

## Our Contributors.

### SOME SPICY SPECIMENS FOR BLUE MONDAY.

BY KNOXIAN.

The *Homiletic Review* has a Blue Monday department that deserves a wider circulation than it can have in a magazine read mainly by a class. This department is made up of clerical anecdotes and of specimens of the "Meanest Parishioner" and the "Best Parishioner." As a rule the specimens of Best Parishioners are good though we think we could enter one or two Canadian parishioners who could easily hold their own with any that the *Review* has yet produced. Some of the specimens of "Meanest Parishioners" are absolutely unique. We thought we had heard of some pretty tough cases in Canada but we never heard of more than one case that for unalloyed meanness comes up to many of the examples given in the *Review*. We intended to enter our case in the competition but we weakened. Our entry would have had a poor chance and we don't like to see Canada beaten on any kind of a field.

Somebody may say that getting out specimens of "Meanest Parishioners" is taking a mean advantage of people. Why not publish a few specimens of meanest parsons? Certainly that would be a good thing to do. The parsons who are not mean would gain more than any other class by having the mean ones pilloried. A specimen or two of the "worst sermon" and the "worst speech" would do good. A pen and ink picture of the "greatest bore" in the General Assembly might serve as a deterrent. Anybody capable of doing the work in a lively way can have this column for a sketch of the worst sermon or the worst speech or the worst anything on the clerical side. Meantime we present a few specimens of the meanest parishioner from the *Review's* appalling list. The first will interest lady missionary collectors. A wealthy member of the Church would not give a cent for missions. The ladies determined to get something. One of them visited him one day and he beat a retreat to the barn. The lady followed him and he capitulated, agreeing to give a chicken. Here is the rest of the story:—

"All right," said he; "there are my chicks. Ketch one, and you can have it."

"Oh, no," said the lady, "I will not catch the chicken. I cannot do it any way. You must do it for me."

To get rid of her he at last slowly and with much impatience captured a chicken—the worst of the brood it is needless to say—and, tying its legs together, threw it into the lady's carriage.

The success of the visit was of course spread all through the congregation in less than twelve hours. The society met and viewed the chicken. After solemn deliberation it was determined to keep the bird alive and sell the eggs it should lay for the benefit of the cause of missions.

After a few weeks, when the hen had industriously laid a good number of eggs, which had, by sale, contributed worthily to the treasury, the donor of the fowl learned how the ladies were cultivating his original gift. He at once repaired to the house of the lady to whom the fowl had been entrusted, and, choking with indignation, demanded that he receive the price of the eggs the hen had laid—since he had given the chicken and nothing more. If this does not discover the acme of meanness, where shall it be found? I vouch for the truthfulness of this incident.

It would be interesting to know what denomination that specimen belonged to. His shrewdness in thinking about the eggs would almost prove that he was a Scotch Presbyterian, but his failure to stand fire instead of running to the barn works somewhat against that theory. If a Presbyterian, it would be a relief to know that he has joined some other denomination. His is one of those cases in which it is "more blessed to give than to receive."

There need not be any doubt about the denomination to which this next specimen belonged. The terms "official member" and "Brother" tell the tale as well as the translation itself:—

An old official member on one of my charges subscribed \$20 toward pastor's salary for his household, five of whom were members. He had a very fine property and was called a liberal man. Toward the holidays the ladies talked of making the pastor's wife a present of a sewing machine. Brother C. proposed to the ladies that they buy an old machine that he had for that purpose, he to let them have it for \$20. They looked at his machine, and decided that it was not worth more than \$10, and ordered a new one. Of course, the matter was kept a secret. Brother C. saw the pastor's wife, talked hard times, etc., and proposed to sell her his old sewing machine for \$20, to be credited on his subscription. The good woman, knowing nothing of the intended Christmas present, and thinking it better to take the old machine than nothing, accepted the offer. He rushed the machine up to the parsonage, where it occupies a place yet, though it has never been run since we had it, and I would sell it for \$5. I have been thinking that in case of Brother C.'s death, I would send the machine to the cemetery and erect it over his grave.

Of course this sewing machine brother was a Methodist. Possibly he may at times have lamented the coldness of the Presbyterian Church. No doubt he many a time said that the Calvinistic system was very injurious to man's best interests—made him a kind of machine, so to speak. The worst case, however, is yet to come.

