

Our Contributors.

WHAT IS LIBERTY?

BY KNOXONIAN.

We smile at the Irishman who explained the draft riots in New York by saying they were "forcin the boys to volunteer." We laugh at the Irish orator who capped the climax on British liberty in this way: "One of the inalienable rights of a British subject is to do as he pleases; and if he doesn't do as he pleases he should be compelled to!" Either of these sons of Erin had as correct ideas on the question of liberty as a good many people have who are shouting about liberty in church and state at the present time. What too many people mean by liberty is the right to say and do just what they please, without any regard for the rights and privileges of their neighbours.

The small boy wants liberty to do just as he pleases in the family. The school boy claims the liberty of doing as he likes in school. Some students shout about liberty if wholesome college regulations are enforced; and a few citizens think that liberty means the right to hand over the country to any neighbor who may want to add to his real estate. Liberty of speech is liberty to slander your neighbour; and liberty of the press means liberty to libel anybody the editor does not happen to like. Anarchists are bad people but they are logical. The front of their offending is that they carry false ideas about liberty to their logical results. One of these unfortunates who came to grief in Chicago a few years ago said he understood that in America a man might do as he pleased. It pleased him to throw bombs among the police. That kind of amusement might be pleasant for him but it was hard on the police; and the authorities put an end to it in a very effectual way. The misguided Anarchists learned in the school of experience that liberty, even in the United States, does not consist in doing just as you please, without any regard to the rights of your neighbours. The fees they had to pay for the lesson were high.

It cannot be too frequently or too forcibly stated these days that each man doing just what he pleases is not liberty; it is the most cruel kind of tyranny. Liberty to be liberty must be exercised with due regard to the rights of others. Society cannot exist for a week if each man is allowed to do as he pleases. Nothing would turn this world into a hell faster than to allow every man to do as he likes. Every command in the decalogue would be violated within the first hour that restraint was abolished.

Our Presbyterian neighbors across the line are having a lively time discussing in the Professor's chair. What does liberty in the Presbyterian pulpit mean? Does it imply the right of a pastor to undermine the faith of his congregation in the fundamental doctrines of God's word? Does it mean that he may drive a coach and four through his ordination vows? How much liberty should a professor of theology have? Should he be allowed to lecture in such a way as to make it reasonably probable that his students will teach congregations to doubt rather than believe? Ought he to be allowed to belittle and disparage God's word or to shape his teaching in such a way as to make it highly probable that some of his students will do so? The Church has said, in a distinct enough manner, what it wants men to preach and teach. The preacher or teacher who is not satisfied with the amount of liberty he has should surely say how much he wants. He got his position by solemnly vowing that he believed and would do certain things. If he wishes to believe or do certain other things he might condescend to say what they are. Friends of law and order have a perfect right to ask every minister in the Church howling about liberty to say how much liberty he wants. In some cases the only true reply would be that the man wants to retain the position and emoluments of a pastor or professor and preach or teach just what he pleases. He attaches exactly the same

meaning to liberty in the Church that the Chicago Anarchists attached to liberty in the state.

The cry of a youthful preacher in the Presbyterian Church for liberty would be very amusing were it not so exasperating. The young man gets his education mainly at the expense of orthodox people in the Church, some of whom have not much money to spend in theological education. Those excellent people build, equip and endow the college; they pay the professors who teach the young man, furnish him with a library, with comfortable lecture rooms and perhaps with board at reduced rates during his college course. He is licensed and ordained, and solemnly vows to "maintain and defend" the doctrines of his Church. He gets a congregation and a manse on the understanding that he took his ordination vows as an honest man; but he is scarcely warm in his place until he begins to howl about ecclesiastical tyranny, and cry for what he calls liberty. Nobody asked the young man to become a Presbyterian minister. The Church could easily have done without him—perhaps better without him than with him. He voluntarily took his ordination vows. Financially and socially he is better than if he had not become a minister. He might have been driving a mule team had he remained at home. But instead of working for the Church of his choice as he promised to do, he tries to undermine the institution he vowed to uphold. And there are old women in men's clothes who blubber over him if the Church asks him to keep his contract; or go out as any honest man should do.

