

Our Contributors.

*SOME PEOPLE AND SOME THINGS IT
WOULD BE WELL IF THE NEW
YEAR MADE NEW.*

BY KNONONIAN.

With a good many people the only new thing about the New Year will be its date—1886 instead of 1885. Even that will not be altogether new at first, for nearly everybody will write 1885 for a time and score it out and put in 1886. Now it is highly desirable that the New Year should bring in something more than a change of figures—a change, in fact, of only one figure. It would be a great thing if the New Year could make some men new.

Here, for example is a member of the Crank family. What a blessing it would be if the New Year could straighten him out and make him a new man! His whole lifetime has been worse than wasted, not because he is really a bad man, but simply because he has been a crank. Now, if that man would begin with this year and try to act on common-sense principles for the remainder of his days, he might yet do something in the way of redeeming the time. It is doubtful, however, if the New Year will do anything for him. A prominent city pastor is reported to have said that a certain power will "straighten out any crank in six months." That statement may be questioned as a matter of fact and as a matter of theology. Who ever saw half-a-dozen instances of ingrained cranks being turned into good, sensible men? As a matter of theology the power alluded to sanctifies what it finds, and if grace finds a man a crank he is almost certain to remain a crank. Still, if every crank would begin this year with a firm resolve to be less cranky, and if he would invoke the power alluded to, he might straighten out a little, and in that case 1886 would really be a *New Year* to him. It would also be a *New Year* to everybody that has to come in contact with him.

Here is another man that might make 1886 a New Year with great advantage. This gentleman is a specialist in the moral reform business. He has a mission to banish tobacco, or to put an end to tea-drinking, make people quit eating meat, or something of that kind. Perhaps he conceives that he was sent into this world for the special purpose of standing sentry at the human nose, and preventing the owner from putting snuff into his own nasal organ. Perhaps he imagines that he has a commission to put an end to skating. Perhaps he belongs to that class who, according to Talmage, believe they are certain to go to heaven if they can jump clear of a whiskey barrel. Now, if a man of this kind would begin the year by finding out that one always minimizes his usefulness by riding a hobby and increases it by fighting the devil along the whole line, this would be a *New Year* to him and he might probably become a new man this year.

Here is a third man who sorely needs the quality of newness. He has been a fighter all his days—probably he was constructed on a pugilistic basis. Perhaps he was placed in adverse circumstances, and fighting his way made him a fighter all round. Possibly, he began by opposing everything for mere amusement and grew into an Ishmaelite before he knew. Whatever be the cause, his life has been one of strife and, having been one of strife, was a bad one for himself and everybody he came in contact with. If he could turn a new leaf at the beginning of this year and live a peaceful life, 1886 would certainly be a *New Year* for him.

Here is a young man who leads a butterfly kind of life. Perhaps it is unfair to the butterfly to make the comparison; but as the butterfly won't be here for some months we will take the risk. So far, this young man thinks that the main occupations of life are dancing, flirting, skating, playing lacrosse or base ball, wearing good clothes, cultivating an incipient moustache, and parting one's hair in the middle. If that unfortunate youth would wake up and be somebody and do something, this year, 1886, would certainly be a *New Year* to him.

There are several other kinds of people that would be none the worse for being done over and made new at the beginning of the New Year. In fact, we would all stand some doing over, and be all the better for it. The man who thinks he does not need any improvement needs it most. About the worst men on this

footstool are the perfect men. There is only one being on this earth that needs to be changed more than a perfect man, and that is a perfect woman.

Passing from men to things, are there not some things in, say, our church life that it would be well to make new at the beginning of a New Year?

Some congregations take up their collections for the Schemes of the Church by a plate at the door. The plate is right enough, but there is almost nothing put on it. The result of that way of working is a collection so small that if you divided the collection by the number of members in the congregation, the quotient is so small you cannot see it. Sometimes you cannot see it because it isn't there. There is no power in figures to express how little some of our congregations do per Sabbath for some of our Schemes. Now would it not be well if the session should begin the New Year by adopting a new method for taking up collections. A year of good collections would certainly be a *New Year* for some congregations.

Here is a congregation in which the service is conducted in such a way as to repel some fairly good people and make many others feel uneasy, though they do not say anything. As a plain matter of fact, apart from what anybody may think or say about it, the singing is perhaps very bad, or the sermon is too long, or the other parts of the service are badly conducted, or for some reason or other the service is considered by a large number of fairly good people as something to be endured rather than to be enjoyed. Some who are perhaps not specially wicked remain away, and a good many who come as a matter of duty are conscious that there is something about the service that might be greatly improved. Now would it not be a good thing for those who are responsible for the spiritual welfare of that church to hold an earnest and prayerful consultation and try to improve their service? Why not? Are they not bound in duty to do so? A frank discussion of the situation might go a long way toward a remedy.

Far be it from us to say that much, if any, attention should be given to the talk of a few cranks, hobby-horse men, specialists, chronic grumblers, old-time pugilists, soured persons, fault-finders and out-of-the-way people of that kind. The office-bearers who pay any attention to them are not wise. But we mean cases in which people, as good as any other, think some moderate changes, wisely made, would be an improvement. If the new thing needed is a good thing why not have it with the New Year.

