

THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

NO. 9. — JULY, 1889.

I. PRESBYTERIANISM AND EDUCATION.

“EDUCATION” is that word which names for us whatsoever is gotten by means of instruction; and where this instruction is of the best, its outcome is found in a rightly-shaped understanding, in a widened scope of thought, in the safe direction it imparts to the affections, in the proper determination it impresses upon the will, and in the various treasure it furnishes for enriching the entire life: making life, by that much, more worth the having. Well, with such an education—such in all its degrees—Presbyterianism stands identified.

There is a sense in which education—of a sort—comes to multitudes without the use of books or of schools. Countless influences are at work, some of them as silent as they are resistless, to whose moulding touches all minds are subject, with or without their consent: those potencies which move in the atmosphere of home, or emerge from those rivers of humanity, the streets, or are awakened amid the voices and noises of the workshop, or are borne upon the wide-winged newspaper that flies everywhere, or that get shape and momentum at the platform meeting where speech burns upon its hottest anvil, or that dart about and about in the circlings of conversation. Character is ingrained and tempered, for good or ill, by the action and re-action of those nameless currents which, with no traceable law, flow turbid or pure through all the conditions of human living. Sometimes even *high* character is thus insensibly built, where there has been no opportunity for acquiring letters. God’s great works have perhaps constituted the university

caused him to press forward the publication of all his works." But we have detained the reader long enough. It would be an endless task to unveil the many inconsistencies and absurdities of the "Great Cryptogram." We trust we have proved satisfactorily that Bacon did not write Shakspeare's plays; that if he did he couldn't or wouldn't have inserted an accurate arithmetical cipher in the inaccurate First Folio; that if he had, it could hardly have been Mr. Donnelly's cipher, and that the revelations of the cipher narrative controvert history and common sense.

W. S. CURRELL.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 1889.

CHATTANOOGA has a number of very handsome churches. Several of them are grouped near the central part of the city. The First Presbyterian Church is one of this group, and has a fine situation in the angle of two streets. The pastor, Rev. J. W. Bachman, D. D., did much to make this session an exceedingly pleasant one by his untiring and genial courtesy to all the members.

Most of the commissioners were in place when Rev. J. J. Bullock, D. D., the retiring moderator, entered the pulpit to preach the opening sermon. Rev. James Woodrow, D. D., and Rev. W. E. Baker took part in the opening services. The sermon was preached from Mark xvi. 15, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," with Rom. i. 16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," etc., and from Rev. xi. 15, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." The aim of the sermon was to show that the gospel was God's power to redeem this world; that it was able to accomplish this, though it had to work on such sinful creatures as Paul pictures in the first chapter of Romans; for it is the *power of God* unto salvation. Through it was the final victory to be accomplished, and the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdom of our Lord.

The Assembly was then constituted with prayer, the roll was called, and the members awaited with much interest the nominations for moderator. Rev. J. L. Rogers, D. D., nominated Rev. H. G. Hill, D. D., from the Synod of North Carolina. Rev. J. W. Rosebro, D. D., nominated Rev. G. D. Armstrong, D. D., from the Synod of Virginia. Rev. H. S. Yerger nominated Rev. J. W. Lupton, D. D., from the Synod of Nashville. Rev. J. C. Williams nominated Rev. James Woodrow,

D. D., from the Synod of Georgia. These nominations were made in speeches that set forth the merits of the different brethren and their ability to preside over the highest court of our church.

Disraeli says it is "the unexpected which happens." The nomination of Dr. Woodrow could not be classed with the unexpected. It would have been a surprise had he not been nominated. His nomination gave the Assembly its

FIRST BREEZE.

Mr. James Lyons, of Virginia, opposed this nomination on the ground that Dr. Woodrow had publicly and improperly criticised the action of the Assembly of Augusta. He was proceeding to prove his charges by reading extracts from the *Southern Presbyterian*, when the moderator called him to order. He thought criticism of any nominee out of order, though, he said, the question was a new one, as he had never before known a similar occurrence.

