

## Our Contributors.

### ON HAVING TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING.

BY KNOXONIAN.

No doubt the majority of American people think that a high protective tariff is a good thing. If they thought otherwise the tariff would not be there. The other day, however, they made it fairly evident that they think there may be too much of a good thing in the way of protection. They want a pretty high wall around their country but Mr. McKinley made the wall rather too high. Perhaps our neighbours want a gap left in the wall through which you can push Canadian barley and eggs and several other Canadian products that are good for the American constitution. Possibly they want the wall left so low that a good Canadian horse can jump over it at a reasonable figure. In Europe they manufacture lovely goods for ladies' wear. Nothing like them can be made in this new world for many a day. The American ladies like to wear these fine goods but being prudent women they do not wish to ruin their husbands and fathers financially by paying the increased prices imposed by the McKinley Bill. The chances are that a good many of them told their husbands to vote against McKinley and a man nearly always does what his wife tells him if he is sure to make money by it. The result was that Mr. McKinley and a large number of his friends were sent out into the cold to meditate on the danger of over-doing things. Mr. McKinley now knows, if he never knew before, that it is possible to have too much of a good thing. We don't believe a high protective tariff is a good thing, but we are trying to look at the matter from Mr. McKinley's standpoint.

Our neighbours are a progressive people but they have a slow constitution. They can't make the will of the people operate on a Government as fast as we can. In England an adverse vote like that given last week would send a Government out in twenty-four hours. The members would hardly have time to take private letters from their intelligent constituents out of the pigeon holes of their desks. In Canada a Government beaten at the polls by over a hundred majority would not be given more time than seemed necessary to make suitable provision for its friends. It is very touching to see a dying Government providing for its friends at the expense of the country. An American Government goes as slow as Mowat. The only point of difference is that an American Government doesn't go when the people tell it to go and Mr. Mowat doesn't go because the people didn't tell him.

Mr. McKinley deserves credit for one thing. He has given the world the best illustration furnished for many years of the danger of over-doing things. The illustration cost him and his friends a good deal but the fees in the school of experience have always been high. He has shown once more that it is a wise thing to let well-enough alone. Again we are reminded—thanks to Mr. McKinley—that it is quite easy to have too much of a good thing.

*Liberty of speech* is a good thing, but it is quite easy to have too much of it. If you don't think so go to some tea-meeting at which there are seven speakers, four of whom are asked to make a "few remarks" on nothing, forty minutes long, lest they be offended, and three of whom have prepared long speeches as unsuitable as holy water in an Orange lodge. Then come the votes of thanks. When you leave that meeting about eleven o'clock if you don't feel that it is quite easy to have too much of a good thing you must have an enormous capacity for being out late.

It must be a fearful thing to have to stand silently by and see your rights trampled upon, your character assailed, your property stolen, or your family abused. It must be dreadful to have to keep silent and see tyranny triumph—see the wrong triumph over the right and the strong trample down the weak. A good man would rather die fighting for liberty of speech than wear a muzzle. Liberty of speech is one of God's greatest blessings and yet the fact remains that more harm is done by evil speaking than in any other way in the world. The tongue does more harm than whiskey. What more need one say?

*Freedom of the press* is a good thing. Apart from positive advantages no one can tell how much good the press does in a negative way. Who can estimate the number of rascals that are restrained by fear of exposure in the press? Who can tell the number of would-be tyrants that are kept in their place by a wholesome dread of the newspapers. Everywhere—in Church as well as in State—there are small big men whose insolence would be insufferable were it not that the newspaper lash can be laid on them. There are always people in the State who would be Neros if they dare; scaly fellows who would be Tweeds if they had the opportunity. There are a few men in every Church who denounce the Pope at Rome while they strain every nerve to be popes at home. There are schemers, wire-pullers, selfish unscrupulous manipulators in Zion as well as in Caesar's arena and the press does more to keep such people right than their religion does. Type does more to restrain them than conscience. Estimated only by its negative force for good freedom of the press is a good thing, but does any one need to be told that it is easy to have too much of this good thing? The press is in more danger from overdoing than from anything else. Impertinent interference with private affairs; cowardly onslaughts on private individuals, prompted by business rivalry or personal hate; hypocritical championing of causes; enterprise that is

bestly cruel as well as impertinent, grossly unfair criticism—these and a few other bad qualities can do the press more harm than the rack and the thumb-screw can. A free press is one of the best things we have but it is very easy to have too much of that good thing.

