

Our Contributors.

THE HALF GREATER THAN THE WHOLE.

BY KNOXONIAN.

In laying out work for his students, Professor Young used to say, "Gentlemen, the half is greater than the whole." The freshest of freshmen soon found out what the learned Professor meant by this startling declaration. He meant that a small amount of work thoroughly done is better than twice as much done in a careless, desultory manner. The Minister of Education for Ontario might do a worse thing than adopt this saying as a motto for his department, and have it printed on all authorized text-books. A precocious boy would no doubt say it contradicted Euclid, but when the boy grew up he would know better. In the sense in which Professor Young used the words the half is greater than the whole.

We hear a great deal about cramming these days. It is often said that pupils are crammed in the public schools to get them ready for the high schools; crammed in the high schools to enable them to enter the universities, and crammed in the universities to enable them to win honours. How much truth there may be in all this talk about cramming we cannot say. It is pretty hard in these times to say how much truth there may be in anything. Perhaps the facts are that some pupils are crammed and some are not; that some teachers cram and some don't. One parent complains that his boy is overworked, and the next that his boy never opens a book. Perhaps both state literal facts.

It is reasonably clear that the motto, the half is greater than the whole, would not apply to a boy who studies nothing. The half of nothing would perhaps be nothing, and in that case the half would be equal to, not greater than, the whole. But for all ambitious boys who are trying to read so much that it is impossible for them to read well, the motto is a good one,—The half is greater than the whole.

It would not hurt some grown up boys to adopt this motto, The half is greater than the whole.

Here is a man making a speech. To anybody accustomed to watch speakers closely it is evident that he exhausted his stock of ideas in the first ten minutes. Instead of stopping when he was done, he went right on and on, floundering away with words until everybody became tired. Now the half of that speech would have been greater than the whole. The half might have been a rattling good address, full of good points that everybody could remember. The half might have done good, but the whole simply worried the audience because what the speaker said after he was done destroyed the good effect of what he had said before he was done. It is a poor oratorical policy to keep the bare stones running after the grist has been ground. An Irish barrister was once asked to explain the secret of his success with juries. His explanation was, "When I make a good point I never say anything to jostle it." It is a pity to jostle a good point. Good points deserve better treatment. They are not so plentiful in most speeches that one can afford to jostle them. The half with a few good points makes a much better speech than the whole with no points at all. Oratorically, as well as educationally, the half is usually greater than the whole.

There are many sermons of which it might be said that the half would be greater than the whole. How often you hear it said of a preacher "Oh, if he had just stopped at that point what a splendid impression the sermon would have made." But he didn't stop. With the best motives imaginable the good man went on and destroyed the good effect of his own sermon. It is a great pity to see a good sermon spoiled by anybody, but it is more than a pity to see it spoiled by the man who had the labour of making it.

Why should any sane preacher spoil his own sermon? Why not stop when the impression is at its best? It is not so easy to stop. A man speaking cannot measure time accurately. Twenty minutes may seem longer to the hearer than an hour to the speaker. Besides, most preachers have arranged to say a certain number of things. These things are in their manuscripts, or in notes, and they don't want to wind up until they have said them. The people don't care a straw what a man has in his manuscript or in his notes. They want a good sermon, wound up in reasonable time. The preacher thinks he ought to give them all he has prepared. The people don't want quite that much. At this point a difference of opinion about the length of sermons often arises. The people think the half would be greater than the whole, but the preacher thinks otherwise. Behind this question of length lies another,—Are the people made for the sermon or the sermon for the people? If the people were created for the sole purpose of listening to sermons, then of course they should listen to them at any length. If they don't they fail in attaining the object for which they were created. If, on the other hand, sermons are made for the people, the people may possibly have a right to say something about their length. And if, in any case, the people think the half would be greater than the whole, perhaps it would be as well to give them the half.

The half of many a tea-meeting would be much greater than the whole. Up to a certain point the meeting is interesting and profitable. Then it begins to drag. Half a dozen brethren are asked to make "a few remarks," because they are present and might be offended if not asked. They begin by informing the long-suffering audience that they have nothing to say, and then take half an hour to illustrate the fact. No human being doubted their word. No illustration was needed. Then came wearisome votes of

thanks to everybody. The half of that meeting would have been greater than the whole.