In the judgment of many Mr. Lyons was not out of order, though they regretted the attack, and considered his action due "to inexperience." They saw, however, before the session closed, that notwithstanding his youthful appearance, his experience was of much value; though having been acquired in the legislative halls, at this point it was rather unsuited to the procedure of ecclesiastical courts.

At the earnest request of Drs. Armstrong and Lupton, their names were withdrawn. Dr. Woodrow pronounced the charge of Mr. Lyons "entirely incorrect." After proclaiming his loyalty to the church and the evidence he had from all quarters of the world that God had approved his teaching, he asked to have his name withdrawn. This having been done, Dr. Hill was elected without opposition.

While Dr. Hill at times became somewhat confused in the multitude of "points of order" thrust upon him, and thus sometimes there was confusion as to the question and debate was provoked, still his un-failing courtesy made him an acceptable presiding officer.

One was struck in looking over the body, with the number of younger and not widely-known men who made up this Assembly. It was a fine looking body, with enough gray hairs to give it a crown of glory. They proved themselves to be men who think for themselves. They were like the Scotch elder—"open to conviction, yet would like to see the man who could convict him." They had their own opinion, yet evidently had come there to get all the light they could, and then decide the questions discussed in the fear of God and love of the truth.

The spiritual tone which pervaded everything, the lack of acrimony in debate, the spirit of courtesy and love manifested, made this a delightful assembly. One could not but feel here are men who have no private ends to serve, no pet project to carry through, but who are here earnestly and conscientiously to discharge their duty. Several times the effort was made to postpone the devotional exercises, but always without success, and the effect on all of stopping thus in the midst of the most absorbing topic to engage in prayer and praise was most happy. We felt that God's Spirit was there, and to this was due the fact that no bitterness marred the debates, and that the Assembly was led to decisions on all the important questions before it which have commended themselves so generally to the church.

There were three questions of great interest which chiefly engaged attention—viz.: The rebuke given by the Synod of South Carolina to the Presbytery of Charleston; the report of the *ad interim* Committee on Coöperation with the Northern Assembly; and the differences in the Foreign Mission Executive Committee.

THE ACTION OF THE SYNOD OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

At the Fall meeting of the Presbytery of Charleston the following resolution was adopted: "Presbytery hereby informs its ministers, ruling elders, and deacons, that the General Assembly has judicially affirmed the decision of the Synod of Georgia declaring that the 'belief of . . . Jas. Woodrow, D. D., *as to the origin of the body of Adam was contrary to the word of God as interpreted in the Standards of the Church*;' and, therefore, that this Presbytery regards the holding of said form of evolution as 'contrary to the word of God as interpreted in the Standards of the Church,' and forbids the public contending against the decision of the Assembly."

The Synod of South Carolina condemned the action of the Presbytery of Charleston as "unconstitutional, irregular and unwise," and ordered the Presbytery of Charleston to meet and correct its proceedings, "which the Synod now condemns." Rev. J. E. Latham, chairman of the Assembly's Committee on the Records of the Synod of South Carolina, recommended—

1. That this action of the Synod be approved in so far as it declares the action of the Presbytery of Charleston "unwise."

2. That it be disapproved, together with the reasons assigned, so far as it declares the action of the Presbytery of Charleston unconstitutional and irregular.

As a substitute for this report of the committee, Rev. T. C. Whaling offered the following:

“Resolved, That this General Assembly approve of the records of the Synod of South Carolina”—

And began speaking on this substitute when the hour of recess came. When the subject came up again as unfinished business, it was determined that Rev. T. C. Whaling, representing the Synod of South Carolina, and Rev. J. L. Girardeau, D. D., representing the Presbytery of Charleston, should each have an hour to speak, with half an hour each for rejoinder; that Rev. J. B. Adger, D. D., should have half an hour, and that all other speeches should be limited to ten minutes.

This discussion was conducted in admirable spirit. While the brethren earnestly contended for their views, there was no acrimony in the debate.

