

## Our Contributors.

### GREAT MOMENTS IN SPEECHES.

BY KNOXIAN.

Once upon a time we were put into a spare bedroom on the north-east corner of a house owned and occupied by a most hospitable and intelligent family. It was a rainy night in autumn, just the kind of night a tired man usually goes to sleep thankful that he has a roof over his head. We did not sleep soon or soundly. The rain on the roof did not disturb us, for we were on the ground floor, but the rain that came down through the water-pipe at the corner of the house played havoc with our rest. It went dribble, dribble, dribble into a tub or water barrel with an amount of continuity, persistency and monotony that banished slumber and made life in that room on a wet night scarcely desirable. If the thing had stopped a moment just for a change; if it had put on a spurt and varied the dribble a little, if it had burst and blown the corner off the house, if it had done anything reasonable we would have felt relieved. But no. On it went, dribble, dribble, dribble with a regularity and monotony that was simply exasperating.

That monotonous dribble recalled several speakers—and one or two preachers—we had heard—we shall not say when or where. Some of them may be alive at this moment, and taking an active part in the elections, but let that pass. In fact the monotonous dribble of a water-pipe represents a school of speakers that might be described as the all-day school. Their peculiarity is that it makes no difference, so far as the speech is concerned, whether they stop in half-an-hour or go on all day. When you hear one of them stop at the end of an hour or so you cannot see in the speech any reason why he did not go on for another hour or stop half-an-hour sooner. He finished nothing, fixed nothing on anybody's mind, made no points. He never rose or fell. He had no climaxes. The end of each paragraph—if the thing could be divided into paragraphs—was as tame as the beginning and the close as flat as the introduction.

A speech of that kind has no great moments. One or two moments bordering on the good, somewhere within a hundred thousand miles of the great, would go a long way towards redeeming the thing, but there is too often no such moment. One great moment can redeem an hour's dribble, but if the great moment never comes the dribble will be as far from redemption as some of the constituencies will be next Thursday evening. One of the principal points of difference between a really great speaker and a weak talker is that the one has great moments and the other never has.

George Brown often had great moments in some of his speeches. We doubt very much if there is a man before the Canadian public to-day who can wake up an audience as George Brown could or who can hold their attention as long. Laurier is a more graceful speaker. Perhaps a dozen we might name are more polished, but for making climaxes that caused your blood to tingle and your hair to rise on end George Brown has no equal. He had great moments in most of his speeches.

Joseph Howe in his palmy days had, perhaps, greater moments than any orator Canada ever raised. Nova Scotia has always been the home of eloquence, and possibly there may have been other orators who equalled Howe, but none of them happened to come west in our day. If that versatile and eloquent Nova Scotian, Principal Grant, would give THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN a column or two on Nova Scotian orators and some of their great moments, the public would no doubt feel grateful.

D'Arcy McGee sometimes had great moments, and if they did not come naturally he could easily make them, or at least make a good substitute for them. His best speeches and lectures abounded in strong passages. There was always a series of climaxes through the speech and a grand one at the close.

Edward Blake's best speeches were of such a high order from start to finish that it was almost impossible for him to put in a great moment. All the moments were so near great that there was little chance to work up climaxes. For popular purposes, perhaps, Mr. Blake's speeches would have been improved by a little more rise and fall. Brilliant passages by the dozen could be selected from his best efforts, but the setting of the jewel was so near the quality of the jewel itself that the brilliance was scarcely noticed. The ex-Vice-Chancellor is a much more effective man on the platform than his great forensic brother, and one reason is because his speeches have far more variety in them. He does not keep along the same plane as the ex-Leader used to do.

Mr. Osler had some great moments in his closing speech at Woodstock. Perhaps his greatest was when commenting on the letter that helped so much to send the unfortunate man to the gallows.

Sir John Macdonald had a great moment or two in his speech on the railway difficulty in 1873. There was real power in the closing passage where he told the opposition that he was ready to face defeat. We mean that passage which began: "We are equal to other fortunes," etc. Sir John always thoroughly understood how to work up a climax that would strike the average man. He has never troubled himself much with points for philosophers, professors of theology or people of that kind, but he has always been a rare man to get up telling periods for the average Canadian elector.