Somebody may whisper that half an editorial or contribution may be greater than the whole. That is a fact, and it is also the principal reason why we stop right here.

THE FIRST ANTI-POVERTY SOCIETY.

BY FIDELIS.

About eighteen and a half centuries ago, the first anti-poverty society of which we have any record was constituted, and held its meetings in the city of Jerusalem. We are not told much about the place of meeting, but it must have been large, because its members were spoken of as "multitudes." We are not told whether any of its members were very rich. None of them, at all events, possessed a complete Bible, a Confession of Faith, or even a Shorter Catechism. Some of them were poor fishermen, who had left behind them their boats and fishing-tackle, and who had not even "a few sovereigns," since one of them could say with truth about that time, "Silver and gold have I none." Others, however, were differently situated, and possessed at least a considerable amount of property.

The members of this anti-poverty society were Jews, belonging to a people supposed to be the most tenacious of personal property that the world has ever known, and the least disposed to place that property freely at the service of others. But these Jews had learned a "new commandment" from One recently gone from them, a leader whom they loved and revered so much that they were eager to keep all His commandments. And this "new commandment" was "that ye love one another." He had also told them that the sum of the Ten Commandments, so far as the duty to man was concerned, was "to love thy neighbour as thyself."

And, in a certain book of Ancient History, which, perhaps, though much talked about, is not so well known as it ought to be, we find this account of the principles and practice of this first anti-poverty society:

"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. For neither was there among them any that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto each, according as he had need."

This particular mode of manifesting brotherly love seems not to have continued long in practice. A painful occurrence that happened in connection with it when a lie in regard to a matter of business met with a swift and severe punishment, may have shown that this community of goods was not, after all, the wisest plan, that it was putting too great a strain on weak human nature, and that loving our neighbour as ourselves does not necessarily imply the abolition of personal property. But this first anti-poverty society will remain for all time, a beautiful example of the simplicity, enthusiasm and eager desire to obey to the utmost, shown by the Christian Church in the freshness of her "first love." But the command "to love thy neighbour as thyself," the exhortation, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," though too often overgrown by human selfishness, have never quite died out of the Church from that day to this. The Church of Christ is, or ought to be, the best and greatest anti-poverty society.

The anti-poverty society recently described by "Knoxonian," in his usual trenchant style differs from this oldest anti-poverty society and from its modern successors in one important particular. Their great central principle is not self-preservation, or self-advancement, but thought and care for others, "looking not on our own things but on the things of others." The brave band of emigrants that left their old settled home because "there was little room and little good for them on their native soil," did so with the pure and simple object of "bettering themselves" and their families. This is of course a perfectly right and laudable object in its way, but it is not the object of anti-poverty societies. The object of these is avowedly to better the lot of our common humanity.

Those emigrants left an old land which the toil of their forefathers had helped to make what it was, but where the selfish "tyranny of landlords," the greed of capitalists, had left them no room for the sole of their foot. They came to a new one where, through the toil and industry that "Knoxonian" so graphically describes, they have conquered the wilderness, turned it into smiling fields, founded villages and towns, and in time made straight the way for the ever-following capitalist. The anti-poverty society has its eyes open to the needs of others, present and to come. It has for its object the prevention of similar circumstances in the New World to those which in the Old World drove these emigrants from their homes. And if the greed of capitalists shall in time swallow up the New World, there is no other left to which the emigrant can go. Yet any one who will take the trouble to read Mr. Henry George's "Social Problems," will see that such a contingency is by no means improbable.

The very centre "plank" of the Anti-Poverty Society's platform is the commission God has given to man to till the earth "and subdue it," the right He has given to him to draw from it a livelihood. But if access to this essential requisite is

denied him, all the "energy, industry, pluck, muscle and brains" that can be mustered, will scarcely be of much avail.

