

quondam informant let me know that the Episcopal Cathedral was a splendid structure, the best on the Continent; I think he remarked it was the finest in the world. I failed to appreciate this marvel upon inspection; the tin spire reminded me of the old-time candle extinguisher, being too large for the substructure, and of a different colour to the stone work.

I inquired about manufactories; ah! that was what gave life to the city—but I never saw these large manufactories, and those I did see were almost empty. After we were towed off the mud in the strait, I said to my friend, "Why don't you get your island fixed up?" An elderly gentleman, sitting near, said sharply, "Why, what's the matter with it, boss?" I only thought the swamp looked feverish. I received some very startling information from one of the "cloth" who sat in the bow of the boat. "You see that church, my friend," said he, "that is the 'Metropolitan,' sir, the largest Methodist Church in the world." I thanked him, and whistled two stanzas of "Sweet by and by."

I took a stroll through the eastern part of the city, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the gas works. I went through a large distillery there; one of the men there informed me, confidentially, that it was the largest distillery in the world, "they send their whiskey to Germany and France and England and the United States and they make it into brandy." I tried to inform him that the gigantic firm of Ames N. Goff & Co., of Cincinnati, would do four or five times the quantity of whiskey that they would in the same length of time, but he smiled incredulously.

I attended the Metropolitan Methodist Church, which was crammed full, but the St. Paul's Methodist Church, of Cincinnati, I guess, will hold comfortably double the number. I was told that all the churches of the city were crammed morning and evening. I was particularly struck with the solemn stillness of the streets in the evening of the Sabbath; everybody seemed to be at church, as indeed they were, but presently the main streets were full of pedestrians, let out from church, and for the next two hours and a half the streets were almost impassable, the whole of the young men and women of the city seemed bent on having a spree; the crowd seemed to be composed of loose females and doubtful swells, and such like. The air for a mile or so was like that of a saloon, smoke and slang and back talk, mixed with obscene language and oaths. The city of churches appeared to be on Sunday night a sort of Canal street, Buffalo. For desecration of God's day I never saw anything worse in any of our cities in the Union than I saw on Toronto Island and the park (save the mark) and at the excursions of the "Filgate." For the three weeks that I put in in Toronto at that time, I heard more about its institutions and devotion (?) and wisdom and what not than I wish to hear again in any city as long as I live. I am glad I have written this letter to you, for my mind, as it were, feels easier. I feel as though I had done my duty.

Yours to command,

A***** L**.

My correspondent, a stranger to me, seems to have discovered the failing of the Queen City, viz.:—Nominative I.

Herbert G. Paull.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

Your correspondent, "Querist," has scarcely put his question in the happiest shape, nevertheless in asking "What is Religion?" he has opened a wide field of enquiry,—one which may be regarded from many standpoints, and one it is almost impossible to condense within prescribed limits; I venture, however, to submit a few thoughts on the subject.

The fashionable Religion of the day apparently consists of going to church, making devotion a matter of public form and observance between man and man, instead of a governing principle, or silent communion between the heart and its Creator; converting the accessory into the principal, and mistaking the symbol and stimulant of pious inspiration for the inspirer; worshipping the type, instead of the archetype; being visibly devout, that is to say, when anybody sees you.

Religion, "pure and undefiled before God," is the last that enters into the contemplation of the numerous classes of Christians, most of whom are too busy in fashioning some fantastical religion of their own to search for it in the Scriptures.

General Religion may be regarded as an accidental inheritance, for which, whether it be good or bad, we deserve neither praise nor censure, provided that we are sincere and virtuous. Far be it from me to assert that men should be indifferent to the choice of religion, still less that all are alike. I maintain only that in the great majority of instances little or no choice is allowed, and it is my object to inculcate that humility as to my own opinions, and that toleration for others, in which the most devout are very apt to be the most deficient.

An old poet has said:—

"Religion is the mind's complexion,
Governed by birth, not self-election,
And the great mass of us adore,
Just as our fathers did before.
Why should we then, ourselves exalt
For what we casually inherit,
Or view, in others, as a fault,
What, in ourselves, we deem a merit?"

