

Our Contributors.

THE MODEL MINISTER OF DRUMTOCHTY.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Of the half-dozen ministers sketched by Ian Maclaren, Dr. Davidson is the only one that a sensible young minister could imitate with any degree of safety. Dr. Marcus Dods, than whom there is no better authority in such matters, tells us in an article in the *British Weekly* that Carmichael is by no means a typical Free Church minister, and most people who admire the Free Church will be glad to believe that the criticism of the Edinburgh Doctor is right. Dr. Dods thinks that the "Rabbi" is wholly an exceptional person, and not a fair specimen of the average Free Church minister. The learned professor does not say whether he considers the clerk of the Muirtown Presbytery a fair representative of his class or not, but most likely his silence in regard to that functionary may fairly be considered a reply in the affirmative. Even in Canada where types are not so pronounced as in Scotland, we have all seen officials a good deal like the Muirtown Presbytery clerk.

Viewing him all round, Dr. Davidson is a grand man and a model minister. Some of us would admire him still more had he been a total abstainer, but he, like all other men, should be judged by the standards that obtain in his own place and time. His manly, erect form, his courteous manners, his generous hospitality, his kindness to the poor, his professional honour in dealing with his brethren, his heroic conduct when he lost his money—all these and many more natural and acquired qualities make Dr. Davidson one of the finest characters Ian Maclaren has sketched. There are not many things in his *Idylls* that have a more wholesome influence than the chapter which tells us how the parish minister bore himself when he learned that his all had gone down with the Glasgow Bank and that he and his fellow shareholders were left worse than penniless. The speech he delivered to the frenzied creditors of the ruined institution is, in our opinion, one of the most useful things Ian Maclaren has ever written. It is useful because it is just such a speech as a man who has a little in a bank might be called upon to deliver any day in the year. We do not see many better things in Drumtochty than the picture of the Doctor after he has read the bad news from Glasgow. He read word for word twice, then he was dazed for a few minutes, then he "straightened himself" and started home determined that whatever happened he "would play the man." Janet, "that honest admirer of able-bodied, good-looking men," came out and followed him with her eyes down the road just for the sight of his unbroken carriage. There was no whimper, no snivel about the parish minister that day. The first shock stunned him, as it stuns the bravest. He feared as he entered the cloud, but when the first shock was over and the cloud had rolled away he thought of only two things. One was that he could not now help the poor as he used to do and the other was the loss that would be sustained by his friend Carnegie, who had put his money in the ruined bank on the Doctor's advice.

As one follows Dr. Davidson home that dark day one ceases to wonder why the Church has such a strong hold on Scotland. Given parishioners like the Drumtochty people and pastors like Dr. Davidson and the problem solves itself.

Have we any ministers of the Dr. Davidson type? We can think of two or three, and there be many more—the more the better for the Church and for Canada. That good minister who went to his reward from St. Andrew's manse, Toronto, the other day, was in many respects like Dr. Davidson. Of course, Dr. Smellie was a Free Kirk man and Dr.

Davidson was a "Moderate," whatever that may mean, but Dr. Davidson was not an extreme State Churchman and Dr. Smellie was not an extreme Voluntary. The more we think of the two men, the one as the one appears in Ian Maclaren's pages and the other as he appeared for half a century in Fergus, the more striking does the resemblance become.

The late Rev. Donald McKenzie, of Zorra, was a good deal like Dr. Davidson, as much like him perhaps as a Free Church minister from the North can be like a Kirk minister in Perthshire. He had Dr. Davidson's fine manly bearing, his courteous dignity, his chivalrous regard for the poor and weak. Dr. Davidson's pastoral visit and Mr. McKenzie's "diet of catechising," were substantially the same kind of exercise. If we had more pastoral work of that kind and not so many visits such as Carmichael used to make, perhaps getting money for augmentation would not so much resemble tooth-pulling as it now does. Hugh Miller used to describe a certain kind of pastoral visit as "an hour's gossip with a short prayer tacked to the end of it." We heard that description beaten out of sight the other week by an intelligent and most estimable young lady who works and worships in a church that has had a great variety of supply during the last twenty years. She said, "They come and sit, and sit, and sit, and talk about any mortal thing except religion."