Rev. T. C. Whaling opened the discussion in a strong speech. He insisted that this matter should not be confounded with the evolution question; that it no more affected Dr. Woodrow than any other man in the Presbyterian Church; that the issue related to the very nature and character of Presbyterianism. Charleston Presbytery was the aggressor, and had unnecessarily and gratuitously precipitated this question, inasmuch as no officer or member of that Presbytery had publicly contended against the decisions of the Assembly.

He argued: 1. That a judicial decision is not to be taken as law outside the case with which it is connected. Therefore the Synod of South Carolina was right in holding that the decision of the last Assembly had no legal authority apart from the case which it concluded. Right or wrong, the decision settles that particular case, and must be received with submission. But the Presbytery of Charleston believes the decision to be binding in all cases. 2. Even if judicial decisions were law, Presbytery had no constitutional right to forbid discussion. They went farther than the Assembly of Baltimore was willing to go, and their action is an unwarrantable infringement upon liberty of speech. The “interdict” was without precedent, and was an act for which the constitution gives no power.

The argument of Dr. Adger was mainly on the constitutional right of the Presbytery to pass such a resolution as the “interdict.” He claimed that Presbyteries or church courts have no right to “forbid” anything, not even sin. They can only testify that such a course is contrary to the word of God. They cannot forbid your travelling on Sunday; they can only say God forbids it. This act of the Pres-

bytery had never been exceeded in folly and high-handed lawlessness and tyranny. Notwithstanding the advanced age of this venerable brother, his speech was very forcible and delivered with much fire.

To these arguments answer was made by Dr. Girardeau. While he objected to their action being called "unwise," he most strongly protested against its being called "unconstitutional." Courts have rights as well as individuals, and if individuals revolt against the court, they must take the risk and bear the consequences. He claimed that the severe criticisms of our courts which appeared in the *Southern Presbyterian*, several of which he read, had gone beyond the rights of the individual, and become such an evil in the bounds of the Presbytery where the *Southern Presbyterian* was published and was circulated in their families, that the Presbytery was justified in using a strong remedy to stop the agitation. This was what the Presbytery forbade, and not proper discussion. He claimed that injustice was done the Presbytery by the Synod's refusing to admit the Presbytery's explanation of their action, which was spread upon their records. That explanation of their meaning was given when they answered the protest of W. A. Clark and others against that action, by saying their interdict did not seal the lips of any one from making such criticism as was made in a "constitutional manner." Also, when Prof. Flinn applied for reception into the Presbytery and declared that he reserved his legal right to express, in a constitutional way, his opinions on the subject, the Presbytery received him without protest or objection, showing that they meant no restriction on free speech uttered in a constitutional way, but only intended to stop the hurtful agitation. The Synod erred, therefore, in condemning the Presbytery for what it did not intend to do, and for what it assured the Synod by its records it did not intend to do.

This case has been presented thus fully because it was an unusual one, and involved grave questions, and because of the interest given to it by its connection with the matter which has troubled the church so much for some two years or more. It is true it was not, as was claimed, the evolution question. It was, however, one of the ill-favored children of that hypothesis, and the vote of the Assembly was influenced by that fact.

The spirit of this discussion was in almost all respects most commendable. The arguments of Dr. Adger and Mr. Whaling were most forcibly put and in admirable temper, while Dr. Girardeau strengthened himself by the generous spirit manifested to those opposed to

him as to the division of time, and by the tone of his argument as well as its strength. There was great pleasure felt that these brethren had allowed no bitter personality to mar the debate, and had given no cause for grief to those who pray for the peace of Jerusalem, nor cause for ridicule to those who rejoice in the dissensions and evil speaking that sometimes disfigure our church courts.

Mr. James Lyons, of Virginia, here offered an amendment to the substitute of Rev. T. C. Whaling, which, after reciting the action of the Presbytery of Charleston and its condemnation by the Synod of South Carolina, concludes thus: "This General Assembly disapproves this action of the Synod of South Carolina, together with the reasons assigned, inasmuch as it appears to the General Assembly from our inspections of its records, that the action of the Presbytery of Charleston was not intended to limit either liberty of private judgment or the constitutional right of proper discussion." This was carried by a final vote of 113 to 31, when the amended substitute was voted upon.