The religion that renders good men gloomy and unhappy, can scarcely be a true one. Blair says in his Sermon on Devotion: "He who does not feel joy in religion, is far from the Kingdom of Heaven." Never can a slavish and cowering fear afford a proper basis for the religion of so dignified a nature as man, who, in paying honours must feel that he keeps his honour, and is not disunited from himself, even in his communion with God. Reverence of ourselves is, in fact, the highest of all reverences; for, in the image of the Deity, we recognize the prototype: and thus elevated in soul, we may humbly strive to imitate the divine virtues, without pride or presumption. Religion has been

designated as the love of the good and the fair, wherever it exists, but chiefly when absolute and boundless excellence is contemplated in "the first good, first perfect, and first fair." With this feeling in their hearts, the virtues could never wander from the right faith; and yet, how many good men seek it among the dry spinosities and tortuous labyrinths of theology. It was a homely saying of Selden, "that men look after religion, as the butcher did after his knife, when he had it in his mouth."

Religion is an acknowledgment that goodness is supreme in the universe. This belief has been uttered more or less clearly in all times and nations with the history of which we are familiar. It has been held in the midst of superstitions: almost lost among them; uttering itself rarely in them or in spite of them. So far as any heart has truly held this belief, under whatever form, it has had a power to strengthen it and to uphold it. Any religion or any form of religion is true just so far as it embodies this faith, and is false just so far as it denies this. In the degree in which any form of religion places evil or caprice instead of good at the centre or on the throne of things, it is superstition and not religion. Whatever in any way shadows this faith in the perfect and omnipotent goodness, is either superstition or unbelief.

In the second place, religion is a worship. The soul turns directly towards this power of good that it feels is watching over it and all things. Through all the forms of the visible world, through all the machinery of forces and eternal laws, its vision penetrates, until it sees through all, and in all, and over all, this presence that it calls Divine. It thus meets this presence as if face to face. It brings to it its best love and worship. It bows before it in awe, or it rises towards it with a glad ecstasy of devotion. It pours all its sorrows and weaknesses into this infinite heart of love. It whispers to it even its sins. It utters to it its most secret hopes, its sublimest aspirations.

Whatever helps to bring the individual or the congregation into this face-to-face with God, whatever uplifts the spirit without intoxicating it, whatever is any way a revelation of the Divine perfection, may be an element of worship. Nothing else has any connection with real worship. Multitudes seem to fancy that God is pleased by vestments, or postures, or ceremonies, as if He would favour those who make use of them more than those who do not. All such rites thus used are a sort of magical incantation. Their object is to bribe or flatter the Supreme power, so as to win from it partisan favours. Men use these rites hoping to get God on their side. The real object of worship is to put ourselves on the side of God. It is to bring our spirits into harmony with the eternal goodness. It is not to make the will of God submissive to our will, but to make our will submissive unto His; or rather, it is to make our will one with His.

Religion is a life. If religious faith is faith in the perfect goodness, and religious worship is the adoration of the perfect goodness and the communing with it, then the religious life is a life that has drawn this goodness into itself. So far as any life becomes the medium of this goodness, so far as it is a life of love and service, of self-sacrifice or self-forgetfulness, so far is it a religious life. A life of mere worship would not be a religious life. A life of mere faith in the Divine goodness would not be a religious life. Only one thing can make a life religious, and that is the presence of that self-forgetting love which is peculiar to no sect, or creed, or nation.

When these three elements of religion are united they make the perfect religion. But it is a singular and important fact that one of these may exist without the others. A man may have a religious faith, and yet his life may be irreligious; or he may have a religious life and be destitute of religious faith, and have no share in any form of religious worship. Each of these elements is imperfect without the other, but there is a great difference in the degree of this imperfection. Religious faith without the religious life is empty and vain, while the religious life without religious faith and religious worship lacks, indeed, a peace, a joy, a strength, and an inspiration, but in itself is real religion, for it is consecrated to that goodness which is the very nature and substance of God Himself.

Thus it may be that at last our age shall be seen to be as religious as any other, for though it is less marked by the forms of external worship, it is, in spite of its vices and its sins, animated by a spirit of far-reaching philanthropy and love, and as the apostle tells us, "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." And those who would be found among the religious spirits of the times must have part in the great work which makes the age.

Laius.

POLITICAL ECONOMY.

In our last issue, the concluding paragraph of the Politico-Economical article, by "Civis Canadensis," was accidentally omitted. Referring to the subject, he says:—What I have written is only a sketchy outline of the matter, the details of which the reader will easily fill out for himself, and in the meantime, Mr. Editor, I shall be happy to read your comments, as well as those of your readers, and should any of them take sufficient interest to communicate with me directly, I shall hope to hear from them, addressing "Civis Canadensis," SPECTATOR Office, 162 St. James street, Montreal.