

CONCERNING CONGREGATIONAL COLDNESS.

(By Knoxonian.)

Nobody in this part of the world needs to be told that the year 1907 came in with a cold wave. Preachers who drive fifteen or twenty miles between stations are quite aware that the first Sabbath of the year was cold enough to freeze the enthusiasm of or almost anybody. Perhaps that cold Sabbath was sent early in the year to remind congregations that a minister who has to drive fifteen or twenty miles every Sabbath should have a fur coat. That may have been one reason why the day was so cold. Congregations whose pastors have to drive every Sabbath for a long distance, in all kinds of weather will please take a hint. A splendid fur coat can be had for about \$60. A coat of that kind is both useful and ornamental. It is useful, because a perfect protection against cold, and ornamental, because a very ordinary-looking brother looks well in a long fur coat, when the collar is turned up. The principal reason why he looks so well is because you don't see much of him. No congregation need expect much prosperity if its minister has to drive between his stations all winter without a good fur coat. The cold chills him, enfeebles him, paralyzes him. The eloquence freezes up in him, and the people don't get it. Their minister becomes cold physically, and there is some danger lest the people become cold in a worse sense than physically.

There is such a thing as CONGREGATIONAL coldness. It may be detected in various ways. One good way is to use the statistical report in the annual returns as a thermometer. By examining this thermometer, especially the columns which show the amounts contributed to missions, you may easily discover the amount of evangelical warmth in any congregation. In some the spiritual temperature is high, and the contributions are correspondingly liberal. In some the temperature is about zero, and the figures in the column for missions are low. In a few congregations the mercury is thirty degrees below zero, and these generally give one or two dollars each to send the Gospel to the heathen.

A newspaper reporter was sent to the North-West to write up the first Riel rebellion. For some reason or other "copy" was not forthcoming for a considerable time. When asked for the reason, the pencil-driver is reported to have said that his lead pencil froze so hard out there that no marks could be made with it. Fact or fiction, that pencil illustrates the reason why some columns in the statistical report are blanks. The congregations are frozen so hard that they give nothing to fill in the columns with. The statistical report is a capital thermometer, and on the whole gives a fairly correct estimate of the amount of evangelical warmth in a congregation. In some cases apparent coldness may be a result of entire want of system in collecting. The trouble is want of organization rather than want of warmth; but while this may be true in a few cases, as a rule, where there is warmth it will show itself.

Congregational coldness may easily be detected without the use of the statistical thermometer. One good way is to attend the public service on Sabbath. Everybody knows—that is everybody who attends church—that churches have an atmosphere peculiarly their own. Go into some churches, and everything is cold, freezing cold. The usher at the door is cold, and gives you a chilling reception. You sit down in a pew beside somebody, perhaps a lady, who seems to be an animated iceberg. The

choir gets up to prelude a little, and they seem like a collection of icebergs. Each one resembles a squeaking iceberg. Then the preacher comes in, and from his appearance suggests that he is a clerical iceberg. The moment he opens his mouth you see that his appearance did not belie him. He reads coldly, prays coldly, preaches coldly. The whole performance is cold. It may be faultless in other respects, but it is so intensely cold that it cannot do any good. There is no evangelical fervour—no Gospel warmth—no touch of nature that warms the heart. The whole service is of the ice-icy. There is no soul in it. It has no heart power, and does little or no good. The preacher is a human iceberg, and you are glad when he gets through. You go home, feeling rather wicked, and wonder what churches are kept up for, any way.

You go into another church in which the atmosphere is entirely different. The usher gives you a warm welcome. Without being obsequious he shows you into a pew in a friendly manner. The occupants of the pew make room for you, or give you a book, or show you some other little civility which makes you feel you are welcome. The choir puts heart power into the singing. The preacher comes in, and you see at a glance that he is human. There is a peculiar something in his voice and manner which tells you he is a man, but a man who wishes to help his fellowmen. His reading of the opening hymn and the scriptures help to put you in a good frame of mind. The long prayer, instead of being wearisome lifts you up and brings you near your heavenly Father and your elder Brother. The sermon comes, and the warm evangelistic truth goes right home to your heart. There was something there for you, though you were a stranger. As the service proceeds, your cares become lighter, your faith stronger, and you leave, feeling that it was a good thing to worship in that church.

What made the difference between these two churches? The difference was in the spiritual atmosphere. The one was cold, the other warm. What made the atmosphere of the one warm, and the atmosphere of the other cold? The Gospel. A church in which the Gospel is fully, faithfully and earnestly preached always has a warm atmosphere. Any church that depends more on mere forms than on the power of Gospel truth must always be cold.

