

Our Contributors.

THE BIG DRUM.

BY KNOXONIAN.

A Methodist sister left her own Church and joined the Salvation Army. Her former pastor met her soon afterwards and the following conversation took place:

"Well, sister, do you find the teaching in the Army more edifying than mine?"

"Oh no," was the reply.

"Do you find the society in the Army more agreeable than the society in the Church you left?"

"I cannot say that I do," answered the sister.

"Well then," said the minister, "what did you gain by leaving your Church and joining the Army?"

"Oh," said she, "I find the big drum such a comfort to me!"

That sister was a typical woman. She represents the large class of people who can find the most absurd excuses for doing the most absurd things. The big drum is considered an unmitigated nuisance by nearly everybody that is unfortunate enough to be compelled to hear it; but this good woman, when hard driven for an excuse, solemnly declared that the big drum was a great comfort to her. It is barely possible that the big drum did give her comfort, but it is far more likely that she drew on her imagination for an excuse. The imagination is a very lively faculty and can produce an excuse for doing or not doing anything with the least possible effort. Hundreds of people do precisely what this sister did—they call upon their imagination for an answer and the imagination responds in lively style.

Here is a man who wanted an excuse for leaving his Church. He had none. He asked his imagination for one and got it promptly. He goes over to some little nondescript body, and perhaps that body is small enough to cackle over him on his arrival. For a time he does nothing but talk about his new connection. After a while he finds his new friends are human—some of them very human. They have poor services very often, poor singing quite often, quarrels occasionally and collections quite frequently. Ask that man what he gained by leaving and his answer, if he tells the truth, will substantially be—"The big drum is such a comfort to me."

Here is a congregation, a part of which has become restless. They want a change. No one knows why and they don't know themselves. They draw on their imaginations and conclude that if they were just vacant they could get a pastor who would stand head and shoulders over every other pastor in their part of the world. They become vacant. They call two or three times and are refused. Finally, after much quarrelling and wrangling, those who have not been wearied or worried out of the Church succeed in getting a pastor. There is a little splurge made over him as long as he is new, but it is soon admitted by everybody but the restless few that he is not as good a preacher, not as good a pastor, and, what is worse, not nearly as good a man as the old pastor. Ask the men who raised the disturbance what they gained by it and, if they tell the truth, they will say something equivalent to this—"The big drum is such a comfort to us."

Young Timothy wishes to study for the ministry, but has got the idea that none of the theological colleges in Canada have the necessary educating power to put his intellect in form for preaching and doing pastoral work. Perhaps he is right. A good deal of power and skill are necessary for the training of certain grades of intellect. So Timothy goes across the lines or across the water in search of a college capable of doing him justice. Of course he writes from his seat of learning inviting his student friends to follow him immediately and wonders how men endowed with reason can remain in such slow institutions as Knox, Montreal and Queen's. Timothy returns to find that he neither preaches better, nor speaks better, nor writes better, nor does any better than the average man who got his education in Canada. Ask him what he gained by leaving his country and making such a fuss, and the answer may be the exact equivalent of—"The big drum was such a comfort to me."

(Let it be assumed that it is a capital thing to take a post-graduate course in Union, Princeton, Edinburgh or even Germany. That is a very different thing.)

For some reason a minister becomes dissatis-

fied with his church relations in Canada. He hears and reads marvellous things about the churches on the other side of the lines. He has a hazy kind of idea that the position of minister in the States is very much better than the position of a minister in Canada. He goes over there and finds that although a few congregations in large cities do more for their minister than any of ours can do, many of them are unable or unwilling to do as much. He finds, too, that in that country a minister has all the difficulties to contend against that he has in Canada, and a good many more that, happily, we know little or nothing about. At the end of a dozen years say to him, quietly: "Now, brother, what did you gain by coming over here?" Perhaps he may admit that he gained nothing, and perhaps he may have a reason that is just as good as—"The big drum is such a comfort to me."

The Church is not, by any means, the only place in which people follow the big drum.

A young man in business gets the idea that nothing can be done in Canada. He hears and reads fabulous stories about business chances in the West. He goes out there and for a time is electrified with the prospects. He wonders that any one can live in such a slow, stick-in-the-mud place as Canada. He remains there for some years and if he makes money it often goes as fast as it comes. This is not, by any means, true of all, for thousands of Canadians are doing well in the West, but it is sadly true of many. Years roll on and our young man comes home to see his friends. He finds quite often that some of the young men he left have made a nice little home for their nice little wives and families, have a nice little business and a nice little balance in the bank, while he, perhaps, has nothing but big talk about the West and big ague in his bones. The big drum did not bring him much comfort.

Some of our Ontario farmers have been following the big drum lately. Suffering from that restlessness which men who have worked hard in their youth are very liable to feel in after years when success leaves them little to do but think about themselves, they pulled up their stakes and moved to the North-West. This is a good thing to do if a man must go some place, but a miserable mistake if he is comfortable in Ontario. Ask that man who left Ontario years ago and settled on a prairie farm how much he gained by the change and nine times out of ten the answer won't have any more sense than—"The big drum is such a comfort to me."