The aims of the "Anti-Poverty Society" like those of most new "movements" are very generally misunderstood. Their chief object is to neutralize as far as possible the selfishness of individuals by the crystallized better feeling and sense of the community expressed in combined action or in legislation, just as the advocates of temperance legislation do in their efforts after improvement. They may be right or wrong in their premises, their reasonings, their forecast, or their methods of meeting the evils they foresee—on this opinions will differ. But at least they are right in the Christian spirit in which they work, according to their light, for the good of man, and in the fearlessness and force with which they denounce the grasping selfishness and injustice with which the Christian Church has often failed to grapple as it might. Had the Church more generally spoken out to its richer members in the tones of an Amos,—had her preachers more generally followed the example of Frederick Robertson in faithfully delivering her message to men of wealth, anti-poverty societies might have been unnecessary. Meantime, they have, doubtless, a good end to serve.

Henry George is not an orthodox believer, but he has more real faith in righteousness than many who regard themselves as orthodox believers; and he has the enthusiasm of humanity. Principal Grant, some time ago, paid him a well-deserved tribute in this respect in the *American Presbyterian Review*. Here is a passage characteristic of his spirit, power and eloquence, taken from his volume "Progress and Poverty."

"Think of the powers now wasted; of the infinite fields of knowledge yet to be explored; of the possibilities of which the wondrous inventions of this century give us but a hint. With want destroyed; with greed changed to noble passions; with the fraternity that is born of equality taking the place of the jealousy and fear that now array men against each other, with mental power loosed by conditions that give to the humblest comfort and leisure, and who shall measure the height to which our civilization may soar? It is the Golden Age of which poets have sung. It is the reign of the Prince of Peace."

In an age of money worship, it is well that men should have such ideals presented to them. They will never be realised, indeed, till the Christian principle of love shall conquer the selfish hearts of men. But they may serve as the "School-master" to bring them to Christ.

FRAGMENTARY NOTES.

ILLUSTRIOUS NAMES IN PRESBYTERIAN HISTORY— CHALMERS' CHURCH, HALIFAX.

It is often asked "What's in a name?" Truly there is much in a name: what Presbyterian can think of such names as Calvin, Knox, Melville, and Henderson, without having his feelings aroused, and the instincts of his better nature elevated? In my last Notes in your widely circulated paper, I made reference to a church named after a man who was a "burning and a shining light" in the Irish Presbyterian Church, one who stood head and shoulders above ordinary men and who, by his brilliant talents, and unrivalled oratory rendered services to that church by which, while its history lives, the name of Henry Cooke will not be forgotten.

The present paper has reference to a church named after another great man, who lived contemporaneously with Dr. Cooke; and at the mention of whose name the love of every Scotch Presbyterian kindles into a flame; that name is

THOMAS CHALMERS,

the illustrious divine, the eloquent preacher, the undaunted defender of the faith. Many eulogies have been pronounced on the life and labours of this great man, but it is not the intention of the present writer to "hold his farthing candle to the sun," but he may be permitted here to relate a circumstance which probably has never appeared in print, which even the author, who is still living and a distinguished writer, may not remember. I was very young at the time, and my minister was then a young man just fresh from college where with raptured feelings he had listened to Chalmers. The startling news of Dr. Chalmers' death arrived; and although the young minister at his ordination formed the resolution that he would not preach funeral sermons, still in the case of Dr. Chalmers he did not hesitate to break his rule. We remember the text and the impression which the sermon made on the congregation at the time, as the youthful orator portrayed with master hand the abilities and eloquence of the great Scottish theologian.

Truly there were giants in those days, and the many churches which have been named after Dr. Chalmers show that he lives in the hearts of the Presbyterian people, especially those of Scottish descent. The lazy-going Presbyterians of the present day can form no estimate of what our forefathers suffered in upholding the old blue banner of the Covenant, and in securing to us the blessings of civil and religious liberty. The vine brought from Egypt has taken deep root and filled the land. "The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars."

CHALMERS' CHURCH, HALIFAX,

has an interesting history. Established in 1842, when the country was unsettled, like many others it had a small beginning. It was composed of a few members from St. Andrew's and St. Matthew's Churches.

The members met for worship in a building on Gerrish Street, known as St. John's Church. The growth of the congregation and the prospect of increased usefulness was a motive to further enlargement and extension; consequently a more