

Our Contributors.

CONCERNING THE CHURCH TILL.

BY KNOXONIAN.

A few weeks ago a well known merchant who does business on King St., Toronto, was asked by a customer if there was any improvement in business. "Well," replied the merchant, "we hear about improvement, and read about it in the newspapers, but

WE DON'T SEE IT IN THE TILL"

It goes unsaid that the Till is the most important place to see financial improvement. Hearing about it and reading about it in the newspapers do not pay a merchant's bills nor keep his balance right at the bank, nor get bread and butter for his family. An extra hundred dollars in the Till at the end of each week does more to help a struggling merchant than a thousand political speeches designed to show that Canada is the most prosperous country in the world. Even a newspaper article which shows in glowing terms that business is first class does not help a merchant to pay his rent or meet his drafts. A well filled Till is the main thing in business.

We write Till with a big "T" partly out of respect to the old rule which used to say that the principal word in compositions should begin with a capital and partly because the Till is a great institution. There cannot be much done in business, in church or state, if the Till is afflicted with chronic emptiness.

Twenty years ago there was much discussion in Canadian Presbyterian circles, especially in the Metropolitan Presbytery of Toronto, about the "mental attitude" of people towards a certain doctrine. A little discussion about the mental attitude of people towards the church Till is useful at times.

Some people simply tolerate the Till. They think it is a kind of incidental nuisance connected with the church, a nuisance that the church cannot abolish but still more or less of a nuisance. They don't like the Till but they are not prepared to suggest any way by which the church can get on without it. Their attitude towards the Till is the attitude of toleration.

Some people profess to be opposed to the Till. They think the Till is a sinful thing, so sinful that their consciences will not allow them to put any money into it. If a minister preaches on missions and asks the people to give something to send the gospel to men who have it not, they say that minister is not a spiritually-minded man. These people will hold on to an American twenty-five cent piece until the eagle screams and at the same time talk about their spirituality. Their attitude towards the Till is one of pronounced hostility.

Neutrality is an attitude far too common. People who take this attitude simply sit bolt upright in their pews as the plate is passed around and do neither one thing nor another. They assume that they do quite enough for the church when they patronise it with their presence.

The proper attitude, and the one taken by the people who sustain the church, is that the Till is a divine institution and that giving is a privilege and is part of our worship. Were it not for the people who maintain this attitude Presbyterianism would not last for a twelvemonth.

The church Till is not everything but it is a most important thing. Prayer is not everything. Preaching is not everything. Working is not everything. No one thing is everything and the Till cannot therefore be everything, but the Till happens to be not only one important thing but one thing without which all the other things lose much of their potency. The Head of the church has so arranged matters that gospel work cannot be done to any extent or with any degree of efficiency without money. Of course there are people in the world now who could have made a much better arrangement but they were not here at the right time. They

should have been here when the church was founded in the days of Abraham and reorganized it after Pentecost. Had they been on time with their plans and had their plans been approved there might have been no church Till but they were late as they always are. The Till is here by divine appointment and it cannot go without the church going along with it.

It is not right to say that the Till is the only test of a man's piety but most assuredly it is one test and a good one too.

A full Till is not undoubted proof of congregational prosperity but it is satisfactory evidence along one line. A pastor does himself and his congregation and the cause of Christ gross injustice when he gives the "collection" as unquestionable evidence of all kinds of prosperity.

One good test of a minister or a movement is the Till.

If a man is making a great noise but gets nothing put into the Till for God's cause he fails in at least one important point.

If a church does a lot of blowing about revivals and other big things and puts little or nothing in the Till it is perfectly fair to say the revival never reached the people's pockets.

Brothers, what is your attitude towards the Till?

THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF IAN MACLAREN'S WRITINGS.

BY WARFLECK.

