

Our Contributors.

WOULD THE FACTOR SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

BY KNOXIAN.

Reading the lines and between the lines of Dr. Stalker's introductory lecture, one easily reaches the conclusion that he thinks better preachers and better preaching would bring more people to church and make those who are there better Christians. The problem is to bring within the church for worship the third who never attend, and to make better men and women of those who attend more or less regularly. "It seems to me," says the Doctor, "that there can be no more important factor in the solution of the problem than the kind of men who fill the office of the ministry. We must have men of more power, more concentration on the aims of the ministry, more wisdom, but, above all, more willingness to sacrifice their lives to their vocation."

With men of this kind much more good would be done. The people at present within the Church would become more faithful, self-sacrificing Christians, and many, if not all, of the one-third who never attend public worship, would become church-goers. In short, ministers of more power, more concentration, more wisdom, and with more of the spirit of self-sacrifice, would bring about a decided and much-needed reformation in the world and in the Church.

Now it may be a fact that ministers such as Dr. Stalker describes would bring about a reformation, but most assuredly the fact does not follow from the examples set before us as in Dr. Stalker's lectures. All through his admirable volume he uses Isaiah and Paul as models of what a preacher should be and do. Better models the Head of the Church never produced, but were they uniformly successful in their work? Every Sabbath school teacher in Christendom knows that, notwithstanding Isaiah's holy zeal and seraphic eloquence, the people were in the lowest stage of spiritual declension. The lesson for last Sabbath describes the doom of Samaria for drunkenness. Beautiful Samaria, "the crown of pride," seems to have been as much addicted to that sin as the worst parts of Glasgow. Would it be quite fair to blame Isaiah for the prevalence of that vice? No doubt the prophet did all he could to stamp out that sin and every other, but the people, or some of them, went on drinking and sinning in many other ways just as if there were no Isaiah there. Perhaps some lecturer in one of the schools of the prophets told the young men that better prophets were needed to put a stop to drunkenness, idolatry and various other sins, and did so at the very time Dr. Stalker's model was doing his best work. If the conduct of the people is to be taken as the only or even principal test of ministerial efficiency, can Isaiah be called a model?

No doubt Dr. Stalker had Paul in his eye when he said we must have men of more power, more concentration, more wisdom and more of the spirit of self-sacrifice. Paul had all these qualities in a pre-eminent degree. But did these good qualities, combined with many others possessed by the great apostle, impress everybody favourably? Were the sinners that he preached to all converted or the saints brought to such a high degree of holiness that they endangered the apostle's doctrine of perfection? Quite the reverse. Paul was a man of power, but the people stoned him when he showed his power. He was a man of concentration. He could say, "This one thing I do," but they met his most concentrated efforts with scourging and imprisonment. He was a man of wisdom, but one of the leading men of the day thought he was mad. No more self-sacrificing man ever trod this footstool, but the people showed their appreciation of his self-sacrificing spirit by beheading him on the Ostian way. He was a noble preacher and spoke well on Mars Hill, but some of the learned men of Athens mocked and called him a babbler. Had Paul been labouring in the mission field under the jurisdiction of a Canadian Presbytery, most likely he would have been moved from one station to another because he could not get on with the leading people. Even the Presbytery of Glasgow, of which Dr. Stalker is an honoured and influential member, might have considered the apostle somewhat eccentric or extreme in his ways. The things clear, however, are that Paul was exactly the kind of preacher Dr. Stalker describes, but though the highest kind of man and the noblest kind of preacher, he failed in bringing everybody to hear him in the cities he visited, and of those who did profess Christianity under his ministry, too many were a long way from being model Christians. His hearers mocked him, stoned him, scourged him, imprisoned him; one at least went to sleep under one of his sermons; many of his converts imbibed false doctrines and indulged in bad practices, and the very Churches founded by him lapsed in the early centuries.

Was Paul to blame for this? No, a thousand times no. He was the noblest man that ever trod this earth—the greatest man the Almighty ever made. But there were things that even Paul could not do, and there are things that no modern minister can do, no matter how well he may be equipped or how hard he may try. One of these is to bring everybody to church, and another is to sanctify those who are there.

All honour to Dr. Stalker for the candour and courage shown in these admirable lectures. No doubt many ministers might be greatly improved. Every wise effort to improve them deserves the thanks and encouragement of all right-thinking men. Is the pulpit holding its own and doing the

work that can reasonably be required of it, is a question that will stand discussion and ought to be discussed. But if every minister were an Isaiah and a Paul combined, there would still be many outside the Church who would refuse to come in, and some are a long way from what they ought to be.

