

PLYMOUTH CHURCH.

Its African Sympathy and Indian Indifference.—Mr. Beecher, Mr. Halliday and the Deacons Called to Account by Father Beeson.

Father Beeson's recent address in Plymouth lecture room and the circumstances in which it was delivered, have already been referred to by the EAGLE. Father Beeson seems to think he was not treated exactly right, while he is certain the Indians have been treated exactly wrong. He therefore, through the EAGLE, addresses the following

OPEN LETTER TO THE PASTOR AND MEMBERS OF PLYMOUTH CHURCH.

Christian Friends: The facts of circumstances which I will briefly state, is my apology for this public address. Your fame for fact and talent in doing good is as wide as the world, and for efficiency in freeing the slave you stand high, if not the highest, of all the churches, and it is because of the vast power which you used in behalf of the negro, that the contrast of apathy in behalf of the Indians is so conspicuous and painful, I feel impelled to offer a few thoughts, not of censure, but (as Paul says) "stir up your minds by way of remembrance." About fifteen years ago your correspondent gave an address in the Lecture Room of Plymouth Church, on the wrongs of the Indians. The venerable Lyman Beecher stood by his side and followed him with an earnest appeal in their behalf. A handsome collection was taken, and the next day the late Mr. Hall (then Mayor of Brooklyn) was so deeply interested that he got the substance of the address in print for circulation. A few days previous to Friday, the 25th of July, 1873, your correspondent had an interview with two of the leading Trustees of Plymouth Church, with whom it was agreed that he should occupy half an hour of the Friday's service by an address for the Indians. Accordingly he attended. Being delayed by an obstruction on the car track, it was near half-past eight o'clock before his arrival, but the introductory service was not over and he was in season for all the time allotted to him. But the Rev. Mr. Halliday failed to introduce him or to make any allusion whatever to the subject of the Indians. Self introduction became a necessity, and though the great majority of the audience became interested and sympathetic, yet the deacons seemed to act as though the speaker and his subject were out of place. Quite a number felt the clashing elements and have since written to me words of sympathy and encouragement. The affair has also been noticed in the columns of the Brooklyn EAGLE. The natural inference is that the leaders of Plymouth Church do not regard the wrongs of the Indian to be equal in importance with the wrongs of the negro, or else that they have a private instead of a public way of giving it expression. Permit me to say that in point of order the wrong done to the Indian has the precedence. Our fathers took their land without giving them a just equivalent. Then having committed this first great national sin they were prepared to steal the negro and make him work the stolen land without paying him for his toil. So that merely freeing the negro does not touch the original sin which caused his enslavement, and it is manifest that so long as we continue this sin its result will be monopoly and fraud in all the ramifications of the Government, and commerce and social life as we see it is this day, because the national conscience has lost its nice perception of human rights and neighborly duties. And this dullness of moral sense will continue and increase as long as the school children know about the Indian wrongs and see no thorough effort to stop them, much less to make restitution for the accumulated wrongs of successive generations. Hence it is that every avenue of moral influence seems choked and obstructed. Periodic worship and started preaching are comparatively useless for good and ever will be while the first duty to our neighbor whether Indian or others, is overlooked and forgotten.

I address you not for personal reasons, but as an advocate for a wronged race toward which you have turned a cold shoulder. As you are eminently outspoken on the great questions of the day, your silence upon this oldest and greatest sin of our nation seems to sanction if not to justify the silence of all the churches in the land. And thus at different times during the last several years when the United States Indian Commission, under the auspices of Peter Cooper and Henry Berge and other philanthropists have invited public meetings for the suppression of Indian wrongs, a slim audience and but a few pastors have attended, and at the last public meeting held in Cooper Institute on the 30th of June, 1873, not one pastor of the City of New York was present, though over three hundred printed invitations had been mailed to the address of each, many of whom are known to have been in the city at the time.

If as many believe this neglect is the result of your example your responsibility is tremendous beyond expression, for when those who are raised high shed no moral stimulus on those below, they stand in the way of human progress and become a curse instead of a blessing to the world.

The Rev. Mr. Halliday, your assistant pastor, like many others, can dwell with elegant pathos on the great cost and injustice of the Florida war and the capture of the brave Osceola, and he is almost tearful while talking about the cruelties which the Cherokees suffered forty years ago, but he utters scarcely a word of regret or rebuke for the barbarous treatment of the Indians continuously from that day to this, and there are many such like who are strong in their vindictive demand for the punishment of Captain Jack and his braves who seem to have no thought about the starved and murdered Indians whose suffering and death Captain Jack was impelled to avenge.

The sorrow of such men is as though "the Priest and Levite" could never allude to the robbed and bruised one whom they "passed by on the other side," without emotional tears of sorrow for the poor suffering fellow, forgetting that the good Samaritan had dressed his wounds and carried him to the inn and paid his bill until he could care for himself, and that Christ said "Go thou and do likewise."

It is but reasonable to infer that if H. W. Beecher and Plymouth Church had persistently kept up the influence and effort which the venerable Lyman Beecher helped to inaugurate your lecture room fifteen years ago, with the same amount of zeal for the Indian as you showed for the negro, Indian wars would long ago have ceased, and many millions of dollars and thousands of lives, including Canby and Thomas, would have been saved to the country, and the erroneous accumulation of national guilt would now be atoned for. The retribution is, in part, already upon us in the misrule and frauds which abound in our midst, and there are causes rapidly at work which, at no distant day, will scatter the Indians from their heritage. There is but one possible remedy, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." To this end the subscriber proposes to inform and quicken the national conscience by travel and the free distribution of suitable documents, and he invokes the aid of everybody, by money or labor, in the work. What is given will be sacredly used. Address him, at Cooper Institute, New York.

Respectfully,

JOHN BEESON.