

pitiable to exclude from them, even for a season, any who in their zeal and love cannot suppress their testimony to their new-found treasure—the old apostolic truth that Christians are to be made “partakers of the divine nature,” to the very end that they may escape the corruption of the world through lusts! When our congregations are so full of unholiness, it is unfortunate that the ban of the Church should even seem to rest on those who are sincerely “following after holiness!” What of the veiled dishonesty of all kinds that so largely pervade business relations—the bank-swindlers, political corruption, newspaper unfairness, advertising lies, professional untruths, social falsehoods, oppression by employers? What of the “trusts” and “combines” which have been fitly characterized by high legal authority as “conspiracy against the public weal?” What of gross selfishness in all phases of life—of the indulgence of carnal passions? What of the cruel tongue of the backbiter, scattering sorrows and death? Are any of these things compatible with the divine command to “love thy neighbour as thyself?” Do not all these sins exist among Presbyterian Church members,—even among Presbyterian office-bearers? And do our ministers, as a rule, denounce these crying sins of the day with the firmness and faithfulness that are needed? When the Church of Scotland was first constituted, everything that fell short of the perfect law became the subject of “discipline!” Can it be pretended that the Church lays any such stress on holiness of life now? I would not have the most inconsistent communicant excluded from the Lord’s table, if penitent for past sin and sincerely desirous of “new obedience.” But there is a strong spirit of unconscious antinomianism widely prevalent, which is sapping the very life of our Christianity; and it will be a fatal mistake if our Church should, by any means, even appear to emphasize mere correctness of theory, above love and faith and purity of heart and life! “I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.”

I cannot help adverting, in passing, to the inconsistency of condemning any Christian people for holding religious meetings at the same time with those appointed by the Kirk Session. Has the Session a monopoly of certain times and seasons, and are their meetings an end or a means? There may be many circumstances which may make it expedient for church members to hold such additional meetings, and certainly one of these might well be found in holding meetings for the neglected, who are not usually found in our ordinary prayer meetings. But when no Church Session would venture to interfere with any member who had a ball or a card party at his house on such evenings, or who attended such parties at those of others, and this is constantly done by Presbyterian Church members, sometimes even at the houses of elders; it is singularly inappropriate to find fault with the religious meetings, which, if real and earnest, could only be for the true prosperity of the congregation whenever and wherever held? And when we see “tableaux vivants” and other entertainments for church purposes, so frequently gotten up by church members, it is no time to frown on those whose zeal for the souls of others may sometimes require other channels than those provided by the Session!

With a mass of heathenism abroad and of semi-heathenism at home, our Church has serious issues and serious work before her, for which she needs all her strength. If she begins to waste it in theological hair-splitting on points whereon true Christians see difficulty; if in a time when Christians generally are beginning to seek after unity by sinking minor differences, she begins to emphasize the points in which she differs from others; if, above all, before the keen eyes of a clear-sighted and critical scepticism, she appears to lay greater stress on an intellectual agreement with a rigid scholastic “orthodoxy” than on the manifestation of the “fruits of the Spirit,” then she can only expect to fail miserably of fulfilling her high mission, and to share the fate of those who, when weighed in the balance, are found wanting!

A LAY PRESBYTERIAN.

#### A LETTER FROM SCOTLAND.

MR. EDITOR.—THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN comes to us at this our new home with unvarying regularity. It always contains something interesting to us who lived so long in Canada. In a recent issue there was a vigorous and sensible article from the pen of Knoxonian, on the text, “Dr. Cochran on Pews.” In my judgment it was a thoroughly sensible article. The deacons and elders of all your Canadian Churches should read it; and seriously consider the wholesome counsel contained therein. In your issue of 12th December last there was a letter by Helen Fairbairn with the heading, “What is the Office of the Church Choir?” I should like to meet her so that I could take her hand in mine and tell her the full extent of my indorsation of her views on the praise question. I trust that the good seed scattered by her through THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN will produce a good crop. I read with unqualified approval in your number of 5th December last, the short but pithy comments on the Galt entire holiness views. Let me reproduce a few sentences, “Let every man who holds that he has attained to entire sanctification prove it by his life . . . no session, nor Presbytery, nor court of any kind will interfere with a person for giving a practical living illustration of entire sanctification. It is the theory of the thing that causes so much trouble.” Just so, those who hold the entire sanctification view may be good-meaning people, but they are only infants in spiritual chemistry. An eminent living preacher says in a discourse on the perfection of the soul in this world, (Philipp. 3: 15), “That the measure of a man’s perfection here is the consciousness of his imperfection.” I fancy hearing every reader of your paper who is humbly and

