

Our Contributors.

THE CHRONIC FAULT-FINDER CRUEL TO HIMSELF.

BY KNOWNONES

The duties that devolve upon the leader of a parliamentary Opposition are at once easy and difficult. They are easy because it is always easy to find fault; and difficult because a wise and patriotic Opposition leader often finds it hard to keep himself from being regarded as an obstructionist. No sensible, useful man desires to be considered a mere obstructionist, in either church or state.

One point of difference between an Opposition leader in England and one here is that the Englishman freely commends measures he thinks good and useful, whilst the Canadian functionary is expected to find fault with everything and abuse everybody on the other side.

There was a fine illustration the other day of how Englishmen rise above party considerations when the occasion demands high statesmanship. The Attorney-General, Sir Charles Russell, brought in a bill giving effect to the Paris settlement of the Behring Sea difficulty. There was some hostile criticism, and Balfour, Opposition leader, and Sir Richard Webster, the Attorney-General of the late Government, came at once to the assistance of the Ministry and helped to put the measure through. Had Balfour done anything like that in Ottawa he would have been called a Judas and there would have been any amount of speculation about his price. If Sir Richard Webster were a member of the Canadian Commons he would, perhaps, have been read out of his party and thanks devoutly given for his removal. Our idea of parliamentary Opposition is opposition to everything and everybody on the other side. They do things differently in England.

Laurier and Meredith would make model Opposition leaders if the exigencies of party did not compel them to find fault with almost everything. Laurier sometimes breaks through the trammels and speaks like a fair-minded statesman, looking all round the question. No doubt he would do so always if the tail of his party did not think the work of the Opposition is to fight everything and everybody. Meredith criticises a Government measure in a fair enough way, and about the end of his speech puts in a sting or two which is perhaps intended to satisfy the people who want him to fight everything. At all events, it looks that way.

Now, politics aside, finding fault with everything is the poorest business any man ever went into, for the simple reason that sensible people soon tire, and then sicken, listening to the ill-natured snarls of a chronic fault-finder. There is no kind of a man that will not commit suicide in the fault-finding business if he just keeps on at it. When he gets so far that people say, "Oh, he'll find fault anyway, what is the use in paying any attention to what he says," the unfortunate man is about done. Prolonged unfavorable criticism, even when it is right in the main, injures a man; when it is wrong, it kills him!

In many rural school sections there is a man that has long been considered a kind of section nuisance. The explanation is that years ago he began finding fault with the teacher and trustees and kept it up until no one pays the slightest attention to what he says on school matters.

In too many congregations there are a few people of the same variety. Their business is to snarl at everything; and they have attended to the business so faithfully that they have snarled away their own usefulness. They began with the intention of killing ecclesiastically the session, or the managers, or the choir, or the minister and ended by committing ecclesiastical suicide.

Who has not seen or heard of the new member who meant to reconstruct the Presbytery. Good taste would have led him to keep quiet for a time, but at the first meeting he modestly assumed that the institution should be reformed and he at once proceeded with the work of reformation. Perhaps some

reforms were needed badly enough; but the new man began too soon and proceeded too bumpily.

Indiscriminate fault-finding and indiscriminate praise are both fatal in the end to any man who indulges in them. If you constantly find fault, people soon regard you as a human hedge-hog. If you are constantly trying to say sweet things, people soon look upon you as a base flatterer. There is a happy medium that good taste and a good conscience need seldom fail to strike.

One thing is clear. Should the day ever come when sensible, reasonable people say instinctively, "Oh, he'll snarl, and find fault and oppose, no matter what you do," be sure your usefulness is about gone. Your first duty is to mend your ways, or look around for a quiet corner to die in!

THE MAN'S SIDE OF THE WOMAN QUESTION.

BY ETHELWYN WETHERHALD.

"You don't look at the man's side of the question," said my friend. "You write of woman's needs and desires and aspirations, and ignore the effect which their gratification would entail upon the men of her household—her father, husband, brothers, sons. Admitting that women have a right to vote (and nearly every man in his secret heart does admit that, no matter what he may think of its expediency), it seems to me that the highest interests of the race would be conserved if women, when they obtain that right, would be willing to forfeit it."

