

## Our Contributors.

### THREE MONTHS A PARISHIONER.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Put yourself in his place is a good working motto for a man who wishes to deal fairly with his fellowmen. For three months I was compelled to put myself in the hearers place in the pew, and I think I learned a few things in the pew that I could never have learned so quickly in the pulpit, perhaps never have learned there at all.

Bermuda is a good place to hear representative preachers. Clergymen from the large American cities around New York often take a little rest in March and go to Bermuda to tone up. The cathedral in Hamilton has services every day, or almost every day, in Lent and there you may hear sermons from the highest of high churchmen almost any day you choose to drop in. During the three months I was a parishioner I heard thirteen preachers of every conceivable variety preach about thirty sermons of various degrees of merit, but there was no sermon from which I could not learn something. My regular pastor was Dr. Burrows, our excellent minister in Hamilton, and I venture to hope he would give me a certificate for regular attendance and becoming docility. But there were plenty of opportunities to hear other preachers without being a rounder and I took a good many of them. Besides our own pulpit was often supplied by a representative preacher taking a holiday, and I could hear them without leaving my own pew. I began my career as a parishioner by hearing Mr. Jordan and Dr. Parsons in Toronto and wound it up in New York by hearing John Hall, Talmage and some brother who preached for Dr. Storrs. I had always felt interested in Storrs' little book on preaching without notes and I was anxious to see how he did it without notes himself. That was not the right motive to go to church from and I got soundly punished by travelling three or four miles on a cold evening, and not hearing Dr. Storrs after all. Served me about right.

Somebody may say thirteen preachers and thirty sermons are not sufficient to draw general conclusions from. All right, brother, go on with your objections and I will go on with my conclusions.

More than ever am I convinced that on an ordinary text, on an ordinary occasion by an ordinary preacher half an hour is quiet long enough for a sermon. There are exceptions no doubt. A Scotch or Irish congregation in the country that has only one service in the week, and that really enjoys good preaching may be an exception. Special occasions are exceptions. Eminent preachers who are strangers may be exceptions. But for ordinary occasions and ordinary men half an hour is quite long enough. There is no earthly use in hammering away at a congregation after a preacher has lost his grip of their attention. On a very hot day twenty or twenty-five minutes may be better than even half an hour if the preacher has his matter in good shape.

More than ever am I convinced that the textual sermon such as John Hall preaches and Spurgeon preached, or the topical sermon with a clean cut proposition such as Bushnell preached is the true ideal of a sermon. The essay style, so popular with many American preachers, is a downright failure. It is worse than a failure; it is a fraud. It is no sermon. It is weak. It is a mollusk. It has no back bone, no ribs, no nothing. It is unfit for manly delivery. A morbid fear of being considered old fashioned drives too many preachers into dawdling over a weak essay that is no sermon and can never take the place or do the work of a sermon. This subject is so large and important that it will stand more discussion that can be given to it here but it will keep.

More than ever am I convinced that the right kind of preaching a Canadian for con-

gregation lies midway between the frigid "high and dry" and the sensational. I heard the "high and dry" in abundance during Lent, and I heard a sermon in which the preacher declared that some pillars of the church are caterpillars and in which he found a place for the Scotch elder who said that though he could do nothing else he could object. Between these extremes the best pulpit work can be done. A sermon may be grave, solemn and instructive without being heavy or dull; it may be bright without being sensational in the bad sense of that word.

My three months experience leads me to ask whether it would not be a good thing in Canada to give more attention to the service without giving any less to the sermon. I know the dislike that many Presbyterians have to a liturgy of even the most modified kind. Might it not be well to ask if this dislike is not in part a swing to the other extreme from something that I need not mention? Would it not be an improvement to divide the long morning prayer into two parts and offer one part just before the sermon? Would any serious harm be done if the people should join audibly in repeating the Lord's prayer?

