

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 will be especially welcome.

Vol. III., No. 11.

NOVEMBER, 1909.

Editorial Notes.

News gathered at random over a fairly wide area, does not seem to show that the Scheme, as we now call it, is making much headway. That is to say, the discussions which are being held concerning it, do not give evidence of any very enlightening treatment of it. On behalf of the Scheme there is the almost universal feeling that something needs to be *done*, to cure a prevalent and mischievous unrest, or more accurately speaking, to deal with a very perilous deadlock in our denominational machinery.

Against the scheme, we hear of many types of argument and objection. Some of them express a sound and natural fear lest we should part with one sort of security and fail to obtain the other. Some are basing all their objections on purely ideal independency which makes one think they were born to be Plymouth Brethren, and have reached the wrong conventicle. Others are heard talking of "leaving no room for the Holy Spirit"—and so the discussion goes on ad libitum. It is to be hoped most sincerely, that banter and persiflage and pious fallacies will not be allowed to kill whatever of good there is in the Scheme. It is still more to be hoped that at the right moment, the Assembly may find that it possesses a

Chalmers to give to the advocacy of a sound Scheme the weight of a gracious personality and a statesman-like mind.

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The recently issued "Transactions" of the Baptist Historical Society contain an article on "Militant Baptist" which will make many readers rub their eyes, and ask if they are to revise one of the standard assumptions of previous historians. It bears we believe no indication of its author, and this is more than regrettable. Its general tone would indicate a certain feeling of enjoyment in overturning the ideas which we have received from Froude and others. The writer at any rate proceeds with considerable gusto to show what precious rascals the Baptist Churches were harbouring in the Protectorate and Restoration years. Perhaps after all we may still listen with some amount of deference to Froude and believe that the Baptists were exceptions to the seditious tendencies of the sects. However that may be, it would be well to have all such articles plainly signed.

To the Brethren.

The future of this magazine is in the hands of the brethren in whose interests it is published. It cannot live without more active support from the brotherhood. Most ventures of this kind die of defective circulation; that is not the chief risk in this case. Everything hinges upon the willingness of the men to take a share in the discussions which go on in its pages, or if the latter are not worthy of their attention, then upon the suggestion of such matters as are. The Editor cannot make bricks without straw. If the brotherhood want the magazine they must support it, otherwise its early decease is inevitable.

There is abundant reason for knowing that things might be otherwise. Every free discussion at local Fraternal, and every casual meeting of a few ministers at our Assemblies, brings to light questions upon which many of them feel and express themselves strongly, and not unimportant questions either. Such matters cannot be discussed in the journals which go into general circulation, but the brethren who are so eloquent, and so justly anxious, upon these things in conversation, might we join in a little profitable printed discussion of them in such a magazine as this. We believe too that there are scores of men, whose work is weakened from lack of opportunity for profitable exchange of experience, and we have tried to the best of our powers to make this very humble and unassuming organ, the means of such exchange.

Our next number concludes a volume, and the continuance of a monthly issue will have to be decided either one way or another before then. The appearances are that the Magazine is not needed in any way.

From Under Vine and Fig Tree—5.

These short papers were written for men longing for a change of pastorate but seeing little immediate hope of it. What can they do while they wait, while schemes meant to help tarry, while the few doors that stand ajar for a time close, and all honourable efforts to remove fail? How can the man at once become fitter for his work and guard against a most natural discouragement? I assume that he neither commits slow suicide by over-working seven days in the week, nor ruins his ministry by wicked idleness. There is nothing new to recommend. But old and forgotten and simple prescriptions may prove priceless when remembered and applied. Daily reading and meditation seriously and strenuously pursued at the throne of the Lamb slain, is a work suitable for every

minister, but peculiarly helpful to one in discouraging conditions. It feeds the mind, cheers the heart, strengthens the will and lifts the soul above low cares to sunny heights. The flock is blest when the shepherd finds green pastures. They are found chiefly in the best of books, but also in the best books of the greatest saints. The great books of devotion are more in number than the Alps and all point upward to the source of all their beauty and worth. Many of these books were written in adversity, and cheer as "songs in the night." I have mentioned a few of them. This prescription is short and simple; but no man ever found it fail since the first psalm was written, nor ever will. But no help follows upon merely reading the prescription and praising it and putting it aside or trying it fitfully. Any fool can do that and can then complain of feeling no better. His discouragement may even deepen. So be it.