earnestly striving after holiness say—“That has been my experience.” In THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN of 12th December last Professor McLaren is reported as saying: “He feared the slowness of Presbyterians to publicly claim their salvation by Christ weakens their influence.” He is unquestionably right in his fear; and the short editorial founded on his well-grounded anxiety—I might say complaint—is pointed and Scriptural. A man who is uncertain of his own standing as a Christian cannot, in the very nature of things, be but a timid uninfluential, vacillating Christian; God wants not hearsay witnesses to testify for Him, but witnesses who know experimentally whereof they speak. The man who can stand up and say, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep against that day that which I have committed unto Him,” is the man to have power over other men. Christ says, “If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make our abode with him.” I would suggest, How could such distinguished and transforming guests be abiding in any soul without knowing it? Ministers and other Christian teachers must have observed in their experience in dealing with experienced professors of religion and young converts, two extremes—the former often shrinking from avowing publicly that they have been born again, and the latter with little or no deep down knowledge of the deceitfulness of the human heart, flaunting before the world that they were saved at a certain time on a certain day. I am not going to dispute with either, but to my mind it would, in the case of the latter, be wiser to reserve the flaunting until later on, when happily a consistent Christian living would be a better evidence of the sacred birth than bold words at the outset. Permit me to quote a few sentences from Dr. Marcus Dods on the Parable of the Ten Virgins bearing on the point. He says, “Many of us feel jarred in spirit when we hear converts rising in a confession-meeting, one after another saying, ‘I was saved last Wednesday night,’ ‘I was saved on the 12th of March,’ and so on. It is not that we do not believe them, that they are speaking the truth, but that we know that they have yet to be tested by life; we rejoice with them because they have found their Saviour; we tremble for them because we know that they have yet to work out their own salvation through years of temptation, all that their confession means is, that their lamp is lit, but how long it will burn is quite another question . . . in many cases there is a lack of solemnized counting of the cost, and a jubilation of spirit which would be more becoming at the close of the long fight than at its commencement.”

Our conduct in this most solemn matter very largely depends upon circumstances and especially to training of circumstances. The best external evidence that a man or woman is saved is not mere asseveration of it, but holiness of life. Allow me in conclusion to urge that every man professing to be a disciple of Christ ought to be ready, in the language of Scripture, to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason for the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear.

Fort William, Scotland, Jan. 1889.

D.C.

#### STRAINED RELATIONS.

MR. EDITOR.—As an onlooker and outsider, but yet as one “seized with the situation,” I am watching with special interest the issue of what seems very strained relations between the Presbyterians of Strathclair and their own Presbytery.

The elders and managers of that field have a reputation which I am sure entitles them to something different from the cavalier treatment dealt out to them at a late meeting of Presbytery. Strathclair is not by any means the only place that has a bone to pick; and Rev. Mr. McKay, I can assure him, has the warm thanks of many a congregation for taking up the cudgels in defence of the rights of our Christian laity. I suggest that one or two of our ecclesiastical friends may try our patience somewhat too much. Let them not forget that in every neighbourhood there are other denominations who would welcome our people and their petitions with open arms.

I sincerely trust no one will attempt the perilous expedient of bringing on a reign of “Bourbonism” in our Church.

PRESBYTERIAN MANAGER.

#### ON THE HORRIBLE IN FICTION.

To speak of the horrible in fiction is at once to suggest the name of Mr. Rider Haggard, who as an inventor of things repulsive and ghastly occupies a very exalted position indeed among the sensational writers of the hour. No novelist of the present day has been so much talked about as Mr. Rider Haggard; no books have sold so fast as his, and no books, so far as we are aware, have yet equalled his in setting forth the cruelty and the thirst for blood which is in man. One would almost suppose that their author were not free from the taint himself, so gloatingly does he delight in details of carnage and horror and ferocity for their own ghastly sake. In massacre, cruelty, and bloody death Mr. Rider Haggard finds his chiefest joy. To hug men until their ribs crack and crunch, to torture them until they wither like snakes, to drive knives right through their quivering bodies, to split their skulls down to the eyes with sharp steel, to crush the life out of them, to listen to the sickening crunching of their bones—to do and write of these things, and to linger fondly over the disgusting details, is Mr. Rider Haggard’s great delight. And to linger with him over these details is the joy of many thousands of men and women, among whom may be found not a few who claim to have good taste and good sense, and who believe they are not without literary cultivation. We do not say that Mr. Haggard’s romances are without literary value, for here and there are to be found descriptions not lacking the charms of art and poetry. But where there is no simplicity, no sincerity, no delicacy

and sympathy; where sound judgment is outraged, cultivated taste set at naught, and refined discrimination conspicuous by its absence; where the language used is all too often inelegant and even incorrect, and where the whole is pervaded by an imagination at once morbid and sensual—where these faults and disfigurements glare at one from page after page, we fail to see that much remains to interest and amuse anyone of intellectual tastes or of healthy mind.

