Our Contributors.

ARE OUR METHODS AT FAULT?

BY NELSONIAN.

Many of the reports presented at the General Assembly are encouraging and reassuring. The finances, considering the general depression throughout the country, are in a healthy condition although a lamentable cry is set up owing to a shortage in the Foreign Mission Fund.

One deplorable statement comes out in the report on statistics, where it is declared eight hundred and two less united with the Church on profession of faith in 1896 than in 1895. How can this be accounted for? Hundreds of Presbyterians, doubtless, entered the country during the year; we presume the ministry was equally faithful and know that God would not stint us of His grace, if we were doing our duty.

Have our methods anything to do with the diminution in numbers? Let us examine one of these only, viz, the system of giving for the extension of Christ's kingdom, and what do we find? We find a system which, whilst it has gone unchallenged by the Church, and has not, as yet, brought any of our number before the civil courts, has, nevertheless, oftentimes caused us to hang our heads with shame and frankly admit it to be mercenary to the hilt, and unworthy the great Church in whose defence our ancestry drained their blood. That this system has some redeeming features is true, but that it embodies worldly, sinful methods cannot be denied.

Christian liberality is giving without receiving—The liberality of socials is giving and receiving.

Therefore, the latter is not Christian liberality. If this syllogism be true, and it seems so to the writer, increasing church funds by socials and other entertainments, is contrary to God's Word and consequently may be charged with keeping back His blessing. In a word, we substitute a human for the Divine method in the one case, and is it to be wondered that sinners take advantage of what we so practically teach and substitute in the other?

The Church says the world's method may be substituted for Christian liberality; the world says, and with equal consistency and plausibility, a moral life may be substituted for faith in Christ and Christian consecration. To deny the one and accept the other is inconsistent. This the Church is and has been doing, and few, for fear of shrinkage in the treasury or some other reason, have raised their voice against it. Let us remember that the Presbyterian Church in Canada has not been commanded to evangelise the whole world, but she has been commanded to do her part in a way that will harmonize with the Revelation which God has left us. How seldom do we hear a minister of the Gospel asking God's blessing from the pulpit on a money-making social. How seldom even is His blessing asked upon it, as the opening item of the programme!

The congregation trembles lest the evening should be wet or the attendance small, and time and money lost, but, if it is a success, the amount secured is announced by a flurry of trimpets and the crowd disperses, pleased that God's work does not call for very much self-denial after all, if the matter can only be shouldered on the willing half dozen, and be widely advertised amongst the riff-raff of the town. Again they see in it an advantage in this way: The women can do the work whilst it leaves the men with a free hand to look to the larder. Do not think this a far fetched and imaginary picture. Not long ago in a Canadian town, with a population of nearly a thousand, a minister from a neighboring place presided at the congregational meeting. At this meeting the male element, members of the church, forsooth, were bent upon electing a board of management, composed wholly of ladies, as the work would mostly devolve upon them at any rate. They were dissuaded from taking this course, but the impression was fixed indelibly upon the chairman, that money-making socials were responsible, in part, at least, for this state of affairs.

Money socials, it is claimed by some, have their advantages. They bring the different denominations together, so that the sympathetic chain is thrice folded about them, and they become united in spirit, although, as it has been amusingly put, they may throw dirt and pommel one another in body. This is indeed the fruit that may be expected from the modern money social.

What would our friendship mean if, after inviting some with whom we desired to be on good relations, we charged two bits for their entertainment? Cannot this question be as appropriately asked of the different denominations? Who would dream of increasing individual friendships in this way? Then, if unworkable with individuals, why conclude it the best scheme with the different religious bodies? The fact of the matter is, friendship, if there can be any produced in that way, is scarcely discoverable, and this method should give way to the free social, which, it cannot be doubted, would bring about a healthier state of affairs. This is a live question and should not be overlooked. Let there be light, and that, if possible, from the leading men of our Church, so that, both East and West, there may be no uncertainty as to the proper course for Christians to pursue.

"CARLYLESE."

