

ROUNDERS.

There is a class of people in New York called Rounders. They derive their name from their habit of going around among the different churches, while they belong to none. It is a way they have, and hence their name—Rounders. Rounders are not by any means confined to New York. More's the pity that they are not. Rounders are found in all our Canadian cities, towns, villages and rural districts. Viewed historically it is difficult to say when Rounders began. Prof. Campbell may, perhaps, be able to trace their origin to some very remote period in the past. Probably some distinguished theologian could show that Rounders existed in the Jewish Church in Old Testament times. Most plain people, however, think that the first really authentic reference we have to Rounders is found in Paul's second epistle to Timothy, where he describes a certain class of people as having "itching ears." For a good commentary on this passage see Barnes; for living illustrations look around your own neighbourhood, perhaps in your own family. One thing is clear, whenever or wherever Rounders began, they are here now, and their ears "itch" quite as much as they did in apostolic times. There are few ministers in actual work who cannot produce a Rounder with ears quite as "itchy" as any that Paul or Timothy ever saw. In a world's fair for Rounders some Canadian towns would be certain to carry off a fair number of medals. There are few things that a real genuine Rounder dislikes more than worshipping in one place—a locality with one church in it would be to him a place of punishment on Sabbath. Next to worshipping in one place, Rounders dislike ordinary services. Plain straightforward worship has no charms for real Rounders. They like great occasions and great excitement. They fairly revel in special services providing the crowd is large and the excitement considerable. If the attendance is but moderate and the feeling not very high they vote the movement a failure and look around the corner in search of a larger crowd and more excitement. Rounders are fond of funeral sermons, anniversary services, church openings, missionary sermons and special occasions of all kinds. Nothing so much disgusts a Rounder as a small meeting. A large crowd and plenty of excitement is to him a far better thing than two or three met together and enjoying the promised presence. Rounders always patronize the "distinguished preacher from a distance." They always like strange preachers and rarely listen to a preacher who has been a few years in the place. Rounders always run after the "new man" for a few Sabbaths. The "new man" has every one of them the first Sabbath after his settlement, and some of the "green ones" in the congregation begin to think that the Rounders are "coming over to us," but they don't come. Rounders delight in the teaching of ex-monks, escaped nuns, and Jews who profess to have been converted. They love to listen to a new "convert" tell how he used to abuse his mother and kick his wife. Any man that makes capital out of his own shame is far more "edifying" to them than a commonplace preacher who has always been stupid enough to conduct himself with a reasonable amount of propriety. Rounders like strange subjects as well as strange men. Let a preacher announce that he intends to preach next Sabbath on "Cain's Wife" or "Balaam's Ass" and he will draw every healthy Rounder in a radius of ten miles.

There is one point in which all Rounders agree—they never pay. A good Rounder, male or female, will "stand up in meetin'" and sing with marvellous fervour:

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my heart, my life, my all."

But then he lets it demand. He never pays any more attention to the demand than simply to sing about it. This is a way that Rounders have. Rounders believe in a free gospel. They don't like the pew-rent system or the envelope system, or indeed any other system that touches the pocket. They have great admiration for the "lay brother" who travels through the country with a slouched hat on his head and a limp Bible under his arm and pitches into the "hireling clergy." They like the "lay brother" because he says he never

takes any money. He travels for nothing, and boards for nothing, and gets his clothing for nothing, he can even cross the Atlantic once a year for nothing on a first-class steamer. Providence feeds the "lay brother" in a more miraculous manner than Providence fed Elijah. Rounders believe all this, and as they think there is nothing to pay, they love the "lay brother" during the little time he remains in any locality. Some people we know are better acquainted with the "lay brother's" financial methods than Rounders profess to be.

Rounders do not like missionary operations. That kind of work needs money, and it is part of a Rounder's religion never to pay anything. In fact he has great doubt about the piety of those men who raise money for any purpose. Trustees who collect pews sharply, and collectors of all kinds, he thinks are all going to the bad place. They are not pious because they ask people for money. Rounders are not favourable to colleges—colleges need money. The Rounders do not like denominational distinctions—denominational machinery needs money to keep it moving. Rounders are people of broad, generous sympathies, who see good everywhere and scorn to belong to the narrow sects that need money. The only time a Rounder ever identifies himself with a denomination is when some zealous collector is after him. Then he always belongs to some denomination other than that to which the collector belongs.

Rounders may be divided into several classes. There is the *high toned* Rounder who patronizes the churches and sits down in the best pew with an air which seems to say, "You are all highly honoured in having me here to-day." There is the *Critical* Rounder who finds fault with something in every church and cannot locate himself he says, because he cannot get things exactly to his taste. There is the *Gushing* Rounder whose soul is too large to worship in any one place. He says they are all "dear brethren," and he loves them so much he must go around among them. There is the *Hypocritical* Rounder who cannot find any church pious enough for him to worship in. There is the *Musical* Rounder who follows the loudest organ or the best choir. There is the *Quarrelsome* Rounder who has been pushed out of half a dozen churches in succession and who gets the cold shoulder from all respectable congregations. There is also the *Hobby-horse* Rounder in search of some "brother" willing to trot out his hobby every Sabbath. There are several other kinds of Rounders. Are you a Rounder? Are any of the members of your family growing up ROUNDERS?—By "Knoxion" in *The Canada Presbyterian*.

