

Our Contributors.

CONCERNING THE EASINESS OF MERE TALK.

BY KNOXIAN.

As we write twelve good men and true of the fine old county of Oxford are being sworn to discharge faithfully the most solemn and responsible duty that ever devolves upon the citizens of a free state. To decide a case involving a man's property is responsible enough, but if a litigant does lose his property through a miscarriage of justice he may be able to get over the loss. It is a serious matter to deal with a man's liberty in a court of justice, but if an unfortunate fellow-creature did happen to be sent to prison unjustly he might have the matter put right and his release would come as a matter of course. Two men were recently set at liberty in England when it was found that they were innocent of the crimes charged against them. It is vastly different in a case in which human life is involved. A mistake that sends a man to the gallows can never be rectified. God alone can give life, and hence the terrible responsibility of taking from a human being that which man can never restore.

No doubt this responsibility is keenly felt by all the parties concerned in a trial for murder. The jury in such cases have a weight of responsibility that seems heavy enough to crush an average mortal. It must be a frightful thing to have a human life on one's hands. If the judge rightly interprets and applies the law and holds the balances evenly he does all that he is required to do. When counsel have urged all that can be reasonably urged on both sides their duty is done. The whole duty of a witness is to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. But the jurymen must say yea or nay on the facts and the yea may send a human being to the gallows. Jurymen don't receive half the sympathy from their fellow-citizens that they should receive. Who ever heard a prayer offered for jurymen? Ministers pray every Sabbath for various people who have nothing to do but spend fat salaries, but who ever prays for the twelve men locked in a room until they decide whether a human being should die the death of a felon.

No doubt all the parties engaged in this great trial feel their responsibility keenly. Judges and lawyers usually manage to conceal their feelings, but under the professional surface which seems so cool no doubt they have emotions like those of other mortals. Jurymen in such cases would be more or less than human if they were not deeply concerned. It goes without saying that all the parties concerned feel their responsibility so much that they never speak about the issue except as a matter of duty.

How is it outside? Why any number of people outside can settle the case in a minute. The people who know least about it can always settle it in the least time. Nothing helps a man to a rapid conclusion like ignorance and irresponsibility. If there is anything that can produce a conclusion with greater rapidity it is malice. Malice can find a verdict of guilty against the best man in the country without any evidence at all. Around the court-house in Woodstock there may be fifty or a hundred hangers-on who can do the business far better than the court. They know exactly what Judge MacMahon should say, and what the counsel should contend and what the jury should do. In fact they know far better than the court. Of course they do. The fellows that are standing with their hands in their pockets looking lazily on always know how things ought to be done far better than the people who are doing them. This is especially true in all public affairs. The number of people who can manage the affairs of Church and State a thousand times better than those who are charged with their management is absolutely overwhelming.

For the purposes of this article let the court at Woodstock represent all those who are discharging difficult duties, carrying heavy responsibilities, and bearing the strain as best they can. Let the hangers-on, who know how to do everything better than the court but who have no duties and no responsibility, represent the great army of talkers in Church and State who talk and do nothing more. Now there you have a picture of human life. Looking at the picture the first thing that strikes you is that the mere talkers have

AN EASY TIME.

Teachers of elocution tell us that the human voice is a wind instrument not materially different in construction from other wind instruments. When a man wants to speak if he has no mind and no ideas all he need do is just turn on the wind. That is exactly what some speakers do. That is all the whole crowd do who talk and do nothing more. Of course that is easy work—very easy. Only the minimum of exertion is needed to turn on the wind. Neither brains, nor character, nor respectability nor knowledge, nor anything except the wind and the instrument is needed for this operation. If any of the things mentioned were needed ten thousand instruments would stop in a moment. Yes, turning the wind on the vocal chords is the easiest operation in nature and that is one of the principal reasons why so many people talk who never do anything else.

How easy it is to stand to one side and make small remarks about how things are done. Is there any power in the English language to describe the minimum of knowledge and sense needed to criticize, say, the Foreign Mission Committee, or the Home Mission Committee, or the College Boards. Is there a prig or a loafer in Canada who cannot tell Mr. Mowat

how to govern Ontario, and Sir John how to manage the affairs of the Dominion? There must be several hundred talking Presbyterians in Canada ready to take charge of the Church and several hundred thousand youthful Methodists ready to take charge of Christendom. A newly-fledged Plymouth convert, who has just come out from among them, is often ready to regulate entrance into the other two worlds besides keeping an eye on this one. All these great things are easily done—in words.

THE BI-CENTENARY OF "THE GLORIOUS RETURN" OF THE WALDENSES IN 1689.

V.