BY REV. W. G. JORDAN, B.A.

This word is used by Emerson in describing a Mr. E. P. Clark, a cashier in a bank, whose services may perhaps be secured for the purpose of unravelling and verifying the booksellers' accounts: "A Carlylese of that intensity," etc. Now, the word seems to be used in reference to Carlyle's literary style, witness the following statement of Mr. J. Morley: "It is quite true that a man who writes in dialect as Carlyle did is heavily handicapped. The classic writers are those who have written English, and not Carlylese, and I am one of those for whom, in spite of the attractions and merits of Carlyle's language, the English language is good enough." This criticism with its finality of tone has provoked replies which reflect strongly on Mr. Morley's originality and individuality. "His good work," we are told, "smells of the lamp, and this address is good on the whole, though no very vivid imagination is necessary to conceive what Carlyle himself would have said about it." We do not wish to concern ourselves at present with Mr. Morley. His remarks serve to introduce our subject, and with the comment that such words as "dialect" and "Carlylese" are question-begging epithets, we leave him.

This question of style is an important one to those of us who have a message to deliver and wish to express it clearly and forcibly. The old saying that "The style is the man" is perhaps far truer than we think. For even when the style does not make known the man, it reveals the fact that he has not learned fully to express himself, or is content to lie buried behind borrowed forms of expression. One contemporary critic has declared that, "Nowadays we are all stylists," the "we" there refers of course to the "literary men;" and there is much truth in that statement also; for there are many who have nothing to say who are striving to say it elegantly. Your professional stylist is apt to become a bore, dealing in pretty nothings. In literature as elsewhere, when dress is the supreme thing, and the truth which should smite like a sharp sword is wrapped in endless coils of finery, then "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." One great requisite of any style is that it should fairly express the man and provide an appropriate form for his message. Carlyle's style was "a literary phenomenon," to use a somewhat slangy expression; people did not know what to make of it, but they were compelled to confess that there was some reality and mighty passion behind it.

In the *Quarterly Review* of 1840 there is a discussion of his views from the orthodox standpoint and also a criticism of his style, written on the whole in a kindly spirit. (By Sewell, a High Churchman, of whose "Puseyism" Carlyle speaks with bitter ridicule: see Life by J. A. Froude.) This writer describes Carlyle's style by a quotation from his description of Mirabeau: "He has the indisputablist ideas; but then his style! In very truth it is the strangest of styles, though one of the richest; a style full of originality picturesqueness and sunny vigour; but all cased and slated over threefold in metaphor and trope; distracted into tortuosities, dislocations; starting out into crotchets, cramp-turns, quaintnesses, hidden satire, which the French herd had no ear for. Strong meat too tough for babes." This is certainly a fair description of much of Carlyle's writing, but it is suggestive that the reviewer had to go to Carlyle for it. After speaking highly of the style of the earlier writings, the "distortions and extravagances" of the later works are accounted for: (1) By a supposed desire to pander to the depraved tastes of magazine readers, and (2) by the influence of "an intemperate and indiscriminate fondness for German literature." The first reason read now in the full light of the ample records which we possess is too ridiculous to need reply; while the second is put in a very shallow fashion and so is of little use to us. We cannot follow this gentleman into his disucssion of the Germans; like much else in this essay it is quite out of date. Forty years later, when the "Reminiscences" came to be dealt with in the same periodical, the question of style is briefly dealt with as follows: "His style has found no imitator—except an occasional one in Mr. Ruskin, who has or had an excellent style of his own—and it is no more likely to be reproduced than the very peculiar class of intellect that created it, and indeed needed it, as the fitting instrument, the eccentric exponent of eccentricity. The style is emphatically the man."