The "question" was called on this before Dr. Woodrow could secure the floor, and he seemed to think this something of a personal indignity, but the Assembly simply meant to say it had had enough discussion and was ready to vote. Besides, Mr. Whaling had assured the Assembly that this question did not concern Dr. Woodrow any more than it did any other Presbyterian.

There were many who felt that it was not a "wise" act for the Presbytery to have passed this "interdict," because it thus opened the way for more agitation, which was at least connected with the disturbing question that our highest court had adjudicated. If it was to be thrust with hurtful persistency on the church, the Presbytery ought not to have given any pretext even for its being done. The provocation was admittedly great when such "contending" against the Assembly was permitted in the *Southern Presbyterian*, as was quoted by Dr. Girardeau and Mr. Lyons, when the Assembly was compared to a drunken fool, whose "intentions were good but whose head was weak;" when it was said the Assembly must say with Saul, "I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly;" when it was called a "packed body," and the "tool" used by an "unscrupulous and malignant intriguer," "wherewith to work out his personal spite;" when such unbecoming phrases as that its action "involves a violation of the law of God itself," and that "Satan had taken possession of them, and they like fiends incarnate"— . . . Still, many felt it would have been better to "bear all things" in view of the personal relation of some in that Pres-

bytery to the past agitation and not subject the church to further discussion of what it is heartily tired. There is a growing sentiment that we must have rest from it; that the church's patience is about exhausted with this draught on her time and thought, turned away from her true and aggressive work. The church protests against further agitation, and that was largely the meaning of the emphatic vote sustaining the Presbytery; for, from the records of the Presbytery and from the declaration of its representative, the Assembly was satisfied that the Presbytery of Charleston meant to forbid *improper agitation*, not free discussion. The language of the "interdict" was not carefully worded to express this, but the records sustained that view; hence the amendment of Mr. Lyons was adopted. Otherwise it certainly could not have been carried by so large a majority. Nor would the Assembly have taken action which would declare that we have no right to express in becoming language our judgment of the doings of any church court. The right of private judgment and the proper criticism of the acts of any church court belongs to every Presbyterian.

It was claimed that the explanation given by Dr. Girardeau, of what the Presbytery *meant* by its resolution, and that its recorded explanation of its meaning given in the answer to the protest, ought not to be allowed to influence the decision of the Assembly. The analogy in civil courts can throw some light on this. A lawyer of eminence here tells me that any court would read a statute passed by any legislature with the light thrown on it by their subsequent action; that in a statute whose meaning was doubtful or disputed, the explanation of its meaning given by the legislature at the same session, composed of the same members who passed the original statute, must be taken along with the statute and the case so decided, the object being to put the court deciding the question in the same position with the body framing the statute.

Of course the thing we are to seek in any statute is *the thought or intent which it expresses*. The Supreme Court of the United States said: "In construing laws it is the duty of the court to effect the intention of the legislature," and allows "an act declaring the true intent of a previous act to control the judiciary in deciding the true construction of the first act."

The analogy seems very clear, therefore, that the Synod ought to have allowed the Presbytery to interpret its own act, and that the Assembly decided wisely in disapproving the action of the Synod of South Carolina.

* This decision seemed to please both parties. To those who defended the Synod of South Carolina, it seemed this action virtually sustained them in that it declared the right of free speech; to those who sustained the Presbytery of Charleston, it gave satisfaction by not declaring their action unwise or unconstitutional.

COÖPERATION WITH THE NORTHERN CHURCH.

This was the most absorbing topic before the Assembly. It is not necessary to fill up the pages of the Review by quoting the long report of the *ad interim* committee. Their report was an admirable one. The interest centered around two points—coöperation in home mission work, especially along our borders, and deciding the status of the work for the colored people.

The Assembly decided to let all parts of the church be heard from by calling the roll and allowing every commissioner five minutes to express his views. This took time, but it proved more satisfactory than having the subject discussed by a few, whose words might reflect the opinion of very few in the church.

Dr. J. R. Wilson, in a very happy speech, introduced the matter and let us look at it somewhat as the committee did in their long deliberation. Then the roll-call began.

