

Our Contributors.

SOME AUTUMN THOUGHTS IN PLAIN PROSE.

BY KNOXONIAN.

Not being ambitious to furnish autumn poetry for any body's waste-basket, we put our essay on autumn in plain prose. We may be wrong, but we have an idea that plain prose in the contributor's column does more good than bad poetry in a waste-basket. Some people would perhaps prefer writing for the waste-basket in poetry to writing for their journal in prose, but that is not our way of thinking. There is neither gain nor glory in having one's verses put into a waste-basket. The literary companionships of a waste-basket are not good.

Autumn in Ontario is in many respects our most pleasant season. October is our most enjoyable month. A run through any part of Ontario in October is a rare treat. The trees, whether in orchard or wood, are more beautiful than in spring. There may be less to suggest hopefulness, but this lack is more than atoned for by the infinite rarity of tint. Any man who can take a run through Brant, or Oxford, or Perth, or Waterloo, or Halton, or Peel, or York, or Ontario, or any of our older counties in October, without being moved to admiration has a small soul. He is but one remove from the cattle seen feeding in these localities, and perhaps not nearly so useful as some of them. October is one of the best months in the year for a holiday. A man who has October and \$200, or even \$100, can take a capital holiday without going off this continent, or even out of this Dominion.

In the life of every good man who lives to his threescore and ten there is an autumn. Where it begins or ends you cannot exactly say, but every body knows what you mean when you say about any given man that he is in the autumn of life. One cannot name any day in September and say autumn began on that day, nor can you name any year in a man's life and say his autumn began in that year. We know when the autumn of the year has fully come, and there are many signs which tell us when the autumn of life has come.

A good man should be at his very best in the autumn of life. Autumn is the fruit-bearing season in human life as well as in nature. A Christian man should be more useful, more influential for good, more of a blessing to his Church and to society in the autumn of life than he has ever been before. He has all his past experience to guide him; he has that faculty for dealing with men with the minimum of friction which can be acquired only by practice; he has the wisdom which years usually give to every man who wants it; he has a vast amount of useful knowledge picked up by the way; and, better than all, he has, or ought to have, more grace than he possessed at any previous period of his life. His autumn should be by far his best time. If a man is not a better Christian in the autumn of life than he was in life's spring and summer, it may well be doubted whether he is a Christian at all. If he has not more sense in autumn than he had in his earlier years, there is great fear that he may never have any sense. There is no hope for a fool at sixty.

Perhaps the finest thing about the autumn of life is its *mellowness*. The mellow character is no longer hard—no longer harsh, no longer sour, no longer green. A man in that stage does not try to do everything by force. He does not try to make drunkards sober by abuse, nor to convert Catholics with a club. He knows that you never make a liquor seller better by calling him hard names, nor turn a Catholic into a Protestant by breaking his skull. A preacher in the mellow stage never consigns men to everlasting perdition in a tone of voice as destitute of feeling as the tones of an auctioneer. The autumn of life brings mellowness in the case of every good man, and mellowness of character means moderation, charity, kindness, patience and many other qualities that make character lovely.

Men in the autumn of life are as a rule the safest men to do business with.

A doctor in the autumn of life is not very likely to give you heroic treatment unless your case is really bad. He knows that "horse doses" shake up the system terribly. He nurses nature, helps nature and gets you through as easily as is compatible with

safety. All young doctors don't give "horse doses" by any means. Many of them are careful, prudent, fine fellows, who treat their patients with great care and skill. Some of the old ones, even in the autumn period, give very strong powders for very slight ailments. But still the general rule remains true that a good physician in the autumn of life gives as few "horse doses" as he can help, especially to weak people and children.

A good lawyer, in the autumn of life, is very careful about advising people to go into lawsuits. He knows by long experience that litigation is slow, tedious, expensive and terribly uncertain. A young lawyer, brimful of fight, and anxious for promotion, may not always be so careful.

A statesman in the autumn of life, if a good man, always becomes more moderate in his opinions and feelings. He has lived long enough to see that there are good men, patriotic men, on both sides. He has also found out that there are selfish schemers, pinchbeck patriots, howling hypocrites, and a few thieves on both sides. A young man starting out in public life is apt to suppose that all the good men are on his own side and all the bad ones on the other. When he comes to the autumn of life he knows better, and becomes more moderate in his feelings and opinions.

A business man in the autumn of life has usually some marked qualities. He is not very apt to enter into wild cat speculations. He doesn't *sue* half as quickly as a young man. In fact he never sues at all if he can get his own in any reasonable way. As a rule, it is much easier to do business with a man in the autumn of life than at any other period. He is more reasonable, more sensible, more kindly, and does not believe so much in *force* as he did when young.

A pastor in the autumn of life should be at his very best. If he has kept up his reading, he is at his best. Having children of his own, he knows better how to deal with the young of his flock. Having lost some of his own, he can sympathize with others when similarly bereaved. If he has been a good student and has had the discipline of the pen, he should preach better in the autumn of life than at any other time. His sermons will be more mellow. He may preach less about hell than he once did, but he will preach more about the cross. His sermons will be more sympathetic, more helpful, more useful than they ever were. His prayers will be the best part of his service. There is nothing that shows the spiritual growth of a minister or any other Christian so much as his prayers.

