

name has long been known as "The Kingdom." It is within the memory of the younger men of the place when that church was filled each Sunday by people who came from miles around, and when a minister each Sunday discoursed sound orthodoxy from a pulpit perched high up against the wall on a level with the galleries. But in an evil hour doctrinal differences arose among the sturdy farmer members, coldness and apathy crept in, and the doors of the old meeting-house that had so mightily helped to train up four generations were closed. The next generation was allowed to go to the devil if it would; it does not see a religious service from one year's end to the other. The old church is now only a hollow, ghostly hulk, stripped of its pulpit, pews, and galleries by thieving neighbors for use as kindling-wood, and draped with cobwebs and dust. The wind moans through the shattered windows a perpetual note of ruin and decay.

Now what are the causes of these facts about the churches in the New England back towns and their decay and disappearance? Dr. W. C. Prime, in a recent article in the *New Princeton Review*, notes this religious stagnancy. He tells how, in his travels through these parts, he had happened upon many unused meeting-houses, and many more Sunday congregations spiritually dead and numerically dying. But he gives us no idea of the real trouble. He found one meeting-house mouldering because a row had broken up the society; he found one congregation filled with apathy and littleness chiefly because the preacher was possessed of the same qualities.

He draws no conclusions from the first case because he does not know what caused the row; he draws the broad conclusion from the second that the ministers are largely responsible for this declining piety. And perhaps they are, in great part. The avidity with which they have seized upon "special calls of God to go to larger fields of usefulness," where society and salary hold out also many allurements, has robbed those that are left behind of half their power with the country folk, and has lent a ridiculous aspect to their service in the cause of Christ. But all this does not begin to touch the root of the trouble. Blame rather the various denominations, professing the same Lord, charged with the same mission, and supposed to be imbued with the same spirit, who narrowly allow their own petty dogmatical differences to overshadow all, and by this persistent pulling in different directions deprive one another of great power for good and often swallow each other up. How many country towns there are hereabouts, only big enough to support one large aggressive church, where the Baptists and Congregationalists, by refusing to unite their forces for the one great object of redeeming the neighborhood, fall to the earth together or barely maintain an existence in littleness, weakness, and resulting coldness that redeem nothing. Cummington, Mass., the native place of William Cullen Bryant, possibly affords an example of this. Here live yet in quiet seclusion, undisturbed by the Roman Catholics, the descendants of the Puritans—comprising a thrifty and unusually busy community for one so far removed from railroads. The place is just big enough for one large aggressive church. It has two—Baptist and Congregationalist. But the dozen or more Baptists will no more affiliate with the other denomination than with Roman Catholics. They cannot afford preaching all the time, and so they go without it the most of the time. As far as the good of the community is concerned, they might much better burn the church and disband. But the Congregationalists also persist in keeping by themselves, and they too are weak and growing weaker. And by strangely persisting in this di-

vision of strength they are fast losing, if they have not already lost, all power as a Christianizing force in the community. The case of this Cummington Baptist Church came before the annual meeting of the Baptist Association for this region, held last month in this city. It was represented that the society was weak in numbers, in finances, and in spirit, and it needed prayer and sympathy and money, not apparently that the cause of Christ might the better be advanced—no mention was made of that—but "to place the society on an equal footing with the other denominations." Such was the grand object of this skeleton of a church, whose members had rather rattle the few dry bones that are left than to seek new life and power for good in a union with those who baptize by sprinkling. And instead of advising these dozen brethren to sacrifice a little irrelevant difference for the sake of the cause they pretended to represent, and to unite themselves heart and hand with the stronger Congregationalists in the work of reclaiming for Christ that neighborhood which sadly needs such work, the Association had the hat passed around and took up \$250, not to start them off in this aggressive coalition, but "to place them on an equal footing with other denominations," to enable them to pull a little more strongly in an opposite direction, that the two might the more equally fall together.

Thus has been uprooted of late in New England many a church society. The churches themselves have been very slow to recognize this fact. Only recently representatives of the Free Will Baptists and Congregationalists, mostly from Maine, met in Boston to see if some plan of union might not be agreed upon that their societies in the country towns might be saved from total extinction. The gathering reached no result, but it got upon the right road. In this direction lies the possible solution of at least a grave social problem.

THE AMERICAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY.

NEW YORK, October 29.

