

## Our Contributors.

### LET IT SIMMER.

BY KNOXONIAN.

This contribution may perhaps be a little helpful to speakers and writers of ordinary ability and common sense.

Men of genius need not read it. Genius needs no help.

Men who think they can write like Macaulay and speak like Demosthenes, without any preparation, should pass by this corner. In fact, men of that kind can afford to pass by anything. They are happy men. Most of them are a good deal happier than the people who try to read what they write and listen to what they say.

Philosophers will not find anything in this contribution for them. It is their business to deal with the infinite and absolute, and draw a hard and fast line between the Ego and the Non-Ego. Some of them dwell in delightful contemplation on the Ego.

One of the best ways for an ordinary man to prepare a good sermon or speech, or write a good article, is to get a good topic and let it simmer in the mind until it fructifies, takes form, and is fit for public use.

Two things are here assumed. The one is that the man has a topic, and the other, that he has a mind for his topic to simmer in. If he has neither a topic nor a mental vessel in which his topic can simmer, he cannot reasonably be expected to do much preparation in the simmering method. In such cases, the unfortunate must extemporize and the human family know to their sorrow that he does just that very thing.

It is worse than a waste of time for a man to speak on nothing and say nothing about it. A few men have the dangerous gift of saying nothing about nothing in an interesting way. That kind of oratory does well enough for a few times, but sensible people soon tire of it, and the orator who relies on his ability in the nothing line, is sure to come to grief sooner or later. Sound is a good enough thing in its own way, and for its own purposes, but the human mind cannot feed on mere sound. Of course if you have to speak in a locality in which the people have scarcely any mind, sound is the right thing for them. There are localities of that kind.

As a rule, however, a man must have a topic if he expects to do sensible people any good by an address of fifteen or twenty minutes. How can topics be found? In a hundred ways. One good way is by reading good speeches, good newspapers and good magazine articles. Some speeches and articles suggest topics. An experienced hunter for topics soon learns where to look for them. Some writers scatter seed-thoughts over their pages. A seed-thought is the thing you are after, and you know one by a kind of instinct if you are a good hunter. One good rule then, is to stop reading rubbish and read literature with seed-thoughts in it.

A man reasonably wide-awake can get many good topics from current events. There is a good deal going on in this little world every day that will stand discussion. Current topics have this decided advantage that people are thinking about them. They have also this disadvantage, that the newspapers may have threshed them out until they are stale. There is, too, some danger of rasping people by handling current questions if they are live questions, because people are sure to take sides on present issues. Still, one must take these risks if anything in the living present is to be discussed. A speech on Egyptian mummies would not be likely to offend anybody, but it would not interest anybody who was not a good deal of mummy himself.

Listening to good speeches is not a bad way to get seed-thoughts. As a

first-class man warms up on almost any subject, he is pretty sure to throw out something that starts other minds to think. One of the undoubted evidences of first-class ability in a public speaker, is his power, often unconsciously exercised, to plant seed-thoughts in other people's mind, and to make them stick and fructify there.

Capital seed-thoughts may often be obtained from the conversation of hard-headed, shrewd, wide-awake, successful men, who owe little to the schools, but who are highly educated men in the best sense of that much misused word. Get hold of an elderly man of sense who has fought a fairly good battle in life, who does a little good reading, and attends personally to his own thinking, who says his say without any superstitious regard for the rules of syntax who spends most of his evenings in a quiet home, and does not make himself a mental imbecile by running to every kind of meeting, who hammers out questions on his own anvil, and comes to conclusions without asking anybody's leave, get well acquainted with a man of that kind, and an hour's conversation with him may start more seed-thoughts in your mind than a day's attendance at a convention.

Every minister worthy of the name knows where his sermon topics are to be found. The source is inexhaustible and the variety infinite. There is one kind of ministerial poverty that does not deserve much sympathy, and that is, poverty in texts. Still, though the Bible is a never-failing fountain in which each minister should find his own topics, one may often have a good text or topic suggested by a neighbour. Some of the best preachers we ever knew often began a conversation in this way: "Good day. How are you? What did you preach on last Sunday?" We may think that question behind the times, but most of the men who laid the foundation of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, used to talk that way. Should the day ever come when Presbyterian ministers think preaching a secondary matter, it will be somebody's duty to dig a grave for the Church. The corpse will soon be ready.

