PROMINENT IN THE PULPIT

Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton Writes of the Great Beecher Family.

CLERICAL CONVENTIONALITIES

A New Era of Preaching—Stories of Thomas K. Beecher — Daniel O'Connell—Criticism of the English Press.

LONDON, March 12.—[Correspondence of the BEE.]—The death of Henry Ward Beecher will revive many memories of the individual lives and idiosyncracies of the remarkable family of which he was the most brilliant member—a family that has occupied a conspicuous position before the American people—perhaps, I may say, before the whole Anglo-Saxon world—for over half a century. Two generations of saints and preachers, distinguished alike for their devotional fervor and keen sense of the ludicrous, blending, in their sermons, every note in the gamut of human emotions, from joy to sadness—they indeed inaugurated a new era in pulpit oratory.

As might be expected the Beecher clergymen have been sorely misunderstood and misrepresented by a mere formal and somber type of religionists, because what they have said and done has not always conformed to the rules of conventionality. The old Puritan type of a pastor with solemn visage and warning words, living each day as if it were to be his last, was in strong contrast with the cheerful, robust Beechers, who enjoyed fishing and other innocent amusements, and who played their violins in the chimney corner. No wonder contemporaries did not know how to classify this new species of black-coats. The Rev. Dr. Tyng's way out of the difficulty was by dividing the human race into three classes: saints, sinners, and the Beecher family.

THE REV. LYMAN BEECHER

had thrown off so much of the pride and assumption of the cloth and set aside so many clerical conventionalities in his day, that it was easy for his son, following in the footsteps of his father, to enliven the rather dry gospel lessons with an occasional humorous illustration that often caused a ripple of merriment to pass quickly over the congregation of Plymouth church. This relief from the dolorous strain that then prevailed in the pulpits although disapproved by synods and assemblies, grew in favor with the people and has even spread to Europe, for I am told that applause is sometimes heard in Pere Hyacinthe's little chapel in Paris, just as used to be the case in the vast meeting-house on Brooklyn Heights. Here in London, too, a laugh and a clap now and then break in upon the oppressive atmosphere of certain sanctuaries. If it had not been for Henry Ward Beecher and his imitators our churches would still be awfully like those awfully gloomy Scottish kirks that Buckle tells of in his History of Civilization in England. I have just said that Henry Ward Beecher inherited much of his originality from his father.

MY HUSBAND

was once a student at Lane seminary, O., when it was presided over by Lyman Beecher, and I have often heard him speak of the eccentric acts and sayings of this able man. His lectures abounded with odd and laughable illustrations of the principles that he desired to impress upon his classes. For example some of the students once asked him to say a few words about the art of preaching. He in substance, if not in exact phrase, spoke about as follows: "I do not think studied gestures of much importance. Here is the receipt that I should offer for a good sermon. First acquire a thorough knowledge of what you propose to treat. Secondly, analyze your subject carefully. Thirdly, imbue yourself with it until ready to burst, then knock out the bung and let nature pour!"

THE ORIGINALITY

which might say, the eccentricities—of the Beecher family was not confined to Henry Ward. Lyman Beecher's individuality showed itself to a greater or less degree in all of his children. The Hooker people never weary of telling queer things about Thomas K. Beecher, who goes there now and then to preach before the students of Cornell university. Mrs. Isabella Beecher Hooker, once came in a buggy from her home in Hartford, Conn., to my house in New Jersey, and read us a sermon one Sunday afternoon in the drawing room. My self-made thought the buggy locomotive visits odd and the sermon odder still. But to me, who knew several of the characters quite intimately, Mrs. Hooker's proceeding seemed the most natural thing in the world—coming from a child of Lyman Beecher.

MRS. COMSTOCK

of Syracuse Women's suffrage convention fame, a few years ago, in a lecture in Steinway hall, New York, on Mrs. Hooker, said that Mrs. Hooker was extraordinary. While a delegate of California, was speaking before the House in favor of granting women the right to vote at the suffrage, Mrs. Hooker was attending a neighboring committee-room, a prayer-meeting, asking divine guidance in the same; and it must be admitted that the hymns and petitions of Mrs. Hooker somewhat harshly with the utterances of the future minister to England.

Henry Ward Beecher's oratory reminded me of O'Connell's. I once heard the great Irish agitator make one of his grand speeches in Exeter Hall, in the presence of six North American Indians seated upon the platform; and although they did not understand a word that the orator was saying, still his gestures and facial movements were so expressive, that they evidently apprehended his meaning. Henry Ward Beecher had much of the same power. In fact, the Irishman and the American also resembled each other closely, although O'Connell was a much larger man than Beecher.

WOMEN IN THEIR STRUGGLE

for political enfranchisement are greatly indebted to both of these noble reformers. From the world's anti-slavery convention, which was held in this city in 1840, refused to admit women delegates, Lucretia Mott and made a strong speech against this narrow-minded course. I never forgotten that appeal to my self-respect, and from that day I admired and loved his sister and revered the name of the brave spirit of Mr. Beecher who refused to advocate woman's cause when she was the first distinguished champion that was offered him. If the American people never weary of telling these