

Our Contributors.

PERENNIAL ELECTIONS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

"Wish the elections were over—great annoyance—disturb business—stir up strife—cause too much excitement—wives angry when their husbands come home late—boys getting demoralized—everybody neglecting business—newspapers becoming abusive—neighbours quarrelling—everything going wrong—wish it were over."

Patience, friend, it will all be over on the 22nd, and then let us hope peace will reign in Canada, and somebody will give us good government. But though this political contest will be over in a few days, let us not forget that there is a more important election than this one going on all the time. Every moral agent has a perennial election on his hands. To elect means to choose, from among two or more, that which is preferred. So Webster says, and Webster knew something about the meaning of words. Well, if to elect simply means to choose between two persons, two things, or two courses of conduct, we have an election on hand all the time. Every day is polling day, and the polling begins early in the morning. The first duty of the day is to elect whether you will get up now or take another snooze. Women have a vote in this election, whether they pay taxes or not. The election is not by ballot. You don't need to go behind the old quilt which the returning officer hangs up in the corner, and calls a screen. You are behind or under a quilt already. You don't need a lead pencil to record your vote, nor are there any scrutineers, or clerks, or law students, or other young fellows of an inquiring mind there, to ask you impertinent questions about your franchise. You are elector and returning officer and scrutineer and poll clerk yourself. You poll your vote mentally and generally. You elect to take another snooze. So you see the very first thing in the morning is an election.

People very often vote wrong these cold mornings. They elect to take another nap, lose an hour or two of precious time, get behind, and never catch up during the day.

After a citizen assumes a perpendicular attitude in the morning, he has another election on hand immediately. He must elect right away whether he will go down to breakfast neatly dressed, and in good humour, or go down coatless, collarless, stubble on chin, cross as a she-bear, and in as bad a condition generally as some of the candidates will be on the morning of the 23rd. The happiness of the family depends a good deal on this election.

Right away after breakfast comes another election. The head of the household is called upon to elect whether he will have family worship in his home or not. The moral and spiritual welfare of the family depend largely on this election. Whether Mr. Blake or Sir John will triumph on the 22nd is a small matter to the boys and girls growing up in that home, compared with the influence exerted upon them by the family altar. And yet there are thousands of men shouting themselves hoarse about politics, who never once bowed the knee before God with their families. If we had a family altar in every home in this Dominion, we would not have much trouble in getting good government. You might as well try to save Sodom and Gomorrah by Act of Parliament, after the fire and brimstone began to come down on them, as save Canada by mere politics. You might as well try to resuscitate the world that Noah looked down upon from Ararat as make Canada a great country by the political dodges of men, who merely use the Bible for electioneering purposes. What we need most in this country is men who will elect to read the Bible in their own families, and try to practise its precepts in their own lives. A man who uses the Bible for electioneering purposes merely stands in about the same relation to Christianity as Judas Iscariot stood, with this important drawback—he has not conscience enough left to take himself out of the way, as Judas did.

Every business man is called upon to elect between two courses of conduct a good many times, almost every day. An angry man comes into a law office, and tells one of the firm a long story about the way he is being wronged by somebody. His mind is full of just one idea, and that is to beat his opponent in court, and smother him under a pile of costs. Before he

has gone very far, the lawyer sees rather clearly that the angry man has no case. But he sees with equal clearness that he has money, and is willing to invest it in litigation. That lawyer must elect whether he will tell the man he has no case and lose the fee, or encourage him to go on and take a good retainer. Some lawyers do the one thing, and some do the other.

Mr Jeremiah Barebones goes into a doctor's office with the horrible intention of dissecting himself. The doctor has heard his dismal story many a time, and knows there is nothing wrong with him but laziness. (In the case of a minister, laziness should always be called *inertia*.) The doctor must elect between telling that man to eat less and take more exercise and giving him medicine. Some doctors do the one thing and some the other. Some compromise the matter by giving Jeremiah a bread pill, and take the fee. If we were a doctor, we would usually elect to take this last course.

Merchants are sometimes called upon to elect between taking the advantage of a customer and doing the square thing. In these lively times, editors have often to elect between the memory of George Washington and the example of Ananias. A farmer is sometimes called upon to elect between putting two kinds of grain in his bag—the best at the mouth—and one kind only. In fact, any man can be called upon to elect between two courses of conduct every day.

Young men leaving home have to elect in regard to their companionship, and their future history depends very much on this election.

One kind of election is going out of fashion. "Take something?" your friend says, with a suggestive kind of look. You must then elect whether you will drink or not. It is more "not" now than it used to be.

In truth we are called upon to decide questions every day, which, so far as we are personally concerned, are a thousand-fold more important to us than whether Blake or Sir John will win on the 22nd. Would that we gave more heed to some of these questions.

THE MELA OF ONKAR.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH BUILDER, B.A., MHOW, CENTRAL INDIA.

Having learned something of the place and the worship of the deity to whom it is sacred, let us mingle with the crowd of perhaps 15,000 people to ascertain what is actually going on.

