

Our Contributors.

CROWDING THE PROFESSIONS.

BY KNOXIAN.

We expect to see an attack made on the High Schools of Ontario before long. It will come in this way. A number of excellent people, chiefly farmers, are becoming seized with the idea that attendance at the high schools unfits boys for farm life. It is contended that if a boy goes for a year or two to a high school, he rarely goes back to the farm. The education received in the high school creates a desire for the professions, and the boy strikes for law or medicine instead of going home to help his father. It is alleged that in this way the High Schools are drawing our best young men away from agriculture and crowding them into professions already overcrowded. The remedy suggested is to cut down the grants to high schools, raise the fees and make the High Schools so expensive that a smaller number of boys will be able to attend them. Several people will have to be consulted before this remedy is applied.

A huge assumption underlies this argument. It is assumed that the boy gets his dislike for farm life in the High School. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred he had the dislike before he darkened the High School door. He went to the High School because he already had a dislike for farming, and had resolved to follow some other vocation. Attendance at the High School is the effect, not the cause of his dislike to farming. He got his aversion to farming on the farm—not in the High School.

It is also assumed that it is a bad thing for the country and for the boys that so many of them should leave the farm. It may be, and often is, the very best thing they can do. Supposing a farmer has 100 acres of land and five sons. Is he to follow the Quebec method and divide and subdivide the farm till each son and grandson has a piece not as large as a decent potato patch? There is no work on a 100-acre farm for half a dozen boys, and the best thing they can do is do something else. Besides, the boys after a while will want to follow their father's example, and get married. Just fancy six or seven families trying to squeeze a living out of 100 acres of land with wheat at 80 cents a bushel! This state of things would soon bring about another Ireland, without the Irishman's ability to live on potatoes and fight for something more.

The Ontario Minister of Agriculture stated the other day that the professions are greatly overcrowded. This statement has been made so often and by so many men in high places that everybody believes it. The numbers of lawyers and doctors, it is alleged, has grown out of all proportion to the population. Now let us examine this statement.

THE LAWYERS.

Let it be assumed that the number of lawyers in Ontario is larger in proportion to the population than it was, say twenty-five years ago. The question is not purely or even mainly one of population. The business of the country has increased marvellously, and general business always makes law business. The more business the more misunderstandings, and the more misunderstandings the more law suits. The railway companies, insurance companies, loan companies, large manufacturing concerns, and corporate bodies of different kinds probably pay more money to lawyers now in a week than the whole bar of half a dozen ordinary counties received from their clients twenty-five years ago. It might puzzle even the Ontario Minister of Agriculture to show that the number of lawyers has increased faster than the volume of law business. That is the point.

Let any man who thinks that the legal profession is greatly overcrowded get into a law suit. When the bill of costs comes in he may find that the competition has not been keen enough to bring down the rates to any great extent.

In almost any town in Ontario lawyers live in the best houses. That is a fact that any one can see for himself. As a rule they are the best dressed and most comfortable looking men. You never see a lawyer wear a wrinkled, glazed, alpaca coat such as adorns the person of hundreds of clergymen. The profession may be pretty well filled up, but the most brainless, briefless fellow in it usually has a better income than many Presbyterian ministers have.

THE DOCTORS.

Everybody says the medical profession is becoming overcrowded. The number of doctors has probably grown faster in proportion than the population of the country. That is far from being an unmixed evil if an evil at all. In the early days many a brave settler male and female, suffered untold agony because the nearest doctor was twenty or thirty miles away. Many a brave fellow lay for days with broken bones because there was no medical assistance within reach. Valuable lives were lost that might have been saved had medical assistance been near. If those people who deal in small jokes about the increasing number of doctors and medical students knew what some of the early settlers—perhaps their own fathers and mothers suffered for want of medical assistance, they wouldn't try so hard to be funny over the matter. The medical is one of the noblest of professions. To save life and lessen suffering is one of the highest vocations. If there are more men trying to lessen the sufferings of their neighbours, then so much the better for the neighbours. The shorter the time you have to wait for the doctor so much the better for you. The number of doctors in Ontario is not so large yet that each one of them will not have to attend dozens of patients who never pay their bills.

THE CLERGY.

Is the clerical profession overstocked? That depends. If you mean, have we as many ministers as the liberality of our Ontario people will sustain, we should say, Yes. The supply in the Methodist Church, we believe, is quite up to the demand. For local purposes we think there are about as many in the Presbyterian Church as the people are willing to find bread for. But if you mean have we as many as we ought to have to send the Gospel to the heathen, then the answer must be an emphatic No. There is work in the world for thousands more if the Church had the wherewithal to send them.

LETTER FROM NORTH CHINA.

