

Our Contributors.

BENEFITS BELOW ZERO.

BY KNOWNIAN

A few days ago this country had the benefit of a cold dip. The mercury went away down—well we cannot say how far it went down. The neighbors who had thermometers gave figures all the way from 12 to 24, so that a citizen who had nothing to measure the temperature by, but the most prominent feature on his face could not be certain as to how cold it really was. The general impression, however, was that the weather had become decidedly cold. The most contradictory citizen would not deny that assertion. The man who wants to argue every point, and he is without exception the least lovely member of the Adam family, had to be silent. Men who differ in religion and politics, and every other thing, were compelled to agree about the imprudence of going out without an overcoat. It is a relief to see such people agree about something.

The cold was not the Manitoba variety, the kind that is so still and dry and gentle that a man can freeze almost to death in it without feeling any inconvenience. The Manitoba article is modest, and if you keep away from it you may rest and be thankful. Like the people of that Province, the Manitoba cold is unobtrusive. Our Ontario cold of the other week was not modest and retiring. The wind drove it right in. One day in particular it followed you right-up, got under your coat collar, into your gloves, into your boots, took hold of your nose and ears, and behaved in a way that would make a quiet, unobtrusive Manitoba cold ashamed.

Of course there was the usual amount of grumbling and the usual threats to move to a warmer climate.

Now we propose to show that the late cold dip was a good thing, that it did a vast amount of good and might have done much more if we had utilized it as we should have done. Grumbling at a cold wave is just as useless as grumbling at anything else. It does not affect the wave to any appreciable extent, but it does make people feel bad. There are great benefits to be obtained a long way below zero. One of these is the destruction of

GERMS.

According to some modern theories of disease the air in summer abounds in germs. Not the air as the Creator made it but the air after men pollute it. There are cholera germs, and diphtheria germs, typhoid germs, and we know not who many other kinds of germs. Fortunately for us some of these germs cannot live in a cold climate. They cannot stand our Canadian winter. For two summers cholera has prevailed in parts of Europe and Asia. People who take their troubles in advance said it would be here in the spring. The doctors said if it did not get here before winter it would not come at all, for a cholera germ cannot live below a certain temperature. The doctors were right, as doctors very often are, notwithstanding the weak jokes that are made about their alleged tendency to disagree. By way of parenthesis we might ask if other men do not disagree quite as much and as often as doctors do. Don't judges disagree every day? Don't lawyers disagree every hour? We almost wrote, don't clergymen disagree, but the right way to put that point is, when did clergymen ever agree in opinion on almost anything.

Coming back to germs: if the cold weather kills them, then a genuine cold wave is a good thing, and instead of grumbling about cold waves we should be thankful they come occasionally.

Cold waves do much more to preserve the health of many of our towns and cities than is done by the municipal authorities. The only efficient board of health some places have is a real old-fashioned cold dip that lasts about three days. It does the sanitary work thoroughly and adds nothing to the taxes. A cold dip makes people

ACTIVE.

You never see a man loitering along the street when the mercury is away down. The laziest citizen has to put on a spurt. One of the reasons why Canadians are an active,

pushing, enterprising people is because we have a cold winter. Could men who lounge and loaf under a southern sky have cut this Province out of the forest in a few years? Could men who bask in perpetual summer sunshine have built the Canadian Pacific across the mountains? Our winter is one of the best things we have and it is one of the sources of strength that will always enable us to hold our own against our neighbors to the south. The northern nations of Europe have always been more than a match for the southern nations, and if we are true to our own interests as a young nation, we need not fear rivalry from the south.

There are several things we need much more than a warmer climate, and one of them is a heavy sitting upon the blatant demagogues who try to keep themselves before the public by kindling the fires of racial and sectarian hate among the people. To make a little money, to increase the circulation of a newspaper, or to have themselves gazed at and talked about, they are willing to scuttle the national ship. People of that kind do much more harm than the climate. A cold dip should make people

CHARITABLE.

The man who sits down at a comfortable fire-side on a cold winter night without thinking about his poor neighbors is neither much of a man nor of a neighbor. He has no heart. There is only one kind of a human biped more to be shunned than a man without a heart and that is a woman without one. Below zero we should learn to be

GRATEFUL.