An unfortunate parson who had suffered from that fearful scourge, typhoid fever, writes:—

We were living in a small Western parish; I had been sick four or five weeks with typhoid fever; wife, physicians, and friends were hoping against hope for my recovery. The larder was nearly empty in the parsonage, the salary being greatly in arrears. Suspecting this fact, sympathizing friends, not members of the Church, made up a purse for immediate relief. This money was put into the hands of a member of the Church, with instructions to take it to the pastor's wife; he, instead, put the same into his own pocket, and said nothing about it for three weeks. By this time I was convalescent and beginning to venture out-of-doors a little, when this brother chanced to call, and in the conversation which followed casually remarked that

he had received a small sum of money for me (naming the amount) a day or two previous, for which, if it were agreeable to me, he would bring wood. Being a man of peace, I consented to the arrangement. He brought the wood, charging me fifty cents more per cord for it than the market price. If any clergyman ever had a meaner parishioner than this one, he has my sincerest sympathy.

This model treasurer and cord-wood man was undoubtedly an Episcopalian. The entry is clearly made by an Episcopalian minister because no other minister on this continent uses the word "parish" but an Episcopalian. No doubt the hero of this transaction had a supreme dislike to dissenters. Of course he championed the Historic Episcopate even when he was hauling in that cordwood. In this wood transaction he scarcely treated the local successor of the Apostles with becoming respect.

Some day soon we may take a few more specimens from the *Review*. Of course we shall give some specimens of the Best Parishioner to contrast with the mean ones.

### LATEST FROM HONAN.

Mr. Hamilton Cassels, Convener of the Foreign Mission Committee, has kindly forwarded the following letter, just received, bearing date Tientsin, December 3, 1891:—

I have received a telegram from the interior informing us that all is quiet in Hsin-chen, and that I may now return from Tientsin, where I have been staying at the Consul's request till such satisfactory word should come. No particulars are given in the telegram, but presumably the local authorities have at length taken action with a view to our present and future safety. This will likely have been due to the special despatch from the Viceroy Li, which our Consul here so promptly secured for us.

In the meantime fresh cause for alarm has arisen in connection with the general situation in China. When your cablegram came three weeks ago asking Mr. Bostwick to "warn" us and "urge retirement to the coast if necessary," not a cloud was to be seen on the horizon in any direction; and we therefore concluded that your solicitude on our account had been caused by imperfect or inaccurate reports in the newspapers. Whether this was so or not, the clouds are now gathering thick and fast, for rebellion has broken out in the North. The first city captured by the insurgents—Ch'ao-yang in Manchuria—is a place where Mr. Parker, of the London Mission, has been stationed, and tears are entertained that he has been killed, though nothing is positively known. It is only a year since he came to China. We Canadians feel particular anxiety about him, as he studied for a while in the Presbyterian College, Montreal, and six of our number met him here only a couple of months ago. No one, of course, knows whereunto this movement may grow; but it is understood that the imperial forces are being sent to the scene of disturbance, and that extra gun-boats have been called for by the foreign Consuls here. Several missionary families arrived under military escort last week who have been turned out of their station near the Great Wall on account of dangerous proximity to the rebels. These are said to be massed in thousands just outside the famous "Myriad Mile Wall."

The British Consul, Mr. Brennan, thinks that we will be undisturbed in Honan; and I propose, therefore, with his full approval, to return in the course of a day or two. I shall have to go overland by cart, as the river is now frozen up. "Pray that your flight be not in winter" has special significance to us at a time like this. Even in favourable weather, overland travelling is very trying, especially for ladies, but it is much more so when the cold weather sets in. Consequently, I, with reluctance, leave Mrs. MacVicar on the coast. Should necessity arise for us to abandon our stations in the interior, Mr. Bostwick will telegraph to a point not far from P'ang Chuang, and thus word will reach us quicker than by the ordinary courier service.

And now I take upon myself to thank you and the Foreign Mission Committee, in the name of the Presbytery of Honan, for the thoughtful concern for our safety evidenced in your cablegram, and to assure you of our thorough sympathy with the sentiment of an old missionary who wrote some months ago: "Many of us are in inland stations where we can have no European protection, but He who piled the mountains and speaks in the thunder—the almighty God—is our defence, compared with whom a fleet of ironclads is no more than a bundle of firecrackers." Yours sincerely,

J. H. MACVICAR.

### THREE DEVOTED CHRISTIANS.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit.—John iii. 7, 8.

Paul lays down the same doctrine in many of his writings, especially in Galatians i. 12.

Within the period of about a year there have departed from this world in this Dominion, three eminent and devoted Christian men—eminent for their Christian lives and conduct.

