

Our Contributors.

SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WINTER, BUT NOT ABOUT THE WEATHER

BY KNOXIAN.

A good many people are wrestling with this question: What kind of a winter will this one be? Will it be an open winter? Will it be a close one? Last winter was close enough to please the most ardent admirer of frost. A man who went through last winter can scarcely be blamed for indulging in a little harmless speculation about the coming months. Most of us have some fleeting memories of last February. It was one of those months that make a man walk quickly no matter how lazy he may be. On one of those mornings that we all remember a pedestrian felt constrained to feel his nose a good many times in walking a mile. Not that he had any reasonable doubt that the organ was there, but somehow the terrible thought stole over one's mind that it might be frozen. Sometimes it was frozen and when not frozen it was always numb. But what is the use of guessing about the weather of this winter. We know nothing about it. Some weather-wise people predict that it will be an open winter. They did exactly the same thing this time last year. Next May we may be able to discuss the matter with some degree of intelligence. We have no data now. The questions, however, that we cannot answer about the winter suggest some others that every good man should be considering.

"Will this winter be a very cold one? Cannot say. Is your congregation a cold one? Have you a spiritual winter in your congregation all the year round? Is the thermometer always below zero? Does the spiritual atmosphere in your congregation suggest January or June? Every congregation has an atmosphere of its own. In some the atmosphere is bright, sunny, cheery, stimulating, helpful. In some it is dull, heavy, leaden, depressing—just like one of those dull, heavy, leaden, November days that we have had lately. In some it is cold—frightfully cold—the people seem spiritually frozen. In a few it is stormy, very stormy. You never know what moment a storm may burst and kill somebody ecclesiastically—perhaps the minister. The air is charged with electricity which did not all come from above—most of it came from the opposite direction—and nobody knows what it may do. Every congregation has its own atmosphere. What kind of an atmosphere has yours? That is a far more important question than, What kind of a winter will this be?

What kind of an atmosphere pervades your prayer meeting? Is it cold? Is it dull? Do the people come because they like to come? Is it a lively, enjoyable, profitable, helpful kind of meeting.

What kind of an atmosphere pervades your missionary meeting? A good many missionary meetings are so small and weak that they do not create an atmosphere of any kind.

What kind of an atmosphere pervades your annual congregational meeting? Is it stormy? Do the best people in the church go with a secret dread that something disgraceful may occur at any moment? Do the wicked fellows go expecting a scene that may afford them as much and the same kind of pleasure that they would enjoy at an average dog-fight? Does your minister lie awake the night before and several nights after? Does he always go home with a very heavy heart and tell his wife that he believes he must resign or look out for another congregation? What is the atmosphere of your congregational meeting anyway?

We have seen that each congregation has its own spiritual or unspiritual atmosphere. Now, if the atmosphere of your congregation is not what it ought to be, what are you doing to improve it? You are just as much responsible for its condition as anybody else. It won't do to say the minister creates the spiritual atmosphere of the congregation. Bad, middling, or good, most of it is created by the people. No one man can make the atmosphere spiritual. Paul was a good man, but if Paul rose from his grave and sat on the platform at a slug-ging-match in Albert Hall or even addressed the congregation he could not create a good, warm spiritual atmosphere. A minister that does not preach the Gospel may do a great deal to lower the spiritual tone of a congregation, because doing evil is always easy, but he cannot raise it alone. God's people must help him. It takes more than one man, more than a dozen men, to raise

the spiritual temperature in a body of a thousand. Now, once more, what is the spiritual condition of your congregation, and what are you doing to improve it? These are more important than any questions about the weather.

"Will business be good this winter?" That depends. If we have a month's good sleighing before Christmas and farmers market their produce it will be fairly good very good for a time of depression. Whether good or not none of us will suffer much in the body though some may feel mentally sore because they are not making much money. Good or middling, if our housekeeper understands the cooking business we shall all have three fairly good meals a day. Most of us will have pretty good clothes. Our ladies will be able to find "something to wear" when asked to weddings and evening parties. The man who likes his little smoke will find his tobacco, and the man who takes a "little something," in strict moderation you know, may be depended on to see that the hard times do not deprive him of his "nip" even in Sec⁴ Act counties. We shall get through with the minimum of economy and the maximum of complaining. That is about how it will be in business this winter.

But how are things shaping in the business that the Giver of all good has entrusted to our hands? Will the balance be on the right side at the congregational meeting? How about the collections for the Schemes of the Church? How is the Church business—the Lord's business—prospering? That business is the most important of all. If it fails and Canada lapses into heathenism all the other branches of business must fall along with it. Trade is not brisk in Central Africa. Corner lots don't bring much in Khartoum. Boys have a poor chance on the banks of the Nile compared with the banks of the St. Lawrence. When will men learn that if the Lord's business is allowed to go down their own must go to ruin along with it.

