

## Our Contributors.

### CONCERNING THE BEST IN VARIOUS LINES.

BY KNOXIAN.

The season for fairs has come round. There is a fair in some place every day, except Sunday, and on some days there are half a dozen. Our people are greatly given to going to fairs. However industriously they may grumble about hard times and short crops most of them can find money enough to visit one or two fairs during the season. Nobody would suppose that the happy, well-dressed, well-conducted crowd that attended Canada's Great Fair, in Toronto, last week, were suffering much for want of money. As a matter of fact they are not. Compared with the people of many other countries, Canadians have much to be thankful for. The trouble with most of us is that we don't know how good a country God has given us. A little travel in some of the poorer parts of the world would be a means of grace to many Canadian people.

These fairs are good institutions. They have an educational effect. A sharp boy can learn more at "Canada's Great Fair" (this fair is held in Toronto, of course) in a week than he could learn in the same length of time in the best school in the Province. A boy never knows how good a Province Ontario is until he sees that fair. A Christian man of average gratitude will leave the Fair thanking the Almighty that his lot has been cast in so good a country. A patriotic man will leave feeling prouder of Ontario than he ever felt before. Young Canada will go home inspired with the feeling that this is an enterprising, energetic, go-ahead young country, and that is a good feeling for young Canada to have. The great fairs held in Guelph, Hamilton, Brantford, London, Kingston, and other places, produce the same effects in the localities in which they are held and the effects are good.

The Ministerial Association of Guelph are of the opinion that some of the attractions lately added to the Fair programme in that city might well be dispensed with. It is the old story. Human nature is ever prone to go to extremes. There are many Fairs and something must be done to "draw." Competition is keen and there must be special "attractions" to make money. Would that Fairs were the only places in which the same policy is pursued.

One of the objects of these Fairs is to find out the best in every line exhibited. The best in agriculture, in arts and manufactures, suggests the best in other departments of life. That wonderful little machine sent over from New York, containing four of Mr. Wiman's speeches—tones, inflections, coughs and all—naturally suggests the question, Who is the best speaker in Canadian political life? So much depends on individual taste that it is impossible to give an intelligent answer to that question. Different men excel in different kinds of oratorical work. For turning a point cleverly and putting a different face on a question, Sir John stands easily first. By a neat anecdote, or timely witticism, or clever joke, he can appear to knock the bottom out of the best argument ever constructed. No man in Canada can find out the weak spots in an opponent's speech more quickly or make more of them when found, than Sir John. The Hon. Alexander McKenzie is the only political speaker in Canada whose speeches stand a *verbatim* report. One of the best stenographers in this country told this contributor several years ago, that at that time there were only two men in the country who could stand *verbatim* reporting. The one was Alexander McKenzie; the other Principal Caven. For clean, incisive, never-to-be-forgotten hitting, commend us to Sir Richard Cartwright. He gives no quarter and asks none. He excels in the power of statement, can arrange facts and figures with extraordinary skill; his literary style is high and altogether he is a most formidable man. People who admire the very highest kind of intellectual work will give the palm to Edward Blake. For close reasoning and literary finish, he has few, if any rivals. For making speeches that never alienate friends, and are very likely to conciliate opponents, Mr. Mowat can hold his own and a little more. Judged by their effects, his speeches compare favourably with the speeches of any public man in the country. The man behind the speech, however has a good deal to do with the effect.

Dr. Tupper is a speaker of rare power. We never heard him but once. It was a fine effort. In his younger days he was no doubt excelled in a Province that has produced more first-class orators than any of its size on this side of the Atlantic. People who admire graceful oratory of course admire Mr. Laurier. People who like to see a crowd waked up and begin to wonder what struck them, greatly admire Mr. Patterson, M.P., of Brantford. Men who like cold facts well arranged, figures accurately given in great abundance, and logical argument, admire John Charlton, M.P. For good, effective work on any kind of a platform, it would be hard to surpass, the Hon. G. W. Ross. Mr. Fraser, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Dalton McCarthy, and Mr. Meredith, are good. So are more than half a dozen others whose names might be mentioned.

In Quebec and the Maritime Provinces there are some very able men—men who are the peers of any we have in the West—but we cannot write of them from personal knowledge.

Who is the best preacher in Canada? It is impossible to answer that question. There is no absolute standard by which preachers can be judged. Opinions vary about preaching as well as about everything else. The preaching that one congregation or one man likes might not be relished by another congregation or another man. One thing may be said, however, with perfect safety. There is no one preacher in Canada that towers up over all the others as Spurgeon does in England, or as Guthrie and Candlish did in Scotland.

Who is the best preacher in the Presbyterian Church in Canada? That question is sometimes asked, but we never met three intelligent men who could agree upon an answer. The failure to agree may show that there is no one man conspicuously above the heads of all his brethren. Some good people are of the opinion that the Presbyterian pulpit has not held its own during the last twenty-five or thirty years. They point to Dr. Ormiston, Dr. Donald Fraser, Dr. Irvine, Dr. Inglis, Dr. Burns, Dr. Willis and Dr. Bayne, and ask, Where are their successors? They tell of great effects produced by sermons preached in their neighbourhood by some of these men and ask where such preaching can be heard now.

Whether Presbyterian preaching is declining in power or the reverse is too large a question to discuss here. Perhaps something might be said on both sides.