THE fall meeting of the American Oriental Society took place at New Haven on the afternoon of October 27, in the Yale Divinity School. It was held under circumstances to some extent depressing and dampening. Those who in the morning trudged through the town to see some of the sights of the ancient University must have been not a little drenched and dispirited. It was, therefore, the more reassuring when the Vice-President, Dr. Hayes Ward, called the meeting to order, to find the room comfortably filled by about twenty-five people, among whom several ladies were noticed. The Society was unpleasantly surprised to hear read a letter from Prof. Whitney, its time-honored President, in which he excused himself from attending on account of sickness; adding that he had not been compelled to do so (when in the country) in a period of thirty-eight years. After the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and the transaction of sundry other business, several interesting letters and communications were read, among them one from China on seven inscriptions containing magical prayers and formulas dating from the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and one from Mr. Protaba Chandra Roy of Calcutta, in relation to his publication, for gratuitous distribution, of the Indian classics, together with an English translation thereof. A letter was also read from Mr. Dodge of the Beirut Syrian-Protestant College, announcing the founding of an archaeological department for Arabic, etc., at that institution.

The first speaker of the day was Prof. Isaac H. Hall of the Metropolitan Museum in this city, on the Nestorian tablet found some two hundred and sixty years ago in China. The inscription dates from the year 781 A.D., and contains Chinese and

Syriac writing. Prof. Hall based his remarks on a new squeeze of the inscription, now the property of the Bible Society in New York, which sets at rest the doubts that have been expressed as to the names of the seventy teachers of the Gospel mentioned in the Syriac portion of the inscription. Prof. Hall then read a second paper on a copy of an old Syriac MS. recently received from the East, containing the chronicles of Mār Jau Allāhā and Rabban Saumā, General-Bishop. It gives an interesting account of the travels of these two Syrians, between the years 1288 and 1318. From a geographical point of view they must be of considerable importance, especially those of Rabban Saumā, who extended his journey to Rome (where he saw the Pope), Genoa, and Paris (where he visited the King of France). Prof. Hall remarked that these chronicles are held in high esteem by the Nestorians of our day, and exhibited several numbers of a periodical published at Urmiah (Persia), in which these travels have appeared, translated into modern Syriac.

Part of a lengthy communication from Mr. Jewett of Beirut and Cairo was next read by Prof. Toy of Harvard University, on a collection of Arabic proverbs made by himself among the natives. Not a few of them are witty, and show a keen insight into human relations, e. g., "The ass went to borrow horns and came back without ears," "Eat what suits you, and wear what suits other people," "A monkey is, in his mother's eyes, a gazelle," etc. A paper was presented from Prof. Bloomfield on two hymns in the Atharvaveda, which, although already published by Prof. Weber of Berlin, have been, until now, inadequately understood and translated. According to Prof. Bloomfield, the one (the first of the second book) treats of counter-incantations, the other (the 128th of the sixth book) is a hymn in praise of the weather prophet and weather maker.

The succeeding paper, by Prof. Hopkins of Bryn Mawr, was undoubtedly the most interesting of the day's series. It was entitled, "Woman in India as Portrayed in the Mahābhārata." Prof. Hopkins (who read only a part of his essay) advised a clear distinction between the earlier times and those portrayed in the Mahābhārata. In the former, girls had considerable freedom in India, but in the time of the Mahābhārata all this was changed. The character of woman as pictured in the earlier writings shows us a higher form than that which we gain from the Greek classics. The aphorisms in regard to women are complimentary, but quite otherwise in the later epic books. Prof. Hopkins is inclined to make, also, a topographical distinction. He finds that there were parts of India in which it was customary to buy women, but that an element coming from another part of the land worked against this custom. Women sometimes took part in war; and a mother had as absolute a control over her son, whom she could sell, as the father. Polyandry is unknown in India; but Prof. Hopkins adduced some cases of women marrying more than one man. In all these cases, however, the men were brothers. (This is the form of polyandry called by Mr. McLennan "Tibetan polyandry." Prof. Robertson Smith, in *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, p. 122, seq., has found traces of this custom elsewhere.)

Mr. A. B. W. Jackson of Columbia College read an essay on "The Similes from the Realms of Nature in the Avesta"; after which Prof. Hall spoke for the third time, on a Syriac calendar from Mardin, containing the feasts and fasts for the whole ecclesiastical year. The Society then listened to a paper by Gen. Carrington, U. S. A., on the integrity and harmony of the Bible in reference to the genealogical records it gives of the first inhabitants of the earth. The last two papers of the day were by Dr. Morris Jastrow, jr., of the University of Pennsylvania, on an As-

syrian name būdû-él, which Dr. Jastrow has found not to be the equivalent of the Biblical Pedahel, as is generally accepted, but to stand for ēbed-él; and on the results to be obtained for the science of Assyriology from a study of the Samaritan language. The lateness of the hour prevented the Society from hearing the whole of this last paper, which opened up quite new fields of research. The Society then adjourned to meet in Boston on the second Wednesday of May next.