There were a few pronounced speeches in favor of organic union, though not so many as were heard in Baltimore last year. All these favored the adoption of the plan of coöperation, because they thought it would lead to organic union. Many good sentiments were expressed in this connection about the importance of brotherly love and the beautiful illustrations the old soldiers had given of the way animosities ought to be buried. They stood opposed to each other on the battle-fields; but now arm in arm, with true concord, met as comrades and friends, and forgot the bitterness of the past.

At the same time some in the Northern Assembly, like Judge Breckinridge and others, who could be satisfied with nothing less than organic union, opposed the plan of coöperation, because they thought it would retard or prove a bar to union. Thus extremes meet.

Some opposed coöperation because they said the Northern Boards and their agents would not faithfully stand by the plan when they saw that it would be chiefly a benefit to the Southern Assembly. Such a plan had already been tried in Texas, and had produced rather than relieved friction. So they thought it would be on the larger scale this plan proposed.

The great majority, however, thoroughly approved the plan and wanted it tested. Its effect would be to relieve friction, to bring the two churches closer together, to keep us from losing places open to us when we had neither the men nor the money to occupy, by calling on our brethren in the Northern Presbyteries to take possession of the land, and also help us to supply our own vacant fields along the border, deeming it better they should be taken by the Northern Church than lost to Presbyterianism entirely.

We believe it will help us preserve our separate existence with dignity and yet coöperate in all aggressive work in the spirit becoming two such churches. We thus show to our brethren that we are willing to do all in our power to establish the truest fraternity, to avoid all ground for bitterness and all unseemly squabbles about property; but at the same time show we are not so insecure in our separate existence, that we must keep them at a distance lest we should fall so much in love with them that we should rush into their arms regardless of consequences.

The majority of the brethren along the border strongly advocated the adoption of the plan, and their opinion had much weight in deciding the question.

The committee were criticised by some for keeping their report secret till it was submitted to the Assembly. The point was also made that only the Presbyteries could decide the question of coöperation, and that the Assembly ought to send it down to them, and not attempt to settle it; but that opinion did not prevail.

Aside from the different views of the two churches as to the spirituality of the church, which stand as a bar to organic union, the difference in the policy of each church as to its work among the colored people perhaps best measures the separation between us. The brethren in the North imagine we are so blinded by prejudice that we cannot impartially decide what is best for our brother in black, and that they understand the whole question and are the only ones qualified to legislate concerning him. It was a matter of surprise that the members of the *ad interim* committee representing them had ever agreed to the words of the report; it was *not* a matter of surprise when their telegram came announcing that they had stricken out these words: "While by conceding the existing situation it approves the policy of separate churches, Presbyteries and Synods, subject to the choice of the colored people themselves." This was stricken out they claimed, not to outline their future policy, but to state their history correctly. To this amended

report the Southern Assembly assented, though they are not in love with the "explanatory resolutions," which seem to abound in the Northern Assembly.

This report shows conclusively that at present no coöperation in our work for the colored people is practicable, and shows how widely divergent is the policy of the two Assemblies. The Southern Church has had its hands tied in large measure for this work, and it will no doubt be so for some time in the future. We could not in the first ten years after the war have reached them had we possessed the men and the means adequate for the work.

We can never agree to the policy of the Northern Church, unless the blacks should be moved to the North, leaving only a few scattered thousands among us. In that event there would certainly be a tremendous change in the sentiment of one of the Assemblies! Which one that would be it is needless to inquire, but it is reasonable to suppose that the one living a thousand miles away would not be the best fitted to legislate concerning the difficult problem that could not practically affect them.

Our Northern brethren may as well recognize this fact at once, that organic union is impossible on their position. We cannot subject our churches, our people, our property, to the control of a great majority whose avowed policy is so entirely opposed to ours; who may at any time feel constrained by their conscientious convictions to enforce on us what we could never agree to. Then would come harsh words and excruciating acts, and with that decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Walnut Street Church case, which settles the property rights, we would be powerless against any edict the majority might promulgate. Would it not be an act of suicidal madness, therefore, deliberately to put ourselves where we would be a hopeless minority, whose only remedy against what we might deem wrong would be a feeble protest of words?