Three years ago the big drum sounded loudly in Winnipeg. Our business men responded nobly to the call and rushed to the front in hundreds. They put more money in mud-holes around the city and in several paper towns and cities than would have endowed half-a-dozen colleges and sent a dozen missionaries to any part of the world. The end of the big drum got knocked in and it brings comfort to nobody now.

Moral: Don't make any serious change in life unless you have some better reason for making it than that the big drum is a comfort to you.

THE McALL MISSION IN FRANCE.

The Thirteenth Annual Report of the Evangelical Mission in France, known as the McAll Mission, has just been received; and as, on former occasions, I send you a *resume* of some of its leading features. Like its predecessors it contains by way of introduction, a letter addressed to Mr. McAll by the venerable Rosseau St. Hilaire, member of the Institute of France, in which he refers to certain outstanding facts in the history of the Mission during the past year. In this letter he points out that, while the *reunions* were first commenced in the suburbs of Paris—the special sphere and stronghold for such mission work—in 1871, during last year a new hall was opened on the great

BOULEVARD BOUVE NOUVELLE

in the centre of the gay city, which is surrounded by a population very different in character from that of the other halls—a busy people, hasting to get rich, and more intent on the interests and pleasures of this life than on the salvation of their souls. And still, this new hall the Salle Baltimore, situated on one of the most brilliant, fashionable and worldly thoroughfares in the world—has become as popular as any of the older ones. Mr. McAll, in another part of the Report, tells that, at the close of a crowded meeting here, the members of the "Fraternal Society," formed only a week before, were invited to gather in a side room with any who might wish to join, and sixty persons remained. No wonder that this excited deep feeling on the part of Mr. McAll and his fellow-workers, when they looked upon such a company so recently collected from amongst the spiritual ignorance and contempt of divine things characteristic of that particular locality,

more, perhaps, than any other in the civilized world. A few months before, when preparations for opening this hall were being made, the neighbours came enquiring as to its object. On being told that the Gospel of Christ would be preached freely to all who chose to enter, the answer received was that such a thing was impossible. "Do you think," said they, in substance, "you can make the frequenters of the boulevards religious? You cannot mean it seriously." And here is the result—a group of men and women, to the number of sixty—previously strangers to Mr. McAll and to each other, now gathered together as one family! A few were aged persons, most were in middle life; but not the least interesting portion of the assembly was a band of young men, apparently as thoughtful and earnest as the rest. When it was requested that those who believed in Christ as their own Saviour, and those who desired to do so would signify the same by lifting up a hand, the instant response was: "There is no need to lift the hands, we are all one in this;" and this reply was echoed throughout the room. The Bible was then read verse by verse, though often with faltering lips; several testimonies as to blessings received in the Salle were given in a few broken words, and one voice among the newly-enrolled members was heard in prayer. It must, indeed, in these circumstances, have been difficult to realize that all this was taking place within a few yards of the incessant noise and folly of the crowded boulevards. Well might Mr. McAll say that God is thus owning his humble efforts to plant the standard of the Cross "where Satan's seat is."

I have dwelt on this particular fact because it illustrates in a remarkable manner the *judgment* and *tact* which have characterized, from the very beginning of these meetings, the "honorary Director" and his co-adjutors, and which undoubtedly have been the chief human elements in the marvellous success which has crowned their labours in France.

Professor St. Hilaire, in his letter, refers to another attraction of these reunions, viz., the

DISTRIBUTION OF TRACTS,

many of them specially prepared by himself, amongst those present at the meetings, and quotes the old proverb, "Spoken words take wings, but written ones remain." All classes, it seems, largely receive and read these tracts, which must deepen and, in some instances, complete the impression made by the addresses and other exercises within.

THE PREVAILING CHARACTERISTIC

of the auditors, both in Paris and in the Provinces, is readiness to listen attentively to a searching and thorough presentation of the truth. Mr. McAll unhesitatingly affirms that alike in the mission halls frequented by the well-to-do classes, and in the great and gay boulevard as in the remotest and most uncultured suburb, the speakers who keep most closely to the essential truths and the direct, loving appeals of the Gospel, are the most welcomed by those who attend, and the most attentively listened to.

What an important lesson to all engaged in evangelistic work, is thus incidentally given by one who brings the weight of thirteen years of daily and close observation of the meetings of Paris to enforce his statement.

FEW NEW STATIONS.

The exigencies of the financial position during the past year prevented the opening of any new stations in Paris, except the Central Hall already referred to, and even the expenses of this were defrayed by the ladies of Baltimore, U.S. In the Provinces the only considerable new undertaking has been that at Nantes and the neighbouring seaport of St. Nazaire, which had been promised a year ago. Aid has been given in some instances to local pastors to commence *reunions populaires* in their respective towns, by contributions to the rent of rooms, etc. Through friends at Springfield, Mass., a second station has been opened at Ajaccio, in the island of Corsica. There has been a considerable strengthening of the

MISSION STAFF IN PARIS

which caused some financial anxiety. This, however, was imperatively demanded, not only by the addition of the Salle Baltimore and its daily services, but especially by the *deepening* of the work in the older stations, which required an increased provision for the spiritual nurture and oversight of the more serious hearers and recent converts. Thoughtful friends in Scotland and the United States urged this as an "indispensable provision."