

Our Contributors.

SOME CAUSES THAT PRODUCE PESSIMISTS.

BY KNOXIAN.

If, as the Honourable Minister of Education thinks, Canadians are the most pessimistic people on the face of the earth, it may be well to inquire into the causes that make so many of us pessimists. A pessimist is not a lovely character. A nation of pessimists would be of little use to the human family. If we cannot do anything better than grow pessimists perhaps it might be as well to give the country back to the Indians.

Some of the causes that produce pessimists are physical. Almost any man is a pessimist when his liver is torpid. When that organ goes on strike everything looks blue. The world and the Church seem going to destruction. It takes a very sensible and discriminating man to distinguish between the torpidity of his liver and the universal destruction which he thinks is going on around him. The man who cannot make this distinction is always a pessimist.

Some unfortunate men were trained to be pessimists. Their fathers were greatly given to growling and spent their evenings in talking about the blue side of everything and the bad side of everybody. The boys soon acquired the habit and a most abominable habit it is. A boy that grows up in a pessimistic atmosphere is almost certain to become a chronic pessimist.

There can be no doubt that extreme party politics makes pessimists. The party in power is always optimistic; the party in opposition is pretty sure to be more or less pessimistic. The "ins" are always optimists; the "outs" are often pessimists. Things look rosy when you have power and the public purse; they look blue when your party is out in the cold. The Tories are optimists now in the Dominion politics. From '73 to '78 many of them were howling pessimists. They said Mackenzie and the Grits were ruining the country. According to their story Canada was about done. They got into office and Canada turned in one night into one of the most prosperous countries in the world. A good many Liberals are pessimists at the present time. They think that Canada is in a bad way. They say our debt is large and our people are not prospering as they should do. If the Liberal party got into power these pessimistic Grits would very likely turn optimists in one night. There is nothing that turns a political pessimist of either party into an optimist so suddenly as giving him a good office.

The Liberals are optimists in Ontario politics. They say Ontario is a well governed, prosperous little country, with a good Premier and big surplus. In Provincial politics the Tories are the pessimists. They, or at least some of them, are supposed to believe that Ontario is a badly-governed, priest-ridden, over-taxed Province with no surplus at all. Just how the Dominion can be in such a prosperous condition while its largest Province is in such a bad way is a conundrum that people may wrestle with who are fond of conundrums.

The *Mail* is the champion pessimist of Canada. From '73 to '78 it told the people every day that Canada was going to the dogs for the want of the N. P. Now it tells them several times a day that the N. P. is utterly ruining the country.

Is it not possible to carry on party warfare without making the people pessimists? Certainly it is. Cannot political questions be discussed on the platform and in the press without teaching Young Canada that his native country is the poorest place on this footstool? Why not? George Brown was in Opposition nearly all his life, but he was no pessimist. He was a bright, hopeful, courageous, cheery man. He said Canada was such a good country, that even the Tories could not ruin it. Alexander Mackenzie never was, and is not now, a pessimist. When he wants to rub it in well he usually says that the natural resources of this country are so great, and the people so enterprising and industrious that even Sir John and his colleagues cannot destroy Canada. These two great leaders could and always did carry on the hottest kind of political warfare without saying a disparaging word about the country whose servants they are. Why cannot all others do the same?

Business as well as party politics makes some people pessimists. A considerable number of people are here for business reasons purely. They came to make or invest money, not because they had any liking for Canada. They fail to make money, or lose what they brought for investment. Of course these people have no love for the country, and often speak disparagingly of everything Canadian. The same class is found in all colonies.

Men badly beaten in the battle of life are nearly always pessimists. A preacher with two or three good calls in his pocket is always an optimist. He thinks the Church is in a fine condition and the good work going on. A preacher who cannot get a call or even a good "hearing" is very likely to be a pessimist. A lawyer with a bag full of briefs is an optimist; a lawyer with an empty bag is apt to be a pessimist. A doctor who has no patients is generally a pessimist; a doctor with a practice worth \$5,000 a year thinks this is a fine country. A candidate for a public position who has a majority of four or five hundred goes home thinking that Canada is one of the best countries in the world; the other fellow goes home and tells his wife to pack up, that Canada is not a country fit to live in.

There is one very mean kind of pessimist—we mean the man who thinks that running down this country proves that he is an aristocrat. This pessimist cannot by any effort of the imagination connect himself with a lord, or duke, or anybody of that kind. So he places himself in the peerage by fawning on everything English and disparaging everything Canadian.

Then there is the prophetic pessimist, who always predicts dire calamities. He knows no more about the future than anybody else, but he predicts coming judgments with great confidence.

The didn't-I-tell-you-so pessimist is a rare gem. When he hears of a calamity that has come upon any one, he always says, Didn't I tell you he would not end well?

Is it possible for a chronic pessimist to be a Christian? It certainly is not possible for him to be a useful one.