I suggest one thing more. Let the man look around him. He and his good wife may see folk in the church and congregation, or within reach though outside, as much weighed down with cares as they themselves are. The manse, however deep in shadow, may look out on homes in shadows darker still—godly women with drunken husbands, struggling tradesmen with bad debts and dire competition, here and there a capable Christian man out of employ, invalids with few comforts, young folk trying hard to breast contrary wind and tide, and almost in despair. And then looking round let him brace himself in God's strength to set right what he can in the church and out of it, as though his death or removal might come soon; and with the feeling that the King's business requires wise haste. However prayerfully, quietly and persistently he may go to work he may seem to accomplish very little, but everybody will be the better for seeing how a brave man of God can bear up in a hard place, and be, to the limit of his consecrated life, a willing helper to everybody. Has he done this already? Has he fanned the Missionary flame? Is everything in church and

congregation as he would like to leave it, if the Master called him away? Has he done his utmost to make it so and keep it so, while the call delays? Then plainly the man must "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" whatever that hardness may be, and however long the campaign may last. The Comforter and Quickener will not fail him, as he fills up "the afflictions of Christ." The income may be scandalously low and even then disgracefully and unpunctually paid but there are church members worse off; there may be calculated insolence to bear, and it may be borne after the Master's example with quiet dignity of rebuke or silence, but servants and tradesmen are similarly tried; church members and even deacons may have their hindering feuds, but holy courage and frank temperate speech from a heart steeped in the Master's light and love may even avail to bring the promised stipend in punctually, or to shame the unmannerly, or to reconcile brethren who are at strife; and if not, duty humbly, boldly done has an immediate reward in peace of conscience and an increase of spiritual strength. Many a man who quietly prepares to leave a church by pouring out his soul in efforts to do the very best he can for every member and every organization, may find that his best work was then and there to do, when he thought all his work was done. Anyhow the man is blest, and by such endeavours is more fit than before to go elsewhere; and more resigned to stay on, even till life's end, if it be the Master's will. Let a man then gird up his loins to do his best to all around him, as in face of death or removal; to bear other men's burdens and cast his own on God; then the hardships and difficulties that remain need not discourage him. Such buffetings may supply the urgencies required to bring the man to his best. And what better work busies God Himself than to perfect us in Jesus Christ? Grace can supply songs in such indigence as Habbakuk's, and enable a man to take pleasure in such "reproaches and infirmities" as Paul's. Heaven is well begun when a man sees that his very nothingness and need

may be God's chosen home where His all sufficiency may dwell and work His spiritual wonders. And, finally, though pain is pain after all is said, and hardness hardness, yet these things change their look, when their work is done. So it was with the Master's Cross. Slow hours of pain and shame once covered it with a great darkness; but when that passed the brightness of God's glory shone upon it for ever.

Our afflictions, that sometimes seem so heavy and so endless, may even now begin to seem light and momentary as we keep before our minds the fact that by these very afflictions the Holy Spirit is now diligently preparing in us and for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory than we could otherwise possess. Crosses change into crowns and sceptres and thrones for God's sons.

SAMUEL VINCENT.

The Brotherhood Movement and Municipal Politics.

In some of our great towns the question is agitating the minds of the leaders of Brotherhoods, as to how far the movement should be identified with Municipal Politics.

There is no doubt that the P. S. A. has taken its place among the epoch-making forces of the time. Already it has contributed much to the awakening of the Social Conscience; but the question of methods is of the greatest importance. Nearly all matters of public reform in our country are unhappily so associated with party-politics that it is difficult to support any great movement without running full-tilt against the political prejudices of a section of the population. For the P.S.A., therefore, to be identified in a corporate capacity with any public question may lead to inevitable friction and possible cleavage.

If, however, the endeavour of the Brotherhood movement be to train men to strive after the highest ideals of personal conduct and to live in the fear and love of God, the question of citizenship will solve itself. The P.S.A. Brother will be one of Christ's men, with "a quivering sympathy for the victims of evil and misfortune, a calm and steadfast bearing of other people's burdens, determined to wage a resolute and heated war against wrong and incessantly going about doing good." No impact that is worth anything can be made upon the world by our Brotherhoods until they are composed individually of such men as these.

