

## Our Contributors.

### AN ANTI POVERTY SOCIETY OF THE OLDEN TIME.

BY KNOXIAN.

Many years ago, the members of an anti poverty society, with their wives and children, met at one of the docks in a British seaport. They met, not to make speeches or pass resolutions, but to embark on the emigrant vessel that was to carry them to America. A few friends accompanied them to the ship. Farewell words are spoken, farewell tears are shed, and the little party go on board the vessel. That evening they watched, with tear dimmed eyes, the fast receding shores of their native land.

There was little room and little good for them on their native soil, but still they loved the land of their birth. They had been turned out to make room for sheep or deer, but even the grim tyranny of the landlord could not quench their love for the old land, and the old flag. Their fathers had carried that flag in triumph on many a bloody field. The sons love it still.

The members of this anti-poverty society possess but a small portion of this world's goods. Their property is packed in a few old fashioned wooden trunks. Somewhere in these trunks you are pretty sure to find a Bible, a Confession of Faith, and a Shorter Catechism, a kind of literature that probably does an anti-poverty society as much good as the meetings of Henry George. Possibly, some members of the society may have a few sovereigns, but the majority had little or nothing when their passages were paid.

After three months battling with wind and wave, the emigrant vessel enters the St. Lawrence. In a few days more she lands at Grosse Island, where many an emigrant sleeps his last sleep. Some members of the society have been taken ill with the emigrant fever on the voyage, and must be left in quarantine. Who can fathom the agony of a family as they sail away from some loved ones who are left, perhaps, to die among strangers.

Quebec is reached, and the society leave the emigrant ship and begin the journey up the St. Lawrence. Many emigrants have said that they suffered more in the river and canal boats than they suffered in three months crossing the Atlantic. The French boatmen swore terribly, and their profanity shocked women and children unaccustomed to such vile language.

A long, weary, tedious journey by water ends at an Upper Canada Lake Port, which we may call Toronto or Hamilton. Here the members of the society engage a number of emigrant waggons and drive one hundred miles into the interior. The roads are largely corduroy, and the women and children get terribly shaken up. The men walk most of the way. Riding over these corduroy roads on emigrant waggons is a good deal harder work than passing resolutions and waiting upon Mr. Mowat.

At length the society comes to the Township in which they intend to take up land. The main road, the road by which the emigrant waggons travel, runs past one side of the township, and the women and children must be left somewhere on this road until the male members of the society go into the township and select their lots. There are no houses to rent, and the women and children must find shelter in sheds, or old shanties that happen to be empty, or any place that can be procured. The women of those days were not quite so particular as some of their daughters have become, and the children were expected to do what they were told, without being paid for the obedience with candy.

The male members of the society enter the township, guided by the surveyor's blaze, travel about in the woods for days, live on bread and the water they drink from springs, and after much anxious thinking, select their lots.

The next thing was to travel many miles to the land office, and have their names entered for their land. This was not always an easy matter, for some of the land agents of those days were as grim and cruel tyrants as ever cursed a new country, or tormented a poor settler. Unless some of them repented suddenly towards the close of life, it would be a good deal easier to locate them now, than it was for some of the early settlers to get the land they were justly entitled to.

Having secured their lands, the next thing was to find shelter for the women and children. So the male members of the society clubbed together, not to pass resolutions and wait on Mr. Mowat, but to build homes for the wives and little ones. Having built the shanties, the next thing was to get wife and children into them. How could they come to their new home? Gentle lady reader, hold your breath while we tell you that your good old mother or grand-mother walked, yes, actually walked and carried the baby, while her husband carried some of the larger children. The new home may have been many miles from the place where the emigrant wagon dumped the family out on the road, and the remainder of the journey had to be made on foot.

New difficulties arise in the anti poverty society. The families have shelter, but no bread. So the male members of the society are compelled to walk to the nearest flour mill, about thirty miles distant, and carry home flour on their backs. This they did for years, until a flour mill was built in their own neighbourhood.

There is many a simpering dude in Ontario to-day, with scarcely enough of energy to part his hair in the middle, whose grandfather carried flour on his back for years to feed his family. Had the brave old man known how rapidly the stock was to degenerate, his burdens would have felt a good deal heavier.

Years roll by, the difficulties of the early settlers are gradually overcome, and the members of this old-fashioned anti-poverty society become comfortable, and some of them rich. Every member that worked hard and let whiskey alone, did well. Comfortable houses, excellent barns, fertile fields, modern implements, and good stock, are found everywhere throughout their township. The sons of the original members drive fine horses, and the daughters, or grand daughters of the women who walked to the shanty and carried the baby, wear silk dresses and \$20 bonnets.

