

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWSSOME AUTUMN THOUGHTS IN
PLAIN PROSE.

By Knoxonian.

Not being ambitious to furnish autumn poetry for anybody's waste-basket, we put our essay on autumn in plain prose. We may be wrong, but we have an idea that plain prose in the contributor's column does more good than bad poetry in a waste-basket. Some people would perhaps prefer writing for the waste-basket in poetry to writing for their journal in prose, but that is not our way of thinking. There is neither gain nor glory in having one's verses put into a waste-basket. The literary companionships of a waste-basket are not good.

Autumn in Ontario is in many respects our most pleasant season. October is our most enjoyable month. A run through any part of Ontario in October is a rare treat. The trees, whether in orchard or wood, are more beautiful than in spring. There may be less to suggest hopefulness, but this lack is more than atoned for by the infinite rarity of tint. Any man who can take a run through Brant, or Oxford, or Perth, or Waterloo, or Halton, or Peel, or York, or Ontario, or any of our older counties in October, without being moved to admiration has a small soul. He is but one remove from the cattle seen feeding in these localities, and perhaps not nearly so useful as some of them. October is one of the best months in the year for a holiday. A man who has October and \$200, or even \$100, can take a capital holiday without going off this continent, or even out of this Dominion.

In the life of every good man who lives to his threescore and ten there is an autumn. Where it begins or ends you cannot exactly say, but everybody knows what you mean when you say about any given man that he is in the autumn of life. One cannot name any day in September and say autumn began on that day, nor can you name any year in a man's life and say his autumn began in that year. We know when the autumn of the year has fully come, and there are many signs which tell up when the autumn of life has come.

A good man should be at his very best in the autumn of life. Autumn is the fruit-bearing season in human life as well as in nature. A Christian man should be more useful, more influential for good, more of a blessing to his Church and to society in the autumn of life than he has ever been before. He has all his past experience to guide him; he has that faculty for dealing with men with the minimum of friction which can be acquired only by practice; he has the wisdom which years usually give to every man who wants it; he has a vast amount of useful knowledge picked up by the way; and, better than all, he has, or ought to have, more grace than he possessed at any previous period of his life. His autumn should be by far his best time. If a man is not a better Christian in the autumn of life than he was in life's spring and summer, it may well be doubted whether he is a Christian at all. If he has not more sense in autumn than he had in his earlier years, there is great fear that he may never have any sense. There is no hope for a fool at sixty.

Perhaps the finest thing about the autumn of life is its mellowness. The mellow character is no longer hard—no longer harsh, no longer sour, no longer

green. A man in that stage does not try to do everything by force. He does not try to make drunkards sober by abuse, nor to convert Catholics with a club. He knows that you never make a liquor seller better by calling him hard names, nor turn a Catholic into a Protestant by breaking his skull. A preacher in the mellow stage never consigns men to everlasting perdition in a tone of voice as destitute of feeling as the tones of an auctioneer. The autumn of life brings mellowness in the case of every good man, and mellowness of character means moderation, charity, kindness, patience and many other qualities that make character lovely.

Men in the autumn of life are as a rule the safest men to do business with.

A doctor in the autumn of life is not very likely to give you heroic treatment unless your case is really bad. He knows that "horse doses" shake up the system horribly. He nurses nature, helps nature and gets you through as easily as is compatible with safety. All young doctors don't give "horse doses" by any means. Many of them are careful, prudent, fine fellows, who treat their patients with great care and skill. Some of the old ones, even in the autumn period, give very strong powders for very slight ailments. But still the general rule remains true that a good physician in the autumn of life gives as few "horse doses" as he can help, especially to weak people and children.

A good lawyer, in the autumn of life, is very careful about advising people to go into lawsuits. He knows by long experience that litigation is slow, tedious, expensive and terribly uncertain. A young lawyer, brimful of fight, and anxious for promotion, may not always be so careful.

A statesman in the autumn of life, if a good man, always becomes more moderate in his opinions and feelings. He has lived long enough to see that there are good men, patriotic men, on both sides. He has also found out that there are selfish schemers, pinch-neck patriots, howling hypocrites, and a few thieves on both sides. A young man starting out in public life is apt to suppose that all the good men are on his own side and all the bad ones on the other. When he comes to the autumn of life he knows better, and becomes more moderate in his feelings and opinions.

A business man in the autumn of life has usually some marked qualities. He is not very apt to enter into wild cut speculations. He doesn't sue half as quickly as a young man. In fact he never sues at all if he can get his own in any reasonable way. As a rule, it is much easier to do business with a man in the autumn of life than at any other period. He is more reasonable, more sensible, more kindly, and does not believe so much in force as he did when young.

A pastor in the autumn of life should be at his very best. If he has kept up his reading, he is at his best. Having children of his own, he knows better how to deal with the young of his flock. Having lost some of his own, he can sympathize with others when similarly bereaved. If he has been a good student and has had the discipline of the pen, he should preach better in the autumn of life than at any other time. His sermons will be more mellow. He may preach less about hell than he once did, but he will preach more about the cross. His sermons will be more sym-

pathetic, more helpful, more useful than they ever were. His prayers will be the best part of his service. There is nothing that shows the spiritual growth of a minister or any other Christian so much as his prayers.

Reader, are you in the autumn of life? If so, are you better than you were at any former period? Have you outgrown all hardness, harshness, sourness, bitterness? Have you that mellowness of character which should come in autumn and which, while it adorns the possessor, is a benediction to all around him? If not, why not?

CARD PLAYING AND RELIGION.

It has been apparent for some time that card-playing has not only been a growing evil in society, but an evil that has crept into the Church and affected injuriously not a few of its members. Not any too soon has the alarm been sounded by Mrs. A. B. Sims, of Des Moines Ia., winner of the women's whist championship of the United States, who has abandoned card-playing and is now using her efforts to induce others to do so. She was one of the speakers at the Winona Bible Conference recently, and gave her personal experience and testimony, as follows:

After I saw what I was really doing, I burned up my whist board and cards, and I should like to speak in every church to the women and tell them what card-playing led me and will lead them to. I belong to Christ Church, in Des Moines, and when I was most active at the card table I was also trying to do work in the church. My husband was on the board of trustees, and I was at the head of the church sick committee. I looked about me in the church and saw that card-playing was undermining our organization. The whist and euchre craze was sweeping the women of the congregation, and the church was sinking because of their neglect. The fever to play whist acquired such a hold on me that I abandoned my church work; in fact, I quit attending services. Finally Mr. Sims and I fell to discussing it, and we concluded that my identity with the church and with the card clubs of Des Moines made my attitude ridiculous. I continued to play cards up to December 17, 1906. I had spent years studying whist from a scientific standpoint. I had given as much thought to the game as a minister of a church would give to the Scriptures. Toward the close of my card career I declared that I would give up euchre and bridge whist parties, but would never abandon the regulation game of whist. On December 17, last year, I heard Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman preach on Amusements. I made up my mind that I would never touch a card again.

The card craze, as it prevails among the women of this country, is the most serious competitor the church has to-day. It is causing them to abandon home and church interests. I have had letters from women in every leading city in the United States, in which they declared that the church and society women have gone mad over bridge whist and other games. Letters in similar strain have come to me from Canada, Europe and Mexico. It was when these messages began to pour in upon me that the hold cards have taken on civilized women fully dawned on me. I want the women of our country to hear my experience. I want to convince them, if I can, that card-playing and Christianity will not go together.