A man or family that can sit in a comfortable home during a cold dip and listen to the storm howl without feeling grateful to the Almighty Giver of every good gift, may have a little religion, but it does not do much for them. They are not the kind of people that give much for missions or augmentation, especially augmentation. Ingratitude is the besetting sin of many Canadians. Other nations may drink more, or fight more, or cheat more, or swear more, but for genuine hard-hearted, hard-fisted ingratitude Canadian ingrates take the palm.

And this ingratitude is extended to many of the men who serve the Canadian public. Tories say that it is largely confined to Grits, and compare the way they treated Sir John Macdonald with the manner in which many Grits treated Alexander Mackenzie. They more than hint that the country will soon see another huge specimen of Grit ingratitude. Probably it may. A strong, and at the same time contemptibly mean disposition to magnify the mistakes and faults of its best friends has always been one of the distinguishing characteristics of Canadian Liberalism.

THE PROPOSED NEW PSALTER.*

BY THE REV. JOHN MCALPINE, CHATSWORTH.

I beg to move that this Presbytery express its entire disapproval of the proposal to make selections from the Psalms and its strong conviction that the psalter should remain intact. This motion, so far as I understand myself, is the expression of a very profound conviction which, with the leave of the Presbytery, I shall attempt shortly to justify.

1. In doing so, my first position is that the psalter is a medium of praise furnished by divine inspiration to the O.T. Church. In that proposition there are two parts, that the psalter is a medium of praise for the O.T. church; that it is divinely inspired. I do not think either of these positions is questioned amongst us. Let me just notice with regard to the inspiration that the testimony upon that point of the N.T. is very decisive and all the more that it is given very expressly to what are known as the cursing psalms, so that it is quite unallowable for any Christian to speak of any psalm as breathing the spirit of private revenge. It is a very different spirit they breathe, a spirit of which, if the church was more largely possessed, it would value the Psalms more highly.

* The following paper was prepared for the Presbytery of Owen Sound at its last meeting, in connection with the motion which it is preface. The writer being unavoidably absent from the meeting, we publish it in our columns as the subject is just now engaging so largely the attention of the church. E.P.

2. My second position is that this divinely inspired medium of praise was given to form a medium of praise not only for the O.T. church, but for the New T. church as well. This is a position which does not, I think, admit of question. That the Divine Being intended the psalter as a medium of N.T. praise will, I think, be at once admitted by all perhaps. I may be permitted to refer to two considerations in support of it. One is the very late date at which the psalter was completed. Material continued to be added to it up to the time of Malachi. Thus it was only in her closing period that the O.T. church possessed the completed psalter, which would seem to be at least a confirmation of the position that it was designed for the New as well as the Old. Nay, does it not seem to authorize the position that it was designed more for the New than the Old. The other consideration is the very surprising one, that penned amid the remarkable ritual of the old economy and repressive of the sentiments of those to whom every rite in that economy was specially dear, the Psalms should be so largely free from the colouring that fact could not but be expected to impart, and laying hold simply of the informing spirit should so express it as to provide a medium of praise suitable still when that ritual had sunk into oblivion, a phenomenon so remarkable as to be explainable in no other way than the now largely discredited one that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

3. Supposing my second proposition to be admitted, I ask also the admission of this that neither in the psalter nor anywhere in scripture is there to be found any satisfactory indication that it is only partially fitted to be a medium of praise for the N.T. church. I employ the word satisfactory because there are some who imagine that they have found indications. But it is manifest that these indications being the determination of private judgment cannot be deemed satisfactory to any whose judgment does not make the same pronouncement. Nor can I imagine any indication could or should be satisfactory but an indication from the same high source as that which furnished the medium of praise. Only He, who in His infinite wisdom has given it, is entitled to employ the pruning knife and to say what should and what should not be embraced in the psalmody of the N.T. church.

