

Our Contributors.

ON LEARNING FROM SUCCESSFUL RIVALS.

BY KNOXIAN.

Some sensible man has said that it is lawful to learn from an enemy. If learning from an enemy is lawful, surely it is lawful to learn from a successful rival. Too many people think that the proper treatment of a successful rival is to denounce the methods that lead to his success. That plan has never been found to work well in this country. If denunciation of Sam Jones would fill an empty church, most of the empty churches on this continent would have been filled years ago. If calling Talmage hard names would build up a congregation, many a weak, struggling congregation would soon become prosperous. About the most useless work on this footstool is finding fault with the methods of men who are conspicuously successful in doing their work.

What is true of individual men is also true of churches. Years ago, one of the most successful ways of blocking any movement in the Presbyterian Church was to show that the Methodist did something of the kind. "You are becoming like the Methodists," was a cry that the most stalwart Presbyterian Reformer could scarcely withstand. Whether the change proposed was a good thing in itself; whether, being a good thing, it was wise to introduce it at that time, were matters of small importance compared with the awful overwhelming fact—"The Methodists do it."

Well, supposing the Methodists do it; what of that? Should the Methodist be allowed to have a monopoly of every good way of working? They take any good thing from us that they can lay their hands on. In the matter of Theological education, the Presbyterian was the pioneer Church in Canada. We lost hundreds of men and thousands of dollars in the early days, because the Church clung to the theory of an educated ministry. There is scarcely a town or township west of Kingston, in which you cannot find Methodists who were brought up Presbyterians. The Church had not ministers to look after these people and they were forced to "join the Methodists." The Methodists lost no time, because they did not educate their ministers as nearly all Churches do now. They sent the old saddle bag preachers over all the country and scooped in our people. Years rolled by and it became very clear that every Church in Canada must have a Theological college. Up to that time many Methodists had made a habit of ridiculing "college made ministers." Did they oppose the establishment of Victoria, or any other college because the Presbyterians had colleges? Did they say "colleges are Presbyterian concerns and we won't have them"? Not they. They were far too wise to talk any such nonsense. They take a good thing when they see it, and the fact that the Presbyterians have it does not make one straw's worth of difference. We should treat them and every other religious body in exactly the same way.

Our people call their ministers. A considerable number of the Methodist people are beginning to do substantially the same thing. Did anybody ever hear a Methodist say, "We would not adopt this system of inviting preachers, the Presbyterians do it"? No Methodist ever said anything so foolish. Is "inviting" a good thing for the Methodist Church, the Methodists will invite, no matter where the system comes from.

A few years ago the Methodists put laymen in some of their Church Courts. Did any brother say, "We won't put laymen into the Courts, the Presbyterians have laymen in all their Courts." We never heard of a Methodist that made a fool of himself by talking in that way. The Methodists take a good thing when they see it and ask no foolish questions about its origin.

There is a growing desire in several quarters to introduce responsive readings and a modified liturgy into the Presbyterian Church service. The question is coming to the front and will soon have to be dealt with. Now just watch and see if one of the first cries against it is not, "Oh that's Episcopalian." Well, suppose that were true. What of it? It is not true, but supposing it were, would the fact that Episcopalians have

responsive readings and a prayer book be any reason why Presbyterians should not have them if they are good things to have. Some of us don't want either, but our reasons for not wanting any change in that direction have a better foundation than the fact that our neighbours use a prayer book.

One of the shortest and easiest ways to block any movement in almost any Protestant Church, is to show that the Catholics do something of the kind. The movement may be quite good in itself, but if the "Catholics do it" that is enough.

The Catholics have one practice that nobody ever had any difficulty in keeping out of Protestant Churches—that is the practice of going to prayer meeting before breakfast. Supposing two men are swimming to the shore. One of them has a fine stroke, and will soon be safe. The other is a poor swimmer and is in danger of drowning. The poor swimmer criticizes his companion's stroke in this way: "I don't like that fellow's style. I would not adopt it on any account. I don't like his method." As he finishes his criticism he goes to the bottom, while the other reaches the shore in safety. Well, if it is better to drown than adopt another man's stroke, drown by all means. Most people would be of the opinion that it would pay better to adopt the successful swimmer's stroke and get to the shore in safety.

Successful business men of all kinds watch the methods of their rivals, and learn from them if they can. Municipal men go over to the American cities every year, and get points about managing the affairs of our cities and towns. The Ontario Government send our asylum officials to asylums in the States to see how their splendid institutions are managed. The Minister of Education makes a tour among educational institutions over there to see if he can get any good hints on educational work. The children of this world are always ready to learn a new thing from anybody who can teach it. The Church alone—or rather we should say some sections of it—refuses to adopt good methods because somebody else has them. The people will soon have no use for Churches that refuse to learn anything.

PAN-PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL.

