

Our Contributors.

SOME THINGS THAT NEED REVISION MORE THAN THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Professor Scrimger gives us a good text in the *Presbyterian Journal* for which we thank him, and wish him a happy New Year. It is a rich, suggestive text, one of those texts that opens right up when you probe it a little, and seems to say: "Now come right on, discuss me." It is worth a dozen such texts as Dr. Parker preached on in his lecture on the "Modern Pulpit." Parker said his was taken from the epistles of Lord Beaconsfield, and read thus: "How are you all to-day?" Professor Scrimger did not go to the epistles of Beaconsfield for his fruitful theme. He found it in the well-known characteristics of the Presbyterian people of this country. Discussing the statement so often made that young people are repelled from the membership of the Church by the sternness of Presbyterian doctrine, the Professor said:—

"FOR EVERY ONE THAT IS REPELLED FROM THE CHURCH BY THE STERNNESS OF ITS DOCTRINE, A HUNDRED ARE DRIVEN AWAY BY THE COLDNESS OF ITS PEOPLE, AND AN AGITATION TO REVISE THAT WOULD BE MORE TO THE PURPOSE."

Phelps and Shedd and Dr. Proudfoot and several other modern teachers of Homiletics tell us that every sermon should have a distinct particular truth which the preacher ought to prove, illustrate, apply or handle in some useful way. Here is ours:—

THE REPULSIVE POWER OF PRESBYTERIAN COLDNESS.

We don't know just what Dr. Proudfoot or Principal MacVicar or any other specialist on sermon-building might say about the drawing of that theme from Professor Scrimger's text. What we want now is the ear of the congregation while we discuss a few things that need revision more than the old Confession needs it. If there is any time left when the sermon is over we may hear what the Professor has to say.

And firstly the typical Presbyterian prayer-meeting needs revision. Its coldness has made Presbyterian prayer-meetings a byword. An American writer says if you happen to enter a large room in a strange city and see a man in black clothes sitting alone on a platform and a number of people sitting on the back seats in the other end of the room, you may always conclude that it is a Presbyterian prayer-meeting. Can any human being explain why Presbyterians always crowd the back seats at prayer-meetings? Do they instinctively take back seats in all other places? Did they take back seats last week at the municipal elections? As one of the Chief Justices of Ontario would say, "Not much." They were in the very front in a hundred fights. Did they take back seats in the Ontario elections last June? If they had, Mr. Mowat's majority would have been a negative quantity. Do they take back seats in business? Hardly. Examine every business concern from Halifax to the last hole dug at Sudbury and on to the last timber limit bought on the Pacific coast, and you'll find a Presbyterian in ninety-nine in of each hundred of them trying to turn hard an honest penny. Strange, is it not, that men who fight for a front place everywhere else should always fight for a back place in prayer-meeting? Perhaps it is because Presbyterians are intensely humble-minded people. One may by a little effort write that with a straight face, but very few men could keep their faces straight and say it. Anyway there is nothing in it. The assumed humility that exhibits itself on a back seat in prayer-meeting is precisely the same quality as the pride that exhibits itself in a conspicuous place. The right thing is to sit where we can add most to the profit of the meeting. Everybody knows that, humanly speaking, a profitable prayer-meeting cannot be held with a gap of forty feet between the minister and the people. The typical Presbyterian prayer-meeting needs revision.

The typical congregational meeting needs revision. It needs revision badly. If Mr. Mercier, or Sir John Thompson, or the Hon. Christopher Finlay Fraser were to introduce a law forbidding Presbyterians to manage their own business affairs, what a storm would arise in a few minutes. Men who have not attended a congregational meeting in twenty years would shout themselves hoarse about our "blood-bought privileges," etc. Men who don't know the names of their own elders and deacons, and who perhaps do not see the inside of a church twice a year, would get on the nearest stump and roar about the "claymores of the Covenanters" and various other weapons. And yet these brave men who want so badly to fight somebody in defence of their right to manage their church business would never dream of spending an hour in attending to the business.

A year or two ago the Presbyterian Church in this Canada of ours modestly proposed that if a congregation after hearing a large number of ministers found it impossible to agree upon one, the Presbytery of the bounds should select a pastor for them until such time as they could agree. This modest proposition was vigorously opposed. The people have a right to call their minister. Who dare interfere with that right? Shouts of "patronage, patronage," were occasionally heard. All very good, but when you hold a meeting to give the people a chance to exercise their right to call a

minister, twenty or thirty out of a membership of two or three hundred will perhaps attend, and the call has sometimes to be carried around for days to get the people to sign it. Yes, the congregational meeting needs revision badly.

