

The Christian Sun.

IN ESSENTIALS—UNITY, IN NON-ESSENTIALS—LIBERTY, IN ALL THINGS—CHARITY.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT.

The Public Schools.—About this time of year, to quote the Almanac, the public schools open. And in this great Nation there is no grander boon or blessing to the people than the free schools. They have done more to enlighten the men and women, and elevate the masses, who have made this nation, than any other single agency. God bless our public schools—the very back bone of our mighty race, the invincible bulwark of a glorious Republic. In no place is education among the great masses of as much weight and worth as in a republic, and the free school is the beginning, the foundation, the bed rock of our educational system. Much more, in this general way, might be said, but a word in particular.

No human system, order or institution is perfect. And the easiest thing in this world is criticism, fault finding. Any sap head can find fault with the wisdom of Solomon. So, very, very easily can parents find fault with the free schools. The committee may not have elected the right teacher; the teacher's methods may not be exactly in keeping with the advanced (?) views of some parents; the school is not strict enough, or too strict; some children go that some parents do not wish their children to associate with: therefore—oh, the fatality and the tragedy in that "therefore"—we will keep our children at home this session. Thus from the prejudice, ill-will or easy criticism of parents the children are to be deprived of a boon and blessing which the State has provided. More than that, deprived of a divine right that almighty God has conferred. In this free land where citizenship has worth, and responsibility, every child has the heavenly and holy right to such education, instruction and enlightenment as the State provides and as will fit that child to meet the obligations of citizenship.

Parents, it is worth your while to think on these things before deciding to keep John and Mary at home out of school this session. At least send them to school till they learn what they are in the world for—and in this mighty Republic for, and their business and place in this noble Commonwealth. This is your duty to John and Mary and to Almighty God.

A War on Paper.—When Japan and the United States, or rather certain citizens of those two countries, had a little dispute some months ago about Japanese children not being admitted to the public schools in San Francisco, there was a mighty cry, from a few yellow journals, that Japan was in a frame of mind to fight, and that the dogs of war would soon be loosed on our Pacific coast. These journals worked themselves into a state of frenzy over the awful and threatening situation. And by their conduct they tried to produce that which their wild imaginations had led them into, a war between Japan and the United States. It was folly and nonsense, but much damage was done—damage is always done when there is sensation over nothing and glaring falsehoods are flaunted far and near. It was a silly, sickening proceeding.

We wonder now what these inflammatory journals think when they see these words of Prince Ito, the most eminent and influential of all Japanese statesmen and leaders, uttered by him a few days since, "America is our friend and we are the friend of America. The recent talk of war finds no support among the statesmen of Japan or the United States. War between these two countries is unspeakable and impossible." This war talk was on paper—yellow, very yellow paper, and was only a battle for sensation and dollars. Pity and contempt for such journalism.

"A Chance For Service."—Those who look for office in our day as "a chance for ser-

vice" are, we fear, discouragingly few and far between. There are those without number who look for the office; but looking for it as an opportunity for service is another question. President Roosevelt was called upon to speak at the laying of the corner stone of the Episcopal Cathedral in Washington. There were just three paragraphs in his address, one of which is good for every citizen in this land:

"I have to say but one word of greeting to you today and wish you godspeed in the work begun this noon. The salutation is to be given by our guest, the Bishop of London, who has a right to speak to us because he has shown in his life that he treats high office as high office should alone be treated, either in Church or State, and above all in a democracy such as ours is—simply as a chance to render service. If office is accepted by any man for its own sake and because of the honor it is felt to confer he accepts it to his own harm and to the infinite harm of those whom he ought to serve. Its sole value comes in the State, but above all its sole value comes in the Church, if it is seized by the man who holds it as giving the chance to do more useful work for the people whom he serves."

*A DESTRUCTIVE CRITIC OF 2907.

(To the Reader of 1907.

Dear Brother: Although interested in the able writings of the higher critics of 1907, especially in their assumption of having discovered something valuable, as if the "historical method" were new in studying the Bible, I confess I became somewhat drowsy under their monotonous efforts to make the sacred writings seem to abound in misstatements. But I gradually absorbed their genius and spirit, and seemed to become a destructive critic, though calling myself a higher critic.

