THE ADVISORY COUNCIL.

LETTER FROM PROF. TIMOTHY DWIGHT.

THE INVESTIGATING COMMISSION AND CONGREGATIONALISM—A VIGOROUS REPLY TO DR. STORRS, DR. DEXTER, PROF. SMYTH, DR. BARTLETT, AND PROF. MEAD—THE ORIGINAL INVENTORS OF THE "QUAKER GUN"—THE COMMITTEE READY TO ORGANIZE THE INVESTIGATING COMMISSION WHENEVER CHARGES ARE BROUGHT.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: In my communication to THE TRIBUNE which was published on Saturday last, I showed that the proposal made in the letter of the Andover Seminary Church was contrary to the principles of Congregationalism as laid down both in the earlier and the later platforms. But no sooner do the five gentlemen to whom I alluded in my former letter begin to get a glimpse of this fact than they gravely inform us that we are not bound to these old rules. Congregationalism, says Prof. Smyth, is "a free and living system." Dr. Dexter, in similar language, tells us that it is "a living system, competent to expand and extend itself to cover any emergency." Very good. So say we all. Congregationalism is a free and living system. This is one of its peculiar glories. It is not bound to petty rules, so that it cannot adapt itself to emergencies. But we must remember that if it is "living," it is also "a system." It is not something which has one character to-day and another to-morrow. It is not a thing which has life indeed, but the whole of whose life-power may be exhibited in changing itself into what is altogether contradictory to its own nature. It cannot destroy itself and yet continue to be itself. A man is a free and living being, and by reason of this fact he can adapt himself to meet emergencies which his ancestors never dreamed of in their experience. But if, in the desire to provide for some peculiar and exacting case, he should commit suicide or should turn himself into a horse, what would become of him as a man? He would have gone beyond the proper exercise of his free and living powers, and the act which he committed would be the end of him. All that would be seen afterward would be a useless, lifeless thing or a mere animal. Our American republicanism is a free and living system. But it lives within the limitations of a certain sphere. Suppose that some polished members of the aristocratic society in one of our large cities should be greatly distressed because the masses are rising to so much power in the State, and should say, Our fathers never thought of such an emergency as this, when millions of ignorant foreigners should be on our soil, and consequently they never provided for it. But the evil resulting from this unforeseen state of things is upon us, and it must be remedied by strong and decisive measures. With this thought in mind, suppose that they should say, Our republican system is a living system, and it must be able to adopt new measures for emergencies that are wholly new. The only measure, however, that will meet this emergency successfully is the establishment of a king and a titled nobility; therefore we must devise a plan by which these can be secured. What should we say to such a body of men engaged in such a plan? We should say, You cannot remedy the evil by this device, unless you go out of republicanism into some other system. The institution of a king and nobility is something contrary to the very nature and idea of republicanism, and the latter is dead so soon as the former begin to exist. And so it is with Congregationalism. When we say that this is a free and living system, what do we mean? Surely we do not mean that it can destroy the fundamental and essential elements of its own nature, and transform itself into something completely opposite. But we mean this, and only this—that it has the power of growth and expansion within the limitations of its own organic life. We do not mean that it can abandon its distinctive principles and take up those of an entirely different system. But we mean that it can (to use the language of Dr. Storrs) "apply its principles, by some normal process in harmony with those principles," to cases which are "novel and exacting."

TWO METHODS OF INVESTIGATION.

