

Our Contributors.

DIFFICULTIES WHEREVER YOU GO.

BY KNOXONIAN.

A congregational meeting was held not long ago in a prominent congregation in the Free Church of Scotland, for the purpose of calling a minister. During the proceedings it came out with painful clearness that the friends of one of the candidates had been canvassing. A worthy elder present denounced the canvassing with becoming indignation. He said he had left the Old Kirk in '43 to escape the evils of patronage, and now in his New Church he had to encounter the evils of canvassing. The good man has sailed away from Scylla and bumped against Charybdis. Would that he were the only man in the world who has performed a similar feat, and had a similar experience. Far be it from us to say that this worthy Free Church man did not do his duty in '43. That is not our point. The point to be discussed is that, in running away from one kind of real or imaginary evil, you often run right into another kind which is perhaps more real than imaginary.

Here is a man who has become dissatisfied with the Presbyterian Church. He says that it is slow and cold and stiff and all that sort of thing. Perhaps the real reason why he dislikes Presbyterianism is because he has no office, or because the heartless Presbyterian treasurer sent him a bill for his arrears, or something of that kind. He hankers after the Methodists, and joins them. For a little while after he enters his new Zion he is very tender and effusive. He gushes. He slops over. He tells his new friends how good he feels since he left these cold Presbyterians, and came among the Lord's people. His only difficulty is with the service at special efforts. Sometimes he shouts in the wrong place. The preacher predicts that some very wicked thing will be done, and the new convert adds a hearty "amen." He is not sufficiently educated yet to sit in the amen corner. The preacher asserts that the devil goes about like a roaring lion, and the newly fledged clasps his hands and shouts: "Glory be to his holy name." With these trifling drawbacks, our old friend has at first a fairly good time. Soon, however, he begins to find that Methodists are human, just like Presbyterians. He had often heard that they attain to sinless perfection, but he never strikes one of that kind. He finds too, that every man can't have an office in the Methodist Church, any more than in the Presbyterian. He finds also, that our excellent neighbour the *Guardian* costs \$2 a year, *strictly in advance*. Worse than all, he finds that the Methodists actually do take money, and not only take it, but have ways of collecting it that Presbyterians never dreamed of. That brother ran away from his Church to avoid things he didn't like, but he was not long away until he struck several things not any pleasanter than the things he left.

And here is a Presbyterian who does the same thing without ceasing to be a Presbyterian.

Without any tangible reason, he becomes dissatisfied with his own congregation. He scarcely knows the reason why. Very likely the principal reason is in himself. Perhaps he is too well fed, and has not enough of work. His trouble may be spiritual dyspepsia. He needs exercise, but he won't take it. His dyspepsia makes everything in his own congregation seem blue. He looks across the congregational fence, and sees everything bright in a neighbouring congregation. He goes over. He expects a brass band reception, but if his neighbours are respectable Presbyterians they don't bring out any brass band. For a time, the "new man" tries to make himself believe he is up to the eyes in congregational clover. As the years roll by, perhaps before one has passed, he finds that his new friends are all human. He finds old Adam is there too. Perhaps he finds that he cannot "run" the new minister any easier than the old one. Before very long he begins to wonder if, after all, he gained much by making the change.

Ministers sometimes have a similar experience. Brother RESTLESS has become dissatisfied with his pastoral charge. The congregation has some things about it that he does not like. The people, or some of them, have grave faults. Brother RESTLESS forgets that if the people were all perfect, his eminent services would be entirely unnecessary. He forgets, too, that he is not absolutely perfect himself. Forgetting these, and a good many other things he should

remember, he puts himself in the way of getting a call. He accepts, but before he is a year in his new congregation—perhaps before he is inducted—he has very conclusive and perhaps painful evidence that some of the new people are not perfect either. In a short time he has the consideration of a rather painful problem forced upon him. That problem is. What did you gain by the change?

Some people become greatly dissatisfied with our climate. It is too cold. These Canadian winters, they say, freeze all the vitality out of a man. They go south. They run away from frost, and run into fever. They are like the Free Church man whose speech suggested this paper. Escaping from one difficulty they run into another.

People who might have more sense often have a similar experience in changing their place of residence. Did you ever see an ill-balanced, poorly constructed man, when he had made up his mind that his own town was the poorest place in all creation, and some neighbouring town the best. What nonsense he talks about the new place. He moves. He finds no loaves hanging to the limbs of the trees in the new place. He sweeps up no sovereigns on the streets. The people there are all human. To his utter disgust, he finds he needs money in the new town and must work to get it.

Let us have a closing word with this young man who has just concluded to take to himself a wife. Right you are, young man. That is a proper thing to do. If you have a reasonable prospect of being able to pay for double tickets on the journey, get her at once. Get one with a level head and warm heart and an industrious pair of hands. Don't forget about the hands. If she is the right kind of companion, you can work along through this world very much better with her than you could alone. But let us whisper gently in your ear that going double through the world brings some serious responsibilities. If you and she are the right kind of people, you need not be afraid to meet the responsibilities, but it may be as well for you to know they are there.