Having found a text or topic, let it simmer. The best sermons ordinary men ever preach, are, as a rule, those that simmered long and were written quickly.

The best speeches are generally those that simmered for months, and were dashed off in a condensed form in a few minutes. A speech of that kind hardly ever fails to do something.

Should we "read up" on a topic before we let it simmer, or afterwards? Generally, we should say, before. Get all the ideas and illustrations you can, and let them simmer when you lie down at night, when you awake during the night, if you are unfortunate enough to be troubled in that way; when you awake in the morning, when you go out for your walk—everywhere, and just see if you don't soon have a speech or sermon that will do its business.

### THE WORLD'S PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS, CHICAGO.

BY THE REV. PRINCIPAL GRANT, D.D.

When the project of a Congress—at which representatives of the faiths of the world would state their fundamental principles—was first suggested, it seemed to me clear, that Christians at any rate should not hold aloof, but rather do all in their power to make it a success. Believing that Christianity is the only faith that can become the religion of humanity, we must welcome investigation and inquiry, on the part of all men. In no other way can its universal triumph be secured. If we have any doubt as to the genuineness of gold that we have found, we shall be slow in subjecting it to tests; but if we are quite sure that it is gold, we shall not dread the application of any test, ordinary or extraordinary. If we believe that we have leaven of sufficient strength, we shall cast it fearlessly into the three measures of meal; but if we think that the leaven has lost its old power, or the salt its old savour, we

shall keep it on the shelf, carefully isolated, and make ourselves believe that that is the true way to do it honour.

What would the Master say to it, is the question to be put in regard to any proposal? The answer in this case is found by remembering that Jesus taught the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Now, how does the Father desire that we should meet our brothers? In the spirit of the Jew, who would not eat with others, nor meet them on a common platform? In the spirit of the Pharisee, who "separated" himself, and said to everyone else, "stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou?" In the spirit of the bigot, who identifies his puddle with the ocean, who thinks that he possesses all truth, and that others neither possess nor wish to possess any? Certainly not. But in the spirit of Paul, who became a Jew to the Jews, in order that he might gain the Jews, and a Greek to the Greeks, that he might gain the Greeks. Still more, in the spirit of Him whose last command was not to hold aloof from others, but to go into all the world, telling the good news, and therefore, to be more ready to tell them, if all the world should be willing to come to us.

These were my views at the outset. Accordingly, when the Rev. John Henry Barrows, D.D., pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Chicago, with whom the proposal originated, wrote to me, I responded with warm words of sympathy, and subsequently consented to respond for Canada at the Welcome meeting, and also to read a paper on Presbyterian Reunion. Now that I have been at the Parliament, I can truthfully say what every one says who sees the Court of Honour at the great Exposition—either by day or by night,—"It is more beautiful than I had dreamed; the half has not been told; and it cannot well be told, for there is nothing with which it can be compared."

The great sin of the Jewish Church was that it did not understand the character of Jehovah, and, therefore, did not understand the object of its own election and the nature of its mission. It isolated itself from the moral order of the world, and fancied that Jehovah was a national Deity, and not the God of all nations. Their prophets tried to teach them, but they refused to listen. "God brought you up out of Egypt," said Amos to them; "that is quite true, but He it was that also brought your Philistine enemies from Caphtor, and placed them on the rich corn-lands beside you; and He it was who also brought your powerful Syrian neighbours from Kir." This was the teaching of all the great prophets, but Israel would not listen; and so Paul, looking back over their history, declared that, during the whole nineteen centuries from Abraham, God had been stretching out His hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people. They answered Paul as they had answered his Master and his predecessors.

In the same way, the sin of the Christian Church has been that it has not understood the character or the method of Jesus, and, therefore, has not done the work that He gave it to do. And so the melancholy truth has to be confessed, with shame and confusion of face, that nineteen centuries after Jesus bade His Church tell the good news to every creature, those that are not Christians are on the increase in the world. "The heathen and Mohammedan population of the world is more by 200,000,000 than it was a hundred years ago; while the converts and their families do not amount to 3,000,000." That is "the increase of the heathen is, numerically, more than seventy times greater than that of the converts during the century of missions," the only century in which Protestantism even pretends to have been awake. Is it that our Lord is straitened? Or, that we are straitened in ourselves? Are we going the right way about His work? Is it not possible that He has been crying over His Church for nineteen centuries, as He cried with regard to Israel, "All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people."

