

## Our Contributors.

### A NATIONAL NEED.

BY KNOXONIAN.

There is a pretty story told about a painter who, when asked what he mixed with his colours replied, "brains sir."

Now don't spoil the little story and minify its moral by asking questions. We don't know where that painter lived, or when, or whether he lived at all. There may never have been any such painter. If there ever was any such painter he may never have been asked any such question. If asked that question he may never have given that reply. A good standing rule for social life is never to spoil a story or a joke by asking questions. A man that deliberately spoils a joke by asking unnecessary questions, when his first and only duty is to put his laugh in at the proper time and place, is an enemy of society and should be treated as such.

Whether the aforesaid reply was ever given by any painter or not it is just the kind of reply that a sensible painter might have given. The other day we heard of a worthy minister who expounded a portion of Scripture without closely examining the text. A friend called his attention to the fact that the Apostle did not say what our friend had eloquently expounded and enforced. The reply was conclusive and covered the whole ground. It was this: "The Apostle might have said it." Of course he might. Any ordinary scholar may explain what a sacred writer does say but that is plain every day work. To explain what a writer might have said is a perfect triumph of exegesis.

Judging from evidence that is accumulating in every direction the time has come in Canada when every man who wants to get three good meals a day and wear good clothes must put more brains into his work. Hitherto Canada, especially Ontario, has been a comparatively easy country to succeed in. In many lines there was little or no competition. One or two doctors every twenty or thirty miles didn't need either great knowledge or great brain power and sometimes they hadn't either. The settlers had to send for them or go to them and many a good settler did suffer excruciatingly because there was no doctor near. Two or three lawyers in a new country, fairly well settled, didn't need any brains to build up a large practice. The people had to go to them because there was nobody else to go to. If a man had the only store in a new township, he did not need to put any brains into his business. All he needed to do was mark his goods high enough, give his customers long credit, take a mortgage with high interest and finally take his customer's farm. Those were the palmy days for storekeepers. A cross roads storekeeper in those early days was as great a man as Sir John Thompson. Many a man made money selling goods in those early times that could not make his salt in these days of keen competition.

The only carpenter, or shoemaker, or tailor in a new township did not need brains. If he had any and used them so much the better for him and for the township, but if his upper story was empty he could rub along well enough so long as no competitor came near.

Sometimes the early schoolmaster had brains and sometimes he hadn't. The amount and quality and furnishing of his brain was often a matter of indifference provided he had good muscle, and his school house happened to be near some well timbered land from which the underbrush had not been cut.

The early Presbyterian preacher as a rule was quite as well equipped in the matter of brain power, scholarship and general culture as his successor of modern times. Some fairly good judges think he was a better all round man. If he came from Scotland he was pretty sure to be a good classical scholar. If from Ireland he was likely to be fond of good speeches, lively discussions and literary things in general. In either case he was generally

a strong, manly, independent man who didn't run after calls, or hanker for cities, or play second fiddle to anybody. His motto seemed to be, "Wherever McGregor sits is the head of the table." If more brains are needed in the Presbyterian pulpit now than were needed fifty years ago we fear the need is not being supplied.

The call for brains, however, is louder and more urgent in the farming line than in any other. Nature made our soil so rich that in the early days anybody could farm. Muscle and energy were needed to clear the land but when it was cleared you needed to do nothing more than tickle it a little with a drag to make it grow forty bushels an acre. In some sections wheat crops could be grown on the same soil many years in succession. Many an early settler just burnt the stubble and put in another crop. Some of the Manitoba farmers are said to harrow in a second crop now without even burning the stubble. That kind of farming is over in Ontario. In fact farming successfully has become a most difficult business. It is doubtful if ever the most skillfully managed farm can be made to pay at the present time. Farmers are having a hard time and it is to be hoped that before long their business will brighten up. One thing, however, is clear. The day when anybody can farm in Ontario is past, never again to return.