In the evening the members of the Society were entertained at a reception tendered them by President Dwight of Yale University, at which Oriental philology was laid aside for a pleasant hour of social intercourse.

RICHARD J. H. GOTTHEIL.

LONDON LITERARY GOSSIP.

LONDON, October 21.

For the moment, politics are in a state of expectancy. What will the Unionist-Liberals do with the Government? What will Lord Randolph do with his programme? What will Lord Salisbury do with Lord Randolph? What will the Czar do with Bulgaria? What will the Lord Mayor and the city police do with the Socialist demonstration? These are questions which politicians are more or less indolently asking, and for which they are content to wait for an answer from time. In default of graver matters, gossip has occupied itself with a silly canard and a great scandal. The silly canard is the fabricated home-rule scheme of the Government, borrowed, it is said, from Mr. Chamberlain, and assented to by Lord Hartington, of four Provincial Councils for Ireland. The scheme is not Mr. Chamberlain's, and Lord Hartington never assented to it, for the simple reason that the Government never entertained it, still less submitted it to him. Mr. Chamberlain's scheme, which was considered in Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet, last but one, proposed a single National Council for Ireland. It was rejected by one vote, in which Lord Hartington, with all the peers in the Cabinet, were the majority; Mr. Gladstone, with the remainder of his colleagues, all commoners, forming the minority. The scandal is the unauthorized publication of Lord Charles Beresford's somewhat alarming memorandum on the subject of the navy. A former theft was traced, I am told, to a single room in the Admiralty occupied by fewer than half-a-dozen persons. It is now believed that inquiry has still further narrowed the circle of possible guilt, and that a hand will presently be put on the shoulder of the offender. These breaches of confidence have been discreditably frequent under successive governments. Some of the great public offices—especially the Treasury, the Foreign Office, the War Office, and the Admiralty—are "clerked," if I may use the expression, by young men of birth and fashion, much in request in society, of small incomes and large expenditure. Their salaries must be supplemented somehow or other, and there are newspapers to buy what they have to sell. Such, at any rate, is the current explanation of a too frequent phenomenon.

While politics are dull or scandalous—two things which may go together—literature is meanwhile showing signs of activity and even of combativeness. The two great quarterlies, as it is still the fashion to call the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* proper, have long since ceased to be powers in criticism. Mr. Disraeli compared them, at a period when they were vying with each other in opposition to reform, to the boots and chambermaid of rival posting houses, who, hating each other, yet expressed the common dislike of the Blue Boar and the Red

Lion to railways. An eminent poet, fortunately still living, was the proud possessor of two tame geese, unhappily dead, whom he named *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly*—injurious nicknames, he used to explain, inasmuch as the birds turned out to be quite intelligent creatures. This was irreverent jesting. There is still, no doubt, a good deal of admirable writing in these two periodicals, but as regards political discussion and literary criticism, they are in some degree superseded by the daily, weekly, and monthly press, and as regards essays, properly so called, by such works as the biographies and monographs contained in series like those edited by Mr. John Morley, Mr. Andrew Lang, and others. Just now, however, the *Quarterly* has succeeded in getting itself talked about in the old fashion. The article in the current number, on Mr. Edmond Gosse's lectures on "English Literature from Shakspeare to Pope," recalls after its fashion the old slashing days, when the mind of Keats, "that fiery particle," allowed itself to be snuffed out by an article; when a Scotch reviewer unwittingly made the literary fortune of an English bard, afterwards known as Lord Byron, and when Gifford and Hookham Frere and others waged war with the Cockney and Lake schools, in the persons of Leigh Hunt, Charles Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.

