

Our Contributors.

GOOD IN QUALITY, BUT SMALL IN QUANTITY.

BY KNOXIAN.

The potato crop of a Highland farmer was good in quality, but there were few in a hill. Somebody asked the good man how his potatoes were progressing. Sandy's reply was characteristic—*She be very goot, but very seldom.*

Sandy's description of his potatoes would apply nicely to a great many persons and things.

Here is a parishioner who comes to church very irregularly. He attends one Sabbath, and remains away two. Then he astonishes everybody by coming two Sabbaths in succession, but immediately afterward he remains away three. He is apparently a respectful hearer when in church. Nobody can say anything against his demeanour. He seems quite devout, and appears to enjoy the service. His only fault is that he never attends regularly. He has the same defect as the Highland man's potatoes—*She be very goot, but very seldom.*

Here is a well-to-do man who pays just \$5 a year for the support of the Gospel. He expects heaven and all that leads to heaven at the moderate outlay of 10 cents per Sabbath for himself and his family. Ten cents per Sabbath probably means in this case 1 cent apiece each Sabbath. Now this estimable, self-denying, self-sacrificing man's expenditure is good as far as it goes. His dollar has 100 cents in it as well as any other man's dollar. No doubt it would be much better for himself and his family and his Church if he gave \$50 a year instead of \$10, but still his money is good. The only trouble is that there is not enough of it. His contribution has the same fault as the Highlander's potatoes—*She be very goot, but very seldom.*

See this minister who has just dropped into a meeting of his Presbytery, and taken his seat with the air of a man who thinks he is discharging a disagreeable duty. He has not been at the last two meetings. He does not like Presbytery meetings, and takes little interest in the business. Perhaps he fancies he is a literary man, and considers Church business too vulgar for his refined taste. Perhaps he imagines he is too dignified to associate with the common herd who are doing the Church's work. Perhaps he has a little "Plym" poison in his system, and thinks Church business is not spiritual enough for him. Perchance he feels a trifle sore because his motions never carry. Possibly he suffers from *inertia*, and does not like the exertion of attending Presbytery meetings. *Inertia* in the laity means laziness. This brother has never discovered that lack of interest in Church work and irregular attendance at Presbytery are two of the never-failing symptoms of a failing ministry. He never found these facts out for himself, and nobody ever told him. Perhaps he would not have thanked them for telling him. Now, no one can say that this brother does not conduct himself with propriety in his Presbytery. He may indeed have a vacant or languid air which seems to say "this is a bore," but his demeanour is fairly proper. His speeches are not too long or too numerous. He never "rises to a point of order" when there is neither order nor point. Negatively he is a good presbyter. He would be a much better one if he came regularly, and took more interest in the work of the Church. As matters stand he suffers from the same defect as the Highlander's potatoes—*She be very goot, but very seldom.*

Now look at this Sabbath school teacher who comes in and sits down besides his class; of course we say *his*, because no lady teacher ever attends irregularly. He is on the whole a good teacher. He studies the lessons well, and knows how to present the truth. He feels a fair degree of interest in his class. He would like to see them do well, and is grieved when they do not take an interest in their lessons. But this teacher, otherwise a good one, has one serious defect. His attendance is irregular. This one defect neutralizes to a considerable extent all his good qualities. He is a good man when at his work, but he does not go at it often enough. You might truthfully say of him what Sandy said of his potatoes—*She be very goot, but very seldom.*

This customer coming into the store pays his bills about once in two or three years. He is honest, but

slow. He likes to keep a snug little pile in the stocking or a good balance at the bank, and lets the store bills run on long time. That is his style. Nothing would please him so much as to invest a few cool hundreds in a mortgage, and allow his merchant to wait. He admires that style of doing business a good deal better than his merchant admires it. Now there are worse customers in the world than this man. He is a much better customer than the one who never pays at all. His only fault is that he does not pay often enough. He suffers from the same defect as the Highland man's potatoes—*She be very goot, but very seldom.*

Before ending this discussion let us take a look at this man who refuses to pay anything to the building fund of the new church. Forty years ago he helped to build the old one. Money was scarce at that time; he was a struggling new settler, and, all things considered, his subscription was very liberal. He was a better man then than he is now, and that was the principal reason why he gave a good subscription. Since then he has learned the art of salting down money, and the art of giving sometimes declines as the art of salting down advances. He makes that forty-year-old subscription a reason why he should not pay anything for the new building. He does not deny that a new church was needed, nor say that it ought not to be paid for. He simply says he helped to build the old one. Now that man did a good thing forty years ago. Perhaps he and his good wife had to deny themselves something to help to build the old church. They have lost the spirit of self-denial. The trouble with them is that they did not keep on giving. Their giving for new churches had the same fault as Sandy's potatoes—*She be very goot, but very seldom.*

COLONIE AGRICOLE ET PENITENTIAIRE DE METTRAY.—III.

THE MODEL REFORMATORY INSTITUTION OF FRANCE.

