

Our Contributors.

THE (Y)EASTERN QUESTION.

What does "the housewife preparing to bake" represent? My answer is a very simple one—"just a housewife preparing to bake." Mr. Denovan, if he were to hear me expressing myself thus, would, no doubt, be amazed at my ignorance, if not shocked at my seeming irreverence. According to him, she sets forth, in figure, a most important spiritual lesson. He says: "Christ left her (the Church), His betrothed, here on the earth to take care of His house and family in His absence." (What difference is there between Christ's house and family, and the Church?) "Like an industrious, thorough-going house-wife, wisely economical, the Church is represented here baking: with the simple and substantial meal of wholesome doctrinal truth and the water of life, the Holy Spirit's power, with her own hands she is preparing food for her household and for those hungry poor who may need her sympathy and help." "Conscientiously, earnestly and laboriously, the Woman works with her own hands to make and to keep her household healthy and strong." "It would not be easy, methinks, even to imagine an illustrative lesson equal in value to this short and very simple parable of what the Christian Church should be, and how she ought to be employed during her Lord's absence—every faculty, every bodily member busy in useful, earnest work!"

I honour the spirit of the language just quoted, but of the language itself, where it stands, I say—using a Scotch phrase—"a' juste perfect havers." In this case, too, what is said of Peter Bell, is true of me:

A primrose by the river's brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And nothing more.

I quote from memory. No doubt, Mr. Denovan could, with little trouble, discover some deep spiritual meaning in the dishes which held the leaven and the meal, the persons who made these dishes, the parents of those persons, and so on. I must pause here, as I do not mean to put in another form "The edifice which John constructed."

"Now, what is symbolized by the leaven this housewife hides in the meal? This appears to be the main point of our Lord's parable." Here Brother Denovan and I can walk together. But let us hear what he has to say in answer to his question. He thus speaks of leaven: "Leaven is material corruption in action used in making bread, it is incipient corruption to facilitate decomposition." "The state of physical sinfulness and the use of material leaven evidently harmonize and mutually aid one another."

I pause in the midst of my quotations here, to say a word or two on the last of those just made. What is "physical," or "material sinfulness"? Is there such a thing as sin in matter? "Mutually aid one another." Is not the word "mutually," quite unnecessary? How can "physical sinfulness" aid "material leaven"? If said leaven be not very active will putting some "physical sinfulness" into it, have an effect on it, such as the music had on the dancers in "Auld Alloway Kirk," which "put life and mettle in their heels"? Again, how can "material leaven" aid "physical sinfulness"? "Do tell." But I must go on with my quotations.

"Leaven holds this intimate connection with human sin." "Throughout the entire statutes of the typical Jewish dispensation, leaven (as the symbol of corruption) is expressly prohibited from use in all religious sacrifices and offerings." "Leaven, the ingredient symbolizing the presence of sin." "We find in every passage (in the New Testament) in which 'leaven' is referred to, that evil and corruption are plainly represented by it." When Jesus Christ, a religious Jew speaking to religious Jews, uttered this parable, He designed leaven to illustrate evil and consequent corruption."

Alas! here my good brother and I must part company.

The doctrine that in Scripture leaven is invariably an emblem of corruption is, as we shall by and by see, downright nonsense. It has an effect on the parable, like that which the leaven in the latter had on the meal. The three measures of meal became all a mass of leaven. The parable, by the doctrine stated, becomes all a mass of nonsense.

I lately asked a professor of chemistry, in one of the foremost of our colleges, his opinion of leaven. Here is his reply—a brief one, as when he wrote it he was in the midst of examinations:

"The fermentation which takes place in leaven, and which it induces in fresh dough, is due to the presence of a minute organism. The chemical changes commonly known as fermentation are, in Pasteur's words, 'correlative phenomena of vital acts beginning and ending with them.' Without the organism the fermentation could not take place."

If fermentation begin and end with vital acts, how can it be corruption?

Mr. Denovan says: "In this world of sin where food is made out of grain grown in an atmosphere permeated by sin, and intended for the use of sin-diseased and corruptible bodies like ours, leaven, by promoting speedy decomposition, facilitates assimilation and digestion."

If the atmosphere be permeated by sin, so, too, of course must be the grain grown in it, and so, too, must be the food made out of that grain. Then, even unleavened bread must be sin-tainted. According to Mr. Denovan, leaven is sin-tainted. Then, bread which in itself is sin-tainted is doubly so by being leavened. Mr. Denovan says that leaven promotes speedy decomposition. That must be of the bread after it has been

taken into the body, which is a very different thing from corrupting the bread. Well, if leaven "by promoting speedy decomposition" of the bread as described "facilitate assimilation and digestion," it helps to nourish the body. It is, therefore, most absurd to say that what is wholesome for the body is invariably a figure of what is ruinous to the soul.

