

## Our Contributors.

### SOME WAYS TO MAKE CHRISTMAS NOT HAPPY.

BY KNOXONIAN.

One of the shortest and surest ways to make Christmas or any other day unhappy is to think exclusively about yourself. Ignore the existence of the rest of the human family and concentrate your thoughts on yourself as if you were the only person in the world worth thinking about. Keep up that kind of thinking all day and you may perhaps succeed in making the Christmas of 1895 fairly unpleasant. Before the day is over you may meet a number of other people who neglect to apologize for being found in existence, and of course their presence will make you unhappy.

If this plan fails, then think of all the slights, real or imaginary, that you have received since last Christmas. Brood over the list until the fire of anger burns and then you will have a lot of ready-made unhappiness on hand. This method rarely fails.

If you have any rivals in business, in public, professional, or social life, think carefully over the number of times during the past year that the public seemed to favor your rivals rather than yourself. Scan minutely every seeming change in public opinion; then brood over it with all your might. The public don't care a straw if you brood yourself into the grave, but you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have spoilt your own Christmas.

If you have heard of any uncomplimentary remark that any thoughtless, envious, jealous, or malicious person may have made about you since last Christmas, write it out at full length on a "pad," think over it, digest it, compare it with other remarks of a similar kind that some alleged friend may have carried to you as an act of pure kindness. If merely thinking over the matter does not make you sufficiently unhappy then consider carefully how you may get even with the person by saying something equally bad about him, or by bringing him before the Session, or by suing him for damages in a civil court. Meditation of this kind is sure to bring about the desired result.

Be sure to forget all the good things you and yours have enjoyed since last Christmas. If you have been sick five days, think more of the five days sickness than of the three hundred and sixty days of health. If you have lost twenty-five dollars think more of the loss than of the good living your family has had for a whole year. If some rude, impertinent fellow has insulted you, think more of that than of the many words and deeds of kindness you have received from scores of kindly decent people.

You may be greatly helped in the matter of making Christmas unhappy by some recent occurrence that has made a fresh imaginary wound. You were coming up street last evening and some neighbor on the opposite side did not salute you. You felt hurt and ransacked memory and imagination for a cause. You went away back and hitched the imaginary snub to some old event equally imaginary. You put the two things together as skillfully as B. B. Osler puts circumstantial evidence together in a criminal prosecution. The trifling fact that your neighbor had his cap drawn over his eyes to keep out the snow and cold, is neither here nor there in the matter. You were insulted and you are in duty bound to feel bad. One case of that kind, if properly handled, will spoil any Christmas.

A man with an ecclesiastical turn of mind can easily find material for spoiling his Christmas. Let him quietly assume that the Church is going to wreck and then brood over the wreck. If that does not make him sufficiently unhappy, let him imagine that he and Donald Somebody are the only genuine Christians in the community and that there are grave doubts about Donald. It makes a man feel lonely to think that he is about the only Christian among a few thousand sinners.

There is no reason why a patriotic politician may not have an unpleasant subject to think about this Christmas. All he need do is reflect on the fact that by running three candidates in a constituency, two of them on substantially the same platform, the minority may rule the majority. By judiciously working this plan even Cardwell may be made to declare in favor of Separate Schools in Manitoba. And this after fifty years of self-government. Perhaps the old family compact men were not so far wrong after all when they favored Dowling Street rule. Let any man lay his hand on his heart and say if Joseph Chamberlain, Her Majesty's Colonial Secretary, could not settle this Manitoba difficulty quicker and better than we are doing.

### THE RIGHT OF RULING ELDERS TO BE MODERATORS OF CHURCH COURTS.

MR. EDITOR,—I have read with considerable interest the various communications which have appeared from time to time in THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN, on this very important question, namely, "The Appointment of Ruling Elders as Moderators of Church Courts." I may say at the outset that I heartily agree with a great deal that has been written on the subject; nor do I in any way find fault with the abstract theories advanced, nor do I for one moment call in question the fitness of many of the elders in our Church for the position. On the contrary I affirm without fear of contradiction that many of our elders, by reason of their "occupying the very highest social, scholastic, judicial and political positions in the land," are eminently qualified to preside over any of our Church courts; aye, much better qualified than many of our ministers to fill the Moderator's Chair, with dignity to themselves and profit to the courts over which they might be called to preside.

It must also be admitted that there are ministers in every denomination of Christians (and the Presbyterian Church in Canada is no exception to the rule) who will pull wires, and do things, which, measured by the Golden Rule, would fall very far short of perfection, when they have set their heart upon the accomplishment of that which is only good; aye, and sometimes on things which are not good in themselves, such as the manipulation of the vote in a vacant congregation for their favorite candidate when moderating in a call. I am glad to say that personally I never knew of any minister who did such a thing, nor did I ever hear of such a thing being done until I read it in your paper. However, the possibility is admitted of ministers doing things.

