

## Our Contributors.

### SLEEPING IN CHURCH.

BY KNOXONIAN.

The season for sleeping in church has come. With some people this season lasts all the year round. Their time is all the time. Many, however, snore in the sanctuary during the summer months who would not think of sleeping at any other season. June, July and August are the months during which they shut their eyes to make their sense of hearing more acute.

Some years before his death, Dr. Guthrie worshipped in a church in the North of Scotland. Six hundred persons were present and the Doctor declared that the whole 600 were asleep at once. The session of the slumbering 600 took him to task for making such a statement, and the Doctor defended himself by saying that, if they were not asleep, "they struck a very suspicious attitude." In some congregations nearly everybody sleeps at some time or other during the service. This contributor worshipped in a church some years ago in Ontario, in which every grown man and woman he could see from where he sat slept during the service. No doubt those he didn't see slept as soundly as their neighbours. They did not all sleep at once. Most of them slept during the sermon, but some preferred the reading of the chapter, while one had a decided preference for sleep during the singing. One or two slept two or three times. There are men who can take several sleeps during an ordinary service. There is much more sleeping in church than good people like to admit. Very few ministers like to stop in the middle of a sermon on a hot day and say: "My friends, if those of you who are asleep in the body of the church don't stop snoring so loudly, you will disturb those who are asleep in the gallery!" That little *impromptu* was actually delivered by an Ontario minister, and he was not a very humorous man either. In some parts of Scotland it seems to be taken for granted that sleeping is one of the privileges of the sanctuary. That must have been the idea of the woman whose husband's insomnia baffled the family doctor. The doctor told her he had tried all the remedies known to the profession, but could not put her husband to sleep. "Now, doctor," said she, "give me could tak' him tae the kirk!" It is not hard to tell at least one of the purposes for which her church was used.

The causes that produce sleep in church are various. With many it is a habit that has grown upon the sleepers unconsciously, and has grown to such strength that they cannot shake it off. They know that it is an abominable, irreverent and sinful habit, but habits long indulged in are powerful and often bind even good men against their will. Bad ventilation produces much sleep in church. Many churches seem to have been constructed for the purpose of slumber. They are badly lighted, are kept perfectly closed during the week, and on Sabbath pure air is kept out more carefully than Satan. Some of the people have a superstitious dread of draughts, and will not allow the windows to be opened. They do not know that foul air produces more colds than moderate draughts, and they breathe the foul air cheerfully. Men who have been in the pure, open air all week sit down in that foul, stuffy atmosphere, and they are asleep before they know. Bad health makes some people sleep. There are conditions of the digestive organs that make the most devout hearer sleepy. A man in that condition is more to be pitied than blamed. In Canadian towns and cities overwork on Saturday evening causes a large proportion of Sabbath slumber. Stores are kept open until eleven o'clock or, perhaps, even longer. The employes go home at midnight so tired that they can scarcely walk. They are not half rested on Sabbath morning, and when they sit down in church nature goes in search of "tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." Who is responsible for the sleep in church caused in this way? Not the worn-out workers who sleep. Not the merchants whose business places have been kept open until near Sabbath morning. The people who do their shopping late on Saturday night are responsible. They are the sinners. In many Ontario towns and cities Saturday night is the principal night for business. The streets are crowded. The stores are full. People who rarely go "down town" during the week always take a tramp on Saturday evening. They would not think that the week had been properly rounded off

if they did not take a promenade and a run through the stores late on Saturday night. This habit not only makes employes in stores sleep in church—it keeps hundreds out of church altogether. And yet many of the people who thus conduct themselves on Saturday evening are church-going people themselves. Many of them are members of churches. It is right that Christian people should combine to stop Sabbath excursions and stamp out Sabbath newspapers. This business of turning out on Saturday evening and keeping stores open until midnight does a thousand times more harm than a Sabbath newspaper during war time; but nobody seems to take any notice of it. Sabbath newspapers are or were published in Toronto alone; but this form of Sabbath desecration exists over all the country. It opposes the work of Christ directly in every town and city in the Dominion. And what is worse—much of it is carried on by professing Christian people.

We think we hear about 10,000 readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN shout: "Preachers are responsible for much of the sleeping in church." That is just what we are coming to. Some preachers are undoubtedly to blame for much of the sleeping in their churches. Pulpit humdrum has marvellous power as a soporific. Monotony in matter and delivery makes men sleep as soundly as Adam slept when Eve was taken out of his side. It would almost seem as if some sermons were constructed and delivered for the purpose of putting people asleep. At all events, they produce that effect with painful regularity. But let it be remembered that some hearers would sleep under any preacher. At least one young man went to sleep under the preaching of Paul. Paul must have been a rousing preacher and the matter of his sermons was good, but he could not keep all his Troas congregation awake. Eutychus fell asleep, although he sat on a window sill on the third storey. If all the people in Ontario who sleep in church should fall as far as Eutychus did, there would be an alarming decrease in our population.

