

Our Contributors.

ONE WAY THAT SERMONS MAY BE SHORTENED.

BY KNOXIAN.

The hot season is upon us, and so is the usual discussion about the length of sermons. When the mercury goes up to ninety many people think the length of the sermon should go down to twenty minutes. Perhaps it should. If a preacher is in good working condition and has his matter well arranged he can say as much in twenty or thirty minutes as an average hearer can listen devoutly to and assimilate at one service in very hot weather. A preacher that understands the art of condensing can say a great many good things in twenty-five minutes. Some preachers have no condenser in their study, and of course they need more time than one who has a good condenser and works it skilfully and rigorously.

It is assumed by everybody that the preacher is the only person who has anything to do with making sermons short. This assumption is as groundless, as unjust, and as cruel as the assumption that everybody who does not belong to the Equal Rights Association is in sympathy with the Jesuits, or that every man who does not believe in the Scott Act is in league with the liquor sellers. Hearers have nearly as much to do with making sermons short as preachers have. If a preacher could safely assume that his hearers were fairly familiar with the facts of the Bible he could cut down many sermons to about half their length. The introduction to a sermon is often a narration of the facts that lead up to the text. Now if the preacher feels reasonably certain that the people know the facts he may dispense with the introduction, or at least shorten it. Sermons are often made long by explanations of one kind and another. If the people know their Bibles pretty well, many of the explanations can be dispensed with and the sermon shortened.

Quickness of perception on the part of hearers does a great deal to shorten sermons if the preacher understands his work. He wishes to make a point, and he tries to make it. If the people see it at the first trial he should go right on. Every illustration used after the people have seen the point clearly is worse than wasted. Every argument added after they are convinced is time lost. What is the use in hammering away at a nail after it is driven to the head? Every word added after a point is well made jostles the point. Let the point alone and be thankful you were able to make it.

But supposing the people don't see the point? A skilful preacher knows when they don't, and as he earnestly desires to do his Master's work, he goes on explaining and illustrating and arguing. Whose fault is it if the sermon becomes too long?

It is easy to say if the preacher did his work better the people would more readily see the points. That is no doubt true, but it is also true that if the people were more attentive and receptive, the preacher could do his work better. No amount of railing at the pulpit can show that intelligent, lively attention on the part of an audience is not a powerful factor in the production of good preaching and short lively sermons. Some unfortunate preachers have to wait until many of their hearers wake up. Whose fault is it if they have to wait long? It is not fair for a man to take a good long sleep and then complain because he got so much time to snooze. He took the time himself.

Let the people fulfil their part of the contract in making sermons short. Let them say to the preacher at the beginning of the sermon, "Here we are, dearly beloved pastor. We are all attention—eyes and ears are open, hearts are warm, memories retentive, and minds receptive. Bring out your pulpit battery and play upon our minds, hearts and consciences for the next twenty-five minutes. Do your best, and we will give you our best attention and most earnest prayers." The preacher who could prose along for an hour on a hot day to a congregation like that should well, we won't say what should be done with him.

It is the easiest thing in the world to make a mistake in regard to the amount of knowledge an audience may have on any given question. It is exceedingly difficult to say how much you may assume that they know about the subject in hand. Professor Young used to say that in beginning a new subject with a class a teacher should assume entire ignorance on the part of his pupils. That, no doubt, is the correct principle to go on in teaching, and the principle can easily be applied when you have four or five college sessions to lecture to the class; but if you have only half an hour to discuss a subject with a noisy, restless audience, you may get into trouble by going back to the A B C of the question. You may also get into trouble by assuming that they know the A B C if they don't.

The practice of the best orators differs. English statesmen like Gladstone, Harcourt, Salisbury and others always assume that their audiences know the facts on public questions. They sail in without giving a historical sketch of the discovery of the lake, or of the man that made their boat, or the place at which they learned oratorical navigation. The result is that their speeches are spicy, interesting and comparatively short. Some of our public men pursue exactly the opposite course. They assume that Canadians are not well informed on public questions, and begin with the A B C of everything. Discussing the Jesuit question they would begin with Mr. Ignatius Loyola, and tell us who his father was, how many children there were in the family, and what kind of a big little Ignatius wore the first day he went to school. The end of the first

hour might bring them down to the taking of Quebec, and in two or three hours they might get down to Mr. Mercier's Bill. Discussing the N. P., they would probably begin with Sir Robert Peel, and in two hours get down to '78. A speech on the Scott Act would probably begin with something about the early history of Neal Dow, and a wordy flow of an hour might float them down to Mr. Scott. Preachers of this class usually begin with Adam, and some manage to get even back behind the days of our first parent.