First, we will go to the temples, of which there are about twenty, big and little. The large ones are all of the same style of construction, about twenty feet square at the base, and from the top of the first story tapering gradually on curved lines to the top somewhat after the fashion of a pyramid; the small ones are mere shrines, of four pillars and a roof, to shelter some hideous-looking idol or small stone bull. Here is a large one with an addition to the front like an enclosed veranda, with a number of priests busy at work. What are they doing? They are sitting on a small mat on the floor with a lump of black mud and some rice on one side, and a board in front having 1,320 small holes. They are making with the clay small images of the phallic symbol of Shiv worship, and placing them in these holes. When they have each filled their board their appointed daily task is performed. These mud images are cast into the sacred river, accompanied with the recital of mantras or Sanscrit verses, and the merit is accredited, not to the priests, but to the account of some rich person who has given a sum of money for this purpose. In this temple there are twenty-two priests, and they continue in their employment for four months, and are then replaced by others. Two other temples are connected with this one, and are, I presume, for doing the same kind of work: one at Nimour, with thirty-two priests, and the other at Maheshevar, with 125. Think of intelligent men spending their time in this worse than frivolous employment, and doing it in the name of religion! Further particulars are too impure for the public print. It would be a relief to see signs of decay in this worship, but alas! it is vigorous and the old temples are not considered sufficient; for a new one is at the present time in course of construction at the expense of the Maharajah of Indore.

Leaving the temple, we go down the rock steps to the river side. Here old and young of both sexes in great numbers are bathing. At a particular place

there are several Brahmins seated on a raised stone platform, screaming "mantras," whilst the worshippers are going through their ablutions. After bathing, a visit is paid the temple of Onkar to see the god, as they express it, and offerings are deposited in front of the marble bull, Shiv's favourite riding animal, and also before the sacred idol. The offerings are, according to the circumstances of the worshippers, from pice to several hundreds of rupees. Lining the roads to the bathing places are little stalls where all sorts of goods are displayed, such as may be obtained in the bazaar of any Eastern city. The object is not, as in Western fairs, to exhibit the results of skilled labour in prize competition. They have no idea of improvement. They think what has been ought to be—what their fathers did they cannot improve. So this part of the "mela" is only for doing a little extra business. Their arrangements are simple. Each stall is about eight feet square. Short poles at the corners support a cotton awning which serves for protection from the sun by day. At night a sheet is fastened up all around as walls, and the store becomes a dining room for the evening meal, and after that a bedroom until morning breaks, when the wares are again displayed to entice the visitors to buy. For the pleasure-seekers there are panoramic shows giving the principal scenes in the history of the hero, Ram, fire-crackers, and a grand display of fireworks on the night of the full moon, the finale of the mela. The showmen did not seem to do much, though they made a great noise with drums and other musical, no-tutting instruments. The boatmen seemed to ply the busiest trade, taking the crowds of people to and fro across the river.

Here is a man walking slowly in the crowd with something the matter with his face. By looking closely it is seen that he has his mouth stuffed with mud so that his cheeks stick out, and a black piece of cloth neatly pasted over it. His nostrils also are apparently stopped, but only apparently, as a passer-by remarked. He is trying to make the people believe he has reached such a holy state that he can live without breathing. A little further on is another man with dishevelled hair and body smeared with ashes. Let us follow him. He enters a place enclosed with a stone wall. At the entrance we meet a very garrulous individual, whom we salute respectfully, and begin to ask questions. This is a Sadhus' home, or a rest house for holy men who have adopted a life of mendicancy and austerity, not for the benefit of others, but for their own salvation. Within a court in this enclosure is a small raised platform of masonry, protected with a red-and-white awning. Beneath this, miniature idols of twenty-four of the chief gods of the Hindoo Pantheon are arranged, with Shiv in the centre as supreme. It is the time of sunset, and a Sadhu is waving fire and muttering invocations over these, accompanied with the ringing of bells, the beating of gongs and drums, and the blowing of a horn. He is simply going over the names of the gods. There is nothing intelligent or spiritual in the performance. Yet the devotees think that in some way, they know not how, help will be given to them to obtain salvation; that is, deliverance from future births, and absorption into Brahm. The place is otherwise decorated with images of Hanuman, Ganes, etc., and some sacred trees. Facing this sort of altar are two long open sheds for the accommodation of the inmates of the place. There are generally about twenty present, but sometimes the number is a hundred. If only ten or twenty come in from the jungle at one time, they receive food for three or four days if they desire to remain; but if a larger number should come, they only remain one day, and return again to the jungle, or go on a pilgrimage to another holy place. These homes are all over India, and in Onkar there are no less than three or four for the different orders, which resemble the orders of monks of mediæval and earlier times in Europe. But who is our garrulous informant? He is the head or rajah of this home. He has his gaddi or throne, and is absolute lord with his stone wall. He is unmarried, although many Sadhus have wives, and he has no disciples as some others. Who, then, will succeed to his throne? When he thinks proper he will adopt the son of some Sadhu, who will succeed to all his rights and privileges. He derives his revenue from a small village yielding Rs. 300 a year, and the bequests of rajahs and other rich people. Some of these Sadhu princes have a permanent income of Rs. 3,000 a year, besides the gifts of patrons, which they spend