If the accusations made against Mr. Gosse are true, he is convicted of a degree of ignorance and effrontery, of an ignorance not nakedly displaying itself, but dressing itself up with a false assumption of knowledge, which makes his book an offence against morals as well as against Literature and scholarship. In a hasty compilation, got together by a Grub Street hack on starvation wages, at the bidding of some Curll of the trade, the blunders attributed to Mr. Gosse would be heinous. But Mr. Gosse is not a book-seller's hack. He is the Clarke Reader in English literature in Trinity College, Cambridge. He succeeded in that post Mr. Leslie Stephen, one of the most thorough and self-exacting of English scholars and thinkers. It is Mr. Gosse's province as a College Reader, not simply to amuse with entertaining discourse those who come to him, but to give them an example of conscientious and scrupulous research, and of sober and well-considered criticism. If the *Quarterly Review* be correct, Mr. Gosse is so ignorant of the chronology of English literature as to be necessarily an incompetent judge of its growth and development, and cannot have even seen some of the great works which he affects to criticise, for he thinks that the "Arcadia" of Sidney and "Oceana" of Harrington are poems. Mr. Gosse, as the police reports say, reserves his defence, protesting that he has a perfect answer to the case against him, and may be considered as at present under remand.*

The writer of the article in the *Quarterly Review*, which has been erroneously attributed to Mr. Alfred Austen, is understood to be Mr. J. Churton Collins, the author of some essays on Bolingbroke and Voltaire which have recently been reprinted in a separate volume from the *Quarterly Review*. Mr. Murray, almost alone among the great publishing houses in London, has certain writers who may be said to belong to his staff of authors, and who are ready, on conditions honorable to themselves and liberal on his part, to undertake book work for him as others undertake newspaper work or magazine work. Mr. Churton Collins began his career in London as a tutor in one of those great cramming institutions which the system of army, civil service, and Indian examinations has called into existence to supplement or supersede

the university. In his indignation against Mr. Gosse there is something of the virtuous anger of the crammer with a man who has got up his subject insufficiently; and in his attacks on the daily and weekly critics who have praised Mr. Gosse's book, there is a flavor of the contempt which in other days he may have felt for civil-service examiners who allowed an impostor to scrape through. But Mr. Collins, in doing justice to an individual offender, claims credit for striking at a vicious system. There is a venal "ring," he asserts, in the literary world, a mutual selling of praise among a fraternity of writers who alternate the character of authors and of critics, and who review each other on the "claw me, claw thee" system. The accusation is based upon the notoriety of personal friendships and of literary and journalistic association; but I do not believe that it has any other basis. There is, of course, a certain amount of human nature even in critics, and a Brutus-like impartiality is not always to be expected. But, as a rule, personal friends are not allowed to review each other's books; and at the worst, the state of things is better than that which prevailed at the beginning of the century, when the tomahawk and the scalping-knife were the instruments of criticism, when Maginn and Christopher North could not acknowledge good poetry or even reputable morality in an antagonist, not to go back to an earlier period; when, as Prior, I think, says, an author's change of political opinion deprived a second edition of a volume of poems of merits which the first possessed.

Among works which are looked forward to with some interest just now, the promised 'Letters of Mr. Abraham Hayward' hold a conspicuous place. They are not likely to go over the same ground as that covered by the Greville memoirs. Mr. Charles Greville, as Clerk of the Council, was thrown into the political society of both parties, and, as a man of birth and of the world, was intimate with Whig and Tory leaders, was often their confidant, and more frequently perhaps their rather obtrusive and fussy adviser. Now and then, no doubt, he had disagreeable encounters and had to submit to rude rebuffs, as when the late Lord Derby, probably the most wantonly insolent man of modern society, explained a failure to recognize him outside the Council Chamber on the plea that no one could be expected to remember the face of the footman who opens the door to him. Some of his (Greville's) personal and political criticisms bear traces of incidents such as this.

Mr. Abraham Hayward, though he took sides in politics, was a man of letters and of society rather than of politics. If the word could be deprived, as I fear it cannot, of its dishonorable connotation, he might best be described as a parasite. He was an upright parasite. He was a 'diner-out' in town, an invited entertainer at the great country houses, where, in the fashionable intelligence, he counted among the entertained. He purchased admission into the society of well-born and wealthy persons, of great ladies and great nobles, by cultivating the faculty of conversation and anecdote. He did not make any unworthy concessions. He neither servilely flattered nor basely reviled. But he liked the graces and cultivated manners of well-born persons, the combined simplicity and dignity of the country life of the hall and castle, the access to people who knew things at first hand; and he paid for the right of entry by interesting and amusing his hosts and fellow-guests. His writings, which were chiefly those of comment and anecdote, were in a certain sense parasitical like himself. His life-long feud with Mr. Disraeli dated from a very early period of their careers.

* Mr. Gosse's answer may be read in the *Athenæum* of October 23.—ED. NATION.