The great need of to-day is to get men to *think*, to weigh up the facts of life and to recognise their personal responsibilities towards their fellows. We must teach our men the great law of solidarity, that community of being which binds humanity into one whole so that each affects the other and is affected by all. Men who are trained in our Sunday services and week-day Discussion Classes to think along these lines will not be slow to exercise their personal influence among their fellows in the workshop and the warehouse and to value the opportunity for exercising the franchise at municipal and parliamentary elections. They will refuse to be led by the gutter-press and to spend their substance in gambling and strong drink. The Social degradation of masses of their fellow-men will appear to them as a national crime to which they dare not be indifferent.

Instead of seeking to make this movement the left wing of any political organization let us open the eyes of our men to the fact that England, in the words of King Khama, has too long "taken care of her things but thrown away her people." When thirty per cent of the population in our large towns are living below the poverty line, suffering the disruption of the home, the handicap of incompetence and an abnormally high death rate; when children are growing up without any chance of realizing their true manhood or womanhood, and young women drifting on to the streets not

because they want to be bad, but because they must live, it is certainly time to emphasize the fact that character has a physical and social as well as a religious basis.

Ours will then be no policy of *laissez-faire*, but, like the silent gathering of the snow-flakes, P.S.A. opinion will develop and strengthen until its impact upon social abuses shall come with the force of an avalanche. The most powerful agencies in the world are of silent and steady growth, and it is by patient continuance in well doing that the kingdom of righteousness is won. Let us win our men for God and send them out into the world week by week from our Brotherhoods to play the man for our people and for the cities of our God.

ARNOLD STREULI.

The Business Side of Church Life.

DISCUSSED AT THE CONGREGATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

An important discussion upon "The Business Side of Church Life," which was held in Queen Street Congregational Church. Mr. E. R. Tanner, of Bristol, presided and a paper was read by Mr. E. L. Lane, of Bournemouth. Mr. Lane took the healthy standpoint that the executive officers who kept the minutes and controlled the accounts of a church were really contributing as much to the building up of the kingdom as those who took the most prominent part in the prayer meeting. He contended that the administration of the affairs of the church belonged to the church itself, and intimated his dislike for a hybrid finance committee composed, in part, of non-members of the church. The position, was warmly supported among the members of the Union. Many ministers of experience afterwards expressed their opinion that carelessness, meanness,

and the lowest methods of the market entered a church with a finance committee augmented by persons from the congregation. They may, of course, be excellent in their way, sometimes. But, generally speaking, they have neither the self-sacrifice nor the sense of honour inalienable from true churchmanship. The question as to the time limit for deacons was raised, and Mr. Lane suggested a triennial election, in which old and young could be included. Mr. Gerard Ford, Manchester, endorsed the conviction that we were not justified in having men dealing with the finances who were not members of the churches. Professor Duff, D.D., of the United College, Bradford, asked when we were going to have women deacons. Mr. B. T. Smith, Halifax, suggested that at least one-third of the deacons should be under thirty-five years of age. Many wondered whether he had sufficiently studied the advice of the counsellors of Rehoboam. Loud cries of "No no" assailed the suggestion that non-members of the church should serve on the finance committee. We have it on the evidence of one of our most distinguished and experienced London deacons that this was a very suggestive meeting, and that he intended, in his office of treasurer, to adopt a hint as to the method of paying the minister's salary.

Some Questionings.

A letter from an eminent Congregationalist Minister, encloses the following cutting to me.

OVERLAPPING. CONGREGATIONAL-BAPTIST CONCORDAT.

"The Committee on Overlapping reported that an agreement had been come to with the similiar Baptist Committee by which a joint central committee to prevent overlapping as between the two denominations would be formed, and local joint committees would be formed by the county unions and associations.

The committees will enquire into the extent of overlapping, and will offer advice where judged necessary."

The movement has set many thinking thoughts that ought to be uttered. Now our "Fraternal," in its semi private circulation, affords a capital opportunity for the discussion of questions that trouble.