BIBLE INSECTS.

BY R. K. DUNCAN, MITCHELL, ONT.

The grand old Book of God still stands, and this old earth, the more its leaves are turned over and pondered, the more will it sustain and illustrate the sacred Word.—*Professor Dana*.

The Bible claims to be God's Word or message to all mankind, and we therefore hold that it may be examined and rigidly questioned respecting anything upon which it speaks.

As the eyes of the omnipotent God must have explored the universe through and through, man by the aid of the most powerful instruments invented to assist his vision can have discovered nothing in nature that is hidden from His all-seeing eye, or that has not first sprung into existence at the Almighty's Word, and under His creative fingers. Now if the Revelation contained in the Book of Nature, and the Revelation purporting to be contained in the Holy Scriptures contradict one another, it follows that the Bible would not be in a special sense God's Book; but if, on the contrary, the Bible, when correctly interpreted, agrees with all established facts of Natural Science, there would be a most direct testimony as to the truthfulness of the Scriptures.

We believe the Bible, when correctly interpreted, to be in perfect harmony and agreement with any department of Natural Science, however small and insignificant it may be; and to substantiate this belief we shall take some of the tiniest inhabitants of the vast green temple of Nature, and compare their lives and habits with statements made concerning them by the Bible.

No branch of Natural History deserves a more careful research than the class Insecta, because no class more abounds in use or injury to man. After studying the immense number of tribes into which God in His wisdom has divided them, and the different purposes for which each tribe was designed; after investigating their structure, habits and modes of life, we can find no language that more fittingly expresses our sensations than the words of the Psalmist:

O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom has thou made them all.

Thou hidest Thy face; they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath; they die and return to their dust.

Thou sendest forth Thy word, they are created, and Thou renewest the face of the earth.

LOCUST (*Locustaria*).

Among the most prominent of "Bible Insects" are the locusts, which seem to have been one of the most terrible plagues by which God scourged an unrighteous and disobedient people. They are first mentioned in Exodus x. 13:

And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night, and when it was the morning the east wind brought the locusts.

Modern observations have confirmed this in a very interesting manner. Being nurtured in the wilds of Arabia, they invariably came from the East into Egypt, and as invariably continue their ravages until they are destroyed by being driven with a strong west wind into the Red Sea. So well do the Arabians know and feel their power that one of their poets represents a locust as saying to Mohammed: "We are the army of the Great God! We have the power to consume the whole world, and all that is in it."

In the year 591 an infinite army of locusts of a size unusually large ravaged Italy, and, being at last cast into the sea, from their stench rose a pestilence which carried off a million of men and beasts. In the Venetian Territory, in 1478, more than 30,000 persons are said to have perished in a famine occasioned by these terrific scourges. In 1748 they were again observed in Europe, and according to the observations made at that time in Vienna, the breadth of one of these swarms was forty miles, and the length so great as to occupy four hours in passing over the city.

The account of a traveller, Mr. Barrow, of their ravages in the southern parts of Africa in 1797 is still more striking. He says: "An area of nearly 2,000 square miles might be said to have been literally covered with them. When driven into the sea by a north-west wind, they formed for fifty miles a bank three or four feet high."

These incidents form an emphatic commentary of the text before us:

For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the field which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing on the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.

The subject is one peculiarly suited for poetry, but we remember of no poet who has dealt with it except Southey, whose vivid description of Oriental life and manners must excite the wonder and admiration of those who remember that he never visited the East:

Here Moath painted where a cloud
Of locusts, from the desolated fields
Of Syria, winged their way.
Oh, how created things
Obey the written doom!

Onward they came, a dark, continuous cloud
Of congregated myriads numberless.
The rushing of whose wings was the sound
Of some broad river, headlong in its course
Plunged from a mountain summit, or the roar
Of a wild ocean in the autumnal storm,
Shattering its billows on a shore of rocks.
Onward they came—the winds impelled them on;
Their work was done, their path of ruin past,
Their graves were ready in the wilderness.

To illustrate the wonderful harmony existing between Nature and the Bible with regard to these insects, we shall quote from the Rev. Dr. Thompson, who was for twenty-five years a missionary in Syria and Palestine: "The references to the habits and behaviour of locusts in the Bible are very striking and accurate. Joel says: 'He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree; he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.' The locusts at once strip the vines of every leaf and cluster of grapes, and of every green twig. I also saw many fig orchards clean bare, not a leaf remaining; and as the bark of a fig tree is of a silvery whiteness, the whole orchards, thus riddled of their green veils, spread abroad their branches 'made white' in melancholy nakedness to the burning sun. In view of the utter destruction which they effect, the prophet exclaims: 'Alas for the day; for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes?' This is most emphatically true: I saw under my own eye whole fields of corn disappear like magic, and the hope of the husbandman vanished like smoke. Again: 'How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.' This is poetic, but true: A field over which this flood