But before we condemn too severely any minister for putting people asleep, let us consider some of the difficulties he has to contend against. He preaches in the *humdrum style*, does he? A good many of his congregation think that is the right style for preaching. If he preached in a lively style they would say he was not pious. They believe that piety and humdrum are as closely related as twins. He is *hazy*, is he? But if he preached in a fresh, crisp, pointed and interesting style, some of the people would be sure to say he was not deep. The good man has to say a number of incomprehensible things every Sabbath to keep his hold on that portion of his congregation who like to hear about the subjective and objective, the absolute and infinite. They would lose all confidence in their minister if they understood him. He is *monotonous*, is he? But if he spoke in any other way some of his good people would say he was theatrical and that would kill him. He is *dull*, is he? Quite likely, but don't you know that if he was anything else a number of his people would say he was not dignified. It is rather too bad to force a man to preach in such a way as to put people asleep, and then blame him because they are asleep. Some of the people who sleep the most are the very men who demand the style that puts them asleep. That may be one reason why they like it.

### A REMARKABLE CAREER.

A STORY OF REAL LIFE.

[The following narrative was given before the Presbytery of Montreal, July 7, 1885, by the Rev. Principal MacVicar, D.D., LL.D., Presbyterian College, and is published at the unanimous request of the brethren, in the belief that it will serve to elicit increased interest and prayer in behalf of those throughout our Dominion who are struggling after intellectual and spiritual light and freedom.]

I first met T. Zotique Lefebvre in the year 1865, in the course of my pastoral visitations as minister of the Free Church, Cote Street, Montreal. He was then a boy of ten or eleven years old and in the service of Mr. James Fletcher, milkman. Having read and prayed with the family, as I was leaving, Mr. Fletcher's sister Agnes, said to me: "You must speak to the French boy, Zotique." She accompanied me to the barn door where I found him busy upon a load of hay. He was the picture of health, vigour and intel-

ligence. The ruddy glow upon his cheeks and sparkling animation of his quick, dark eyes might have enabled him to pass for a lad just fresh over from the most highly-favoured parts of Scotland or Ireland. I called him down from the load of hay, and asked if he could read. He said he could read a little French. I gave him a French Testament which chanced to be in my pocket, and heard him read a few verses in the Gospel by St. John. He had been taught to read English by Agnes Fletcher, who had, herself, been brought to the knowledge of the Saviour in the great revival in the North of Ireland, and has ever since continued devotedly to serve the Master. I invited Zotique to attend my Sabbath school. It was my custom, and one to which I now look back with satisfaction, to advise young people of all sorts to join my Sabbath school and Bible class. He, of course, did not know what a Sabbath school meant. Roman Catholics follow no such methods as ours of Biblical instruction. He agreed, however, to attend and did so regularly and with deep interest.

But here I must go aside to say that he was the son of a widow of limited means, residing near New Glasgow, about thirty miles from Montreal. He had come into the city to make his own way as best he could, and was, as his family and ancestors had always been, a devout Roman Catholic, counting beads, wearing a scapulary to scare away the devil, praying to saints and angels and especially to the Virgin Mary who, sad to say, is more honoured in this Province than Jesus Christ.

The pious influence of the humble home of the Fletchers told upon his youthful mind, and their painstaking diligence in teaching him to read and in pointing him to "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world" furnishes an example that might well be universally followed by Christian masters and mistresses in dealing with their servants. It was not many months until his Sunday school teacher called to tell me that Zotique was a real convert, a believer in the gospel. Glad of this good news I advised him to continue his instruction and seek especially to establish him in the faith. I took occasion to come into personal contact with the lad—to examine and teach him—and was fully satisfied that the teacher's opinion was correct.

As time passed thoughts of home often rose in his mind, and he expressed a strong desire to visit his mother and family. He felt that he had something to tell them, and was impatient at the thought of putting his light under a bushel. He was eager to enrich those he loved with the treasures of the kingdom. We could not but think with anxiety and some measure of fear of his return into thoroughly Romish surroundings. We have seen enough to know what this means. But he had no fear. Armed with the little French Testament he had received he believed himself fit, with the promised help of his Saviour, to meet and withstand the entreaties of relatives and the skill of the priest—and he was right.

Early in the fall of 1867 he made the proposed visit, and frankly told his religious experience, and the new light he had received. They were filled with consternation as he read from the Gospel and claimed to understand and believe it. To persons from whom the Word of God is carefully withheld, and who are taught that it is wicked for them to suppose that any but priests and bishops can comprehend its meaning, it seemed blasphemy to hear a mere lad read and explain it. His mother earnestly besought him to give up the book and hasten to make confession and submission to the priests. A bachelor uncle offered to give him his farm if he would do so. The priest reasoned with him, told him of his rashness, ignorance and mortal sin, in the course he was pursuing, plied him with learned arguments and terrible threats, but all to no purpose. He was firm and immovable, and found something in his Testament to meet everything they could advance. They were equally unyielding, and after several weeks spent in this way he begged again and again to be allowed to return to Montreal. Finally his mother reluctantly consented. It was a sad parting on both sides—the mother grieved beyond utterance at the errors of her child, and the lad constrained to follow the truth in spite of his warm filial affection. But he must go. He had even then learned that fidelity to the Saviour is supreme and imperative. He set out on foot to make the thirty miles journey. He had not walked more than seven or eight miles until he was