

THE GIFT OF THE GAB.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE SECULARIST, CHARLES WATTS.

And the Answer of the Clergy Draw Anecdotes Appropos to the Occasion from G. E. F., of Fredericton—There is Nothing Like the Gift of the Gab.

I was quite interested in the conclusion arrived at by the St. John clergy in connection with the subject before them was whether or not it was desirable to appoint one of their number to debate with a gentleman known as Mr. Watts, "the Secularist," so called, upon the fundamental principles of Christianity. I copy from the Telegraph of June 4:

The secretary read a petition from a very large number of persons professing to be Christians, expressing a fear of growing skepticism, saying that all ministers should defend their creed, and asking on these grounds that the evangelical ministers should meet Charles Watts, the Secularist, in public debate.

After remarks had been made by several of the gentlemen present, the conclusion arrived at was, in my judgment, very wise and very judicious—viz., in brief, to let Mr. Watts severely alone. No doubt the adoption of this course was based upon "the Rock of Ages"—a system of 1900 years—against which no assault, and there have been many, has made the slightest impression—so that for one of our clergy to step forth into the public arena at this time of day as the defender of such a faith, and do battle with any one gifted with the gab, who thinks proper to throw down the gauntlet, would gain nothing, but perhaps lose something in the encounter, and thus render them perhaps worse citizens than ever.

But in order to raise immediate funds to pay his board bill and keep things moving generally, our genius undertook to give a course of lectures at the Mechanics Institute, upon astronomy. What an illiterate bridge builder (illiterate not necessarily because a bridge builder, but any one could see that he and Lindley Murray were entire strangers to each other), could know about astronomy became a puzzle to the whole town, and so the whole town out of curiosity turned out to learn what our great "secularist" had to say for himself upon a subject so much more far-reaching than that of building a 600 feet bridge out of pure deals and spikes. He said (and now comes the next point we desire to make), that the world for the last four or five or six hundred years (he was not particular as to numbers) had been misled and laboring under a great delusion—that the Copernican system was a fraud—that Ptolemy (whom he called Pollimy), who insisted that the earth was fixed in the centre of the universe, and that the sun and stars revolved around the earth, which was a flat surface, like a pancake—was the true astronomer, as every one might ascertain for himself, if he would only take the trouble, as he had done, and thus learn how easily people had been gulled during so many centuries. Ay, and by the time he had delivered his third lecture he found many believers among his auditors. Every one became an astronomer, some in favor of poor Copernicus, and others on the side of the exploded Ptolemy theory. At the suggestion of our "secularist" a society was formed—subscription \$1 a year, from which quite a snug sum of money was obtained and pocketed by the president, the founder of it. (My recollection is not quite clear upon this head.) If it had even the merits of our "federation" organization, or, later still, our "Loyalist" movement, with the intention of making the world move, instead of one to make it stand still, the press might have been awakened pro and con; but then in those days there were no reporters to wake up the editors—while the man in the moon felt no interest as to the opinions of St. John in reference to the solar system—if he did, perhaps only laughed at the gullibility of so many respectable people.

While our genius talked loudly, and glibly at the Institute by night, by day he continued to hammer at his bridge. One fine morning, however, he was among the missing—nor did he turn up all that day. He was off before anybody else was up—thus proving by practical demonstration that if the world did not move, he knew how to move himself, and at the right time, for his creditors had begun to come down upon him so soon as they had discovered that his deal bridge gave visible signs of tumbling into the tide. It is needless to add that the astronomical society (if it really did exist) did not last long after this; and it was currently believed at the time that, after all, Copernicus was right, and that the world does move. Whatever became of our "secularist" hero, it is unknown up to this day. Even his old creditors have long since given him up.

Fredericton, June 4. G. E. F.

The Domestic Has Not Recovered. A lady with the best heart in the world and a very large share of this world's goods, but whose education had been rather neglected in her youth, took great pride in her elegantly furnished house, especially in a very handsome grand piano, which she viewed merely as a beautiful piece of furniture, and not all as a musical instrument. One morning a guest who had happened downstairs a little earlier than usual, heard her hostess instructing the new parlor maid how to dust the drawing room.

"And be very careful about the piano, Mary; lift up the lid, and dust the insides, and above all things, mind you clean the teeth!"

When spoken to by a friend shortly afterwards, Stephenson remarked, "well, well, science is a good thing and so is truth; but after all there is nothing like the gift of the gab."

