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Christian Reformer AND DISSENTER.

An Advocate of all Scriptural Reforms in both Church and State, and of Dissent and Separation from all that is Unchristian as a Means of Reformation.

"He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new."—Rev. 21: 5.
"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."—2 Corinthians 5: 17.

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THE WEEK'S OUTLOOK.

"Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchmen said, the morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come."—Isaiah 21: 11, 12

THE devotion which a "true friend" of the National Reform Association shows is to be judged not by loud profession but by the facts in the case. On the one hand, there are men working with all their might for the Association and its noble and patriotic cause. In their efforts to help forward the work they as an executive committee prepared a brief constitution to be suggested for auxiliary societies. They never dreamed of departing in a single iota from the constitution of the National Association. The form of constitution and the by-laws to be suggested to auxiliary societies were framed without consulting documents, and as giving in as short compass as possible the substance of the aims of the National Reform Association. And because of the use of the word "relation" instead of the word "allegiance," this "true friend" of the Association sets himself with all his might to weaken the confidence of the friends of the cause in the men who are striving to carry on the arduous work. And this attack is made just in the midst of the labors in preparing for a convention in a large city, and just before the annual collections are to be taken for the cause.

Now turn for another view of this "true friend." While the workers for the cause are giving their best energies for its advancement, the National Reform Association is attacked, not this time because of the use of one word instead of another, and not because of any similar blundering or scheming of its officers, but squarely on the ground of its alleged unscriptural character. The Association itself is directly and avowedly opposed as an organization that is in violation of the law of Christ. And this "true friend" of the Association, who in his burning zeal and devotion cannot endure the thought of having its glorious cause imperilled by the use of an unwisely chosen word, and who rushes with drawn sword upon all such offenders for a word, has not a syllable of rebuke for the assailant who is doing the utmost in his power utterly to destroy the Association. How there can be such consuming zeal in the one case, and such entire want of it in the other is a mystery of this boasted true friendship.

THERE is still another view of the "true friend" as he gives his own portrait to the public. He can not only pass by without condemnation the most direct assaults on the National Reform Association for the welfare of which he is so deeply concerned, and similar attacks on the Christian Endeavor movement to which he had repeatedly borne the highest testimony, but he can give to the assailant all manner of support in opposing what the church has repeatedly approved by the strongest kind of resolutions and by practical co-operation. And yet, when another brother discusses the question of the unity of the church, in as calm and honest an effort as possible to set forth the teachings of the Scriptures and of our Testimony and Covenant on the subject, the hue and cry is sounded as if the very flood-gates of heresy had been wide opened and the church were in danger of being buried under false doctrine and worldly corruptions. For our part we are at a loss to determine whether the support or opposition of such a "true friend" is the more desirable.

WHILE the articles on the organic unity of the church speak for themselves, and while it is not necessary to reply to all criticisms some of which seem strangely to miss the aim and purport of the discussion, we must protest against the gross misconception of the following statement by this "true friend:" "It is proposed by the adoption of such a basis of church union to open Covenanter pulpits to ministers who reject the system of doctrine, the order of worship, and the rules of discipline which the church has solemnly sworn to maintain." This is no doubt the way this critic understands the articles. But if he interprets text-books of theology or church history in any similar manner to his classes the unfortunate students will have many an introduction to writers whose "legs are not equal."

THE statements made by "W." in the December issue of the R. P. & C. about the Geneva case are so astoundingly and stupendously and amazingly aside from any thing that has the least semblance of fact to substantiate them that we are somewhat dazed by the audacity of the man who could write such fiction and publish it for fact. He refers to certain articles on Church Union published in the Christian Statesman last June. He gives a few extracts from a reply by Dr. James Dick in the Irish Covenanter and reprinted in the Christian Nation. He

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LETTER.

Dr. Cook, professor of biology in Pomona College, gave us a lecture last night on comparative anatomy. He has recently purchased, at his own expense, an extensive series of vertebrated skeletons, costing over two hundred dollars, all handsomely mounted. He had on the platform a representative of nearly every order of the vertebrates. Although a pronounced Christian evolutionist, when he came to the monkey, he admitted a great break between it and man. He had traced a gradual development along the whole line up to this point, but here found a great gulf which could not be passed over.

Prof. Cook, like Prof. Haeckel, finds the beginnings of the union in atoms, inelastic, impenetrable, indivisible and inert, having a tendency to unite in groups. I have not yet learned how far he endorses the Darwinian theory of natural selection, sexual selection and environment as accounting for the origin of species.

