

Our Contributors.

DR. POLONIUS INTRODUCES HIS SON TO SOME MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

BY KNOXIAN.

In order that you may enjoy yourself, my son, at the meeting of the General Assembly, I wish to make you acquainted with some of the members. Allow me to introduce you to

THE SILENT MEMBER

In the General Assembly, as in every deliberative body, a large number of the members never make speeches. They are silent for several reasons. Some have no taste for debate. They may be good preachers, good speakers on the platform, fine scholars and good men all round, but they have no liking for ecclesiastical discussions, and they satisfy their consciences by merely giving their votes. Some are too busy to examine the questions well enough to speak on them, and being sensible men they have never acquired the faculty of speaking on matters that they know nothing about. Others remain silent because they believe they are not well qualified for taking part in debate. Perhaps they sit in the Assembly for the first time, and have not become familiar with the working of the ecclesiastical machinery. Some of these are much better qualified than some who speak quite frequently, but they do not think so. The Assembly suffers and the whole Church suffers just because many worthy men are too modest to allow their voices to be heard. They sit still on their seats whilst others speak by the hour, who don't work half as hard or raise one-tenth part of the funds that these modest men do. You will think it queer, my son, to see half a dozen members whose congregations do not unitedly contribute a hundred dollars for the support of the colleges, speaking by the hour on the college question, while some modest brother whose congregation pays five or six hundred dollars does not say a word. But, my son, queer things do happen even in General Assemblies. A large number of members remain silent because they think there is too much talking. They are too sensible to say, "There is too much talk," and then do some more. The Plymouth Brethren say there are too many sects, and then proceed to mend the matter by forming another, and that the narrowest, most bitter and most exclusive sect on this footstool. A General Assembly man who would say, "There is too much talk," and then talk himself, would have no more sense than a "Plym." A Presbyterian with no more sense than a "Plym" needs to be reconstructed, enlarged, built on a new basis, and done over generally.

I wish you to understand, my son, that there is no special merit in being silent in a deliberative body. No man has a right to boast that he sat in the General Assembly ten or fifteen years, and never opened his mouth. Perhaps he would have spoken several times in these years had he done his whole duty. Silence is not conclusive evidence of learning, wisdom, genius, piety, Church loyalty, or superiority of any kind. That famous philosopher, Josh Billings, says there is no substitute for wisdom, but silence comes nearer it than anything else. True, my son, quite true. Many a man is considered wise simply because he says nothing, just as thousands of men are considered dignified simply because they are dull. Therefore, my son, don't attach too much importance to silence. The oyster is silent. The clam makes no speeches. The oyster and the clam, though useful, are not the noblest specimens of the animal kingdom. Silence is not the sum of all the virtues. Always, remember that if *somebody* did not speak, and make motions, and read reports, and such, business could never be done.

Now, my son, allow me to introduce you to

THE SAFE MEMBER.

I don't mean Dr. Reid. The worthy Doctor is perhaps the safest, but is not by any means the only safe member. Not long ago an eloquent friend of your father's indulged in a fine rhetorical flourish about Dr. Reid's safety. He said the Doctor "had invested millions of the Church's money and never lost a cent." That flourish was literally true. The Church owes Dr. Reid to-day as much as, perhaps more than, it owes to any living man. It owes him a great deal more than it ever can, or perhaps ever will, try to pay. But, my son, safe men are needed in departments other

than the financial. In these days safe men are greatly needed in the colleges. One of the colleges of the Southern Presbyterian Church is well nigh wrecked at present because a professor persists in teaching a modified form of Evolution. In fact, safe men are needed in every department of Church work. There are restless spirits abroad, men who wish to change everything merely to gratify their love of change. It grieves the hearts of such people to look up these fine pure mornings and see that we have the same sun. They have a quarrel with the Almighty because He does not give them a new sun every morning. They don't see why He does not make the earth turn the contrary way on its axis, just for the sake of a change. They think its course around the sun should also be changed occasionally. The trifling fact that such a change would cause a collision in the solar system is neither here nor there in the matter. What signifies the wrecking of the solar system if one wants a change. Nothing pleases a man of this kind so much as to be able to prove that his grandfather was a combination of ass and fool. If there is anything in the saying that "like produces like," most likely he was. Now then, my son, you see that if there are people of this kind in the world, some of them may get into prominent places in the Church; and just so long as this danger exists, safe men are indispensable if the Church is not to be wrecked.

But, my son, I must warn you against a spurious imitation of safe men. Safe men are so useful and so much respected that they have spurious imitators. I mean those people who oppose progress of every kind and fight against every change, however necessary and desirable it may be. They take no risks, shoulder no responsibility, oppose progress of every kind. They think that safety consists in standing still. These are not safe men, my son. They are almost as dangerous as the wreckers I told you about a moment ago. Safety does *not* always consist in standing still. Quite frequently the only safe course is to move on. People who stand still and are *too safe* to build a new church until their congregation scatters are wrecking the congregation just as certainly as they would if they set up a graven image in it for the people to worship. Therefore, my son, don't suppose that a safe man of the right kind means a man opposed to all progress. Brakes can never make a train go. They are useful, but they are a dead failure as a substitute for steam. If Columbus had been a safe man America would not have been discovered. A really safe man, my son, is one that moves forward steadily, wisely and quietly, not so fast that he runs off the track, and not so slow that everything runs over him and goes past him.