Here is another story still more appropos: Some 35 years ago a half-fledged genius found his way to St. John from across the lines, and proposed to build a bridge at the falls about where the cantilever bridge now stands—just before Mr. W. K. Reynolds of excellent memory essayed to give us a suspension bridge, which will for ever stand as a monument to his genius and enterprise—from deals altogether. These were to be

lapped one over another, each tier projecting about two feet beyond its predecessor; the work of extension was of course carried on over the top. The breadth of the bridge was probably 20 feet. The design was that as soon as the centre of the chasm should be reached from both sides the key planks, as it were, would be inserted, and the whole structure be compactly and tightly knit together. The work was begun on the eastern side, and day after day the carpenters might have been seen extending the plank tiers one over another and spiking them down as each new lap was made. The number of deals lying about for the work was prodigious—all got on credit. It was rather startling to observe the men at work, probably a distance of 50 feet from the shore, and if there had been the least sag, or miscarriage of calculation, down they must have all gone together into the angry billows below; but they seemed not the least afraid, but hammered away upon this frail humbug day after day with as little concern as though they were upon terra-firma. Crowds of people went over to the falls every day to see this new device for crossing a river. Some doubted but many believed that it would be a great success; and having "the gift of the gab" to perfection, and a very plausible way of putting things, the engineer managed to knock a great many deals and endorsed notes of hand out of honest folk who thought they saw something in the speculation for their own benefit.

DEAD EBENEZER: I ride these few lines in haste, but come down without fail, for it's gointer be the greatest tea meetin' you ever seen. Tell yer mother and sisters and all what pink cotton's the style loose, with white sash drawn in the at the waste. Hoops is poplar and bustles is worn small. Hats is made of straw, same as was in the bed what I slept in when I see visitin' you, only there isn't no trees in it like there was stickin' in me when I see visitin' you. Hats is also trimmed with brood green ribbons, let flyin' loose. Sky-blue gloves made of cotton is the stile, and all the wimmin wearin' pink parrots trimmed with artyshtal roses and dandylions. So if they cum down they kin be in fashion if they want to. Has your father got his whiskers shaved or yet. If not, tell him what they're the stile; stickin' out from his chin like a meat-look, I mean. All the doods is wearin' homespun this summer, so yer father won't have ter git a new pair of pance. It's gointer to be warm here, so he'd better bring somethin' to save his complexion.

It's gointer to be grate; electric menagerie biggerin' Baruum's. Everything gointer by electric lite. You orter see the pictures. Ask Mr. Cornwall ter tell you all about it, 'cause that's what he does. There's gointer to be a monsther trades percession, too. I don't know what the monsther trade is 'cept its bein' a alderman, but I guess it'll be gorgeouse. And the bands is gointer to play on the square also. There's lots a gurl on the square Ebenezer, and if you want one don't be bashful and tell me. I don't know whether your growed mutch er not, but I guess I kin get you one, 'cause the gurls is all sizes. They're gointer to have a mareen pageant or somethin' in the harbor, but pa says if they'd only had it this spring they could a had it up Main street, Portland, so I guess they must be gointer to have some man-a-wars in the show. We're gointer ter have a torch lite percession with electric lites and a parade and other things too noomer to here state. Be sure to come, Ebenezer, and tell all the folks 'cause pa's invitin' everybody.

Pa found this letter and was madder'n a bull, so he tore it up and I had ter rite it over again. He said what them blamed wimmin would look worse nor anything in the parade, and what old Mister Greenbow was a old bore and greener than his name. But I guess they'll all come though, and me an' Bill is gointer ter be the recepshun committee. JOHNNY MULCAHEY.

OPPOSITION IS THE WORD. The Lansdowne "Theatre" versus The Mechanics' Institute. "Lansdowne Theatre" is the name on the flag, that now floats over the building on Charlotte street where the curlers spent so many pleasant evenings last winter. The rink has been leased by the Micawber club, who have transformed it into a theatre, and a company under the management of Mr. E. A. McDowell will open there Monday. There is nothing very attractive about the interior. The large beams and rafters of the building do not show to advantage. A large raised platform has been built, sloping towards the stage, the part near the door being as high as the gallery of the rink. This is provided with chairs to seat 500 or 600 people, and the grade is such that all can get a good view of the stage, which is built about two feet from the floor and measures 26x54 feet. Four electric lights have been placed in the flies and these can be regulated to give any quantity of light. All the Micawber club scenery, so familiar to patrons of the Institute, will be used at the Lansdowne, and it is said Mr. Gill has been engaged to make it look brighter, something it needs badly.

Mr. Oliver Jones' Narrow Escape. Here is another bon mot from the luminous little lady whom I introduced to the readers of PROGRESS last week. One of our most prominent capitalists, whose name will appear at the end of this little story, and who is equally noted for his portly form, his large benevolence and his heavy bank account, had a very narrow escape from being killed, last week. He was crossing the street, when a frantically driven hack dashed up, and as he was looking the other way, he was almost under the horses' feet before he observed his danger, and not by bystanders dragged him aside he would have been trampled down and almost certainly killed. Her husband was relating the episode in little madame's hearing, and concluded with the remark: "It was touch and go. If he had slipped and fallen it would have been all over with him." "Yes, and with the crossing, too!" his better half said, dreamily. "It would have been all over—Jones." * * *

For cramps, cholera, diarrhoea, summer complaint, use Kendrick's Mixture. Kendrick's Mixture, a positive cure in nearly every case. Sold by dealers. 25 cents.—Adel.

