

THE Presbyterian Quarterly.

No. 48--APRIL, 1899.

I. GENESIS OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY.

For great events in either Church or State there are usually well defined periods of preparation. Such events do not arise suddenly, but come to pass in their fulness of time.

It is with them as with a mighty river. Its vast volume of rushing waters is the product of many smaller streams, and these in turn are made up of many lesser rivulets, which, gathering from distant mountains and flowing through fertile plains, combine to make the great river—the St. Lawrence, the Mississippi or the Amazon; the Rhine, the Danube or the Nile. To understand the river aright, we must trace its various converging streams to their respective sources, in the recesses of lofty mountains, in the depths of trackless forests, or amid the loneliness of distant lakes. Thus explorers have sought the sources of the Nile, the Mississippi and the Amazon, and in this way reliable geography is made.

So it is with the Providence of God, as it works out its great movements, alike in the life of nations and in the history of the Church. These movements can only be rightly understood by tracing the various streams of influence

NOTES.

I. IS THE STANDARD DECLINING ?

Progress may be judged from either of two different points of view, and the estimate be very diverse accordingly. It depends very much upon whether you measure from the starting point or from the goal; judged from the goal the progress may appear inappreciable, judged from the starting point it may be vast.

When one hears the devoted temperance orator marshalling statistics and portraying the desolation wrought by the rum-devil, the whole nation seems rapidly being drowned in drink and the effect is depressing well nigh to the verge of hopelessness; on the other hand, when our oldest people tell us that in their youth whiskey was a part of the regular stock of all "general merchandise" stores, sold as uniformly as coffee and sugar, with no license, restriction or supervision; that prominent Presbyterian elders regularly manufactured it, and hauled it to town for sale as they now do bacon and flour; that it was much in evidence on the sideboard and table; that pious pastors in their visits had it offered without apology and were accustomed to drink it without scruple and sometimes without water—when we hear such things they seem to us incredible, almost. This fact is one measure of the advance of temperance sentiment within the compass of a single lifetime.

There has been a good deal said of late about the decline of scholarship in the Presbyterian ministry; some very strong statements have been made, and some rather severe indictments have been brought.

It is one thing to assert a low standard, and another to assert a decline of standard; moreover, a standard may be low absolutely which is not low relatively; a man, tried by an absolute standard, may be a very poor scholar, whereas

comparatively or relatively his scholarship may be highly creditable.

Once more ; as to the matter of a decline, the measure is still different, even a comparatively low standard is not necessarily a declining standard.

I have been connected with two Presbyteries only, and my term of ministerial service, is not a very long one, but during the whole of it in both Presbyteries I have been concerned in the examination of candidates, and my department has been that of the ancient languages, the Greek, the Latin and the Hebrew, just the field singled out by critics and by them stigmatized as most farcical.

Now, I do not undertake to speak for the whole church, but I do most solemnly affirm that constant and close observation, based upon numerous examinations in this very department, warrants the confident assertion that, so far from there having been a decline of scholarship, there has, on the contrary, been a decided elevation of the standard.

I can recall very distinctly the examination given me ; at that time the first two verses of Genesis seemed to be universally the passage selected for the Hebrew, and for Greek the corresponding verses in John's gospel. I wish to say that for four years or more I have not in a single instance assigned a candidate a passage for examination in either Greek or Hebrew without being first assured that he had never before read the passage.

As a matter of interest I append here the latest examinations I have given. The publication of the papers is an afterthought ; there was no idea of the sort in my mind at the time they were assigned, but I have been advised by several friends to publish them as a contribution to the discussion. Let the reader understand that the candidate had never before read either passage in the original and that he had the help of no lexicon, grammar or translation and signed the same pledge that colleges require appended to such papers :

HEBREW.

Judges 19:1-3 inclusive.

- I. A literal translation :
- II. Discuss :
 לְרַבֵּר ; וַתְּבִיאָהּוּ ; לְהִשְׁבִּיבוּ ; וַתִּלְקֶךְ ; בְּיַרְכָּתִי ; רָהֵם ; וַיְהִי
- III. Compare and distinguish אִשָּׁה in verse 1 and אִישָׁה in verse 3.
- IV. Inflect through tense occurring in text, omitting ו conversive : וַיִּרְאֶהוּ וַתִּזְנֶה ; וַיְהִי
- V. Analyze into component parts : לְקַרְאָתוֹ ; עַל-לִבָּהּ ; מֵאִפּוֹ ; וַיִּקְרָם ; וַיִּקְרָה ; וַיְהִי
- VI. Give complete synopsis (3rd pers. sing. only in Perf. and Imperf.) omitting ו conversive : וַיִּקְרָם ; וַיִּקְרָה ; וַיְהִי
- VII. GRAMMAR :
 1. Methegh ; definition and chief uses ?
 2. Daghesh-forte ; how many kinds, and chief uses ?
 3. Some discussion of tone-shifting.
 4. Number in nouns ; how many kinds of ? Illustrate formation of each in both Masc. and Fem.
 5. Construct Case : What is it ? Illustrate formation and use in both genders and in each number.
 6. Translate into Hebrew :
 - (1) And the Lord said unto Moses.
 - (2) And he called upon the name of the Lord.
 - (3) And he arose and went into the house of the Lord.

GREEK.

Mat. 14:1-5 inclusive.

- I. Translation.
- II. Discuss : ἐκέλευε, &c., κρατήσας, διὰ.
- III. Decline : παισίν, τούτο, γυναίκα, Ἡρώδης, Ἡρωδιάδα.
- IV. Syntax of : ἀκοήν, γυναίκα, ἔξεστι, σοι, ὡς.
- V. Principal parts of : ἤκουσεν, ἔθετο, ἔχεν, ἀποκτείνει.

- VI. Conjugate through tense occurring in text : *ἐνεργούσιν* and *ἔδησεν* and explain the accent in each word, taking some one form for illustration.
- VII. Etymology and meaning of *τετράρχης*.
- VIII. GRAMMAR :
1. How many declensions ? An example of each ?
 2. How many conjugations ? An example of each ? Which is older ?
 3. Difference in *significance* between : The 1st Aor. and 2nd Aor. ? between the 1st Aor. and Imperf. ?
 4. How many classes of contract verbs ? Give one example of each.
 5. Difference between *μη* and *οὐ*.
 6. How many ways of expressing purpose in Greek ?
 7. The forms of the conditional sentence ?
 8. Explain the syntax of the phrase : *ἐν τῷ τότε ἰδεῖν*.

I may add that six hours' work on the examination brought papers which "passed" very creditably. There is nothing in the examination that need worry a man who has been a faithful student, it was not designed for that purpose; but I humbly submit that few readers will call it farcical.

It is altogether likely that other Presbyteries are equally serious.

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