That the class of novel readers, yeckled by a recent writer the “all gulping,” should find some entertainment and relaxation in Mr. Rider Haggard’s slaughter-house style of fiction, that his morbid scheme of existence, his agnostic and pseudo philosophic reflections should have a certain fascination for their jaded minds, we can in a measure understand. But what we cannot understand is the praise and appreciation his works have met with among people who profess to abhor the “Penny Dreadful” style of literature, and to deprecate the placarding of dead walls with theatrical pictures illustrating scenes of violence and bloodshed, and the circulation of papers after the type of the *Police News* and the *Murderers’ Own Guide*.

Mr. Rider Haggard is a clever man. No one can deny that. He knows well what the people want. He rightly gauges the popular taste. And so does the newsboy. How eagerly the urchin cries aloud in the streets the latest choice bit of villainy and blackguardism which he sees set forth in his papers in leaded type! For many minds there is a deadly attraction in things hideous, and in the laughter and curses of the damned; and to this it has been Mr. Rider Haggard’s high mission to minister with unparalleled success. His pages fairly drip with blood. Nearly every book he has written is a carnival of cruelty and crime. Were the scenes of carnage and horror printed in letters of red, the remaining letters of black would appear as few and as far between as do the oases in the Desert of Sahara. To give extracts from these creations of Mr. Haggard’s distorted and gloomy imagination, in order to substantiate the present charges, is not possible in the space at our disposal. But extracts are not needed. His methods and mechanism are too well known to need illustration. His caverns, and tombs, and deserted cities; his fantastic, preternatural machinery, so “lumbering and creaky”; his monstrosities so “crudely monstrous”; his skulls and bones and corpses—are they not as familiar to us as our A B C’s?

Mr. Rider Haggard’s popularity may be on the wane, but his past remarkable success shows that he has accurately gauged the taste of a large section of the reading public. Novelty, and the reaction against the afternoon tea school of fiction, were no doubt factors in the success of his books, but the sumptuous display of all that appeals to the animal nature, the full and free gratification of the morbid taste for the unearthly and the horrible—herein, we fear, lies the real secret of Mr. Rider Haggard’s success. He has lately abandoned his startling and narrowing methods, and now writes clothed and in his right mind, as it were; and it remains to be seen whether in abandoning his peculiar methods he will in time be abandoned by his sensation-loving admirers. So far his most widely read and popular productions have been those abounding the most extravagantly in acts and scenes calculated to gratify and pamper this taste for the horrible. Is this a worthy object for the writer of fiction to aim at? Mr. Rider Haggard is only one among many novelists whose aim is this, but he is the most notable example, and for that reason we single him out. People like to read and hear about the extremes of wickedness. They will pay, and pay well, for the privilege of reading about the dark and cruel deeds of their fellow men. Newspaper-men recognize this fact and take every advantage of it. The most is made of every bit of depravity which comes in their way. Do not the papers sell the more quickly? Now the novelist wants his books to sell quickly. Much tempted is he, therefore, to say to himself, “The people like sensation. They pay well for it. I will give them sensation.” It is well for fiction and literature generally that this temptation is not always yielded to.

The point of view from which we regard fiction is neither that of the prude nor that of the puritan. We hold that the primary object of the novel is to amuse. Its office is neither to teach nor to preach. But whilst we may look askance at the didactic novel and the novel with a purpose, and, in short, at all novels in which art is sacrificed to the setting forth of opinions and views supposed by the author to be of spiritual or moral edification—whilst we may look askance, we say, at such novels, we yet hold that if the emotions and thoughts excited by a novel do not tend to elevate they must at least not tend to debase the mind. The most ardent admirers of Mr. Rider Haggard’s novels cannot claim that their tone is elevating; and how can their effect be negative when they appeal, as they surely do, to a taste the very opposite of elevating, a taste both morally and spiritually stultifying? It is the prevalence of this taste which we deplore more even than the books which serve to pamper it—the taste which craves such morsels to feast upon as are afforded by the recent Whitechapel murders, the taste which craves for every particular concerning the last hours of criminals, the details of bloody prize fights, the awful corruptions of the human heart and mind.

Those who minister to this depraved and morbid taste, those whose joy it is to lay bare all that is most revolting in human life, all that is darkest, blackest in man—these are they who should be shunned as we would shun the deadliest pestilence. Their ways are not the ways of wisdom and light, neither are their deeds the deeds of the brave and the true.—Carter Troop, in *The Week*.