There is just one other case more exasperating than this one, and that is the case of a minister who leaves another Church and comes into the Presbyterian on what he calls "conviction"; but is no sooner safe on board than he begins to try to scuttle the Presbyterian ship. He has a better salary and a better position in every way than he could ever have possessed in the Church he left. Perhaps his own denomination was glad to get rid of him. Possibly as he went over they said it was "more blessed to give than to receive." But the new arrival has hardly taken his seat in the Presbytery before he begins to sigh for liberty. Perhaps he had hard work to squeeze himself in; perhaps he button-holed every member of the reception committee; quite likely he got several influential members of the Assembly to put in a good word for him; but the moment he got to work he wanted to revise the Confession, change the discipline and revolutionize the Church generally. Out with such humbug.

There is not a club or a secret society, or a national society, or a fire company, or an organization of any kind that would tolerate for an hour the brassy insolence that the Presbyterian Church is too often asked to stand.

A SCOTCH MEETING-HOUSE FIFTY YEARS AGO.

"Meeting-house" describes north of the Tweed what "Chapel" describes south of it—a dissenting place of worship. The National Zion was and still is designated the "Kirk." Nothing could be plainer and more unpretentious than the ordinary Meeting-house. Of architectural ornament it was absolutely destitute—a barn-like structure, and generally so seated as to hold the largest number of people in the smallest amount of space. The Kirk, even in rural parishes, was a little more imposing, if from nothing else than its belfry, which it was thought it had alone the legal right to possess. The Dissenters must have no hell!

But the attachment of Scotch Dissenters to their Meeting-house was not affected by its humble appearance. Principle had separated them from the Kirk, and held them firmly together in this new and apparently uninviting fold.

The edifice in which the congregation assembled, whose services we are going to describe, was one of the plainest of these plain ecclesiastical structures. But the congregation had a long history; its roots went far down into the first half of the

last century; and the spirit of its founders had passed into every new generation of its members. The fathers lived anew in the children, and the children warmly cherished the memories of the fathers.

The geographical situation was one of singular beauty; at the roots of the southern hills which rose behind, with little wood but green to the summits, a stream of purest water curving round it, and away northwards the land spreading out till new hills rose dimly on the horizon. A little village relieved the solitude, and was a centre of social life in the sparsely peopled valley. This was the scene of the Sunday gatherings, whose story is, for our changed times, not without its interest.

What was a Sunday service in that rural Meeting-house fifty years ago? No bell tolled to convene the worshippers. The Kirk's bell was not heard till an hour after the Seceders had assembled. But they were punctual, though many of them came from distant places among the hills. It was an interesting sight to see them converging from all parts in little streams to this remote sanctuary. That weekly sight was itself a religious education. In summer they usually gathered in little knots on the green before the church conversing, and then, when the venerable minister was seen approaching from his manse there was a general movement towards the doors, and soon every seat in the area and gallery was filled.

The service lasted usually for three hours. In the hottest of the summer season there was sometimes a break of half an hour or so, but this was not often. When once in, everyone resigned himself to the protracted diet. Usually after the devotional exercises there was the reading of a chapter from the Bible with what are called "comments", or brief, pithy observations as the preacher passed along. This was followed by the singing of a psalm; and then came the exposition, which formally traced and unfolded the course of thought of the sacred writers. Book after book was gone through in this way. This was what was known as "lecturing," and when a preacher had a talent for it it was greatly relished, especially by the older people. And after the lecture was ended, a psalm sung, and a short prayer offered up, then came the sermon, which was distinct in its structure and method from the lecture. It had so many "heads" or main divisions, and under each "head" so many "particulars" or sub-divisions. To a young mind not over attentive these were apt to be a little confusing. The "heads" were sometimes all announced at the beginning of the discourse, and when the preacher was heard saying "fourthly" the inference was that he was near the close; but "fourthly" might be only a "particular" under an early head, and therefore a long way from the end! If the hearer, whether old or young, could report at home what were the "heads and particulars" he was considered to have heard with profit.