Now here is just the difference between the proposal made in the Andover letter for the investigation of Mr. Beecher's case, and the proposal made by the Advisory Council. The Andover plan, which was to try the case of a member of Plymouth Church by a mutual council, one-half of which should be appointed by the Andover Church, was a palpable violation of one of the two or three vital principles of Congregationalism. It was in contradiction of the organic law of the system. Dr. Dexter is beginning to understand this, for in his most recent article he speaks of adding to the platforms which we now have a new plank called "the Andover plank!" If the principle lying at the basis of this plan were to be adopted—namely, that one church can intrude upon the domain of another church for the purpose of trying or taking part in the trial of its members—Congregationalism would come to its end. Something might still exist, but it would not be Congregationalism. The proposal of the Advisory Council, on the other hand, although it was a device to meet a new and extraordinary case, was wholly within the organic law of the Congregational system. The adoption of the plan which it involved would endanger no principle which the churches have held from the beginning; while the plan itself would reach the end desired in a reasonable and safe way. A few words will make this clear, I think, to any fair-minded person. If the First Church in New-Haven, for example, should find itself in some internal difficulty exciting to the whole neighborhood, which it became convinced it could not itself investigate with such manifest impartiality as to commend its decision to all, could it not, according to its wise judgment and for sufficient reasons, submit the case to three gentlemen of high character in the community, outside of its own membership (such as President Woolsey, President Porter, and Prof. Thacher), and agree to abide by their decision? An advisory council might be the more natural means for deciding the case, so far as the ordinary practice is concerned, but nobody would think of any impropriety in the other plan, in case there were reasonable grounds for it. It would be simply the adoption of a "board of referees," constituted by the church for the particular case, and would be so natural a thing under some circumstances that it would recommend itself to every mind. I have no doubt that there have been many instances in the churches in Connecticut in which such a course has been taken. Certainly it is not such a deviation from fundamental principles, when some extraordinary condition of things makes it appear to be the wisest course, as to occasion the slightest apprehension of danger. But if the church in a peculiar case could do this itself it could also ask a council, which it might call for the consideration of the subject, to give it advice as to whether such a body of referees would not be a wise means to attain the end in view. Moreover, if the church could ask such advice, the Council could suggest and propose to the church to empower such a body to act for it in the emergency. And still further, if the Council, when looking into the subject, should find reason to believe that, in case the church nominated this body of referees for itself, it would be accused of partiality and would thus lose a part or all of the benefit of the decision which the referees should make, no one can doubt that it would be competent for the Council to advise the church to allow three other persons (members of the Council itself) to nominate the referees. The whole power in the case is left with the church, notwithstanding this advice, and the Board of Referees would have no authority or existence except as empowered by the church. There is nothing in such a plan, devised for an uncommon emergency, which could by any possibility endanger either the independence of the local church or the principle of fellowship with other churches. It is simply an instance of a "free and living system" putting forth its energy to meet the demands of a wholly "novel" and very "exacting" case, and is an example of what the common sense which is so characteristic of Congregationalism can do. This, however, is what the Advisory Council did, and all that it did, in the matter of constituting an investigating commission. It advised Plymouth Church to allow three persons to select five persons out of a list of 20, and when they had secured the consent of the five, and thus created the commission, to make known this fact to the church. It further advised the church to accept these gentlemen, and to empower them as a commission for the investigation of the case in hand. It gave advice, and nothing more. If Plymouth Church concluded to accept the advice and adopt the suggestion, that church could empower the commission when it was selected, and could thus give it life and being. But it would have no such life, no power as a commission, until that power was imparted by the church. As Dr. Bacon has well remarked in a recent lecture, all councils are advisory, and when they have given advice their mission and work are ended.

A PRESBYTERIAN METHOD.

But it is said by some persons, who do not seem to understand the matter perfectly, Why argue so long about this? What is the difference after all? The Andover Church, in an affectionate spirit, made one proposal which is outside of ordinary practice, and the Advisory Council made another. Why is not the former as legitimate as the latter? Because the former was not a legitimate proposal, and the latter was. There should be no misunderstanding on this point; and there need be none, for the originators of the Andover movement have left no doubt as to their design. Their proposition called the pastor of Plymouth Church before a tribunal which the Andover Church should itself either half constitute or wholly constitute. It was not a mere affectionate suggestion or admonition or request. The design was, in case Plymouth Church refused the proposal for a mutual council, to resort to an ex-parte council, which should be wholly selected by the Andover party, and which should try the case. The entire plan of proceeding is laid out out by Dr. Dexter, who was one of the originators of the movement, in his editorial in *The Congregationalist* of Feb. 2. It is distinctly stated that the church which made the proposition could, in case the Mutual Council was not accepted, call a council of which it should "name all the members;" that "such a council would take absolute, undeniable, and unavoidable jurisdiction" of the whole case; that there would be "no way in which the church and its pastor could decline or evade such an investigation as the council should order, except by retreating before it out of the Congregational denomination;" and that "the outcome of such a council," if it should not acquit the pastor and the church, "would be to relieve the Congregational churches of the contamination of that presence." Fortunately there is no ambiguity about such language as this. The step which the Andover Church took was the initiatory step in a process of discipline involving a member of another church, and not only this, but also a process of discipline in which one of the two parties to the original "affectionate" proposition was, in due course of time, to become the sole judge. It was thus a direct and palpable infringement of the liberty of the Congregational system, and was an importation of the principle of government over the churches which characterizes Presbyterianism and similar forms of church polity. It was, indeed, an introduction of this principle in its worst form, for it furnishes none of the safeguards against tyranny which even Presbyterianism is compelled to furnish. It was fair of danger, therefore, and was rejected no more quickly or decisively than it ought to have been. The proposition of the Advisory Council, on the contrary, was wise and safe. It ought to have been accepted cheerfully by all.

CONGREGATIONALISM NOT A ROPE OF SAND.

