

## Our Contributors.

### SOME CONVERSERS WHO DON'T CHARM.

BY KNOXIAN.

In an obituary notice of a late American minister it is said that he was a profound scholar, an impressive orator, a persuasive writer and a

#### CHARMING CONVERSER.

As a rule obituary notices do not lessen the number of a departed friend's good qualities, but it is not often said that they are charming conversers. No doubt the reason why so few people get credit for being charming conversers, even after they die, is because charming conversers are scarce. Many believe that conversation is fast becoming a lost art. Just why we cannot talk in as interesting a manner as our grandfathers and grandmothers it would be difficult to say. The one thing pretty clear is that we don't, and probably don't because we are not able. Some enterprising publisher should arrange for a symposium on conversation as a lost art and instruct the contributors to direct their attention mainly to the causes that produced the loss. Why is conversation becoming a lost art in an age in which knowledge is more general than in any previous age of the world's history?

One reason why a good many people have dancing in their houses is because their guests cannot enjoy themselves in any other way. People who entertain declare that young folks don't care to sit and prose away and look at pictures for a whole evening. It seems rather hard that in a country where school taxes are so high young people cannot enjoy themselves in any other way than by dancing. This Province pays enormous sums every year for education of one kind and another. Count up the amounts paid to sustain universities, colleges, high schools, public schools, private schools, ladies' schools and various other schools and one would think that young people who have so many advantages might enjoy themselves for an occasional social evening without dancing. Whether the amusement is sinful or not it certainly should not be indispensable to the happiness of any reasonably intelligent person. The heel should not be more important than the head.

Quite likely some of the powers that make a man or woman a charming converser are natural rather than acquired. Possibly it is beyond the power of schools and colleges to make some people interesting talkers. The raw material to make a charming converser is not there. This view of the case is strengthened by the fact that many intensely interesting talkers never saw the inside of a college and owe little to schools of any kind. Nature dealt kindly with them and gave them the power to converse in a fascinating manner. It may be that charming conversers, like poets, are born not made. Still anyone can and should improve his conversational powers. If it is worth while conversing at all it is worth while doing it well. Converse as well as you can or dry up would not be a bad rule for society.

If the number of charming conversers is small the number of conversers who don't charm to any great extent is sufficiently large to keep all listeners in mind of the fact that there is a good deal of patience needed in this world. Prominent among the conversers who don't charm is

#### THE SLOW RETAILER OF COMMON PLACES.

This individual puts himself in what he considers an impressive attitude, assumes an air of immense importance, and looks as though he was going to say something that would decide the fate of nations, and then solemnly announces that this has been a mild winter.

While you are recovering from the shock produced by this momentous announcement the slow converser is seen to be loading himself up again. This time he is going to ask a question. Judging by the time and deliberation he takes in framing this question you think it is going to be one that will at least pierce to the vitals of some of the most profound problems on the earth beneath. You are surprised when he slowly asks you if you had the grippe. Life is too short and duty too pressing to spend much time with the slow retailer of dreary common-places.

#### THE EGOTISTIC CONVERSER

is an exasperating fellow. He begins every sentence with I. I did this and I said that and I am going to do or say so and so. He so overwhelms you with I's that you almost feel like asking him if he created the heavens and the earth, arranged for the deluge, brought down the fire on Sodom and did all the wonderful things recorded in sacred and profane history. There is only one way of getting on peacefully with an egotistic converser and that is to listen. There is some danger in doing even that because he sometimes assumes that silence means assent and goes away and says that you agreed with him in all he said.

#### THE PROLIX CONVERSER

is also a most exasperating kind of person. He is often not a man, though we say "he" by way of courtesy. He wants to tell you something and he goes away back somewhere about creation to get a fair start just as we boys used to take a race for a high jump. The trouble with him is that he never takes the jump. Each time he comes near the hurdle he goes away out on some side issue. If he wants to tell you one thing he tells you about a hundred other things and it takes him so long to tell the hundred that he hardly ever gets to the one.