This may or may not be the right way to make a speech. Everything depends on how much you assume that your audience know about the question under discussion. Pretentious, conceited bores always assume that the people know nothing. A man began a sermon in Boston by saying, "The sheep is the most docile of animals; the shepherd takes care of the sheep." Surely a Boston audience might be assumed to know that.

Speeches might be made very much better and shorter if the speaker assumed that his audience had a fair knowledge of public questions. Sermons might be made shorter and less prolix if some of the good people who clamour for them would only read their Bibles.

THE CLUSTER OF CHURCHES AND SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

MR. EDITOR,—I continue my remarks on this question from your number of the 10th July the length precluding my putting all in one letter.

It will be seen by the preceding and this letter that the centre of Toronto is well attended in respect of Sabbath schools. The schools in the vicinity of the corners of Carlton and Jarvis streets will be alluded to in some future number of your paper. I would here remark that preaching on Sabbath in our churches is necessary and essential, but should be followed by instruction—able and full instruction to the young—the same day. The pastor in Erskine Church usually takes his morning text from the afternoon lesson to the children. Whether it is so in other churches I do not know.

Last Sabbath I attended in the afternoon (after visiting a school in St. John's Ward) at Knox Church, and heard the pastor, the Rev. Mr. Parsons, speaking to his Bible class and a large Sunday school at great length, on the Sunday school lesson of the day—"The early life of Samuel, and the sinful negligence of Eli towards his wicked sons." The Christian life is one needing constant prayer and watchfulness, especially over the young. We hear the Sunday sermon, and perhaps form good resolutions, but require the refreshing of the mid-week prayer meeting—and no Christian ever attended one properly conducted that was not better for it. I fear this mid-week privilege is not properly valued. The little ones, even in hot weather, are always the better for an hour's attendance in the Sunday afternoons. A few of our churches omit to have Sunday schools in July and August, but I think it is better to keep them up. Well, to continue, going still westward I find Mr. Bates' Baptist Church and Mr. Gilray's Presbyterian Church both within half a mile of the said corner position of Spadina and College streets. The Baptist Church has a fine large Sunday school, visited 16th September last by me in its old church, and recently in the new church—Mr. Freeman is the superintendent, the Rev. Mr. Bates the pastor. There are over 400 children in it—ninety infant children included—two Bible classes and forty-five teachers in this beautiful school, with which I was delighted. The spirit of the school was animated, also friendly and full of Christian zeal. It was a scene I loved to see, and it reminded me of the Bloor Street Baptist School. The singing and organ playing also were good. The congregation have just built a fine red brick church on the corner of College street and Palmerston avenue. May God bless and speed all their doings. The new school in the new church is a beautiful one, with two fine galleries—I visited it two weeks ago but did not address it. The Rev. Mr. Gilray's church and school I have visited twice, and wrote a letter about one visit in the *Globe* last year—the other was made this year and found it progressing all the time. On my last visit, 21st April, I addressed the infant and general school. There are two infant classes, numbering together 167 dear little boys and girls. The rooms are too small to contain them. A Bible class is taught in the church by the pastor. The general school numbers over 400, the superintendent being now Mr. Samuelson, formerly Mr. Mitchell. This church, under the superintendence of Mr. Gilray has greatly prospered, and will prosper under one who lives so close to his Saviour. The new Trinity Methodist Church (Robert Street) was visited by me on the 28th April. This church has become famous on account of the late trial of the Rev. Mr. Jeffrey. It has got over this difficulty and is now going on well and peacefully. I found all harmony, and its prospects exceedingly good. The Sunday school is superintended by Mr. Crabb and a staff of very intelligent middle-aged and young men and ladies, who welcomed me and allowed me to speak to the infant class and general school for some time. There are two Bible classes attached to it and about 250 children attend, with good prospects of increase. The church I also attended shortly after. It is a fine roomy stone edifice with large galleries, capable of seating perhaps 2,000 people. The Rev. Hugh Johnston is now the pastor. A great many influential families support the church. A large number of active Christian workers, chiefly young, attend. The West Presbyterian Church on Bloor Street, near Huron, I visited 24th March last. The Rev. Mr. Wallace is the pastor. I spoke only to the Bible class, which I am glad to say is very large, numbering over 70, under the pastor's charge. The

infant class taught by Miss McMaster numbers about eighty, and the general school, including the infants, 360, under the able management of Mr. Fotheringham and a good staff of teachers. The Rev. Mr. Moffatt spoke to the school the day I was there. It was erroneously mentioned in my last letter (July 10) that the school contained 600 children—too high an estimate. I include in the half-mile limit of eighteen Sunday schools, the Central Church school, which I described in the *Globe* last year. The church is under the management of the Rev. Mr. McTavish, and the school numbers about 300, the Bible class being taught by that well-known, zealous and able teacher, J. K. Macdonald, Esq.

