

## Our Contributors.

### CONCERNING HARMONY IN CONGREGATIONS.

BY KNOXIAN.

Addressing a congregational meeting in St. Andrews Church the other evening, Mr. Macdonnell uttered a seed thought. By a seed thought we mean a thought that takes root in your mind, fructifies there and brings forth other thoughts that may be useful as material for an article or speech.

Seed thoughts are good things and are as scarce as they are good. How many speakers of your acquaintance are in the habit of uttering seed thoughts, that is, thoughts that suggest other thoughts? You might listen to many a pompous talker until you arrived at the mature age of Methuselah, if you could hold out that long under the infliction, and never hear a thought that would stick and produce other thoughts. Hundreds of books and untold thousands of sermons have not a seed thought in them from beginning to end. Dr. Joseph Parker is one of the best producers of seed thoughts on the other side of the Atlantic, if not the very best. Dr. Phelps, of Andover, was one of the best on this side. As a producer of condensed thoughts on which you can write an article or out of which you can beat a useful speech, we think the books written by Phelps can hold their own against any left by Emerson, Beecher or any American of modern times.

But we must get back to our text. Mr. Macdonnell's seed thought was not theological, for he was not dealing with a theological question. It was not metaphysical, the matter under consideration was far enough removed from metaphysics of the German or any other variety. The question to be settled was the removal of a church from one site to another, and Mr. Macdonnell remarked that

#### "HARMONY IN THE CONGREGATION"

was of far more importance than the question of what corner the church should stand upon." Now that may not at first blush seem much of a seed thought, but just stop and think for a moment of how little use anything else in a congregation is without harmony; think of the number of congregations that have been wrecked for years for the want of harmony; think of how the cause of Christ has often been disgraced by church quarrels; think of the number of congregations you know that are feeble and feckless just because they have no harmony; think of the number of men you have known who might have been a blessing to the Church, but who degenerated into mere ecclesiastical pugilists; think of these things and you soon begin to realize that harmony is not only much more important than any question of corner lots can possibly be, but is also of much more importance than almost anything else. Easy enough to think that, says some one. Yes, it is easy enough when you have a seed thought to start you.

Harmony is of far more importance than  
NUMBERS.

The more people there are in a congregation the worse if they are all engaged in the highly Christian duty of fighting each other. A small congregation thoroughly united has a thousand times more influence for good than a large one in a chronic state of quarrel. In this age of statistics we attach a superstitious importance to mere numbers. Small men try to make themselves appear big by identifying themselves with crowds. A compact, united, harmonious congregation of two hundred members is a much more influential body for good than a snarling, embittered one of five or six hundred members. What difference does it make how many members are in a congregation if they spend all their strength in fighting each other.

Harmony is of more importance than

#### ELOQUENT PREACHING.

All our congregations want eloquent preachers when they are vacant. It is highly amusing to listen to one of the "leaders" who are running a vacancy go over a list of the very eloquent, learned and otherwise distinguished men whom they have patronized with a hearing and may possibly call. Some of the men you know and perhaps have known all your life, but of course you don't say anything on that point. Good enough men they may be, but very unlike the picture drawn of them. One of the funniest things in Presbyterianism is to sit and quietly listen to some "leader" in a vacancy tell about the great "work" that his favourite candidate has done some place when you know nine-tenths of the story is pure fiction. We have said listening to a story of that kind is funny, but it has a very serious side. Who loaded up that man so? Was it the candidate himself or did he get other ministers to do it for him?

But supposing every newly-called minister to be as eloquent and learned as his friends allege—and the supposition is a huge one—even then harmony is of more importance than his eloquence and learning. Paul failed to make much of a divided Church, and even the youngest of us cannot surpass Paul in some of the qualities that go to make a successful preacher.

Harmony is of more importance than  
MONEY.

There is a vast amount of snivelling cant talked about money. Certain kinds of softish pietists affect to despise money in connection with religious work. Mean men who do not want to pay any money often hint that money is a

carnal kind of thing, and should not be associated with religion. Money is one of the powers by which God spreads the Gospel and conquers the world, but, useful as it is, harmony is of more importance in a congregation than wealth. If the people are quarrelling they seldom pay much money no matter how rich they may be, but if they are thoroughly united and in good spirit a little from each makes a good sum.