While in this state of mind, sleepy though I was, I seemed to live rapidly through the centuries, century after century, until I found myself moving among scholars who dated their letters with the numerals, 2, 9, 0, 7.

On seeming to be roused from a semi-consciousness, and supposing that a thousand years had passed from the time I fell asleep under the dreary chanting about the mistakes of the Bible, I seemed to be walking among the fancied alcoves of my library, now increased by the additions of a thousand years, and coming across the following correspondence I give you the letters, believing that it may be interesting to the reader to observe how the reasoning of the future destructive critic (writing in 2907 of our times in the spirit in which the destructive critic of 1907 writes of Bible times) will make the conditions of our generation to appear.

If we of the year 1907 know something of the conclusions of the learned gentleman of 2907 to be false, whose letters I now reveal, or if his modes of reasoning are absurd, or if he lays stress on insufficient data in his logic, or, especially, if he is ludicrously given to denying the statements of eye-witnesses to the facts which we of our time know to be true, these faults must not be attributed to me: for I copy the letters and publish them exactly as I found them a thousand years before they were written.

J. J. Summerbell.)

Dayton, Ohio.

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ELEVENTH LETTER.

Kinkade, New Zealand, 15, 12, 2907.

My Dear Grandson:

I wish to warn you against an impertinent review of my great book on "Jonah and the Whale." You remember that in that immortal work, consisting of sixteen octavo volumes, I distinctively proved that a whale cannot swallow a man; and therefore we must regard the book of the Bible relating the story of Jonah, as a fable or parable.

But my impertinent reviewer was so ungentlemanly as not to recognize my enormous labor, and to imply in his very opening sentences that I am not candid in the spirit of my book; since the book of Jonah does not say that a whale swallowed Jonah, but that the Lord "prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah." And the impudent young man went on to demonstrate that my work was entirely valueless unless I proved that God could not, or would not, or did not prepare such a fish. He also said I bragged incessantly about the

learning of the higher critics; and I ought to know that (scientifically) the whale was not a fish. And he pointed out that in the New Testament, where the translation makes Jesus to speak of "the whale," the original only means sea monster. And the early Christians knew better than to picture Jonah as having experience with a whale: for in the catacombs at Rome, the monster was painted as a dragon. And so on he cut my book to pieces; although I was criticising the Bible.

I was so indignant at the review, that on meeting the young man, an editor of a prominent paper in Kinkade, I sharply rebuked him for his impertinence. I told him he had no right to criticise my book; and that no learned man would read it without accepting its conclusions. He said, "Do you claim to be pope of New Zealand?"

"No," said I; "but I know that God did not prepare a great fish to swallow Jonah."

He replied, "You cannot know that: for you were not there."

I said, "How do you know that I was not there?"

That confounded him: for he is a much younger man than I am. I went on, as he was silent, staring at me, "I cannot believe that God could, or would, or did prepare a great fish to swallow Jonah."

The impudent young fellow promptly replied, "No; you cannot believe in the power of God, or his will at times to stretch forth his hand in the universe; but if some critic should return from the ruins of Nineveh, and say that he had seen, on some tablet or wall discovered in the present excavations there, a statement that some rich men had (eight centuries before Christ) tamed whales, and run a regular passenger line of barges towed by whales between Joppa and Tarshish, you would believe that, wouldn't you; especially if they should produce a time table and regular schedule of rates for carrying nobility, common people and prophets?"

To this I hardly knew what to reply: for he was an editor, and I suspected that he had some late news of the last expedition to Nineveh. So I cautiously replied, "Yes; I could believe that."

Then the crowd laughed. That seemed to encourage the young man, and he burst out with the most extravagant abuse I ever received:

"Dr. Critic, you are too old a man to be such a fool. In the book of Jonah, as it is in the Bible, you put all the emphasis on a whale that is not there. You ignore the sweet intimacy of a great prophet with God (an intimacy permitting him to act like a spoiled child with his father); you ignore the tenderness of the infinite Father to him, while yet he holds his child to high and tremendous service; you ignore the plain teaching of the book that this petted child-prophet must do exactly as God commands. You cannot see all those things; but you see a whale that is not there. You ignore what the book of Jonah tells of the compassion of God toward the people of Nineveh, by reversing his own prediction of the destruction of the city; a picture of sweet mercy and forgiveness when the people repent; a beautiful picture of the fatherhood of God. You cannot see that; but you see a whale that is not there. I tell you, Dr. Critic, there is a miracle in the very book of Jonah, greater than the swallowing of a prophet by a monster of the sea. The book itself is a miracle. How did any writer of that age (eight hundred years before Christ) have such lofty conceptions of the infinite tenderness and sweetness of the heavenly Father, unless his own spiritual truthfulness had been so lofty as to put him into such close touch with God as to make him incapable of telling a lie? Jesus had not yet come to the world. And even after Jesus had come, even Peter, one of his most intimate disciples, could not believe (in that age of general Greek and Roman culture) that God was not a respecter of persons, and that God would forgive sinners outside of Israel, until God gave him the vision of the sheet let down from heaven. Yet here in the book of Jonah we see a picture of God's rebuking Jonah for wishing the destruction of a repentant city; pointing out the existence in it of more than 120,000 chil-

dren, who ought to have a chance of life. Remember the age, the period, Dr. Critic. You are forever telling about the progress of man, his evolution. And your grandson has been telling me how you have proved the advance of our age over the conditions in 1907. Remember the time of Jonah; it was thousands of years before our day; and before 1907. It was an age of cruelty, of revenge. The city of Nineveh was an enemy of Israel. Who put the sweet doctrine of forgiveness into the book of Jonah? Jonah would not, unless truthful: for the book humiliates him. The book is a miracle, greater than would be the swallowing of a man by a great fish. Its spiritual doctrine is as that of the Lord's prayer. Why do you not believe it?"

I hardly knew what to say; but I replied, "It's the swallowing, that swallowing."

He replied, "You swallow greater humbugs than would be the swallowing of Jonah even by a whale. For you swallow a whale manufactured by yourself. I believe that God could prepare a whale that could swallow a greater man than you are. But you swallow all kinds of theories to do away with the plain meaning of the Scriptures. Now suppose I were to inform you that Dr. Noetaul the younger, Dr. Maximus Noetaul, had just discovered an old tablet at Nineveh containing the history of Jonah, except that the 'great fish' is there pictured as a swift Phoenician galley of that name, and the 'vomiting' is pictured as a swinging shoreward of the prophet by a machine. Would you believe that?"

I then was almost sure that the editor had some late news of the expedition to Nineveh, and I said, "Yes; if Dr. Maximus Noetaul says that, I would believe the whole story. But tell me, Mr. Ignorance, do you believe that a 'great fish' swallowed Jonah, as the Scriptures teach?"

Like a flash he replied, "Yes, I do. And let me suppose something. You are all the time framing theories to upset the statements of the Bible: let me suppose something: Suppose the Bible account to be true. Suppose that the 'great fish' swam from the Mediterranean with all the velocity of a great shark, for three days and nights, until near the southeastern shore of the Euxine Sea he vomited the prophet forth on dry ground, in the full sight of a great caravan journeying to Nineveh. Suppose the people of the caravan to welcome him to their protection, on seeing the act of the sea monster and hearing Jonah's story, allowing him to journey with them to his destination. All the hundreds of that caravan, some of them possibly merchants of reputation, some of them literary fellows, some of them traveling for pleasure, would be witnesses to the miraculous nature of Jonah's deliverance and mission, and on his entering Nineveh the history of his escape from the sea would be told by all these travelers, and the people of Nineveh would look on him as a divine messenger: and it would be easy to see how, notwithstanding his hateful cry, 'Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed,' his eloquence and truthful denunciation of their sins would excite the sorrow and reformation of the people, from the palace to the hovel; just as 'the sign of the prophet Jonah,' centuries later, the burial and resurrection of Jesus himself, when preached on the day of Pentecost to the citizens of Jerusalem, caused three thousand of them (on hearing that first sermon) to repent and join the infant church at Jerusalem where were many witnesses."

But I did not stop to hear any more; it made the book of Jonah and the resurrection of Jesus look too probable. I am too great a man to believe anything that contradicts the general experience of mankind. . . . And I may here remark that I would advise you to cease associating with Mr. Ignorance. His language, that I mentioned, showed that you had been in communication with him. His speech to me, as well as his review of my book, was highly cruel persecution; and I determined that I would not submit to it. And I immediately went to the proprietors of his paper and secured his discharge from his editorship.

Your grandfather,
Higher Critic.