

Our Contributors.

CONFERENCE AT SLABTOWN TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION, "SHOULD MINISTERS VOTE?"

BY KNOXONIAN.

There is considerable activity in municipal circles in Slabtown at present, owing to an effort that is being made by a number of good citizens to improve the municipal government of the place. For years the municipality has been cursed with a lot of officials who are either incompetent or worse. The place has been wretchedly governed, and although taxes have been ruinously high, no improvements have been made. High taxes and low morals has long been the motto of the Slabtown Council. So bad has the municipal management been, that property has fallen in price, rowdiness went up as property went down, and the people began to leave. A number of good citizens determined to make a last and desperate effort to save the town, and among other things they asked the local clergy to vote, leaving it entirely to themselves to vote for whomsoever they pleased.

The ministers and several other men prominent in religious circles held a conference to discuss the subject.

The REV. MR. SUPERFINE, B.D., Ph.D., said he had never voted, and he never intended to. Politics were too dirty for him to touch. He never mixed with crowds. These municipal people were not educated men. They had no culture. There was not a graduate among them. He would not associate with such people even while voting. That was all he had to say.

(Mr. Superfine then turned up his nose at an angle of forty-five degrees, sniffed the air and sat down.)

The REV. AMINADAB CANT said he had never voted, and he did not think he would this time. He was not a citizen of this world. He did not like to associate with men of the world. We must come out from among them.

The REV. JEREMIAH HALF-PLYM said he agreed with Brother Cant. They were not citizens of this world, and they should not vote. See what Macdonnell had come to by voting.

MR. SANDY MCSNEISHAM, an elder of the Presbyterian Church of Slabtown, then addressed the conference. He said he had come to the meeting as an act of courtesy to the ministers, and not because he had the least sympathy with the views expressed by the reverend gentlemen who had spoken. He thought it a rather strange thing that men who preached to others on the duties and responsibilities of citizenship should hold a conference to decide whether they should accept the responsibilities and discharge the duties of citizenship themselves. You gentlemen may say, continued Mr. McSneisham, that you are not citizens of this world. There is quite enough of old Adam in the best of you to entitle you to vote down here, if you pay your taxes. (Applause.) You are not only citizens of this world in a very important sense—you are citizens of Slabtown. You may say you do not care for the interests of the place. Well I say you *ought* to care if you don't. You have the responsibilities of citizenship laid on you, and you shirk them at your peril. You are sailing in the vessel along with your neighbours, and if the pirates scuttle the ship you will go down as well as the rest. (Cheers.) And now, gentlemen, let us thresh out this objection about "mingling with the world," as you call it. I might easily show that such talk is sanctimonious drivel; that is to say, it is sanctimonious drivel—pure, unalloyed cant—in the sense in which you use it. There is an important scriptural sense in which Christians should not conform to the world, but you haven't the scriptural idea in your mind. I know right well you haven't. Every man of you would take a pass from the most godless, grinding railway corporation that ever robbed a municipality, or ground the life out of its employees. You would take a dead-head passage from the toughest steamboat company that ever sent out an over-loaded floating coffin, drowned the passengers it bargained to carry, and then worried their widows out of damages with a long lawsuit. You take the "clerical discount" from Jew, or Socialist, or Anarchist, or anybody that offers it, and I hear that some of you even point to your necktie when you are making purchases, if the seller does not speak of a discount

(Cries of "Shame!") You are too spiritual to conform to this world to the extent of voting; but you take favours from this world fast enough. You are too pious to vote; but you put yourselves under obligations to the most hardened and godless of worldlings, and most grinding of worldly corporations. Gentlemen, I don't understand that kind of piety.

And, gentlemen, there is another point I would like you to throw some light on. I am told that there is not a minister in Slabtown who pays taxes. You are too pious to vote for good municipal government, but you are not too pious to take your light, and your sidewalks, and your police protection, and education for your family for nothing. If Caesar is such a great sinner that you cannot endure him long enough to mark your ballot, why in the name of common sense do you take so many favours from him? What right have you to expect light and protection and education for your children for nothing? Your salaries may not be large, but they are much larger than the salaries of scores who help to pay your taxes. Are you not afraid that taking favours from Caesar—putting yourself under obligations to him—aye, taking that from him which he has no right to give, and which as an honest ruler he cannot give, may do you as much harm as marking your ballot? (Cheers.) Gentlemen, allow me to say I think your ways are a little peculiar. Of course, I am but a plain, uneducated man, and have never had the benefit of a college education, and may not see things in the right light. It does, however, seem to me that if a Christian man is a citizen, he should manfully accept the responsibilities, and cheerfully discharge the duties of citizenship. And it does strike me that if a minister is above voting at a municipal election, he ought to be above acting as a pauper, and taking favours from the municipality. I may be wrong, gentlemen, not having any college learning, but that is how it strikes me. (Loud cheers.)

THE HOME MISSION FUND.

MR. EDITOR,—Will you kindly allow space for a word or two on this vexing Home Mission question and the difficulty threatening the fund?