Harmony is of more importance than *culture*. People generally forget all about their culture when they take each other by the throat.

Harmony is a far better thing than *dead orthodoxy*, a fact that dead orthodoxy never knew.

Harmony is of far more importance than *modes of worship* a fact many a time forgotten in our own Church, and for the forgetting of which some of our congregations paid high fees.

Harmony is of more importance than *organic union*. Some people want union so badly that they would fight for it. Time is up.

### SERMON REVERIES.

NO. XI.

These pastors and their trips abroad form an ever fruitful object lesson about the time their sermons ought to be being delivered. One cannot blame the recurrence of so interesting a remembrance to a mind properly charged with the requisite receptive quality, and yet I question if it is sermon or lecture. We Presbyterians place great store by the sermon, and rightly so. Other denominations do not do so, and frankly say so. The service and its ornate features pleases them; but woe to the minister who, in a pulpit or kirk, fails to lay due stress by the sermon.

Thus it was that on a recent Sabbath I was set awandering, not very sentimentally, 'tis true, through Europe. "This kind of thing needs a deal of training," says some bright mind; I will not say where, for fear of raising objections; and I was not sufficiently trained, I fear, to follow the gyrations of our orator over "our old home." A lecture on travel offers to the lazy mind a most tempting bait. It requires so little preparation, you see, that almost anyone can do it, and I fear that on this occasion the preacher had been hard pressed for time in his weekly preparation, so had fallen back on his experience as a traveller.

It is said "that anticipation is better than realization" by some who profess to know of what they speak, and we would fain believe them in their assertion, because of the difficulties attendant upon fulfilling all of our desires in regard to many, many things. Notably a trip to Europe. There is much expense and trouble attendant this feat which deters many of us from attempting it, and yet who will say that this anticipation, which most of us will carry to our graves, is better than the realization? Did these bold people speak of South America, Africa, or any of these speculative regions, then indeed could we imagine a flavour of reasonableness about their assertion? But Europe! never. Probably every square mile of European land, and, indeed, water also, contains enough history, both sad and gay, to stock and surfeit us for all time. And still it goes on; that inexorable law which creates history by the slow or quick method, just as fancy sets it, still holds force in that wonderful patch of territory.

From the snow-clad cape of the wild and tempestuous North to the sunny isle of Crete on the South; and from the famous Cape St. Vincent on the West to the Urals on the East, there stretches a land which literally flows with the milk and honey of political and historical livelihood. Probably it would not be extravagant to assert, that here indeed has the world's history been made and framed.

It would require no great stretch of imagination, having closed one's eyes and given oneself over to contemplation, to imagine oneself doing the grand continental tour in detail and with vigour. Imagine, if you can, starting in Spain with Gibraltar, and its memories of its gallant defence, crossing over the narrow connecting isthmus and finding oneself in the once proud home of a still prouder Moor. Not far from us lies lofty Granada, which is none the less famed to us because of Irving's beautiful history of its conquest. O Spain's many historical battle-fields need we mention; what flushings of the face would take place on viewing Valladolid, Victoria, Salamanca, not to speak of many memories engendered by the land of Pizarro, Cortez, and other conquerors and new world discoverers.

Over the classic and snowy pyramids we view fair France, with a history almost as brilliant as our own. True, its names present several unpronounceable features to those of us who, not being French scholars, find them awkward. A travel through the provinces of France would, we are told, both by Sterae, away back, and Pennell in these latter days, prove to be a revelation to those who imagine that Paris is France. Then over to Germany, home of the Saxon family. What a history this highway of Europe presents to the imagination! Here is the ground upon which great issues have been decided, and battle-fields, if you want them, can be shown from every hotel window. The chances are that if your informant be German or Austrian, for they have much in common, that he will disdain any of the notorious defeats, such as Jena, Austerlitz, and the like, and point you to those having a more national success. The royal palace at Potsdam would surely interest those who, having followed Carlyle's rather too enthusiastic history of Frederick the Great, would like to see the