4. My fourth proposition, which is simply a corollary from the preceding, is that therefore the proposal to make selections from the psalter is a strangely unbecoming one. One might with entire propriety use much stronger language with regard to it. And all the more so when the genesis of the proposal is considered. I venture to say it is not long since when such a proposal could not have been made in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. I venture to say that not long ago there was not a man in the Presbyterian Church in Canada who would have dared in any court of the church to make such a proposal. The possibility of such a proposal is but of yesterday. And the wherefore of the possibility is not hard to indicate. There is not a question but it has risen out of the marvellous manner in which men bearing the Christian name have permitted themselves to handle the Word of God, and is indicative, painfully indicative, of how the church has permitted herself to be influenced by them. Such is unquestionably the genesis of the proposal before us, and such being its genesis I would have the less hesitation in characterizing it as we have done, as being to the last degree unbecoming. Its unbecomingness we shall further emphasize by two considerations which I ask leave to present and with which I shall conclude. One is the want of qualification upon the part of any and every human being to say what are the elements of praise proper to an inspired psalter. To have to write such a sentence is matter of pure amazement. Just think of a company of men sitting down to determine what part of an inspired psalter is fitted for praise. Of the incongruity of such a spectacle we shall be more convinced if we recall to ourselves the scripture estimate of men. We have one statement of that estimate in the words, "Cursed is man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm." This is a statement

that finds ample confirmation in the spectacle that at this day and in all days is presented by society. Another statement of that estimate is in the words, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," and brethren the more I become acquainted with myself the more extended is my observation and experience of my fellow creatures, the more do I feel compelled to bow to the humiliation of these representations. And such being a true representation of man, and man at his best estate, what are we to think of a company of such beings sitting down to eliminate from a divine book of praise what is displeasing to them? Words cannot express the utter and horrible incongruity of the spectacle. The second consideration in support of the unbecomingness of the proposal before us is the selections themselves. To one who has gone over the Psalms carefully noting the selections and exclusions, the result I have no doubt has been that of pure amazement and profound pain. There have been portions left out that without doubt have proved the rod and staff of God to comfort His own in their need, or the green pastures in which He has made them delightedly to lie down. Let us just notice some instances taken at random. There is the beautiful verse in the 42nd Psalm with its exquisite touch about songs in the night, "His loving-kindness yet the Lord command will in the day, His songs with me by night, to God by whom I live I'll pay." In the 40th Psalm we are not to sing "Thy tender mercies, Lord, from me O do thou not restrain, Thy loving-kindness and thy truth let them me still maintain," words whose preciousness are immensely enhanced by their connection with the striking confession of sin which follows—a confession that must have spoken hope to many a sin-burdened soul and especially when found in such a connection and all the more that the confession and all are put into his lips by God Himself. In the 48th Psalm are no longer to be sung the words of pure praise, "O Lord, according to thy name thro' all the earth's thy praise, and thy right hand, O Lord, is full of righteousness always. Because thy judgments are made known let Zion mount rejoice, of Judah let the daughters all send forth a cheerful voice;" and the 50th Psalm is left out, with its magnificent start reminding one of the blare of the trumpet at the great day, "The mighty God, the Lord, hath spoken and did call the earth from rising of the sun to where he hath his fall."

Our God shall surely come, keep silence shall not he, before him fire shall waste, great storms shall round about him be. Unto the heavens clear he from above shall call, and to the earth likewise that he may judge his people all." Who that has had to discourse upon the solemn theme of the judgment has not instinctively turned to that passage as affording appropriate praise and the more that there is in it so sweet a declaration of the very marrow of the gospel in the lines that describe God's saints as "Those who by sacrifice have made a covenant with me." Nor are we to sing from the 51st Psalm, "My closed lips, O Lord, by thee let them be opened, then shall thy praises by my mouth abroad be published." Nor "a broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice, a broken and a contrite heart, Lord, thou will not despise." In the wisdom of the Hymnal Committee these thrice precious words are no longer to be sung. And just listen to the strains they have left out in the 85th Psalm, "That in thee may thy people joy, wilt thou not us revive, show us thy mercy, Lord. To us do thy salvation give. I'll hear what God the Lord will speak, to his folks he'll speak peace and to his saints. But let them not return to foolishness. To them that fear him surely near is his salvation that glory in our land may have her habitation. Truth met with mercy, righteousness and peace kissed mutually, truth springs from earth and righteousness looks down from heaven high." Just think of that last stanza containing so surprising an expression of the central mystery of the gospel, the reconciliation of righteousness and peace, think of that being left out of the praises of the church, and left out when divine wisdom and grace had put it in. But not to unduly expand, let me just notice, in this general way, two other instances. One is in the 27th Psalm in the words "Thou' me my parents both should leave