Should we complain because more brains are needed and are working in almost every line? Not by any means. The more brains each worker has the better for every person who has to use the work. Competition within reasonable limits is a good thing. None of us is in danger of doing our work too well. We can easily get absolution for being perfect if we ever become perfect in duty. As the country grows older better work is demanded in every line, and with the single exception of farming we believe better work meets with more liberal remuneration. What more could we want.

### REVIVALS, THEIR IMPORTANCE AND ABUSES.

BY REV. JOHN J. CAMERON, M. A.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF REVIVALS.

The great purpose for which Christ founded His Church was to save men from the penalty and power of sin, and just in proportion as she has accomplished this object has she fulfilled the end for which she exists. In the accomplishment of this object means are to be employed, and the more efficient the means the more satisfactory and fruitful the results. "And," writes the apostle, "He gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." From this it follows, that whatever aids us in accomplishing this object must be regarded as vitally important. It is for this reason that revivals in the true sense of the word, have an importance proportioned to the extent to which they have been successful as a means of attaining this end. It will be found that those who doubt or deny the importance of revivals as factors for the upbuilding of Christ's Church and the extension of His kingdom, have been led to do so, from a narrow or faulty view as to what revivals are based upon, the objectionable features which sometimes accompany them. To establish their importance, therefore, it will be necessary to define. The term revival comes from a word signifying to live again, and means, therefore, the causing to live again. It implies previous life, but a life which has, from cause, become torpid and inactive, and a revival aims at the restoration of the enfeebled life to its former state of vigour and activity. In winter, for instance, all nature seems dead, every sign of life in stream or lake, in flower or tree, has departed; but when spring, with its warm sunlight and refreshing showers returns, our earth returns to life, the streams breaking loose from their icy fetters, bound along their ac-

customed channels, the flowers unfold the grass sprouts, and verdure and beauty clothe the plain,—there is a revival of nature. Or a person, we will suppose, falls into the water and is taken out in an unconscious state, life appears extinct, but by a process of friction to which he is subjected, he comes to, signs of life appear, the lungs begin to breathe, the eyes open, the limbs move—life is revived. So, in the spiritual sphere. A church may relapse into a state resembling our earth, as it lies congealed beneath the snows of winter, or a body which has lost consciousness, its spiritual life is cold, sluggish, apparently dead, faith is weak, love, cold; hope, dim; spiritual fruit is difficult to find. Now when a revival takes place in such a congregation, it is like the return of bright, balmy spring after a long and dreary winter, the languishing life of the church becomes active, faith becomes strong, hope bright, love warm, joy full; the fruits of the spirit are brought forth in abundance, there is hearty co-operation among its members in every good work and every department of the Church work throbs and thrills with a happier and healthier life. Against revivals as thus defined and illustrated, no person we think, can have any objection. They are in harmony with principles or laws which permeate and govern all other spheres of activity. We have revivals in trade, when business is brisk and unusual activity prevails in commercial circles, revivals in education when a thirst for knowledge is created, when the mental faculties are quickened, when books are read and studied with avidity and questions of public interest discussed, and so, we have revivals in religion when a relish for spiritual things has been induced, the services of the sanctuary more fully enjoyed, and the fruits of the spirit more abundantly brought forth. The importance of revivals in this sense of the word, will more fully appear from one or two considerations. First: That they are accompanied by the presence of the Holy Spirit in larger measure than on ordinary occasions. We live now, it will be admitted, under a spiritual dispensation, Christ is present in every Church, in every believer, by His Spirit. Every sinner, when he, by living faith accepts Christ as a Saviour, receives this Spirit. He is a "Holy Ghost Christian" from the very first. But, at first he possesses and enjoys the Spirit usually in a very imperfect measure, both as regards knowledge of the truth and attainments in grace. Now, in times of revival, an outpouring of the Spirit is experienced. The Spirit which was always present in them, is possessed and enjoyed in larger measure. His presence is more sensibly and powerfully felt. It was so in the early Church in that remarkable outpouring of the Spirit which took place on the day of Pentecost. On that occasion we read, the disciples were "all filled" with the Holy Spirit in perfect measure, but that they possessed and enjoyed His presence in a larger, more sensible measure than before, as evidenced by the effects which followed their minds being more fully enlightened, their hearts being fired with warmer love and their tongues loosed "to speak of the wonderful work of God," and as then, so now, every revival which has since blessed and refreshed the Church, has been accompanied by a deeper, more pervasive sense of the presence of that Spirit whose office it is to enlighten, to commence to comfort and to sanctify.