This solemn conclave will be memorable for the interest it created in the great centre of Episcopacy, alongside of the Pan-Anglican Council. Here were mixed bishops from every quarter of the globe under one roof, and plain, black broadcloth dissenting ministers, so-called, from every civilized land, under another. Questions concerning High Church, Low Church and Broad Church were studiously kept in the background, whilst attention was being invited to the need for aggressive work by clergy and lay members, and the signal prospective advantages of widely employing deaconesses as active auxiliaries in various forms of Church work. Our interest has more to do with whom we stand as Presbyterians in our relations to each other under different but similar banners, since our readers acknowledge the parity of Presbyterianism and its intitutional practicability as applied to every class of society in Christian or heathen lands.

The meetings, as you are aware, were held in Exeter Hall, London, and were well attended; often crowded. Foreign delegates had their full share of duty, as was right and proper, while not a few prominent Presbyterians, north and south of the Tweed, took part. You have already given reports of the proceedings of this quadrennial Council, so that it were irrelevant to do more at this late date than attempt to gather up a few fragments that remain as after results. Those whose privilege it was to attend the Council meetings of Philadelphia in 1880, and of Belfast in 1884 would have us believe that on those occasions the speakers, as a whole, did themselves fuller justice, although some of the papers, on the present occasion were of a very high order.

Drs. John Hall and Ellenwood (Philadelphia), with Principals Cairns and Edwards fully sustained the standard. Dr. Hoge, of Richmond, Virginia, although of advanced years, gave a most effective address. He took a hopeful view of the present social agitation in its relation to the Church; his brilliant oratory was refreshing and inspiring. Professor Elmslie, of London—quite a rising man—spoke on the same subject.

It cannot be said that American delegates were kept in the background, since more than half of the

thirty-five representative from the United States took active part, and nearly all the Canadians. Besides the names of Principal MacVicar, Dr. R. F. Burns, Dr. William Cochrane and Principal Caven, the laymen were worthily represented by Chief Justice Taylor, of Manitoba. It were invidious to attempt giving names, since many active and influential persons did effective work in their several departments, or gave place to others, magnanimously, in the field of public discussion.

Not one of the many addresses excited so much controversy as that of Rev. Marcus Dods, D.D., of Glasgow, entitled "The Responsibility of the Church for Present Day Scepticism." If that gentleman's subject was to call attention to a residuum of bigotry in certain orthodox pulpits as accounting for the withholding of candid enquirers from the ranks of Church membership, or, whilst remaining in the fold using unsanctioned liberty of thought he succeeded in said object unmistakably. Worldliness and inconsistencies generally, among Christians, were severely commented upon as a stumbling block in the way of ingenuous enquirers after truth. UnChristly characters could not be expected to do otherwise than greatly injure the cause of the Master, and so account for the contempt and rejection of faith on the part of many. A supreme living power in living types of Christ Himself, on the other hand would be calculated to draw all men unto Him. The objections raised by eight speakers in the Council, one after another, did not combat such points as these. Certain fundamental doctrines were held to have been ignored or covertly sneered at, such as the fact of man's being a sinner—the necessity for an atonement and the fact of Christ's substitution. Dr. Marcus Dods magnified the influence of good examples in life and character. His critics held that too much importance was placed on this since history shows that there is no infallible good result from the holiest lives, except among persons who may be described as more impressionable than their fellows. To others the cross of Christ continues to be a rock of offence. One unfortunate part of this controversy was where allusions to the Old Testament admitted of so much misconception; also when he says "The Church might have given a more distinct idea of Christianity" as if to blacken the orthodox Churches and exonerate perverse opponents. Two great weaknesses of human nature seem to have been left out of account in this paper, viz, self-delusion in trying to frame excuses for believing what one wishes to be true, and, taking as specimens of Christianity imperfect human examples, instead of Christ the one perfect model. It is conceivable that outsiders will regard the argument of Marcus Dods as impugning the authority of the Old Testament, because he represented it as inferior in its tone to the spirit of the New Testament. His object seemed to be to indicate that being designed for a comparatively infantile and immature state of society the teaching of the Old Testament was necessarily progressive and preparatory to a higher and more complete revelation, but not that it was therefore superseded by it. Already, however, Dr Dods receives many a patronizing nod of approval from some sceptics who look upon believers in holy writ as credulous sentimentalists, especially as regards the Old Testament. Is there no responsibility for producing an undesired effect by unguarded statements?

Principal Cairns, of Edinburgh, wound up this notable debate by giving its author credit for belief in the integrity of canonical Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, while admitting that most minds would find it difficult to perceive this. The consummate ability of the carefully prepared paper was admitted on all hands. Whether the final result will be to disenchant the free thinker of intellectual conceit, or to quicken Laodiceans into a life of loving discipleship the future will disclose. It seems an evil of our day that intellectual definitions or pronouncements too often take the place of loving life giving stimulus, since the religion we profess is worse than nothing if it does not carry with it lofty purity of motive, child-like humility, and a burning sense of duty with abounding charity. Intellectual pride in high places retards the millennium.

Doubtless many of your readers will secure a copy of the full reports—now ready—and form their own estimate of the men and their work. W. P. M.

On board the "Wyoming," August 1, 1888.