

Our Contributors.

THE NIBBLERS WHO STAND ON THE BANK, LOOK ON, AND NIBBLE.

BY KNOXONIAN.

One day last month a most distressing accident took place in a town in Western Ontario. A mill dam broke away, the rushing waters carried a row of houses from their foundation, and five lives were lost. From a well-written description of the accident in a local paper we clip the following in regard to the search made for the bodies of the drowned.

Willing hands rendered valuable assistance, but it was astonishing how many there were just as willing to stand aside and look on, wondering why some of those who were up to their knees in water and slush, working like nailers didn't do so and so, without ever taking into consideration that they were just as much entitled to do it as those who were doing the best they could. In such a crowd you will always find plenty of fault-finders and men who are ever ready to give directions, but they are the last to soil their boots or hands in real work.

Yes; you can always find that crowd without any difficulty. They always talk so loud that it is easy to find them. They stand on the bank, find fault, give orders, shout "Why don't you do so and so?" "Didn't I tell you so," and other equally sensible things, but take precious good care that they do nothing themselves.

Let those men who are searching for the dead bodies in the water represent the people who are working in the Church. Let the men who stand on the bank represent the large number in, or hanging on the sides of, the Church, who never do anything, never pay anything worth mentioning, and whose chief business it is to nibble at those who are doing the work. Let us listen to these nibblers for a moment as they nibble at the workers.

One nibbler shouts, "Why don't you do so and so?" It never occurs to this nibbler that it may be just as much his duty to do the thing as the duty of the worker he nibbles at. Oh dear no! Perish the thought. His business is to cross-examine the workers. The best work he can do for the Lord is to bombard with impertinent questions the people who are doing their best. So he says to the elder, Why don't you do this? and to the manager, Why don't you do that? and to the Sabbath school superintendent, Why don't you do the other thing? and to the minister, Why don't you do everything possible and impossible? How long would it take a thousand such nibblers to build a church, or endow a college, or send a missionary to the heathen? They wouldn't do it in 10,000 years. The lean nag that carries one of our student missionaries between his stations in Muskoka is worth more to the Church than 10,000 nibblers whose best work is to shout "Why don't you do so and so?"

Listen to nibbler number two as he stands on the bank, and yells, "Didn't I tell you so?" His little soul is ecstatic. He hasn't felt so glad for a long time. He has seen somebody fail when trying his best to do a good thing. A man with a heart as large as the head of a mosquito always feels bad when he sees a good worker fail in his attempt to do a good thing. This nibbler rejoices at the failure because it gives him a chance to say, "Didn't I tell you so?" One peculiarity of the "didn't-I-tell-you-so" nibbler is that he has very little regard for one of the best-known incidents in the history of the United States. He too frequently forgets that little story about George Washington and his hatchet. When he says "Didn't I tell you so?" he means you to infer that he *did* tell somebody what was going to happen. Quite frequently he didn't do anything of the kind. He knew no more about it than any body else—perhaps not half as much as the man who tried to do the work and failed. The "Didn't-I-tell-you-so" nibbler need never fail. His work is easy. Anybody can do it. All he does in his department of industry is stand on the bank, open his mouth, wag his unruly member, and out comes "Didn't I tell you so?" How many years of that kind of work would it take to evangelize the world?

The most provoking of nibblers is the *fault finding* nibbler. He takes good care he never does anything himself. His business is to look on, and find fault with anybody and everybody. For this class of work he expects to hear the welcome, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." One of two things is absolutely certain; either that nibbler will never hear that

welcome, or Paul was sadly astray in his views on Christian duty.

The fault-finding variety of nibblers may be divided into a number of classes according to their specialty. One class makes a specialty of nibbling at the church music. The less they know about music the more persistently they nibble. Those who know nothing at all stand on the bank, and shout vociferously. Another class takes the session in hand. A third makes a specialty of finance and devotes all its energies to the managers. Those who never pay anything nearly always belong to this class. A fourth deals with the Sabbath school. Sometimes all the classes unite, and attack the preacher. There are various other specialties in the nibbling business. One man makes a specialty of nibbling at the Augmentation Fund, another at the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund, another at the Colleges, another at the Home Mission Committee and so on, every creature after his kind.

Viewed in regard to the *manner* in which they do their work, nibblers may be classified as the *grave*, the *acute* and the *circumflex*. The *grave* nibbler does his work in a heavy, half-melancholy sort of style. He is very likely to pelt you with misquoted passages of Scripture, and consign you to a bad place, if you decline to do what he wants. He tries to make you believe that he carries the keys.

The *acute* nibbler puts in his work in a bitter, venomous sort of way. It pleases him to give anybody pain. The youthful Nero loved to see flies tortured to death slowly; the *acute* nibbler loves to torture human beings. He says he is a Christian.

The *circumflex* nibbler works all round on general principles.