Moral—The best weapons to use against poverty are *not* speeches, resolutions, and interviews with Mr. Mowat. Energy, industry, pluck, muscle and brains, are the right and only successful weapons.

### JOHN McNEILL, OF LONDON.

BY REV. I. A. MACDONALD, EDITOR OF "KNOX COLLEGE MONTHLY."

Scotland has lost her Spurgeon. At a meeting of the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh this week the transference of Rev. John McNeill, to Regent Square Church, London, was granted. This move was scarcely expected. Not only McCrie-Roxburgh congregation but the best people in all the churches in Scotland hoped he would remain. He was regarded as a prophet raised up to deliver the word of the Lord to the Scottish people, and do a great work which needs to be done. He spoke to the Scottish heart as no other man of the day speaks. His success has been so uncommon that you wish to know something about the man and the secret of his popularity.

His popularity may have several explanations. I am reminded of a sermon preached at the induction of a minister in Western Ontario a few years ago. The preacher undertook to give reasons for the popularity of John the Baptist. The other ministers who were present have probably forgotten the first and second reasons, but they will remember the third, which, with many repetitions was stated thus: "Now my dear friends I come to the third and main reason for the popularity of John Baptist in his day and generation. John the Baptist was popular because *the people went to hear him*." In the same way the popularity of John McNeill might be explained. But why do the people go to hear him?

The first time I saw and heard Mr. McNeill was at his regular week-night service two months ago. This service is not an uninteresting Sabbath service on a small scale. It is the Sabbath service on the same scale. Congregational prayer-meetings are not generally a success in Scotland. I arrived at the McCrie-Roxburgh Church early on the Wednesday evening referred to. Already a good congregation had assembled and at eight o'clock nearly every seat both in the area and the galleries was occupied. Presently the vestry door opened and the "Scotch Spurgeon," a well-built, fair-complexioned, full-bearded, West-of-Scotland man, of about thirty years of age, entered. He was quite at ease in the pulpit and his reading of the opening psalm and the chapter showed that he belonged to a different school from the majority of his brethren. His tone was deep and full; his voice pleasant and flexible, and he read as though he had some conception of the author's meaning—a rare thing in this country. His prayer was a simple, earnest pouring forth of the soul before God in adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. He *prayed*. His address or sermon, which occupied about half-an-hour and was delivered without the inevitable "paper"—a delightful change—was based on I. Chron. 11:22. It might not be in accordance with the principles of Knox College homiletics, in fact few Scotch sermons are, but it bristled with telling practical points which were brought to bear with great power on the hearts and consciences of the audience. The name "Benaiah," the God-builed man, did good service, as did also his heroism when "he went down and slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day,"—one of the most unheroic of days, when other men would be sitting by the fire warming their fingers waiting for a more favourable opportunity. I shall never forget the judiciously dramatic representation of Benaiah and the lion in the pit. It was a life and death struggle. One of them must die, perhaps both. How they watched each other with fixed eyes round and round the sides of the pit. My heart seemed to stop. My fists clenched. Then came the fatal spring, and the roar and the desperate tussle, and the lion lay stretched on the ground, dead. Nor will I forget Mr. McNeill's application—how every man has his lion to slay. How some are content that he is in a pit, forgetting that he may break out some day more ravenous than ever because of his confinement. And how there came One who for man faced Passion and Sin and Death in the darkness of "the fearful pit." But it would be impossible to give any fair idea of the sermon in a few sentences. I have since heard Mr. McNeill many times, usually on more familiar texts, and always with delight and profit.

Many things conspire to make Mr. McNeill a powerful preacher. Nature has done much for him. A good physique; a manly voice, a vivid imagination, a kindly heart, earnestness of purpose, fearlessness of faith—these are some of the things. Then, too, he has an inexhaustible fund of humour—genuine Scotch humour—and this sometimes bubbles over in his sermons. That was a capital hit he made in describing Edinburgh as an "East-windy, West-endy place." And in a little brush between himself and Dr. Flint, the distinguished university professor came off second best. There are indeed those who are terribly shocked at what they call Mr. McNeill's "vulgarity." And "vulgarity" is unpardonable sin, the only sin some critics recognize. True it is, Mr. McNeill's unpremeditated speech is not without blemishes and excrescences,

and sometimes well-shot arrows miss their mark because of ill timed humour or undignified wit. But experience and a good literary taste will soon correct these faults. Some affect to despise him as being uneducated, and others find in him an argument against scholarship. Both are mistaken. Mr. McNeill is not, indeed, scholarly like Marcus Dods, nor polished like Walter C. Smith, nor has he even a university degree. But I venture to say that he got more out of the three years he spent in Edinburgh University and the four years in Glasgow Free Church College than the majority of those whose names thrill the generous hearts of lady friends on Convocation Day. He is less learned but more educated. And what he has learned remains his and he knows how to use it.

