

Our Contributors.

CONCERNING CHAIRMEN

BY KNOXONIAN.

"Capital meeting that. Enjoyed it all the way through. Everybody pleased. Never spent a more delightful evening. Everybody happy. Glad I went."

That is the kind of observation people sometimes make going out from a public meeting. Quite frequently the meeting was a delight because it was presided over by a good chairman. That at all events was one of the reasons. A really enjoyable meeting is rarely held under the presidency of a poor chairman.

"Horrible bore that meeting was. Draggd all the way through. Insufferably dull and heavy. Not a bright thing said all evening. Thought it never would come to an end. Sorry I went."

That kind of a speech is also heard sometimes on the way home from a public meeting. In fact it is too often heard, and one of the reasons why some church people "cannot be got out to any thing" is because they have suffered so often in flesh and spirit at public meetings. No small part of the suffering was inflicted by chairmen who did not understand their business.

The fact is the chairman gives tone to a meeting and the meeting is often pretty much what the chairman makes it. No doubt there are exceptions. One or two exceedingly bad speakers may spoil a meeting in spite of anything the best chairman can do. A really able speaker may lift a meeting out of the ditch in spite of the worst kind of chairmanship. These, however, are exceptional cases. The rule is that other things being nearly equal a meeting is largely what the chairman makes it. If he is a strong, happy, well-balanced man with a fine turn for public affairs, his tone will soon pervade the meeting and help to make it a success. If he is a sour, ill-natured, unhappy man, the meeting will soon become more or less like him. If he is nervous and fidgetty, the meeting may become uneasy. All of which we say on the assumption that the man is strong enough to make an impression of some kind on his fellowmen. If he is purely negative, a mere nobody, too weak to make any impression, then the meeting will feel as if it had no chairman at all.

Chairmen may be divided into many classes, but there are several distinct varieties that have become familiar to men whose duty it is to address public meetings. For the present we can discuss only two or three varieties that do able-bodied service in the way of spoiling public meetings. There is the

LOQUACIOUS CHAIRMAN.

He speaks long at the beginning of the meeting, speaks long at the end and puts in a speech at every possible opening between the beginning and the end. He makes a speech every time he rises and rises as often as he can. If he introduces a choir he makes a speech on choirs. A solo is introduced by a lecture on solos and a duet by a homily on duets. A biographical sketch accompanies the presentation of each speaker, and the meeting may be considered very fortunate if it is not favoured with a description of each speaker's birthplace, a history of his parents and some speculation as to the probable time and place of his death. The loquacious chairman is very often a clergyman.

THE ANECDOTAL CHAIRMAN

is generally a poor specimen. He begins by an anecdote which is sometimes fairly good, but before the meeting is over his stock of good ones run out and he becomes fearfully tiresome. One of the most excruciating things in life is an unsuitable, untimely anecdote badly told. The anecdotal chairman rises after every speech and says "That reminds me," etc. Then he tells a long story that has no more connection with what has gone before than it has with Julius Cæsar. Then he introduces the next speaker with a story as nearly related to him as to the planet Saturn. And so on to the end of the programme. Now a good anecdote that happily illustrates something, that serves the purpose of a flash light, or that contains a neat hit, or happy allusion, or a timely joke that provokes a generous laugh, is just about as good a thing as a chairman or any other man can deal in, but Oh! a string of stupids beginning with "And that reminds me," etc.

THE WOULD-BE CRITICAL CHAIRMAN

is out and out the worst specimen. He considers it his duty to criticize every speech. As soon as the speaker sits down he begins a running commentary on all that has been said or as much of it as he can remember, and his critical remarks are generally the most common place drivel. The critical chairman is very likely to be a young clergyman or an old school-master. If he belongs to neither of these classes he is almost certain to be a theological student.

THE PATRONIZING CHAIRMAN

is generally a city man not known beyond his own yard. After he has introduced you in the most patronizing style imaginable you have to go to work and find out who he is. Generally speaking you find out that he isn't anybody in particular.

THE WOULD-BE FUNNY CHAIRMAN

is a good enough kind of man if he would just go on as nature built him and not try to be humorous. A desperate attempt to be anything one isn't is not lovely, but a frantic

attempt to be funny is about the poorest exhibition a mortal can make. Humour to be worth anything must bubble. The best humour is the kind you see a man is keeping back. The restrained humour in some of Spurgeon's efforts is not the least interesting part of them.

Various other kinds of chairmen might be described, but time is up. The practical point is that if you are to have a good meeting you should have a good chairman. Business meetings that have official chairmen must take their chance, but the hundred and one meetings that are arranged for and have a programme might be greatly helped by a little good judgment in the selection of chairmen. If a meeting is worth holding at all every effort should be made to have it a good one. No meeting is nearly always better than a poor one.

