

Our Contributors.

THE TOWN ON THE STRAIT.—II.

BY BERTRAM HEYWOOD.

Were we asked by any impartial questioner as to whether those who dwell in the Town on the Strait are, because of their isolation and conservatism, little concerned about the affairs of the outside world, we would reply with a most decided negative. In their quiet nook business is not carried on with the same rush and bustle as in more populous centres. The arrival of the mail train and its departure, the coming and going of the few steamships that frequent the port are the most important events of the day. Week after week will pass by without anything of an exciting character transpiring to disturb the somewhat somnolent air of the place. A weekly market is an unheard of institution, and the sittings of the Circuit courts are felt by all to be a most delightful—because exciting—episode in the history of the year.

One can, therefore, easily surmise that with an abundance of leisure, especially during the long winter months, when the port is closed by ice, the inhabitants have plenty of time to interest themselves in schemes of all kinds, beneficial and otherwise. Among many others of lesser importance, no matters so arouse their interest and energies as those of an ecclesiastical nature unless it be politics.

The Presbyterian Church has always been ably represented in the old town. At every period in the history of the place, men of worth have been the preachers of righteousness and the teachers of truth. Loyal did the earliest of these ministers uphold the banner of the Covenant when, had they been so minded, fields more attractive, with emoluments more substantial, could easily have been obtained by them. But they remained steadfast to their duty. During the week they taught the youth of the town, and on Sabbath in some settler's log-cabin or barn, or, mayhap, in the grander fane of some forest avenue, preached the everlasting Gospel. It is not to be wondered at that still, throughout that country, the office of a minister of the Gospel is accounted the noblest a man can hold when the first pastors of that flock in the wilderness were godly men of granitic character. Since their day, fully a century ago, that whole district has produced more Presbyterian clergymen to the square mile than any other place in Canada.

But it is not merely of the ministers of a former time the old town preserves reminiscences. The folks who live there are not given to boasting, but many a town that has produced one great and good soul makes more noise about it than this place which has produced many such. And most famous among these many are the men, aye, and women, who to the regions beyond went forth and died for the sake of the Gospel.

When a boy the pioneer missionary of our Church lived here, and the memory of the household to which he belonged has been well preserved. In some of the older houses of the town there can be seen old-fashioned eight-day clocks in tall wooden cases. American speculators try in vain to purchase them. They are cherished, not merely as relics of a bygone time, but because they were made in the boyhood's home of him who just fifty years ago began his work as a missionary in the South Seas.

He was not unaccompanied in his efforts. Far away on the shore of these tropic islands, where to-day gleam white among the palm trees the cottages and churches of a Christian people, are the graves of some who once dwelt in this quiet Arcadian hamlet, and who left it to become the martyr missionaries of our church. Here at the feet of ministers, still well remembered, they first received the Spirit which urged them to the perilous task they undertook, and in the performance of which they at length laid down their lives.

Just beyond the outskirts of the town on a little knoll near to the harbour shore there stood, until a year or two ago, a very ruinous old barn. It was the oldest one in the county, and we can well imagine the frolic the farmers of some ninety years ago would have at its raising. At that time it was the largest building available for any important public meeting, and so there, in that almost legendary past, the Presbyterians of that coast met and formed the first, if we be not mistaken, of that long series of "Unions" which culminated in the grand one at Montreal in 1875. Another of these earlier unions was also consummated in this same old town. The place is full of mementoes which recall to mind the struggles, successes, and fellowships of the Presbyterians of the first quarter of this century and even of a date prior to that.

Curiously enough the Town on the Strait is the center of the fragment of a kirk that refused to join in the formation of a great church co-extensive with the Dominion. This Synod is, however, steadily diminishing in numbers being gradually absorbed into the local Presbytery of the greater denomination. Reason for a separate existence it has none, and it has been virtually cast off by the "Auld" Kirk at home. Yet it has accomplished a great and good work, and its ministers to-day are broad-minded, scholarly men, between whom and the ministers of the greater body the most cordial and fraternal relations are maintained.

