

Our Contributors.

DR. POLONIUS GIVES THE YOUNG MAN SOME POINTS ABOUT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

BY KNOXONIAN.

I am glad to know, my son, that you are a commissioner to the General Assembly. This ought to be a good Assembly for young men who desire to take a hand in the proceedings. A considerable number of the more prominent old members are going across the Atlantic, and Halifax is too far away for some others to attend. The coast will be fairly clear for the younger men and any ambitious member who has a consuming ambition to make an ass of himself will probably have a favourable opportunity.

I would like to give you a few points on some questions that are likely to come up, so that you may contribute your quota to the proceedings. I hope you will never be known as one of the members who bob up on every question. Still, if you can contribute anything worth hearing you should do so. There is a golden mean between the silent member and the inflated bore who thinks the world and all that is therein were created for the special purpose of listening to him.

Very likely, my son, something may be said about how far the Assembly should go in urging Presbyterians to support the Scott Act and kindred measures of moral reform. You need not give yourself any worry on that point. The people may be depended on to draw the line themselves. If they have confidence in a law, and believe it to be a good thing they will vote for it without any instructions from the General Assembly. If they have no confidence in it and believe the law does harm they will vote against it no matter what the Assembly may say. The Presbyterians of Huron and Bruce knew quite well that the Assembly urged them to vote for the Scott Act, but in hundreds, if not thousands, they voted it down. Presbyterians have a queer habit of voting as they please. It is a way they have. Many of them were born so. Methodists can be driven like sheep to the polls, but Presbyterian people seldom take kindly to driving. They kick like fury if you try to lay on the lash.

Those esteemed gentlemen who raised this question in the Toronto Presbytery were probably thinking about the principle of the thing. They wanted the Church to do what they thought was scriptural. Or possibly they were thinking about the position in which the Church is placed when the Supreme Court recommends specific legislation that her own members and office-bearers vote against in hundreds. They may have supposed that it does not increase the spiritual influence of a Church court to endorse laws that her own people snuff out at the polls. So far as the Church is concerned these are most important matters, my son, but you need never worry yourself about the liberties and rights of the people. You need not pose as a champion for the popular rights on this question. The people can take care of themselves.

No doubt you will hear a good report from the Sabbath Observance Committee. When the fathers and brethren have exhausted themselves on railways and steamboats, you rise in your place, my son, and modestly ask if the Assembly is in favour of holding Scott Act meetings on Sabbath at the Sabbath school hour or any other hour. Ask some of the commissioners from Toronto what they think about that Sabbath meeting that used to be held in the Pavilion in Toronto last autumn to promote the election of Mr. Rogers. Ask the fathers and brethren if they think the Scott Act was much helped in the late contests by meetings held in Methodist Churches on Sabbath evenings—meetings that thinned out many of our own Churches, lessened our collections and certainly did not promote the spirituality of the people. Put these questions gently, my son, for some of the commissioners may have been at these meetings. If any member rise and says the Scott Act was greatly helped by these meetings, just modestly ask him where the help came in. When the Assembly is discussing this great question of Sabbath Observance, try to bring the court down to something smaller than the Grand Trunk Railway.

No doubt, my son, you will hear something about

the aggressive power and corporate vote of the Catholic Church. That is all right. The Catholic Church will bear watching. Corporate votes are the bane of Canada. There ought to be no Catholic vote, or Orange vote, or French vote, or Methodist vote, or Presbyterian vote, or corporate vote of any kind. When some of the eloquent brethren storm loudly about the influence that the Catholic Church exercises over our numerous governments, you rise quietly, my son, and ask if the fathers and brethren have ever heard of a man being made a judge because he was a Methodist. If this assembly has a sprinkling of live men from Ontario, they will put in some mild applause there. When the applause subsides, ask if anybody ever heard in these latter days of a man being made a cabinet minister, partly because he was a Methodist. That will bring the house, if the house knows as much as it should know. When order is restored, ask how it came that the Baptists got a charter for their university from the Ontario Legislature, at the very time the Minister of Education was putting through his Scheme for University Federation. Tell the Assembly, my son, that there may easily be corporate votes besides the corporate vote of the Catholic Church.

If any proposals are made to ask Presbyterian electors how they vote on certain questions, you rise and modestly remark that voting is done by ballot in this country. The very object of the ballot is to prevent enquiries of that kind.

Some other day I may give you some further instructions. Meantime master these points, and be ready to use them at the right time.

THE CHURCH AND PROHIBITION.

MR. EDITOR,—In looking over some of the reports of Presbyteries and Synods I see they have taken such a strong stand on Prohibition that I would like to know where they get their support or proof for it. Assuredly not in the Bible, for it teacheth the moderate use of all that God has given us and holds us responsible for the same, whereas if others pass laws compelling you to such a course, it does away with your right of private judgment and responsibility, and sets aside the teaching of the Word, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. xiv. 5; 1 Cor. x. 25-27), but the prohibition theory is, if we are persuaded, we will compel you whether you think it is right or wrong, which, if carried out to the utmost, would be a most despotic and tyrannical thing, not approved of in the Word of God. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth judge him that eateth not, for God received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" (Rom. xiv. 3, 4.)