Study of the character and influence of a man like Dr. Davidson should do much in the way of raising the professional honor of ministers to a much higher plane. If the hundredth part of what one hears ministers say of one another is true, there is less professional honor in the clerical than in any other profession. Judging by the frequent boasts we hear on the platform about the local ministers dwelling together in harmony and treating one another with courtesy, one is perfectly justified in concluding that the general public expect them to treat one another in quite an opposite way. And that is exactly what the average public does expect. Deny it who may, the evidence is palpable as a mountain that even many church-going people do not expect to treat one another as gentlemen. How did the people come by this idea of the ministry? They came by it honestly enough. They saw that the professional courtesy which exists among all doctors of the better class, and among lawyers without any regard to class is often conspicuous by its absence among the clergy. We know at least one ex-Moderator of Assembly who holds that there is less professional honor and courtesy in the clerical than in any other profession. There are lots of things done every day by clergymen that one could not imagine Dr. Davidson doing. It is beyond the power even of an evil imagination to think of Dr. Davidson so loaded up with envy, jealousy, or bad feeling of any kind that he would backbite any minister, or make an anonymous attack on any minister in the papers, or steal sheep from the flock of any neighboring minister—or rejoice in the mistakes of any minister. The thing is absolutely unthinkable. You cannot imagine the man doing it. The old Doctor would rather die than do many of the things that are done in this country every day under the guise of superior piety.

May a kind heaven give us a large number of Dr. Davidsons. We have a few slender imitations of Carmichael—and a few are quite enough. We need lots of Davidsons—men who can die if they have to, but cannot do a sneaking, ungentlemanly thing.

Mohammedanism has a history of thirty centuries. It has won 200,000,000 followers, and its degraded and wretched myriads are confined to Southern Asia and Northern Africa. Christianity, after nineteen centuries of life, has won 400,000,000 followers, and, with the exception of China and Turkey, its happy and enlightened people rule the world.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES.*

BY REV. R. J. MACBETH, M.A.

The General Assembly of our Church has done many wise things, and amongst these we give prominent place to the action taken at the meetings held in London in 1895, when it was resolved to constitute a committee for special oversight of Young People's Societies, and for reporting on their operations. By taking this step the Presbyterian Church gave another proof of her readiness to lay hold upon every agency that was giving evidence of a strength that could be utilized to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and also of her wisdom in seeing that the intense enthusiasm of the Christian Endeavor movement—one of the greatest religious movements of our century—would be the better of close connection with a Church whose splendid system of government and whose strong theology afford the best possible safeguard against the danger of unreasoning zeal. This young people's movement has passed beyond the region of experiment, though it still has its dangers as well as its vast potentialities. But we feel that the dangers are greatly diminished when the great Church to which we belong is drawing Young People's Societies into closer touch with the noble record of the martyrdoms through which she has won the liberties we enjoy, and to the central doctrines of a creed whose disciples have stood at the pivotal points of history and have once and again, under the sovereignty of God, swung the prow of this Old-World vessel toward "the sea of glass unmingled with fire." It was because the General Assembly had taken action in the matter that your convener had the honor of requesting this Synod last year to appoint the committee which has now the pleasing duty of laying before you its first report. Owing to our Synod holding its meeting in the fall, and to the fact that it has been a suggestion from the Assembly to the Young People's Societies of our Church to close their year at the end of December, in keeping with the general practice of the Church, this report is made up from the reports of Presbyteries as sent at the end of the year to the Assembly's convener. It might be well for the Synod to consider whether in future years your committee should or should not try to bring the report down to a time nearer the date of meeting.

