

Our Contributors.

CONCERNING HOT WEATHER AND SHORT SERMONS.

BY KNOXIAN

The hot weather has come around again, and a considerable number of fairly good people think shorter sermons should come along with it. In so thinking they are not unreasonable. A lovely autumn day or a crisp sharp day in January is a much better time for listening to sermons attentively than a hot day in July. It is also a much better time for preaching sermons that are worth listening to. It is hard for a man who works seven days in the week and who has been driven from pillar to post for a long twelvemonth to preach well on hot Sabbaths in June or July. Hard preaching makes hard hearing, and hard hearing calls for shorter sermons. In fact, some people who don't make much effort to hear in hot or any other kind of weather, vociferate for short sermons all the year round.

Strange is it not that people can listen to speeches at a political meeting until twelve or one o'clock on a hot night, and not be able to listen to a sermon forty minutes long or a prayer ten minutes long on the next Lord's day.

Perhaps the political candidates and their friends speak very much better than preachers can speak. We have heard just three political speeches in twelve years and they were good ones. Still we think that there are a number of ministers in the Presbyterian church who can speak about as well as two out of the three political orators we had the pleasure of hearing. Before the new parties arose, it was generally conceded that the clergy of Ontario compared quite favourably in the matter of oratory with the other public men of the country. Perhaps the attraction is in the splendid oratorical gifts of the representatives of the new parties. It may be that the Patron candidates and their friends are giving the people some new points in oratory. Possibly it is the charm of Patron eloquence that keeps people interested until midnight; or it may be the fine rhetoric and splendid elocution of the P.P.A. men that are doing it. Account for it as you may, some people will stand a campaign meeting until midnight, who would complain if a religious meeting went ten minutes over the usual time.

Possibly indeed the subjects discussed at campaign meetings are more interesting if not more important than those discussed at religious meetings. Most of us would rather hear an hour's discussion on the sins of Mr. Meredith, or the sins of the Mowat Government, than ten minutes' discussion of our own. The time passes much more quickly and pleasantly when other men's sins are being denounced than when our own are being faithfully pointed out. Ten minutes spent in examining our own hearts may seem much longer than ten days spent in prying into the sins of political opponents. A year spent in reforming other men's habits, may seem much shorter than a day spent in reforming ourselves. Time passes quickly when conscience is regulating other men's conduct; not so quickly when it is regulating our own. One reason why a campaign meeting seems shorter than a religious meeting, is because at a campaign meeting we are usually asked to join in the congenial business of denouncing other people's sins; at a religious meeting we are often asked to condemn our own. Now just look into the matter a little and see if that is not so.

Why do some people enjoy an hour's denunciation of Popery and feel tired if not angry, under a ten minutes' denunciation of the drinking customs of the country? Because they hate Roman Catholics and love whiskey.

Why do some people grow frantic with delight over a description of the real or imaginary evils of a convent, and grow angry at one-tenth part of what might be said about the evils of a bar-room? Because they hate the convent, about which they know little or nothing, and love the bar room in which they nightly squander the money that should provide bread for their wives and children.

Why are some hearers quite wide awake and quite appreciative if you preach a semi-political sermon that suits them on Separate Schools or Equal Rights or something of that kind, but quite drowsy if you preach a much better sermon on the love of Christ.

Men never tire of sermons on their own fad or their own hobby, or on the subject about which they like to fight, provided you say what they want you to say.

Just go below the surface of the question a little and see if the cry for shorter sermons does not often arise from lack of vital interest in the very subjects that ought to be the warp and woof of all sermons.

FRAGMENTARY NOTES.

NEWFOUNDLAND — ST. JOHN'S — LABRADOR.

This is the oldest of the colonies in connection with the British Empire. It is situated in the Atlantic Ocean, and at the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It is divided by the Straits of Belle-Isle, from Labrador, which is a part of the colony. Labrador is an extensive country, roughly estimated at 450,000 square miles. The climate is very severe and is such that ordinary cereals will not ripen. Barley is sown and cut green, and makes good fodder. It is here that we find the Esquimaux, who are said to be the origin of the human race, and who inhabit the northern coast. The ocean adjoining is a great fishing ground, and for over 500 miles north of the Straits fishermen swarm from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and the United States. The results of these fisheries is estimated at about five million dollars. The fishermen have hard lines, small wages, poor fare, and are greatly exposed to the intense cold. This a business of which Canadians know very little; and, on the other hand, it would only be folly to try to make farmers out of the fishermen. Some of the natives have been Christianized by the labors of Moravian missionaries.