There are other tests by which the spiritual atmosphere of a congregation may be tried. The prayer meeting is a good one. It is one of the best. A congregation with a poorly-attended prayer meeting is generally cold. The attendance of the members at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a good test. If the members attach very little importance to this sacrament, and attend of communion Sabbath in small numbers, then rely upon it the spiritual atmosphere is below zero.

We find the following item in one of our exchanges. The thought contained in it may be useful to any of our readers who may have had difficulty in sanctioning the innovation: The use of the individual cups is Scriptural; this usage dates back to the institution of the Holy Communion by our Savior. The Lord's supper was instituted by Christ, in connection with, and at the conclusion of, the Jewish passover . . . at that Passover table, as always, everyone of the guests was provided with his own cup. All authorities agree that individual cups were used at the Passover table; this same custom prevails to-day among the Hebrews of all lands in their celebration of the Passover. At the institution, therefore, of the Lord's Supper, surroundings show that individual cups were used. The use of a single cup is, accordingly, a departure from the method adopted at the beginning.

LORD'S DAY ALLIANCE.

A series of meetings of more than passing interest in connection with the Lord's Day Alliance will be held in Toronto during the last week in November.

The annual meeting of Toronto branch will convene on Thursday, November 28th, at 8.00 p.m., in St. James' Square Presbyterian church, Toronto. Addresses will be delivered by His Grace Archbishop Sweetman, D.D., D.C.L., of Toronto, the honorary president of the Alliance, who also will preside; Ralph Smith, Esq., M.P., of Nanaimo, B.C., a leader in the Labor movement in Canada; Rev. L. Norman Tucker, D.C.L., John A. Paterson, K.C., and others.

In the afternoon of the same day the annual meeting of the Ontario Provincial Alliance will convene in the same place, St. James' Square Presbyterian church lecture hall, at 2.00 o'clock.

The reports will cover the work accomplished during the past year, and outline an aggressive campaign for the coming months. As this is the first year the new Lord's Day Act is in force much interest will centre in this meeting.

On Friday, the sessions being held at 10.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m., the Triennial Convention of the Lord's Day Alliance of Canada will be held in St. James' Cathedral parish hall, Church street. Delegates are expected from all the provinces. The report of Rev. Dr. Shearer will contain the intensely interesting story of the steps taken to secure the Federal Lord's Day Act; the intense struggle against mighty odds when the bill was before Parliament; the account of how the Act has been received in the various provinces, and point out how it has brought freedom to tens of thousands of Canadians, who, otherwise, would still be slaves to seven-day-in-the-week toil. There will also be plans made for the future.

The vacant chair of the President (Rev. Dr. Potts) will be filled at the morning session by His Grace, Archbishop Sweetman, the Honorary President.

In view of these meetings the ministers of the city churches will probably preach on this question the previous Lord's Day or at the mid-week service of that week. Every person who is interested in the preservation of the Lord's Day is assured a hearty welcome to any or all of these meetings.

In the F. M. Tidings for November the following new life members are reported: Miss Jennie F. Patterson, Whitby, Auxiliary, Whitby; Miss E. McNabb, W.F.M.S., Kilsyth; Mrs. W. H. Benn, W.F.M.S. Auxiliary, Niagara-on-the-Lake; Mrs. John Saunders, Knox Church Auxiliary, Harriston; Mrs. John Leiper, Burns and Knox Church Auxiliary, Lonsdale; Mrs. Daniel Beattie, presented by St. Andrew's Auxiliary, Guelph-Toronto; Mrs. W. O. Eastman, St. John's Church Auxiliary, Hamilton; Miss Laura Savers, Mission Band, Brucefield; Mrs. W. J. McKeenan, W.F.M.S., Glamis; Miss Sarah Shand, Knox Church W.F.M.S., Port Dover, Hamilton; Mrs. F. W. Clarke, Knox Church Auxiliary, Winnipeg; Mrs. George A. Bayne, Knox Church Auxiliary, Winnipeg; Mrs. (Rev.) Martin, W.W.M.B., Exeter, presented by the Ladies' Aid; Miss Agnes C. Gordon, Westminster Church Auxiliary, Toronto; Mrs. Dr. Bruce, presented by Old St. Andrew's Auxiliary, Toronto; Miss Effie M. Cant, W.F.M.S., Knox Church, Galt.

Profound learning can never take the place of familiar and everyday contact with men and women. To move the world we must know the world. To influence men and women we must appreciate their condition and be in some sense familiar with the things in which they are interested. It is only in this way that learning can have its rightful influence over the lay mind.