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# The Central Presbyterian

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Living without landscape must be a sad lot. To spend one's days without the vision of the fields and hills, the broad waters and the arching sky, is a great destitution. Yet there are some who choose to live in the city and have no vision. Out of a back window, down a narrow alley, between brick walls, and at the end a paved yard too small for the rubbish and waste. And that is all; no green thing, no tree nor vine, nor spreading field nor lofty hills. It is like choosing to live in a prison cell.

About noon the sun looks down into the city canyon, along the high brick walls and into the window. For a short and radiant hour of light, it fills the room with its glory. What a welcome visitor! It is like a bright and cheerful guest who drives the gloom and sadness all away and fills the home with gladness and love. We would like the sun to stay longer with us, but he will not. We are thankful for his daily coming, and in the darkness wait for his return.

If one will look up through the long dark valley, far up and over the dismal roofs and chimney-tops, one may find a little square of blue. It is far away in the heavens, but it is full of light and beauty. Only fleecy clouds in fragments drift across its face. We could wish that all had patches of heavenly blue on which to look. We could wish that every lonely prisoner in his cell, every sick and suffering one in darkened chamber, every one shut in from landscape of many kinds, might have vision of things unseen and eternal.

A meeting was held last week in Baltimore of delegates from four of the large American Methodist Churches for conference as to combination in Missionary work. The Methodist Episcopal, the Methodist Episcopal Church South, the Methodist Protestant and the Canadian Methodists were represented by strong delegations of bishops and other clergy. For the present it was proposed to restrict the combination to the Missionary forces in Japan. There are said to be about 10,000 Japanese converts in the Methodist Mission Churches. The question of settling the articles of faith was found to be a somewhat difficult one, but it was hoped that on this subject harmony could be secured. Bishop Galloway, Dr. Leonard, Secretary in New York, and Dr. Sutherland, Secretary in Canada, spoke at a public meeting at night.

One of the *Ad Interim* Committees appointed by the last General Assembly, North, was a committee on Men's Societies in the churches. Various efforts and schemes for Guilds and Leagues and Societies for men have been tried, without uniformity and with varying success or failure. The Synod of Ohio asks for the formation of a men's Order or Brotherhood, within denominational lines, which shall be distinctively Presbyterian in name and purpose, providing for Presbyterial, Synodical and National conventions for the purpose of bringing Presbyterian men together in the interest of the Presbyterian Church, is working with diligence to prepare a plan to be reported to the next Assembly. It is hoped that all existing societies of men in the churches may be brought together, in a brotherhood, not secular, not finding their end in a banquet, but religious and aggressive, that will bring the ability and enthusiasm of men to the work and progress of Christ's kingdom.

In a small triangular courtyard in the rear of No. 20 South William Street, New York city, is one of the curious relics of the earliest church on Manhattan. In the pavement there are a dozen or more of the ancient burr mill-stones, which, with horse-power ground the flour of the early settlers' grain. They are bound with iron hoops and are of Belgian origin. In the loft of the horse mill in 1628 was organized the Reformed Church of the Hollanders of Manhattan. In 1690 there was a Portuguese Jewish Synagogue, which adjoined the old mill, and which later took in the mill site. The Jewish Synagogue, moving to another site, had two of the old mill-stones mounted in its vestibule. The Jews lately celebrated their 250th anniversary; and the Dutch will in a few years be celebrating their 300th anniversary.

An event of great interest is the completion late in December of a plan of union by the joint committees by the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches in Canada. The plan was prepared by sub-committees on doctrine, polity, the ministry, administration, etc., and has been approved by the full committee, is now published and will be transmitted to the supreme assemblies or councils of the churches negotiating for union. The Presbyterian churches of Canada were united in 1875, and the Methodist churches in 1884. These unions were believed to bring such valuable results that the desire for further combination became wide-spread and influential. The great urgency for combined efforts in the evangelization of the great mission territory in the Canadian west and northwest has been a potent influence. The doctrinal basis is not a supplement to existing confessions but a substitute for them. It is said to be more Calvinistic in its tone than the Brief Statement, which the Northern Presbyterian Assembly adopted when it revised the Confession. The polity proposed is a selection of the forms prevailing, Presbyterian, Congregational,

and Episcopalian. There is a General Assembly, biennial, the moderator being relieved of all local pastoral work, that he may be a chief executive officer. There are annual and district conferences corresponding to our Synods and Presbyteries. Pastoral service will be without time limit, and settlement committees and transfer committees in sections will have power to appoint to vacancies and arrange transfers. The movement is one of the most important in the late history of the Christian Church. It will be studied and watched with deep interest in all parts of the Protestant Christian world. The Toronto Globe sums up its conclusions with reference to the united church in the following sentences:

"It will be a church with a creed; it will be a church democratic in its government; it will be a church with an educated ministry; it will be a church at once evangelic in spirit and national in outlook." It speaks of the report of the joint committee as "the most remarkable ecclesiastical document issued in Protestant Christendom since the Reformation" and continues, "Never before did the official representatives of three different denominations—different in their origins, in their traditions, and in their creedal documents—meet together in authoritative and deliberate council and find in doctrine, in policy, in institutions, or in spirit no insuperable obstacle to organic union."

In the last year or two it has been prophesied that the weekly denominational papers of the country would go down in failure. It has been said by some of the secular dailies in the great cities that the church papers were no longer a necessity of the people, and were becoming a thing of the past. The only truth in this statement is the fact that the cost of producing those papers has increased. They use a superior grade of paper, much more costly than that of the dailies, and a more perfect typography which grows in cost. It has become a financial necessity in some cases that church papers combine. But, looking over the New Year's numbers of many exchanges, there is distinct evidence of prosperity. Some tell of the increase of circulation, and some are enlarged and improved. As a class of journals, they are adapting themselves to the needs of the people, and are more and more important to the denominations which they serve.

Dr. Denney, of Scotland, after a visit to "the States," that is, as other visitors do from the old country, to a few cities and institutions from Boston to Chicago, gives his impression of America. He says:

"Another difficulty of the Church was the immigration problem. The evangelizing of this mass was a work of time, but it was being done. The leaven was at work. 'The leaven is thoroughly good stuff to leaven this enormous lump.' In regard to the negro problem, one with which he did not come personally in contact, he quoted the dictum of a friend. 'What our duty is to the colored race is to educate them, Christianize them, and see that they get justice, but there is nothing after that for us to do—the race problem is not for us, it is for God's Providence. What we have to do is to wait.' Dr. Denny's own opinion was that there is no reason why the two races should not learn to respect each other as members in one commonwealth even though they did not racially amalgamate.



### The Crown of Thorns.

Oh Crown of Thorns! No diadem adorns  
The brow of lofty potentate to-day—  
Bringing rich dow'r of Gold and Kingly pow'r—  
Can match thy regal sway.

Oh Crown of Thorns! On that Sad morn of morns,  
When thou didst crown the lowly Nazarene,  
The richest gem, that shines in diadem,  
Flashed from thy prickly sheen.

For gazing now upon that Kingly brow,  
From thorny prod—we see rica drops of blood—  
First drops to now, cleansing from sin and woe—  
Drops from the heart of God.

Oh Thorny Crown! As from thy points flow down  
The wine of life, We gaze on human strife  
Beneath the Cross, for sordid gain or loss—  
Sigh for a higher life.

Ages have pass'd since then, and sinful men,  
Have pass'd away, from these poor homes of clay,  
Trusting alone, in him who did atone,  
For them, in his own way.

From out the years, stealing through sighs and  
tears,  
The story comes—how gently, tenderly—  
His mother bore, that crown all stain'd with gore,  
Away from Calvary.

Oh Crown of Thorns! In that bright morn of morns,  
When Jesus comes, and earth's redeem'd shall  
sing;  
Blood drops shall rubies—Tears, shall diamonds be,  
To crown our Saviour King.

WM. LAURIE HILL.

### Polygamy.

REV. S. S. LAWS, D. D. LL. D.

This subject is supposed to be before the Southern Presbyterian Church. Its consideration largely depends upon an overture before the Synod of Virginia at its recent meeting in Richmond; that overture will go up to the General Assembly of 1906 from the Virginia Synod by complaint. Is it best that our church should be informed on this subject or kept in blissful ignorance in regard to it? Although this overture has been in three of the Church Courts for more than a year and a half, it has never been published in any one of our church papers. As this overture has been misunderstood and consequently harshly spoken of, it is requested of the *Central Presbyterian* that it publish the overture itself, with some words of explanation and defense, as disarming prejudice and misrepresentation.