St. John's is the capital of the island, and is the centre of business in every line. It is the seat of Government, which is administered by a Governor, House of Assembly, and a Legislative Council. Sir Terence O'Brien is the present Governor, and is a man of strong administrative ability. During the recent elections he proved himself capable of grappling with questions of exceptional importance, and of rare occurrence, and was in every case sustained by the Home Government.

The conflicting parties came to a deadlock and several members of the late Government have been unseated and disqualified; other trials are in course of procedure, and most likely will go the same way. The new Premier is the Hon. Mr. Gooderige, a large fish merchant, who has called into his Cabinet several strong men, and it is thought that the ship of state will now run safely again.

St. John's is also the centre of the business of the colony, and contains a number of extensive merchants, who are all engaged in the fishery business, and who employ a large number of hands, and any interruption to these industries would be severely felt by the working classes.

A line of railway is now being built by that great railway man, Mr. Reid, right across the island, which, when constructed, will lift passengers at Cape Breton with a little over six hours by water.

The best known features of the old colony are its "fogs" and "Newfoundland dogs," which are widely known, but strangers often remark that almost any other species of the canine tribe are more plentiful than the famous Newfoundland dog. The fog is always with us, and dense too. On the steamer the most frequent question asked the officers of the ship, "Is there any danger of fog?"

The fog horn is always in tune, and from its iron throat the danger is announced, at the sound of which the most formidable of our "ocean greyhounds" will reverse their engines, and call a halt, and wait patiently for a western breeze to sweep away the mist. The fogs give most trouble in May and June. Another interesting sight in these months is the "icebergs," which are frequently met with. At present writing there are two large

bergs near the mouth of the "narrows," which are said to be about 200 feet above water, and four or five hundred feet below. They are probably aground and may remain all summer; the wind from their quarter will keep the air cool in the city; but this is always moderate both summer and winter. The people are healthy looking, especially is this true of the ladies, who are the subject of general remark, for their fresh rosy appearance. Newfoundland is also famous for its codfish; there is probably no country in the world to compare with it. The banks of Newfoundland, which every school-boy has read of, actually swarm with codfish, and there is no more interesting sight than to see these crafts come in with their "catch."

It is generally known that these "Banks" cover a wide area; they are about 600 miles in length, and 200 miles in width, with a depth running all the way from 10 to 160 fathoms deep.

It is not too much to say that strangers coming to St. John's, prefer to have cod on the table to any other fish.

The fishing season opens in June, and lasts until November.

The term "fish" is applied to codfish only, every other kind is distinguished by some name, but the term "fish" belongs to the cod only.

THE REV. MOSES HARVEY, LL.D.

The above is the best known name in Newfoundland, he has written a history of the colony, besides many other literary productions, containing information which would be difficult to get. He has another work on a similar subject, going through the press at the present moment.

The degree of LL.D. was conferred upon him by McGill College, Montreal, and seldom has it been more worthily given. Dr. Harvey was born in Armagh, Ireland, and had for college companions such men as Rev. Dr. Gregg, of Knox College, Toronto, and Rev. Dr. Bennett, of St. John, N.B. Dr. Harvey held for a time a charge in England, and from that place came to Newfoundland, and settled in St. John's. He is well known as a periodical writer and newspaper correspondent. The late Hon. George Brown said that he was the best correspondent on the staff of the Toronto *Globe*.

Some years ago Dr. Harvey retired from the active duties of the ministry, and was succeeded by the Rev. L. G. MacNeill, now of St. John, N.B., who maintained the prestige of the congregation at high-water mark, and resigned the charge amid the universal regrets of the congregation, and city of St. John's generally.

St. Andrew's congregation is a large and strong congregation; a large number of its members was born in Scotland, and when we say this we say a good deal, for it is well known what Scotland has done for Presbyterianism.