Nothing but the Psalms and Paraphrases were sung, and these often in a "dreich" and doleful way. The precursor of our earliest remembrance led the psalmody without choir or instrument of any kind, and might have sung anything, for nobody could make out a word he uttered. His successor was a little more spirited, and introduced "repeating tunes," but some of the older members were greatly incensed by them. One farmer used to pluck off his spectacles, close his book, and look unutterable things, as this profane melody (for so he regarded it) went on. Had anything approaching Sankey's lively singing been attempted, more than one old Seceder would have had apoplexy!

The prayers were long, especially the opening one. The worshippers sat when singing but stood at prayer, or at least professed to stand. Their eyes were usually not shut. The different postures assumed through the long prayer were singular. Few stood upright all the time, and none in one position. Some were half doubled up over their pew, others turned their backs on the minister and then faced round again, while from a wearied young-

ster a half suppressed sigh might be heard as if nature were well-nigh exhausted.

Very carefully were lecture and sermon prepared, very carefully were they committed to memory, and as carefully were they delivered. In substance the sermons were mainly doctrinal, and so were the lectures; for Paul's Epistles chiefly occupied the preacher. They were hard logical discussions of the Calvinistic type, and if they had not been so they would not have been relished. The Scotch Dissenter of that time was nothing if not argumentative. He fed on the writings of Boston, the Confession of Faith, and the Shorter Catechism. The practical was not altogether neglected in the pulpit, but it did not bulk so largely as the doctrinal.

On the homeward journey both lecture and sermon were keenly discussed; and the youngsters were expected to be able, in the evening, when they had got home and were receiving their usual Sunday lesson, to give some account of the "heads and particulars" of the latter. And here, as we have referred to home training, we may say that it largely consisted in going over the "Mother's Catechism" with the younger children, and the "Shorter Catechism" with the elder.

(To be continued.)

BEWARE OF AN IMPOSTER.

Mr. Editor: The Board of Management of the Toronto Children's Aid Society have just learned that a man carrying a copy of their annual report has been imposing upon the public under the pretence of collecting for the society. To serve his purpose more fully he is said to have falsely entered as subscribers the names of well-known friends of unfortunate children in the book he uses with fictitious amounts opposite them. The society has hitherto relied on voluntary contributions, and if it be found necessary to call in the aid of collectors they will be furnished with books properly authenticated by the signatures of the officers of the society. The society will be greatly obliged if you will warn the public of the imposture.

Yours, etc.,

J. Stuart Coleman, Secretary.
J. K. Macdonald, President.
30 Confederation Life Chambers, Mar. 3.

REV. ROBERT DEWAR.

The recent death of the Rev. Robert Dewar, formerly pastor of the Lake Shore congregation, Annan, Ontario, removed from our midst another of the old pioneers, who did valiant service in the early days.

Mr Dewar was born at Aberdeen, Scotland, March 26th, 1811, and was brought up in Cupar, Fifeshire. In his boyhood he was at first very averse to learning, but afterwards became as devoted as he had been careless. About the time he reached manhood he determined to study for the ministry. In 1838 he entered the University of St. Andrews, from which he graduated in 1842 with honours in mathematics and physics. Among his fellow-students he was known as a hard worker of very superior abilities, who stood in the first rank as a mathematician. After the completion of his course in St. Andrews he entered the Divinity Hall of the U. P. Church in Edinburgh. At that time five sessions in theology were required. These were very enjoyably spent by him under the tuition of Dr. John Brown, Dr. Eadie and Dr. Harper. It was certainly a memorable period for a student of theology in Scotland.

During the intervals of his attendance at the Theological Hall, he engaged in teaching. Most of his work in this capacity was done in the village of Kettle. As a teacher he gave entire satisfaction and won the esteem of all who knew him. He had always a very high and noble conception of the teaching profession, and his own work was skilful and thorough. He was never satisfied with performing the mere routine of work required of every teacher. In everything he sought to awaken in his pupils the same unquenchable thirst for knowledge he himself felt, and succeeded in a marked degree. Being a theological student, he naturally endeavoured also to quicken the development