Those who have the sincerest friendship for and highest appreciation of Carlyle find the style a stumbling-block. Speaking of Sartor, Emerson says: "And yet did ever wise and philanthrophic author use so defying a diction? As if society were not sufficiently shy of truth without providing it beforehand with an objection to the form." And Carlyle "will not defend such attitude," but calls it "questionable, tentative, and only the best that I, in these mad times could conveniently hit upon." On the same subject a careful criticism is addressed to Carlyle by John Sterling, so that if the Sage sinned again in that way he did it not in ignorance but in the fullest light. "The objections to phraseology and style have good ground to stand on. Many of them are considerations to which I myself was not blind, which there were unluckily no means of doing more than nodding to as one passed." "The poor people seem to think a style can be put off, or put on, not like a skin, but like a coat. Is not a skin verily a product and close kinsfellow of all that lies under it, exact type of the nature of the beast, not to be plucked off without flaying and death? The Public is an old woman. Let her maunder and mumble."

There is still another view of the subject which is, that in order to have a style like Carlyle you need merely take a few words such as "silence," "eternity," "entity," etc., put them in the plural and begin them with a capital letter, when lo, you are a great writer, master of a new and strange eloquence. Alas! that theory like some others is condemned by its simplicity. No! even here the style is the man, the style is strange because the man is strange, not to be measured by small rules of rhetoric. A greater than Carlyle, even Shakspere, broke away from the rules and traditions of his art, his mighty genius could not be imprisoned by artificial "unities," and he was regarded by pedants as a strange monster. Balzac has a good saying to the effect that a man to be original must "read nothing or read everything." In many directions Carlyle was an omnivorous reader. He has a tremendous vocabulary, uses very freely the right of coining new phrases, at times he bids defiance to all grammatical or rhetorical rules and flings his startling expressions about in a bewildering fashion. There are times when only a strange looking or strange sounding word will satisfy his feeling. This kind of writing was naturally startling to those who had been accustomed to a dull humdrum style or to those who took as their model perfectly balanced sentences after the manner of Cicero or Johnson. That Carlyle could write forcible and beautiful English with comparatively little eccentricity in it is proved by the Lives of Schiller and Sterling, many of the essays, etc. Sartor Resartus confessedly represents a chaotic condition of mind, the soul struggling with the everlasting nay, and is no doubt influenced by that Werthenson which was one of Goethe's cast-off clothes. "The French Revolution" cannot be discussed here, as history, but those who have studied that terrible time and noted its mixture of wild elements tragic and grotesque, must feel that there is an appropriateness in Carlyle's pictures, painted with bold strokes, manifesting the grim humour and passionate pity and scorn which such scenes stirred in his soul. On the whole we conclude, then, that Carlyle's style is worthy of study, and is not to be dismissed with contempt as "Carlylese;" what the result of that study may be will depend upon the student's tastes and ideals. It may be that this writer, whose teaching is not now the subject of criticism, manifests in his style something of morbid egotism and of wilful eccentricity, but there is along with this the genius that can toil terribly and is conscious of its strength, and in the subject now before us, there is the lesson that we need each one a flexible style which shall enable us to express with directness and force the thought that is in us.

Strathroy.

TENNYSON'S RELIGION.

BY WM. HOUSTON, M.A.

What Tennyson's precise religious attitude and state were it is not easy to gather from his published works. He wrote little in prose, and when he wrote in poetry he had a poet's right to put sentiments and opinions in the mouths of the characters he created, which he might have properly enough repudiated if he had been charged with holding them himself. Any light, therefore, which can be shed by others on this side of the great Laureate's nature must always be welcome to those who, through acquaintance with his writings, have come in some sense to know the man.

A few months ago a near relative gave some glimpses of Tennyson's religious state in a magazine article; quite recently a more important revelation has been made by an intimate personal friend, Mr. Wilfrid Ward. This is contained in an interesting article in the *New Review* for July last, in which is given a summary of conversations with the poet on questions of philosophy and religion. As he drew near the end of his long life these subjects occupied an increasing proportion of his time and thought, and when he recovered from a serious, almost a fatal illness, in his eightieth year, he wrote from under the very shadow of death that most beautiful of uninspired religious lyrics:

Sunset and evening star,
  And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
  When I put out to sea,
But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
  Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
  Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
  And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
  When I embark;