We intended giving some illustrations to show how easy it is to spoil great moments in a speech or sermon, and we also intended to try to point out some of the factors that make great moments, but time is up.

P.S.—It is very easy to talk about great moments, says somebody. Of course it is easy to talk. Don't you hear the number of people talking every hour about how this country ought to be governed?

### TRADITIONALISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

BY REV. J. MUNRO GIBSON, D.D.

The word "tradition" has a bad name not altogether deserved. It is an important part of our heritage. There is a sense indeed in which even Scripture itself may be included under the head of tradition (see 2 Thess. ii. 15); but in this sense the word is now obsolete. In our time it is invariably used as applied to what is in Scripture called "the tradition of men." But even the tradition of men is by no means to be despised. It surely need not be assumed that what men hand down is not worth handing down. We should be poor indeed without this accumulated capital from the past. This applies even to our spiritual heritage; for, though after the completion of the canon of Scripture nothing further in the way of Divine revelation was to be expected, there remained the work of exploration, digging in the mine, extracting the precious ore and fashioning it for use, which has been going on ever since; and surely it would be not only ingratitude to our fathers, but disrespect to the enlightening grace of the Holy Spirit, who has never forsaken His people, to suppose that all which has been thought out since the death of the last apostles has been of so little value that none of it was worth handing down. Moreover, it is, as a rule, the best of what has been thought and said and written in the past that becomes tradition; for the law of "the survival of the fittest" holds even in the region of theological investigation. It is then a great mistake to condemn tradition *per se*. Its very existence is so far a consideration in its favour.

The reason why the word has come to be used in an evil sense is that the mass of tradition is so woven into our life that we quietly assume it without recognizing it as tradition. It is only when at some point it comes into conflict with what seems authoritative truth, that that small portion of it is summoned to the bar and branded as tradition, for the purpose of noting the fact that it is not authoritative and therefore may not be assumed, but must justify itself as fully as if it claimed recognition for the first time.

It is from this restricted sense of the word that we derive the term "traditionalism," which means the disposition, when there is a conflict between tradition of men and truth of God, to adhere to the former and reject the latter. While, then, tradition is, or ought to be, a word of honour, traditionalism is a term of reproach.

The traditions of men may come into conflict with the truth of God as revealed in nature, in history, or in the Bible. That God speaks to men through all these channels is admitted by all Christians. If, then, any of our own notions, however cherished, come into collision with a clear utterance of God in any of His "volumes," it becomes us to welcome the new light and let our own notions go. This position will no doubt be readily granted by all Christians as sound in principle; but difficulties often emerge in application, especially in the field of Biblical interpretation. The reason of this is that there has been such constant reading between the lines in a book so voluminously commented on as the Bible, that many have lost the power of distinguishing between the lines and the interlines. They will fight as eagerly for the interlineations as for the original word, not because they defend tradition as such, but because they mistake it for the Divine word; and what is worse, they will stake the whole fabric of truth upon its stability. This is the form of traditionalism most to be dreaded in our day. To take only one example, it would be curious to find how many of Milton's ideas have been fought for as passionately as if Paradise Lost had been added to the canon of Scripture.

It is important to remember that tradition may find lodgment not only between lines, and between words, but in words themselves. Of this a notable illustration is found in the word "doctrine," which in the Scripture means teaching in the largest sense, with a special view to that which is practical, the things contrary to sound doctrine, being such as lying, lust, perjury, profanity (see 1 Tim. i. 9, 10,) while it is now used in contra-distinction to that which is practical. But the most serious menace to the truth of God is the intrusion of the tradition of men into the Scripture word "inspiration." There is perhaps no line of Scripture which has suffered more from interlineation than this: "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." There has grown up around it a whole mass of tradition of what inspiration is supposed to demand. The most flagrant impossibilities have been assumed to be necessary. There has been, for example, the assumption that the Scriptures must be perfect, as God is perfect, no allowance being made for the medium through which the heavenly message comes. To meet the requirement it would be necessary first to create a new language free from the imperfections which necessarily inhere in all Roman languages; next, to impart miraculously the faculty of understanding it; and finally to replace the imperfect knowledge of the time by omniscience.

