

## Our Contributors.

### NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

This is the season for "swearing off" and making good resolutions. Of late it has become rather popular to say sarcastic things about the resolutions made on New Year's Day. The persons who hold a meeting in their inner consciousness and propose, second and carry good resolutions unanimously are held up to ridicule because said resolutions are not always kept. Well, some of them *are* kept. Others are kept for a short time and even that is a good thing. If a man resolves on New Year's Day that he will drink no more for a year and does not taste until Dominion Day, he has been sober for six months, and surely that is a good thing. It may be urged that the breaking of the resolution weakens his moral nature. Probably; but six months' drinking would do his nature more harm than fracturing the resolution. Even if a resolution is not kept six months it may be a good thing. The making of a resolution is a wholesome exercise. It brings conscience into play; it involves self-examination; it makes the man look back and forward and take a moral reckoning of himself. Such reckoning should be made oftener than once a year, but once a year is better than not at all. Let no one despise the resolutions of New Year's day because they are not all kept. The making of them shows that the maker *thinks*, and that is a great deal.

The number of topics that might be embraced in a good set of resolutions for 1885 is large. A family man who wishes to grow symmetrically with a well rounded character and fight the devil along the whole line will generally begin with some

#### FAMILY RESOLUTIONS.

The family is the basis of society. The Church is an aggregate of families, and what the families are the Church must be. To improve church life by anything that lowers the tone of family life is an impossibility. The State is an aggregate of families, and what the families are the State must be. The Dominion can never be any better morally than the families that constitute the Dominion. If, on reflection, a man finds out on the first day of '85 that he does not spend as much time with his family as he should do, he ought to make a good strong resolution to mend his ways—and keep it. Business must be attended to of course, but sitting on inverted soap boxes in a corner grocery hearing and relating village gossip is not business. It is unfortunately necessary to go to a good many evening meetings in towns and cities, but the number might well be reduced and the meetings made much shorter. To go to the Lodge once a month may be a duty, but some men go to the lodge when there isn't any lodge. All that class of citizens—ministers among the number—who spend so many of their evenings in public should solemnly resolve this week to spend more time in their homes during 1885. One of the weakest points in Canadian society is the little attention that many give to home life. If husbands would give their wives a little of the attention they used to choke them with before marriage it would be a good thing for the family. The husband may possibly not be always to blame. Then let wives always resolve this week to make their homes brighter and happier for 1885 than they have ever been before.

#### CONGREGATIONAL RESOLUTIONS.

It might be a good thing for some of the office-bearers of our congregations to make a few resolutions this week. An elder that did not do any work during '84 but distribute the symbols on Communion Sabbath might take some healthy exercise on the first day of January in the way of self-examination. If this exercise leads him to make and keep a few good resolutions for '85 he will be happier a year hence than he is now. A trustee or manager who has taken no interest for a whole year in the business affairs of the congregation he was appointed to manage must have some unpleasant sensations at the end of the year. He should make a series of good resolutions and keep them. The member who has done nothing for a whole year but "object," might ask himself if he finds that objecting to everything helps on the Lord's work to any great extent. Those people who always propose to equalize the expenditure and revenue by cutting down the expenditure might ask themselves if the equalization could not be brought about by raising the

revenue. Several hundred people might resolve to go to church more regularly than they did in '84. Several thousand should resolve to attend prayer meeting who have never attended at all. The men who make long speeches about economy, but never pay anything, might pay up so that their eloquence may have a better chance next year. The number of congregational resolutions that should be made is wonderful.

#### RESOLUTIONS FOR CHURCH COURTS.

It might be well for the brother who continually rises in the Church Courts and says "*Moderator, I rise to a point of order,*" to resolve not to rise so often about that point. A point of order is usually a very small point. Sometimes there is no point at all. The brother who begins every speech by saying, "*Moderator, I feel I cannot give a silent vote on this question,*" might resolve to let that introduction go. The fact that he is making a speech shows how he feels. The brother who speaks on every question in every church Court might resolve to try if the church can get on with less of his eloquence for a year. The unfortunates who are compelled to listen to him can. Whole Presbyteries might resolve not to spend an entire day on business that might be done in an hour or two.

#### PULPIT RESOLUTIONS.

Would it not be well if some ministers would resolve this week to shorten their sermons. Public opinion demands brief treatment of subjects and there is nothing to be gained by quarrelling with public opinion in such matters. Cursing the age won't make it any better. When the Head of the Church sent you into this world to preach the Gospel at this time, do you suppose He did not know what the state of public opinion would be about the length of sermons? There is no use in saying that centuries ago the people would stand sermons three hours long with sixty heads. If God had meant you to preach at that time sermons of that kind He would have created you then. The fathers who preached then were grand old men, and they made sermons to suit their times in length. Why can't you imitate them and resolve to adapt yourself to the age in which you live? You must do justice to the subject, of course. The subject will come back, however, but the people may not if you weary them. If there is reason to believe that you can do more good by preaching half an hour than forty-five minutes or an hour, why not resolve to preach the half hour? Every man preaches and speaks longer than he *thinks* he does. Making all due allowance for the nonsense talked at conferences and conventions about long prayers, might it not be a good thing for some ministers to shorten their prayers? Some of the most intelligent people—the most loyal Presbyterians—the most devoted Christians—do complain about the length of the prayers and sermons that they hear at times. They are the best friends of the Church. Though cranks, and meddlers, and troublers and busy-bodies be treated with contempt, might it not be well to yield to the feelings of some of the very best of our people?

