

Our Contributors.

CONCERNING THE NOTORIETY OF BADNESS AND FOOLISHNESS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

The number of theological students in the Presbyterian Church in Canada is about three hundred. When the Divinity Halls are all opened and work has fairly begun, if these young men work hard and conduct themselves with propriety, little will be said about them outside of the colleges until next spring. If they are good young men the outside world will let them alone. Should one of them, however, exasperated by a dull lecture, throw an ink bottle at his professor and make a slight dint in the learned brow of that learned gentleman the world will be sure to hear about him. All the work that he could do during his college course, the best exercises that a student could write, the best examinations that a student could pass, would be as nothing in the way of bringing notoriety compared with the throwing of that ink bottle. A little badness would make that student better known among his fellow men than a life time of goodness. Why? Mainly for two reasons: The newspapers would tell all about the badness and a majority of the human family like better to read and speak about badness than to read and speak about goodness.

There are ninety odd members in the Legislature of Ontario. The proceedings are opened each day with prayer. How many of the Christian electors of Ontario know anything about these prayers? How many of the clergy of Ontario know whether the devotions are led by the speaker, or by the clerk, or by a Government and Opposition member in turn? If one member should so far forget himself as to curse audibly all Ontario would hear and speak about the profanity next day, but so long as members merely pray nobody takes much interest in the matter.

There are two or three unfortunate men in this Dominion under sentence of death. One of them occupied a larger place in the public mind a few days ago than the whole population of the Dominion. Two or three millions of decent men and women discharging their duties, bearing their burdens, fighting life's battle bravely and well, were nowhere compared with this scamp on trial for murder. People lay down their daily paper and say "there is a carnival of crime in Canada just now." There is nothing of the kind. There are a few criminals but the five millions of Canadians are for the most part respectable, well-behaved people. The carnival exists in the imagination of people who read and think and speak about the badness of a few and pay no attention to the goodness of the many.

If we remember rightly there are about one hundred thousand clergymen in Canada and the United States. The majority of them are honest, hard-working, God-fearing men—men who preach faithfully and do all in their power to make their fellow men happier and better. That young scapegrace in a western city, who was found making love to all the female members of his choir the other day, bulked more largely in the public mind than any hundred of the hundred thousand. He was bigger than a whole Presbytery. He was better known than some of the American colleges are. Foolishness brings in more notoriety in a day than Methuselah got during the whole of his life. Next to being absolutely wicked the most notorious thing is to be a fool. The surest of all ways to become known is to shoot somebody who is well known already. The next best way is to set up as a rival to George Francis Train.

Phillips Brooks told the students of Yale about "those despairing moments which come to the extemporaneous speaker, when a wretched piece of folly escapes him, which he would give anything to recall but cannot, and he sees the raven-like reporters catch the silly morsel as it drops." Raven-like reporters are not by any means the only people who catch the silly morsel that cannot be recalled. Perhaps Brooks had in his mind's eye the Boston reporter who described a certain prayer as the best ever addressed to a Boston audience. Reputable Canadian reporters often eliminate the silly morsel as well as straighten up and mend the broken-backed sentences. It is a merciful thing for many a speaker that they do. But some good—at least professedly good—Christian people often pick up the silly morsel and feast on it. Sometimes it is the only thing they remember. Preach a fairly good sermon with no lack of properly arranged matter, but in an unguarded moment say some silly or rather broad thing and you will be surprised at the number of people who remember only the thing that would have been better unsaid. There may have been enough of Gospel in the sermon to save the world but the only thing caught by some of the hearers was the silly morsel.

Deliver a rattling good speech on some important question to an average audience. Make it fairly bristle with good points, strong arguments, apt illustrations and powerful appeals, but say in an evil moment just one silly thing, that next morning you would give much to recall, and you need not be surprised if the silly thing is the only part of your speech some of your hearers remember.

One of the undoubted evils from which modern society suffers is the prominence given to badness, to foolishness, to oddity—to anything out of the usual run of ordinary events. On the part of many there is a constant craving for some-

thing startling. To satisfy this morbid craving, notoriety hunters are ready to do anything from shooting a man down to wearing a shirt collar that saws the ears. One of Birchall's chief characteristics in his early days was a consuming love of notoriety. He has more now than he bargained for. Why should sensible people pay more attention to the odd, the foolish, the wicked, than to the ordinary that is really good?

The craving for the odd—the sensational—is just as manifest in the Church as in what is called the world and the attempts to satisfy it are becoming far too common. But this branch of the subject will keep for another time.