IV—THE FESTIVAL AT SIBAOU, D.

which took place September 1, 1889. As Sibaou is only ten minutes walk from the chief place of Bobi, at the bottom of the Valley of Luserne, and as the day appointed for the commemorative meeting was a Sabbath,* a large gathering was counted on. But, owing to the magnificent weather which enabled one to see, from the morning, the tops of the Palavas, the Granero, and the Cournaou, expectation was surpassed. When the numerous conveyances which filled the road from La Tour (Torre Pellice) to Bobi had set down those whom they had so well shaken on the stoney road, and when the long lines of foot-passengers had left the highway and the dust, to pass under the numerous triumphal arches, decked with foliage and the edelweiss, which were reared at the entrance of the village and near the church, and go on the beautiful green plain on which rest the rocks of Sibaou, it was found that the closely-packed meeting before the platform of planks and foliage exceeded 6,000 persons.

Before taking their places under the large walnut and chestnut trees, which shade the somewhat damp meadows of Sibaou, each one had to pass by the plain but elegant monument which stands on the eastern edge of the rocks. The pedestal, which is of considerable height, has cut-stone corners which are filled in between with ashlar work. On this lies a sloping heap of boulders on which the names of the Waldensian parishes, such as Torre Pellice, Angrogna, Bobi, and Vilar, are engraved. This, in its turn, supports a large square stone on which are the names of the principal mission stations, as Rome, Naples, Florence, Milan, Genoa, and Venice. This forms a base for an obelisk of a single stone 230 meters (about seven feet high).† Near the top of the obelisk is a five-pointed star. Beneath it are the dates "1689—1889." Next the base is a large medallion on which is the device of the Waldensian Church—a lighted candle under an arch of seven stars. Above the medallion is the Church's motto—"Lux lucet in tenebris." Beneath, and half-encircling it are two branches, one of laurel, the other of olive, which cross each other. In the meeting one heard the most diverse languages spoken. On the platform were representatives of many nations. Flags with the Royal and Waldensian arms waved above the speakers, but with less life than at Balsille. On the front was this saying of Janavel: "Let nothing be firmer than your faith."

At ten o'clock, Dr. Prochet, who presided, called on the choir to sing a French version of Luther's choral, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott." Speaking in Italian, he reminded his hearers that their forefathers, who met together in the same place 200 years before, began with worshipping God by humbling themselves, praying to Him and listening to His Word. He then invited those present to unite with him in the prayer of adoration, thanksgiving and supplication which he afterwards offered up.

After the reading of Psalm cxxi., he asked pastor Micol, of Villeseche, to speak. The latter said: "That was a solemn meeting at Shechem, at which the old leader Joshua called on the Children of Israel to choose whom they would serve, and it was blessed, for they answered, 'We will serve the Lord.' That was also a solemn day, the 1st of September, 1689, when their forefathers swore, with their hands raised to heaven, that they would serve Jesus Christ. They stood to their promise, and kept the faith without being terrified by their adversaries. Their faithfulness has been a blessing to their descendants who meet here to-day in thousands from all parts of the world, surrounded by friends from all countries. However, God looks not at numbers. The important matter is to have faith like that of the 600 at Sibaou. Let us be faithful as parents, as citizens, as Christians. Let not our liberty draw us into indifference and infidelity. Let the Lord's day be better kept among us. We must not obey the world, but the Word of the Lord. Officers and soldiers took an oath here, 200 years ago. Let great and small to-day resolve with Joshua: 'As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.'" "Glory to the God of Israel" was sung.

Pastor Luzzi, of Florence, was then called on to address the meeting. He spoke in Italian from the text from which Pastor Montoux—using as a pulpit a door laid on two large boulders—preached at the Return: "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." (Luke xvi. 16.) He said: "Met in the same immense cathedral in which the per-

*If I be not mistaken, this festival and the former ones took place not only on the same days of the month, but also on the same days of the week as those on which the events in 1689 which they celebrated took place.

†This makes the whole monument about fifteen feet high. If there be a misprint here for twenty-three meters, then the obelisk is about seventy feet high, and the whole monument about 150. The former is, however, more likely the true height.

