

Our Contributors.

THE SWEET REASONABLENESS OF PUBLIC SERVICE.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Two distinguished American citizens, Grover Cleveland and Benjamin Harrison, are candidates for the Presidential chair. Both are Presbyterians and good able men. Cleveland is a minister's son and Harrison is a ruling elder. Both are lawyers and earn their bread by the sweat of their brain. Neither is rich, and both no doubt lose business and money by serving the Republic.

It is not their fault that they are candidates. Their friends nominated them and started them on a race for the White House. Both cannot get there. The one that does get there will be bored excruciatingly for the next four years, and the one that doesn't will probably have a sore head for the remainder of his life. Were this world anything like what it ought to be, these men would have the sympathy of all good citizens and the prayers of all good Christians. But this world is not much like what it ought to be and Cleveland and Harrison instead of being sympathized with and prayed for will be abused in a manner that might make old Satan himself blush.

In this matter of abuse Cleveland has a decided advantage. He was a candidate four years ago, and anything bad that could be said about him was said then. His enemies forgot that he might possibly run again and they didn't leave any mud to throw the next time. That was a tactical error, so to speak. The scarcity of mud is shown by a very disgraceful fact. Since his election Cleveland has taken to himself a wife. He found out that it is not good for a man to be alone in the White House. Some of his enemies started an abominable story to the effect that he does not use his wife well. Mrs. Cleveland promptly checked the slander in a clever, womanly letter to the press and expressed the wish that every woman in America had as good a husband as hers. This abominable slander shows that the mud-slingers exhausted all their material before the last election and left nothing for this campaign. Their misfortune now is that they can go back only four years. However, an industrious, able-bodied, campaign liar can work up a good deal of matter out of a record of four years, and we may yet be told that Cleveland has broken every command in the Decalogue.

Harrison must suffer. He is pretty well up in years and his opponents can go back to the days of his infancy for material to attack him. If he was a cross baby they can say that he disturbed his mother's health by keeping her awake at nights for sixteen years. Sixteen years would be a mild exaggeration for election times. If he ever jumped the fence into a neighbour's orchard during his boyhood and took a few apples, his opponents will no doubt say that he stole 10,000 bushels of apples and shipped them by a night train to New York. If, during his school days, he ever wrestled with a school mate and tripped him up no doubt the campaign sheets will kindly say he killed that boy. When serving his time in a law office he may possibly have spoilt some blank forms and torn them up. If he did his opponents will no doubt say that he robbed the office. No one need be surprised if it is alleged that in his manhood he committed forgery, arson, burglary, robbery, bigamy, murder and every other crime in the calendar. In fact no one need be surprised at anything that may be said about a Presidential candidate. The inventive ability of the campaign scribe is almost infinite. As a mere matter of business he can turn out the most horrible story on the shortest possible notice.

Can we Canadians afford to throw stones at our neighbours for this abominable habit of abusing public men? Not we. If you want to hear everything bad that can be said about a decent citizen and hear it in a grossly exaggerated form, just start him out as a candidate for some public office. The moment he starts the fusillade of abuse will begin. He may not want the office; he may have consented to be a candidate with great reluctance; he may suffer in business and lose money by becoming a candidate, but the abuse will come all the same.

One might have some patience with this style of attack if it arose from a desire to see good men in public life. Nine times out of ten the persons who

make the attack are worse men than the persons attacked. Four years ago Henry Ward Beecher made some of Cleveland's opponents squirm by telling them that nine out of ten of them lived habitually in the commission of the great sin Cleveland committed only once. They were angry enough to have torn Henry Ward to pieces, but wise enough not to provoke him to come to particulars. Beecher was a dangerous man to handle. There is no kind of hypocrisy, so vile, so loathsome, so utterly disgusting as the hypocrisy of the man who ignores his own moral rottenness while he makes a business of exaggerating the faults and failings of his neighbours. The more putrid his own character the more diligently does he attend to the business.

Is there anything in the Presbyterian Church that unpleasantly resembles this ignoble practice of abusing public men? There is. If you want to hear in a grossly exaggerated or distorted form all about a minister's misfortunes and mistakes, foibles and failings, just nominate him in some vacant congregation where two or three factions are trying to get in their man. Assaults are sometimes made there just as wanton and quite as cruel and unjust as many of the assaults made on public men. They are all the more cruel because not published in the newspapers. A man can defend himself a newspaper attack, but he is powerless against ecclesiastical whispering, against libellous letters marked "private and confidential," against clerical nods and winks and all the ignoble means too often used in ecclesiastical canvassing.

LETTER FROM FORMOSA.

Long ago I saw North Formosa preachers and students engaged in spirited debate. I know that they are drilled in Chinese history and Chinese classics, that they study anatomy, physiology and hygiene, astronomy, geology and many other subjects. I know they are taught these on purpose that they may better know, and be better able to wield the "sword of the spirit."