Another consideration which goes to show the importance of revivals, is the blessed effects which flow from them, as seen not only in the Church, and its members, but on society and the community at large. The fruits of the Spirit are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance." In times of revival just as the Spirit's presence is more sensibly felt, so the fruits of the Spirit are brought forth in unusual abundance. These fruits, no doubt, appear, in some measure, in every true believer's life, varying in degree, according to his diligence in the use of the means of grace he enjoys, but as there are seasons

when, beneath warm sunlight and copious showers, the grass and grain, and flower and fruit, exhibit unusual vigour and growth and a more abundant harvest rewards the husbandman's toil and rejoices his heart, so in the spiritual sphere, are there times, when by the more faithful use of the means enjoyed, the fruits of the Spirit are unusually abundant. Not only are sinners converted from the error of their way, but believers are built up in their most holy faith, their hearts become fitter habitations for the Spirit's indwelling and their lives more adorned with the manifold virtues and attractive graces which are the flower and fruit of a living faith, there is a warmer appreciation of the services of the sanctuary, a keener relish for the study of God's word and works, more comprehensive views of truth, a clearer sense of our duty to God, to our neighbour and ourselves, and a heartier performance of the same, a deeper interest in the missionary and benevolent operations of the Church, and in every movement which aims at the elevation and salvation of men. The prayer meeting and Sabbath school at such times are better attended and more warmly supported, the contributions to the various schemes of the Church are larger and more liberal and every member of the Church and every department of the Church-work, feels the reviving, refreshing influence. But not only does the Church feel the benefit of such revival, but directly or indirectly, to a greater or less extent, the whole community is blest. The careless often become serious, the doubting are confirmed, the backslider restored, the sceptical convinced, the vicious reformed, and the sinner converted. The effects will be seen, not merely in the profession, but in the practice, in the daily walk and work in making men better, manlier, more exemplary in all the relationships of life, so that the tradesman does more honest work, the merchant gives juster weight, the farmer sells a better article, the employer becomes a kinder, more sympathetic master, and the employee a more conscientious workman, the moral tone of our commercial and industrial life is elevated, and the difficulties which beset the labour problem of to-day, and which are assuming so threatening an aspect, find an easy solution. These are the effects which flow from a genuine revival, and did these effects always flow, the objections sometimes urged against them, would disappear, but unfortunately these effects do not always appear, or appear in such small measure, that some have been led to disparage all revivals as fraught with results calculated to injure rather than benefit the cause of Christ, and this leads us to the second part of our subject.

#### THE ABUSES OF REVIVALS.

The very best things have been abused, and revivals have proven no exception. These abuses proceed most often, from a false view as to the object of revivals. There are some who speak and act as if the aim of a revival was to excite the feelings, to arouse the emotions, and this, as an end in itself. Religion, according to this view, consists in excited feelings, rather than in obedient lives and when the feelings are worked up into a happy glow, the desired end is attained. There are some sections of the Church who have yearly, periodic revivals of this type, although, happily, the practise is being abandoned. The revival service is looked upon as having some merit in itself, in securing spiritual blessings, the penitent leans upon it as the Roman Catholic does upon his penance, the message is lost sight of in the man. Possibly there are some who may be reached by this type of revival, for what does not suit one, may suit another, but it is our firm conviction, that others are hardened, while others again are repelled by the extreme measures employed. There is a mode of catching fish sometimes practised, which fitly illustrates this truth. Dynamite is sunk in the waters which the fish frequent, and there explodes with deafening noise. The result is that some fish are killed and caught, but a serious objection to this mode of fishing is that many others are frightened