Who is the best lawyer in Ontario? Can't say. The profession is divided and subdivided. One may be on the highest rung in equity, another in common law, a third in criminal law, a fourth in commercial law, and others in other departments.

The same is true of the medical profession. One practitioner excels as a physician, another as a surgeon, a third in some other branch of the profession.

Who is the best writer in Canada. George Burns was. Perhaps Goldwin Smith is.

Who is the best man in Canada. It is impossible to say. There are many good ones and some who are not exactly specialists in that line. We should all try to be the best and every married man should think his own wife is the best woman.

### TO THE ASSEMBLY AND BACK AGAIN.

BY ONE OF THEM.

*Concluded from last issue.*

The present writer enjoyed the privilege of a "run" over to "the Island," i.e., Prince Edward, via Pictou and Charlottetown. This is a Province with which the people of Ontario are not as well acquainted as they should be. The island is very fertile and the verdure unsurpassed, being fanned and salted by ocean breezes; hence the richness and beauty of the meadows. There are only about 60,000 acres of what may be termed poor land, out of a possible area of 1,500,000 acres. It has a great reputation for potatoes. These are excellent in quality and quantity, some 3,500,000 bushels being raised annually. There are no mining industries, no coal or iron being found, Dr. Dawson has said that coal could be found at Belfast, but at too great a depth for practical purposes. There is a railway 198 miles long with three feet six inch gauge, opened in 1875 and costing about \$15,000 per mile. The island itself is about 130 miles long, and from three to thirty-four broad.

Presbyterianism is very strong on the island and very pure too. The people were originally largely Scotch. In Charlottetown the Rev. John McLeod and S. Carruthers hold the fort and both doing excellent work being workmen, who need not to be ashamed. The trip to Summerside is short and sweet being only about forty miles. Here there is a large Presbyterian congregation in a flourishing condition, although at present without a pastor. This is a thriving town of about 4,000 and said to be a very cheap place to live.

After "doing" the island as far as time would permit, we retraced our steps to Nova Scotia, and dropped down in Hants County, at the town of Windsor, which may be termed the golden gate of the Annapolis valley, the finest, prettiest, wealthiest, most fruitful in apples—part of Nova Scotia. The late lamented Joseph Howe is reported to have said that you could ride for forty miles here and not see the sun for the shade of apple trees. In this valley is also the beautiful village of Grandpré (big meadow) so beautifully sung in Longfellow's "Evangeline," although the poet himself never saw Grandpré in his life.

The town of Windsor is of historic reputation and interest. Here "Sam Slick," *nom de plume* for Judge Haliburton, flourished and wrote. He has passed away but his residence and grounds are still objects of interest to the curious. Here also is King's College with the hoary hairs of one hundred years now resting on it. It is ably presided over by the Rev. Canon Brock, D.D., a gentleman of high literary culture and great urbanity of disposition. The college has done good work in the past, but is now distressed through want of friends. The latest move is amalgamation with Dalhousie. This is in the right direction for both colleges, and it is hoped it may be speedy and the union consummated to the satisfaction of all concerned. The "Encænna," or in plain English the commencement of convocation took place during our visit, and was attended by many learned men from all parts. Among others we noticed Principal Forest, of Dalhousie, and the new Bishop of Nova Scotia. The conferring of degrees was all done in Latin. The proceedings were chaste, dignified and stately. Speeches followed by the new bishop and others. The whole affair was conducted *a la mode* University of Oxford, after which King's College is modelled.

Our Church is well represented in this town. It is strong, wealthy, well organized and without debt. The pastor is Rev. Thomas A. Nelson, of Presbyterian College, Montreal, a native of Ontario. Mr. Nelson is quite a young man and very popular in his congregation as a preacher and a pastor. He is a preacher of more than ordinary calibre, his sermons being models of neatness and exact thought. Good work is being done for our Church in Windsor by Mr. Nelson.

From Windsor we hied ourselves away and dropped down at East River, Pictou County, Nova Scotia. This whole county is Presbyterian *en masse*. A few years ago there was not one of any other denomination—even the ubiquitous Methodist and Roman Catholic had not penetrated. This is a very flourishing county with great wealth in coal, iron, lumber and agriculture. The coal mines of Stellarton are famous.

We had the pleasure of a visit to the Presbytery of Pictou, and were cordially greeted by the fathers and brethren. The Rev. G. Scott, of New Glasgow, was Moderator. Mr. Scott has been for ten years in his present charge and is much loved and respected. In early life he travelled in Egypt and Palestine, his accounts of which make him a very interesting companion. Under his escort we ascended one evening Fraser's Mountain, which lies in rear of New Glasgow, and enjoyed one of the grandest prospects that could fall to the lot of ordinary mortals. We were higher up in the world than ever before or perhaps shall be again. Yonder was the noble Gulf of St. Lawrence with Prince Edward Island lying placidly, on its beaming bosom like a beautiful sea girt isle. Yonder, eighty miles away, were the distant misty shores of Cape Breton. Time and space fail us in describing the loveliness of the scene.

The Rev. G. S. Carson, of Pictou, was the Clerk. He is lately settled and is doing an excellent work in charge. An amusing part of the proceedings was the report of General Assembly delegates, which were very brief. Among others was the report of an old