There is a wonderful, an irresistible charm about Ian MacLaren's writings. They are full of touches of nature, and have made the whole world kin. Their pathos is most overcoming. I will frankly confess that the "Bonnie Brier Bush" is the only book I have cried over since the appearance of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." It is a sort of ungracious task to pick faults in productions that so move and melt the heart. We have so few books of this character and it does one so much good to have the rugged hardness of the old Adam subdued and softened a bit, that I own to more than usual hesitation in looking at Ian MacLaren with the eye of a critic. But I think it needs to be done, and if so, of course somebody must do it. It has been "borne in" upon me in many hours of serious reflection and perhaps the burden of duty rests on my shoulders.

Dr. Watts tells us

"The brightest things beneath the sky
Give but a flattering light,
We should suspect some danger nigh
Where we possess delight."

I am not sure if that is always true, but I am certain that it is sometimes. We contemplate with much pleasure that marvellous character sketch, "Weelum McOlure," but taking "a conjunct view" of this man, what is the picture we have presented to us? That of one who, though distinguished by almost every feature of moral excellence, passes all his life in neglect of the ordinances of public worship, and so far as his influence goes, is on the side of ungodliness rather than of religion. He wholly lacks that characteristic of a good man which shone out so conspicuously in David, and expressed itself in the words, "My soul longeth yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." In this age of Sabbath desecration and sanctuary desertion, I dread the effect of putting before the world as a model man such an example as this. Was this a sketch from real life, or is there much of the fictitious about this picture of the village doctor? Could there be so much goodness without godliness? It is at least doubtful.

I am not exactly a theologian of the old school, but there is a laxity on some points about the "Bonnie Brier Bush" which I do not admire. Charity is all very well, but it may be carried too far. I have no sympathy with "Quicunque Vult" whether found in prayer book, confession, or creed,

but that there are some things essential to salvation, and that there is a "faith" which has been "delivered to the saints" for which we are to "contend earnestly," I firmly believe. But I did not sit down to discuss the soundness of Ian MacLaren's theology in this article. That is too large a subject and involves some subtleties of distinction at which I am not an adept, I prefer to go on surer ground and say a little on the moral influence of this writer's teachings.

In discussing this theme, I shall confine my attention to "The Days of Auld Lang Syne" and one other later production of our author. The very first chapter of the volume just named, "A Triumph in Diplomacy," draws a picture of mean higgling and clever manoeuvring about the renewal of a farm lease which is in perfect contrast with the sublime unselfishness of that noble hero, Dr. McClure. According to the story there would seem to have been only one man in the parish who was capable of driving a thoroughly honest bargain with his landlord. "No one was better liked or more respected than Burnbrae, but the parish was not able to take more than a languid interest in the renewal of his lease, because it was understood that he would get it on his own terms." Alike the landlord and all the "neebors" knew that this man was willing to give a fair price for his farm in the way of rent, while all the rest of the tenantry wanted to get their leases under value. It may be a true picture of life in Drumtochty, but if so, it shows that the moral sense of the people was very low. The particular case which is cited as "a triumph of diplomacy," is one in which persistent depreciation and the meanest kind of lying succeeded in getting £10 a year off the rent, equivalent in a nineteen years' lease to the snug little sum of £190. The tricks and devices employed to achieve this result are skilfully narrated, and form a deeply interesting study in human nature, but the moral influence of the chapter as a whole is anything but wholesome.

"A Servant Lass" in a couple of chapters,—how she went out and how she came home,—presents a case of casuistry on which an ecclesiastical council might argue for a month and arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. Such a medley of lying and deception, self-denying kindness and disinterested benevolence was surely never before concocted, and all to give a poor servant girl a happy, contented death bed. Might not the same delicate generosity have been shown without such gross deception and downright lying? If it is motive that gives actions their moral character, it would seem that on the whole it was a good act that was performed, but this view of the matter involves the Jesuitical doctrine that it is justifiable to do evil that good may come. If lying and deception may be practised from a good motive, there will be little difficulty in finding a motive, under almost any circumstances, to shield wrong doing.

THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN of Jan. 29th contained a supplementary chapter of Drumtochty history, entitled "A Footstep from the Unseen." It is a clumsy sort of ghost story, or, rather, for there are several of them, a collection of clumsy ghost stories. The particular one which is put forward by the author as involving "a footstep from the unseen," carries with it several possible explanations of the mysterious circumstances which are narrated. That which would naturally occur to a well-balanced mind was that as there were at the time "suspicious characters," or, as we should call them, "tramps," haunting the glen, some of these had visited the premises, caused the noise of footsteps, tossed about the bed clothing, and disarranged the furniture of an upstairs room. The ground for suspecting supernatural agency is of the slenderest. But the narrator, afraid that his house-keeper will take a "scunner" at the place when she sees the startling evidences of ghost work, says, "I took my resolution swiftly." It was to lie about the affair. "You may well look horrified, but I heard you say once no man could make up a bed. Yes, I tried

my hand to pass the time before it grew dark—got sheets out of the cupboard you see—but it wouldn't do—sorry for the mess I've made." Then he adds, "But it was not I that laid out that bed for the dead. Nor have I any doubt that a footstep from the unseen paced the cottage that evening." O man, great is thy gullibility, and small thy love and regard for the truth. Art thou a servant of the Most High God who desireth truth in the inward parts," and a preacher of the New Testament which enjoins "putting away lying" and "speaking every man truth with his neighbor?" All the examples of lying which have been cited in this article are of the most needless kind. Business can and ought to be done honestly and truthfully. No dying pillow needs the help of alle to soften it. Better lose a good housekeeper than keep her by the help of a falsehood. The age is honey-combed with fraud and deception. At such a time, if ever,—nay more than ever—a preacher should hold forth the truth, and inculcate the wickedness of "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."

GO WEST, YOUNG MAN.

BY REV. D. G. McQUEEN, B.A.

The annual visit of the Superintendent of Home Missions for Manitoba and the North-West and British Columbia, will soon be made to the Colleges of the Church for the purpose of enlisting volunteers for work in the West. The importance and needs of the work can be neither over estimated nor too strongly stated. And I am sure that the case will be well presented to the young men, who, in a short time, will be standing looking out—let us hope not with too telescopic an eye—into the world and saying to the Church that needs them and that has cared for and educated them: "Here am I, send me."

Writing as one who has been "at the front" for nearly nine years I must honestly say to you that the Church will not, and the Home Mission Committee cannot, ensure you any such salaries as we find in the General Assembly's Foreign Mission Report nor any of the very desirable perquisites therein mentioned. But you can be assured of abundance of self denying work—the grandest of all—as "God's fellow-workers," in laying the foundation of a Christian nation. In the West especially do we sincerely hope that you young men will by your action this coming spring remove the reproach that has been cast and rests upon you of seeking, in the comfort and convenience of an eastern charge, selfish ends and not the glory of God and the good of His kingdom. This charge of selfishness, if true, ends in indifference to and ignorance of the claims of any Home Mission work outside of your own little plot, and you become an easy prey to the indefinite and confusing glamor of mission work in far away lands and among people of "a strange tongue." The truth of this is seen in facts gleaned from, in some respects, the bluest of "blue looks." Last March the Home Mission Committee, "confined" by the indifference and ignorance of many of the pastors and "much people" of the Church, recommended, and Assembly adopted and embodied in the Home Mission Report, "that a sum not exceeding \$17,000 be granted to the Synod of Manitoba and the North-West, and a sum not exceeding \$13,000 to the Synod of British Columbia" to carry on the Home Mission work of a territory extending halfway across a continent and rapidly filling up with a heterogeneous mass, mainly Anglo-Saxon, and in many cases only nominally Christian. In the same territory there was expended by the Church last year a sum of \$23,755 for work among the Indians and Chinese. And the estimates passed for this year reach the sum of \$32,343. A comparison of the salaries received by Home and Foreign missionaries laboring side by side is not only "odious" but simply outrageous, in the face of all honesty and honor, and the permanent value of the work that is respectively carried on by these workers. "We speak