"Money is scarce." Where? For what purpose? Rumour has it that the money to start the Liberal Club came in quite freely. This contributor has no quarrel with the Liberal Club provided that the Liberals conduct it properly. He holds himself in readiness to dine there when invited by Mr. Cartwright or Mr. Mowat. It is, however, remotely possible that some Presbyterians may give \$1,000 to the Liberal Club, \$100 to the endowment of Knox College, and \$10 to the Schemes of the Church. That is scarcely a fair division. We have no sympathy with the howl that some people raise about so-called luxuries. Burrowing in people's sideboards, inspecting their wardrobes, making an inventory of a lady's dresses and jewellery, making an estimate of a man's clay pipes and old briar roots, is a mean, small business. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the people that live well pay the most for all good purposes. The problem is to keep up a proper proportion between what we spend on ourselves and what we give for good purposes.

"Money is scarce." Yes, it is desperately scarce in the homes of those worn-out ministers who are trying to live on \$200 a year. Think of that when you sit down in your elegant home.

"Money is scarce." Yes, it is painfully scarce in the homes of those ministers who are trying to keep the wolf from the door with very small salaries. Think of that, you Grit Presbyterians, when you are subscribing for the Liberal Club, and when you think of give Argumentation a lift. Mr. Macdonnell has a better scheme than Mr. Cartwright, and he can support it just as ably.

ECHOES FROM THE OCCIDENT.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.

The past summer was an unusually dry one in this Province. In consequence bush fires were numerous and, for several weeks, smoke filled the atmosphere, making it rather unpleasant, and rendering navigation very dangerous. The late rains have extinguished the fires and dissipated the smoke, and now the weather is delightful.

Notwithstanding the dry summer, the crops were on the whole good, and were safely harvested. Fruit of a great many varieties has been abundant. The salmon industry has been very successful. While, therefore, the past season has been one of severe financial depression, we have reason to thank a kind Providence for a bountiful supply of the necessities, and even the luxuries of life.

The Provincial Exhibition was held this year in New Westminster. As yet it is in its infancy. Owing to various causes, such as difficulty and expense in transportation, distance and want of interest on the part of those having choice productions, and the inadequate inducements offered to exhibitors, it was not as good as it might be. In many departments the show was very meagre. In large vegetables, however, we cannot be beaten. The display of fancy work was also very fine.

As the C. P. R. is approaching completion, Eastern people are availing themselves of the pleasure of visiting our Province. Sir Charles Tupper paid us a flying visit during the Exhibition and, I believe, told our people that this was the finest country he had ever seen. This is perhaps too flattering, although all the great men who visit us express themselves in similar language. We are expecting a call from the Governor-General this week. We hope soon to welcome some of our clerical brethren to the West; they have gone East to recreate long enough. They should now take Horace Greeley's advice and *come West*. The brethren here would be only too glad to let them preach in their pulpits on the Sabbath, and take them around to see the sights during the week.

In church matters there has been some progress all along the line. We are not a little disappointed at the action of the General Assembly in not granting our petition for a Presbytery. We feel the lack of such a court very much. It would be presumptuous, however on our part to criticise the action of that venerable body. Doubtless, the fathers and brethren who opposed our petition had good reasons for their opposition, although we have looked in vain for them.

Mr. Thomson entered on his work at Granville and the North Arm early in the spring. His success is very encouraging. In May an organization was effected at the North Arm; two elders—Messrs. McCleery and Boyd—were ordained; a communion roll containing over a dozen names was formed and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper dispensed. A site for a church has been secured on Sea Island and the building will be erected in the course of a few months. In former years Mr. Jamieson gave supply to this field. Mr. Dunn also gave them service for a time.

At Granville, the service is held in the school-house which has proved far too small, many having to go away night after night for want of room. We hope that a suitable site will soon be obtained so that ample accommodation shall be provided for all desirous of attending upon the means of grace.

In the Nicola Valley, Mr. Chisholm is prosecuting his work with vigour. Now that he has taken unto himself a helpmeet he will be able, I suppose, to do double service. We should have another man for the Spellemachem field, the majority of the settlers being Presbyterians.

Encouraging reports come from Mr. Fraser in Victoria. During the summer, he visited a new district called Alberni, lying to the west of Nanaimo, and found the beginning of what will be eventually a flourishing settlement.

In New Westminster the fourth communion season for the year was observed recently. Eleven united with the Church upon profession of their faith. The total number added during the year is thirty-five—nineteen upon profession of faith and sixteen by certificate.

We started a Chinese Mission School on the 1st of August which, on the whole, has been very encouraging. A suitable building was rented at \$15 per month. A little over twenty dollars fitted it for a night school. The rent so far has been met by a fee of twenty five cents per week imposed upon each Chinaman who is able to pay it. Inability to pay however, does not exclude from the school. The expenses of fitting up the place will be shared by some members of our congregation. The school is open every night during the week but Thursday. The attendance is very fluctuating. Since opening, over fifty names have been placed on the roll, while the average attendance would scarcely amount to fifteen. We teach them to read, write and count, and the progress they make is astonishing. At the close of the lessons we sing a hymn in Chinese, such as, "There is a Happy Land," "Happy Day," etc., and repeat the Lord's Prayer which is printed on a large sheet of cotton. We have sheets containing four hymns, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. They were printed for me by a young Chinese doctor who, I am sorry to say, has become so addicted to opium