The missionary meeting needs revision. Some congregations think the usefulness of the missionary meeting is clean gone. The people who are doing their duty attend; the people who need most to go stay away. There is no reason in the world why a missionary meeting might not be made useful and enjoyable. In the olden days many of them were dull and tedious. They needed revision so badly that the people revised them out of existence. Is there not enough of business management and missionary zeal in the Church to hold one good missionary meeting in each congregation in twelve months?

There are few things in the Church that need revision more than the singing. In some congregations the service of song is good—it is hearty and inspiring and helps on the other parts of the service more than a little. In too many what is called the singing spoils everything else. It is simply deplorable, and the worst feature of the case is that any attempt to improve it would be met with a storm of opposition.

The giving of many congregations surely needs revision. The trouble with some is that there is hardly anything to revise. You might kill the thing altogether if you tried to revise it.

The worst thing about some congregations is their atmosphere. It is cold, COLD, COLD. The minister is cold, and the sermon is cold, and the people are cold, and the office-bearers are cold, and the Sabbath school is cold and the prayer-meeting is cold. You enter the church at any kind of a service and you think you must have wandered into the region in which Sir John Franklin got frozen in. Perhaps the minister stands up in his little iceberg and preaches a sermon on the danger of religious enthusiasm!

The mode of conducting business in many of our Church courts sadly needs revision. To see bearded men, not to speak of ministers of the Gospel, spending precious time on personal compliments, verbal errors in documents and other trifling matters while representative laymen whose money influence and work the Church needs, are impatiently waiting to have important work done is simply exasperating. The amount of time spent discussing missions, Sunday schools, college work, the state of religion and other vital matters is so small in proportion to the amount given in some Church courts to really trivial matters that one sometimes wonders at the license that calls the court spiritual.

Does some lay friend say some sermons need revision badly? Amen. Revision that would strike out of them arguments to prove what nobody in the Church denies; defences of what nobody present ever attacks; explanations of what everybody understands, and illustrations intended to illustrate what everyone already sees. Yes, revision of that kind would be a good thing and would cut many a sermon down to twenty-five or thirty minutes.

Taking a "conjunct view of the whole," as the Presbytery Clerks say, there is nothing in the Church that needs revision less than the Confession except, perhaps, the Bible. Let us first revise the things that need revision most.

CHARMS OF MONTEREY.

THE PLEASANT RETREAT OF THE GOLDEN WEST.

The visitor is first charmed with the Del Monte Hotel and grounds, the acme of natural beauty and enchanting artificial embellishment. Nere Monterey, venerable, antique, almost unique, as to historic associations, sits queenly on the rising shore of the placid bay of the same name. Here Juniper landed June 3, 1770, the first Spanish settlement, as afterwards, the first American capital. Still further along Pacific Grove, a sort of Chataqua, with all its varied charms of sylvan dells and walks, a grove of God's own handiwork, somewhat deformed to make it adapted to man's civilized habits. No saloons, a moral, God-fearing, Church-going, Sabbath-keeping people is the charm of this lovely resort.

Del Monte, Monterey, the "Grove" form a triple crown on the head of the Neapolitan bay of the golden West. No description can give any adequate idea of their varied beauties. It would only tantalize the reader who has not seen for himself as the reading of a cook book by a hungry man is a doubtful treat as a "feast of imagination." What a "delusion and a snare" such a description turns out to be to one who visits such scenes and wonders as Niagara Falls, Yosemite, the Alps, the Coliseum, Pompeii, the Louvre, Vatican, or other galleries of art and sculpture.

A composite picture of this gem of California might be framed by borrowing the air, sunshine, Naples Bay and Lake Como from Italy for the foreground, and Ballagio, a gem Alpine forest resort, for the town, with a section of the adjoining Italian and Swiss Alps as a background and counterpart of the California rival. The dense woods of the hillsides of the latter are more striking though the eternal snow-capped Alps surpass in that respect in sharp contrast of ever green and ever spotless white. Any who choose may "see Naples and die," but we prefer to see Monterey and live! The best—the half has not yet been told. As in San Francisco the city of wonders in varied lines of great successes, the greatest success of all, in our estimation, is the most successful Church, whose helm is manned by a Caledonian pastor, whose success has been won under God by the old Scotch Presbyterian

doctrine and methods, a truly Apostolic line of succession, without any novelty in theology, sensationalism, hobby or other so-called attraction to "draw" an audience.