The critics of the Advisory Council tell us that, if this which we contend for and which is the doctrine of the historic platforms is Congregationalism, it is "a rope of sand," and we must have something stronger and better. This cry that Congregationalism is a rope of sand is as old as its history. Every opponent, whether within our communion or outside of it, who is full of the idea of strong government, joins in the cry. As they look upon our liberty in connection with fellowship and cannot comprehend how it can survive the first shock to which it may be exposed, they all say, Your system is a rope of sand. But, somehow or other, the rope holds. The system has stood strong in the country for more than 250 years, and has infused its principles into other systems more and more as the generations have passed onward. Its energy, in the last quarter of a century, has been greater than ever before. In view of all the past, we who love the system and its liberty are not alarmed. We say to all who demand stronger government, be they who they may, what we say to the critics of our republican institutions—what an eminent professor in the University of Berlin once said, in my hearing, to his class: "The advocates of monarchy are forever talking about the instability and danger of the American Republic; but it is a remarkable fact that the Republic has survived unchanged for nearly a century, while almost every government in Europe has been revolutionized three or four times within that period." And until the memory of the great disruption of the Presbyterian Church has died away we shall meet with calumnious all prophecies of danger to our free system—a system which has never known any such terrible experience. The gentlemen who are now discussing upon the weakness of our system will pass away after a few years, as Dr. Woods of Andover and others in the last generation, who feared as they are now fearing and demanded the stronger governmental element which they are now demanding, have already passed away. But the Congregationalism of the early fathers will survive unchanged, and it will bless the generations to come as it has blessed those that are gone.

CONGREGATIONALISM AND GUILTY MINISTERS.

Has Congregationalism, then, no method of dealing with a minister who is accused of crime, provided his church adhere to him? It has. It offers, indeed, not only one method, but more than one. First, it points to the course indicated in the 18th chapter of Matthew—the way pointed out by Christ himself. If this method had been adopted in the case which has occasioned all this excitement, and if the brethren in the ministry who were in doubt or dissatisfied had gone to the pastor of Plymouth Church before the Council of 1874, in the spirit and following the principles of that divine method, instead of beginning with a movement for the calling of a council to discipline a church, the entire subsequent history of Disease might have been changed. It is, certainly, to be deeply regretted that it was not adopted. When men are in doubt of each other, a private conference, with Christian feeling, is a better way to reach satisfaction than councils or indictments; and with infinite wisdom did the great Teacher enjoin this as the first step. But when this step has been taken and with no favorable result, Congregationalism has two other courses which it opens. It allows definite charges to be made against the minister in question before the association of ministers with which he is connected, and if the charges are substantiated by clear proof, it allows them to expel him from their body as guilty of crime. These associations, indeed, are in a sense voluntary in their nature, and a man may be dismissed from one of them without losing his office as a minister. But if he is expelled on grounds which are clearly established to the public mind as sufficient, he will be as effectually condemned as he can be in any ecclesiastical system. Congregationalism offers also a third method. It gives all other churches the power to withdraw fellowship from the minister who is guilty and the church which sustains him, and to give public declaration of their withdrawal, both by their own formal act and by the action of a council called by themselves in accordance with the provisions of the platforms. In case this withdrawal is universal on the part of the rest of the Congregational churches, such a church may be wholly excluded from the denomination, and any other churches which withdraw fellowship will be no longer responsible for it, any more than they would be for a Methodist or a Roman Catholic church. This is what Congregationalism can do with such a man and such a church. In these days, when the principles of liberty have overthrown even the main part of the power of the Pope himself, this is substantially all that any ecclesiastical system can do. What course does Prof. Swing take in the Presbyterian church, when he is tried for heresy and his own church, largely or wholly, rallies around him ready to stand by him no matter what happens. He simply sings out of the denomination and takes his church with him or forms a new one, and the Presbyterian body being withdrawn from him, can do nothing more. What does he care, or what difference does it make in his future, except as to his ecclesiastical relations, if the synod or the General Assembly fulminate against him after he has taken his leave of the church system? What regard has Bishop Cummins for the solemn words of the bishops whom he abolishes when he enters the Reformed Episcopal Church, as they assemble and formally depose him from his office? He is beyond their power, and they can accomplish nothing. They relieve themselves from all responsibility for him, and he is out of their fellowship. And so it may be in the Congregational system.

MR. BEECHER NOT PROVED GUILTY.

But a guilty Episcopal bishop may be deposed, it is said, and never hold the ministerial office afterward. So may a guilty Congregational bishop. Men in the Congregational ministry who have fallen into grievous sin in past times have been degraded from their office, and history has shown that no system is more effective than that of Congregationalism for securing the purity of the ministry. But a minister in any branch of the Church of Christ must be proved to be guilty before he can be deposed. Once establish this fact with regard to the pastor of Plymouth Church, and Congregationalism will not only rid itself of him, but he will be an outcast from its ministry within two days after the proclamation of the proof of his guilt. But the difficulty in the present case is one which would be a serious obstacle in the way of ecclesiastical condemnation in any denomination. It is this, namely, that the pastor of Plymouth Church has not, as yet, been proved guilty. Many persons think that he is. But an equal number of persons think that he is not. All that is positively known is that the only investigations held in the case thus far have resulted favorably to him, and that the general principle applied to all other men except clergymen is that they are to be presumed to be innocent until proved to be guilty.