DISCOURAGEMENTS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS IN WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSION WORK.*

In order that our meeting may be successful in helping the workers to be helpers of one another by comparing notes and experiences, I propose giving my small fraction to this end. 1. On discouragements, and how to meet them. The small meetings are a source of discouragement to the earnest worker. The place, time and hour of the monthly meeting are announced from the pulpit. The pastor urges the ladies to attend, and speaks a kind word in our behalf. We usually meet at the different homes. The lady who has the privilege of the meeting in her house makes preparation, has the room light, bright and warm. Bibles, hymn-books, letter-leaflets (not forgetting the flowers when they can be had), with plate or box for the contribution envelopes at the treasurer's place. We invite all whom we see of our women. The president and others come prepared, expecting to have a good time, and so we have, but alas! how small the number! How few avail themselves of this hour with Jesus, to consider the interests of His kingdom! He says, Pray ye the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers, and the harvest is great. Prayer is a law of the kingdom. Ask, and ye shall receive, but to receive we must ask (I will be enquired of, saith God), and ask unitedly, as they did for the Pentecostal blessing, and be agreed; for, If two of you shall agree to ask in My name, it shall be done.

The duty of meeting is plain and scriptural. Now, after the preparation and the promises, is it not discouraging to the workers to have so few come out and join in prayer and consultation for the advancement of the kingdom? Yes! but if Christ had to say, What! could you not watch with Me one hour? when He agonized in prayer, should we not expect to say, Could you not give one hour a month to the missionary meeting? and often be disappointed? Let us remember we get the blessing for ourselves, and often portions for those who do not come.

Last summer I was visiting in the country, and heard on Sabbath at the village church the woman's missionary meeting announced. My friend and I drove seven miles to attend it, and found only four women convened in the church for this hour. Yet, in that same church, hundreds met every evening, and that evening too, to have a good time singing, "Where are the Reapers?" and such. A revival was

*Paper read by Mrs. Blair, Prescott, at the annual meeting of the Woman's Foreign Mission Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

going on, but the practical part had not yet commenced.

What is the cause of the small meetings? Once I heard this said. O! it is only a woman's meeting! A few women! True, but it was at a woman's prayer meeting that the Gospel was first preached in Europe.

Paul, the greatest missionary of his time, was hurried by the Spirit from place to place, and not permitted to stop till he came to the woman's resort for prayer. Perhaps Lydia, in her commercial relation, heard from Palestine of Jesus and His Gospel, and she and her companions were praying God to send the light to them. Did not God honour this woman's prayer meeting?

Again, the remark, They are small, these women's meetings. Yes, but the promise is, Where even two or three are gathered in My name, there am I, and call to mind that meeting of only two (long ago) and its results. One of the two was the missionary that came the longest way, and made the greatest sacrifice, even our Lord Jesus, the risen Saviour, and the other was the woman Mary. At first she thought it was a common person, the gardener, but when Christ revealed Himself in the word, "Mary," she bowed in adoring worship. O! what a joy came into her life! In that short meeting she learned that she was a child of God, a sister of Christ, and a missionary to the brethren, all personal blessings, and she carried in her hand a lighted torch, containing the message: "Go, tell," to her sisters all down the centuries, which is now in this nineteenth century flashing brighter and wider than ever.

The couplet,

Take my feet, and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee,

was quickly exemplified in Mary. "She ran for joy." What seemed at first to be a common meeting was a meeting with Jesus. Let not then our meetings be despised. If we are ministering women, going out to do real service for Christ, as did Mary, our meetings will bring blessing to ourselves and others.

Let us willingly and gladly go on with this part of the missionary service, *even* the small meetings. Another objection I have heard named was: "I can't hear them, they don't speak out." Well, yes, but we are learning to speak out, and when we get training institutions for this work there will be a growing improvement in that too, for the good we would do we cannot, unless we speak out clearly and distinctly.

Another discouragement to the workers is the few that will engage in leading prayer in the meetings. I believe that is one cause of many absenting themselves from the meetings, the fear of being called to lead in prayer.

That is a cross that Presbyterian women have to take up; I know it from experience.

Why should this be a cross? Simply because in our early days we were so oft reminded of Paul's saying to the Corinthians, "Let your women keep silence in the Churches; it is a shame for women to speak in the Church." The fire might burn within us, but our tongues cleave to the roof of our mouths for fear we should be breaking Presbyterian doctrine or rules, and instead of this faculty of speech being let out, *educated*, it was shut up, for we were women. But now the Sun of Righteousness has sent forth His brightness, and dispersed these clouds that enveloped us. The women who laboured in the Gospel with Paul are brought into notice, and the uncovering of that precious prophecy, for woman's recognition in her Lord's service, is indeed a garment of praise. "The Lord giveth the Word (it is ours), and the company of women that publish it are a great host." God grant that our women may lay hold (with a firm grasp) of their title deed, so long hid away. We are entering upon ancient inheritance. Let us go in to take possession.

One more—the contributions. Of these it has been said. "We have enough to do at home without going abroad. We have to support our own Church, and we have the elbow heathen around us." It is true we have our own Church ordinances and home heathen to work for. Is this *all*? Is this only the Church's mission? Begin at Jerusalem, at *home*, certainly, but go tell, preach, teach, heal to the uttermost parts of the earth. "The world for Christ" is our motto, our mission. Our example is Christ. "As the Father sent Me, so send I you," are His words.