

Our Contributors.

FOUR MEETINGS THAT MIGHT BE IMPROVED.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Winter is the season for church meetings. The annual soiree, the missionary meeting, the congregational meeting, and the Bible Society meeting are usually held during the winter months. Besides these, there are anniversary meetings and meetings of various other kinds. Some clever boys can manage to have two birthdays in a year, and some enterprising congregations manage to have several anniversaries in twelve months—anniversaries of different events of course. "Too many meetings," says the good conservative man who likes to spend his evenings in slippers at home reading his paper, and perhaps consulting his briar-root. That may or may not be. It is a fact, however, that congregations that have much life hold a good many meetings of one kind and another, and congregations that have just life enough to exist, as a rule, hold very few meetings. Whether the life produces the meetings or the meetings produce the life is a question that need not now be discussed. One thing is clear: if a meeting is worth holding at all it ought to be made as good as possible.

THE ANNUAL SOIREE

is having a hard time. It is being killed, but it dies as slowly as the Irishman's snake. Pat said the "baste was dead, but it was not sensible of it." There was a time when the annual soiree was a respectable institution. Grave doctors of divinity patronized it. Prominent city pastors sometimes travelled long distances to speak at soirees. Dr. Burns, Dr. Ormiston, Dr. Inglis, Dr. Irvine and others made many a rousing speech at tea meetings—speeches that lifted many a struggling congregation out of a rut and gave it fresh life and a fresh start—speeches that are remembered to this day. These eminent men considered it a privilege to address the people and give the Church a lift. They wished to make Presbyterianism a power in this land, and when any one of them spoke at a soiree or any other kind of meeting the Presbyterians felt proud, and the other denominations felt there was a *man* at that meeting—not a crank or a clerical dude. There is no reason in the world why a soiree might not be made a very useful meeting. It is often said that people will not listen to sensible speeches at a tea meeting now. It might be said in reply that too often sensible speeches are not offered to them. It is sadly true that there are communities in which *some* of the people are not sufficiently civilized to conduct themselves with decorum at a soiree. That is a sad truth. They whisper and whistle and talk and pelt each other with cakes, accompany the choir with mouth organs, or mouths of their own not so musical as mouth organs, and behave generally in a manner that would make an average Indian ashamed, but all the people of Canada do not conduct themselves in that way. One healthy hornet can break up a camp meeting; two or three roughs can disturb the most orderly meeting ever held, and prevent hundreds of decent people from enjoying themselves. Soirees should be made decent, orderly, enjoyable meetings, or not held at all. If a speaker is not allowed to discuss a live topic in a sensible way, he should sit right down. He should never fight for a hearing, nor tell miserable stories to tickle the ears of unmannerly groundlings. If a community is not sufficiently civilized to hold a respectable social meeting in one of its churches, let that fact be known, and let the Foreign Mission Committee take one of its men from among the Indians, and put him to work in that community. He is more needed there than on the banks of the Saskatchewan. Red men are quiet when they have had enough to eat, but some white bipeds can eat four times the worth of their money and be noisy for the whole evening.

THE ANNUAL MISSIONARY MEETING

is in most congregations far from what it should be. Missionary meetings are usually arranged for in two ways. The Presbytery sends a deputation to address the meeting, or the Session manages its own meeting. Both methods often fail to bring out the people that it is most desirable to have out. The men who know all about the Schemes and who support them libe-

rally are present; the men who know little about the Schemes, care little and pay less, are never present. They are never reached, at least never by the missionary meeting. The collector may reach them on her rounds, but she—for the collector is generally a woman—rarely reaches their pockets to any great extent. Now what is the best way to get at these people? Preach to them, says somebody. True, but there are many things about our Church Schemes that one cannot very well explain in a sermon, and some of our best people, be it remembered, have not a very keen relish for that kind of preaching. Strangers always dislike it, and are almost certain to be present the day you preach about money. Sometimes they never come again. I've printer's ink, says somebody else. That costs money, and some of the people pay just as much attention to your tract as some ministers pay to the circulars they receive from our excellent Conveners. Obviously the best way to discuss the Scheme is at a week-day meeting called for that special purpose. But then if the people do not come. Ah, there's the rub. What means can be used to bring out the people, especially the people who need most to attend? That's the question. That problem has never yet been solved. One good preliminary step toward its solution would be to candidly admit that Presbyterian missionary meetings are often the most poorly attended meetings held in this country. When we have acknowledged that fact then we may begin to improve matters. Perhaps the children of light might learn a useful lesson from the children of this world, or, as some very refined people seem to think, of a world lower than this one. The party politicians have for months been holding meetings over all this country that have been attended by thousands. For months to come they will hold meetings attended by thousands more. How do they bring out the thousands while the best sessions in the Church might be puzzled to get up a missionary meeting that would draw fifty? Mr. Blake's friends or Sir John's friends can arrange a meeting in almost any place that will draw 2,000 or 3,000 in any kind of weather. There is not a Presbytery in the western part of this Church that can arrange a series of missionary meetings conducted by its own members at each of which the Presbytery can be sure of an audience of twenty! How do these politicians reach the people? How do they bring out the people? How do they move the people when they are brought out? Would it not pay as well to learn a little from these men as to denounce them? To say that the people take an interest in politics is to utter the most drivelling of commonplaces. Would they take a special interest in politics if no means were used to interest them? What candidate would risk his election on the kind of efforts that many Presbyterians make to secure aid for the Schemes of the Church. No politician fit to be out of an insane asylum would risk ten votes on the machinery used in many congregations to collect money to send the Gospel to the heathen.