How, then, shall we determine the question of guilt or innocence? This is the all-important point. The feeling among large numbers outside of the late Council, and of many in the Council, has been that the past investigations were not altogether satisfactory and sufficient. With the knowledge of this feeling, the members of the Council put aside whatever differences of opinion existed among themselves on the question whether any further investigation was desirable, and by a unanimous vote recommended the Church to adopt the plan for an Investigating Commission. The members of the Council separated, I am sure, with the feeling that they had been wisely and Divinely guided to so harmonious a result, and that the whole Christian public would accept their proposal as offering a wise method of bringing this great question to a final settlement.

DR. BARTLETT'S PASSIVE COMMISSION.

But scarcely had the Council adjourned and the members reached their homes when they found themselves exposed to a storm of unfavorable criticism, and their plan for investigation declared to be impracticable, unwise, the product of the heated zeal of impassioned men. The criticisms are so remarkable that I cannot forbear calling public attention to a few of them. I will quote from every one of the five distinguished gentlemen to whom I have referred. Dr. Bartlett informs us that "the Commission is wholly passive; is to do nothing; is not even to be organized unless some outside party shall make charges;" and he adds, "This looks almost like a set purpose to kill the whole movement." I agree perfectly with Dr. Bartlett that, if the Council had proposed the organization of a body which it intended should do nothing, it would have adopted a measure that was likely to kill the activity of the body. But, strange as it may appear, the Council supposed that the body was to do something, namely (precisely what all courts do), institute an investigation when charges are made, and not before. Are courts passive bodies, killed before they are born, because charges must pass the ordeal of a grand jury before they can be considered? Dr. Bartlett, I think, is the first person who has made this curious discovery. Do courts in the neighborhood of Chicago, let me ask, go scrambling about among the families of that city for all the gossip of the day in order that they may not be "wholly passive," but may find something to do? Dr. Bartlett says further, "Perhaps none of the persons having knowledge of the case wish to reopen it and make charges." Very well. If they do not wish to reopen it, who does? If they do not wish to make themselves responsible for the proof of their statements, they had better not whisper their statements among their neighbors; or, if this whispering is all that they choose to do, they had better not find fault that judicial bodies do not examine them. Prof. Smyth tells us that, according to the plan of the Council, "charges must be made without any definite knowledge of who is to hear them." Did Mr. Tilton, I would inquire, know who was to try his case when he first brought it before the civil courts? It was only at the last moment that it was decided to make Judge Neilson the judge in the case, and the jury were not selected until two weeks after the trial commenced. The gentlemen who are expected to make charges now can know that some persons chosen from among twenty men, whose names show that they are above suspicion, will be the tribunal, just as Mr. Tilton knew that one of three or four judges and twelve out of five hundred jurymen would try his case. If in the case of the civil courts men were to refuse to make charges, or to have their causes tried because of objections like these, I have only to say that the courts would very soon get into that state which Dr. Bartlett describes as "wholly passive," and the legal profession would find itself with "nothing to do." What are we to think of the "Christian gentlemen of high position and repute," like the one of whom Prof. Smyth speaks, who are informing the public that they have important testimony, but that they will not "volunteer" it? What do they think of such men in Andover or in Chicago?

DR. DEXTER'S SARCASM.

Dr. Dexter in a vein of sarcasm says, "Neither known to the civil law nor to the gospel, it must lack moral as well as legal ability to gather testimony." I am not familiar with the laws of the State of Massachusetts, but I have never supposed before that a board of referees is an organization unknown to the civil arrangements of that State. If so, I would invite Dr. Dexter, at some convenient opportunity, to visit Connecticut. As for the gospel, on the other hand, I have had some occasion to look into its provisions, and I should be very grateful, never having found the place myself, if Dr. Dexter would inform me as to the part of the gospels in which we may find the authorization of the Andover proposition, of which he is understood to have been one of the originators. Or if we are to speak of moral and legal ability to gather testimony, I have thought that men like President Hopkins and Gov. Washburn would have the requisite moral power, and that Judge Shipman, Senator Foster, and the Hon. C. J. Walker were as likely to possess legal ability as the Rev. Messrs. Jones and Brown and the other ministers and delegates who might be assembled in a mutual or *ex parte* council. I sit at Dr. Dexter's feet in all this matter with the most profound respect, but as to any legal power to gather testimony from "Christian gentlemen of high position and repute," who say that they have testimony, but "will in no case volunteer" it, I have, until reading Dr. Dexter's article, entertained the idea that no body of men except a civil tribunal possed this power. But the critics tell us that the civil tribunals have signally failed in this case. Perhaps Dr. Dexter's *ex parte* council might get at their testimony without their volunteering it, as the Rev. Dr. Fairfield has evolved from the depths of his own consciousness a knowledge of Mr. Beecher's guilt which is "equal to his knowledge of his own future salvation."

INVENTORS OF THE QUAKER GUN.