Reader, are you in the autumn of life? If so, are you better than you were at any former period? Have you outgrown all hardness, harshness, sourness, bitterness? Have you that mellowness of character which should come in autumn and which, while it adorns the possessor, is a benediction to all around him? If not, why not?

RAMBLES AMONGST SWISS HILLS.

A WEEK IN THE JURA.

Tourists seldom make any stay in the Jura. They are the first hills they meet on entering Switzerland from the west; and none of them are high enough to endanger life in the ascent. Swiss tourists, therefore, may pass through the range by train and admire the scenery; but hurry on to the giant mountains of the Bernese Oberland, or the lofty hills south of the Rhone Valley, and finish their Swiss tour by a hasty visit to Chamouni, and a look at Mont Blanc, "the monarch of mountains," and some of its neighbours in French Savoy. This is a mistake; for there is much in the Jura which would repay a delay amidst its peaceful valleys and clean, pretty and industrious villages. I have made several visits to this part of Switzerland—the last at the beginning of this month—and each time I discovered new beauties and physical features peculiar to the Jura; met many pleasant and intelligent people, and always received the greatest kindness and hospitality.

I will now state a few facts, taken at random from my note-book, which may interest some of your readers, and perhaps induce some of them, on their next visit, to spend a day or two here, where they will find far more comfort, at much less expense, than in the over-crowded hotels to which they too often resort. Grand scenery, too, is also to be found here, as a ride by train from Bâle to Bienne and Neuchâtel through

the Münster-Thal—in French, Val Moutier,—proves. It consists of a succession of defiles and narrow gorges of marvellous beauty, while the broader basins are enlivened by meadows, mills and factories. It is certainly the grandest valley in the whole Jura range. Again, the route from Neuchâtel to Pontarlier through the Val de Travers, is full of picturesque scenery, of which glimpses can be had on both sides of the railway. It was in this neighbourhood I spent a few days recently, and what follows has special reference to it.

EXQUISITE FORMS OF VEGETABLE LIFE.

I have already referred to the valleys as being peaceful; they are also fruitful and full of industries of all kinds; and in the season flowers are found in the greatest profusion. The eye is charmed in looking upon fields of anemones, gentians, orchids and thousands of species of every variety of colour. And here let me interpolate a few sentences, to say that no country in Europe offers to the tourist more exquisite forms of vegetable life than Switzerland. Even in the most elevated regions, close to the abode of perpetual snow, are lovely harebells, primroses, saxifrages and numbers of tiny, delicate plants and flowers which flourish in the very drip of the glacier, lighting up the most dreary solitudes with their brilliant colours, so that one is inclined to address them in the language of the poet, and ask:

Meek dwellers 'mid yon terror-stricken cliffs,
With brows so pure, and incense-breathing lips,
Whence are ye? Did some white-winged messenger,
On Mercy's mission, trust your timid germ
To the cold cradle of eternal snows;
Or, breathing on the callous icicles,
Bid them with tear-drops nurse thee?

The characteristic flowers of Switzerland are the rhododendron, called here the Alpine rose, and the edelweiss. The former is abundant and grows at lesser heights, so that every school boy you meet carries a bunch on his alpenstock. And yet there is scarcely any plant which, when pulled, so soon loses its beauty. With surprising speed, it changes its clear transparent purple-gold into a bluish tinge, so that no one has seen Alpine roses in their full splendour, who has not seen them blooming on the slopes of the rock. The latter is rarer, grows in more inaccessible places, and is still more beautiful. True, specimens of it, with its tender star-shaped flowers, stretched and mounted on cards for sale, may be seen in every town. But the plant in its natural state is only to be found after climbing dangerous rocks, and the experiment is not unattended with occasional loss of life. Mr. John Ball, whose passion for mountain scenery is well known, a passion which led him from his youth to pass most of his life in mountainous countries, has written much on the flora of the Alps. In one of his memoirs he says that the region contains 2,010 species, divided into 523 genera, included in 96 natural orders. In addition there are reckoned no less than 335 sub-species—forms closely allied to recognized species, but distinguished by differences more permanent and better marked than those which characterize the so-called varieties. No one can visit in spring an Alpine valley, when the flowers are in full bloom, without again and again saying with Keble:

Relics ye are of Eden's bowers,
As pure, as fragrant, and as fair,
As when ye crown'd the sunshine hours
Of happy wanderers there.

FERTILE COUNTRIES AND RICH PLAINS

offer no sights to be compared with the pictures presented amongst these hills in the Jura. Rich vintage and abundant harvests have not the same charm or attraction for the tourist. Nor do the inhabitants of such countries become attached to them so strongly as do those born in higher regions. Neither the length of the winter, nor their isolation, nor the sterility of these uplands, lessens the love of the mountaineer for his native hills. As Alceste says of Celimènes, they say of their country: "Sa gracie est la plus forte." And yet I was told that the number of houses, and consequently of

INHABITANTS ARE DIMINISHING

yearly upon the higher plateaus of the Jura. Deep though the love of the mountaineer be for his rugged hills and rude climate, it is beginning to give way before the wants and exigencies of the present epoch. Formerly the people were satisfied with little—a cow, a field of barley, a garden planted with cabbage and potatoes, a rustic homestead, sufficed for the needs of the family. Now, this is not so. The general level