#### OVERTURE.

*An overture from the Synod of Virginia to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, to meet in Greenville, S. C., May, 1906, on the subject of polygamy.*

Whereas, The missionaries of our church are confronted by polygamous sentiments and practices in the States and Territories of our country, North and South, not only by Mormon citizens, but also among our Indians, and the inhabitants of our island possessions and likewise in foreign lands; and

Whereas, Under the light of the gospel no man can marry a second wife while his first wife is still living in conjugal relations with him, without offending against the laws of Christ. Such relation is pronounced criminal by the United States Supreme Court and other courts, although it may be justified by heathen custom and law and be entered into in ignorance of the truth, yet it cannot be perpetuated nor connived at by one who has become a follower of Christ, neither can it be justified by the church; therefore, the Synod of Virginia solemnly invokes the General Assembly to make the following deliverance without delay, to-wit:

1. That no church under its care shall be allowed to tolerate the polygamous or concubinous relation on the part of any of its members whether in Christian or in heathen lands.

2. That when any man in polygamous relations offers for membership, every wife except the one first married, if alive and faithful, shall be repudiated.

3. That if the so-called wife or wives thus repudiated or their children, or both be dependant, then the church shall kindly assist him in their support, if need be.

Converts from heathenism should be treated very tenderly in this most painful situation, and yet they should be dealt with in all fidelity; and when a man is called to separate from all but his first and only wife, he should be enjoined to make provision for those from whom he is separated to the full extent of his ability. (See Moore's Digest, p. 507.)

4. In like manner, any woman in polygamous or polyandrous relation shall abandon the same as a

condition of Christian communion and church membership.

5. That the Committee on Home and Foreign Missions are hereby enjoined and ordered to promptly and firmly enforce this rule.

The preamble shows that this overture does not confine attention to the foreign missions, but contemplates the whole world wherever the gospel is preached and polygamy is found. But the overture is continually spoken of as relating only to the Foreign Missions. Read the "Whereas."

The overture does not deal with an abstraction or an hypothetical case, but with an actual state of fact, for there are a number of polygamists in our church in Africa and China, notably at Luebo in Africa.

No steps have been taken by the courts of the church toward the exclusion of those polygamists now in our church, though attention has been called to it, nor have the missionaries who admitted them, been restrained from admitting others at their discretion; they have not even been advised not to do so. As things now stand, who knows whereunto this thing will grow. So that it is now an open question whether the heathen are to be Christianized or our mission churches heathenized.

All parties are agreed that polygamy is a sin, and that the polygamous relation is in violation of the law of monogamy, which was instituted by Christ as the law of his kingdom, and hence it is a sinful relation. Herein polygamy differs radically from slavery. The sacred Scriptures regulate the duties which spring out of the relation of the bond-servant to his master, but it does not recognize moral duties as springing out of sinful relations. The duty in that case is to abandon and break up the relation. The adulterer must separate from his mistress or concubine. In the case of incest at Corinth, Paul took the case in hand and ordered that the licentious offender should at once be excommunicated—"deliver such a one unto Satan." (Read the whole of 1 Cor. v.)—though the corrupt sentiment of the Church had tolerated it.

At the creation, the conjugal relation was ordained for the race between one man and one woman, and it is notable that conjugal duties are never recognized nor enjoined except as arising out of the monogamous relation of one man and his wife, *never wives*; or woman and her husband, *never husbands*. Jesus Christ lifted this natural law of monogamy binding on all men into the spiritual sphere of his church.

The plural sex relation is one of adultery, whether by man or woman. The provision of the overture is that these adulterous relations shall not be admitted into the Church nor tolerated in it.

As a matter of fact, the *separation* contemplated in the overture has been egregiously misrepresented as iron-clad, harsh and cruel. There is not a word of truth in such epithets. It is not unreasonable for a man to confine his attention as husband to his one wife. As to the other women, it is simply, in all reason and decency, required of him to discontinued cohabitation with them; but in no manner to discontinue his support of them and their children. His becoming a member of the Church would not lessen his ability, and should increase his disposition to do so and to still be their best friend and protector, as in duty bound toward those dependent on him. The overture provides in terms that if he is not able to discharge fully these duties to those dependent upon him without aid, then the church shall aid him. Hence the entire mixed family would be placed in better living condition than before. This is kindness, not cruelty.

Confession of Faith, Chapter xxiv. "Of Marriage and Divorce," section first, is in the following words: "Marriage is to be between one man and one woman, neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time." The overture is no stricter than this provision of the Constitution of the Church, and it is meant to render it operative, and it is not easy to see how anyone who accepts the Constitution of the Church can oppose this overture.