"You think that man should be just, and give woman the suffrage, and woman should be generous enough to leave it unused?"

"Exactly."

"But why?"

"Because what man values chiefly in woman is her feminine nature, and it is precisely this femininity which active participation in public life would injure and probably destroy. Try to put yourself in my place and look at the question from a man's point of view. How would you like if you were a man to have the women of your household appear like men in nearly every respect, except that their hair was longer, and their clothing more voluminous?"

Certainly I should not like it at all.

It is very easy to detect the women from whom the element of femininity has been eliminated. I once heard an unfeminine woman lecture. She did not stalk about, nor shriek, nor shake her fist. On the contrary, she exhibited an almost inhuman absence of passion. Her tone and manner were well bred; she was dressed in good taste; her reasoning was close, often profound, her words admirably chosen, her argument unanswerable, her emotions apparently non-existent. She did not appeal to the imagination, she created no atmosphere about her. She was suffering not from over-development of the intellect, but from a one-sided development, which cultivated her mind and starved her sensibilities.

Another unfeminine acquaintance of mine spends nearly all her waking hours in "slumming." When her friends wish to find her they are obliged to look for her in the haunts of vice and dens of depravity. She comes home at night too tired to smile, and deeply depressed because she cannot construct a world in which there would be no sin nor sorrow. She answers her husband mechanically and he does not expect companionship from her. As for her children, they would as soon think of gathering figs from thistles as of obtaining a story from her worn and pre-occupied mind. Few philanthropists live as much in other people's families and as little in their own as she, but who has not heard intelligent women reproach themselves for allowing the demands of their aid societies, and missionary meetings, and lend-a-hand gatherings, and temperance work, to interfere with the claims of their own small people at home. One woman (a tirelessly active Christian worker) told me that on coming home after one of her exhausting days she was so unstrung that the prattle of her little boy made her want to scream. What could be more destructive of feminine charm than this?

Perhaps the force that best succeeds in stripping femininity from women is fashion. Imagine that the colored figures in a dress-maker's fashion plate have stepped down from the wall. Imagine what they would say. Imagine their power of thought, their depth of feeling, their intense soulfulness, the magnetism of their womanhood, the expressiveness of their faces, their eager unselfishness, their admirable clear-headedness, their scorn of petty aims, their womanly tenderness. Even such is every woman, the sole burden of whose thought is wherewithal shall she be clothed.

Over-work is another devastator of feminine attractiveness. In many a farmhouse, where the not very muscular housekeeper does all her own work, you will find her a fagged, dragged creature—the family drudge—with no more femininity than her broom and churn-dasher. An unending round of monotonous hard labor takes the manliness out of manhood. It even more effectively destroys all the womanliness of womanhood. Look into any crowded store the week before Christmas, and observe the young women clerks. What strain, what tension, what a metallic ring in the voice, what brusqueness in the manner. Their nerves are whipped up to the last gasp of endurance, but, even if they were not, the poor creatures have no time to be ladylike. It requires some leisure to succeed in that finest of fine arts. Every woman who is a slave of bitter necessity, in her home or out of it, is, in a large measure, robbed of her womanliness.

It is possible, though not very common, for women to injure their feminine quality by too great a devotion to athletic pastimes. When girls prance into a room like a party of young colts, and extol the hardness of their muscle in voices that bear terrific witness to the strength of their lungs, one begins to wonder whether a portion of this superabundant animal might not profitably be exchanged for a little of the grace, ease and sweetness of femininity.

What is the meaning of these illustrations?

Solely this: That the feminine nature refuses to bloom except in the divinely tempered atmosphere of moderation. The woman of over-developed intellect is void of charm, but not more so than her ignorant sister whose mental fingers are all thumbs. The active worker, whose excessive philanthropies drain all her brightness and sweetness into public channels, is nearly valueless in the home circle, but so is the selfish woman who never lifted a philanthropic finger to help anyone. The moving fashion plate is a moral monstrosity, but the woman who never gives a thought to her appearance is not a pleasing object to contemplate. The drudge is utterly unfeminine, but the name of the man who would rather marry her than be the husband of an indolent woman is legion. The athletic girl may be as unfeminine as an army with banners, but she can hardly be called more deficient in the qualities which make the successful wife and mother than the delicate damsel with a paste-board back. The woman who reads nothing but newspapers, cares for nothing but politics, and aspires to nothing but political place and power, is unfeminine, it is true, but not more so than she who thinks it simply horrid for any woman to want to vote.