The theory as expounded by Tyndal, Huxley, Spencer, Darwin and Haeckel, is gradually weakening. Prof. Weisman, a distinguished naturalist, says: "It is impossible to demonstrate it in any one point. We accept it simply because we must; because it is the only possible explanation which we can conceive."

We have a Pomological Society, composed of members of the faculty, literary men and practical ranchmen of the community. At our last meeting (it meets monthly) we had papers on fertilization of flowers, chemical analysis of plants, bugs, etc. It promises to be most useful to fruit growers. They have a basket picnic once or twice a year.

A group of literary men and women have formed a "Cactus Club." We are to spend seven evenings on Hawthorne's writings. The club meets fortnightly. Last Monday evening the subject was "The Scarlet Letter." I had been requested to give a paper on the ethical element of the story. The following is a condensed outline of the paper.

ETHICAL ELEMENTS IN "THE SCARLET LETTER."

Ethics is the right in human life—the obligation we are under to God, to others, and to ourselves. It extends to all moral questions. The ultimate basis of morality is not the inherent nature of things; not the fitness of things; not the truth of things; not the relation of things; not the greatest happiness; not the authority of the state; but the revealed will of God. That is the ultimate rule. That is the supreme principle of life, imperative and of universal authority. *Ethics*, the right in human life, is to be distinguished from *aesthetics*; that which is the expedient, the beautiful and the noble.

Ethics include both right and duty. Right is what we *may* do lawfully. Duty is what we *must* do. Some of the old philosophers taught that living in tranquil and constant contentment is happiness, and can only be had in living and acting in harmony with God. According to Plato it consists in the enjoyment of God as the eye

enjoys the light, and not in the enjoyment of body or mind; while Aristotle regards the sovereign good in happiness as inseparable from virtue, and as consisting in life and action.

While the author of "The Scarlet Letter" conceived happiness to consist in "living through the whole range of faculties and sensibilities," he failed to realize this in his official life, in the dreary and monotonous rounds of daily life in the old custom house in Salem. He began to realize a perceptible increasing dullness in his intellectual faculties, and was in danger of making the dinner hour "the nucleus of the day, and spending the rest of it as an old dog spends it, asleep in the sunshine or the shade." He evidently regards the tenure of public office as inimical to intellectual development; for when turned out of office, as he is likely to be at the change of administration, the hope of getting replaced is ever after, like an ignis fatuus, luring him on so that he enters heartily into no other business.

He rightly condemns, and with a good deal of severity, the blood-thirsty spirit that characterizes the victors in political conflicts. He felt it keenly when on the accession of the Whigs to power in 1849, he was officially decapitated and his headless body was kept careering for weeks through the public press. And so he professed to be glad to make an investment in pens, ink and paper, and once more open his desk for literary work.

Among the old papers in the custom house was found part of an old dress with the letter A embroidered in scarlet on the bosom. Hester Prynne, who had left her husband in England two hundred years before, had been condemned to stand in the pillory and to wear this scarlet letter perpetually, the A indicating to every one that she was an adulteress. The ethical lessons of "The Scarlet Letter" are:

First, The danger of being unequally yoked. An aged, decrepit, deformed yet scholarly man wins the hand of a young, beautiful and graceful girl. She afterwards said to him, "I felt no love nor feigned any." "It was budding youth united to decay." It is worse than madness, and so often opens a spring of woes unnumbered, to both; and so he says: "Let men tremble to win the hand of a woman unless they win along with it the utmost passion of the heart. Some one else may, some day, call forth all its deep passion and love."

A *second* lesson is the gnawing, withering, consuming power of a guilty conscience, in the attempt to hide a guilty heart through life. The young minister, Dunningdale, father of the child, felt every moment the burning, scorching power of a guilty conscience, of his unconfessed sin against virtue and against God. It was as a fire in his bones consuming the natural moisture of his body, and brought him to a premature grave. His high position and the holy character he was obliged to exhibit made it all the more difficult to confess.