#### THE SLIMY CONVERSER

is a bad fellow. His peculiarity is to say bad things about people behind their backs. He is always sweet—too sweet to be sound—when the people are there, but when their backs are turned he says dirty things in a dirty way about them. Never talk with a slimy converser.

About the worst kind of a converser, except perhaps Satan, is the fellow who begins every sentence with

#### THEY SAY.

"They say" this man drinks, and the other man cheats and the third man does something else. Ask him who says? and he never can tell you. Ask him who are "they" and he never knows. The plain unvarnished fact is that conversers who always begin their sentences with "they say" are scandal mongers dyed-in-the-wool and dirty. Give "they say" men and women a wide berth.

A sub-division of this class do their work in a way of their own. Wishing to make a cowardly attack on a woman they say, "If she is not slandered" she is so and so. Of a man they wish to stab in the back they say, "If he is not badly maligned" he is this or that or the other bad thing.

There are various other kinds of unlovely conversers that time forbids us paying our respects to in this paper.

If we cannot all become charming conversers we can at least avoid and help to silence conversers that are vicious and probably do as much harm as whiskey.

### UNION OF CHURCHES.

BY PRESBYTER.

By union of Churches is here meant the organic union of different denominations, placing them under one ecclesiastical government. This is a subject that occupies a good deal of attention at present, and which is discussed with much and increasing interest. It is one of great importance, and the discussion of it will, it is to be hoped, promote more intercourse among churches than has heretofore existed, and also excite mutual Christian affection, and lead to co-operation in edifying and extending the Church of Christ, and, in this way, rendering more visible to the world the unity which exists in Christ's mystical Body.

What I wish, at present, is not to set forth the desirability of such union, but to indicate difficulties connected with attempts to accomplish it. Many are unwilling to look at these at all. They are so liberal that they are prepared to make any needed sacrifice however great. But this is not true wisdom; and it is spurious liberality. Union procured by sacrificing what many regard as great religious principles and deep religious convictions is bought too dear and cannot be permanent, nor can it yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. I do not speak of difficulties which exist in connection with the union of Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, for these are not great, and they may be indefinitely minimized, but I refer to difficulties connected with the union of these churches with the Church of England.

These will appear if you consider the circular emanating from the Pan-Anglican Lambeth Conference of 1888, and addressed to the various non-Anglican churches in England, and proposed as a Basis of Conference on Union:—"The Old and new Testaments as the rule and ultimate standard of faith; the Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol, and Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith; the two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and the Supper; the Historic Episcopacy locally adapted in the methods of its administration, and the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church." Although this proposal is made as the Basis of a Conference in reference to union; yet, considering the source from whence it emanates and the authoritative manner in which it is enunciated, it is evidently intended to be the Basis itself. It is important that this be distinctly understood. Indubitable evidence can be adduced to show that it was so understood by those who made the proposal, and by the Nonconformists of England to whom it was addressed. We shall confine our attention to the last Article, which refers to Church polity.

It appears that a few months ago a number of private and unofficial meetings were held in London, attended by Anglican Bishops as well as by Congregational ministers, to see how much their different churches had in common. On many important matters of doctrine, the brethren were all agreed, but when polity was considered, they found it necessary to bring the meeting to a close.

In his pastoral letter for 1889, Dr. Ellicott, Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, who attended these meetings, makes the following statement as the conclusion of the whole matter:—

"He had formerly held private conference, not without due authorisation, with the representatives of one of the great religious bodies that do not belong to the Church of England, on Christian union. He was profoundly impressed with the friendly and Christian tone of the meeting, and the remembrance of it will never leave him. But what was the upshot? That we parted, amid expressions of the deepest and truest friendliness, with the profound conviction on both sides that so far as we were then permitted to see, anything like Re-union was not possible. The question of Orders was the chasm over which we could cast no bridge. And so, I seriously believe, it will be found in every real practical discussion

of the subject—until the time when, it may be, God may so draw the sides of the chasm together that the bridge may at last be made. Meanwhile, let us hope and let us pray. Much even now may be done. We may certainly cultivate all friendly relations; scrupulously avoid all things that might offend; and if ever forced to any judgment upon our relations to Nonconformity, simply to adopt the general statement, and even the words of Archbishop Bramhall, freely avowing that we presume not to unchurch our Christian brethren, but leave them to their own Master to stand or to fall." These words clearly indicate that, in the view of Bishop Ellicott and other Bishops, acceptance of Episcopal polity is the condition of union with the Church of England, as without this "re-union was not possible." Let this fact be held fast.

