

Our Contributors.

SOME PLEBISCITE POINTS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Intelligent discussion strips a question of extraneous matter and sets the vital points in a strong, clear light.

The discussion of the drink question during this Plebiscite campaign has for the most part been intelligent and temperate. Some foolish things may have been said and written on both sides, but an equal amount of talking and writing on any other question would have produced an equal amount of folly.

We would not undertake to defend everything said by all the friends of prohibition. Some of them may have used facts that could not be proved correct, figures that would scarcely bear the examination of an expert, and logic that what they might not heartily endorse. But what if they did? The path of the anti-prohibitionists is strewn with the corpses of so-called arguments, in such a condition that it is to be feared they aid la grippe in making the atmosphere unhealthy.

There, for example, is the old so-called Bible argument, once so flippantly used by men who never open a Bible except when they want to find something in it that seems to under-pin some mischief. "No prohibition in the Bible," shouts the long-tongued fellow who could not find a verse in one of the minor prophets if his life and his whiskey depended on the finding. The fact is, the Bible bristles with prohibition. Every sin forbidden is prohibited. Eight of the ten commandments are prohibitory. But what is the use of trying to reason with a man who uses his Bible merely for the purpose of defending slavery or the liquor traffic.

Then there is the old liberty argument. "Prohibition interferes with personal liberty," shouts someone, perhaps a petty tyrant who never defended any kind of human liberty but the liberty to drink whiskey, nor championed any right but the right to get drunk. All, or very nearly all law, is an interference with the personal liberty of somebody. Taxation is a very decided interference with personal liberty. Tariffs are an abominable interference with personal liberty. College regulations are an interference with the liberty of students. School regulations interfere with the liberty of pupils. Family regulations interfere with the liberty of the children. The fact is, society could not hang together a day if every man were allowed to do as he pleased. The theory that individual liberty should not be restrained is the theory of an anarchist. Some years ago half-a-dozen of these people tried to practice their theory in Chicago by throwing bombs among the police. That kind of liberty may have been pleasant for the Anarchist, but it was hard on the police and the authorities of the State of Illinois effectually restrained the liberty of the Anarchists by sending half-a-dozen of them to the scaffold.

Society has a right to defend itself against anarchy or anything else that threatens its life or its well-being. Society defends itself against evils that are not doing the ten-thousandth part of the harm that is being done by the liquor traffic. Canadian Society defends itself against wolves by giving a premium for wolf scalps. Ontario defends the country against thistles by fining people who allow thistles to grow on or near their premises. Canada defended herself against cholera a little over a year ago. Society is defending itself by law against some evil every day in the year, and yet we are told that society has no right to defend itself by a prohibitory law against the greatest evil that afflicts Canada at the present moment. No passably intelligent man would use any such argument unless he had a theory or a practice to defend.

The liberty argument has nothing in it for anybody, but it becomes positively ludicrous in the mouth of an heroic defender of tariffs. This man fetters trade, shackles commerce, compels free citizens to buy and sell honest goods as he pleases, but when a proposal is made to stop the selling of whiskey he instantly begins to shout about interference with individual liberty. It ill becomes a defender of the N. P. or the M. K. & B. I. to talk about interference with individual freedom.

The most absurd position of all is that occupied by the man who advocates license and contends for liberty with the same breath. Is not license a most decided interference with liberty? The liberty of every man in the community is restrained by license except that of the few who happen to have the license. The liberty of the man licensed is restrained by regulations in regard to time, to place, to persons, and in regard to various other matters. License is very nearly as great an interference with personal liberty as prohibition would be.

The financial argument has been answered by three finance Ministers in succession. Galt, Tilley and Foster distinctly stated that the revenue lost by prohibition could be made up in other ways.

The attempt to introduce party politics need not be discussed here. Whether Sir Oliver Mowat, or Sir John Thompson asks the people to say what they want on this question is not a matter of any importance to a man who really wants prohibition.

