

Our Contributors.

A CONVENTION OF OLD SCHOOL MORAL REFORMERS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

A convention of moral reformers of the old school was recently held in Imagination Hall. The object of the convention was to discuss certain modern methods of dealing with various evils that afflict the people and, if possible, to suggest a remedy for these evils. The attendance was not very large, it was generally supposed that the old school men could not advance any new theories of reform or suggest any new method of working. The supposition proved correct, as all the speakers were in favour of working mainly on the old lines and held tenaciously to the opinion that moral evil can be removed only by divine power. Whilst not opposed to any Scriptural method of dealing with prevailing evils, the convention was a unit in holding that there is no radical cure for sinful human nature but the power that changes the human heart.

Abraham was the first speaker. He said he was strongly in favour of the family altar and of religious training in the household. He had moved about a good deal; but he never settled down in any place without erecting his family altar. He had always exercised authority in his family. When destruction was coming upon Sodom the fact was communicated to him because he had "commanded his children and his household." He did not believe in attending conventions while the moral training of one's own household was neglected. He did not believe that any man who neglected the moral and spiritual training of his own children had any real regard for the welfare of his neighbours. Sarah, his wife, had never attended a convention. She stayed at home and trained Isaac. Isaac had turned out well. Lot, his nephew, had not erected his family altar and the result was that his children went to destruction. They associated too much with the Sodomites and the end was ruin. The speaker then dwelt at length and with great power on the influence of good home training and expressed the fear that in these days of numerous meetings and conventions home training was neglected even in the families of some who figure prominently as moral reformers. He showed that the State is simply an aggregate of families and the State can never be raised higher morally or religiously than the families that compose it. He knew that many considered him behind the age in his views; but he must strongly insist that one of the best safeguards against sin was parental authority in every household and a family altar in every home.

Moses then addressed the convention. He said he had had considerable experience in his time. For forty years he had been the leader of over a million of his fellow-countrymen. He had no faith in the power of mere laws to regulate the conduct of the people. Good laws were useful and his nation had in operation the best moral, social and sanitary laws the world ever saw. But he had found that the best laws ever framed could not change the human heart. His people had committed a grievous sin under the very shadow of Mount Sinai. Before he could come down from the mountain with the Decalogue they made a golden calf and worshipped it. Even the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai did not keep them from idolatry. He had not one word to say against good laws. In their own place they were useful. Nor would he say that the occasional violation of a law proved that the law was not a good one and that its operation on the whole was not beneficial. All the laws given to his people, even the Decalogue, had been frequently violated. What he warned the convention against was the theory that laws in and of themselves had any regenerating or elevating power. His experience of forty years fully convinced him that there was only one power in the universe that could elevate human nature. In times of perplexity he had always called for that power and it was always sent. He had no faith in a moral reformer that did not pray.

David was the next speaker. He began by saying that he had observed some of our moral reformers expected help from the political parties. He doubted very much if the help that came from that quarter—if any did come—would do any real good in the end. He had seen a good many politicians in his time and knew something of party politics. The moral reformers of his time did not go to the house of Saul and say:

"Will you help us if we give you our votes," and then come to him and say: "King David, if you don't give us what we ask we will give our support to the house of Saul." The house of Saul would, he believed, have promised anything rather than go out of power. His son, Absalom, had raised a rebellion. What would be thought of a moral reformer who would go to Absalom and say: "Young man, if you give us the laws we want we will help you to upset your father's government," and then come to me and say: "Old man, if you don't do as we wish, we will turn your government out of office and put Absalom in power?" Absalom would have promised anything to get into office, and he was not a much better moral reformer than some Canadian politicians are. That way of doing things might be all right but, with his knowledge of politicians, he had not much faith in it. He would not oppose it in any way; but he had not as much faith in such work as some people seemed to have. While in favour of good laws he wished to state most emphatically that he knew of but one power that could successfully deal with sin. For his views on this point he referred them to Psalm li. He was pained to know that some so-called moral reformers spoke about their former sins in public in such a way as to show they were not ashamed of them. Sackcloth and ashes appeared to have gone out of fashion. He thought that a man dragged out of the gutter should wait until he had the filth scraped off him before he went on the platform to lecture his neighbours.

Peter then addressed the convention. He said he would confine his remarks to one point—the absolute need of divine power to change and purify the human heart. He saw the truth of his theory tested at Jerusalem. A very large congregation had assembled on the day of Pentecost. They had come from all quarters and spoke several languages. It was not a promising congregation to preach to. When he began some of them shouted that he and the other disciples had taken too much wine. He went on and did his best, but his words had little effect. At last the divine power came and three thousand of them were converted in a moment. Since that time he had never relied on any other agency than the divine power. Good laws were well enough in their place. They would no doubt help and as far as they went were good enough; but he had not the slightest confidence in law as a regenerating or elevating force.

