

Our Contributors.

DOLEFUL vs. HOPEFUL.

BY KNOXIAN.

Brother Caleb Hopeful and Brother Jeremiah Doleful were members of the same congregation and took a good deal of interest in congregational and Church affairs. Both were good men, and really desired to promote the welfare of Christ's cause, though they showed desire in very different ways. Brother Hopeful was a bright, cheery, resolute man, who always cultivated the habit of looking on the bright side of things. He had strong faith in God, and in God's truth, and was a firm believer in the ultimate triumph of every good cause. Brother Doleful was a very different kind of man. In his innermost heart he wished every good cause to prosper, but he never had enough of hope to look upon prosperity as a probable or even possible thing. He was always haunted by the most gloomy forebodings. He saw spots on the sun, and thought every noise was the crack of doom. He never was so happy as when he was thoroughly miserable. His hopelessness was both his misfortune and his fault—his misfortune, because it was partly constitutional, and his fault because he never fought against it.

Brother Hopeful and Brother Doleful indulged in an audible soliloquy one day, a verbatim report of which may, perhaps, be useful to the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN as showing the different views which two good men may take of the same situation, both being earnest, honest men.

BROTHER DOLEFUL'S SOLILOQUY.

Our congregational affairs don't seem to be prospering. I don't think our minister preaches as well as he might, and most likely he won't preach as well in a few years as he does now. I don't think that much good is being done. Very few people join the Church, and of these few I am afraid the majority are not sincere. I am afraid the most of them will backslide. The people are cold. There is very little real piety in the congregation. In fact, I don't believe there is a really good man in the congregation except Brother Growler and myself, and I am not very sure about Growler. The elders are not up to the mark, and the managers don't seem to conduct the business properly. I know there will be a deficit at the end of the year. I am afraid the Sabbath school must go down. These children will all grow up in a few years and there may be no more children to attend. I never was the man to take trouble in advance, but how can we have a Sabbath school without children? Things are in a bad way. I tell the minister and the office-bearers every day how things are going, but they don't seem to mind me. My conscience is clear. I have done my duty.

The affairs of the Church at large are in a very bad condition. Cochrane runs that Home Mission business too fast. There will be trouble there some day. I told him so, and he actually laughed. I can't bear those men that laugh when I tell them what's going to happen. I said years ago that French Evangelization would not work. Our Foreign Missions are in a bad way. If this war goes on between England and Russia all our missionaries will be driven out of India. There is no hope that Dr. Mackay and his fellow-labourers will get back to Formosa. Who knows but the French may put a hundredweight of dynamite on the island and send it to the bottom, college and all. I never was the man to meet trouble halfway, but something is sure to happen. We have too many colleges. These hard times will ruin the Montreal people, and the Montreal colleges will be sure to go down. Queen's is doomed. If the University goes into the Federation it will be swallowed up so that even Principal Grant won't know it, and if it remains out it will die of isolation. Nothing prospers in Kingston anyway but the Penitentiary. The Endowment for Knox is sure to fail. The people have no money for endowments, and if they had they wouldn't give it. I have no confidence in the people. They get worse every day. The Union is a failure. I always said it would be. What good has it done? Those people are right who say that nothing can help this world but a general winning up of affairs. Even when the great Battle of Armageddon is fought, I am afraid the wrong side will win. The wrong side always does triumph.

BROTHER HOPEFUL'S SOLILOQUY.

Our congregational affairs are in a fairly prosperous condition. Our minister preaches very well, and anybody who honestly desires to be spiritually benefited, and comes prepared for worship, can find good spiritual nourishment at our services. I never heard him preach a sermon that had not Gospel enough in it to save a man, and have rarely heard a sermon from him that had not truth in it that would help somebody. He has helped me many a time, and my family too. Our elders are good men. Considering the fact that they have their own business to attend to and often have not control of their time, they do well. I am sure they do the best they can. The managers, no doubt, do their best too. Of course they cannot coin money if the people will not pay, but they do their best with the means at their disposal. I have no doubt they will be able to keep the revenue up to the expenditure, and perhaps, have a balance at the end of the year. I shall do all in my power to help them. Our Sabbath school is a blessing to the Church. It does one's heart good to see so many willing workers there and in the session and on the board of managers, who give their services year in and year out from love to the Master. Nobody can tell how much good is being done every day in the Sabbath school. It makes my heart leap for joy when I think that these boys will be ministers and elders and Sabbath school teachers and superintendents in a few years. All they need is grace and plenty Shorter Catechism. I expect our congregation to make great progress. I don't see any reason why it shouldn't—God's work must prosper. It always goes on. Grace must triumph over sin. I hope I may have grace given me to help every good work and honest worker. We have only one drawback of any account. If Providence would reconstruct Brother Doleful, or remove him to another sphere, we might get on more easily, but we should not complain. If the Lord tolerates him we should. Perhaps, he was left here to teach us patience. He serves that purpose admirably. We can practise any amount of patience on him in five minutes.