More than ever am I convinced that in the matter of preaching Canada does not need to take a back seat in any company. Too many of our people have a weakness for thinking that every man who preaches in a large city or whose name they see often in print is a Chalmers and a Guthrie and a Spurgeon and a Beecher rolled into one. A little travel would cure them of that weakness. I heard several representative preachers from large American cities—men who receive salaries that it would stagger most of our Canadian congregations even to think about—and I could count twenty Canadians in less time than it takes to write this sentence who preach quite as well—some of them a good deal better—than these American brethren. And you may be sure that when a man goes from home he does not take his poorest sermon with him.

#### REV. WM. PATTERSON AND COOKE'S CHURCH.\*

The structure that now bears on its front in cast iron letters the name of "Cooke's Church," and which stands at the corner of Queen and Mutual Streets, is said to be the largest Protestant church in the Dominion, and I suppose that Mr. Patterson preaches to the most numerous congregation that gathers on Sunday in Toronto. The architecture of the church is massive and dignified and does great credit to its designer. Its strongly-built, substantial walls of dark, brown-red brick, with their heavy piers and tall arched windows; its fine tower with a note of simple grandeur about it that everyone will admit; the arrangement of its porch and front gable, the latter crossed with an arched of stone pillars and arches; its great, simple roof, and the low, tile-roofed tower that forms its west gallery-staircase, make up an exterior that will always excite the attention and interest of those who care for solidity and fitness in architecture. There is no showiness about it, but there is a great deal of character; such ornament as there is of a grave and suitable sort; it has the beauty of simple massiveness. You have no doubt that it is a place of worship.

It is my opinion that the congregation at Cooke's Church is composed of grave, earnest, solid people, who have a conscience, who keep their word and who are not turned about by every wind of doctrine. I saw great, substantial, young men come in and sit down with quiet, childlike reverence, men whose complexion was red and healthy with outdoor work, you could mark where the tan lost itself in the whiter forehead which had been protected by the hat, and you knew that their arms were like iron, and their thews and sinews of the sort that come through temperance, self-restraint, hard

\* Conde used from *The Week* of May 3rd.

work and the fear of God. I saw tall, well-built, self-respecting, unfrivolous young women with "Old Country" inscribed in legible characters all over them, and, of course, women of the same sort who were not tall. I saw old men, with the marks of years of faith and patience and pious thought in their faces, coming in with their wives and children.

When Rev. W. Patterson comes in and takes his seat at the rear of the pulpit, you see before you a robust, aggressive young Irishman of thirty or thirty-five. He has more strength of character than intellect in his face, and more sincerity and earnestness than speculation in his eye. He is in deadly earnest in all he does, and the seriousness of the outlook he habitually takes on life is only modified by the buoyancy of his youthful vigour. He looks like a fighter and if you were to tell me that he had once been a good boxer, and hadn't forgotten how to parry and deliver now, I should say that there is nothing in his appearance to belie the statement. His abundant hair is black and neatly brushed; his strong, earnest face clean-shaven. He has a very firm and purposeful mouth and a very determined chin. He has a preoccupied air as he comes in and sits down, and in a few moments he opens the service with a few rapid, simple words of prayer. Then you know that he has a pleasant voice and that his pronunciation is provincial Irish. But there is a force and magnetism about him that are very attractive. The man is plainly so sincere and so much absorbed in what he is doing that you cannot but attend to all he does and says. He announces a psalm to be sung. It is the quaint, old Presbyterian paraphrase that looks so odd to unaccustomed eyes, and that pays no attention to the ordinary rules of versification. He reads a verse of it in a voice that makes you think it must to him be transfigured by years of sacred associations. There is an artless appreciation of it in his voice that is very striking. He is not thinking of how he is reading it—his congregation has faded from his perception; he is absorbed in this quaint verse:

The Lord of us bath mindful been,  
And He will bless us still.  
He will the house of Israel bless,  
Bless Aaron's house He will.  
Both small and great that fear the Lord,  
He will them surely bless,  
The Lord will you, you and your seed,  
Aye more and more increase.