DOWN THE CARIBBEAN.

BY REV. JOHN MACKIE, M.A.

X—TRINIDAD: THE BOTANIC GARDENS.

But in writing of Port-of-Spain, it would be unaccountable and unpardonable, to ignore, or dismiss in a sentence its marvellous tropical gardens. For weeks and months, not for days or hours, would one delight to revel in the richness of their luxuriance and gorgeous grandeur, especially when under the enlightening guidance of their learned and communicative director. No tongue or pen can describe this wonderland. One feels as if on enchanted ground, where all things, even the grass beneath one's feet, have been changed from the ordinary into the extraordinary, from what we have not merely read or heard of, but what our liveliest imaginations have never conjured up.

Here, is an avenue of palms whose plumes of forty or fifty feet are playing with each other 130 feet overhead, and whose trunks are like massive pillars of silver leading up to the palace of some wizard prince. There, is a green savannah, every inch of which is shadowed with the far-stretching leafy boughs of a single majestic saman. Here, are lines of ceibas, running up from the ground like mountain ranges, into trunks of mammoth girth, and hurling into the air their ponderous branches brilliant with the colouring of a thousand parasites. There, are all the fantasticalities of floral development, countless orchids vieing with each other in the grotesqueness of their form and brilliancy of their hue, leaping out of the vegetable into the animal world like bees, and butterflies, and lizards, and swans, and doves, and eagles, yea! even like human beings, arrayed as for a fairy carnival. Here, issuing from the earth are piles of cordage, which twist and twine themselves into huge cables, tighten their coils around the titanic trunk, loop them loosely over the lower boughs, and touching the sward in festoons, swing themselves aloft, higher and hither and thither, till, like a Samson, the giant of the forest is bound fast and firm. There, are trees laden with fruit, not visible to the eye, neither on stem, nor branch, nor twig, nor leaf, but clustering on lines that trail along the grass, far as the shadow of the farthest bough. Here, are large groups of fan palms, or "the Traveller's Ivy," twenty, thirty feet high, whose every frond has a deep draught of clear, cool water for the weary pilgrim in a dry and thirsty land; and there, is the ivory palm, bearing its fruit at the base of the trunk, great fibrous excrescences, swollen with a hard and white material that supplies the world with buttons and handles for shades and umbrellas. Snap these dry twigs and smell. it is the camphor tree. Bark that one and taste: it is the cinnamon. Slit that one, and thick milky juice will flow, curdle and thicken in your hand. it is the Indian rubber tree. What are those shrubs flowering like myrtles, snow-white corollas with bunches of golden stamens? They are tea plants. And these, with dark smooth-pointed leaves, and green berries thickly strewn on every twig? They are coffee trees. And these small trees with shiny leathery leaves, and clusters of buds like nails? They are cloves. And there, are rows of aloes, ligne aloes and bitter; taste if you doubt, and you will have the evidence of your senses the rest of the day. But now, we have entered a grove of nutmeg trees. The fruit is hanging like chestnuts; the ground is strewn with mahogany kernels, burst from rich orange shells, and wrapped in an anillus of fiery red, afterwards changing to yellow, and known as mace. But the shadows are deepening as we descend, and the gurgling of water is heard, and suddenly the whole world of ferns and mosses opens out before us; treasures in every crook, and cranny, and fissure, and crevice, through the ravine and up the banks, on every stone and fallen bough—the whole costly outpourings of a million conservatories in one vast, wild, and bewitching mass! And then the sunshine and a pathway lined with crotons of infinite blendings, old gold and crimson, creamy white and scarlet, purplish pink and gray, bronzy red and yellow green, maroon deepening to dense black, every shade of every colour and every combination, indescribable gorgeousness. Then copses snowy and sweet as of English hawthorn, or apple blossom; orange trees with frequent flower, green, canary, and rich yellow balls. A shaven lawn with beds of roses, and a spraying fountain with a pond of waterlilies, among them the curious *Tropha biornis*, bearing on the underside of its leaves, an edible nut shaped like the head of a bull with crescent horns. A verandah peeps out from glossy leaves and rambling brilliant climbers: marble stairs lined with vases of flowers lead up to a West Indian reception-room, shaded and cool, with polished floor, and green with palms, and bright with crotons,

bathed in the odour of subtle perfumes, and breathing a true and kindly welcome. Oh! those exquisite gardens. A visit to them alone is worth far more than a voyage of over 2,000 miles. Their recollection is a joy forever.

