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OUR VIRGINIA CORRESPONDENCE.

BY REV. JOHN E. EDWARDS, D. D.
CENTRE CAMP-GROUND.

In recalling some of the incidents connected with my early life, in North Carolina, I recur to the camp-meetings I attended in my boyhood at the old Centre camp-ground in Guilford county. The first camp was on the North side of the Reedy Fork, and not far from where Centre Church stood fifty years ago. At a later period the camp was established at a point South of the Reedy Fork, and within two or three miles of old Martinsville. I go back to camp-meetings, held full fifty-five years ago, at the old camp-ground. This camp was near a Brother Shelton's, and at a distance of a half a mile or so, East of the main road running Northward from old Martinsville, and, as before stated, a mile or two North of the Reedy Fork. There is scarcely anything of which I have a more vivid recollection than of this first camp-meeting I attended in my boyhood. In the days there was far more of excitement in the way of shouting, connected with violent muscular exercises, and boisterous demonstration than is witnessed, among the Methodists, in these latter days. There is no exaggeration in saying that there was a prevalent notion that shouting was the mark of conversion, and that it was the sign and expression of a high state of religious enjoyment. Anything short of the shouting point marked a comparatively low state of experimental religion. To such an extent did this notion prevail that a heavy discount was put upon a profession of religion that was not attended by shouting. Some of the best and most exemplary Christians I ever knew, in those old times, were often in unutterable distress, and were led seriously to question their conversion because they did not, and could not shout, as they saw others do. This is no overstatement of the case.

INTERESTING INCIDENTS.

There is scarcely anything connected with my recollections of the first camp-meeting that I attended that interested me more than the religious exercises of two very handsome, and tastefully dressed young ladies. They were from Virginia, and their names are still remembered, but are not material to this reminiscence. At the close of nearly every sermon, when the invitation hymn was sung, and the penitents were called forward to the "altar," these two young ladies, in their religious ecstasies, would get up, each on a bench, and trip from end to end on it, singing, and praising God—shouting, and exhorting the people. Their faces were radiant with joy. Their voices were sweet and soft, and the effect of their tender appeals and entreaties to sinners to fly to Jesus for refuge were perfectly thrilling. Tear bedewed faces were around them, and many were led to seek the Savior by their appeals, and by the happiness which religion seemed to afford them. These exercises interested me more than the sermons.

A notable case of quite another sort is still remembered by me. It was ludicrous in the extreme. The times tolerated much in those days that would be strongly reprobated now. Even then the case to which I allude was deemed extravagant, if not inexcusable. There was a young man at this meeting who was very warm in his first love. He afterwards became a preacher, and I could give his name, but this is not necessary. Under his religious excitement, he would shout and tumble on the ground, until he was perfectly exhausted by his "bodily exercise." As ridiculous as it may seem, it is nevertheless true—he wore a loose, calico gown, made in the simplest, conceivable style. On the occasion to which I now refer, he was jumping, "and leaping and praising God." In one of his ground tumbles he got the back skirt of his long gown over his head, and by an unfortunate mishap he got his feet upon it; and the texture being thin and frail, it required but little pressure to pop his head through the back, and through it came. It would be difficult to describe the grotesque and comical figure the young man cut in this laughable plight. Nothing abashed he continued his exercises, to the no small amusement of "the uncircumcised in heart and lips." The scene was funny enough to shake the sides of the most devout old saint on the ground. Now, I sincerely hope that nobody will be pained by the record of these incidents, which occurred more than fifty-five years ago. The

actors, most probably, are all safe "over in the promised land."

NEW CENTRE CAMP-GROUND.

Hallowed memories linger around the New Centre camp-ground. That was located, as before intimated, two or three miles farther South, directly on the West side of the road, between old Martinsville, and the Reedy Fork. In all probability the ground where the camp stood—there in the woods—has long since been cleared and tilled, and may now be—most probably is—a broom-grass old field, turned out to waste, if not covered with the inevitable growth of old field pines. At this camp-ground I first saw the Rev. Thomas S. Campbell, then a young man, and I remember to this day the text on which I heard him preach on that camp-ground in 1833, now nearly fifty years ago. At that meeting I saw for the first time the Rev. Alfred Norman, then a vigorous, strong young man—that year, on the Randolph Circuit. He was a perfect thunder bolt in the pulpit, and was singularly gifted in prayer. At that camp-ground I was converted, at a meeting held in September 1832. The spot is sacred to my memory. The Rev. Peter Doub was Presiding Elder in 1832, and I was consciously converted while he was preaching. The Rev. Stephen Winburne, of blessed memory, was also at that meeting. The preachers are gone, but the work abides.

