

Our Contributors.

HOW THE WINTER EVENINGS MAY BE UTILIZED.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Summer is over and we must now face another long, dreary Canadian winter.

That is the sad little speech that a number of people are now making. It is a poor speech, a miserable little speech; it is as stupid and senseless a little speech as ever was made by a tenth-rate tea-meeting orator. An aged person or an invalid may well be excused for looking forward to our Canadian winter with some anxiety, but a strong healthy man who croaks about Canadian winters is usually an idle fellow, who is too lazy to move enough to keep his blood in circulation. He wants to lounge on the verandah or lie on the grass all the year round.

Winter is not here yet and you need not freeze your ears—a fine writer would say "auricular appendages"—before frost comes. October is usually one of the most enjoyable months of the twelve. The infinite rarity of tints to be seen on our Canadian trees is more pleasing to many eyes than even the uniform green of spring. Dr. Willis used to say that Canadian woodlands in October were among the most beautiful he had ever seen, and Dr. Willis had travelled a good deal in his time. If summer is over we have one of the most enjoyable months of the year before us. Let us enjoy it. Don't drag the storms of January forward into October. Last autumn the usual homilies were delivered about the "rigours of the Canadian winter" but when winter came the weather was mild as autumn, and "la grippe" caught the people. The unexpected happened. If you go on libelling the climate, distrusting Providence and anticipating evil, something else not expected may catch you long before Mr. Frost takes any undue liberties with your—auricular appendages.

Winter should be the most profitable season of the year for every man who wishes to improve his mind. The long evenings afford splendid opportunities for reading. Almost any man who is not a public servant, we almost said a public slave, can take three hours of good solid reading out of a winter evening and three hours' reading each evening may in a few years make the difference that exists between the Hon. Alexander Mackenzie and a featherhead. That difference is almost infinite. Two hours of good reading may and often does make the difference between an intelligent influential citizen and a nobody. There is not much use in going over the old story about Hugh Miller. The raw material out of which a Hugh Miller can be made is not found on every concession nor in every town and village. But there is ample material in every part of Canada to make any number of intelligent first-class citizens if our winter evenings were utilized as they might be.

Young man, how do you propose to spend the evenings of this coming winter?

Do you intend to fool away the precious time in skating and dancing and other amusements of that kind? Do you propose to give all your time and strength to the cultivation of the heel? If so, you need not be surprised to find that a few years hence your neighbours will give all the honours and emoluments to the men who have cultivated the head. People don't usually patronize lawyers, or doctors, or merchants, or business men of any kind, who have given all their time and strength to heel cultivation. They prefer men who have given some attention to the other extremity. When a sensible citizen has to pay out money for services of any kind he nearly always pays it to the man who has fewest vacant rooms in his upper storey. Rational amusement may be a good enough thing as a change from honest work but when a young man makes a business of amusement he always finds in the end that the business does not pay.

Young man, do you intend to trot every evening this winter to a gathering of some kind. In our towns and villages there is something "going on" nearly every evening. A young man who has no taste for reading and who cannot exist comfortably unless he is in a crowd always trots out after tea to see what is "going on." You find him in the council chamber, or in the magistrate's court, or at the public meeting, or in the corner grocery, or in any place where there is a "show" of some kind. Intellectually he is on the down grade, and if not careful he may soon be on the down grade morally. The very fact that a young man cannot content himself unless he is on the trot to something is of itself a bad symptom. It shows that he has no self-control—no self-reliance, no mental resources, no serious purpose in life—that he is mentally fevered, uneasy and restless. The only cure for this restless condition is a noble purpose in life and honest work to attain it.

We say nothing here about spending the precious evenings of winter in ways that are in themselves sinful. Time may easily be wasted in ways that many would not condemn as morally wrong. The class we are trying to reach is composed of young people who do not make as much of winter evenings as they might, but who stop short of positive wrong-doing.

Making every reasonable allowance for evenings spent in church, social and other duties, it is as clear as the sun at noonday that any young man of industrious and methodical habits can find time for a good deal of generous reading between October and April. Cast iron rules cannot be laid

down for dividing the time. An earnest, industrious young man will do that for himself. Nor can anything specific be said about the kind of books to be read. So much depends on the circumstances, taste and acquirements of the reader that most rules about selecting books are practically useless. Speaking generally, it may be said that books of travel are good. So are the biographies of good men. The standard poets are among the best literary companions. A well written history of almost any country can hardly fail to be instructive. What about fiction? There is this one thing certain about it: A young man is much better employed in reading Walter Scott, or Bulwer Lytton, or any writer of high class fiction, than in trotting to every kind of "show" that may happen to be going on in his neighbourhood.