*Reading* is a good thing but it is quite possible to read too much. The amount assimilated is the real test of reading—not the number of books skimmed.

*Rational amusement* is a good thing but when amusement is made a business it becomes an evil and dangerous thing. There are few creatures in this world more to be pitied than a human being constantly in search of something to amuse him.

It is a good thing for a young man to go and see his *intended* occasionally but if he goes every night and stays until the old gentleman comes in and winds up the clock, and the old lady goes out to the front gate and says she is looking for the morning paper he is making too much of a good thing.

An *occasional joke* is a good thing but a professional joker is a nuisance. To be worth anything a joke must have seriousness and solidity behind it.

A *heartily laugh* is a good thing but a person who laughs at everything is not more than one remove from an idiot.

Yes, it is quite easy to have too much of a good thing. Even a prayer or a sermon may be far too long. One of the good things to know in this world is to know when to stop.

How often have you seen the best thing spoiled by being carried a little too far.

### OUTPOURINGS OF THE SPIRIT.\*

The above is the title of a new work on the subject of Revival, by the Rev. W. A. McKay, B.A., Woodstock. The subject is one of such great, living and practical interest that it keeps constantly turning up in our Christian literature, as well as our Christian lifework. It is satisfactory to find it in this latest contribution handled with so much intensity, discrimination and practical urgency. If the book has faults they are mainly those almost inseparable from the brevity (p. 141) so desirable in a work intended for the wide circulation it is to be hoped this will receive. Its interest and completeness would have been greatly enhanced by some account of recent as well as remoter revivals in the United States and Canada. Ample recognition of the glorious visitation of divine grace has much to do with their extension and recurrence. The interests of vital religion have suffered quite as much from over caution in this respect as the opposite. The first chapter of the book discusses the nature of true revival, the next six briefly and graphically sketch various prominent scenes of this nature in Bible times, then in England, Scotland, Ireland and America. The remaining three deal with the practical aspects of the question. As we might expect, there is much that is instructive, and stimulating for the preacher and for the people of God at large, the thought upon revival possibilities and methods in the home and the congregation are especially suggestive and impressive. Would that they could be pondered in every congregation and in every home. Especially should this book be read and candidly pondered by those Christians who from some cause or other have found themselves disposed to turn away from the subject. We venture to think that few even of such would find Mr. McKay's treatment of the question unsatisfactory. At page 19 he says: "There has been so much defective, if not erroneous, teaching, so much fanatical excitement and so much hollow profession connected with some so-called revivals that many earnest but sober-minded Christians have acquired a distaste for the very word 'revival.' But let us beware of rejecting the genuine gold because of its worthless counterfeit. . . . How careful also should we be lest we discountenance a real work of grace because of some things which may occasionally accompany it! . . . Connected with many revivals there has been much of an emotional and spasmodical character. But these are only incidental. The adventitious is not to be confounded with the essential. We do not despise the great river because of the sticks and straws that may occasionally float on its surface. The greatest possible evil is a deadly insensibility. The storm is preferable to the parching drought. Better, if that were necessary, to have noisy animal excitement than that the sterile wastes of worldliness should not be transformed into the fruitful gardens of the Lord. Notwithstanding incidental excesses, there is such a thing as a true revival of religion. The psalmist when he prayed: 'Wilt Thou not revive us again?' was not guilty of presumption and mockery; nor the prophet when he cried: 'O Lord, revive Thy work,' etc. Should not such seasons be objects of intense desire, fervent prayer and earnest effort on the part of God's people? It may indeed be said that the Church should always be awake and thoroughly in earnest. We readily admit the 'should be,' but who will claim that the Church is so at the present time? It is not a question of duty or privilege, but of fact. With the murderous liquor traffic legalized by the votes of church members, in full blast on every side of us; with Romanism so aggressive; with the spirit of worldliness so prevailing; with immoralities of various forms eating, like a cancer, into the very heart of the community; with the overwhelming majority of our young