We look at the facts presented to us from a thorough knowledge of the negro and of our people, while they deal with these questions as matters of sentiment. It seems such a dreadful thing for a church to declare that it must separate the whites and blacks, that they will not tolerate that wrong sentiment in their Southern brethren, no, not for an hour.

Let more of their leading men, like Dr. Field, come among us with their eyes open and their prejudices blindfolded, and, like him, they will go home, as he candidly confesses, "a wiser man." Their plan

will never operate well. See the experience of their own missionaries; the families of many of them unite with Southern white churches, though their husbands are pastors of the colored churches; their representatives in Florida have well-nigh ceased attending ecclesiastical meetings because they found it neither pleasant nor profitable. But the most determined opposition to it will come from the blacks themselves. White people, no matter who they were, would meet a cool reception if they attempted to attend regularly any colored church. A colored church in East Hanover Presbytery, in Virginia, found itself much prejudiced amongst its people by the fact that two of its trustees were white men. See, too, the embarrassing difficulties in which the Episcopal Church finds itself entangled by the same policy which the Northern Church holds. They are threatened with division, and the present compromise cannot hope to hold very long. We must guide ourselves by the facts, and we certainly claim to know more of the perplexities of the difficult problem than those can know who live at a distance, or than the various agents of Northern Boards can learn in their brief sojourn.

The meagre results that have followed their tremendous outlay of money, which seems to have started questionings among them (as was manifested in the violent debate in their last Assembly), might lead them to have more confidence in the judgment and convictions of those who have known the colored people from their infancy. And is it not time for us to stop our annual wailing over our work among them, as if we had been criminally neglecting them because of ill-feeling or prejudice? In that admirable Narrative prepared by Rev. S. H. Chester it was said, "Almost nothing is being done," etc.; and so yearly our reports make the impression that there is a great lack of interest on our part. Do these reports set us right before the world? It is true we might have accomplished more in some directions, but have we not done in most places about as much as they would let us do, or as we have had the ability to do? Perhaps the *Christian Observer* stated it too strongly when it said in some recent very telling articles on this subject that the Northern missionaries "enticed" them away from us, but the facts presented then ought to be known to all. We claim for ourselves, without qualification, that we are not held back from laboring for the colored people by prejudice. We feel the perplexities and difficulties of the question. We are anxious to do all we can to solve it, and will unite with the Northern Church in any way we can to benefit this rapidly-increasing race, for whose spiritual progress we feel the

deepest interest. But we cannot risk the domination of ignorance, and if the sentiment in the Northern Church is so strong they cannot work on any other plan, then both sides ought candidly to say so, and not try to walk together except they be agreed.

FOREIGN MISSIONS.

There were many fears of disagreeable debates, of unpleasant charges and counter-charges, as the grave issues of this important cause came up for discussion. It was known that for some time there had been serious differences between different members of the Executive Committee; also that the compromise made by the last Assembly had met the fate of most compromises—it had failed to settle the difficulty. There was a general feeling of sorrow when the secretary presented a paper requesting the investigation of these difficulties.

The secretary is an honored and successful servant, whom the church was unwilling to lose. Those who differed with him were equally honored and valued, who had done most self-denying and generous work, who had testified their love and zeal for the church by many acts that had largely helped to put the work of Foreign Missions on the high vantage ground it now occupies. The Assembly felt the need of wisdom to guide it to the right settlement of the question, that this great cause might not be injured.

The Standing Committee gave all parties interested the fullest hearing they desired. Then, most earnestly considering the whole matter, after listening for twelve hours to the statement of grievances, they, with one exception, recommended changing the location of the Executive Committee from Baltimore to Nashville, and left the nomination and election of the secretary to the Assembly.

There were some who thought that there ought to be a clean sweep, the location changed, and a new committee and secretary appointed. But if the location was changed, and a new committee wholly inexperienced was appointed, it rendered it important to retain the secretary. The brethren in Nashville said they did not wish the committee sent there if a new secretary was to be appointed. So the Assembly decided by a large majority to move the committee, and re-elected Dr. Houston. This decision could not please all, but to the majority it seemed the wisest course.