DOWN THE CARIBBEAN.

BY REV. JOHN MACKIE, M.A.

VI.—GUADALOUPE.

Leaving Montserrat at eleven at night, we anchor next morning at five o'clock in front of Basse Terre, the chief town of the island of Guadeloupe. The tricolour is flying from the flag-staff: the island is French. The city, which is large and far more pretentious than any that we have as yet seen in our cruise, is built on a plateau of rock at the foot of a richly clad mountain, from whose summit, when the clouds are driven away, may be seen the sulphurous smoke issuing from its fiery abyss. On landing at a graceful pier, a cool promenade, where music is discoursed in the evening, we see on our right a rather imposing building, bearing on its face the name of Hotel-de-Ville. Above that motto, which has too often kindled burning fires within, that have belched forth to the destruction of all that it can reasonably mean—"Liberty; Equality; Fraternity." Before it extends for a good quarter of a mile a grove of tamarind trees, under whose grateful shade the daily market is held. What a babel of voices! or rather cawing of an immense rookery. What a scene of grotesqueness! What a wonderful revelation of flowers and fruits and vegetables, and fish and fowl! The stores are arranged in little piles on the ground before groups of incessantly chattering creatures. The buyers and sellers are, every one, arrayed in the most gorgeous colours, rivalling even a sunset at sea. The style is a yoke, or baby's bodice, with waistband under the shoulders. The skirt, very full, is drawn from the sides and tied in a knot above the knee; while behind is a long and widely-extended train, which gathers the air and swells like a huge balloon as the conscious owner majestically moves about. The neck is circled with beads; the ears and nostrils are adorned with filigree gold; the wrists and ankles are covered with silver bangles, and even the toes are clasped with silver rings. The hair, black and straight, is twisted into a flattened heap on the left cheek; and the head is turbaned with kerchiefs of flaming dyes, the corners erect like the ears of some curious elfin creature. They are tall and stately, of dignified air and swinging gait, and light, coppery hue. The countenance wears an expression of perfect satisfaction and absence of every care and cross. They are the descendants of an importation from "India's coral strands," disliked as intruders by the sons and daughters of those whose ancestors hailed from "Afric's sunny fountains," and contemned by the rosy-cheeked French, the aristocracy of the land. "Your ladies dress beautifully," was the mirthful remark made to one of these upper ten. "Yes!" was the reply, "our ladies do, more elegantly, perhaps, than in Paris itself, but these women would almost frighten the cattle."

The principal commercial street lies parallel with the shore and this grove of tamarinds, and contains many attractive shops. Behind it are several others, and these are intersected at right angles by narrow lanes, scrupulously clean, well paved, and running up to the hills. On an elevation stands the Governor's residence, a building of no pretensions, in the midst of beautiful grounds, the privacy of which is effectually secured by a stone wall of gigantic height and coped with glass.

Almost in the centre of the city is the representative of the only religious denomination in the place, St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral. The architecture is Norman and severely plain. The interior is attractive, and among much that is tawdry has much that is handsome and costly. The altar is of Parian marble, decorated with branches of artificial flowers, though the island abounds with nature's loveliest. The pulpit is of a beautiful wood called acajon, very like highly-polished Spanish mahogany, reached by a spiral stair and surmounted by a canopy elaborately carved. The baptismal font is also of marble, over which hangs what is perhaps regarded as the greatest treasure of the Church, a large and splendid painting of the Nativity, with the following inscription: "Donné par L'Empereur." 1860. Behind the church is a college, the chairs in which are held by professors from France, and which is in affiliation with the University of Paris. There is free education for all, and the ambition of every parent, from the high official down to the lowest negro, is to get their sons, by means of a good education, into Government employ, which is regarded as highly-respectable, well-paid idleness: an attraction and an idea perhaps not confined to Guadeloupe. There is also a garrison of soldiers, a spacious military hospital and cardboard fortifications peeping out at several points.

But the country! who can describe it? Pyramids upon pyramids, emerald from base to apex; scalloped and rounded hills; jagged, truncated, volcanic creations tumbled here and there; mountains stretching away from rich profusion and shade of exquisite valleys to naked peaks that pierce the light-cottony clouds playing round the crater of the Great Soufrière. There are meadows of amaryllis, scarlet and gold, carmine and white and coral; there are hedges of colcus of infinite blendings of brilliant hues; there are giants of the forest smothered with the dazzling blossoms of a thousand parasites; and here are whole tapestries of variegated beauty flung over the precipitous heights. There, sweeping away from the wealthy botanical wilds to wilds further on, are the

golden fields of the ripe sugar cane; and under the waving bananas and plantains and palms are invisible villages, the homes of those fairy, fantastic beings that fluttered in the tamarind grove. The whole is a picture of loveliness and grandeur; the fullest realization of one's wildest dreams of a tropical world. Fain would we tarry and leisurely explore this wonderland, but the *Caribbee* sails at sundown, bearing us further and further away from a far-off home that is ever before the eye as the fairest spot, and that loses none of its charms whatever panorama of glory unfolds itself.