secuted Church held a solemn meeting, we would like to hear the discourse which Montoux gave the six hundred soldiers. But nothing of it has come down to us, save the text taken from that Word which endures forever. It is first, a word which relates to the past. The law and the prophets were until John; but in Christ the legal economy found its close; in Him the prophecies were fulfilled. With Him the covenant of works ended, and the covenant of grace began. Why did Montoux choose this text? It must have been comforting and strengthening to the persecuted to think on God as their Father reconciled in Christ,* on Jesus who died and rose again, and sits at the right hand of the Father pleading on behalf of his own, and on the Spirit who bears witness to our spirits that we are children of God. Have we ourselves felt that our salvation is not founded on works of the law, but on the finished work of Christ? The word of Jesus relates also to the present. 'The kingdom of God is preached.' This kingdom of God is the triumph of good, of the will of God on the earth, which is a fruit of grace, which consists in righteousness, in peace, in joy, and above all, in love. We have reason to believe that there was a connection between the preaching of Montoux and the oath which followed, for the thought of the kingdom of God rules in the solemn engagement of our fathers. They understood that if God had protected them it was not that they should make their nest in these valleys, but that they should spread abroad the Gospel throughout Italy. This commemoration should strengthen in us the resolve to pluck from the superstition of Rome, the souls which are still its slaves. It is not enough that error does not come into the Church, truth must make a breach in the fortresses of error.

"Once more, the passage before us is a word for the future. Jesus Christ sees, in time to come, the multitudes pressing to enter into this kingdom, the triumph of which is assured. It is a leaven which is to leaven the whole lump. Let this ideal be before your eyes when Italy is under consideration. Your ancestors said at Salbertrand: 'The bridge is taken.' Let us say with faith: 'Italy is ours.'"

The choir sang, "Our Father, we bow to Thee in praise." "Let us now speak of our forefathers," next said the chairman. "Picture them to yourselves when they were kneeling here. They left Prangins on the 16th of August, they had crossed Savoy, overcome those who opposed them in their march, and reconquered their country. If, as Italians, we are proud of the bravery of our soldiers, we can also be the same, as Waldenses when we think of that wonderful expedition, before which even that of Garibaldi's thousands pales. The latter knew that they were upheld by a people's sympathy. The Waldenses were alone, tracked by Louis XIV., and had to contend with the Duke of Savoy. Notwithstanding that, they said: 'We shall conquer, or we will die.' The stranger offered them a refuge; love of their country led them to set out to return to it with their weapons of war in their hands. It was lately said to us at Pisa: 'Recross the Alps.' Recross the Alps! No, we will not do that. If we have crossed them because an Italian heart beats within us. In all the battles of Independence, Waldensian blood has been mingled with that of our fellow-citizens. Further, the Waldenses, when they returned, brought to Italy a gift more beautiful than the sun which enlightens it—liberty of conscience. At first it was as a germ which develops itself slowly, but while in the Italian cities everything bent under the Papal tyranny, here it was resisted. By resisting, the Waldenses won the right to worship God according to their conscience. If the first article of the "Statuto" speaks only of toleration, it is there, however, a flower whose perfume is spread through the whole bouquet. Toleration is to-day true liberty. Go now to Rome, and you will see that mere toleration is, for all time coming, a thing out of date. Here our fathers entered into solemn engagements. Now that we are free, enjoying the kindness of our sovereign, and the sympathy of sister Churches, are we not willing, looking at past mercies and at the work before us in our country, to raise our hands to heaven, and to promise to be faithful all together to that God who has delivered us?"

Silently, the Assembly raised their hands, and the chairman offered up a short prayer asking the help of God.

The choir sang the oath at Sibaou, which I shall merely translate:—

Lift your hands to heaven; it is here that your fathers Swore before God not to betray Him, But to restore their altars to these great sanctuaries Where, for the holy cause, they came to die.

Several speeches followed of the substance of which I wish to give my readers more or less. That, however, I must do in another paper. I shall, therefore, now close the present one.

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*This is a very common expression, but it is never found in Scripture. There, God is never said to be reconciled to sinners, but sinners are said to be reconciled to Him. (See, for example, Romans v. 10; 2 Corinthians v. 18-20.) My attention was first directed to this by a remark which I once heard the late Professor Young make at his Sabbath morning Bible class in Knox College. In Scripture we read also of man being reconciled to man ("Wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master?" 1 Samuel xxix. 4; "Be reconciled to thy brother." Matthew v. 24.) The reconciliation of one to another, whether it is the sinner to God, or man to man, is, in Scripture, the removal of that which prevented the latter from receiving the former into his favour and fellowship. The Unitarian interpretation of reconciliation to God—laying aside our hatred of Him—is, therefore, utterly absurd. The passage in Matthew, of which I have quoted a part, is almost invariably misinterpreted. The person addressed is supposed to have something against his brother, whereas it is his brother who has something against him. That something makes the brother keep the other at arm's length from him. The person addressed is exhorted to use the means to have that something removed, in order that he may be "reconciled to" his brother.

†M. Luzzi, plainly, does not believe that wickedness shall increase in the world till Christ come to reign visibly. Our good brother, Pastor Denovan, would, of course, regard him as outrageously heretical on the (Yeastem) question.