If leaven were, under the law, always the symbol of corruption, why was it not classed among the unclean things.

The bread commonly used by the Jews was leavened. We are warranted, therefore, in the absence of proof to the contrary, to believe that the shew-bread was leavened. Would God command that to be used in His service which had in it the invariable symbol of corruption?

Christ compares Himself to bread, leavened as well as unleavened. But if leaven invariably "illustrated evil and consequent corruption," would He have used leavened bread as a figure of Himself, in whom is no sin?

Our good brother, to be consistent, should use only unleavened bread at the Lord's supper. Will he go that length? I would not be at all surprised if I were to hear of some doing so.

Elder's Mills, Ont.

T. F.

LETTER FROM TRINIDAD.

MR. EDITOR,—I fear I was somewhat reckless when away from my work and promised to write you, among others. To break promises lies somewhat on my conscience, so I snatch a little leisure by the seaside to fulfil them.

There is a dish here called calliloo. It is said that the cook concocts it by putting into it a little of everything.

Now don't laugh; calliloo is really very eatable. I propose to make this letter like calliloo, and I only hope it will serve up as well.

For the first time in history there is direct steam communication between Canada and Trinidad. We can—I was going to say step on board, but that will not do for we have no wharves here, so I will begin again. We can take a boat to the SS. "Portia," for instance, as she lies out three or four miles in the shallow gulf, and without transfer be landed at Yarmouth, N.S., or St. John, N.B.

We shipped by her last trip 150 tons of sugar, and Canadian cheese, butter and oatmeal are advertised in the local papers. This trade is of great importance both to us and to you. At least so every one here believes, and it has been decided not to trouble with the Jamaica Exhibition, but to take means to be well represented at St. John and Toronto. I wonder if it would be regarded as bribery if we were to send a barrel of our No. 1 vacuum pan sugar to some of the principal editors in Canada. It would be better worth a review than many of the books sent you. Trinidad has some very fine sugar estates. One set of works manufactures directly from the canes about seventy tons a day. It is supplied by a group of estates and makes some 7,000 tons per annum. Six other properties make 3,000 tons each per annum.

Cocoa is our second staple. Of cocoa beans we hope to ship nearly twenty million pounds this year. In exchange for our sugar, cocoa, coconuts and bananas we will gladly take your flour, beef, pork, codfish, butter and cheese. In a cold country like Canada chocolate ought to be highly esteemed and extensively used. It is, I am sorry to understand, but little patronized. Readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN, who do not drink chocolate in some of its forms, you do not know what you miss. Get the genuine Trinidad article and sweeten it—not with rank beet-root sugar, but with our vacuum pan No. 1 or even No. 2, and you will then know why cocoa is called by botanists "Theobroma."

Now who does the work of cultivating the sugar and cocoa? Largely the East Indian immigrants, commonly, but erroneously, called coolies. But for these East Indians, of whom we have over 60,000, Trinidad would not be much, and Canadian missionaries would not be here. This mission work began over twenty-two years ago. Through it the maritime provinces have taken a very considerable stake in Trinidad. Of that work I propose to write you in another letter.

Near the entrance of the Gulf of Paria are some rocky islands with seaside houses. Here we sometimes retire for rest, sea-bathing and meditation, when school boys have holidays. This week our youngest missionary, Mr. Coffin, is with us. He has had a somewhat unusual experience here. One night he thought he heard the rustle of wings—angel's wings they might have seemed to this dreaming Jacob—but a very earthly sensation awoke him to find that vampire bats had operated on both his feet and the bedding was covered with blood. Nothing like this has ever happened to any of our staff and now that it has occurred once we do not expect it to occur again for twenty-five years.

This morning I took Mr. Coffin to see a bats' cave. It was just like any other cave except that it was inhabited by bats in numbers past estimation. The cave is on the side of a cliff and entered by boat. Mr. Coffin showed no enthusiasm, as I think he should have done, over these bats. When appealed to for some expression of feeling he coldly remarked, "I have had enough of bats."

We have several varieties of bats. Some that live on fruit and are harmless, others, blood-thirsty, that attack our horses and cattle often enough to be troublesome, and occasionally operate on human toes or noses. Others, such as those in the cave, feed on fish; but it is not settled whether they are a distinct species or not. It is only a recent discovery, made in Trinidad, that some bats feed on fish. This will I think suffice as a sample of calliloo.

