

Our Contributors.

REMEDIES THAT DON'T GO TO THE ROOTS.

BY KNOXIAN.

The number of people even in this Christian country who do not seem to believe that the gospel is the only remedy for fallen human nature, is painfully large. Why do so many advocate remedies that never touch the real cause of all the ills of human nature and belittle or even ignore the only real remedy? Mainly because they do not believe in the Bible doctrine of sin nor trust to the all-sufficient remedy that God has provided.

Here, for example, is a man who thinks that all the ills that afflict the body politic are caused by party politics. Abolish party, he says in effect, and a political millennium will come in. It never seems to dawn on his mind that responsible government without party is an impossibility. The best statesmen that Great Britain, the mother of parliaments ever produced, accept it as an axiom that party and responsible government must go together. The safety of the body politic arises in no small degree from the fact that the parties watch each other. Abolish the watching and there is a sufficient number of bad men in or hanging on the skirts of any party to bleed the country white. Allow these bad men to unite and operate without the check of party and there would not be a dollar in the treasury in a twelvemonth. What the country needs is not the abolition of party but the growth of better men. We do not say better public men. The public men, taken as a whole, are perhaps about the average of the private men. Indiscriminate abuse of public servants has long been a standing curse to this country. Better men at the ballot-box is what the country needs first and most, and the men at the ballot-box can be made better by the Gospel and in no other way. Has that doctrine gone out of date? So much the worse for Canada if it has. If that doctrine goes clean out of date in this country the country will soon go off the map.

Here is another Doctor who tells you in effect with a straight face that the remedy for all the ills that afflict the Church is organic union. Just huddle the Methodists and Baptists and Presbyterians and all the others into one huge ecclesiastical heap. Call the heap by one name, start the great ecclesiastical machine, put sinners in the hopper and they will come out saints almost ready for translation. Does the man who talks in that way or who leads simple-minded people to think in that way really believe in the Bible doctrine of sin. Has he accepted the doctrine of regeneration in anything more than a mere form, if he has accepted it at all? Would it not startle him to say that regeneration should be a term of communion? If organic union is set forth in the Scriptures as the proper condition of the Church—we don't admit for a moment that any such thing is taught in the Bible—but if it is, it can be brought about by a great outpouring of divine grace and in no other way. To unite the churches on a mere business basis and for the avowed purpose of saving money, to unite them for no higher purposes than people unite school sections or cattle shows would be a calamity. Of course such a union would be followed with the usual flourish of figures and the usual platform exhibitions. But souls are not saved by big figures nor sanctified by platform swagger.

Years ago we knew a man who professed to be converted at a union meeting. He said the thing that converted him was the appearance of all the town ministers "on a common platform." He didn't stay converted a month. Souls are not converted by spectacular exhibitions. What the churches need is a great outpouring of the Divine Spirit—more spiritual life in the pul-

pit and the pew, more of the power of the Holy Spirit in our Church courts and committees—perhaps it is needed there as much as in any other place—a great revival of true godliness and true manliness as well. The Church has no greater enemy than the man who even unconsciously leads men who love their sins to think that organic union can take the place of regeneration.

Another Doctor, and he is quite often the shallowest kind of a quack, tells you that the right remedy for the bad feeling that too often exists between Roman Catholic and Protestants is to abolish separate schools. Let the little Catholic boy and the little Protestant boy cipher and chew gum at the same desk and all will be well. It might occur to the man who proposes the sovereign remedy that there are no separate schools in the United States and the feeling of antagonism there between Catholics and Protestants is more bitter than in Canada. The P.P.A., one of the worst things that ever grew on the soil of America had its origin in a country in which there are no separate schools. Enmity against God or our fellow-men has its origin in the human heart, and is too deeply rooted there to be eradicated by a change of school systems. At all events, that is the way we read the New Testament.

Some of us can remember when education was advocated as a remedy for almost every kind of evil. Free schools, it was alleged would make good boys. The fact that many of the worst criminals on the continent are educated men has knocked the bottom clean out of that theory. Knowledge is power, but like money it may be a power for evil as well as for good.

Universal suffrage was contended for as a remedy for many evils. The ballot would make men better. The fact that so many men are ready to sell their ballots goes hard with that theory.