It appears plain to me that prohibition was never intended, if it had been, some provision would have been made to that end, but there is nothing of the kind. In Gen. ix. 20, 21, "And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard, and he drank the wine and was drunken." But although directly under the direction of God Himself, he was not forbidden to take it again. This is the first mention we have of wine. The next is in Gen. xiv. 18, "Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine, and he was priest of the most high God, and he blessed Abram of the most high God." Here we find it along with bread, which the most bigoted prohibitionist uses, and in similar connections they are found nearly all the time. In the Scriptures wine is mentioned 242 times, and also drink 413 times with only three prohibitions, viz.: That to the priests after Nadab and Abihu, on going into the Tabernacle, the Nazarites and to others not to use it to excess.

These three are the only restrictions I find in the whole Bible. We next find in Gen. xix. 32-34, the case of Lot—a most aggravated case,—and yet he is not told not to take it again. We next have in Gen. xxviii. 25-28, the instance of Jacob, another bad case, bringing Isaac his savoury meat and wine to drink; and in verse 37, "With corn and wine have I sustained him." And in Gen. xlix. we have wine mentioned figuratively in reference to the promised Saviour. In Ex. xxix. the use of wine with the temple service, and in Lev. ix. the first prohibition, "Do not drink wine nor strong drink thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the Tabernacle of the Congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations." Lev. ix. 10, "And that ye may put a differ-

ence between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean." The restriction here establishes the freedom elsewhere and at other times. In Numbers vi. 3-20, we have the case of the Nazirite and as in the former, the restriction and freedom, the one confirming and establishing the other. In Deut. xi. 13-15, we have God's promise on account of obedience, "Of the corn and wine for man, and grass for cattle, thou mayest eat and be full." In this we have three things promised, two of which prohibitionists would willingly have plenty, corn and grass, why not the wine? God places them together. How daring of man to separate! In Deut. xii. 32, the Almighty, knowing the perversity of fallen man, warns him of the very thing he is doing to day, "Thou shalt not add thereto nor diminish from a what I command." In Deut. xiv. 24-26, we have what these modern pharisees would call unwarrantable liberty, to buy wine or strong drink the same as for oxen or for sheep or whatsoever they desired. "And thou shalt eat these before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou and thine household." Also Deut. xv. 14, in freeing those that had been sold in the seventh year, they were to be furnished liberally "out of the floor, the flock and winepress of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee, thou shalt give them."

Deut. xxviii. 15, 39. As the blessing for obedience so the punishment comes with disobedience. "Thou shalt carry much seed out into thy field, and shalt gather but little in." "Thou shalt plant vineyards and dress them, but shall neither drink of wine nor gather the grapes;" and Isa. lxiii. 8, 9, contains a promise to the Jews of blessing, after their return to their own land. Yet masters in Israel appear ignorant of the things of God as those in the days of the Saviour. "How can these things be?" They desecrate their pulpits by preaching prohibition, and slander God's servants who are honest enough and brave enough to declare the whole council of God. One, from whom we might expect better things, told his Bible class that such a preacher was the agent of the evil one. How awful when the light that is one is darkness; and how great is that darkness! Look at Psa. civ. 10, 15 these are only a few samples among the many that might be cited. Prov. iii. 10, "Honour the Lord with thy substance," "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine." Eccl. ix. 7, "Eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works." What, "being merry drinking wine." Jer. xxxi. 12, a most wonderful verse. I would like to know if our modern teachers have ever seen it. I would advise them to look at it and get the Minister of Education to exclude it from the Scripture lessons taught in our public schools, because it would contradict those modern traditional lessons for which they thanked him so much at Owen Sound. History would only be repeating itself. Of old, these traditions contradicted the Word of God. Joel ii. 18, 27, and iii. 18, the blessing. Amos v. 11, but the punishment the wine taken away; to-day some are doing all they can to take it away. And Amos ix. 14, promised after their return as a blessing. And Micah vi. 15, punishment. Also Zeph. i. 13, here, as in the other places, along with other things, either the giving or withholding. There is no selecting one as the better, and another as the worse. It is as to garble God's Word; that is what the evil one does.

In Zech. ix. 17, we have a wonderful prediction of what should come to pass and has come to pass. Corn shall make young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

Our moderns tell us that the spirit of the New Testament is for prohibition. Let us examine a few texts. Matt. xv. 7, 20, the Saviour here says: "In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man; and are ye also yet without understanding. Do not ye yet understand whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart and they defile the man." "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness. These are the things which defile a man." Matt. vii. 16-18, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" "A good tree cannot bear