The main question with most thinking people is, would prohibition prohibit in Ontario. On this issue the votes will turn. The *Globe* has done capital work by sending its commissioners to Iowa to see how the law has worked. In some places it has worked fairly well, in others it has not worked at all, but it has failed no worse than a license law would have failed, no worse than a law against gambling would have failed, and perhaps not quite so signally as the seventh commandment has failed. The one thing made undoubtedly clear by the *Globe* writers is that the enforcement of the law depends mainly on the amount of moral force behind it. The vital question is this: Is there enough of moral power in Ontario to secure the reasonable working of a prohibitory law. The best way to find out is to try. Call the law an experiment if you will, it is an experiment well worth trying. All reforms are more or less an experiment. You never can be sure how anything new will work until you try. There is no hope for a people that will sit satisfied and still and look at the havoc the drink habit is making even in the best of communities. The duty of the hour is to roll up such a majority on Monday next as will convince everybody that the freemen of this Province want something more done to stem the tide of sorrow and suffering that has for years been sweeping over this fair land. When the people say something more must be done, something more will be done. If that something is not prohibition it may be a near approach to prohibition and so long as it is a good thing good men will not quarrel about names. Roll up the majority on Monday, and when the bells ring at five to close the poll may they ring the death-knell of the liquor traffic in Ontario.

"CASTING OFF PASTORS."

SIR,—Without intending the remotest reference to "lang-shankit spunes," I think I may credit myself with enough experience to make me cautious about entering upon a controversy with the editor of a newspaper; but your article on November 8th, on the subject of the rejection of pastors after a brief term of service, is so evidently non-controversial, that I am inclined to believe you will welcome any criticism, that is, what the article itself was, an honest effort to contribute to a fruitful, or fruit-promising, discussion of the matter.

You approached the subject from the point of view suggested by your quotation from the Moderator of the Synod of the Maritime Provinces: "The day for long pastorates is evidently over." The church should strive to solve "the problems connected with pastoral changes." That discussion of that aspect of the question is in order, I should be sorry to deny; nor is it likely that anything better than the remedy you suggest—a modified form of the Methodist system of itinerancy—will be discovered. But if you will couple with this conclusion the fact that the Methodists are adopting a modified form of the Presbyterian system of calling pastors, and study the coincidence a little, you will arrive at the point of view from which, as it appears to me, the subject must be treated most seriously, lest we be guilty of an attempt to heal the hurt lightly.

You say rightly that the evil cannot be checked by any mere exercise of authority on the part of the Church Courts. Nor can a fever be checked by any mere exercise of authority on the part of the family physician. But his authority may do something in the way of making sure that the proper remedies are properly applied. The evil in this case is largely of the nature of a fever, arising from a bad state of the system. As a learned and able pastor said to me some little time ago, "the spiritual life of the church is low." And he added, "but it's a fine doctrinal body." But in a democratic church, the majority rules, and the majority—in congregations—do not know much of doctrine. If, then, the ruling majority has neither life nor doctrine to guide it, what can you expect?

Here is a church which has been living beyond its means, going in for extravagances in building or music, or what not, that it could not afford. A big effort must be made, and the young people take the matter up. Need I sketch the progress of the movement? Need anyone wonder if a new pastor is desired, if only to add to the list of novel attractions?

Here is another at a somewhat earlier stage of development. The communion roll has been rather small and an increase will look well in the returns. The young people must be encouraged to come in, and by-and-bye we find that it is quite the correct thing to "join." After a time, the pastor, good easy man, is found to be too slow, and a change is desired.

When the seed is the wind, what should the harvest be but the whirlwind?

Now if we confine our efforts in this matter to the devising of ways and means by which the desire for change may be met, going no further than that, shall we not be simply pandering to an evil spirit which owes its birth in the first place to an unwise pandering to that which is described as "the natural man?" Of course it is open to anyone to deny the correctness of my diagnosis. Equally, of course, many instances of faithful men who have been cast off can be cited. The subject is a wide one, the variations are many, but I am not afraid to give a general rule and to maintain its correctness: Given plain and faithful preaching of the gospel of Christ, by men in whom is manifest something of the spirit of Christ, and the cry for change will wax fainter and fainter. You can turn it round, and you will find that the converse, or reverse, is also true. Given preaching designed to attract, but warranted not to offend; as much reproving of sin as you please, provided that nothing be said to make the respectable sinner uncomfortable; expositions of "love" which chiefly demonstrate that a backbone is out of place in the anatomy of a Christian; and a life modelled in strict conformity with the preaching, and not only will the feverish demand for change grow, but the very office of pastor will become a hissing and a reproach.