The Rev. Dr. R. S. Storrs, with that felicitous and polished rhetoric of which he is universally considered a master, takes up the same strain of criticism by saying, with reference to those who suggested the plan of the Commission: "It might not, perhaps, be wholly unjust to the shrewder minds behind the scene to suspect that they thought it adapted to give a show of readiness to meet hostile charges without involving serious dangers—an ecclesiastical Quaker gun which looks ready for any service, but through whose silent wooden mouth no shot can pass. It certainly is not too much to say that no result in the least likely to be attained by such a commission can do anything important toward enlightening and purifying the fetid darkness in which the churches of Brooklyn and the land have long been walking." These conciliatory words refer to certain persons, but do not mention who they are. They only describe them as the shrewder minds behind the scene, who originated the plan. It may not be uninteresting to the public to know who the inventors of this Quaker gun are, so that they may give them due honor. I have been able to discover two of them certainly, and, I think, all of them. The two are eminent authorities, one in the secular and the other in the ecclesiastical sphere, if indeed they are not both in the latter. I refer to the proprietor of *The Independent* and the editor of *The Congregationalist*. In a letter addressed to the Examining Committee of Plymouth Church, some two weeks previous to the assembling of the Advisory Council, Mr. H. C. Bowen, after stating that he would not give his testimony to the church, made a formal suggestion that a commission of three or more persons, including the names of President Woolsey, Dr. Hopkins, and Alpheus Hardy, should be called together, and be offered to tell them all he knew, and to abide by their decision. Is it possible that Dr. Storrs suspects that Mr. Bowen was one of these shrewder minds," who was "exhibiting a show of readiness" to meet his enemy "without involving serious danger," but did not like to mention his name? To the other gentleman, Dr. Dexter, I owe the first thought of such a commission which ever entered my mind. Very near the beginning of all public investigation of the scandal, two years ago, he brought out in his valuable paper the suggestion that the Plymouth Church or its pastor should call upon three gentlemen (President Woolsey, Dr. Hopkins, and Gov. Buckingham, I think), and should make them the tribunal in the case. A similar proposal has been made in his paper recently. If my own feeling was that of the Council, as I am confident that it was, I may state not only for myself but for all the members that we were led to adopt the plan of a commission because it had been suggested in these quarters, and because we accordingly thought it was the plan which would satisfy those who believed Mr. Beecher to be guilty and those who were in grave doubt respecting his innocence. But it seems that new light has come to these gentlemen since the Council adopted their proposal, and they now see that their own invention was a "Quaker gun," which will have no effect upon the fetid darkness which gathers around the churches of Brooklyn." Dr. Storrs also criticises the commission because it is "to act in secret." This discovery is one to which the "result" of the Council did not lead him by its own language, for there is nothing said about secrecy in the document. But if he penetrated "the shrewder minds behind the scenes" and found his provision there, I need only to remind him that Mr. Bowen, who regards himself as having in his possession what are called the bottom facts, has solemnly declared that he will not pollute his sensitive soul and betray a sacred confidence by giving his testimony before any tribunal which does not "sit in secret." A tribunal having only open sessions, and thus failing to gain any knowledge of what Mr. Bowen has to say, might or might not be a "Quaker gun," but surely it would not get much light into the center of "the fetid darkness in Brooklyn."

BRING ON THE CHARGES.

Finally, Prof. Mead brings forward the most terrible charge of all—that the Council presumed, as it were, to act after it was dead. "A council," he says, "after it has adjourned *sine die*, has no longer any existence. Consequently, it cannot be represented by a committee; it has no right to appoint a committee, with powers to act, after it itself is dissolved, for that committee, representing nothing but a nonentity, is responsible to no one." I would suggest to Prof. Mead that dying persons sometimes make provisions for a period that follows their death, and so we of the Council thought we might give advice that should live a few weeks, at least, after our adjournment. We were moderate in our hopes, as we thought, for we provided only for six days. But it seems that we were presumptuous, and that we became a nonentity the moment we adjourned, and our so-called committee of three became even more thoroughly dead than the body which appointed it. No wonder that Dr. Dexter thinks the Council devised a plan for "finding how not to do it." I have indulged the opinion, however, that, while the Council terminated its existence on the day of its final adjournment, the gentlemen whom it advised Plymouth Church to employ in aiding them in respect to a new investigation could that and them so long as they should themselves be living. And I would inform any readers who may have honored me by reading what I have written up to this point, that I am not now dead, and so far as I know, the other two gentlemen who are associated with me are also not dead. We hope to live to the end of the 60 days and beyond that time, and if charges are brought against the pastor of Plymouth Church by responsible persons offering proof, we propose to select the members of the commission as provided in the resolution of the Council, and present their names to Plymouth Church that it may accept and empower the commission. When it is accepted and empowered, it will become a body representing not a "nonentity," but a church of 2,500 members who give it its life and power.