The latest and perhaps most absurd remedy for evil is to make the women electors, the bad ones as well as the good ones.

Supposing we all go back to a New Testament basis, and adopt as a working principle the doctrine that sin is the root of all our trouble, and that the Gospel and the Gospel alone is the real remedy that goes to the roots.

THE REV. ROBERT J. LAIDLAW, LL.D.

BY REV. HORATIO S. BEAVIS, M.A.

The late pastor of St. Paul's Church, Hamilton, sank peacefully in death, at half past two o'clock in the morning of Oct. 24th, at the residence of his mother-in-law Mrs. Hugh McColl, near Georgetown. He had been in a state of decline for more than a year, during which a stricken people gave him every evidence of sincerest love. A native of Canada, of Scotch parentage, there were combined in him elements of character and gifts of mind that made him almost idolized by Americans and Canadians, giving a stamp to the ministry which was an honor to God and the Church he represented.

He was born at Esquesing, Ont., Dec. 3rd, 1839, and his childhood was singularly fortunate in those home and neighborhood influences by which the coming man is moulded. The omnivorous reader developed into the brilliant student, and the earnest Christian lad into a consecrated worker for his Lord, and after valuable experience as a school teacher at Quatre Bras, he entered Knox College in 1859. The same year he matriculated at Toronto University, but relinquished his studies there on account of the death of a brother. Returning to Quatre Bras he taught until 1863, then took charge of the school at Waterloo, which he taught until 1867. Throughout these years he was an industrious student in various lines, and received fine training in the classics under the Rev. James Mitchell, then in charge of the churches of Boston and Milton.

"After giving up teaching Mr. Laidlaw engaged in business for about a year, when

the way opened for him to carry out the wishes of earlier years and study for the ministry. He entered the Theological Seminary at Princeton, N.J., in September, 1868, and took the regular course of three years. Dr. Charles Hodge was then senior professor of this famous school of the prophets, and probably exercised upon Mr. Laidlaw a greater influence than any other man. The Seminary vacation of 1869 was spent preaching in the churches of Brainard and East Nassau, Rensselaer county, N.Y., and the vacation of 1870 at Brockville, Ont. During the first year in Princeton, Mr. Laidlaw was very ill with typhoid fever, and in the next year he suffered from pleurisy, some effects of it remaining with him for life. He was licensed by the Presbytery of New Brunswick at Princeton in the spring of 1871, and graduated from the Seminary on April 2nd of that year, one of the leading students and most promising men of a class that had in it a number of men who have made their mark as preachers and professors."

His full ministerial career opened with the acceptance, May 1871, of a call to the First Church of Columbus, Ohio, one of the strongest churches of the State, and his incumbency was marked by signal ability. Columbus always retained a strong hold on Mr. Laidlaw's heart, for there he began his ministerial labors, to it he brought his bride—Margaret, daughter of Hugh McColl, whom he married, on Jan. 18th, 1872—and there his daughter, Anna C., was born. This was followed by the pastorate of the Jefferson Avenue Church of Detroit, entered upon in 1875, and covering three years. During his American ministry, he was honored by the appointment to convey the fraternal greetings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States to the sister body in Canada, and his performance of the task showed that the right man had been selected. In 1878 he began the full, rich and happy pastorate of St. Paul's Church, Hamilton, Ont., where a record of such ability, loving zeal and widespread usefulness has been made as would be an honor to any minister of Jesus Christ. His scholarship, pulpit power, pastoral fidelity and organizing ability, together with that genuine piety whose cheerfulness never touched the borders of irreverence, and whose seriousness had no tinge of gloom, made him an object of loving admiration, and his life a sunny blessing. As a preacher he was vigorous yet tender, Biblical and practical, evangelical and independent. As author he was clear, interesting, scholarly and courteous, as witness his works on "The Trial of Dr. Briggs," and "Our Religion as It Was, and as It is."