In many parts of the heathen world the woman is the bread-winner and support the man and their children, and hence the main result of the separation in such cases would be to set the loafer to work. As a rule, the described horrors of separation as thus contemplated are an utter fiction and fraud.

The Church is bound to come to some such position as this overture, or lose its purity and power. And the sooner it is done after all this waiting and confusion, the better. Of all the churches on earth, one would suppose the Southern Presbyterian Church would most promptly and uncompromisingly unfurl its banner for Christ and the uncorrupted Christian family at home and abroad. If the present state of things is continued, how can our Southern Church be defended against the charge of being "*Polygamous Presbyterians?*"

### The Minister and Music.

"A Country Minister" remarks in the *Central* of December 27th, that he is unable to agree with the statement made in the issue of December 6th, that "when there is poor singing in a congregation, the minister is to blame."

Let another country minister say what he did with that paragraph about the minister and the music. First of all, he rejoiced to see it and secretly thanked the editor for it, and at once renewed his subscription to the paper. He read the paragraph from the pulpit, at the same time commending the paper from which it was taken. He cut the piece out and sent it to the local newspaper—to give other churches the benefit of it. The newspaper did not publish the remarks, perhaps, because the local ministers might have thought they were thereby criticised.

Can the minister best help the singing by himself leading the singing as "A Country Minister" seems to imply? We think not. He may thereby even hinder the promotion of this exercise. The writer, who is neither a singer nor a musician, once succeeded a pastor who raised his own tunes, at prayer-meeting at least, and he is convinced that the people's talent was for that very reason neglected. A minister may help the cause better if he himself does not sing. He is then in a better position to call forth the aid of those who "can sing a little," but who would never venture to claim "ability to sing" nor a "knowledge of music" worth mentioning, but whose mingled voices go to make up congregational singing.

The minister can promote congregational singing. He may not be able to get the choir to practice, it is true; he need not despair if he cannot. Hymns accurately rendered by the choir may not be that most delightful part of worship that is felt when a congregation with melody in the heart at least, joins in earnest and sincere praise to God. At the Old Forge Church on Cedar Creek, when the Rev. Dr. W. H. Woods was pastor there, the service of praise by those farmers and their families, with no choir, made an impression upon an occasional visitor, that has not been equalled by many choirs and silent congregations. The writer recalls two instances in which musically good choirs destroyed the effect of the sermon, and the effect of their own singing by their smiles and inattention during the prayer and the sermon.

The service of song would be made more worshipful and helpful if ministers imitated one of our most promising pastors, who is not himself a musician. He was called to a church that put great emphasis upon its choir and the choir had introduced highly artistic, if not artificial, compositions and performances. The young pastor shocked the choir leader by requesting that he substitute for such pieces, some appropriate hymn and its natural tune. "Why, Mr. —, it would ramage my musical reputation to sing such a piece as that, sir." "Well," replied Rev. Dr. — (he told me of this himself) "when it becomes a question between your musical reputation and the worship of God's people we will not hesitate." In that church there is sincere, earnest singing to-day, and it is artistic, too.

The new *Psalms and Hymns* by its historical hints is well calculated to stimulate interest in the hymns themselves and the tunes. Let the minister frequently call attention to these; let him often announce the name of the tune (for so few singers ever know the names of the tunes they sing), and above all, let him strive to properly read the hymn. Let him manifest in the Sunday-school this same zest, let him induce a few scholars to commit one or two hymns (the name of a girl could be mentioned who repeated twenty-five selected hymns for her pastor); let him stir up the superintendent to feel the importance of teaching the school to know the church hymns and tunes. The pastor who does these things will have his reward in better singing.

Finally, two suggestions from experience have proved helpful: Dr. Peck's rule was that the first hymn should be of a general nature, and only the one following the sermon should specially relate to the sermon. It will be found helpful to follow the Scripture lesson with a hymn according in theme with the passage read. Again, a new tune may be made the people's possession by a little management. Select two tunes that are unfamiliar, say St. Martin's and Park Street, and let them be sung in the Sunday-school, first one and then the other, every Sunday for three months. Then select too more, say Zerah and Geneva, and treat them in the same way, while the first two alternate between the morning and evening church service each Sunday for another month. And so on. The stock of tunes will grow and so will the interest in the singing, and the tie between the school and the church will become a living link. The new tunes should generally be with the opening hymn.

ANOTHER COUNTRY MINISTER.