

## Our Contributors.

### CONCERNING THE AVERAGE MAN

BY KNOXIAN

Some years ago two prominent clergymen opened a church in a western town. Both were noted men, though noted for widely different qualities. One of them read a learned and most elaborate essay, which was probably intended for the special benefit of some prominent men who lived in that town. The other preached a rousing popular sermon, which did good and is remembered by some until this day. The learned elaborate sermon was not forgotten by anybody for the best of all reasons—it had never been remembered by anybody. All that anybody could remember was that a dismal pulpit failure had taken place on a very important occasion.

What made the difference between success and failure? Just this. The one had a sermon that might have done good to a very small number, the other preached to the average man. Probably the elaborate sermon might have been of some use to a congregation of clergymen. It might have done them as much good as any other kind of a sermon. Whether any kind of a sermon would do a congregation of clergymen much good, and what proportion of them ever listen to sermons with any desire for spiritual profit, are questions of interest we do not discuss here and now. All we want to say is that the one preacher failed to hit anybody or anything because he aimed at too small a mark. The other made a powerful impression because he aimed at the average man and hit the whole congregation.

Mr. Barrett Wendell, of Harvard, in his charming new book, takes the ground that the best literary style is the style that strikes the average man. Undoubtedly the most useful style is the one that works up average humanity. If you wish to accomplish anything in either Church or State you must always write and speak with the average man in view. The average man is in a large majority everywhere. There are not very many distinguished people in the world. There are thousands who think themselves distinguished, and tens of thousands who would like to be celebrated for something, but the number of people in any country known to everybody in the country may be counted on your fingers. The number known to many outside of their own country might almost be counted on your thumbs, and perhaps it would not spoil the count if one thumb had been lost in your early days. How many men are there in the British Empire whose names are known even to every civilized man in the empire? Perhaps there is not one. Spurgeon and Gladstone come nearer it than any other two, but there may be white men under the old flag who never heard of either the one or the other.

The upper storey of society is not full and in our country the basement is not crowded. The vast majority are average men, good, sensible, level-headed men as a rule. They are not too easily moved, but when they do move they mean something. When they move in earnest the cranks and dudes, and snobs and hobby horse men and would-be distinguished people have to get out of the way in short order. It is a grand inspiring thing to see the average men march solidly along in the right direction and push the prigs and dudes and would-be leaders out of the way. In a self-governed country the average man is the source of power and once in a while he wakes up and shows his power. It is a thousand pities that he does not wake up more frequently. It does both Church and State a world of good to get an occasional shaking up by the average man. Big little men posing as leaders would become perfectly insufferable if the average man did not interfere once in a while and put things right. Many a minister has been shorn of his strength and worried into his grave simply because he trusted to two or three pets and had no faith in the judgment and fair play of average men.

All great preachers preach to the average man. Spurgeon never uttered a sentence that could not be understood by a man of average intelligence. John Hall is pre-eminently a preacher to average humanity. We once heard him discuss the doctrine of substitution, but he never used the word substitution or substitutionary. All through he said "life was given for life." That is exactly the same thing, but it strikes an average man with a thousand times as much force as the long word substitutionary strikes him.

Successful statesmen always appeal to the average man. The manifesto issued by Sir John Macdonald last winter was in one respect a model. Every sentence, every clause, every word was designed for the average elector of Canada. Keeping in view the well known canon that a piece of literature must be judged by the manner in which it does that which its author intended it to do, Sir John's address was a perfect masterpiece. It was intended to touch the average man and it touched him.

Mr. Mowat knows how to touch the average man in the right place about as well as Sir John knew. The letter addressed the other day to his colleague in the representation of Oxford shows that the Premier's hand is not losing its cunning. The object of that letter no doubt was to show the average man that neither the Premier nor his constituents have any sympathy with annexation. These facts were shown by both the letter and the meeting with an amount of clearness that made misrepresentation impossible. Mr.