MILITARY EXERCISES AND GYMNASICS

are daily practised, but on Sunday longer time is spent on them. A twofold purpose is served by these exercises—one sanitary, the other military. Most of the boys when they arrive are suffering from various diseases, and all are weak from the wretched lives they have had. By judicious treatment and open-air exercise, stiffness of limbs and deformity gradually disappear, health is improved, strength and agility imparted, and habits of obedience and discipline developed. Vocal and instrumental music, cultivated by a few, are found to have a softening and refining influence.

On hearing the bugle sound, "prepare for dinner," my guide took me into the quadrangle, that I might have a sight of the gangs coming from the fields around, as well as the boys from the workshops. All this was done in military order, each family being ranged in double files in front of their houses. In this way I had a good view of their features, which indicated great variety of types as well as degrees of intelligence. They were all dressed alike in coarse sackcloth trousers, blue linen tunics and rough blouses. On their heads they had Basque *berets*—woollen caps resembling Highland bonnets—and on their feet sabots or wooden shoes. When all had collected, and gone through some military evolutions, the bugle sounded again, and off they all clattered to their respective places in the dining halls. And here they did justice to their simple meal, consisting chiefly of bread and macaroni, followed by a goblet of sound *vin ordinaire*. Twice a week they have flesh meat. After dinner there is an hour's play, and after the other meals half an hour.

EDUCATION.—RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR.

Two priests reside in the colony, and thoroughly enter into the spirit which pervades every part of the work. They never detain the boys more than three-quarters of an hour at the longest service. In connection with the church is a library, from which books are lent to the boys, and they are encouraged to cultivate the habit of reading. The Archbishop of Tours pays occasional visits to the colony, and encourages both masters and scholars.

On the walls of the church are inscribed in golden letters on a marble tablet the names of the founders and other benefactors. Among the number is a long list of English names, including Lord Brougham and Mr. Gladstone—the former of whom once eloquently

praised "this noble and useful institute" in the House of Lords, and gave a generous donation. Mr. Gladstone showed his appreciation of the work by giving his time and money, on his return to England, to establish the philanthropic farm school at Red Hill, which more nearly resembles Mettray than any other reformatory institution in England. There are several American names also on the tablet.

In winter more time is spent in school exercises than in summer—reading, writing and arithmetic being the chief subjects of study. A few are taught linear drawing and singing in parts, which they practise in going and returning from work. This prevents conversation, and helps to fix good words on their memories. All but three and a-half per cent. receive lasting benefit from the education thus imparted, and these are children of weak intellect. When admitted, the young are regarded as "having sinned without discernment," and therefore irresponsible, but after being instructed here, they become subject to the strict rules of the institution.

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

The masters of the workshops give rewards in money to the best workmen every three months to the amount of 3½ francs, graduated according to the number in the family—if not vetoed by the *chef de famille* on account of misconduct. The reward is always doubled if the recipient is a *frère aîné*. Part of the money is put into the savings bank in Tours, and part goes to pay for clothes renewed before the time for giving out fresh clothing. If at such a time the clothes are found to be in good condition, the boy gets the benefit of it, by having the money put to his account. On leaving, all the money at his credit is paid to the boy, unless he wishes it to be kept. Sometimes instead of storing up his gains, a boy sends them to his mother or father, which is always regarded as a favourable sign.

There is also what is called the "roll of honour," which contains the names of all found worthy. When I visited Mettray money premiums to the value of 5,128 francs were standing in the names of colonies, and good marks to the value of 2,855 francs.

After mass on Sundays all the boys meet in the large school room, when their marks for the week are read out in the presence of all the masters. The director sits upon the tribune, surrounded by the *chefs* and *sous chefs*. The colonists are ranged in front, and every boy who is deserving receives commendation. Each family, too, receives its meed of praise or blame, and the family whose members possess the largest number of good marks has the honour of carrying the national flag for the day with the motto attached, "Honour to the family." This family marches at the head of the colony whose standard-bearer it has become during the military exercises. This is the great event of the week, and the family to which the deserving boy belongs is highly gratified. The entire family is in this way responsible for the conduct of each of its members, and the influence for good is said to be marked.

THE STRICTEST DISCIPLINE

is observed, nothing being overlooked. The fault for which no allowance is made is lying. It is regarded as worse than stealing, and is always visited with punishment, the object being to cultivate a sentiment of personal dignity. No punishment is inflicted hastily or in a passion. The culprit is sent to a room called "chamber of reflection," and left to his own thoughts, until the director has examined his "conduct book," and considered well his general character, advantages and disadvantages, and is prepared calmly to declare the measure of punishment the culprit deserves. No corporal punishment is inflicted, so that fear plays a small part at Mettray. The punishments are erasure of name from tablet of honour, detention within doors, compulsory labour, bread-and-water diet, imprisonment in a light cell or in a dark cell. Those confined in cells have an hour's exercise daily in chopping wood or other work. However severe the penalty, it is accompanied by a great personal kindness.

Boys who continue to conduct themselves well for two years after leaving Mettray receive from the directors a symbolic ring with the device, "*Loyauté passe tout*"—faithfulness surpasses all.

Near the church is a

RESTITUTION BOX

for "all articles found"—a delicate way of allowing