ABIDING FRUITS.

Who can tell the good that resulted from these camp-meetings at Centre camp-ground? How many were converted at these meetings who became preachers? Who can tell? A young man by the name of John Duncan was converted at the meeting held at Centre camp in 1833. He went to Georgia—entered the ministry—became a member of the Georgia Conference—was a great singer—a good preacher—greatly beloved—was instrumental in the conversion of many souls—became blind, and died only a little more than a year ago, and went singing to glory. In the writing up, at the last, it will be said, "this, and that man was born here." Speaking of John Duncan I am reminded of the circumstances connected with his conversion. They have never been recorded. I saw a notice of his death, with a short biographical sketch, in the Wesleyan Advocate last year, which was at fault in several particulars. At the time of his conversion, young Duncan was studying law with Mr. James Morehead, in Greensboro. He was one of the most profane and godless young men I ever knew. He came to the camp-meeting on Sunday. He was dressed in a suit of faultless white linen. The last thing that occurred to John Duncan's mind in coming to the meeting was his own conversion. His mother lived a short distance from the camp, and he came expecting to remain over Sunday night. He became interested on the subject of religion, evidently contrary to his own expectations. Sunday night he went up to be prayed for. The weather was hot. He roiled and agonized as if he were in the clutch of a demon. Late at night he was powerfully converted. His linen suit was in sad plight. But he rejoiced and praised God after the old Methodist fashion. In his transports he said: "let us pray." He got on his knees, and finding he did not know how to pray, he looked around, and seeing a Christian gentleman whom he recognized, he said: "Mr. Donald, pray for us." Two or three of us took him to a tent to change his clothes, which were not presentable; and, shall I say it? Still rejoicing in his happy conversion, he said: "I'll be—boys, if I ever felt as happy before in my life." He, of course, was not aware of having used a word of terrible profanity. But, if anybody in this world was ever soundly converted, John Duncan was; and his whole after life proved it.

John Duncan and I commenced holding meetings together at private houses in the country. I was still at school. One night we had a meeting at Mrs. Lamar's, about three miles from Greensboro. I was late getting to the meeting, having to ride about five miles after getting home from school. When I reached the meeting John Duncan was preaching—his subject was the divinity of Christ, and he was descending learnedly on the Divine Logos, when I entered. He stopped suddenly, and said: "Here is brother John Edwards, and he knows more

about the subject than I do." The reader will excuse this rambling reference to John Duncan. But it came up from what I was saying about the fruits of camp-meetings.

As I look back, to-night, over the lapse of fifty years, intervening objects and events seem to stand aside, and lose themselves in the back ground, and Centre camp-meeting comes out as the one object that fills the contracting angle of vision, away back on the verge of my boyhood. I hear again, or seem to hear, the old songs that rang out in the tented grove. Bright faces peer amid the flickering lights. The prayers of penitence, and the shouts of rapture, salute the ear. Days and nights pass by. Tents are stuck; the camp fires smoulder into ashes; the worshippers disperse, and silence comes over the deserted grounds. But who can gather up and gauge the influences for good that have gone out far and wide from that voiceless spot in the silent woods? The actors are dead; the ploughshare has been driven over the sacred soil, but the moral influences, like Autumn seeds, carried afar by the passing winds, still live, and are to-day bringing "fruits after their kind."

Petersburg, Va., Feb. 15th, 1883.

FOR THE ADVOCATE.

LETTER FROM BISHOP WILSON.

The weather amply sustains the claims of the ground hog. Two weeks have passed since the glory of the sun for a few hours made glad the eyes and hearts that had grown weary of cloud and storm, and in that fortnight not a cloudless day has been granted. A few, faint glimmerings, through a translucent medium, a few starlit nights, a pale moon, with its storm-portending circle, and, for the rest, rain, snow, hail, sleet, gloom and all the other repressive and oppressive agencies and conditions of nature. Our Western neighbors have suffered largely from excess of rains. Damage done in Ohio and Kentucky and elsewhere are reported. There have been destruction of property, distress and loss of life. There is fear of increase of the floods, as the rains continue, and heavy additions to the losses already incurred. It is comforting to us who believe the old Book to know that the earth shall no more be destroyed by deluge. The God of the covenant is indeed, the only "refuge and strength," of man, confronted by these terrible, destructive, resistless forces. If we come not into the covenant with Him, then we may look out for the fires.