The Scotch thistle and heather have been transplanted and flourish in California, but it has been questioned if the Scotch Presbyterian theology, morality, Sabbath and family religion could long survive in this uncongenial soil. Over forty years ago a youth left his native hills in Scotland to push his fortune in the land of gold, arriving in '49 among the Argonauts, and soon after located where Monterey now is. Perseverance, industry and native talent and energy with God's blessing have carried him to the top round of the ladder of success in business and influence in the community. Though his ranch rivals in extent the estates of many "lairds o' bonnie Scotland" yet better still a higher and nobler line of success has crowned his career. For many years as a priest in his own house, long ere any Church or pastor afforded spiritual help, he maintained the religion of his fathers, and for a quarter of a century co-operated with other Churches and when a Presbyterian Church was organized became an elder and pillar of it to the present time. All his family, trained in the good old way, are continuing to walk therein, a credit to him and a blessing to the community. This is the grandest success of all, the best thing, the most admirable the writer found at Monterey, a Christian home, a faint vestige of paradise and foregleam of millennial bliss. This may seem a strange statement to the good people of Canada with tens of thousands of happy unbroken Christian families and homes of the rich as well as other classes, but the writer in a decade has only found one other family of children of the wealthy class—and that Scotch too—from one end of California to the other, that had not one or more black sheep, prodigal, scapegrace or blackguard in it. Many colossal fortunes have been founded by the pioneers. There are over one hundred millionaires in this city; but few families have been established worthy the name. Many have no heirs—at least, legitimate. Others maintain a sort of polygamy, having several concubines in different parts of the city with their off-spring.

If Hon. Oliver Mowat had known this city and coast, or from Chicago westward, his optimistic lecture, however true for Canada, would have been less optimistic if not tinged with pessimism. Take a few points of contrast. He observed 1. that he knew of no agnostic or infidel society in the Dominion. Here any number exist in every city and town. 2. There are no anti-Christian papers. The whole secular weekly and daily press here is anti-Christian, with trifling or obscure exceptions. Worse still, it almost ignores or caricatures Christianity. A Sunday game of baseball or shooting match receives more space than all the clergy and churches unless something scandalous or sensational is written up. 3. A larger proportion of the people of the world have now faith in some form of Christianity than ever before. Here it is estimated that only four per cent. of the people attend Church. On one Sunday the Young Men's Christian Association counted the attendance of young men at all the churches and found about 1,650, while over 32,000 were found one Sunday in the saloons or brothels. This with one saloon for every eleven voters and one arrest for every twenty-three of the population does not look much like the millennium yet on this horizon. However while wickedness abounds and infidel, Spiritualistic, Theosophic and Christian Science, literature and teaching spread like wild fire, yet there are many hopeful signs. Christians are being aroused to aggressive work as never before. Evangelists are abroad in the land. Two grand workers from Scotland, Donald Ross and John Currie, are now here. Mrs. Baeyertz, a converted Jewess from Australia, has been holding meetings for some time, for Christians in the afternoon and for others at night, with results surpassing even Moody and Sam Jones. The Salvation Army is the greatest power for good in the city. As to the question whether the world is growing better or not it is safe to say that the bad are growing worse and more numerous than ever before, and the good are better and more numerous than ever also.

But as to the proportion of bad and good people, that is the point between so-called optimists and pessimists. Considering that there are 100,000,000 of heathen more than at the beginning of this century, the admitted increase of crime and pauperism "in darkest England" and other Christian countries, a continental Sunday, Socialism, Nihilism and a thousand-and-one-isms all coming in the name of benefactors or as panaceas for the evils of society, and chiefly that the Book (2 Tim. iii. 1-13) says: "grievous times shall come in the last days. . . evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," it ought not to be hard to answer the question as to the ratio of the increase between good and evil. An old minister being asked if the world was growing better replied: "It is better off." Optimists mistake civilization for Christianity, and profession for the possession of it.

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AN ENQUIRY.

MR. EDITOR,—A Canadian clergyman has just been designated for work in Tarsus; this fact occasioned this enquiry which many friends of missions are making, and as yet has received no answer. We know that Canadian ministers must be sent to new fields in order to commence the work, but Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt and Turkey are not new fields. Evangelical missions have been established there for half a