THE BRIGHT SIDE OF CALVINISM.

Looking at it from the standpoint of a saved sinner, Calvinism has some very bright features. It presents him with a glorious God. The loftiest, the grandest the most exalted being of which the human mind has any conception, is the God of the Calvinistic system. It was Calvinism which gave to the Church that description of God which reads almost like the inspired Word, and which is said to have fallen first from the lips of one in the outbreathing of reverent and adoring prayer. "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Before Jehovah's awful throne it bows reverently. God, not man, is the centre of the system. Hence predestination and election. It exalts God. Glory to God in the highest is its ever-recurring refrain. God is supreme, is the keynote of its teaching. On this rock, its every doctrine rests; from this, every obligation springs. The secret of that wonderful power, which history discloses as residing in the system, to make human character grand and effective, and which Froude sought in vain, lies mainly in the fact, that it holds up to men—throws around and above them—the presence, the majesty, the sovereignty, of such a glorious, awe-inspiring God. It is no light claim for the system, to assert that it exhibits to men a Supreme Being worthy to be feared and adored.

It presents God in the most attractive character. In its sublime portraiture of the Divine majesty and

glory, Calvinism has by no means omitted the attractive lineaments of His goodness, and mercy, and love. Indeed, it is the high glory of the system, that while it exhibits God as unyielding, and even exacting in the claims of His holiness, justice, and truth—as unwilling, even *unable*, because He is God, to abate one iota of the claims of His exalted supremacy—it at the same time enfolds His character in the rich drapery of infinite love. It is Calvinism that says with adoring gratitude, "Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other." It is the special claim of Calvinism, that, while it faithfully portrays those lineaments of the Divine character which cannot but cause the sinner to tremble, it sets them before him as joining in a covenant of love for his redemption.

To Calvinism belongs the high distinction of looking at things as they are. It has little to suggest as to what ought to be. It makes no claim to have found the ultimate standard by which to try the creature and the Creator. It deals only with existing things. It accepts the situation. It goes teachably to God's Word, and finding what He has revealed concerning Himself, His purposes, His plans, His works, it writes it down as the truth; and while it cannot, by searching, find out the Almighty unto perfection, it can and does say with reverent adoration, "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" It reads the inspired record of human origin, human obligation, human sin, human redemption. It finds much that is mysterious, much that is sad, much that is perplexing. But it accepts it all, and reverently adds, "Even so, Father, for it seemed good in Thy sight." It does not quarrel with revealed fact.

Calvinism is highest reason. Its high doctrines are logical deductions from its first premise—the Divine sovereignty. It rests rationally upon the Divine veracity. It promises relief from sin only on the rational principles of right and justice. It claims a full vindication of the Divine procedure in a full salvation freely offered to all. Calvinism asks for no blind credulity.

Calvinism is definite. It formulates everything. It fairly revels in definition. It leaves nothing unbounded. It utters no uncertain sound. This it is which makes it so easy a mark for those whose faith and practice it antagonises. Its every point stands out in full view; and herein it meets the imperative demand of the seeker after truth. The earnest soul is vexed and wearied with the search after the undefined. It turns away, in sheer hopelessness, from the half-hidden truth that refuses to emerge into the light and disclose its boundaries. Calvinism defines.

Calvinism is a system of certainties. It fixes things. It leaves no loose ends. It proclaims no peradventures. It suspends nothing on possibilities or contingencies. Its doctrines of Divine prerogative and eternal decree enable it to dispense with the subjunctive mood. It claims for everything a predestinated time and place. The tide of human events may ebb and flow—old foundations may be swept away and give place to new—Calvinism calmly looks on the scene, and confidently exclaims, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure!"

Calvinism produces strong character. History testifies to the fact; Froude has brought it out into bold relief. It furnished the men for the Church's decisive struggles; it nerved men for conflict, when conflict meant death or victory, oftentimes death in victory. Its grand doctrines commanded obedience, even when its stern call to duty kindled the fires of martyrdom. John Calvin in Geneva, John Knox in Scotland, standing firm on the eternal rock of their faith, in the midst of the tumultuous sea of the civil and religious life of their times, are grand figures on the page of history. Calvinism claims them as her own, and Calvinism makes strong character stern; and the kingdom of Jesus needs as valiant soldiers to-day as in stern times of the past. Of weaklings and sentimentalists, of babes and sucklings in the faith, the backboneless religionists, the Church has enough and to spare. What it specially needs, to-day, is the very