I take my leave of Prof. Mead's criticisms by asking him, on behalf of our committee of three, to read the following words of his friend Dr. Bartlett, which he will find in *The Congregationalist* of Feb. 2, 1876. He is speaking of a small and wise council, including President Woolsey and Dr. Hopkins, which he thinks might satisfactorily investigate the scandal. He says, "It would perhaps be a wise course for Plymouth Church to put the shaping of the whole subject into the hands of some such board of referees as Drs. Palmer, Clapp and Coe, or others like them; to request them to designate the council; and then to adopt, without change, their recommendation." I would also commend these significant words of Dr. Bartlett, printed only two weeks before the meeting of the Advisory Council, to the attention of Prof. Smyth, Dr. Storrs, Dr. Dexter, and, I may add, of Dr. Bartlett himself. And I would close by asking these gentlemen whether such persons as President Woolsey and Dr. Hopkins and Judge Shipman are less worthy of regard or less competent to discharge their duty when they are "designated" by Dr. Wellman and the Hon. R. R. Wood, than they would be if designated by Drs. Palmer and Clapp? Is it not better for these five gentlemen to stop criticising the plan proposed by themselves and adopted by the Council partly because they had proposed it, and to unite in bringing this great excitement to an end, if possible, in a way which all parties have favored within the past two months?

New-Haven, March 21, 1876. TIMOTHY DWIGHT.

PROF. DWIGHT ON THE COUNCIL.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: Thousands of hearts are grateful to you for publishing in last Saturday's issue of THE TRIBUNE Prof. T. Dwight's reply to recent attempts to reproach and destroy the influence of the late Advisory Council by caricature, unauthorized inference, and palpable misrepresentation. Prof. Dwight's criticism was very timely and unanswerable. Many will be glad to know that it is soon to be put in a form for extensive circulation, and it may interest some to learn that Prof. Dwight is a grandson of Dr. T. Dwight, formerly the distinguished President of Yale College. He is a man of clear intellect, profound knowledge, pure heart, and sound and impartial judgment. In these days, when so many agencies are at work to confuse, deceive, and prejudice the public mind in regard to an unpleasant and complicated matter which is very imperfectly understood by multitudes, Prof. Dwight is just the man to expose error, establish the truth, and vindicate injured innocence. In such a truly manly and Christian work he will no doubt be ably assisted by many other members of that noble Council.

Brooklyn, March 22, 1876. A CONGREGATIONALIST.

SHAKESPEARE MURDERED IN A GUIDE-BOOK.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: In reading the brilliant letter on Westminster Abbey in Saturday's TRIBUNE I was reminded of a blunder, the original responsibility for which belongs to the compiler of the guide-book to that venerable pile. It is in relation to the inscription on Shakespeare's monument in the Abbey, allusion to which appears in John Paul's last letter. The selection is from "The Tempest," fourth act, Scene I.; and in the original text, as well as on the slab itself, the analogy presented is "the *baseless* fabric of a vision." The official guide-book, sold by the vergers of the Abbey, destroys both sense and rhythm by making it read "the *base* fabric of a vision;" and I observe with pain that you have conspired with your guileless and accomplished correspondent to give currency to the affront—for such it may be called—to the poetic genius of the immortal bard. Very respectfully yours,

Brooklyn, March 19, 1876. W. H. W.

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.

LETTER FROM MISS C. E. BEECHER.

HOUSEHOLD RELIGION—LET THE CONVENTION OF MINISTERS IN THE HIPPODROME NEXT WEDNESDAY ASK THE WOMEN OF THE CITY TO VOLUNTEER FOR WORK IN THE TENEMENT HOUSES.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

SIR: I have been an interested reader of the reports of the teachings of Moody and Sankey, and through your columns ask their attention and that of the clergy and laity, who meet them for consultation next Wednesday and Thursday, to some questions of the greatest interest to men and to all other educators. The great question for all mankind is, What must we do to be saved from the dangers of the life to come? In reply, Mr. Moody teaches "the only way to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." "There is no creed, no denomination, no system required," nor "to pray earnestly and weep and mourn and do penance; but just simply to believe."

Of course the words "to believe" and "to have faith" are used in the ordinary sense of the common people. A man believes in doctors when he seeks their advice and obeys it. A man believes and has faith in Mohammed when he takes his teachings and obeys them. And he has faith in Jesus Christ when he takes His teachings and obeys them. And the measure of a man's faith is the right understanding of instructions, and the measure of obedience to them. And when His disciples prayed, "Lord, increase our faith," they meant "Lord, help us to clearly understand and faithfully obey Thy instructions."