Take, for example, the demand for scientific accuracy. Suppose that some holy man of old had been inspired not

only to declare the will of God for man's salvation, but so as to be himself infallible in everything; could he have used his omniscience? No one could have understood him if he had. The demand for absolute scientific accuracy is now generally relaxed, but a stand is still made on behalf of the traditional demand in the field of literary exactitude. It is thought, for instance, that if a psalm was mistakenly attributed to David in the time of Christ, it was the duty of the Divine Saviour to use His omniscience for the correction of the literary error before He could quote the psalm. Such people do not consider that if he had assumed the role of a literary jurist He must have laid down that of a Saviour from sin. Only the tradition of men demands that all intellectual mistakes should be corrected; all that the word of God demands is what may be necessary "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Tradition is bad; but mere anti-traditionalism is not much better. There are too many mere iconoclasts, overthrowing that which is held in reverence, without furnishing what will awaken a higher reverence. We should deal very gently with the past, even when they are held with tenacity against what seems to be the word of God in nature or in Providence, or in the Bible honestly interpreted. It may be even dangerous to overturn an established tradition, if nothing be offered to take its place. Christ came "not to destroy, but to fulfil"; and His Spirit now with His people will certainly proceed on no other principle. It seems fair then to conclude that mere destroyers are not led by the Spirit of Christ any more than those reactionaries who practically deny His presence by assuming that there can be no new light shed on the old word. We may not shut God out of His world, or refuse to accept His word however He chooses to make it known; and while we are careful not to adopt too readily all that may be propounded in the name of science or of literary criticism, it behooves us to hold all our traditional notions in readiness to yield them to the superior authority of the Divine word, whether it be known in nature or in history, or in the Bible interpreted according to the light and leading of the spirit of truth.

London, England.

### SKETCHES OF TRAVEL IN EUROPE.

BY REV. E. WALLACE WAITS, D.S.C., OF KNOX CHURCH, OWEN SOUND.

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF GREAT CITIES—SOME PHASES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN LONDON.

Every kingdom has its metropolis—its political centre, the abode of its royalty, the place to which all its streams of wealth flow, and from whence its commerce, laws and literature flow to remotest provinces. According to Herschel, the great astronomer, London is the centre of the terrestrial globe; we know it to be the centre of commerce, of wealth, of intellectual and moral life. As "all roads led to Rome" when she was mistress of the world, so now every thinker and worker, every artist, every inventor, every philanthropist and preacher, seems to turn to London and to find his best home or market there, where the multitudinous transactions of mankind are concentrated and carried on.

In this vast metropolis there are to be seen individuals, families, tribes of pretty nearly every race on the habitable globe, of almost every tongue and dialect, of every colour and complexion, of every faith, religion, persuasion and opinion—however eccentric. We can assert of London more truly than Gibbon could claim for pagan Rome, that she is the centre of religious toleration, the common temple of the world. There are in London some of the best and some of the worst people upon the face of God's earth. And there are relatively more agencies for good and evil than exist in any other part of the world. It has been said: "Convert London, and London will convert the world." This mammoth metropolis presents indisputable claims to our patriotic and Christian regards. The Right Hon. John Bright, in a speech delivered at Rochdale, ten years ago, said: "A great many of you have been to London, and yet you know nothing about it. I have spent six months there every year for forty years and yet I know nothing about it. I do not believe that there is a man in it who is fairly acquainted with all the parts and districts of that vast city." And even its population is next to incredible. It has been said there are twice as many souls in London as in the largest division in France, and a half a million more than in the most crowded county of England. London is five times more populous than New York, four times more than St. Petersburg, twice more than Constantinople, two-thirds more than Paris, and one-fourth more than Peking. London numbers more souls than the kingdom of Hanover or Saxony, or Wurtemberg, or Denmark, or Scotland, or even the Dominion of Canada, or Upper and Lower Austria combined.

An enquiry into the moral and spiritual condition of London is a subject which comes home to every Briton. She has the first claim on our Christian sympathy and exertions; for we seem to hear a voice saying: "Begin at Jerusalem"; and viewing the course pursued by the early evangelists in first preaching the Gospel in and around our own land, and then carrying it into the regions beyond, we think they left us an example that we should follow in their steps. Two millions of persons are said to live in London in neglect of religious