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Smokers will not fail to try the "National" Havana Cigars, and Virginia Tobaccos. The best in town.

THE INFUX WILL BE GREAT.

Johnny Mulcahey's Efforts to Make the Summer Carnival a Success.

I guess there's gointer to be a grate inflocks of visitors comin' to this town this summer. Pa says it'll be somethin' 'normis sure. Summer carnivals is grate things fur inflocks, and I guess we're gointer to have somethin' of a inflocks ourselves, 'cause pa's mail is orful big from the country, sayin' what don't he remember that invitation what he give when he's rustercatin' 3 or 4 years ago; well, yours trooly is a comin' down. They all says their pa's trooly, but I guess ma don't care as long as it ain't wummin what's writin'.

Ebenezer Greenbow, what's jist my size, and lives upter Belle ile rit to me askin' if I'd invite him. I like Ebenezer, 'cause he tickled a firy horse one day when Ise up there, and the horse hit Ebenezer's father in the stummick, and made a hole in the barren. Eb's father is a funny old feller when he's hit that way, 'cause he looked as though he'd been eatin' green peaches since he's born. I rit Ebenezer back as follows:

ST. JOHN, June 13. DEAD EBENEZER: I ride these few lines in haste, but come down without fail, for it's gointer be the greatest tea meetin' you ever seen. Tell yer mother and sisters and all what pink cotton's the style loose, with white sash drawn in the at the waste. Hoops is poplar and bustles is worn small. Hats is made of straw, same as was in the bed what I slept in when I see visitin' you, only there isn't no trees in it like there was stickin' in me when I see visitin' you. Hats is also trimmed with brood green ribbons, let flyin' loose. Sky-blue gloves made of cotton is the stile, and all the wimmin wearin' pink parrots trimmed with artyshtal roses and dandylions. So if they cum down they kin be in fashion if they want to. Has your father got his whiskers shaved or yet. If not, tell him what they're the stile; stickin' out from his chin like a meat-look, I mean. All the doods is wearin' homespun this summer, so yer father won't have ter git a new pair of pance. It's gointer to be warm here, so he'd better bring somethin' to save his complexion.

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STEAMER "MAY QUEEN," C. W. BRANNEN, Master, will, during the present season, run between the above-named places, leaving her wharf, INDIANTOWN, every WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY MORNING, at EIGHT o'clock, local time. RETURNING, will leave Salmon River on MONDAY and THURSDAY mornings, touching at Gagetown wharf each way. Will run on the West side of Long Island.

The owners of this reliable steamer having put her in the best repair during the past winter, and are now running her strictly under Dominion Government inspection, which, combined with qualities for speed and comfort, make her one of the best boats now plying on the St. John River or its tributaries. This "Old Favorite" EXCURSION STEAMER can be chartered on reasonable terms for Parties, etc., on Tuesday and Friday of each week. All UP FREIGHT must be prepaid, unless when accompanied by owner, in which case it can be settled for on board. A careful person in attendance to receive freight. Freight received on Tuesdays and Fridays.

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ROUND TRIP 50 CENTS. N. B.—No Excursion on rainy days. R. G. EARLE, Manager.

STEAMER "BELLISLE" WILL LEAVE "HEAD OF BELLISLE," every MONDAY, WEDNESDAY and FRIDAY morning, at 7 o'clock, for Indiantown. Returning, will leave wharf at Indiantown every TUESDAY, THURSDAY and SATURDAY, at 12:30 p. m.

G. MABEE, Manager.

BAY OF FUNDY S. S. COMPY. (LIMITED.) SUMMER SAILINGS. ON and after 1st June, the CITY OF MONTICELLO will sail from the Company's wharf, Reed's Point, on

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 7-15 a. m., local, for DIGBY and ANNAPOLIS. EXCURSION TICKETS will be issued on Saturday at St. John, Digby and Annapolis, good to return either way on Monday, at one fare. Tourists and invalids paying full one way, and desiring to return same day, will be entitled to return tickets free, on application at the Purser's office on board.

Returning same days and due here at 6:45 p. m. H. D. TROOP, Manager.

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A. L. LAW, Gilbert's Lane Dye Works. W. ALEX. PORTER, WILL REMOVE —ABOUT— SATURDAY, June 8, to his New Store, Corner of Union and Waterloo Streets. S. R. FOSTER & SON, MANUFACTURERS OF STEEL and IRON-CUT NAILS, And SPIKES, TACKS, BRADS, SHOE NAILS, HUNGARIAN NAILS, Etc. ST. JOHN, N. B.

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