The sun is to set, however, and the sun is to rise before we can bid farewell to Basse Terre and lose sight of Guadeloupe. It is Saturday afternoon and at four o'clock every hand drops down, and finish the discharging of the cargo they will not. What remains undone they will do to-morrow. In vain does the captain plead haste, and dilate on the inconvenience of unnecessary delay, and the vexation to passengers to have the Sabbath so wantonly encroached upon. There is but one reply, "we will finish the rest to-morrow." How disappointing to us all this announcement is, for we have been looking forward to a Sabbath on shore and communion with the faithful in the little Anglican Church at Roseau, for Presbyterian there is none! But now we must remain all night where we are and behold the Sabbath of the Lord profaned in our own steamer, and have our religious sensibilities wounded. "Nothing strange," says a resident English gentleman who has come on board to dine with us, "there is no Sabbath here until morning of vessels is as common on Sunday as on Monday. The largest market in the week is held on Sunday morning. Only pleasure interferes with business on that day, for fetes and entertainments of all kinds are invariably arranged for Sundays. The Church and religious services are of little account here. Men never go to Church, and only some women. 'I believe in God' is the longest creed of the most religious of the men, and that is too long for the vast majority of them. They hate the Church because of the character of the priests, and . . . but enough! We should have preferred to have left God's beautiful island with the pleasing thought that His greatness and might in the smoking mountain, and His goodness and love in the fertile valleys, kept the islanders bowed at His feet in humility, and love, and obedience of life."

DOMINICA.

The Sabbath desecration is now over. At seven in the morning the lighters came alongside and the gang of labourers in the employment of the Government re-commenced the discharging. For three hours the work was continued, and very thankful we were when the last hogshead disappeared and all the tobacco leaf was landed on the jetty in front of the Government factory, to be rolled by hundreds of black hands into *Long Toms* for the good (?) of the people and the questionable gain of the revenue.

It is now the afternoon and we are anchored at Roseau, the chief town, or village, for it looks very small, of the island of Dominica. As we sit on deck with our Sunday reading we call to mind that it was on a Sunday in 1493 that Columbus discovered it and named it accordingly. From then to the beginning of the present century England and France and Spain have contended for possession, the British and French holding it in turn; but from 1793, though several times attacked, it has remained a British possession till now. The island is about thirty miles long and sixteen broad, of volcanic origin and exceedingly mountainous. At seven o'clock the bells rang out sweetly over the waters and we rowed to service in the little English Church. How delightful it was to join again in public worship, and to experience a feeling of kinship with utter strangers, as we knelt at the throne of the heavenly grace. The congregation was small, perhaps large for the place, but they joined heartily in the prayers and praise, and listened with attention to the discourse, which, though simple, was delivered in an earnest, affectionate manner, a delivery that always secures a hearing. The Church is somewhat old-fashioned—box pews, with doors and locks; the pulpit high in the air, and the galleries are latticed off like those in a synagogue, originally intended, perhaps, for the accommodation of slaves. Any other reason we cannot imagine. But now, though a few black faces were peeping through, there is no line of separation between the colours, or yet between the sexes. The former fashion has, fortunately, gone out, and the latter has, fortunately, not yet come in.

The service over, what a magnificent scene presented itself to us standing at the church door and looking out into the night! The heavens were a blazing expanse crowded with stars of marvellous magnitude and brilliance, but the wonderful sight that arrested our gaze was the Great Southern Cross, seen for the first time, and standing just above the horizon. It was most striking, and, confronting us emerging from the Christian church and the worship of the crucified Christ, was, we must confess, solemnizing. There is no imagining it a cross. It stands out large and clearly defined, a quadrilateral of four stars poised on an angle, and certainly a cross attracting the eye even of those that are least familiar with the face of the sky. We recalled that historical or legendary page, just as you please, in which we were told that by such a celestial sign above the meridian sun, the pagan Emperor Constantine was converted to the Christian faith, and paganism overthrown throughout the Roman Empire. We thought of a paragraph that appeared twenty years ago in the *New York Tribune* to the effect that a religious periodical had published the following curious appeal: "It is asked of all newspapers desiring the spread of truth and the destruction of error, that they publish this re-