There is much in the condition of the Church as a whole that calls for gratitude and inspires hope. We are not doing what we might do, or ought to do, or hope to do, but Presbyterianism has made marvellous progress in several directions in twenty years. We don't raise as much for missions as we ought, but we raise very much more than we did. We are improving and that is a great deal. Some of our congregations pay handsomely for missionary purposes, and this is a good sign. The average Canadian does not put money in anything unless he believes in it. We may, perhaps, have too many Divinity Halls, but that was one of the necessary results of Union, and will put itself right in time. Montreal College has had some splendid gifts, and when business brightens up, I have no doubt the millionaires in Montreal will complete the endowment. If the brethren down there have special difficulties in working the French Evangelization Scheme, the Church should pray for them, help them, rally round them and cheer them on. The Church should be like the British drummer boy who said he had never learned to beat a retreat. Aaron and Hur didn't throw stones at Moses when he couldn't hold up his hands. How would ministers who never cease pelting committees and professors and Boards like their own elders and managers and members to pelt them every time that things don't go right? Our Home Mission work is a great success and is well managed. Once or twice the fund got behind, but the people lifted it right out of difficulty and they will do it again if the indebtedness is increased by doing good work. Our Foreign missions are doing very well. There is no parallel to the success of the Formosa mission in modern times. Things will come right there yet, and the war may be overruled for good. If anybody can pull Augmentation through, Mr. Macdonnell will. His efforts to improve the position of poorly paid ministers entitle him to the gratitude of every good Presbyterian in the country, more especially those who live in manse. On the whole there is much to thank God for in the present condition of the Church. Let us help on the good work.

THE ladies of Knox Church, Woodstock, have sent a box of clothing, valued at nearly \$300, for the use of our missionaries in the North-West. The articles sent are new and admirably selected for the object in view. The ladies of St. Andrew's Church, Ingersoll, also sustain a missionary every summer in the North-West. We trust others will soon follow such examples.

WORK FOR THE HYMNAL COMMITTEE.

MR. EDITOR,—You printed some little time ago several letters on the subject of "Reverence in Church," and one of your correspondents spoke of certain people who "expect much from their own little fancies" in the matter of reforming the manners and morals of their neighbours. At the risk of being classed with such, I must acknowledge that I have a "little fancy" from which, however, I do not "expect much." It will hardly be disputed that there is a decay of reverence in this age and on this Continent; nor will many deny that we must go right back to the nursery to get to the root of the mischief; but this larger aspect of the subject I do not mean to discuss. My own "little fancy" is the thing I wish, with your permission, to ventilate just now. Briefly, then, it seems to me that the service of praise is not always what it should be—too much is made of "the singing" considered as a performance, too little of the meaning and the matter. The congregation to which I belong uses our Canadian Hymnal, and my conscience is not thereby offended; but I cannot help thinking that the growing practice of hymn-singing is, to a large extent, responsible for the evil I have mentioned. Take two somewhat similar figures, the first from Hymn 25:

When by the dreadful tempest borne
High on the broken wave,
They know Thou art not slow to hear
Nor impotent to save.

And the second from Psalm xciii:

The floods, O Lord, have lifted up,
they lifted up their voice,
The floods have lifted up their waves
and made a mighty noise.
But yet the Lord, that is on high
is more of might by far
Than voice of many waters is,
or great sea-billows are.

And tell me which is better calculated to call forth the spirit of praise? The first is respectable rhyme, the second is lofty poetry, and that is about their measure in any comparison you may choose to make between them. The first teaches the proper lesson of enduring faith in trial and danger; but it presents no special picture to the mind—it takes hold of the imagination with no special force. But the second—ah! there we are breathed upon by the mighty spirit of Israel's warrior king. Under an angry sky the fierce winds shriek and roar—even the solid rocks tremble beneath the rush of the thundering breakers—our poor humanity cowers and shrinks beneath the terrible majesty of nature; but "the Lord that is on high," our Father, holds these things also in the hollow of His hand! I am aware that no amount of demonstration will show to some people the difference between rhyme and poetry; but history, to say nothing of our own experience, teaches us, that even those who do not understand the difference are influenced by it. We hear often of "ringing" lines. Many of the Psalms "ring." Few of the hymns do more than tinkle, and some of them do not even do that. Some one, in an article on Scott's poetry, spoke of the "trumpet-stop in his organ." This is largely present in the Psalms—largely absent from the Hymns; and I do not think we have reached the time when we can safely discard the "trumpet-stop" from the service of the Church Militant.

What has all this to do with the subject of "Reverence in Church"? Much, in my view. As out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh, so from a reverent spirit, and from that only, can come any outward reverence which is worth having. Such a spirit is greatly hindered by the subordinating of praise to "performance," and hymn-singing tempts to that. Again, the Hymns, precious as some of them are for their tender sweetness—are, and in the nature of things must be, as compared with the Psalms, sadly deficient in the power of cultivating the spirit of reverent adoration.

But at this rate I will never come to my "little fancy." It is just this: That the use of the Psalms might be increased by—if I may use the term—codifying them. It is not to be expected that Oriental lyrics written thousands of years ago can be all and altogether appropriate to our public services. Indeed, the fact that so many of them, in the dress in which we have them, are appropriate, is enough to put their author simply as a poet, a very long way indeed over the heads of most hymn-writers. We are all familiar with the cumbersome pulpit direction, "omitting the third, fifth and seventh verses," and we are also, alas! familiar with the reverence-disturbing results which