One thing is very clear. Any Scheme that is not well brought before the people must fail. Were it not so pitiable, it would be very amusing to watch a church court, even the General Assembly, passing resolutions commending Schemes to the liberality of the people. Just pass a resolution or recommendation, you know, and the thing is done! Fancy the Tory members at Ottawa passing a resolution that the country should support them, and the Grits passing another that the country should support them and leaving the matter there!! Well, yes, they might do something more, they might send a copy of the resolution to county associations, which would be about the equivalent of the ecclesiastical procedure known as sending things down to Presbyteries. When we compare the efforts made by political managers to move the people with the efforts made by the Presbyterian Church to support her Schemes in many places, one wonders that the Presbyterian Church lives. Its existence is the strongest possible evidence of its divine origin.

The congregational meeting and the Bible Society meeting must be laid over for future treatment

THE older I grow—and I now stand on the brink of eternity—the more comes back to me the sentence in the catechism which I learned when a child, and the fuller and deeper the meaning comes. "What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever."—*Thomas Carlyle.*

RAMBLES AMONGST SWISS HILLS.

A WEEK IN THE JURA.

The industries carried on in the valleys of the Jura—the factories for watch-making, the mills for the preparation of asphalt, the distilleries for absinthe, etc., supply matter for an interesting letter. But natural objects are perhaps more suitable for description during summer rambles, and therefore I confine myself at present to

ERRATIC BLOCKS AND BOULDERS,

which are met with not only on the crests of the Jura Hills, but on the sides of almost every mountain in Switzerland. If this letter prove uninteresting the fault will be the writer's, not that of the theme, which, to all intelligent readers, must awaken thought by its suggestiveness.

These boulders are sometimes called "foundlings," or wandering blocks, being, in many cases, found forty or fifty miles or still greater distances from their original homes. They are of all sizes from that of a large ball to bodies of such dimensions that from the contents of a single stone, a solid two-storied building has been built. In another case I saw a large house erected on the top of one of them. The former bears an inscription in German, of which the following is at least the sense:

From out a great red acre-stone,
To many little pieces blown,
By hand of man and powder's blast,
Was made this house so firm and fast,
God in His mercy keep it sound,
Let no ill-luck its walls confound.

Whenever they are found in quantities, one at least, for some reason has got a popular name by which it is known. In the Jura the favourite boulder is called "Pierre a Bot." It stands on the side of Mont Chaumont, and to visit it from Neuchâtel makes a pleasant walk. It measures fifty feet in length, twenty in width, and is forty feet high, so that its volume is 40,000 cubic feet. But this is small compared with others to be seen. Take for example the green slate boulder dropped by the Schwartzberg glacier in 1818. To see it, tourists leave the train at Visp, on the Rhone, and go up the valley which leads to Zermatt. This valley divides at Stalden, two hours from Visp—the valley to the right leads to St. Nicholas and Zermatt, that to the left to Saas and Monte Moro. Three hours above Saas bring you to this gigantic boulder, which measures 244,000 cubic feet, and from it the glacier has now retreated half a mile. In a chestnut grove above Monthey, in the Rhone valley, amongst an immense number of boulders, is the huge "Pierre Adzo," which is curiously balanced on a point but a few inches in area. But it is time to ask,

WHENCE CAME THEY AND HOW?

The first part of the question, science has no difficulty in answering. The material of which they are composed gives the key to their original home. The agency by which they were transported to their present site has occupied much of the time and thought of men of science; but this has also been satisfactorily solved. Of course, at first, very crude notions were held and found utterance. It was supposed, for example, that nature, at the last elevation of the Alps, took to throwing vast volcanic bombs, and that these errant fragments had been ejected and scattered, as they are found, over hill and dale. By and by, however, the nature and motions of glaciers came to be studied—the first idea being thrown out by Veneiz, an engineer of the Canton of Valais. This idea was taken up and studied by Charpentier, Forbes and Agassiz, and the conclusion arrived at was that these boulders had been landed at their several localities off the backs of enormous glaciers which, at one time, filled these valleys, modifying if not really creating them. On the reasons which led to this theory we need not dwell, further than to say that the valleys themselves indicate, in several ways, that at one time they were the beds of gigantic glaciers which had passed through them, rounding the surface of the rocks in some cases 1,000 feet above the present level of the valleys, striating and polishing them so that they sometimes glitter like mirrors in the sun.

It is quite common, even now, where glaciers are shrinking, to see the marginal rocks laid bare for a height of fifty or one hundred feet above the present glacier, and the rocks thus exposed bear icemarks and moraines, some ancient and others modern, shewing