THE MARAVAL.

But not the least of the charms of Port-of-Spain are the numerous lovely drives over the hills, and through the valleys, that form its magnificent environs to the west and north. Passing the Botanic Gardens on the right, and the Savannah and Model Farm with its grazing English and Indian herds on the left, we wheel into a road, hard and as newly swept, that winds through ever changing sylvan scenes that baffles description. At one time we passed underneath a continuous bower of bamboos, the thousand jointed polished stems shooting through the air eighty feet high, and embracing each other, forming for miles a greeny dome, where the sunbeams and the willow summits are at constant play. At another, the wooded hills rush upward from our feet, with deep rents here and there, clothed with greener verdure and dripping the pure moisture of the clouds; and ravines in sombre shade, dense with a foliage never seen before, and irresistibly drawing us to the exploration of their inner recesses, teeming with a vegetation of richness and grandeur that surpasses belief. Now we are by the river's side; the waters of the Maraval are leaping the thwarting boulders, gushing through a thousand sinuous channels, and uniting, rush as a cataract into deep and silent pools shaded with the graceful fronds of the tree-fern, fringed with lilies and grasses and mosses; and throwing a witchery over the admiring traveller. Presently we are slowly ascending the heights of a series of curving sweeps, the wayside brilliant with ipecacuana flowers, and cabins furtively peeping behind fluttering banana and plantain leaves. Before us rise the everlasting hills, densely wooded, towering into a sky of softest blue, and throwing their grateful shadows over the world of beauty at their feet. Four mountain burns rumbling and racing each other, are on our left: four rustic bridges span the ferny dells through which they rush, and lead us to a miniature lake, whose crystal waters reveal far down the snowy concrete bed, and reflect the graceful trees and shrubs that hang in admiration over them. Crotons of gorgeous colours and rarest combinations compass it: sprawling rosetrees throw their fragrant masses over rocky mounds showing here green clumps of moss, and there, clefts and crannies rich with ferns and over all and far away, hangs the feathery canopy of bamboo. Hence flows the healthful, cleansing tide down through all the dwellings and streets of Port-of-Spain; and the Irish guardian never feels the burden of responsibility grow lighter nor loses aught of the consciousness of being the principal benefactor of the city.

TO THE BLUE BASIN.

Let us take another drive. this time to the Blue Basin, a few miles from the city and northward. The road at first curves the savannah, and then winds along through the wide valley that sweeps from the wooded hills to the seashore. Look at that avenue of gigantic samans with trunks like oaks of England, centuries old, and huge outstretching boughs that seem like banks of vegetation, so altogether clothed are they with parasitical plants, staring at you from their greeny heights with eyes of fiery red, brilliant vermilion, burnished gold, and captivating blue. Follow them, they lead to a pile of buildings that used to resound with the tramp and song of British soldiers, but which now wears the aspect of a place forsaken, waiting for a puzzled Government to declare its future. We are reminded of Fort Henry at the magnificent site that commands the approach to Kingston at the junction of Lake Ontario and the rivers Rideau, and St. Lawrence, now given over to galloping dilapidation through want of a trowel, though the battery of stalwart men endangered in the malarial swamp below it could not be more usefully employed than repairing the ravages of time and culpable neglect, nor more comfortably quartered than within its walls. Mayhap we may read some morning that the crumbling ruins, useless to the country, have been sold by a needy Government for the sum of five dollars, to be used henceforth as a monastery in a diocese that is marching rapidly, not by its own strength to the perfection of its ecclesiastical machinery.

Another large building that attracts our attention is the lazaretto, or hospital for those that are the victims of leprosy. Around it, are extensive and beautiful grounds, borders of flowers, and green parks with umbrageous trees, with a plentiful supply of seats for the feeble and weary. No stone walls surround it, no prison gates bolted and barred shut in a world of misery from a world of joy and sunshine; no warning cry, "Unclean, unclean," falls upon the ear of the sympathetic and strengthening spirit that passes through. The grounds lie perfectly open, and the patients have fullest liberty of ingress and egress, and visitors are constantly going and coming. The disease is almost entirely confined to the negro population, and very possibly may have its roots in uncleanliness and insufficient variety of diet. By inhaling the breath of those terribly diseased, through contact with the sores, or in the washing of the clothes, the malady may be imparted; but with due precaution, although always with uncertainty, as in the case of other infectious and contagious diseases, one may perform all needful offices to the patient and yet preserve one's own health unimpaired. This being perfectly well understood, no halo of glory surrounds the attendant when living, and no more mention is made of him or her when seized and carried off by the disease than is wont