

WE AND OUR NEIGHBORS

On Wednesday, July 15, the 1896 season of the Crete Chautauqua closed. The thirteen days' program has been of an excellence extraordinary. The weather has been cool and especially suited to campers, for only one rain has fallen. The spring rains prevented dust, although it made the grove almost too damp for anything but the influenza. The rest of the grounds are high and dry, though in the middle of the day somewhat sunny. The mornings and evenings are cool enough for wool clothing, the middle of the night is chilly almost as the nights of Wyoming. The Blue—a queer name for dark brown, but Nebraska people are poetic, and the children make a Queen Elizabeth doll out of a corn cob, the Blue, I say, within the space-fenced off by the Chautauqua, contains the largest bird city or settlement in the country. Nebraska is said by ornithologists to have a larger variety of birds than any other state. In order to confirm this statement it is necessary to get up early enough in the morning to hear their chorus and part songs. Oliver Thorne Miller or Burroughs would think the banks of the Blue an earthly paradise.

The people who make the Crete Chautauqua assembly their annual vacation are, for the most part, serious-minded, plain people. The smart set stay at home, go somewhere else, or if they go to the Chautauqua, dress plainer. The campers and cottagers always greet each other when they meet even if their standing has not been guaranteed by an introduction. It is a pleasure to be one of a community whose members show only kindness and good will to each other. Even politics has little dividing power, except in a woman's club. Mr. Bryan's nomination caused no demonstration in the shape of brass bands and fireworks. There were plenty who, like Mr. Welch, would have pounded the big brass drum so far as their feelings were concerned, hesitated on account of the intrusion of worldliness into a pastoral retreat. In its outer aspect the life at the Chautauqua is pastoral. There is nothing but the sheep and the shepherds lacking. Morning and evening the people go through green fields with pails to one of the two cisterns on the grounds. Many of the families got their own meals. They set the table on the grass in front of the house. When they sat down they never failed to ask a blessing. The spectacle of so many groups of people sitting with bowed heads in the open air brought back a sense of the beauty and simplicity of the communal life of the shakers or community life of any kind.

Dr. Scott, who has been superintendent of instruction for several years, might play shepherd if it were not work. The shepherds of Holland use long stilts that they may see the sheep who are pleased to conceal themselves in ditches or on the other side of knolls. Dr. Scott would not need stilts even in Holland. Perhaps it is because his head is so high in the air that his vision is not bounded by the nose limit that most people should take treatment for. He sees things clearly and in relation to other things and he puts the result of his long distance views in simple, potent language that drips kindness and toleration all over an audience.

Since his residence in Chicago he has taken time for the study of the higher critics of the Bible. Higher criticism of today is a study of the Bible as Agassiz studied plants, which was an attempt to learn from the plants themselves what they had to teach of their structure and use. He had no views about them that he had not learned from them. It is a higher critic who

in writing a life of Shelley goes to where he lived, learns the facts of his life from his letters, from his friends and from all others who have written concerning him, only looking up the authorities for the statements that were made. Bible lovers have nothing to dread from higher criticism. A study of the Bible which strips from it ideas not in it but meanings which have been read into it by the long habit men have of taking some other man's word for it, instead of being his own exegete, will make the Bible more widely read than ever.

Chief among the German writers quoted by Dr. Scott are Wendt and Beyschlag. They are reverent and devoted believers in Christ's mission to the world. Yet much of the supernatural related by men long after Christ's crucifixion the German critics together with Professor Bruce of Scotland reject as unnecessary and irrelevant. If it were not for higher criticism which makes it possible for the most cultivated intelligence to believe in the mission and person of Christ, while rejecting the supernatural, the charge that the Bible is losing its hold on the educated might be proven. The higher critics are preparing a way for those who have not the time, the learning nor the ability to search the scriptures as they have done. They are as truly sent to prepare the way as John was. Ingersoll has been scoffing for so long at the opinions that the church had of what the Bible is not at the Bible itself. There are very few who believe at the present time in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, that is, that Matthew, James or Luke wrote at the Lord's dictation. They believe that they were filled with love of Christ and wrote down what others had told them of Christ's words and ways. If Mr. Ingersoll had read the higher criticism he could never have written the "Mistakes of Moses," for any other than a sensational or mercenary motive.

Yet when Dr. Scott announced his theory of the atonement, his lecture was followed by a chorus of protesting, surprised questions. He said that the significance of the atonement or at-one-ment was not that it appeased a resentful God but that the crucifixion showed the love of Christ for the world. It was an emancipation. It showed the world that the man who had told them to love their enemies loved them well enough to die for them. If He had not been crucified people would be saying today "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," is the only good system of capital punishment and that the cloak and coat command is impracticable. Most of us believe that it is impracticable but there are a few who believe it and do it. Dr. Scott's denial of the doctrine of appeasing God by innocent blood roused the theologians to grieved remonstrance. The next day a paper about the size and consistency of a waffle, though not so thick, said that Dr. Scott was engaged in tearing down the Old Testament and wondered if he could make another as good. The Crete Methodist assured the people, however, that the Bible would stand long after Dr. Scott was dead, which is the argument of disputants much larger than the "Crete Methodist"—(It is such a piquant name I like to repeat it as often as possible.)

Speaking of Dr. Scott's slender height, a man said, "No wonder he looks cool, he is really in Colorado while the rest of us are listening to him in Nebraska. Up where he lives he does not know that it is warm."

Dr. Graham Taylor, the lecturer on Christian economics at the Chautauqua two or three years ago set up what is called "Chicago Commons." He rented a house in a tenement district in which manufacturing had driven the well-to-do residents into the suburbs.

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