CLERICAL GLEANINGS.

BY REV. JAMES HASTIE, CORNWALL.

THE PASTORESS.

This Gleaning has to do with the pastoreess, better known as the minister's wife. Let it be printed in boldest type, and read with wide-open eyes that the minister's wife is not the wife or servant of the parish. She belongs to her husband and family, and to no corporate body or association. The parish has no more right to levy a tax on her time, or to dictate her mode of dress, style of living, or manner of life, than that of the lawyer's or the doctor's wife.

Yet, for their pastor's sake as well as their own, the people will feel a deep interest in his selection of a companion. No one, however wanting in spirituality, would recommend to him a mere woman of fashion, whose heart is absorbed in the trimming of a dress or the colour of a bow. With such a one he might well enough take a promenade, sing a song, or play a game of croquet; but all agree that she is totally unsuited to be his partner in the sober work of life. Even irreligious people admit that a minister's wife should, like her husband, be identified in her sympathies with the kingdom which is not of this world. And the more intelligent she is, the more thorough her education, the better fitted will she be to enter into his work, and to stimulate him intellectually and morally.

It is fortunate if she proves his counterpart, his complement, as the beautiful Anglo-Saxon term helpmeet signifies. All the better should her temperament differ from his, provided the differences, like certain discords in music, tend to greater harmony. A reserved man needs a wife who is frank and social; an impulsive man, one who is calm and judicious. It is particularly fortunate for the parish if the pastor's wife has the power of adapting herself to the temperament and needs of her husband.

Nevertheless, to expect her to do work according to parish rules, or to walk in the exact footsteps of her predecessor, is contrary to all reason. It is her undoubted right to act out her own particular nature, to do good in her own way. Some women have not merely a natural timidity, but also a constitutional reserve in expressing their religious emotions. This

gives them a peculiar shrinking from many of those things expected of a minister's wife.

Taking part in a prayer meeting is extremely painful, while assuming its direction is sometimes positive torture. They may be earnest Christians, but they cannot pray in the presence of others without an amount of struggling and suffering of which many have little conception. They deserve sympathy rather than censure, for Christ has nowhere enjoined the specific duty that is often exacted. Yet in these cases, uncharitable remarks are often made. Said a good sister to a minister's wife once whom she had reproved for not speaking in a public prayer meeting: "Sifting the matter to the bottom, it was all pride that prevented." Another minister's wife of this class was laboured with by one of the "brethren," who affirmed that women had a burden on their heart if they did not speak; to whom she replied that she sometimes had a greater one, if she did speak. Of course no one will understand me as in the least underrating the value or influence of female prayer meetings.

Let all who can freely mingle their hearts together, and rejoice in the privilege. Such meetings are often an important help to the minister, and a great moral power in the Church. But some there are who can plead the cause of a lost world more fervently and unrestrainedly in their own closets. Do not pronounce them unfaithful or indifferent; the incense that goes up from hidden censers is not less acceptable to the Lord.

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

On the other hand there are women who could preside at a large meeting with entire equanimity, and who have a great facility in expressing their thought and feelings.

Let all such be congratulated, but do not rebuke those who are not equal to such occasions. The difference between the two classes is often one of mere constitutional temperament.

There are soldiers of the cross who can fight bravely in the forefront of the battle, marching onward to the sound of trumpets and with flying banners. And there are others, equally loyal, who shrink from the open field. Their conflicts are in the solitary wilderness, and their victories are registered only in the Lamb's book of life. Let us do all honour to the former class; but let us not be unjust to the other, who though in a more private way may accomplish not less for their Master. To Him they are equally dear, and they shall wear at last as bright a crown.

Thus while legally the minister's wife owes the parishioners nothing beyond that owed by the doctor's wife, the lawyer's wife, or the mayor's wife, seeing they pay nothing for her services, nor has she entered into any compact with them to work; yet from another point of view she owes them a great deal, and will find her highest pleasure in meeting her obligations. From sympathy with her husband in his ministerial work—the noblest ever given man to do—and from the vantage ground she occupies socially, she owes his people all such labours as she can give consistently with those home duties which are always paramount. She owes them exactly what every other Christian woman in the parish owes them—the influences of her character and example, in favour of all that is good and true—plus any special facilities she may possess to do good arising from her position her experience, or her education.

But how much parish work she can do outside of her home, and what that work shall be, can be determined better by herself than by all other bodies combined; therefore critics should be few and far between who would make the minister's wife the target of ungrateful and unkind remark.

COUNSELS TO YOUNG MEN.

Dr. Thain Davidson, of London England, is deeply interested in the welfare of young men. He delivers a special discourse to them once a month. The following is one of his latest addresses:

Multitudes stand for years upon the verge of the Christian life, knowing it to be the only happy one, and urged by an uneasy conscience to go forward; and yet they still hold back. You are perfectly satisfied that the one thing above all others to make you