THE BI-CENTENARY OF "THE GLORIOUS RETURN" OF THE WALDENSES IN 1650.

VIII.

V—THE FESTIVAL AT TORRE PELLICE.

(a) *The Inauguration of the Waldensian House.*—Continued.

Immediately after the services, the prefect visited the Waldensian museum and the halls of the new building. As soon as he had left the public was admitted into the hall which takes the eye at the very first by the decorations of the ceiling, and the elegant glass cases arranged along the walls, above which are hung trophies of ancient arms, and of objects brought from Basutoland. In the glass case in the middle are the beautiful flag given by the Duke of Wurtemberg to Arnaud, the scarf which the latter received from Victor Amadeus II., the cup, snuff-box and seal of the pastor-colonel, belonging to the Peyrot family of the Fort, a copy of the flag given in 1848 by the Waldenses to Charles Albert, presented by the parish of Turin to the Waldensian Church on the occasion of the Bi-centenary, a copy of Olivetan's Bible,* swords, fire-arms, the key of the old church of Serre, Captain Jahier's cooking-pot, beidanes,† cannon-balls from Balsille, etc. Above the elegant marble mantelpiece, on which is a small copy of the monument at Prangins, is the tablet dedicated to the memory of the historian, A. Muston, bearing the following inscription: "To the revered memory of Chev. Alexis Muston, pastor, and Doctor of Theology, author of 'The Israel of the Alps.' Born at Torre Pellice, February 11, 1810. Died at Bourdeau (Drôme), April 6, 1888. The Waldensian Historical Society."

Their mountains do not contain monuments like those of other countries. No poet has made this asylum illustrious. But its rocks are poems. And the barest history of the Waldenses is a temple which neither men nor time can destroy.—Preface to the History, page vi.

In one of the side glass cases is contained the magnificent Herbarium of the flora of the Cottian Alps, collected by Dr. E. Rostan, of St. Germain. Above the central glass case is a trophy of the culverins of Janavel, Tron-Poulat, and Bonjour, of Subiase. Behind the portrait of the sub-prefect, Geymet, the east wall is decked with a trophy of the flags which have, at different festivals, represented the Churches of the Valleys, those in mission fields, and the Waldensian ones in foreign countries.

Immediately after the inauguration, a banquet was given at Fort Ste. Marie, to which the Peyrot-Arnaud family kindly invited, besides statesmen and ecclesiastical and administrative authorities, the members of the Festivals Committee, the Waldensian Historical Society, etc. The gathering was a kind of family one, still it is not unlawfully divulging secrets to give an outline of the addresses delivered at it.

Deputy Peyrot began with one to the following effect: "Gentlemen,—With deep emotion I rise to thank in the name of my family and of my grateful fellow-religionists, as well as in my own, the distinguished person who has condescended to come here to represent the greatest and most revered of monarchs, the first defender of Italian liberty and glory, King Humbert I. The name of the king, repeated with veneration during these festivals of the bi-centenary, proclaimed with emulation in these beautiful valleys, is the noblest, the most precious consecration that we could desire of Waldensian traditions. A word of warm thankfulness to you also, honoured gentlemen, who have been pleased to grace with your presence this memorable solemnity, which is and shall remain in the heart of all those who have taken part in it, the true festival of liberty of conscience. The echo of our dales and the rugged sides of our mountains speak to us still of the giant struggles of our ancestors to acquire that liberty which is the most precious of all. Their history is written in letters of gold in our families, and their indelible memorials move every fibre of our being, and send a thrill through all hearts born and brought up in these valleys. I shall not again go over that stirring tale of struggles and of unknown sufferings, of sacrifices and of heroism which are now matters of tradition. Just allow me to remind you, with the noble pride of a true Italian, of the period when the raising up again of Italy began; when a king of the House of Savoy, the most generous of monarchs at that time on the throne, decreed the political and religious emancipation of the Waldenses. This highly magnanimous act, while it delivered a whole people

from the bondage even of memorials, made sure to the holy cause of the country, the certain, unlimited, unconditional and loyal help of all the children of these valleys who asked, and do ask, nothing more than to consecrate their life to the good of the king and of the country.