This the Nonconformists also understood. At a meeting held last autumn at Hull, the Congregational Union of England and Wales, in courteous terms, declined the Lambeth invitation on account of the Fourth Article in the proposed Basis. Congregationalists believe in an Historic Episcopate, but claim that they, and not the Episcopalians, adhere to the Apostolic conception both of the Church and of the pastorate, their distinctive testimony on this point being explicit. But while it is impossible for them to enter into such a conference as is requested, they would gladly confer with the Bishops about union in the various offices of worship, and about co-operation in the common services of the Christian faith. The Baptist Union has replied in substantially similar terms.

Thus although there were private and unofficial conferences between Anglican Bishops and Nonconformist ministers in reference to the Fourth Article, yet the great Nonconformist Bodies declined to confer with the Bishops on this point or even on a basis which contained it.

One can scarcely fail to be surprised at the Lambeth proposal. It is such as could not be made to Presbyterians. The Provincial Synod should seriously consider this. The Bishops could not address Presbyterians as persons who had left the communion, and invite them to return; they could not talk to Presbyterians about re-union. The Bishops would not presume to address Canadian Presbyterians as "Nonconformists." They evidently thought that they retained a paternal relation to English Nonconformists, and might reasonably expect them to return to their former home, merely on invitation, without any concessions. Yet the Nonconformist churches peremptorily refused to hold any conferences on Historic Episcopacy as a basis of Union. It is now freely admitted by both parties that there is a chasm here over which they could throw no bridge.

Now, it is well known that, in 1887, the Provincial Synod of the Church of England, invited the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches to a conference on union, that a joint committee of the three Churches met in Toronto last April, and that the meeting was in every respect most gratifying to all parties. But the joint committee did not discuss the question of an Historic Episcopacy, did not attempt to measure the breadth and depth of the intervening chasm, much less did they consider the possibility of throwing a bridge over it. If this be, as is now frankly admitted by all parties in England, the great obstacle in the way of union, then it is evident that absolutely nothing has been done in Canada, or even attempted, towards the removal of the obstacle. This is the true state of the question at present. The Presbyterian committee reported to last General Assembly, and it was re-appointed.

There is a kind of indistinct report, which may be true, that a communication from the Provincial Synod of the Church of England is to be sent to next General Assembly, inviting to a conference on the Lambeth Basis. This seems to be an entire change of base. The Lambeth document has already been stated; but the proposal of the Provincial Synod, in compliance with which the joint committee met last April, was very different, it was as follows:—"That a committee of this House be appointed to confer with any similar committee appointed to represent other Christian bodies, for the purpose of ascertaining whether there is any possibility of honourable union with such bodies."

Now, if this report be correct, it is a very grave matter. As it has been admitted, and indeed clearly brought out by private and unofficial conferences in England, that the Lambeth proposal including the Historic Episcopate is not merely a basis of Conference but also a basis of union, and the only one that will be accepted, then it is clear that the only course that our General Assembly can properly take is like the English Nonconformists, to decline the conference. But, at the same time, an earnest desire might be expressed to hold conferences from time to time, or even stately, in order to promote Christian sympathy, to consider matters affecting the welfare of all the religious bodies, and to seek, as far as possible, to co-operate in the great work which Christ has entrusted to His Church. In this way nearly all that could reasonably be expected from union might be gained.

It is much to be regretted that the Church of England holds so tenaciously a kind of Episcopacy that places a wide chasm between her and all other Protestant churches, practically, however, it is more than a mere form of polity; its apparently necessary concomitants penetrate into the very heart of the Church, and affect her whole spiritual life and activity. Yet she well knows that were she to surrender her Historic Episcopacy, she would part with her distinctive characteristic as a Church and with the bond that holds together—but never can truly unite—all the discordant and conflicting elements