The attitude of the various Protestant Churches to each other, of the three main divisions of Christendom—Greek, Roman, and Protestant—to each other, and of embodied Christianity as a whole, to the non-Christian world, has not been in the past what the spirit of the Lord required. It certainly has been very far from genial, yet that surely is the attitude in which brother should meet brother, and especially the richer should meet the poorer brother. The spectacle was, however, different at the Chicago meetings, and it is no wonder that a profound impression was produced on all who took part, and on the tens of thousands who attended. The old truths that are written broad on the fore-front of Scripture, if we would only read them and consider their significant historical settings, came home to

many as new revelations from God. Men saw in concrete form that God had not left Himself without witness in any land or age, and that in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him. They learned what an intelligent study of Holy Scripture might have taught them that, even at the time when He was educating Israel, He had prophets outside Israel, and that He—the Eternal Power and Presence, who is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world—had shone with wondrous brilliancy in some of these, and that to deny their light is to dishonour Him. Whittier's lines came home to many with new power:—

In Vedic verse, in dull Koran,  
Are messages of love to man;  
The Angels to our Aryan sires  
Talked by the earliest household fires;  
The prophets of the elder day,  
The slant-eyed sages of Cathay,  
Read not the riddle all amiss,  
Of higher life evolved from this.

We met scholarly, big-browed, eloquent men, who had travelled thousands of miles to listen respectfully to all that chief exponents of Christianity had to say. We found them our equals in intellectual ability, in purity of morals, in loftiness of ideal, and very decidedly our equals in courtesy of manners. All that they asked of us was that we should hear them in their turn. They represented hundreds of millions of their fellow-countrymen and civilizations hoary with age. They explained to us, with all the disadvantage of using our language, instead of their own, the positions they occupied and the fundamental religious truths that had been the life of their respective races for centuries, and they submitted their systems to our tests. Is it not as clear as the sun at noonday that, if we had declined to engage in earnest, sympathetic, fraternal intercourse with such men, judgment would have been given against us by default, in the high court of humanity, and that our Master would have had cause to be ashamed of the modern conies who call themselves His disciples? Those seekers after God, who had come to us from old Eastern lands where the spiritual has always been esteemed mightier than the material, would have returned home to report that Christianity shuns the light, and that it evidently has no special truth to announce, as we did not dare to bring it out into the open. I could not help feeling that a grand occasion was offered to Christianity: for we could explain, in the light of day, to wise men from the East, the essence of our faith and the secret of its power, while at the same time, we could humbly confess our own failures, and ask their co-operation in bringing to fulfilment the kingdom of God upon earth. I felt, that after acknowledging all that is good in Confucius, in Lao-tse, in Gautama, in Menu, in Zoroaster, in Mohammed, we could point out that Jesus is the Son of God, the Saviour of men, in an altogether unique sense, that to Him all prophets witnessed, even though they knew Him not historically, and that He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins. The occasion was altogether unprecedented. In no other age of the world's history could such a Congress have been convened. The ends of the world have been brought together. Steam and electricity are annihilating time and space. Commerce and British rule have made our speech the language of progressive men everywhere. The unity of the world and of the race is realized for the first time. The spiritual natures and needs of men are felt to be the same. Profound changes in our points of view have taken place and other changes are impending; and the question is simply this:—Seeing that Christianity has already proved itself divine, by surviving shocks that would have destroyed it, had it been merely of human origin, shall we admit that its divine power is exhausted and that it cannot adapt itself to present conditions, or shall we not rather boldly, and in the spirit of our reforming Fathers, employ new methods to meet the new age in which our lot is cast? There can be no doubt what the answer of the believer must be. He stands as ready to adapt his methods to the new order of things as a good soldier is to throw away his bow and arrow for Brown Bess and Brown Bess for arms of precision and smokeless powder. At a conference with men like Mozoomdar, he feels it absurd to talk about non-essentials or disputed points of doctrine, ritual or government. He has to get down at once to bed-rock.

Perhaps the most striking testimony that was given to the resistless strength of the principles of modern civilization, that are really the fundamental principles of the Reformation, now asserting themselves in full vigour, was the atti-