It has been on my mind for some time to write a short account of their conversions to a belief that Christ was the "Christ of God," and I have put the above verses at the head of this article because their conversions remind one of their truth. I know of no verses more sublime, religiously mysterious, than they are. The occasion of their utterances—the conversation between the two eminent persons, the one

the God-man, the other an educated, devoted Pharisee— anxious to come to a knowledge of the truth, anxious to know whether there was beyond this life another life eternal and holy. The time, the silent night, the two all alone—all combined strike the soul with solemn thoughts, with great spiritual importance. They show that there is a way of spiritual conversion, an unseen spirit's movement, and influence, which affect men who are deeply desirous of knowing the truth, from the eternal world, emanating from God, only known and felt by those who are the privileged recipients of it.

The three dear Christian men of whom I am about to say a few words, now I believe, in a spiritual paradise, are the late Major John Oldright, of the 81st British Regiment; the late Walter Mackenzie, of this city, late Clerk of the County Court of the County of York; and the late Lord Cecil who was drowned at Napanee in 1890.

I had the pleasure, Christian pleasure, of being well acquainted with the two first, and of many conversations with them. With Lord Cecil I was not personally acquainted, but have heard many things about his Christian character, his manner of conversion, his devoted life as a Christian, his love for his divine Master, our blessed Saviour. What I know of them leads me to believe in the truth of these words of Christ in the third chapter of John. These three men forsook the vanities of this life, saw the preciousness of another life given by God through Jesus, and whilst still in this world were not of the world, but their lives were hid with Christ in God. Like Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, their spirits had been touched by the Spirit of God, and they believed in those mighty, those truthful, yet awful, words of St. Paul as spoken chapter v., 2nd Corinthians: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And again in those equally high and precious truths contained in the words of our dear and beloved St. Paul, whose soul glowed with love for his Master, contained in the eighth chapter of Romans: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

All true Christians believe in the utterances in these two chapters, and I know that all three of these men did so. Major Oldright died in October last, near Halifax, trusting in Jesus, whom he had faithfully served many years, at the advanced age of eighty-nine, having been converted when a soldier in the British army, at the age of about twenty, and he never forsook his love for Christ, but followed on the mysteriously given spirit, ever trusting, ever believing, ever preaching and exhorting others to follow as he did, until his devoted soul took its flight to God. He was in the habit of preaching to various groups of anxious souls for many years, and up to within four years of his death. He did so near Halifax for over twenty years. He was not a preacher after the manner of the preachers of the world, in churches, but was a preacher in the secret Church of Christ, hidden with God. He was a private Christian gentleman, exemplary, true in his profession as a soldier and officer, and true in his family life and worldly example to his fellow men whom he loved, whom he loved to see turn to Christ, and many of whom, in his long life, he was the humble instrument in turning to a belief in the Gospel of Christ.

There are scattered throughout the world many of whom I have often met) the most devoted and loveable Christians, belonging to the secret spiritual Church, not seen by the open world, but known to the Lord Jesus as His loved ones, and of this number were Major Oldright, Walter Mackenzie and Lord Cecil, and many others around the wide world. They are called by the world Plymouth brethren, and often spoken against by those who do not know their worth. I have attached myself to an organized Church—much of my life to the Presbyterian and some part of early life to the Episcopal Church of England—over both of which there are known ordained ministers, and could never see that it was not right and believe it is right. Yet I cannot say that those who choose to worship in small communities without an ordained priesthood are wrong and not accepted of God. The Old and New Testament Scriptures would warrant us in believing that God, our living God, so precious in our minds in His holy qualities, will accept of any man or woman who worships Him in spirit and in truth. This doctrine is clearly held or set forth in the Book of Job, in the call of Abraham, and in the dialogue between Christ and the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria. Indeed this is Christ's doctrine as given to Nicodemus. As above spoken of, Major Oldright was of great benefit to the soldiers in his regiment, many of whom turned to Christ no doubt by his example. He preached up to within a few years of his death to select companies of friends, and formerly (some twenty odd years ago) in Toronto. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, are now enjoying Christian light through his preachings in Canada.

The late Walter Mackenzie was once a very worldly man, very well educated, admitted as a barrister to the Ontario Bar, but never practised law, acting for over forty years in Toronto as a faithful, painstaking Clerk of the County Court of the County of York. He was connected with a military family and married into a military family. He was a most gentlemanly, amiable, lovable man, the pink of honour, loyalty and manhood. He did not think at first, for over a generation, that Christianity was so deep a thing as he did in later years. He was long attached to the Episcopal English Church and worshipped in it. Later on he thought it too formal, not sufficiently spiritual, and joined the community of Christians called, as I have said, "Christian Brethren," or "Plymouth