The Bathurst Street Methodist Church School is one of the eighteen included in my list, as also are the English Church (St. Thomas's) called the Sussex Avenue Church, near Bloor, and the small worshipping body of Christians called the Christadelphians, who worship at the corner of Cecil and Spadina Avenue.

The above named (the Bathurst Street School) I visited two weeks ago and found it one of the best managed and most efficient in Toronto—the superintendent being, in my estimation, very pains-taking in his examination of the children by questions as to the lesson of the day—"The life of Samuel and the conduct of Eli as to the education of his wicked sons." He caused the elder children to repeat that beautiful chapter of St. Paul—on Charity—viz., 1 Corinthians, chap. xiii., a chapter which surpasses all others in the writings of the apostles in its deep meaning of the Christian religion—yet one which was fully carried out in the character of our blessed Saviour. It shows how necessary it is to have the feelings of a consecrated charity towards all men, and breathe the spirit we suppose holy spirits and angels have in heaven. The school surprised me, in its extent, as I thought it small, whereas it contains over 450 children, small and large, with a large staff of teachers, and a Bible class taught by the Rev. Mr. McKee, the pastor. The children come from the most western parts of the city, and even from Seaton village and the adjoining suburbs. The Sussex Avenue School is small, only eighty, and the Christadelphian Church has only about twenty scholars.

The last body of worshippers are simple and primitive in their forms, yet no doubt very pious and Christ-like in spirit.

The Sussex Avenue English Church is a ritualistic church in its form of worship. I don't wish here to go into the question of the correctness or incorrectness of this ritualism in the Church of England, but in passing would say that it is very different from what the dear old Church was in my boyhood. Christ and His apostles, above all things, loved simplicity, sincerity, pureness, and an informal way of approaching the great God, the Father of all spirits, who loves broken-heartedness, child-like simplicity of worship. Now in closing this letter on the great Cluster of Churches and Sunday Schools (which I trust your readers will excuse for its apparent length) I cannot help but say, how great is the charge and responsibility of those who have these five thousand or more children and eighteen churches under their Christian guidance, and how great may be the result to the future welfare of the souls which are therein taught the truths of Christianity, if such teaching be done in the love of Christ.

CHARLES DURAND.

Toronto, July 18th, 1880.

WHY I CANNOT BE A ROMANIST.

MR. EDITOR,—Some weeks ago a professedly "powerful" sermon was preached by one of our city doctors bearing the above title, and thereafter was published in the *Globe*. It is not my design to trespass so far on your space as to review the sermon thus given for our guidance but simply to show that on the same grounds and for the same reasons the Romanist may say and show why he cannot be a Protestant. This I will present as briefly as I can.

The grounds taken and the reasons given by the doctor are two-fold. The first reason given is "because the Romish Church denies the perspicuity of the Scriptures and therewith the right of private judgment as to their intent and meaning" and second "because the Church of Rome places its traditions on a level with the inspired Scriptures themselves as a source of authority." Now if we look at the different bodies of Protestants, how far from this do they differ? Every body must have a bond, for a body without a bond is a mere anomaly, like a barrel without hoops or a house divided against itself which cannot stand. Each one of these bodies has its own peculiar bond differing more or less from the other, be it tradition, creed or standard, and by these and these alone admissions or exclusions as regards each of these bodies are determined and thereby the right of private judgment as to the intent and meaning of the Scriptures is denied and the traditions or standards of the Church are placed on a level with if not above the word of God. For instance, should a Presbyterian apply for admission into the Methodist or any other Church, he would never be insulted by being asked if he believed the Scriptures but, if he were acquainted with and accepted the standards of the Church. Thus the word of God of itself would not open the door of admission. Now in such a case, which is not novel but universal, I ask any Protestant to say whether is the higher of the two, the word of God or the traditions or standards of the Church? The applicant may be clear in his view of Bible truth and conscientious in his convictions, it matters not, the right of private judgment is denied him and his conscience is unhesitatingly "lorded over." While Protestants may not proclaim their traditions as infallible yet they are employed in a similar way in the Pro-