I was invited the other day into the parlor of a parsonage in Virginia and, accepting the invitation, forced myself in the midst of about thirty children, gathered for Missionary purposes. It was not a public enterprise, not a Sunday-school Society: it was simply a voluntary association of little ones called by the preacher's wife, under pressure of her longing to do something for Missions and for the children. The children earn their money and bring it every Saturday afternoon to the parsonage. Some of them have recitations, in prose or poetry, to make at each meeting, all of them sing some Missionary hymn, accompanied by the organ, and have pleasant, informal talk with their leader and then go off for another week's endeavor. I had some quiet chat with them—did not make a speech—shook the hand of each one and left them to the wiser care and guidance of that faithful Christian, woman. That little band has sent twenty-five dollars to Dr. Allen's College, after some two or three months of work, and have some more in hand.

In connection with this, two things may be said—neither of them new, but both worth repeating. First, how much the children are doing and what a blessed training they are receiving through these Missionary Associations. The amount they bring into the Missionary Treasury is wonderful, considering that they have not the capital of the country at their command and have not "pin money" and "market money" to save from. The withdrawal of the supplies from that source would, I imagine, be an appreciable loss to the foreign work. It is a capital feature of the children's work that they should furnish funds, earned in some way by themselves. Let them offer that which costs them something. There are many things that a boy, or girl, can do to earn a few cents and by the labor he acquires a conscious right of property which makes it worth more to

him than the careless gifts of parents or friends. To give his own, his own by right of labor, is sacrifice. Train the children to do this and in another generation the miserable, obstructive and destructive avarice of the present will give way to a true Christian liberality which will make possible to the Church undertakings that now seem visionary and impracticable. The other remark I proposed in this connection is that a good woman can do immense good if she should happen to be too modest to make a public appearance. My friend, this pastor's wife can not be induced to make a speech on any platform; she will not debate, nor lift up her voice in the streets; but she is as true to her Lord as any other and, does what she can. In truth, that sort of quiet, unostentatious discharge of the duty lying nearest at hand is characteristic of that household and there are few more successful, or influential men than he, few more useful, devoted women than she. They never fail in any station. It is a house which the Lord blesses.

Many women, on a larger or smaller scale, can imitate her. They can find children, more, or less, in their neighborhoods, bring them together, teach them about missions and how to help them, read to them, sing with them—in short, bring them up, as far as Missions are concerned, in the way they should go. The women ought to do this. They are the proper guides and instructors of the children. Let them set about it everywhere as they have opportunity, and we shall soon have a good report from them.

I am glad to see that the Life of Bishop Andrew, by Rev. G. G. Smith, is well received and circulating widely. It must have been a keen delight to search through the records of such a life and follow it in its development and course to the blessed issue. The work is lovingly done and with much tact. Those who knew the venerable man only in his closing years of life will find a deep interest in tracing the attractive and endearing traits, which were to him through the earlier periods of his history. It was a stormy life with a broad and deep basis of unbroken peace. All Southern Methodists ought to read the book; and it will not hurt others. The preachers in these parts are preparing for Conference. The old Baltimore will meet on the 14th of March at Charlestown, W. Va. It is a vigorous body, doing good work under heavy pressure. There are indications of a good return for labor bestowed in all the Districts. In some localities there is still a remnant of the old vexation. Some of our brethren of the other part are not willing to submit to the adjudications of the Cape May Commission and threaten our people with lawsuits and annoy them. Not content with this, they bring false accusations against them, charging them with aggression in this line. I am glad to say that in no single instance have any of ours attempted directly, or indirectly, to disturb the settlement made by the commission at Cape May. I suppose offences of that sort will come until humanity shall, in the resurrection, be reconstituted; but the Church ought not to harbor the offenders. On the whole we live in peace and the word of God grows and prevails.