All those meeting to consult with Moody and Sankey believe that our Lord teaches that there are such awful dangers to be feared after death that it should be the first interest of this life to save ourselves and our fellow-men from these dangers, and that the number who will escape depends on the measure of the faith and labors of his followers. They also believe that the mode of escape revealed by our Lord is to follow His example in sacrifice, and labor to serve as many as possible of our fellow-men. He, the noblest, the wisest, the richest of all, became the poorest, the most despised, and the most suffering. And His first disciples "forsook all and followed Him" to poverty, disgrace, and death, in order to save as many as possible of their fellow-men. So Paul writes to the early Christians, as those considered as "filth and offscouring," and, if without hope in a future life, "of all men most miserable." When the young man came asking the way to be saved, the Master replied, "Sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me to shame, suffering, and a painful death." And "he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." And then the Lord said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven!" The most remarkable of Christ's teachings and the chief feature which distinguishes His religion from all others is that God is a living Father, not to the Jews only, not to the baptized only, not to the regenerated only, but to every child born into this world; and that as every parent feels and cares most for the weakest and most ignorant, so the Heavenly Father cares and feels the most for those who most need such love and pity. It is the lost sheep, the prodigal son, and straying lamb for whom He is most concerned, and whom He specially commits to the love and tender care of His followers. This is what all Christian ministers and laymen hold in common as taught by our Lord.

For over forty years I have been a sojourner with family friends and former pupils in every section of our nation, and most of whom profess to be followers of Christ. And I state some of my experience in order to obtain light and counsel. In some of these families I find the housekeeper really believes that it is the most neglected of God's children for whom He cares the most, and expects His most favored children to do the same. And so, when the foreign young woman comes to her kitchen, without home, or parents, or acquaintances, she is treated as the youngest child, taught to read and write by the mother and daughters, provided with suitable books, taught to lay proper clothing and make and mend it properly, taught to be gentle and patient with children, and to perform properly all the varied duties of the future state. And then in a few years she is married, and is well prepared for the multiplied duties of housekeeper, wife, and mother. If she is a Roman Catholic she is taught to read and obey the excellent manuals of moral and religious duties prepared by the priesthood of that Church, which contain all that is needful to secure eternal safety after death. Nor is it deemed safe or wise to loosen faith in the religious teachers whom she has been educated to respect and love.

In other families a very different course is pursued—some who are professed followers of Christ. In some such I have seen the housekeeper and mother spending most of her thoughts and time in preparing an elaborate and expensive wardrobe for herself and daughters, and so engaged in a round of social gatherings and receptions that she has little time for nursery or kitchen duties, and not at all for training her servants. Most of the day her little ones are in the care of ignorant and sometimes unprincipled foreigners. To them, at times, she gives her expensive and ornamented dresses after they are partially soiled by sweeping muddy streets. She tries to teach the servants to imitate an expensive and unhealthful style of dress. In repeated cases I have known cooks, waiters and nurses to pay from twenty to sixty dollars for a single dress. In other cases the corset and the weight of clothing on the lower part of the body have insured the most painful and humiliating disclosurements both in the nurseries and maid. In some families, the habits and character of young children are regulated more by ignorant servants, with whom more of their time is spent, than with the parents.

Our nurseries and kitchens are more and more becoming the homes of foreigners, and our housekeepers are thus becoming responsible for the training of the wives and mothers of the working classes. In one family where I visited, the cook had been taught wisely and well, and when she married she had so economized as to furnish her home with all needed comforts and conveniences when her husband, an honest day laborer, had provided a house. In another case the servants had not been taught to economize, and, imitating her mistress, spent all for rich dresses. She also married a day laborer, and in about a year both husband and wife were in need of charity, the husband sick, and the wife confined with an infant in a hospital.

In the tenement-house districts are collected by hundreds and thousands the ignorant and neglected children of the Heavenly Father, who came to earth to save them by His life of humiliation and sufferings and those of His true followers. Within the walk or ride of half an hour stand some of our rich city churches, and in most of them there is the division of the congregation into the "regenerate," who claim to be followers of Christ, and sitting beside them are those supposed to be "unregenerate." The first claim to be the obedient children of God, whose chief interest in this life should be to save as many as possible of His disobedient children from "the bitter pangs of eternal death."

For over 20 years I have been connected with an organization of ladies, from almost every Christian denomination in New-York City, the object of which is to train woman for her profession as housekeeper, chief educator of children and servants, nurse of the sick, and as wife and mother, the chief minister of the family state. This effort has been managed by ladies of the highest intelligence and position, approved by the clergy of all denominations, and approbated by the editors of our most influential newspapers. Guided by such counsels and approval, I have devoted my income, time, and labors to this object. As eldest of 13 children, I was trained to the care of young children and servants through my early life, and afterward was repeatedly, at both the East and West, a housekeeper. When from over-exertion health was destroyed, and I became a resident in the families of many superior housekeepers, I prepared, by their counsels and examples, my works on domestic science and home duties, devoting all the income, except the most economical outlay for health and personal expenses, to promote this object. I now have become a resident in Brooklyn, and within an easy ride to the sections of New-York City, where so many children of our Heavenly Father are in the state of ignorance, neglect and misery described above.

If the ministers and laymen who consult with Moody and Sankey next Wednesday and Thursday will devise means and measures for such an operation, there are hundreds of Christian women who would rejoice to labor in such a field, and I would gladly join them. When I once sought to send missionary teachers to the West and South, to encounter full as great difficulties as would be encountered in this home field, more than 300 women, recommended by their clergymen, offered to go. Not one quarter could be sent, for want of funds and proper cares. If a similar circular were issued to supply the home field in the most neglected sections of our large cities, Christian women by hundreds would gladly offer their services. It is for such Christian women, and for the lost and wandering sheep and lambs of our Lord at our very doors, that I plead with those who are appointed by Him for this very service to lend their counsel and aid.