His services to the Church spread beyond the bounds of his own congregation and community. He was almost conscientious and efficient presbyter. He was assiduous, wise and conciliatory in the Church courts, and "Dr. Laidlaw's bottle of oil" became proverbial. His trusteeship of Queen's University was characterized by such wisdom as to win from Principal Grant the statement: "No more sagacious advisor sat at the Board." As Convener of the Assembly's Committee on the Distribution of Preachers, he wrought faithfully and lovingly. As a citizen he was public-spirited and helpful.

The sad death in March, 29th, 1893, of Mrs. Laidlaw, deprived him of his best friend and wisest counsellor. His children, Miss Anna C., Hugh Campbell and Robertson, were spared to comfort his heart, and enjoy for a little longer the most touching, companionable, fatherly care.

It was the writer's privilege to become intimately associated with Dr. Laidlaw, during the last year of his earthly history. It is impossible to state too strongly the impression made by that godly spirit. Personal contact with a character which was the embodiment of purity, devotion and common sense gave fresh confidence in the possibilities of sanctified human nature, and strengthened the desire for a better and higher Christian life.

The funeral services were held October 26th in Hamilton, in the church he loved so well, when a bereaved people looked upon the features of him who had given the best years of his life to them. The Presbytery

of Hamilton and the Ministerial Alliance were in attendance. Rev. Principal Caven, Knox College, spoke most feelingly of the precious spirit now gone before; his faithful discharge of duty, and the memory which those loving labors will leave behind. Rev. Dr. Fletcher, representing the Presbytery in a tender address; and Rev. Dr. Smith, speaking for Queen's University, paid a fitting tribute. The Moderator of the Presbytery, Rev. W. M. Cruickshank, assisted in the service as did also Rev. Dr. Burns, Principal of the Hamilton Ladies College, and president of the Ministerial Alliance. Rev. Mr. Wade, rector in the Church of England, participated in the services. A special train, provided by the managers of St. Paul's Church, conveyed a large number to Georgetown, and in the cemetery there by the side of his beloved wife were laid the mortal remains of the model pastor, the ideal father, the Christian friend, Robert F. Laidlaw. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

SUNDAY'S SOLILOQUY.

BY A. O. C.

Yes, Sunday is very different from the other days: to me even the trees seem to feel this and look more dignified; possibly it is imagination, but why should it not be so? The Indians, who knew nature as none have since, gave human understanding to her, and certainly there are trees now that remind one of people. For instance, a tree hard by is so like Uriah Heep that when the breeze disturbs the branches they writhe as did Uriah when he would tell how "umble" he was. The Uriah Heeps in real life are legion. Many there are whose very "umbleness" is their most aggravating pride. These "umble" people are associated in my mind with those who are so good—so much better than the ordinary Christian—that they become intolerable. Now, two pews in front of me there sits a man upon whose face is written "Behold how good I am—there are few equal to me!" But that very expression, together with his quiet stealthy step, and the gentle, insinuating way he takes his seat, reveal more of his true character than he is aware. In direct contrast to him is myself, who profess no extraordinary goodness, nor ability to distribute tracts, but who can smile. A smile is not worth much in itself but when a squaw, peddling one day, said "Thank you kindly for your smile; it is the first I've had to-day," I felt that I had given more, infinitely more, to her than if I had bought her whole stock-in-trade. The day seemed brighter and happier to me for her few words, we each helped the other by a smile. A smile will bring more comfort to the weary and sick, and to the well too, than a dozen long, sanctimonious-faced men who have scriptural quotations for every occasion and of whom the above is typical. Strange that smiles are not more cultivated? Would that they could be taught in our schools as a necessary part of our education and then used as freely as our powers of speech. Now while I have been thinking, the sermon has come to an end, and how much do I remember? "A sower went forth to sow." Truly appropriate, for here I have been ostensibly worshipping while in reality my thoughts have been so preoccupied that the words have only reached the outer ear and have never touched the soul. A wayside hearer for this morning. There are probably many others the same, although they are ashamed to confess it; but this evening there shall be good ground and no soliloquising. Ah! There is one who looks as though he had heard what he had come to hear and ever more. This is one of the joys of church-going, to hear thoughts that have hitherto been struggling to break the veil between them and our understanding, put into words and made tangible, so that one is strengthened to meet the future, and buoyant with the knowledge that the way to do ourselves the most good is to do good to others.