THE BI-CENTENARY OF "THE GLORIOUS RETURN" OF THE WALDENSES IN 1689.

III.

The official dinner was in the magnificent greenhouse (*salle de verdure*) adjoining the old chateau, once occupied by King Joseph Buonaparte, which is now occupied by the Young People's Institute of the Moravian Brethren. Over 150 partook of it. A few others, chiefly Genevese, were invited to the house of M. le commandant, Pilet Faure, whose charming hospitality it would be impossible to forget.

About half-past one all who had taken part in the festival came together under the majestic dome of the chestnut trees of Prangins. The hour for toasts* and speeches had come. They were numerous, and very hearty. Most of them were stamped with a religious and Christian sentiment. Among the speakers were representatives of the Genevan State Council, the Consistory, the Venerable Company of Pastors, and the Free Church (*L'Eglise Libre*). Pastor Peyrot, in an affecting manner, spoke of the debt of gratitude which the Waldenses owed their Swiss, German and Dutch benefactors of two hundred years ago. Pastor Hugon thanked the Moravians for their hospitality. Among the Swiss Waldensian speakers were M. Falconnier, Prefect of Nyon, and Professor Combe, of Lausanne. M. Gay-Roche read a poetic address to the Waldenses of Piedmont, by M. H. Decrue, of Geneva, which was well received. Pastor A. Dardier, of Nîmes, who wore in his button-hole the Waldensian decoration, made a very effective speech. He spoke warmly of the bonds which linked the Waldenses to the Reformed Church of France—fellowship in suffering, in gratitude and in faith. "We have both suffered," he said, "from the same principle which influenced the bitter enemy of our faith—the Romish clergy. We have to give thanks to God for like deliverances. Especially to you and to us, Switzerland has been a hospitable land. We have had in difficulties and dangers, the same help—faith." Then, raising the idea of religion above that of nationality, he represented the heavenly country as the hope which should re-unite all divided Christians.

Sig. Basso, Consul-General of Italy at Geneva, spoke of the Swiss in a most kindly manner. An address to the king of Italy was unanimously adopted.

The chairman, M. Amedee Bert, once a pastor in Genoa, did his part in a most happy manner. He closed the meeting by proposing the health of the ladies.

About four o'clock each one went home. The pastors of the cote set out on foot for their village. Some persons went to the neighbouring railway station. Elegant carriages passed and disappeared in a whirlwind of dust. The festival was over. Not one false note, no long speeches, much cordiality and seriousness. The heart was, at the same time, raised and cheered. It was a loving and lasting remembrance. Those who were present at this religious festival could not think of it otherwise.

At half-past six two boats put out from the shore, in which were a few who had decided to take the same road as their forefathers did. These were MM. H. Bosio and H. Tron, of the Waldensian Table; M. Armand-Hugon, pastor at Rorà, and his two sons Joseph and Alexandre, and young N. Charbonnier, of Turin.

II—THE FESTIVAL AT BALSILLE.

which took place Aug 27, 1889.

That day, two hundred years before, the Waldensians came to it on their return journey. They were now again in their valleys. Balsille was the first village in the valley of St. Martin. Here twenty of their soldiers deserted them, which their commander and pastor, Arnaud, says, was the more surprising because they had begun to set foot in the country which they had undergone so much hardship to reach. A school house here is another monument set up in commemoration of the Glorious Return in 1689. It stands at the foot of the famous rock where 400 Waldenses withstood, for several days, the attack of 25,000 soldiers of the regular army, and were successful. But I must now turn to the festival, which is the subject of this paper.

One who took part in it gives a very lively account of how he and his companions spent the night before. The following is the substance of it: They came to Prouse between six and seven. When all were together in the inn there they formed a company as varied as the contents of a small boy's pockets often are. There were a professor from Bale with his son, a delegate from the National Church, from Neuchâtel,

*The word is the same in the original. It is becoming naturalized in French without any alteration. Some English words have been taken into the French language, but shockingly misshapen, for example, "roast-beef" as "rosbif," and "beefsteak" as "bifteck."

two Genevese, the Moderator of the Irish Presbyterian Church with his colleague, two theological students from Berlin, the Secretary of the French Protestant Historical Society, an English minister with his daughter, and an excellent countryman from Wurtemberg, representing the Waldenses who fled to that country. So great was the confusion of languages that at last the innkeeper was addressed in English and the Wurtemberger in Piedmontese.