Many a day has passed since preaching in Gaelic was abandoned by the ministers of the town. Half-a-century ago, however, ability to do so was required of every pastor. Any visiting brother who could discourse in the mother tongue of the settlers was given a royal welcome, more particularly if he had come from the land of the heather. The many quaint customs of Gaelic religious services were common enough then. Old people still talk about them with a lingering regret and think that all the so-called improvements in church worship are evident tokens of degeneracy. They love to recall occasions when field-days among the preachers were the grand events of the year, and especially that glorious time when a flock without a shepherd was visited and encouraged by "the great Norman," as he was called. Could they ever forget that day, fifty years ago, so lovingly chronicled by himself, when, to the assembled Highlands of the whole district, he preached, and to the worthy dispensed the Sacrament of the Supper! That was a red-letter day in their lives. On a little plateau immediately behind, where the manse now stands, the tables with their white coverings were placed. It was a faultless day in summer and the assembled worshippers as they sat on the turf and looked down on the harbor far below could see a picture well fitted to inspire the heart with reverence for the Most High. The calm surface of the land-locked haven was dotted with boats slowly bearing to the town attracted from afar by the fame of the great preacher. Beyond it, on the farther shore, the forest commenced and swept in waves of verdure to the base of the towering hills that, in a semi-circle, stretched from east to west. The murmur of the not far distant rollers was borne to the ear, and gave, as it were, vocal expression of Nature's gladness. Beautiful was the scene, and solemn the occasion. With due form the quaint service proceeded, and again and again were the benches filled and emptied by the devout communicants. The man of God justified his right to fame as an expounder and orator, and was himself deeply touched, so he has written, by the events of that day. Between each "table," and whilst one set of partakers was departing and another taking their places, the people sang, following the lead of the preceptor, who, in the fashion peculiar to Gaelic services, chanted, a line or two at a time, the one hundred and third Psalm:

"O m'anam, beannaich thusa nis an Dia Ichobhabh mór

Moladh gach ni an tnoibh st gh dhiom
'ainm naomha mar is coir.

Those who have once heard such singing can never forget it. It may be inartistic but it has a grandeur all its own. In it seem to be mingled with the words of men the murmur of the sea and the "sough" of the wind among the pine trees.

That day on the hill with "the great Norman" is now little more than a tradition, but some of the folks in the Town on the Strait have not forgotten it. They cannot do so, for to them it was the first of days when they at last found Him whom their souls had long desired.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE.

BY MRS. A. G. SAVIGNY.

"In it thou shalt do no manner of work."

Familiar words, referring to the Day of Rest, and a command from the beneficent Creator of all. The Jews of to-day, owe their fine physique to the obedience of their fathers to the above mandate from the Divine Judge of all law breakers. The human race, as well as the animal kingdom, all require a day of rest. And now that those philanthropic societies, the anti-Sunday car and Lord's Day Alliance, have declared themselves anew in favor of a Saturday half-holiday, we may hope that this much to be desired people's own half day will soon be a thing secured by the strong arm of the law.

The writer has long been convinced that all work would be better done—that the wage earners would throw more heart, more muscle, into their work—if their tale of bricks was lessened, and that half of Saturday was their very own, in which to stretch out weary arms, yawn or lounge at will; their own in which to learn to be wise from pages of long closed books; or in those blessed hours of freedom to visit friends, or picnic with their little ones and aged amid the many rural spots within and around our broad city.

We have all witnessed the partial blotting out of the Day of Rest "across the line;" nay, may we not say the wholesale surrender of its restfulness. But to cease throwing stones, rather let us ask ourselves: Are we much better than they? We women are to blame for the Saturday eighteen hours toll of milliner and of butcher.

By placing our orders early on Saturday or even on Friday with our butcher, we would prevent the midnight toll; we would not hear the rattle, rattle, rumble, rumble of the wheels of the butcher's cart; we would not hear the sound of the cruel lash descending on the back of the poor weary horse, nor would we hear the voice of reproving conscience. God have pity on the midnight toilers for we have none.