It is an arduous, if not an impossible task for me to give my friends at home even a peep through my eyes at the Chinese; the land they live in; their habits and customs, domestic, religious and political; architecture, etc. Only the knowledge that my friends in the home land are capable of appreciating these things more than I am, reconciles me to saying anything about them. I am also aware that many of the scenes and incidents coming within the range of an observing missionary would, if properly reproduced, be of prodigious illustrative and quickening value to the brethren at home. I would that I could aright set forth the moral and social condition of the people, and their extraordinary need, and relate with all the force of zeal-fired truth the dual aspects of missionary effort in far off Cathay—its successes and its discouragements, its joys glistening with the sheen of heaven, and its sorrows heavy with more than Egyptian darkness—so as to arouse others through you to a more reasonable, I had almost said "decent" interest in the Lord's work throughout the whole rebellious world. I am painfully well aware how such language is generally received and answered by the majority of even Christian people at home, and I am conscious of the opprobrium heaped upon any and all who dare speak in this way. I am also aware that such indignation-laden replies are truly meant to be righteous, and I give their authors credit for sincerity—yea, methinks the extreme of sincerity. Nevertheless, I am compelled by the irresistible constraints of the tried Scripture, conscience and current facts—to believe that although the Church, as a whole, is practically asking—and her tones are tremulous with innocence, injured and surprised, "Wherein have we despised Thy Name. Wherein have we wearied Him? Wherein have we robbed Thee? If God would speak to us in these last days," it would be through a stern reproof like Malachi saying: "Ye say also, Behold what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it saith the Lord of hosts; and ye have brought that which was taken by violence, and the lame and the sick; thus ye bring the offering. Should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord!" "Ye rob me even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove Me now, saith the Lord of

hosts," etc. Just in proportion to my love for men, and desirous of pressing home such like necessary and severe truth, in order that we may redeem the time and redeem all else possible which has been diverted from its proper to selfish or worldly channels. And dearly beloved, I desire you to recognize that I am not speaking alone about foreign work,—through that right to receive more attention—but of all our work at home and abroad. But you want, I am sure to hear, something different from the blunt "preaching" of a zealous "un known;" you can get better of that kind at home, so I will switch off on to another track, yet aiming, as you want me to do, to be about my Father's business.

I do not think I told you in my last about the gaudy day in Peking, just before we left there. The occasion was the annual visit of a god whose temple is outside the city to a goddess, whose is within the city walls. The festival lasts about three days. First the god is amused by theatrical performers in front of his own temple, theatres are built in front of the majority of temples for this purpose; the most grotesque things are done to please him.

Comedies and farces are ludicrously performed by the hired buffoons, as though they were bound to make the god laugh. (When we so plainly see how their idea of what will please their god reacts upon the people themselves, and they become assimilated to the character which they ascribe to the deities they worship, it magnifies in my mind the awful importance of earnestly "following on to know the Lord." And it darts one gleam of light into and reveals more of the marvellous depth of that word of the Master's: "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." (This is followed by small offerings of various kinds and the burning of large quantities of incense. Just here leaks out a small hint of the extreme earthliness of the religion of the Chinese. These offerings in the midst of festivities and buffooning are doubtless prompted by what they would like if they were being entertained by theatricals—refreshments in between. Speedily the theatricals are resumed, and like the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, though they do not cut themselves and call, they play and call upon their god until completely exhausted, and tired nature drops down unable to make another sound or motion. On the third day is the great procession, when his godship is brought into the city temple.

If the Christian world could have viewed that one pageant, methinks from henceforth there would be a marked increase in gifts and interest, or one would be compelled to answer in the negative that question: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"

The procession lasted the whole day, from early morn until late in the afternoon. Innumerable bands of music (?) (if the crushing harangue produced by the utmost expenditure of physical strength in thumping huge gongs and clashing a multitude of discordant cymbals; the shrill screamings of lutes, clarionets, whistles, etc., all on different keys, can be called music,) alternated by troupes of players, acrobats, high-stilted pantomimists, knights tournaments, jugglers, wrestlers, etc. The jugglers did really marvellous things. I have seen a good deal in my younger days, but nothing, in acrobatic or juggling feats, to compare with these. The remainder of the entertainment part of the procession was farcical, childish, etc. The religious part of the procession which comes last is a most imposing and specious, but withal unutterably sad spectacle. Perhaps a word of explanation just here will enable you the better to understand what I am about to say. The god in whose honour this festival was held, when living on earth was a great physician, and is now worshipped at Pao-fu as the god of medicine. The Chinese, as a people, believe in confession, propitiation and substitution—of course it is with these, as with most things, they think or know, a very vague and unreasoning belief. One method which the Chinese have of punishing a certain class of criminals, is to put the head and one hand through a square made of boards, in such a way that the prisoner cannot put his hand to his head, nor move about. He is perfectly helpless, and unless the passing public—for he is placed out on the street—take pity on him and feed him, he must starve to death. The crime for which he is thus punished is written on the board and sometimes accompanied by