We may all indorse Bishop Pierce's call for a general revival—a revival in every charge. That is the best antidote to all our evils and a sure guarantee of prosperity. May the Lord revive his work.

A. W. WILSON.

Baltimore, Md.

REVIVAL PREACHING.

How shall we preach to promote revivals? We would answer, preach clearly, directly and earnestly the saving truths of the Gospel.

Preach repentance. Don't preach about repentance, to analyze it as an intellectual or moral process, to consider it abstractly. But preach that men ought to repent; that they must repent or perish, that the duty is imperative and the time is short. Seek to help sinners to repent by showing them the dreadful character and results of sin, and the goodness of God, which sin despises and insults, and so arouse the feelings that aid repentance. Preach faith as you preach repentance. Peter made short work of it at Pentecost. He did not talk about the philosophy of faith, but urged its immediate exercise. He exhorted the people, saying, "Save yourselves from this unto-

ward generation." They knew the way of salvation. He urged them to immediate action. The men who claim to be in doubt and confusion in regard to the very way of life do not need argument. They saw the way when they were children; they understood it then. Their doubts have arisen under our constant preaching, but they have arisen from neglect of duty, neglect of salvation. The bewilderment of the mind has come from the death of the soul, the moral nature is becoming deadened, and ceasing more and more to respond to the Divine truth. Urge those to act who feel and confess that they ought to act. It is sheer neglect to do what men are convinced that at last leads to doubt and darkness, when God has taken away the light which they will not follow.

Do not suppose that revival preaching should be different from preaching on ordinary occasions. Revivals are not to be promoted by special arrangements, a change of programme, studied manipulation. A certain writer has said, "Some churches revive only when they are stirred up. The life of their members is a menagerie life. They are kept caged for exhibition when they would like to be roaming in lawlessness. There they lie, all nerveless, listless and forlorn, until some gay-robed exhibitor, some fancy preacher, steps jauntily into the ring to stir them up; and then the dismal spot resounds with dismal life, and this they call a revival." But the stirring up of a church is no revival, and the preacher that needs to change the manner of his preaching and his work in ordinary to promote a revival in his church, is but stirring up. He may be a shrewd manipulator; he is no revivalist. A change in the manner of preaching may be very essential, but that change will have to represent the work of God's Spirit in the preacher's heart, and not a mere temporal expedient. There may be much good revival preaching and no manifest revival. All true, faithful preaching, presenting God's saving truth earnestly and lovingly, and with faith in God for his blessing, is revival preaching, and no true minister of the Gospel ought to find it necessary to change his preaching, or call in other aid to promote a revival.—South-western Methodist.

CLERICAL INFLUENCE.

The following selection from a lecture of Professor Austin Phelps will be relished by many who may not have the privilege of reading in his most suggestive and instructive volume, "The Theory of Preaching":

"Real power in a clergyman is essentially solemn and affectionate. Those elements in a man's ministry which appeal to conscience and the sense of kindness are the chief sources of the strength of his pulpit. Without these he may gain notoriety, but not influence. Such influence as he may seem to gain is not clerical in its nature. Therefore, to him it is worse than none. A man who establishes a reputation for personality, oddity, or buffoonery in the pulpit, does just so much against his reputation, and therefore against his usefulness as a Christian preacher. He establishes a kind of influence of which he cannot but feel ashamed when he is clothed and in his right mind and begins to aim at the conversion of souls. By his buffoonery he has done a work which he must undo, before he can successfully approach men who are inquiring what they must do to be saved, or men who are in affliction, or men who are on a death-bed. Yet these are among the classes of our congregations whose instincts about a preacher are the most unerring test of his clerical influence. It is a curse to a minister to have a reputation, founded on qualities which are repellant to the sympathies of such minds. No preacher can afford to support the reputation of having more grit than grace. A clergyman was once settled in one of our cities of whom an intelligent lawyer, not a Christian, used substantially this language: 'I admire my pastor. He is a tingling preacher, witty, eloquent, severe. He is not afraid of a laugh in his audience. I am willing to pay largely to sustain him, and so are we all. But if I were in affliction, or were about to die, he is the last man I should then want to see.' Such a criticism, if well founded, should annihilate a pastor. What must the Savior think of him? We cannot too earnestly remind ourselves that clerical influence may easily be sacrificed to clerical notoriety. And no two things are more unlike."