I believe it is Dr. Mackay's leading them in constant search into examination and study of the Word of God itself, more than any other book that makes North Formosa preachers what they are. Without seeing native preachers and hearing their teaching, one can have little idea what a fund of illustrations of Divine truth Dr. Mackay has given them from the created world around them, and how they have been taught to gather more from their own observation, also what a depth of meaning is to be found in some passages of Scripture, and how they are "opened up" under the light of such study.

Dr. Mackay often says "We have no right to take a few favourite texts out of Scripture and dwell on them almost to the exclusion of the rest of the Bible. We should take the whole Word of God as the Shorter Catechism says."

From Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation, the Bible is full of references to things in nature. Christ Himself, teaches by illustrations or parables. Is it not true that we learn of the unseen by reference to what we can see, or hear, or handle? In constant study of nature and the Bible together, North Formosa preachers are not only made strong in faith, but have put into their hands the means to search deeper and deeper into this revelation of unseen things.

In contrast with theirs, let me give you a little of my own experience which may serve to make clearer to you the advantage they enjoy.

In childhood I was faithfully and carefully taught. I learned all about the "covenant of works" and the "covenant of grace" and the fall of man and about election and could repeat the Shorter Catechism without missing even "effectual calling." I have read the Bible over a number of times, and I used to pick out texts (I fear) to suit the bent of my own mind. I know the Holy Spirit is promised to guide us "into all truth" and I know also that he will not do so unless we study the truth. Now and then, to my great delight, a flood of light seems poured in on some passage of Scripture, generally through Dr. Mackay's teaching, or by better understanding something in the created world.

Yet, alas, I have to confess the whole book seems to me almost a sealed one! I don't know it. I don't believe I should be satisfied with just getting barely the same truth from the same passage of Scripture that I got ten years ago. I ought to get more from

that passage now, I ought to dig deeper down into it. In this, all the geometry and algebra I ever learned will do me little good. The more I see and hear of what students here are learning, the more I feel that I have been but scraping away at the surface of the Bible and have not reached down into its depths at all. I open it and read "The spider taketh hold with her hands" etc. What do I know about the spider? "Fair as the moon." Little indeed do I know about the moon! How then can I enter into the deep meaning of this passage? "Quails came up." What do I know about quails—except what I heard preachers telling some days ago? What do I know of the "jasper" or the "sapphire" or a "pearl" or of "a desert place" in Palestine, or of the "clouds" and the "sea" and the "whirlwind," of "honey" and "figs" and "vines" and "mandrakes"? How much more full of meaning to native preachers must be the third chapter of 2 Peter than to me; the story of the leper to those who have thoroughly studied this among other diseases! How much more full of meaning the Bible account of races of man, the words "all nations" etc., to those who have learned about these races, even to the aborigines in the small islands!

How much more full of meaning "I will make you fishers of men," to those who know many varieties of fish and a score of different ways to catch them! So I might go on.

I am not alone in thankfully observing the training these young Chinese preachers are having. Foreigners who have seen them at work and who could not understand a word of their dialect, have been delighted with the real and practical knowledge, rather than "book knowledge" of the world around them that these students are evidently acquiring. They themselves are mostly grateful for the privilege they enjoy. Preachers have preserved notes of Dr. Mackay's teaching, from year to year for sixteen years. Fresh notes are continually being taken and added to these as their course of training goes on. Dr. Mackay speaks hour after hour to the class and they take notes. Preachers are enthusiastic over their studies and never weary listening to Dr. Mackay. When teaching Christian truth, he never uses any work save the Bible as Text Book. No other writing is allowed to take its place. Hoping what I have written may be the means of giving even a little useful information about one branch of mission work in North Formosa, I send it to you. ANNIE C. S. JAMIESON.

Tamsui Formosa, May 5, 1888.

THE SIX MONTHS' LIMIT.

While I was reading "Knoxonian's" article on "The Six Months' Limit," in your issue of the 27th of June, I could not help picturing him with his head stuck in the sand, in terms of his own simile, and refusing to see the danger. For surely it must be a head small enough, and of such peculiar shape as to admit of ready insertion into a bank of sand, that would impose such reasoning on such intelligent readers as the ministry and laity of the Presbyterian Churches consist of. He chooses the comment of the *Globe* as his text. And, like many another "Knoxonian" (no invidious comparison intended) he never touches the text. He most skillfully evades it, as well as the whole question at issue. He devotes more than the half of his article to the building of a man of straw; and to the exhibition of his skill in beating it to the ground again. Instead of discussing a measure which purports to interfere with a particular and specific right, he wanders off to speak of other rights etc., which have no bearing whatever on the point at issue; and for which no sane man, lay or clerical, sets up any claim.

He talks of "absolute right," as if any creature could lay claim to any absolute right. We claim no absolute right for our congregations in anything—not even in the matter of calling a minister. They are, to a very large extent, secondary to the matter. We believe that the King of the Church Himself, overrules this matter of calling and settling His under-shepherds.

We claim, however, a delegated right for our congregations. We claim too, that this right is inalienable and can be infringed upon, or curtailed only by Him who gave the right to His Church. Further on, "Knoxonian" exultingly propounds this question, as the root of the whole matter: "Have we the Presby-