Without going into minute details as to the statistics gathered from Presbyteries, we give a few of the most interesting figures. Out of nine Presbyteries in the Synod seven sent reports, though in some cases the reports are very meagre, and in the case of Regina Presbytery a portion of the report was mislaid. The Presbyteries of Portage la Prairie and Glenboro' did not send any reports. It is within the personal knowledge of members of your committee that within the bounds of these two Presbyteries there are a number of strong and energetic societies. It may be possible that a committee on Young People's Societies was not formed in these Presbyteries. Should such still be the case, let this notice of the fact be a suggestion to them from Synod to do so, in that they may have the good work which we know they are doing in this line represented for the encouragement of others. In all from this Synod fifty-four societies reported with a total membership of 1,581. In both Senior and Junior societies the so-called stronger sex are in the minority though not alarmingly so. We trust all our ministers will strive to keep before the growing lads and young men in their congregations the ideal type of manhood—the one perfect man our earth has known, even Jesus—the infinitely brave and true, and tender and pure—so that they may increasingly feel that the manliest thing under God's heaven is to do the right—and the weakest to do the wrong, for then we shall see less difference in the number of men and women in our societies

* Report of the Committee on Young People's Societies to the Synod of Manitoba and the North-west Territories. Presented by Rev. R. J. MacBeth, M.A.

and prayer meetings than we do now. The words of the dying King of Israel to his son Solomon should be made to ring in the ears of every growing lad around us: "Be thou strong, therefore, and show thyself a man." Well would it be for us and for the Church if men were as faithful to their Lord as those of the other sex who were the last to leave the quivering cross, the first to come to the rock-hewn grave, and who, to-day, girdle the earth with organizations that are toiling up new Calvaries ever in their fight for purity, and temperance, and home, and heaven and God.

As we turn from the composition of the societies to the practical work in which they engage, it is a delight to find in so many returns that such work as visiting the sick in hospital or elsewhere, relieving the poor and the distressed, going to the hotels and boarding houses with invitations to church services and meetings, sending out literature to mission fields, etc., bulk so largely in the programmes of the Young People's Societies. After all, a religion that works in these lines with the incentive of the constraining love of the Redeemer is the religion that tells in a world that is cursed with sin and selfishness, and is the religion that wins approval from the compassionate Lord of Life. In the great day yonder we opine there will be many surprises. Many people who, with flourish of trumpet and the heraldry of newspapers, gave largely out of their abundance for certain things, will be surprised to find that God's Angel never thought them or their ostentatious gifts worth recording, while on the other hand some humble Endeavorer never heard of beyond the concession line, surprised by hearing words of special commendation, will in vain modestly disclaim, saying: "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink. When saw we thee naked and clothed thee, or sick and in prison, and visited thee?" for Christ shall reply: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Humanity can never be the same since the Son of God in the form of man trod the green sward of Palestine, and if the young people of our societies are seeing something of the Christ-like and divine in the unfortunate around them who need help and are helping them for the sake of Christ, they are doing noble work indeed.

If we pass now to the question of the raising and expenditure of money we are glad to find here also marked evidence of earnestness. It is true that the societies as a whole have not made this a speciality, as the members doubtless contributed regularly through their respective churches, but a very considerable sum was raised during the year, of which it is pleasing to find that more than half was given to the missions and colleges of our Church. In addition to the sums thus given to the schemes, several societies, either in whole or part, undertook the support of a missionary either at home or abroad. This, it seems to us, above other things augurs well for the prosperity and permanence of the Christian Endeavor Society. There was a time when a great many of us doubtless feared that the society would fall when the first few years of enthusiasm and novelty had worn away, unless some work of a definite and tangible kind were earnestly taken up. Indications are that God is drawing the energies of these societies more and more out towards the great missions of the world which a recent article in the *Missionary Review* calls "His Peculiar Enterprise," and as this is more felt the force of the society will be the more experienced in the Church. We believe that the society ought to become more and more an agent in the hands of God for the evangelization of the world, and we urge our pastors and young people to keep that end in view. The present proposal of the General Assembly's Committee to make the study of the doctrines, polity, history and work of our own Church a prominent part in the societies' programme for meetings will be extremely helpful here if faithfully carried out.