Gasparillo, Trinidad, April 22, 1890.

MISSIONARY CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF BELGIUM.

THE IMPRESSIONS OF A PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY.

Monsieur Monvert, Professor of Theology, colleague and friend of the well-known commentator, Dr. F. Godet, attended the last Synod of the Belgian Missionary Church, as a deputy from the Free Church of Neuchatel (Switzerland). On his return he wrote to a religious periodical the following account of his visit to Belgium:

"I never so much enjoyed a deputation trip as I did this one to Belgium. I had often heard of the Mission in that country, but it is necessary to see it with our own eyes, in order duly to appreciate its results. The way in which this Church develops and recruits itself reminds me of what must have taken place in the time of the early Christian Church. The converts consider it as their first duty to speak to others of the new light they have received; they try to persuade their friends to accompany them to the meetings, and if they are obliged to change their residence in search of work, they immediately endeavour to spread their faith in whatever place they establish themselves.

"Religious liberty is unlimited in Belgium; every form of worship is allowed. Any attempt made to disturb a religious assembly would be checked at once. The missionary church is improving to the utmost these opportunities. Colporteurs and Bible readers are constantly travelling over the country selling the Scriptures and speaking to people of the message it contains. When the way has been thus prepared, an open air meeting is organized, the members of a neighbouring church will come out in a body, take their stand in the open space of a village, attract the crowd by singing a hymn, the glad news of salvation will then be preached both by the pastor and by lay helpers, tracts will be distributed and often the result of such a gathering will be the establishment in the place of a regular meeting.

"The congregations of the Belgian Missionary Church are, with only a few exceptions, composed entirely of poor working people (chiefly occupied in the coal-pits and the factories); they are very ignorant, but the blessed influence of the Gospel refines and educates them; it takes them from their dissipated lives, and opens out their intellects by the careful and persevering study of the Bible. The good example given as a rule by the Protestant families does more to forward the cause than many arguments.

"One lovely Sunday afternoon I took the service in the village of Courcelles, not far from Charleroi; when I arrived the chapel was already as full as it could hold; the people were singing hymns as they waited for the service to begin; the appearance of the congregation was not at all what I expected. I could hardly imagine that nearly all these men, so well dressed in their black suits and spotless linen, and many of these girls with their neat dresses and bright bonnets, were the same that one meets on week days, black and grimy, in their mining clothes, and that my intelligent and attentive audience were men and women who toil day after day, doing long hours and hard work for very little pay.

"How good the singing is! every one joins in it; it is quite refreshing to hear our good old hymns sung so heartily, and I can well imagine that this is one of the methods employed with the greatest success for reaching a people so fond of music as are the Belgians.

"In the evening I attended what they call a 'Bible question meeting' in a neighbouring church, Jumet. The pastor was in the chair; after a hymn and prayer those among the congregation who had met with any difficulty in their daily readings asked for explanations. Each question gives rise to an interesting discussion, which shows how much the Bible is studied by the converts of the Belgian mission.

"The ecclesiastical organization of these churches has developed itself spontaneously, according to existing wants and not from any preconceived and inflexible rule. At first it was only an evangelizing society, working in any field that might present itself. Little by little permanent stations were established, which by degrees became organized churches. Colporteurs, Bible-readers and evangelists prepare the way for pastors. I had the privilege of seeing some of the first pioneers of the Belgian mission; they insist that their church should remain true to its missionary and conquering character, which has been the source of life and strength. The young pastors, while maintaining the importance of the evangelistic work, would wish to bestow more time on the spiritual welfare of the church members, and on the religious instruction of the young.

"One can understand that the energies of the pastors are heavily taxed: their extensive districts oblige them to hold a great number of regular services, besides constant impromptu meetings. The converts have to be cared for, and require visiting. The pastors are helped by bands of voluntary workers and by the Bible-readers; but this does not suffice; most of them are overworked; it is urgent that the number of pastors should be multiplied, but that cannot be done unless the funds increase.

"The members of the Belgian churches are striving to increase their contributions, but they cannot support all the expenses of their local churches and of the missionary work. The annual budget is about £5,600 sterling (100,000 frs.). Notwithstanding the help afforded by the Christians of Great Britain, Ireland, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, America, etc., the deficit amounts to £800 sterling (20,000 fr.)! We the friends of this work, must take a part of the burden, so