A motion was made to grant the privileges of the floor to Dr. W. U. Murkland and Mr. Inglis during the discussion, but it was opposed simply because the Assembly was unwilling to have the personal differences

between men who stand so deservedly high paraded before the church and sent over the land. It would have been as promptly opposed had the request been made for Dr. Houston, and could not be understood as in any way putting an affront on Dr. Murkland. It was as much for the sake of the brethren most interested, as for the sake of the cause they represented, that the Assembly was unwilling to open up the matter in public.

This action was not meant to "vindicate" either party, nor to cast reproach on either. Moving the committee from Baltimore was not meant to cast any blame on the committee there, nor was the reelection of the secretary meant to vindicate him. They found nothing censurable in the official conduct of the secretary, and they pronounced no judgment on the differences, but expressed in warm terms their appreciation of the generous and self-denying labors of the committee. Did any consider it otherwise, they mistook the spirit of that body whose sincere aim was simply to do what would most benefit the work so dear to all hearts.

SYSTEMATIC BENEFICENCE.

This paper, however, is long enough, and we will only touch on one more point. The important work of Systematic Beneficence, the question of the best way to secure the gifts of the people, was left to the last, to be discussed and decided by a few members. Would it not be wise to have a matter so vital to the work of the church discussed when we could have the benefit of the judgment and experience of all the secretaries and of wise financiers from every part of our field? The plan adopted gives to every church the opportunity of contributing every Sabbath, if they deem best. It aimed to provide against the danger of risking the revenue for any cause on one Sabbath, when the contingencies of weather or some local cause may prevent the gathering of the gifts of the people. The plan deserves a faithful trial.

The desire was expressed in several of the committees to reduce the expenses of the Executive Committees wherever practicable. This was done in the Foreign Mission Committee by combining the office of Treasurer and Assistant Secretary. There was also some discussion in the Standing Committees of Education, Home Missions and Systematic Beneficence, with reference to transferring the work of the Executive Committee of Education either to the Home Mission Committee in Atlanta, or to the Publication Committee in Richmond. The cause of Education was once in the hands of the committee in Richmond, and was moved from there when the disaster fell on it in 1877-'78,

but the chaos that existed then has now been reduced to admirable system. Dr. Hazen has, by his financial skill and well-balanced judgment, not only freed the committee from debt, but also made it self-sustaining, so that all money contributed is spent in benevolent work. The work of the Education Committee could now be done in Richmond with very little, if any additional expense. The duties of that committee are largely clerical. The Presbyteries must bear the responsibility of deciding on the fitness of candidates to receive aid, and the Committee of Education can do little more than obey these recommendations. These suggestions did not arise from any spirit of criticism of the work of the present committee, or of its faithful secretary, Dr. E. M. Richardson, but simply from a desire to most wisely use the church's money. The Assembly is fortunate in having as secretaries of the various committees men of such fitness for their work, and of such industry and zeal in their work. The record of the past year's work has been most gratifying, and we trust these beloved brethren may be long spared to do even better things.

J. W. ROSEBRO.

THE NORTHERN GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

THE meeting of any great religious body is a matter of interest to all Christian people. It gives expression to the religious sentiment and life of the people it represents, and gives shape and impulse to the outflow of that life as it is yet to manifest itself in the future. The late meeting of the General Assembly in New York is a more than usually striking and forcible illustration of these thoughts. It was impressive, both by the number and character of its members. The cosmopolitan character of the Assembly was manifest in the appearance of the body, where were white men, red men, and black men; men from America, both North and South; from the distant mission fields of Europe and Asia, and from the islands of the ocean; representatives gathered from all the great fields of activity in which the church is at work, both at home and abroad.

The material of this Assembly was certainly equal to its best gatherings, though many new faces and younger men appeared possibly for the first time, and, what was interesting and hopeful, many new names sprang to prominence, and hitherto untried debaters thrilled the Assembly, and assured us that as the older servants of God give way, these younger and earnest men will fully supply their