Paul was the last speaker. He said that at one time he had attached great importance to laws and regulations of different kinds, for he had been a strict Pharisee. These laws, though conscientiously observed, had never changed his nature. Nothing subdued him until he was stricken down on the Damascus road. Soon afterwards he went over all Asia Minor, across into Greece and west as far as Rome, and in all his experience he found that there was only one power that could change a man's heart. He never saw a man permanently changed by any power but that one and he never saw a man that power could not change. He recommended it on all occasions and in all places. He had no objection to good laws and good regulations of every kind; but he ventured to assert that any man who depended on acts of parliament alone to regenerate or elevate human nature was making a radical mistake. The root of every form of evil was sin. There was just one power that could remove sin. He was very much afraid this fundamental truth that he had so often taught in his Epistles was being forgotten in these modern days. He would favour every human means used to restrain sin and lessen suffering; but, whilst doing so, he must insist everywhere and always that the only and all-sufficient remedy for sin was the power of the Divine Spirit. He might add that he had no faith in the efforts of a moral reformer who was not under the influence of the Spirit. A man who had no love for God had no real love for his fellow-man.

The convention unanimously resolved to support any wise laws that might reasonably be expected to check vice and lessen suffering, but to put their entire trust in the divine power as the only agency that can change and elevate the human heart.

A HOLIDAY TRIP.

To reach the Continent from London, there are several routes across the Channel. Desiring to visit Antwerp, we selected the route *via* Harwich, whence a steamer sails every evening at nine o'clock, landing her passengers in Antwerp about eight o'clock next

morning. These Channel boats do not by any means resemble the palatial steamers which ply the inland lakes and rivers frequented by tourists in Canada, nor is the Channel trip generally as free from seasickness as the sail between Montreal and Quebec. We were favoured, however, with pleasant weather and on a lovely summer morning reached Antwerp, where this year an International Exhibition is being held on an extensive scale. The grounds were most beautifully and artistically laid out, the numerous fountains and miniature lakes, the walks and lawns and shrubs and flowers combining to render the exterior almost equally attractive with the interior. The Canadian exhibit, though we saw it highly commended in some recent Canadian papers, was not such as to cause us to go off into raptures and proclaim with a feeling of pride to those whom we met there that we hailed from Canada. Whenever we think of that exhibit we see in our mind's eye a tall self-feeding coal stove with a great piece broken off the coal receptacle near the top, and beside it are two visitors, one of whom, in answer to the question what the hole is intended for, replies: "That is where the coal is fed"—ignorant of the fact that the piece has been accidentally broken, probably in the transit of the stove from the foundry in Canada to the exhibition building at Antwerp.

The numerous small market carts drawn by dogs, and generally driven by women, are among the singular sights one witnesses in this quaint city, the home of Rubens the celebrated artist, many of whose paintings are found in the cathedral and museum.

From Antwerp we proceeded to Brussels, the most beautiful city, with the exception of Paris, which we saw on the Continent.

In the immediate vicinity is the field of Waterloo, where we spent an afternoon, and from the top of the mound had pointed out to us by the loquacious guide the position of the respective armies at different hours of the decisive day.

From Brussels our route lay by Aix-la-Chapelle, Cologne and Rouen, thence

UP THE RHINE TO BINGEN.

On the Rhine steamer we were joined by Rev. Dr. Gibson, of London, formerly of Montreal, who, with members of his family, was spending a short vacation on the Continent. Nowadays many decry the Rhine trip, and speak of it as far inferior to the sail on the Hudson from Albany to New York. We are not of those who thus speak. Art has done a great deal to beautify the Hudson. Nature and art combined are seen all along the Rhine, and almost every step of the way is classic, historic ground. The towering mountain tops, the numberless old castles and ancient ruins, the smiling villages and the vine-clad hills on either side all lend charm and beauty to the scene and make a day on the Rhine one never to be forgotten.

Leaving the steamer at Bingen, we there spend the night, and next morning take the train for Heidelberg, where we rest a day or two, visiting its university and its grand old castle.

From Heidelberg we proceed to Basle, and are quite entranced with our first sight of lovely Switzerland. In succession are visited Lucerne, Flueve, Brunig, Brienz, Greisbach, Interlachen, Thun, Berne, Fribourg, Lausanne, Chillon, Montreux and Geneva. Any attempt to describe these places would be in vain. To copy from the numerous guide-books or to give one's own impressions would convey but the most shadowy idea of the reality. They must be seen to be appreciated. Never shall we forget the evening of our arrival in Lucerne, when the lovely village and the surrounding mountains and even the lake itself were all illuminated—a veritable fairy land it seemed. The magnificent panorama seen from

THE TOP OF THE RHINE

is itself alone worth a visit to Switzerland. The places of interest and of beauty all through the country are so numerous that the great difficulty experienced by the tourist who has only a few weeks at his disposal is to know which of the many routes to select. The hotel accommodation everywhere along the frequented routes is good. It were difficult to find better hotels anywhere than on the Continent, and that at moderate rates. In Belgium, Germany, France and Switzerland the average cost in first-class hotels is about \$3 per day. Many travellers take Cook's hotel coupons, which can be purchased for \$2.50 per day for full board and lodging and are available for one or more