There is certainly more than a surface idea prevalent, that the two wings of the Congregational body ought to be thinking about amalgamating. Should they? What is the differentiating principle that keeps us apart? Is it so imperative as to make fusion impossible?

Now it will be agreed that we ought to unite if we can conscientiously do so. To maintain any other attitude than this would be to incur the Sin of Schism, for after all, there *is* such a sin. Only some deep underlying, compelling necessity should be allowed to keep us apart from visible union with our believing brethren and sisters. There can be no question that our witness is weakened in the world by denominational disunion.

This much we may take for granted. The zeal of our Congregationalist friends for the Baptism of Infants will not keep us apart, for, to be perfectly frank, I do not believe they possess it! In the degree in which they might be seriously concerned to urge that as a practice, they would make it difficult for us to consider any suggestion of union.

I venture to say that few would now be found among the leading thinkers and writers of the English Congregationalists who would say that Christian Baptism, set forth in the New Testament, is meant to be administered to infants. Notwithstanding specious arguments of comparatively recent years as to the baptism of infants signifying that they have been redeemed by Jesus Christ, and that there is a distinction between disciples and Church members and with sundry ramification of bad logic (contributing abominably bad excuses for the practice) there can be

no question that the Congregationalist body does not defend the practice of Infant Baptism by claiming for it that it is Christian Baptism.

The significance of much which has been said by them and other Paedobaptists on this subject when "off guard," showing that they understand perfectly well, and teach with great correctness the true implications of the rite, has been brought out ably by our brother Roberts of Manchester in his book, which we are glad to see, has been adopted for study by the Local Preachers Federation. Over and over again it is shewn that faith must precede baptism, by men who practice the baptism of infants. Of course we accuse nobody of bad faith; we recognise that the compulsion of the dead hand in Chapel Trusts plays very fantastic tricks.

But all this points to the possibility, nay the desirability of a *rapprochement* between us. This way deliverance may come for many perplexed and conscientious men who are harassed by the knowledge of an inconsistency somewhere. So much for that side.

On our side a large number do not regard baptism as the door into the Church. I do not mean the real, the invisible Church of course. Faith in Christ admits into fellowship with Him. No one of us would dare to say that after belief in Him, after regeneration by the Spirit of God, the rite of baptism is absolutely necessary before the believer is received into the one Holy Catholic Church.

But this denial prompts an enquiry—if He admits on Faith alone into His Church, have we the authority to say that we will keep out of *our* Church, so much less perfect than His, any who believe?

But if admission into the visible Church be permissible without baptism, submission to the rite being regarded as the obligation of the individual conscience, the argument for the separation of the denominations, if not gone, is very much weakened.

In the face of that, does not the maintainance of the two denominations, separate, distinct from one

another resolve itself into a matter of *policy* rather than *principle*?

It is undoubtedly a duty, in given circumstances, to cherish and foster a separate denominational entity, but surely our ideals should be a visible union wherever possible with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

Along these lines many thoughts are travelling to-day. The writer is not sure of his own conclusions so far as they have gone, but a quiet discussion of this matter in our useful little "Fraternal," may serve to help many of us to the light.

C.

Are we Over-organized?

This question, which is often referred to at quiet gatherings of ministers, does not seem to appeal to them when they are asked to express an opinion upon it in a few lines on a postcard. So be it. The following communications, for which we are very grateful are in praise of organization. The emphasis is wise, and we are in agreement with every word. But the possibility of over-organization in the shape of over-lapping Societies, both in individual churches and in the denominational life, is not to be ignored. The smallest Church can be properly organized; cannot indeed dispense with system. But the small cannot carry a multitude of Young Peoples' Societies for instance as a large and varied congregation can. A Band of Hope, two or three Christian Endeavour Societies, Guilds, Clubs and Classes, can be readily kept living where there are hundreds of Church members, and a congregation proportionate, with a still large array of half attached "parishioners." The smaller type of Church, such as still holds the field in scores of places, cannot possibly multiply its agencies in this lavish way without weakening them and the whole. The time has surely come when temperance

teaching should be the work of any and every Young Peoples' Society worthy of the name. It should not need a separate organization for it. The importance of such teaching cannot be over-rated; but it does not need what it gets in many quarters, a whole evening a week devoted to it. It could be well and wisely blended with some other type of work for the young.

