressed. These young men and women share in the general development of culture and refinement; they have free access to the sight of beautiful things in our picture galleries, museums, etc.; they see smoothness, order and efficiency prevailing in the public entertainments of the day; they find our public buildings increasing in beauty and magnificence. And when they (and some older ones as well) seek for similar features in connection with their worship of God, it must be confessed that they find them either in the centuries-old parish church or in more modern buildings of the Established Church on which the money of the wealthy has been freely spent, rather than in many of our own buildings. If the progress of Nonconformity is really arrested, this is, at any rate, one of the causes.

We must plead guilty to the charge of cheapness. With no national funds on which to draw, no friendly landlords to give free sites, and comparatively few wealthy people to subscribe to our funds, we are compelled, when providing new buildings in which the people may worship, to spend only hundreds when thousands would be more fitting. Cheapness is undesirable, but in most cases it is no shame to us. But "crude" and "common"—is there not here a reproach too often deserved, and which it should be our concern to wipe away? The words seem to imply a baldness in our methods of service which borders on irreverence. We often begin badly by erecting a building which has far more the appearance of a lecture hall or a concert room than of a place for the worship of God. We go on badly by neglecting the elements of fitness and reverence in the appointments of the building and in the details of the service. Doors are allowed to

creak and slam. Floors are left bare or covered only with some material which allows every footstep to resound. The noise of talking and laughing often comes from lobbies and corridors, and in the place of worship itself the moments of waiting for the preacher to appear are not infrequently filled with gossip in all too-audible whispers. The organist frequently sins by playing most unsuitable music as voluntaries. The members of the choir, placed in full view of the congregation, fidget and chatter, and seem to regard the lessons and prayers as simply affording a convenient interval in which to find the tune for the next hymn. And the minister—but the writer is a minister himself, and will not venture to particularise the failures of his brethren, but will simply chronicle his own painful sense of many a shortcoming. Let it be confessed, in a word, that where Anglicanism gains at our expense, it is not because men prefer Episcopalianism and a State Establishment to the freedom of the individual Christian and the church, or are any nearer to belief in baptismal regeneration and priestly authority. It is because they find in the buildings of the Established Church more of the atmosphere of reverence, more of the outward manifestation of the beauty of holiness.

For many a day we must continue to erect and furnish our buildings with regard to cheapness. But, if we are wise, we shall admit the significance of the impression, made on a friendly observer, of crudity and commonness, and shall seek a more excellent way in the appointments of our places of worship, in the methods of conducting service, and in all that makes "atmosphere." Although the matter has been discussed in the light of a suggested gain of Anglicanism at the expense of Nonconformity, it goes far deeper than this. For Free Churchmen and Anglicans alike, the essential thing is to satisfy the spiritual needs of mankind. In the case of some, their requirements may seem to be met by the sensational and superficial. The barely or gaudily furnished building and the

somewhat noisy and disjointed service supply all for which there is a present craving. But to multitudes of those who, if retained by the churches, are likely to do best service to the kingdom of God, these things are positive hindrances. And, apart from the question of effectiveness and attractiveness, it is fundamentally a matter of our own true reverence and devoutness. We need to seek a more vivid sense of the presence of God, a more humble and reverent attitude in worship, a deeper consciousness of the awe and mystery of the Divine. We can do with less of enthusiastic admiration for the eloquence of a preacher if we have more of the upward look to the Father which is in heaven. Given this, many of the evils hinted at would disappear. However limited our funds and however simple our buildings, we should instinctively seek after more of fitness and real beauty in their style and appointments, and more of quietness, order and true dignity in our outward rendering of the worship of God.

QUARTUS.

Memoranda.

(i.) Baptist Ministers' Fraternal Union MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS became due on January 1st. These, together with the subscription for "The Fraternal," 2/6 in all (minimum), should be sent to the Hon. Secretary:

B. VERNON BIRD, "BRETBY," STEVENAGE,

to whom also should be addressed applications for benefits of the Benevolent Section of the BOOK FUND, or Membership in the Mutual Benefit Fund; and all general correspondence.

(ii.) Enquiries *re* Books, Orders, and Deposits for the BOOK FUND should be addressed to: The Secretary B.M.F.U. Book Fund, 4, Southampton Row, W.C.

(iii.) MUTUAL BENEFIT FUND SUBSCRIPTIONS are payable in advance, and become due on the first day of each quarter; they should be made payable to "The Treasurer of the B.M. Mutual Benefit Fund," crossed ——— & Co., and sent to the Rev. J. H. French, 86, Hampton Road, Forest Gate, E.

The first subscription should not be sent till a member has received notice of the acceptance of his application, and of the amount of his subscription.

BOOK FUND.

Deposits received during July and August:—Nos. 15, 9/-; 34, 10/-; 39, 2/6; 51, 3/-; 54, 2/6; 55, 2/-; 57, 2/6. Total £1 11 6. Not bad for the holiday season!

WHEN NEXT WE MEET.

At Reading, in Carey Chapel Schoolroom, on Wednesday October 6th.

At 4.45 we shall enjoy the hospitality of the deacons of Carey Church to tea. After tea a Conference.

Our chairman, Rev. J. C. Carlile will preside, and Mr. G. W. Macalpine, J.P., of Accrington (Vice-President of the Baptist Union), will give us an address. Let us all be there.

THE YEAR BOOK.

After many delays, this is now in printer's hands, and will soon be sent to members. There is some decrease in membership owing to subscriptions being unpaid.

IN MEMORIAM.

On August 9th our brother Christopher Duxbury, aged 72, fell asleep. His earthly ministry began at Longton in 1865, and ended only last year at East Cheam.

He was called to the new life after an illness of a year and eight months. The brotherhood will sympathise with his widow and his daughter in their loss. He has bequeathed the priceless legacy of a beautiful example of the saintly life.