A party seceded and went on to Villesèche, by the light of Venetian lanterns and torches, with which the village of Pomaret "seemed in a bleeze," like "auld Alloway Kirk" on a certain memorable occasion. After that they had the light of great bonfires which blazed on the black flanks of the mountains like stars in the sky, and shed their ruddy glow away down to the very bottom of the gorges of the Germanasca. Their night at Villesèche was none of the quietest. The tide of pilgrims kept rising, almost without interruption. Young men were playing horns, or the bagpipes.* Young girls were singing in choruses. Carriages were bumping, like to go to pieces against every stone in a "shocking bad" road.† The whole had as an accompaniment the fierce barking of dogs. But no one, even of those who were packed together like sardines in the hay-lofts,‡ thought of grumbling on account of these trifling annoyances. When the dawn of a most glorious day touched the peaks of the Alps with its rosy fingers, there was in every heart, as it were, a trumpet-flourish of joy and thankfulness.

Very lively was the scene while those who desired to keep the feast at Balsille were on their way thither. There were long strings§ of foot passengers who went in Indian file on the narrow paths; old mountaineers with their swallow-tailed, high-collared coats, and with black cotton caps under their solemn tall hats; countrymen with their beautiful white caps, like daisies in the meadows; the dark dresses of the ministers||; the blue aprons of the girls; handkerchiefs of lively colours; and tri-coloured flags which seemed to quiver for joy in the bracing breeze from the mountain-tops, and to wish to free themselves in order to fly away up into the blue sky. Put in the background of the picture the massy, red rocks of the Pelvoux, varied with green pastures; the beautiful waterfall of the Pis, and along the lower ridges the delicate fringe of larches. Such a scene the writer referred to in the beginning of this article beheld.

About nine o'clock shouts are heard in all directions, handkerchiefs are waving and people are thronging to the Balsille ridge. "What's a' the steer?" A small procession draws ne coming down the road from the Col du Pis, with flags and music at its head. It is the travellers who left Prangins in the evening of August 16, and have come the same way that their forefathers did in 1689. A party went to meet them at Salbertrand, in the Susa valley. Both have come back together, tanned by the sun; sporting cockades made for the occasion, and wreaths of Edelweiss,¶ and delighted with the welcome given them.

The scene shifts. We are now at the meeting which brought so many together. It was held in a large field at the foot of the famous rock already described. There must have been three or four thousand present. The exercises began about ten o'clock. M. Turin, pastor in Genoa, led in prayer. The sixty-eighth Psalm was sung. M. Bunous, of Cosmopolita, a Waldensian station in South America, read Matthew v. De Geymonat, of the Waldensian College in Florence, then gave an address. He contrasted their situation with that of their forefathers in 1689, the privileges which they now enjoyed and the kindness of those in power, more especially of King Humbert. Then he welcomed the foreign brethren who had come to rejoice with them—those of France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, England and Scotland. He next spoke from Psal. cxliv. 15: "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord." The Waldensians are that people, especially favoured above surrounding nations. They owe their happiness to this Church and to the Word of God, on which it is built. Even persecution, a terrible test, but a baptism of fire, has been blessed to them. Their happiness they owe, especially to a lasting grace, in the mercy of the Lord, whose goodness is from age to age on His children. He showed by some instances from their history, in which God delivered them in ways truly miraculous, the anxiety with which He had watched over them. God was still their God. Did they wish to be His people? Would they and their houses serve the Lord? The speaker then asked all present who desired to make that vow to lift their right hand, and say "Amen." Hands were raised in all directions and a murmur of assent swept like a wave over the immense gathering. Dr. Geymonat closed by saying that all that they are and have the Waldensians owe entirely to the grace of God. They may say after doing all: "We are unprofitable servants."

M. Bonnet, pastor at Angrogna, spoke from Matthew v. 14-16. The chief end for which their forefathers came back to their country was to light in it the torch of the Gospel.

* "How in the noon of night that pibroch thrills, savage and shrill."—Byron. † "Tonal" should be pleased to know that the Waldenses have the bagpipes, a proof of their exquisitely fine musical taste.

‡ Among the French-Canadians a cariole is "a sliding car indebted to no wheels."

§ Hay-lofts in the Waldensian Valleys are not so large as they usually are with us.

|| In the original "chapelet," a string of beads. To count one's beads is, in French, "Dire le chapelet."

¶ In the original "clergymans," not "clergymen." Our Waldensian friends think that "mans" is the plural of "man." "O! scorn them not!"

¶ A flower found, I believe, only in certain parts of the Alps.