Our fathers went cheerfully to the gallows—died bravely amid the heather—that the church might be kept from corruption. Did their spirit die with them?

R. A. DIX.

WHY HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS SUFFER.

BY G. M. W.

On reading the two letters in your last issue, one from North Westminister (for whom I have a brotherly feeling) the other from the Rev. R. P. McKay, I was confirmed in my opinion that there is something radically wrong in the constitution of our church, and that it is time a change was made in order to remedy the defects, said defects being caused by the people themselves in giving too much liberty to those who seek to rule by virtue of their money and social position.

While our missionaries in the "great lone land" are by turns freezing and thawing, and always in straits to make ends meet, on a salary less than we pay our navvies, and the Foreign is ever crying for more, we in this part of the Dominion have shut our eyes and ears and find more satisfaction in the Jerusalem cry, as we are pleased to call it, it sounds more Christian than the more true one of self and consequently we have less than ever to give to outside work.

For example, take the case of our own town, a place of about seven thousand inhabitants—which is not increasing—in which there are two congregations; both had comfortable churches, were free from debt, and gave largely to all the schemes of the church and prospered spiritually; but alas! all this is changed. Several years ago a spirit of rivalry sprung up and changed the pleasant scene. The senior congregation tore down their fine building erected a few years before, and built another, which was at that time the most conspicuous church in the town and large enough to seat all the Presbyterians in the place. But they had a heavy mortgage also, and the moneys which had been going towards the schemes of the church were required to pay interest. The work of the church as a whole was crippled, and the congregation itself has shrunk in everything. Last year the sister congregation, having listened to the little popes which curse every one of our congregations, undertook the erection of a new church, and at a cost of some forty-five thousand dollars have lately completed, and entered into possession of their new building, which is said to contain the most convenient and handsome "dining rooms," "kitchen," "pantry," etc., of any church west of Toronto, and so liberally have the people given that only twenty-five thousand dollars remains as a mortgage, to be paid at a future day. Some may say these churches deserve great praise; granted, but would they not be more worthy had they, when they built at all, done so more in accordance with their means. The large amounts which have been, and must be paid out for interest on mortgages, has crippled their power for good both as congregations and as part of the whole church. Both suffer. Mr. Editor, these things are wrong, and could not be, if there was more true piety and less apeing after the things of the world in order to "draw;" and after all what good to the church are the people who are drawn in this way. Merely a weakness, if happily nothing worse. They are like the leech, always crying more, more, more of the world in this, that, and the other thing, till the Gospel is forced into the back ground. The poor of His people are not ministered unto, the light is hidden under a bushel. In my next I shall, with your permission, deal with the remedy.

REV. JOHN LAING, D.D., AND MISSIONARY REVIEW.

Sir,—Your issue of the 6th inst. contains a letter from Dr. Laing, complaining of an article by Dr. Pierson on *Pre-Millennialism*. The manifest purpose of the letter is to warn the readers of your paper against the *Review*. The *Review* is, without a doubt, one of the best publications anywhere to be found. In advocating missions it has been a power. It is to be hoped that the letter of Dr. Laing's may increase the circulation of it, rather than diminish it. The Doctor gives several reasons why the article of Dr. Pierson should not have had a place in the periodical. One is this, that Dr. Pierson did not always hold the views taught in said article. Without controversy, that is no reason at all. The Apostle Paul did not always hold the doctrines he taught in any one of his epistles. Another reason put forward why Christian people should drop the *Review* is, that Dr. Pierson teaches that the kingdom of God has no existence in the present age. (The word "village" in the Doctor's letter is manifestly a misprint.) This reason overlooks what Dr. Pierson plainly said, viz.: "That the kingdom of God is to be found wherever a community or a soul owns His sway." There may be a difference between the view of the kingdom as held by Dr. Laing and that entertained by Dr. Pierson, but the divergence is not so great as to cause any person reasonably to drop the most excellent periodical. Dr. Pierson takes the word "kingdom" in its normal sense, and Dr. Laing takes it in its mystical sense. Who is right? Dr. Pierson holds all that Dr. Laing does, plus a few more truths.

A third reason why the *Review* should be discontinued in the homes of Christians is that the article is *offensive* to many. Too much is made of this point. A reader who has made up his mind on this subject, and does not care to see anything more on it, can pass it over.