Mowat's friends often speak of his knowledge of constitutional law as if that were one of his strongest points. His knowledge of law, constitutional or any other kind, would not have kept him in power these twenty years had he not known the average Ontario man well, and known how to talk and write to him. It may be doubted whether any statesman, however capable and patriotic, can long govern a democratic country unless he knows the average man and knows how to address him. The source of power is neither in the cupola nor in the basement—it is in the main body of the edifice of state, and a man who cannot make himself felt there had better keep out of politics.

Some rare men have a style that moves the average man and at the same time charms the highest culture. Any man of average intelligence feels the power of almost anything Goldwin Smith writes and yet the most cultivated student of literature might study Goldwin Smith's style with profit and pleasure.

Mr. Laurier can move the masses, but he is cultured enough to address any audience in Christendom. He speaks well to the average man and at the same time well enough to satisfy the most cultivated hearer.

Anybody not an insufferable prig would be pleased with Principal Grant's style and yet the Principal is a perfect master at moving average men. His success in dealing with average men has done more than any other one thing in making Queen's what the old University is to-day.

Perhaps some priggish fellow whose eye meets this column may say he cares nothing for average men. All right, young man. The first sermon you preach or speech you deliver strike an attitude, and, in the most affected tone you can command, shout, "DICHLOTETRAHYDROXYBENZENE." If that superior word does not make the people wonder, try "TETRABROMOHYDROQUININE." These words may not be found in any ordinary dictionary, but any well read young chemist will recognize them at once, and by using them you will be free from the vulgar suspicion of addressing average men. You will also be free from the suspicion of doing anybody any good, but perhaps not from the suspicion that you are a fool.

### IRELAND.

BY ONE WHO WAS THERE.

The writer spent some weeks very pleasantly in an entirely rural region, the part of the country where he was born and brought up. That it was in a familiar neighbourhood I was may easily be inferred from what was said in a former article. That district is not only rural, it is besides free from the residences of local gentry for miles on every side. It is an inland landscape that is spread out before you, and in some places there is a very extensive view. There is nothing of a very striking nature to be seen save a range of not very high mountains running from north to south almost the whole length of the country. The mountains are not very far away and they are seen very plainly. However the natural features need not be dwelt upon; the people are of more interest than the country in which they live. It is not meant that there is no interest in the landscape: there is oftentimes a great deal of interest. Before going on it may be stated that a leading line of railway—that from Belfast to Londonderry—passes quite near, and there is a country station at hand.

As to the people, looking southward from the place of my sojourn during those weeks, they are almost entirely of the Scotch race and so Presbyterian almost to a man. Looking northwards, the country becomes higher and bleaker and the people are more or less mixed until the majority of them become Celtic and Roman Catholic. Of the former class the people are of the usual character, retaining many of the qualities that our fathers in the seventeenth century brought from Scotland and taking on generation after generation some lesser features that are not so distinctively Scotch. The farmers are shrewd, industrious, and fairly well-to-do, in some cases more than well-to-do, in the comparative sense rich. The dialect that is spoken is perhaps changing slowly but very slowly. The Orange principles do not hold the farming class to the same degree as they did half-a-century ago; they are more confined to the cottier class, and where there are some local gentry, as there are some miles away, they belong to the order. It is suspected in some quarters that the gentry have fallen in with the Orangemen in order to control them in the political aspect. Whether or not this be the case, the middle class of well-to-do farmers are not in it, at least in that district, and I believe not in any district in the North.

There is no inclination to spend much on luxuries, save in drink, of which there is far too much taken, though less than formerly. There was a time, some of us remember it very well, when there was no social gathering without drink and often a good deal of it. There does not seem to be much of it used in that way now. In fairs and markets there is still far too much used but there is improvement here too. It may seem to a Canadian that such improvement is very slow, yet there is substantial progress made as compared with the state of things in the generation that has passed away. In a market town this summer a man offered once to treat me after the old-fashioned way, but he was a Roman Catholic. While he meant it in kindness, and with him there seemed at the moment no other way of showing kindness to one whom he had known in the long-ago time, yet it is what not one in a thousand of Protestants would have the face to propose now.