men never inside a Christian Church, and only five per cent. of these members of the Church; with our prayer-meetings so small, and with a liberality amounting to less than one-seventh of a cent a day from each communicant for the evangelization of a thousand million heathen, who will say that we have no need of revival, no need of revival in temperance, truthfulness, uprightness? The time may come when the Church will be all on fire of earnestness; when every heart will be stout and every arm will be strong in conflict against evil; when Sabbath assemblies will be crowded and the prayer-meetings times of refreshing; when Church members, full of the spirit of their Master, will rise above the large greeds and little givings of former days, and, like Araunah, as a king gives unto a king, pouring out their treasures as brave warriors do their blood; and giving, or at least striving to give, after the measure of Him who, that we and a lost world might not perish, gave His only begotten Son. But the time is not yet."

As to our responsibility, page 128: "We are apt to regard a religious revival as a miracle or as some arbitrary manifestation of the Almighty power, given in His own time about any reference to any action of His Church as a preparation for it. There is no use trying to 'work up a revival,' we often hear said. 'A revival,' it is urged, 'depends upon the sovereign will of God, and we are not to move until there are unmistakable signs that God is about to commence a work of salvation, but we run before we are sent, and injure the cause of religion.' All such reasoning is based on an erroneous conception of the divine method. Undoubtedly a revival is a work of God, otherwise we need not pray: 'O Lord, revive Thy work.' But God works through means in the spiritual as in the natural world; and He has ordained that His people shall be co-workers with Him in extending His kingdom. They are to plant and to water, in order that He may give the increase. It is the Spirit that quickens believers and converts sinners, and the Spirit is given not in any arbitrary manner or without regard to human will, but in answer to prayer and to render human agency successful. A revival is thus in an important sense the result of means employed by the Church. If the Church is seeking a revival she must 'awake and put on her strength'; she must stir herself to take hold of God. Isaiah said: 'As soon as Zion travailed she brought forth children,' and it is true of the Church to-day."

The means to gain this all-important end our author very clearly describes as (1) preaching of the good old Gospel plainly and earnestly, (2) backed up by holiness of life, accompanied by (3) fervent prayer and (4) bold and loving personal efforts to bring souls to Christ. As in the first three centuries "all at it and always at it," with the results of bringing the known world to the feet of Jesus. Why should not this be repeated in this age of steam and electricity and of ripe Christian experience and accumulated wealth on a yet grander scale? The opportunities and the exigencies of the hour combine with the divine commands and promises to urge the holy enterprise. Who will say it may not be done? Who will say it should not be done? Then why shall it not be done? Let the situation be solemnly faced, and what will the verdict be? "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." (Isa. lix. 12). Also for the sloth, selfishness and unbelief of the day, are they not sufficient without going farther to account for the failures? We may close this notice with the repetition of our author's aim: "it is not to promulgate any special theory of revivals. Our object will be attained if we succeed only in imparting useful information, removing unseemly prejudices and awakening a more widespread and earnest cry for a work of grace throughout the land." In all of which we wish him Godspeed. W. M. R.

### FRAGMENTARY NOTES.

HALIFAX, N. S.

Among the large number of individuals who are advised to "go to Halifax," this correspondent found himself among the number, and yet, unlike many other places, it is a place where one would rather stay than leave, not altogether for the sake of filthy lucre but for the many attractions which the old capital of Nova Scotia holds out to those in search of pleasure and amusement. These are varied and numerous. To the lovers of sports there is always football, cricket, and the splendid Basin at Bedford, where the oarsman can exercise his muscle. Those who have a taste for military life can have it gratified to the very utmost, as the red coats are to be seen on the streets marching to the music of fife and drum. Halifax is equal to any other city in proportion to its size in providing benevolent institutions which it liberally supports. They have their dispensary Sunday, to which all denominations contribute, and whatever may be the difference on other points all are agreed on this, and quite a respectable sum was realized about a week ago when collections were taken up in all the churches for this very deserving object.

The city shows many signs of substantial progress and prosperity. The many new and handsome residences which have been erected, or in course of erection, are sufficient evidence of this. Educational interests are not neglected here Dalhousie College is making its power felt in the Maritime Provinces, and under the Presidency of Rev. Dr. Forrest is

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