The present pastor is the Rev. William Graham, who is strong physically and intellectually, and capable of any amount of work, and in such a city where there is but one congregation in the denomination, it is very difficult to get any assistance either in pulpit supply or parochial duties. A second church has been built in the West End, but as yet no steps have been taken to secure a pastor or assistant to the Rev. Mr. Graham, who has made a very generous offer to secure one.

This new church served a most important purpose when, in 1892, in the general conflagration, the first substantial church was swept away; but of this great fire I shall give more particulars in a future letter.

Meanwhile the congregation has in the most spirited manner built a fine hall for public worship, and sufficient accommodation for the Sunday-school, and the erection of a new church will be proceeded with at once.

The church registers were saved, but the records of session and membership were all destroyed.

The young ladies presented the session with a handsome communion service, value \$370, the old one having been destroyed by the fire. They have also, for social purposes, purchased a piano, value \$800. The new pulpit Bible is the gift of an old friend of the congregation in Australia. K.

DEALING WITH MEN IN REFERENCE TO SPIRITUAL THINGS.

REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D., PH.D., GALT, ONT.

One of the arts not taught in theological colleges is the fine art of a wise dealing with men in reference to their spiritual interests. Each student is left to discover for himself what his gift is, in this respect, and the best ways in which it may be used. It is therefore, through many unsatisfactory attempts, and many failures, that he reaches success, if success is ever attained. He has a two-fold knowledge to gain: first, a knowledge of man as an individual, and next, a knowledge of himself as one sent to work upon individual wills and minds. To deal with one man is a very different thing from dealing with a crowd of men. One man puts to the test the aptness of one to teach. It sounds the depths of his knowledge of man, his skill in taking up his case, his wisdom in plying means to secure ends, his discernment in discovering the evils that oppress the soul. For this, an arrow shot at a venture is not enough. There must be intelligent dealing. There must be a direct and business-like entering into the conditions that call for treatment. There must be a fearless handling of the matter—the fearlessness and the force of love. When one seeks the salvation of another he is not at liberty to mince matters, or to gloss over sins, that need confession and repentance, or to hide the awful truth that is spoken against moral and spiritual obliquity, he must deal honestly and straightforwardly respecting the things of life and death. He must be genuinely true. Nothing can excuse shortcoming here. One of the noblest men we know in reference to this point, is the Rev. John McNeil. He hits right from the shoulder. He strikes right home. He has the ancient valour of the prophets in dealing with sin. Take his sermon on "Achan," entitled "Found Out," and how grandly he condescends from himself, to the elders, and the individual members! It is refreshing to read it. It is a breeze of ozone from the mountain tops. There is no finesse there; no shilly-shallying there; no mealy-mouthed mumbling there. Every note clear as a bell, and every statement as trepchant as the thrust of a Damascus blade. An honesty rings through the whole utterance, as of a man who felt that he was sent of God, to speak for eternity, and to pluck perishing men as brands from the burning. Strong conviction loads every word. Clothes, and titles and perfume, and high looks, are all forgotten; and souls in jeopardy alone are seen. Oh, it is grand to find one man at least there where he stands—and one such man! Every man who deals with men for God, should be as he is—fearless, and bound up in the truth, and forceful. Otherwise, there is little hope for a sinful race.

John McNeil individualizes his congregation and thrusts, and thrusts, and thrusts, like one using a rapier; he stabs, and stabs, and stabs like one handling a Highland dirk. There is little chance of escape from such an onslaught. He has such a healthy mind, that he has no hobby to ride; no new-fangled opinions to present, no mawkish sentimentalism to disgust one with; rather, he brings an honest heart, a clear brain, a common-sense philosophy to the discussion of every part of God's Word. He is a sound teacher, and therefore a saving teacher.

It is his individualizing tendency in preaching that justifies his being mentioned here. No doubt, what he is at arm's length in the pulpit, he would be hand to hand on the street or in the parlor. His dealing with men therefore may stand as an illustration of the point in hand. All the examples we can get at this juncture are greatly needed. "Spencer's Pastor's Sketches" may be helpful to one entering on the work. The lesson on Dr. Hurlbut's "Outline Normal Lessons," (on methods of approach) may give many most valuable hints. Charles Simeon's after-tea conversations may do the same. Bits found here and there in biographies may render much-needed help by their suggestiveness. Before giving a few incidents, here is a short paragraph worth quoting from Charles Simeon's conversations: "Young