I leave Mr. "Knoxonian" and other able gentlemen of his stamp to handle the question in general and as they see it at a distance. I want to say a few things about it in particular and from this outpost of operation. "Knoxonian" puts a very forcible speech into the mouth of Elder Tighthide, who prescribes an infallible remedy for the trouble—one that would cure it for all time, with the additional advantage that in a while there would probably be no missions left to give trouble.

But it is only fair to add that in applying the remedy there is just a possibility that the part of the Church not strictly mission may be brought to suffer the inconvenience associated with that species of disease they call hide-bound.

The good elder advocates the withdrawal of some of the missionaries, which is an important question; and from what fields? Let the good man be sent out to determine, but I bespeak him a very unpleasant task. It would be something unpleasant were a family obliged to abandon to fate some member in order to provide sustenance for the rest, and I presume of the same delicate nature would be the sad attempt at abandoning any of the families and the children of the Presbyterian Church. With a little more of the grace of God in his heart, the good man would find it much happier work to go down upon his knees and pray the great Lord of the harvest that He would send out more labourers into His harvest.

There is not a mission station within our bounds which does not contain some of the sons and daughters of some of the best people of the Church. Shall they be given up? We have also on those missions many who helped to build the churches and the schools and colleges of the East, men who occupied important posts in the congregations. They are working and helping still, and contributing even in advance of many who are inclined to find fault, but they labour under the disadvantage of fewness of numbers. Must they therefore be abandoned? The Oddfellows or Freemasons would scarcely treat their friends like that. And will the Presbyterian Church? I say never.

Then, again, who has helped into existence the present state of things? I presume the very parties

objecting. Have they not prayed for the success of the missions? I hope so. Have they never said, "Thy kingdom come," or felt their hearts going out for the conversion of the world? Now if this is to be done it must be either by miracles or by means. If by miracles then we have nothing to do with it. But it is clear the world is not to be converted by miracles, or God would have done it long ago, and without any trouble to the Tighthide family. Then if by means, by whose means? Must we urge on other people the duty of contributing to the desirable end, and at the same time try to obtain a dispensation for ourselves? Surely not. By prayer and countenance and contributions we have helped into existence the present position of things. God has answered our prayers, opened doors, thrust in the men and blessed their labour. What then are we to do? Go back to God and tell Him that it is enough, nay, more than enough? "Stay Thine hand, we have too many men and too many fields." Will we dare say, "When we prayed for Thy blessing upon the work we did not mean just all this?" Then again, we were sent out here to do the Church's work, and it is one of the most pleasant thoughts connected with our work that we have the Church behind us, and that we are remembered in the congregations and homes and at the altars and in the closets of the Church. But how will it affect us and our work to be told that when, as the result of the blessing of God upon our labours, the fields grow and missions multiply, involving a little extra pressure for a brief while, we are then to be abandoned. Canada freely spent millions to succour and sustain the settlers of this land in the late unfortunate rebellion. And I think I hear the best voice, the Christian, patriotic voice of our Church saying to our men, Work on, trust on, fight on, and verily you shall be sustained. If we go out from these fields some one will come in at the other end. Is there any other Church in the land better able to take them up? Are we then prepared to throw over on other and weaker shoulders burdens properly and pro dentially our own?

One other matter, and I close. Last March, or earlier, all the missions of this Synod were visited, and, under heavy pressure, they agreed to certain amounts for the support of ordinances for the year. The Presbyteries took those promises, and on their basis sent the men to the various fields. When Presbyteries in Ontario engage a man at a certain figure they take care to see him paid. I hold that every appointment and settlement is a solemn bargain with the field and the man sent to the field for the time included in the agreement. But what has happened here? We went to work as usual in the beginning of April last. At the end of October—or six months after—we are told that the grants to fields have to be reduced. The fields will not pay more. Our experience is that they nearly always pay less. The committee say they cannot, and to make it appear honest they cut the grant. It means however that the hand of the Presbytery is compromised, and the missionary or minister in assisted charge suffers the loss of a great portion of his much-needed salary. Will the proper parties in the Church say if this is right? There is not a farmer in any congregation who would not aim at higher morality toward his hired man. What effect will this have on our hearts, our homes, our work?

And let me say that this has become a kind of institution with us. If the work is to be extended, pray let it not be altogether at the expense of our hard-working missionaries. MANITOBIAN.

Birtle, Nov. 25, 1887.

"FAITHFUL" ON THE SECOND COMING.

MR. EDITOR, Discussions on any subject should be fair and honest, and should be conducted in a becoming and humble spirit. Let me ask your correspondent "Faithful" to forbear, as those who differ from him are forced to bear under his undeserved censure and misrepresentation.

"Faithful" is so convinced that there will be a partial and elective whatever that means, resurrection, in which only God's people shall have a part, that he cannot think that he may be wrong. Hence he says this is the teaching of Rev. xx. 1-5, "to the candid and unbiassed reader." Can this mean anything else than that those who differ from him are not candid and are biassed? Perhaps "Faithful" is an old ex-