CATHARINE E. BEECHER.

Brooklyn, March 24, 1876.

EVIDENCE OF SPENCE PETTIS, THE FORGER.

In the suit of Herman Funche against the New-York Mutual Insurance Company to recover an insurance on a cargo of arms sent to the Mexican coast, which has been on trial for nearly three weeks before Judge Sanford in Superior Court, Special Term, the evidence of Spence Pettis, the convict forger, taken in the Massachusetts State Prison, was offered yesterday by the defendants. The object of his evidence was to show that Gen. Sturm, the assignee of the present plaintiff, induced Pettis to forge a letter purporting to come from Mr. Gill, which was used at one stage of the proceedings in this case, and to alter a check draw by Sturm which might have been a damaging piece of evidence. Almost all of the deposition was rejected by Judge Sanford as irrelevant. It is probable that the first witness this morning will be Prof. Doremus, to testify in regard to photographs of the check in question, and the effect of chemical substances in erasing written characters.

Mr. O'Flaherty undertook to tell how many were at the party: "The two Crogans was one, myself was two, Mike Finn was three, and—and—who was four? Let me see" (counting on his finger). "The two Crogans was one, Mike Finn was two, myself was three, and—bedad! there was four of us, but I couldn't tell the name of the other. Now, it's meself that has it. Mike Finn was one, the two Crogans was two, myself was three—and—by my soul, I think there was but three of us after all."

THE REVIVAL.

MR. MOODY'S SERMON ON THE BIBLE.

WRONG WAYS OF READING THE SCRIPTURES—CHRISTIANS SHOULD TELL WHAT THEY FIND—TREASURES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT—CHRIST'S DEALINGS WITH SINNERS.

The pleasant afternoon filled the Hippodrome yesterday. All the seats were taken, and numbers were standing in the corners and around under the eaves, while many applied in vain for tickets, and were turned away disappointed. Mr. Moody preached his second sermon upon the Bible, taking the New Testament more particularly for his subject. These sermons are designed to awaken a new interest and pleasure in reading the Bible in those to whom it may become a somewhat dull duty, a matter of conscience, or a matter of total neglect.

Mr. Moody said he merely endeavored to give the outlines to show how the Bible might be read with a fresh interest and general comprehension that would give a new Christian life. People were always taking in and never giving out; filling up their heads and hearts with lumber they never used. He would have them read the Bible with such vital interest that they would use what they knew, tell it to others, and live by it themselves. He told of a man in England who had two bags of gas made, one for each hand, and all he had to do was to stamp his foot on the ground when he came to a fence or a hedge, and over he would go. "That is the way if you have plenty of Bible truths about you; you can go over all obstacles and never notice them."

The sermon, as usual, was full of familiar illustrations. Even two boys, with ragged hats and dirty hands, who had evidently dropped in there for an adventure, paid enough attention to catch all the stories and convey them to each other by nudges. If some delay over the sermon tried them, the singing came in time to prevent a retreat. By request, Mr. Sankey sang "The Ninety and Nine" again.

The sermon was as follows:

Those who were here yesterday afternoon will remember I was trying to show that Christ was the key to the Old Testament, and to-day I will show that Jesus is the key to the New. Christ was tempted as we are, but He had not the same enemy to overcome. He that knew no sin took upon Him ours. One of the saddest mistakes that young converts make, is that of merely feeding upon sermons, instead of the Word of God. You know it is quite an event in the family when the child gets so it can feed itself. We want to learn as quick as possible to feed ourselves. If we will only take our Bible and make up our minds that we will depend upon our own study of the Bible, He will help us understand it. If we try to study it in one way, and we find we do not like it, let us take up another, and if that fails, try another. Some time ago my wife was very anxious that I should learn to like tomatoes. She liked them, and she wanted me to like them. So she got me to try them, first raw, with vinegar and sugar and pepper, but I could not bear them; then she fixed them another way, but I didn't like them; and another way, but I still could not eat them. One day I came home and I said, "I have cooked the tomatoes a new way." Well, I tried them again once more, and I thought they were the best things I ever tasted. So, if you take up the Bible one way and don't like it, take it up another way, and keep trying until you find a way in which it will unfold itself to you. You won't find people that are in love with the study of this Word carrying a dime novel through the street. They won't walk up Fifth-ave. with a trashy book in their hands. They will be reading books that will help them understand the Bible. You will be so anxious to get off alone and have a feast upon it that you will have to reprove yourself for not going out and working more. There is danger on that head. There are a great many who are all the time feeding upon the Word—not in this country, I am sorry to say. I would rather be as they are everywhere than as they are in this country, where they neither feed on the Word nor study either. But some people are always ta