A *third* danger-light displayed is the immeasurable pain and ignominy that follow a violation of the law of

charity. Poor Hester Prynne lost a pearl of great price. The ignominy of the pillory and the scaffold, exposed to the gaze of the public, was only temporary. A life time of shame and mental agony lay before her. She henceforth rejected pleasure as a sin. She was not permitted to mingle with either the joyful or the sorrowful scenes of life. She lost faith in every one. Though unequalled in her skill in embroidering, and employed to embroider almost everything, she was never permitted to embroider a bridal veil. The young woman in the crowd in front of the jail voiced the truth when she said, "Not a stitch in that embroidered letter on her bosom but she has felt in her heart"

A fourth suggestion as to the result of the violation of the law of chastity. The mother was blessed, shall we say, with a lovely, beautiful child which she nestled in her heart. She had purchased "Pearl" at a great price—all that she had. The child grew up to be not only the joy but the pain of her life. Oftentimes the mother was at her wits end to know how to control Pearl. Though beautiful, with dark bright eyes, rosy cheeks, and rich brown curls, she was defiant, self-willed, refusing to play with other children, chasing and flinging stones after them.

Hester Prynne believed that this extraordinary character was to be traced directly to her own wild, desperate, defiant and oftentimes gloomy and despondent state of mind or condition before Pearl was born. She felt (and the story does not assure us of the contrary) that "later in the day it might be prolific of the storm and the whirlwind." People often said, and Hester sometimes almost believed it, that Pearl was a demon-offspring. "The iron link of inherited crime is most difficult to break." "In giving her existence a great law had been broken, as a result, a being brilliant and beautiful, but all in disorder."

Still another lesson comes out, viz., the transforming power of a revengeful and wicked spirit. Chillingworth, the injured husband, swore vengeance on the father of the child. How perseveringly, stealthily and mercilessly he pursued his victim. People noticed, and Hester was amazed at the transformation that had taken place in a few years. He wore at times the aspect of a demon, and was but a walking skeleton. So one may readily be transformed into a devil if he will condescend to do the devil's work. His heart, once a habitation large enough for many guests, was now lonely and chill and without a household fire.

Again we must not fail to notice the blighting and blasting influence of sorrow and shame. The germ and blossom of womanhood had been beautifully developed in Hester, but in the seven years of shame "all the light and graceful foliage of her character had been withered up by this red-hot brand." "Some attribute had departed from her, the permanence of which had been essential to keep her a woman." A magnetic touch might transform her. Probably it never did.

I must, however, mildly yet firmly enter my protest against the entire trend and spirit of "The Scarlet Letter." First of all in its spirit and purpose it is a philippic on the Puritan fathers. Their children are termed the offspring of the most intolerant band that ever lived. The women are represented as coarse and wanting in sympathy, brought up on beer and ale, with a moral diet not a whit more refined than Queen Elizabeth's. They gloated in the punishment of a fallen sister. With broad shoulders, well developed busts and rosy cheeks, they combined boldness of speech and rudeness of manner. The clergymen were unsympathizing and intolerant, hypocritical and superstitious, narrow and bigoted. Whereas, in fact, parents and children, ministers and people, rulers and subjects, while stern and somewhat extreme in their views of duty, were conscientious, virtuous, exemplary, and truly pious and God-fearing, beyond those of any subsequent period in the history of our country. The children of this generation don't know, and through such sources as "The Scarlet Letter" will never know, what a debt of gratitude we owe to the Pilgrim fathers; the rich and imperishable heritage that has come down to us through their fidelity. "The Scarlet Letter" is not the only piece of fiction that has given to the present generation a false view of the laws and customs of our fathers.

Finally, I here enter my protest against the attempt to throw discredit upon the ministerial profession. One of the leading characters in "The Marble Faun" is a fallen priest, who, we are led to suspect, had tempted a young and beautiful girl to her ruin, while in "The Scarlet Letter" a young Protestant minister is held up to the scorn of the world, as an arrant hypocrite, pretending great holiness and purity of character, permitting his partner in sin and shame to stand in the valley and suffer on for long years in his very presence, without one word of sympathy or protest.

Rev. Mr. Willson, an able, godly and scholarly pastor in Boston, when urging Hester to tell the father of the child, has "no more right to meddle with a question of human guilt, passion and anguish of the heart, than one of those portraits that adorn the frontispiece of an old volume of sermons." He and his brother ministers stop Hester in the streets and admonish her to repentance, and when she was present in the church, her sin was made the subject of discourse.

Now while clergymen are fallible like other men, they nevertheless are unexcelled in purity of life, sympathetic, exemplary and ready to lift up the fallen. From his very position, work and profession, compelled every day of his life to endure the ordeal of standing in "that fierce light which beats upon the throne," he ought not to be caricatured as is done in "The Scarlet Letter."

The Rev. Mr. Jones followed with an excellent paper on the art of the story. This was followed by a most lively and earnest discussion of the papers in which a great diversity of views came out. J. L. McCARTNEY.

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