Is anything necessarily bad, simply because it is new? Is anything necessarily good simply because it is old? Sin is old. And then it should be remembered that many things that are new to us are not new to everybody. We have heard people vigorously denounce certain things as innovations that other Christians quite as good as any of us had been familiar with for a hundred years. The right spirit in which to pass out of the Old Year into the New is the spirit that says, "I am anxious to be a new man, or at least a much better man, in 1886, and I am willing to adopt any new method of working during 1886 if there is reasonable ground for believing that the new is better."

SAINT JOHN, N. B.

ITS LOCATION, TRADE AND ECCLESIASTICAL SURROUNDINGS.

St. John, the commercial capital of New Brunswick, is advantageously situated on the Bay of Fundy, and is almost surrounded by water. Its first settlement by U. E. Loyalists began about one hundred years ago. Their memory being still highly esteemed, the centennial of their advent was celebrated about two years since.

Since the destructive fire of eight years ago, which almost laid the entire city in ashes, rapid progress has been made in rebuilding. The old frame structures have given place to handsome cut stone and brick residences, which vie with those of Western cities, whilst the wholesale and retail warehouses bespeak both taste and enterprise.

The staple trade of the Province is lumber, or, as the people here say, "spruce deals are at the back of everything," for, when lumber is brisk, everything is lively, but when it is dull, the bad effects are felt all around. There is a large mercantile trade carried on in the city; the merchants are smart, live business men, and might be considered to be in advance of

those in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Saint Johnians are justly proud of their city and Province, and it is refreshing to hear their pioneers and politicians trace its history, development and wealth. The trade of the city, some years ago very large, has been turning into different channels. In former times, ship-building was carried on to a large extent, and St. John was looked upon as the Liverpool of Canada, but as buckboards, ox-teams and slow boats have given place to the iron horse, so wooden ships have fallen into disuse, the liner to makeway for the better and faster iron-clad steamer.

To say that the people are contented and happy would be saying too much, as there are still political problems to be settled; the golden period of universal contentment is still in the distance. The party in power laud the country to the skies, and the opposition, or defeated party, say that it is going to the dogs. The latter say that the country is overtaxed, consequently poorer, although they maintain that there was quite a plethora of cash in circulation at the last by-election, that everyone seemed to have enough and to spare. With such seeming prosperity it is absurd to talk of bad times and scarcity of money.

Several important improvements have lately been made, such as the new Intercolonial Railway Station, the Cantilever Bridge, by which the trains on the New Brunswick and the Maine Railways can get into the station, and passengers by the Halifax and Quebec trains can proceed on their journey without interruption, thus saving the inconvenience of crossing to Carleton by ferry. Several of the public buildings are very fine, among which might be mentioned the custom house, post office and New Brunswick Bank.

PRESBYTERIANISM,

if not lengthening its cords, has been strengthening its stakes. Corresponding to the seven Churches of Asia, including the Reformed Presbyterian Church, there are seven churches here, all now supplied with pastors. The extended vacancy and financial troubles of Calvin Church seem to be bridged over, and a few weeks ago the Rev. A. Macdougall, formerly of St. Andrew's, was inducted pastor, with fair prospects of success. Mr. Macdougall is an able preacher, and the sincere desire of everyone is that Calvin Church may now take its place alongside the other active churches in the city.

ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH,

of which Rev. Dr. Macrae is pastor, has made an important addition to its church building. A brick school room was lately dedicated, which cost over \$4,000. Of that sum there only remains a few hundred dollars of debt, which, it is expected, will soon be wiped out.

The other churches in the city are doing well; Sabbath schools and young people's associations, temperance, Christian endeavour and other societies are flourishing, and although there are no boys of ten years of age publishing sermons, as was stated to be the case, in a religious periodical, of a minister's son of that age in the States, still the Sabbath schools are up to the average standard. There are no burning questions of heresy, nor any minister showing his learning in trying to prove that man is descended from a monkey.

ST. DAVID'S.

This church was built since the fire at a cost of over \$40,000, of which only about \$12,000 remain as a debt. The pastor is the Rev. George Bruce, M.A., a graduate of Knox College, and formerly of St. Catharines, Ontario. Under Mr. Bruce's care the congregation continues to prosper. It was the Communion Sabbath. There was a large congregation present; fourteen new members joined. Some of these were from another denomination, some from other churches and others by profession of faith. The services throughout were instructive. The sermon proper had special reference to the occasion, and while there was no display of rhetoric or eloquence, there was a rich vein of thought running through the discourse. Such preaching cannot fail to promote the spiritual and intellectual improvement of the hearers, and edify the body of Christ. A noteworthy feature in the St. John congregations is the attention given to the psalmody of the Church. The music in St. David's is excellent, and for some years has been efficiently conducted by Mr. Binning, with an accomplished lady as organist. I noticed that the hymn book used was not the same as that authorized by the Church, but the same as in St. James' Square Church, Toronto. Now, this is