We very greatly fear that with all these many agencies the work of direct and sound religious teaching is only being half accomplished. The present writer lately examined a set of Sunday School papers, for a wide area, and finished his task with little short of amazement at the appalling state of affairs which they revealed. Not the least disturbing thing was the apparent failure of elementary education to provide the scholar with any thing like sound habits of thought. With very few exceptions nothing but the mere surface events seemed to touched the imagination of the young people. If the papers in question could be taken to represent religious teaching in our schools as a whole, then it could be said without hesitation that it is rotten from end to end. No milder term is adequate. We are still wondering whether our Churches in their work among the young at any rate, have not been over-organized into a condition of shallow fidgetty activity, in which all the sounder work of true knowledge is either neglected or submerged.

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No—we are not over-organised. Organization is the process of disposing or arranging constituent or inter-dependent parts into an organic whole, "And it is difficult to see how that process can be carried too far. The parts of our church work which cost us the least trouble or anxiety are just those in which the method applied to the working of successful industrial enterprises are followed. Of course the Church of Christ is far from being a business concern, but it offers opportunity for laying upon the altar the gifts and aptitudes of the trained man of business. Many

branches of Christian work suffer for lack of method: the last thing discoverable in their haphazard activities is the presence of a co-ordinating idea. In our Church there is a Men's Meeting, a system of visiting, and a system of finance—all highly organized and all of them powerful supports of our work. We are slowly but firmly laying down similar line for organization in every department, with a view to "arranging the inter-dependent parts into an organic whole." The corollary of the pious aspiration that all the Lord's people were prophets, is the wish that all the Lord's prophets were men of method.

P. T. THOMSON.

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The best attended Churches in the North of England are the most highly organized, and the situation seems to point to a need of the times as in the days when the Social life of Greece was honey-combed with societies.

From the ministers point of view over-organization is to be deplored. How few of us can say: "I was left alone and I *saw!*" Our people too need more of the "quietness of true religion." I would therefore plead for yet one more organization—a Society for the Prevention of the Frittering away of the true strength of Pastor and People!

ARNOLD STREULI.

Manchester, 11-11-09.

"Working for men! There is nothing so congenial. It is the only business on earth that I know of, excepting the mother's business, that is clean all the way through; because it is using superior faculties, superior knowledge, not to take advantage of men, but to lift them up and cleanse them, to mould them, to fashion them, to give them life, that you may present them before God."—*Beecher*.

Battle Baptist Church.

Another most useful addition has been made to the slowly accumulating histories of our Churches. The story of the Church at Battle has been written by its present pastor, the Rev. F. W. Butt-Thomson; and in a most interesting brochure of close on sixty pages, he surveys the history of close on 130 years. Incidentally, and yet almost inevitably, the life and work of William Vidler, Baptist and Universalist, the first pastor on the records, has much space given to them, and that part of the story is of very real interest and value. It shows once again most clearly, the ever present tendency to independent thinking which the Baptist churches have always manifested.

One sidelight upon our denominational habits is worthy of notice just at this moment. The nineteen terminated pastorates recorded in Mr. Butt-Thomson's book, show an average of just under six years each. It is almost a commonplace of our discussions that pastorates in former years were very long, much longer than now. Some of them undoubtedly were. Very many of them were not. It may be questioned whether the general averages of our churches for a century past, would exceed six years. The number of two and three years pastorates, in the record of some of our churches is very suggestive; and it is by no means a modern feature.

"The History of the Battle Baptist Church, with a biography of William Vidler, Baptist and Universalist, its first pastor"—by Rev. F. W. Butt-Thomson. (Burfield and Pennells, Hastings).

By liberty, I mean a latitude of practice within the compass of law and religion. It is a standing clear of inferior dependencies and private jurisdiction.

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.

Secretary's Notes.

Deposits have been received during October as follows:— No. 13, 5/-; 18, 4d; 32, 30/-; 41, 7/8; 51, 12/-; 52, 7/6; 54, 2/6; 56, 6/6; 58, 2/6. Total £3: 14: 0.

The Hon. Secretary gives notice that the Subscription of half-a-crown, including membership in the Fraternal Union and payment for the "Fraternal" for one year, becomes due on January 1st, and should be sent to him.