Those of the Scotch race are a church-going people as a rule, and, in the place where I attended when a boy, there is in spite of the decrease of population a far better attendance on the services than there was when I remembered it first. The building that was used in my boyhood was erected in the closing years of the last century, and was in its day a good enough specimen of the country church, or as they called it meeting house of those days. The congregations around prior to that were all of the Synod of Ulster, but it for some reason or other which I never heard was Secession. It is very likely that the graver men who laid the foundation of that congregation were of the notion that a more savoury preaching and a sterner discipline were available in the Secession than under the Synod of Ulster. Although there was no other Secession congregation close by, there were charges of that type on both sides not many miles away. The second minister of the congregation passed away at the middle of this century, after a pastorate of forty years. I was then but a boy, but I can remember him very well, although I cannot recall anything of his preaching or administrative talent. The impression that suggests itself is that he was rather commonplace at the best, and in his later years he was too infirm to effect much if he were so inclined. My father had long been a member of session, but he was as old as the minister was. Whatever prosperity the congregation enjoyed up to that date was as much as anything else owing to the fact that in a larger and older congregation not far away there had not for a long time been much ministerial work of the higher kind done. The old man that was there in my early days put in some sixty years of a ministry, and the best that can be said of him is that there was "little good, little ill" in him or his work. It did not recommend him to those that were inclined to be orthodox, that three of his sons found their way into the Unitarian ministry. These suspicions, together with a somewhat easygoingness in ministerial work, resulted in no very high prosperity in one of the largest congregations in all that region of country.

But enough this week, we will continue the narrative in a week or two.

### EARTHQUAKES IN JAPAN.

BY REV. L. H. JORDAN, BERLIN.

A thrill of horror passed around the world when suddenly the intelligence was spread, a few weeks ago, that Japan was in mourning over a terrible disaster. An earthquake had occurred, and in a moment thousands of souls had passed into eternity. The unfortunate victims had no time to escape, for the first indication of danger was a violent trembling of the ground, which converted villages and towns into heaps of shapeless ruins. Then ensued a panic and a flight, made all the more woeful because impelled by the groans of the wounded and dying. And death stalked everywhere. Some who turned back that they might help the helpless were suddenly themselves engulfed; others who turned deaf ears to every cry, fleeing for their lives, died ultimately from exposure and want.

Those who have made themselves familiar with the history of Japan feel no great surprise that it is an earthquake which is accountable for this terrible national calamity. As far back as existing records carry us, this country has been the arena of similar visitations. It is not to be forgotten that there are over fifty active volcanoes within the empire, and every one knows that such surroundings constitute a natural hotbed for earthquakes. The graceful cone of Fusijama, the pride of all these islands, is manifestly the product of an extinct volcano; once it belched forth flames, breaking out threatenings and slaughter. Hence the foreigner who lands in Japan must prepare to reckon with earthquakes. Those who live there report that about five hundred shocks occur every year.

The writer of these notes spent five weeks in Japan twelve months ago, during which time he passed through the very district which has lately been devastated. Within that short period he twice experienced what it means to feel the earth tremble. In each instance the shock was very slight, other wise it might have been impossible for him to make this record of it; but it was abundantly sufficient in both cases to remove all desire to feel the earth trembling in one of its serious convulsions or to witness the effects of some relentless upwelling of its strength.

An ancient superstition used to connect these sudden disturbances of the earth's surface with the struggles of a huge fish, which was supposed to be imprisoned in an unknown subterranean lake; in its efforts to make its escape it was believed to lash itself at times into an ungovernable frenzy. Of late, like many another fable, the story has ceased to be repeated. Such tales lose their interest as soon as science speaks. The enlightened Japanese Government has appointed hundreds of agents throughout the islands to observe and record the symptoms which accompany these disturbances; and, not satisfied to rest even here, it has endowed a chair in the university for the purpose of formulating and disseminating the information thus acquired. This action deserves the highest commendation. That it was abundantly called for will appear when it is mentioned that the earthquakes of Japan are among the worst that are known. In the great majority of cases the loss of life is small; indeed, in very many instances the shock is scarcely perceptible. Still, the appalling catastrophes of 1783 and 1855, not to speak of the disaster which has brought sorrow so recently into thousands