### THE MODEL TEACHER IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

BY JAMES CROIL, MONTREAL.\*

It may seem trite to say that the teacher ought to be a Christian, but the question has not yet been settled whether, under any circumstances, it is expedient to employ unconverted teachers in the Sunday school. There are such—men and women of good report who from praiseworthy motives have offered their services, but who would hesitate to call themselves converted persons. They have not made a distinct profession of their faith. They have not yet reached the decisive point in religious experience which enables them to say, "*I know in whom I have believed.*"

Perhaps it is enough to say here that each case of this kind that arises should be judged on its own merits, rather than that a cast-iron rule should be laid down. At the same time, it is claimed that such persons do not properly come under the category of our ideal Sunday school teacher. The traveller, in selecting a competent guide, must be satisfied that the person who offers his services not only knows a great deal about the country whither he is going, he must know it from personal observation and experi-

\* Read before the Conference of the Evangelical Alliance, at Copenhagen, September 4, 1884.

ence. He must have been there himself. The mariner employs a pilot who is supposed to know every reef, and shoal, and devious current, that lies between him and his desired haven. So he who would instruct others in the knowledge of saving truth ought to be one who has himself been taught of God, and is fully persuaded in his own mind as to the verities of revealed religion. Observation leads me to say that unconverted teachers, however well qualified in other respects, are not to be depended upon for any great length of time. They usually fail precisely at the point where endurance is most needed—when confronted with some of the difficulties and discouragements which every now and then beset the teacher's path.

#### THE MODEL TEACHER

has a thorough knowledge of the Bible and a profound respect for it. He accepts it as something more than authentic history—a revelation from God—the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him. He believes that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for instruction in righteousness. He takes it for his text-book and is thoroughly loyal to it. He does not seize upon isolated passages and twist them so as to square with his own fancies. He does not come before the class to ride any of his own hobbies. Upon every subject he is called upon to investigate and discuss. He compares Scripture with Scripture. He is not carried about by "every wind of doctrine." He does not vex himself nor distract his class, by speculations on deep mysteries which he cannot explain; instead of "darkening counsel," he aims at a simple presentation of truth, so far as he knows it.

The model teacher is "a workman, that needeth not to be ashamed"—a skilled workman. He has the best tools he can procure, and knows how to use them. He has a perfect knowledge of the material he is to work upon. As the sculptor, looking at the rough block of marble, "sees an angel in it;" as the artist culls from some broken heap of rubbish bits of broken glass and converts them into an exquisite stained-glass window to adorn a cathedral, so the skilled teacher, out of the common quarry, rears magnificent temples—temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. He himself is a pattern of regularity and punctuality, of faith, patience, and perseverance. He sets about his task with a definite aim. He never loses sight of it. Everything he says or does is with a view to a predetermined result, and every word tells. Recognized fitness for his work is that which alone entitles him to the distinction of a skilled workman.

The teacher has a right appreciation of what the Sunday school is, and the purpose it is intended to serve. He does not regard it as a substitute, in any sense, for anything else. It is not an institution attached to the church, like a dining-car which is coupled on to a passenger train at one station and switched off at another.

IT IS A PART AND PARCEL OF THE CHURCH, as necessary to its satisfactory progress as is the tender to the locomotive. The church cannot do without it. Certainly it is not to be regarded as a substitute for family instruction. It is the complement of it. The Sunday school has proved itself to be an educational power, a civilising power, and a saving power. No longer a feeble band of unappreciated if not despised workers, it has become a great army—a million and a half of teachers, with thirteen millions of scholars. "Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." It is the right arm of missionary enterprise throughout the whole world.

Nor is the power of numbers to be underrated. It is well calculated to inspire the teacher with courage and devotion. As he looks along the line, he feels that he is not an isolated sentry. He belongs to the army of "the invincibles." If there be failure at any given point to-day, he does not despair of success to-morrow. He knows that the battle is the Lord's and that, sooner or later, he will be "more than conqueror."

We come now to the crucial test of the skilled teacher. He has prepared himself by careful study for analysing the lesson. Remembering that other and wiser men have looked into these things before him, he will not despise their assistance. Mr. Spurgeon says: "Usually we have found the despisers of commentaries to be men who have no sort of acquaintance with them. A respectable acquaintance