home of the remarkable soldier. A visit to the country of his many victories, now a province of the Empire, Silesia, would be very, very interesting. Into Poland no one would like to go, I am sure, nor into Russia, such suffering and misery are not the best things to witness on a pleasant and pleasure trip. Of our northern friends, Norway and Sweden, too much could not be seen, and the past and present popularity of Ibsen, the great dramatist and delineator of the north, would be an additional incentive to view the hords and deep bays of the land of the mighty Gustavus and of Charles the Great. Of the Lowlands, Alva, Silent William, John Barneveldt, large hats, white and green homes, bulbs and pretty effects, who does not dream with pleasure? Whoever has viewed Poggenbech's exquisite landscape studies of Holland and Denmark, must long to view the originals; not to mention Belgium, Brussels, Marlborough, Eugene, Malplaquet, Kamilles, Waterloo, etc., and all that these brilliant names recall. To mention mountains means hardness, and that also means Swiss. This people have been fighting the battles of everyone for hundreds of years. True they were paid for it, but they never ran away providing their pay was not too much in arrears. The whole history of the fifteenth and sixteenth century events only shows that if the Swiss had not been fighting men, the rest of the combatants would have shaken hands and gone home.

Of course Italy and Greece combined are the piece of resistance of your trip. Greece, not for what you see, unfortunately, but rather for that rare "gout" there must be in the air even yet. Italy, for the wonderful diversity which she affords in her history and its many records. From fabulous Remus and Romulus onward, no land has tried so much and kept as little.

Old England and her sisters are par excellence the most finished land on earth. As a young Canuck puts it after a trip there: "Nothing remains to be fixed, it's all ready for a view." There are no battle-fields but fratricidal ones, and you will avoid these as unworthy of anything but regret. There are not on British soil any battle-fields which call for pride, showing that instead of waiting for the foe, the sturdy Britishers have always sought him out. There are no remainders to be cleared off. The whole land is one vast picture, finished, varnished, framed and hung up, all ready for admiration or objection. Admiration for its beauty, its homes, its industries, its buildings and its wonderful historical associations. Objection to its squalor, its poverty, its pride and its class versus mass effects. But these opposites surely only complete the picture. Mankind would not be complete without poverty and dirt. A fair and equal start all round tomorrow would have the proper proportion of poor and dirty, versus comfortable and clean, ten, and even less, years hence. And so it is a finished country. I tell you, you young Americans, who vainly imagine that this continent is the thing in every race, you are making a wonderful mistake. In many, many things the old land leads us, and, to all appearances, always will; and not the least of these leads is in men.

So this remarkable sermon let me think out all these things and more; for mightily does the mind work when a chance is given. No word of God, did you say? Yes, many an opportunity was seized and improved upon, all tending to show forth His wonderful hand in this interesting corner of the earth. For if ever there was God's hand at work in any place with success, surely that place was in Europe. The whole place doth tell of His mighty work.

CURLY TOPP.

### CHIPS FROM CHAUTAUQUA.

SOLOMON'S SONG.

BY W. D. RUSSELL, WINNIPEG.

The first Sunday of the Chautauqua Assembly for 1892 opened sombre, wet and cold. Rain had fallen heavily during the previous night, and the roof of the huge amphitheatre, patched and prematurely old, leaked freely in many places. In the sunlight, and especially when five or six thousand earnest and expectant faces throw their radiance toward the platform, the vast building presents a pleasing appearance. But this morning, under the leaden skies that seemed to touch the earth at places, and with the pitiless rain pelting the massive roof and gathering in pools on floor, benches and platform, the pride of former Chautauquans looked dingy and forbidding in the extreme.

Professor McClenahan, who is to open the day's services with a Bible study at nine o'clock, no doubt expects to meet a small and restless audience. If so, he is agreeably disappointed. Promptly at the hour a fair proportion of Chautauquans are in their seats, and, except to elude a drip from the roof or a pool on the floor, gave the speaker the closest and most interested attention.

Let me present your readers with a brief outline of this study.

The "Song of Solomon," the speaker asserted, was not written by the libertine King, but by some person who lived then or four generations after this time. Nor did the speaker believe the book had any reference to Christ and His Church, as the headings of our English Bible would lead us to believe. He described the work as a grand moral cantata, intended to show the people that love only is the basis of true marriage, and that marriage is allowable between one man and one woman only. The central figure of the poem is a bright-eyed, comely girl of the north, whose out-door life had given her beauty of colour and charm of form. On a