Now, my son, I wish to introduce you to

THE SUGGESTIVE MEMBER.

He is really about the best member we have. He does not abound to any very great extent when hard questions are being settled. On some questions—college consolidation, for example—he is conspicuous by his absence. One suggestive member is worth more in a Church court than a hundred thousand fault-finding members. Anybody can growl when things go wrong, but it requires a *man* to suggest how they can be put right. An idiot knows when a boiler bursts, but he could not run the engine. An Indian caught five hundred miles on the other side of Prince Albert would perhaps yell if he saw a train go off the track, but he would probably not be able to make any practical suggestions about putting it on again. Men are useful, my son, in every deliberative body in proportion as they are able to put and keep things right. Neither the world nor the Church will ever lack men who have just enough of capacity to shout when anything appears to go wrong. They often shout in both places when there is nothing wrong. The kind of man needed most in the world and the Church is the higher kind of man who can tell how things are to be put right. Your mother and I would like to see you become a suggestive member, my son. That is the only kind of member that really amounts to anything in the end. Sensible people soon get disgusted with men who can do nothing but criticise and find fault and worry those who are working. If the Church is to make progress, somebody must indicate the lines in which she is to move and then *move her*. Don't you, my son, be found among the crowd who can do nothing better than nibble at the men who are doing the Lord's work. Suggest something, and do something, and be a credit to your Church and to your parents.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN LONDON, ENGLAND.

BY REV. JOHN ROBBINS, GLENCOE.

London is called the modern Babylon. But ancient Babylon had not in it a well organized and thoroughly aggressive Presbyterianism, otherwise it might have endured unto this day. We do not believe Lord Macaulay's prediction will ever be realized of the New Zealander viewing the ruins of the great city from London Bridge, because the efforts put forth to evangelize the city will act as the salt to preserve and sanctify it. Among the agencies at work Presbyterianism occupies a very honourable position, because of the quality of the work done. Our Church is growing in the metropolis, and year by year enlarges its borders, and will yet occupy a foremost position on English soil. Why?

First.—It finds in London a wide sphere—a city of over four million inhabitants. It includes within its inner circle Hampstead and Stamford Hill on the north, Bromley (Middlesex) and Woolwich on the east, Streatham and Sydenham on the south, Kensington and Putney on the west. The area thus included is 122 square miles or, in another form, it is equal to a square having about eleven miles to each side. But the importance of this city as a centre of evangelistic toil is not measured by its mileage, but by its population. To-day, as we have seen, more than four million people reside within this area, and every year adds to this mighty host. The natural increase alone is 52,000, for, according to the Registrar General's returns just published, the birth rate is 1,000 per week greater than the death rate. Add to this the immigrants from the country and abroad, and we find an annual increase of 65,000 souls to the population. Whereunto this city will grow none can tell; but amidst this vast and ever-growing population the Presbyterian Church is doing a great work. Thoroughly established amongst the Churches, it has adapted itself to the people, at the same time maintaining the standards of doctrine in all their integrity and distinctive features of Church government. It is aggressive, establishing its mission stations in the new parts of London that are continually springing up to meet the wants of the population.

Second.—Presbyterianism is needed. Dr. McEwan, the newly elected Moderator, at the Synod in London last month, said, "Efficiency is now the test of every institution as of every machine." And, tested on this principle, the Presbyterian Church in London is not found wanting. It is demonstrated to be a sound Protestant Church, with an admirable system of government—not Congregational, but Presbyterian. It is painfully apparent that the Established Church is tending to Romanism. Go to the Church of the Madeleine in Paris or to the Oratory in Brompton (Cardinal Manning's church), and then to St. Paul's Cathedral, and you will be reminded that Ritualism is an imitation of the Papacy. Candles upon the high altar of the Madeleine, candles upon the altar of St. Paul's. Postures and positions and the intonations of the one imitated in the other. Protestants bowing at the name of Jesus, and crossing themselves at the repetition of the Apostolic Creed. This is coquetting with Popery, as Bishop Ryle of Liverpool declares. But the spirit of Wycliffe is not dead, nor of Latimer or Hooper. Positive Protestantism is loved by tens of thousands, and it is found in Presbyterian Churches in its purest and best form; and because of this the Church of John Knox and Thomas Chalmers will grow like a cedar in Lebanon in the great metropolis. The teachings of the Shorter Catechism or the Westminster Confession, expositions of the faith once delivered to the saints, cannot be construed into the teachings of Sacerdotalism.

Third.—The government of the Church meets a felt want in England. It is not a rope of sand like Congregationalism, but a government with all the security and protection afforded by the Church Courts on the one hand, while the liberty of the congregation in its pastoral choice is guaranteed on the other. The love of constitutional government is very strong in the motherland, and constitutional government and Presbyterianism in the ecclesiastical world are interchangeable terms. This form of Church polity is admirably adapted to metropolitan thought and feeling.

The Presbyterian Church of England is wise in its generation to disseminate Scriptural knowledge amongst the young. The Synod last year offered the