One striking feature of Mr. McNeill's preaching is its originality. He is decidedly original, that is to say, he is himself. He looks at things with his own eyes. He expresses his thoughts not in the hackneyed phrases of the schools nor with the approved accent of the pulpit. He is perfectly untrammelled by conventionalism either in beliefs or methods. But he is quite orthodox in doctrine and would be so regarded even in Canada. His theology is such as years ago I used to hear from John Ross, of Brucefield, and Lachlan McPherson, of East Williams, a rugged old Calvinism, preached because believed, believed because experienced. Hence his power. The truth he preaches is real to himself. Sin to him is a terrible reality because he has felt its power. Salvation is more than a change of opinion, it is a change of life. He has seen the Lord. With open face he beheld the glory of the Lord. He has had the vision without which no man can be a great preacher. This is the secret of McNeill's power. Not humour, not eloquence, not learning, but an open-faced vision. Would that there were more such prophets. Scotland is not the only country cursed with false prophets; men to whom the Lord has not spoken, to whom, whether broad or narrow, truth has come at second-hand; men who preach truth they have never experienced and, therefore, to whom it is not truth. What wonder then that people do not hear? And what wonder that crowds, gathered from the two extremes of society and all grades between, wait upon the ministry of Dr. Whyte and John McNeill? These men have heard the thunders of Sinai, and have stood by the Cross of Calvary.

This originality and this truthfulness make John McNeill a preacher to the masses. It is a strange and a sad sight to see the common people, the poor, turn away from Christ and hate his name. Why do the masses distrust Jesus and His Gospel? It was not so when He was on earth and they saw and heard Him. Are not churches to blame in so far as they have hidden, not revealed, Christ? Is there not too much truth in the sneer that Christianity has been tried for eighteen centuries, but the religion of Christ never? From Christ presented by men who know Him, who have seen Him as the apostles saw Him, the masses do not turn away. The publicans and sinners in the Cowgate do not turn away from a man like McNeill.

It is feared by some that Mr. McNeill will not be a success in London because he is so strongly Scotch. They mistake the secret of his success in Scotland. His Scotch humour, Scotch accent, and Scotch sympathies go a long way; but before all and above all is the freshness and power of his message. And wherever there are men struggling with sin and sorrow, whether it be in Edinburgh or in London, preachers like John McNeill will not preach to empty pews.

But while one knows that in London with its seething un-Christian masses there is what Chalmers would call a fine field for men like McNeill, still one regrets his loss to Scotland. It is true that evangelical preachers in London are like the occasional stars of a cloudy sky; at the same time Scotland has none to spare. She has thousands of preachers but her McNeills are few. And it was with sad hearts that Principal Rainy and Dr. Whyte moved the Presbytery to let him go.

His work in London will be peculiarly difficult. London is not Edinburgh. Presbyterianism in England is overshadowed by a pretentious and overbearing establishment, and has scarcely yet recovered from the bad odour of Unitarian defections. And to occupy the Metropolitan pulpit of English Presbyterianism following in the wake of Irving, Hamilton and Dykes—that will test the Scotch graduate of two years ago. But the preaching that gathered 10,000 people in the modern Athens is not likely to prove a failure in the great metropolis. *Edinburgh, 11th January, 1889.*

### MANCHURIAN SILK WORMS.

BY THE REV. JOHN MACINTYRE, MANCHURIA.

The Chinese are not a go-ahead people, or they would turn their attention to the ailanthus silkworm. They like a durable material, and they have it here. I have seen a robe made of ailanthus silk which had been worn on occasions for twenty years, and had no end of wear in it, as the owner said. It had a coarse look, to be sure; but the Chinese will pardon that for durability. And then it could be made much finer by foreign machinery. It was dear, the material costing eighty-four strings of cash, i.e., eight Newchwang taels, or twice the price of our common pongee; but then this is because it is rare, there being only a few pieces in the market. I have only heard of one district in the province where it is made (that is, as a matter of trade); and even when I ask for it in the port of Newchang, the article (usually dyed) has come from Shansi. They complain, of course, of the difficulty of reeling it, the process used in the oak cocoons being useless here. In fact, they want enterprise and they want machinery. Everything else is to hand. The tree known as "Ailanthus glandulosa," by the Chinese here as