When the organ strikes up the tune of "Dundee" and the choir and the great congregation stand up to sing the psalm you can tell that they appreciate it too. The singing at Cooke's Church is earnest and massive; it is psalm-singing pure and simple, but there is a depth and volume about it that fairly sweeps you off your feet. The combined tone of that long row of female voices is a thing to hear. There is no striving after effect in this psalmody, but it gives you the idea of a great reserve of strength. The male voices in the rear support the strain. The precentor seems to enter into the meaning of the words and sings away with a vigor and spirit worthy of a chief singer in the sanctuary. The congregation join in with a heartiness and vigor that are contagious. So far as I am aware it seems to me the best congregational singing in Toronto. I read in a Toronto newspaper not long ago a report of a meeting of a Presbyterian church at which one of the members advocated some more attractive feature than plain psalmody being introduced into the service. He wanted solo-singing and ornate anthems, and said that the church "must keep up with the procession." There was a liking for these things abroad, and they tended to draw a congregation. That, to my mind, was simply looking at a church service as an entertainment, and from a purely commercial point of view. It is, of course, possible to regard a church service in that light, but I am disposed to think that anyone hearing the massive and satisfying singing in Cooke's Church can-

not but feel that it is of the sort best adapted, on the whole, to the Presbyterian order of worship.

There were more psalms and paraphrases, and again the minister led the prayers of the congregation in a simple and heartfelt way. He read the scriptures twice and made one or two comments. While the collection was being taken up the choir sang the hymn with the refrain "Till He Comes," with great sweetness and feeling.

When Mr. Patterson stands up to preach he reads his text in a plain, straightforward sort of a way and begins to speak with a rapid and energetic utterance. His manner of speech is very direct, earnest, and to the point. There is not a trace of the academic about him either in language or manner. A man of the people, he addresses the people in the people's own language and they attentively listen to every word. His sermon on Sunday morning was upon Simon the Cyrenian who bore the cross of Jesus. The preacher used neither manuscript nor notes. He entered immediately upon a most interesting description of the trial and crucifixion of Christ, and showed how it was that Simon was compelled by the Roman soldiers to bear the cross. The simplicity and force of this narrative could hardly have been improved upon. It formed a starting point for several cogent lessons which seemed to flow easily and naturally out of it. It also placed the hearers in a suitable frame of mind for receiving those lessons. Mr. Patterson has the Irish gift of warm and moving eloquence, and he has a good deal of what I can find no better name for than mother wit. He sees the points in a subject that are likely to strike home; he gives little suggestive touches that, somehow, stay by one. "The Roman soldiers took off the purple robe from Jesus; we do not read that they removed the crown of thorns." "Simon found it very hard to have to bear the cross, but while he was bearing it, where was Jesus? Not far off."

#### THE MISSION STEAMER "DAY- SPRING."

MR. EDITOR,—Your issue of April 24th, says: "The new *Dayspring* is on the way. . . . Instructions have been received in Britain to proceed at once with her construction on the Clyde."

In view of the above, and of the frequency with which the scheme has been advocated, its progress set forth, and its claims for support pressed upon our Church, it is but fair to the Church that a fuller statement should be made as to who ordered the steamer and what the different churches interested have done regarding it.

#### THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY.

This is an advisory body, composed of representatives from all the Australian Churches, in which they take united action in matters of common interest at Home, and more especially in their mission work abroad; and its findings, while not authoritative, are usually accepted as decisive.

When Dr. Paton returned to Australia, he first asked, for his scheme, the approval of this Federal Assembly, but the opposition was so strong that he withdrew his request before the matter came to a vote.

#### THE VICTORIAN CHURCH

The Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Australia, whose Home agent Dr. Paton has been since leaving the Islands in 1881, has at length, for the first time, sanctioned the scheme. The Foreign Mission Committee of that church has ordered the steamer; and since they have done so it may be well to note the steps which have preceded their present action.

Ten years ago, when the mission was wholly dependent upon the *Dayspring*, and there was no prospect of commercial steamers running to the Islands, the missionaries thought that a vessel with auxiliary steam power would be desirable, and Dr.