A little milliner whom the writer had occasion to employ has stated that during the busy season the clocks from our city towers were ringing out the long drawn notes of midnight as her day of toil ended; and with aching back, weary fingers, and despairing heart she dropped her needle, the steel of which is not so coldly cruel as are our hearts, who will insist on having our head gear for Sunday. What a boon a Saturday half holiday would be to all wage earners! And it would be quite as easy to extend the gift to butchers and to milliners as to bankers.

Oh that the working man was not so easily deluded by those who tell him they desire to blot out the Sabbath in order that he may divert himself in the parks or elsewhere!

If those who endeavour to delude him—in order to secure his vote—really had his interest at heart, they would let our peaceful Sunday alone, and exert themselves to give him a Saturday half holiday, and they would instruct him most earnestly never to part with his best friend, the Day of Rest, but to hand such a blessed heritage down the ages to his children, and his children's children, even as his fore-fathers, having

been faithful to their trust, have passed it down to him, a necessary rest for the weary! A necessary rest, yes. For the wage earner's only capital is his physical health and strength. Let him then guard what he holds most precious in life; for so surely as he lends his aid to those who advocate Sunday labour in the running of Sunday cars and pleasure excursions. So surely will he waste his capital of health and strength, in the seven day week of toil which will most assuredly follow.

"WHOM SHALL WE SEND?"

MR. EDITOR,—I have read with grave concern the suggestion of our Foreign Mission Secretary, in your issue of 30th Jan., that our F.M.C. should follow the example of the Church Missionary Society, and of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, in their policy of sending into the foreign field all applicants regarded as suitable for the work, and your advocacy of the same in your issue of 13th February.

It is not to be wondered at, perhaps, that the secretary, pressed as he is constantly, in correspondence, with the crying needs of the work, and not in a position to realize the increasing difficulty of raising the ever increasing revenue needed for all the work of the Church, should be moved to suggest such a doubtful expedient for multiplying the number of our missionaries, but surely such a departure is not seriously contemplated by our F.M.C., notwithstanding the notable precedents cited.

What is it the Church is asked to do? To encourage the F.M.C. to run into debt, in the faith that He, whose the work is, will dispose and enable his people to pay it. And it is implied that hesitation to do so indicates a lack of faith. If this is a sound policy for the F.M.C., it is equally so for the H.M.C., and the old-fashioned policy of "pay as you go and keep clear of debt" has been a sad mistake. Still more, if it is a safe and sound policy for the Church it is equally so for the individual Christian. But the only man I ever knew who had such unbounded faith in the Lord's providing his living, while he was doing the Lord's work, that he borrowed money to carry on his business and keep his family, while he was days and weeks away conducting evangelistic meetings, concluded by compromising with his creditors at ten cents on the dollar. Who would like to see the number of our missionaries multiplied by ten, and have them paid in a similar way?

Is our Church prepared to follow the lead of the China Inland Mission, and to send out all offering, who are regarded as qualified, whether able to maintain them or not? If so, then there is no alternative but to divide among them, as fairly as may be, what the Church gives, year by year, for their support, however inadequate it may be. Such a policy will soon tell upon the health and work and lives of our missionaries. A large staff poorly provided for will cost more, and do less in the end, than a much smaller one better kept. Besides, it seems scarcely fair to ask our missionaries to undertake to live and work in a foreign land, on faith, when there is not one of our Presbyteries that would sustain a call to a minister, without a guarantee of stipend duly signed. Under the policy proposed it will be quite impossible for the Church to give to our missionaries any guarantee of stipend at all.

But, after all, is the policy of multiplying missionaries the best one? Would it not be wiser to encourage our other missions to follow the lead of Formosa, with a small staff, at a central point, and a native ministry, trained to spread the work and superintend it as it spreads. This is the only policy by which the Church will ever be able to evangelize the heathen world, and this is the policy that gives the largest and best results for the money expended.

With every word you have so well written, urging the duty of the Church to keep ever before it the last command of Christ, I most heartily concur. The duty, and privilege, and honor of obeying this command cannot be