The man's side of the woman question is that woman must at all hazards preserve her femininity. She must not be warped or one-sided, she must not be over-developed in one direction and under-developed in another. She must not go to rash excesses in philanthropic, political or domestic work, but neither must she be incompetent or uninterested in these important branches. Her development should present balance, symmetry, harmony.

A very odd idea used to exist regarding the meaning of the word feminine. It was supposed to mean not the sum of the aspirations and capacities revealed in the unfolding of a woman's nature, but merely the preservation of those womanly characteristics which best ministered to the immediate comfort and convenience of her proprietor. If he had a large family, his idea of the truly feminine was the hen-minded woman, with no thought beyond her coop and her chickens. If he were a painter, or a poet, his model of feminine charm

was an ideal creature with the soul of a lily and the body of a willow wand. The average citizen was satisfied with a combination of saint, slave and simpleton. Even yet there are men who, when they declare that a certain course of action is contrary to a woman's nature, really mean that it is contrary to the nature of men's wishes concerning her. Custom also has an enormous weight in this matter. Many a man sees a vague impropriety in the idea of his mother setting off alone on a railroad journey who would have no objection to his daughter undertaking that feat. Not that a woman of sixty is not as capable of taking care of herself as a girl of sixteen, but the former carries with her the atmosphere of the time when it was feminine for a woman to be helpless, the latter belongs to an age when self-reliance is regarded as one of the indispensable feminine qualities.

We are all acquainted with the typical heroines of old-fashioned novels—Amelia Sedley and Lady Jane Sheepshanks, Dora and Agnes Copperfield. Sometimes dignified, though occasionally kittenish—always sweet, patient and forbearing, they formed the ideal of a past generation of men. The representative man of to-day is not so likely to consider a monotonous mind an essential part of feminine charm. He desires a comrade in his wife, and he would feel astonished and injured if his intelligent remarks concerning private or public affairs should meet at his own fireside with nothing more stimulating than "a mere mush of concession." If, as is natural, the fruit of her interest in outside matters is a desire to have a vote in them, he is not alarmed for her femininity. If he can trust her moderation in other directions he surely can in this, and the golden mean in all things is the preservation of womanliness. Certainly he would not know whether to be more amazed or amused at the suggestion that the woman whose childish prattle keeps her husband yawning is more feminine than she whose interests are one with the living interests of humanity.

A COMMON HYMNAL.

BY REV. WM. GREGG, D.D.

It is known to our readers that when the Council of the Alliance of Presbyterian Churches met in Toronto a conference was held by representatives of British and Colonial churches, at the request of members of the Hymnal Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. A resolution was adopted unanimously at this conference that it was very desirable to secure a Common Hymnal for the churches of the British Empire holding the Presbyterian system, and a committee was appointed to prepare a statement to be communicated to the Supreme Courts of the Churches represented, and to correspond on the subject of a Common Hymnal with the Hymnal Committee of the several churches. The resolution has been carried into effect. The matter has been brought before the Supreme Courts of the Established, Free, and United Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, each of which has approved the resolution of the Toronto conference, and remitted it for consideration to the Joint-Committee of the three Churches. During the past winter the Joint-Committee has resumed its meetings, and has made some progress in the provisional selection of hymns that might find a place in a Common Hymn-Book, but does not regard its work as sufficiently mature to represent its mind. A communication has been received from the Secretaries of the Joint-Committee containing the above particulars, and inviting correspondence from the Canadian Hymnal Committee, which may be expected to give information respecting its proceedings and to make suggestions for future action.

During the ensuing twelve months the important work in which the W. P. M. S. is engaged, shall have a more prominent place in our columns than ever before. Attention will be paid to furnishing articles suitable for reading at the meetings of Auxiliaries and Mission Bands; and special letters from missionaries in the home and foreign fields will appear from time to time. Try THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN from now till 31st December, 1894, for one dollar, and you will never again care to be without it.