"And I am happy to be able to affirm it in a special manner to-day, when the illustrious Count Lovera di Maria, the representative of our well-beloved sovereign, is pleased not only to honour with his presence the abode of our forefathers, but also to show how much the desires for liberty which we have had for ages and our highly patriotic aspirations are esteemed. I therefore, gentlemen, with liveliest gratitude, propose the health of such a worthy representative of this great monarch, for whom we all cherish an unbounded veneration. This is an anniversary of two centuries which is celebrated to-day by hundreds and by thousands of emancipated families. Well, in the name of these families, and making myself the mouthpiece of all these hearts devoted henceforth to the liberty and the greatness of the same country, I invite you to accompany me in saying: 'Long live King Humbert! Long live the prefect! Long live united Italy with intangible Rome!'"

After a salutation from the Moderator to the chief of the "old and always young in heart" province of Turin, Senator-General Cl. Corte proposed the health of the Waldensian people, "small in number, but great by their history and their virtues." He called them the most beautiful example of a truly democratic society. But when he thought on the exploits and deeds of those heroes, which they remembered with emotion, his thoughts turned also to their female companions in danger and martyrdom. For their husbands there was at least some glory in resistance and sacrifice. For them on the contrary there was only self-denial, anguish and secret tears. The victories won by the Waldensian warriors were greatly owing to those women who encouraged and strengthened them in the struggle, suffering them to die only for the ideal of their life, the preservation of their faith. He hoped that the Waldensian women of to-day would inspire a like courage in the new generation, and personifying them in the person of the amiable mistress of the house, he proposed their health.

Deputy Geymet, supported by Advocate Poetti, of Pignerol, proposed the health of her Majesty the Queen, after which Deputy Alla, ex-Minister of Grace and Justice, now Vice-President of the Chamber, spoke. He said: "I utter the feelings of every one when I return the Peyrot family our warmest thanks for having invited us to take part on an occasion which has deeply affected us. I have heard great orators, but I have never been so much impressed as in seeing all heads bowed down as if to answer, silently but fully, the thought and the word of the pastor. I understood then that I had before me a people which had a lively sense of religion, and I said to myself: 'Here, now, one can pray to God without betraying his country. One can have a religion without failing in respect to established laws. Here are the people who have known how to unite the feeling which binds them to their God to that which binds them to their country.' That is a very great merit, especially in our day, when scepticism invades us, and we have to fight in our own bosom these self-styled religious men who make a matter of doubt the duties which we have to perform to our native land."

Deputy Pasquali was also deeply moved when he saw how one can unite these two great ideas, God and country.

Following him, Deputy Luzzatti said: "These last two days I have been meditating on the spectacle of a people overflowing with faith and patriotism. Yesterday, when I heard your pastor express in prayer sentiments of the truest patriotism, I said to myself: The struggle between God and the king is over. This separation has never existed in your valley, but it exists elsewhere. May it soon have completely disappeared over all our dear country!"

Deputy Plebano thanked those who had enabled him to be present at this festival of patriotism, and of liberty of conscience which is the foundation of all civil progress. He, too, now understood how religion and patriotism can be united. He hoped that this alliance may become a reality in every Italian heart. If it were so our country would quickly attain that true greatness which in vain she is going to seek on African shores.

Deputy Faldella was touched with the readiness with which, for the sake of our guests, the mistress of the house had made the sacrifice of staying away from the beautiful festivals which had so deeply affected them. If they have been precious to those who cultivate liberty of conscience, how much more should not they have been so to the heart of women who nourish always the religious feeling. He could, therefore, not do better than drink to the health of the hospitable family under whose roof they were assembled, especially to hers who was the centre and ornament of it.

Dr. Prochet made a feeling reply to these gentlemen. He said: "When I was in the presence of his Majesty to present to him the homage of our Church on a happy occasion, and reminded him of the words of his august ancestor, 'We have hitherto been enemies, henceforth we shall be friends, and while I have a loaf of bread I will share it with you,' he answered: 'We form but one family.' Was not our sovereign a thousand times right? I would ask of those who have Waldensian blood in their veins. And to those gentlemen who are come from so many different parts of our country to bring us a word of warm sympathy and affection, I say in proposing their health: 'We are all brethren.'"

*Olivetan's Bible, which is in French, was published by the Waldensian Church. I have seen the above-mentioned copy—one of the first edition. It is a curious specimen of old French. The binding is new, on account of the original one having become, by time and use, very much "dilapidated." Very few copies are known to be in existence.

†The original gives this word in Italics to show that it is either an old or a foreign one. I must try to find out its meaning when I next write to Signor Pons, of Torre Pellice. The only word like it in French is "bedon," which means a drum. The dictionaries mark it as not good French. "Beidane" may be the form of it in the Waldensian *patois*. But this theory of mine may not be correct.