It must also be admitted that there are some ministers who regard themselves, as the Session, Deacons' Court and Congregation, and they would regard as heresy of the very worst kind the action of any one who would have the hardihood to differ in opinion from them; such are as autocratic in their ideas, and sometimes in their actions, too, as the Czar of All the Russias. But after all, there is nothing very wonderful in all this. The wonder is that there is not a great deal more of it. When it is considered that ministers hold a position in the community in which they dwell, not accorded to other people, their advice is sought at all times, and a deference paid to their opinions and words not accorded to everyday mortals. And it is a right and proper thing that ministers should be very highly esteemed for their work's sake. But it must not be forgotten that they are still men and unless the grace of humility is in very active exercise, they are apt to forget that they are still men, and very fallible men at that, so that where the natural inclination is to "rule" it becomes a part of their nature, and any opposition offered to their opinions and actions comes to be regarded as a personal insult which must be put down and trampled under foot if need be. But while there have been such cases, and such may still ex-

ist, they are the exception—the rare exception which prove the rule—and it will be a dark day for the Presbyterian Church in Canada when her ministers will lose the love and respect of her people which has been accorded to them because they minister to them in holy things. And no stronger evidence can be given of the decline of spirituality in any Church, than a decline in the love and respect paid to the ministers of the gospel.

But the question may be asked: What has all this to do with the appointment of ruling elders in Church courts? I answer, practically, very little. I only refer to them because they have been dwelt upon at considerable length by former writers, and to show that while I claim for ministers the sole and exclusive right to be Moderators of Church courts I do not base this claim upon any superiority inherent in the minister over the elder, or that ordination and induction to the ministerial office confer upon the individual any special fitness for the performance of the duties of the office. Neither will ordination or induction into the ministerial office, in any way change the individual or the life.

While former writers have dwelt at considerable length upon the equality of teaching and ruling elders, drawing their illustrations mainly from the Apostolic Church, in which it is claimed that no distinction was made between the two, and hence that the distinction now made is invidious, unscriptural and uncalled for; and to prove this has been the trend of all that has been written on the subject by the supporters of the "Right of Ruling Elders to be Moderators." So far as I have seen, there has not been a single reference made by any one to the law of our Church on this very important subject. I now ask the question: What is the law of the Church in reference to the appointment of Moderators of Church courts? In answering that question it is not necessary to consider whether the present law is good or bad, whether it is scriptural or unscriptural; nor is it necessary to consider the parity of teaching and ruling elders, nor apostolic practice, but simply what is the law and constitutional practice of the Presbyterian Church in Canada anent this matter?

I am well aware that my answer to this question will be in direct opposition to a great many ministers and elders of the Church, but that fact will not influence me in any way, or prevent me from expressing the strong convictions I hold—that, according to the law of our Church, the Moderator of all its courts "is a minister," that it is so stated in the book of "Rules and Forms of Procedure," sanctioned by the General Assembly of the Church in 1889. I have not seen the original minute of the Assembly but I presume that this minute which is recited in the Prefatory Note, is correct, and is as follows: (1). "That the 'Book of Forms,' as now submitted to the Assembly, be approved and adopted as a useful guide for the members, the office-bearers and the courts of the Church in the transaction of ecclesiastical business." This "Book of Rules and Forms of Procedure" is very specific on the constitution of Church courts from the Session to the General Assembly. In every case does it declare that "the Moderator is a minister," and that must be taken to be the law of the Church, until it is amended or repealed. I must suppose that those Presbyteries who have appointed ruling elders as their Moderators, have been able to put a different construction upon this minute to what I have done, and it might be for the benefit of the Church if some of the members of those Presbyteries would give to the Church through THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN an analytical construction of the above recited Act of Assembly as their warrant for what they did when setting its specific requirements aside. For my part, I contend most strongly, that there is no ambiguity about the expression, "The Moderator is a minister." And it would surely have been a

much safer way to have so construed it, and if they were dissatisfied with the law, as it now stands, to have sought a change in the regular and constitutional way, than to run the risk of having all the acts of the Presbyteries so constituted declared illegal. I can conceive cases where congregations might be put to very great inconvenience, where the acts of Presbyteries might be declared void by the civil courts through being illegally constituted. And it is a great pity that due consideration was not given to this aspect of the case.

As the whole question will have to be discussed and decided by the General Assembly, it is a matter for regret that it did not deal with the question in June last. It was simply a waste of time to remit it to Synods. Synods have no jurisdiction in the matter. All that the Synod can do is to enquire into that which is already well known. The Assembly is seized of all the facts, and remitting it to the Synods was neither more nor less than a shirking of its duty. I hold that what the Assembly should have done when the matter was brought before it was to have passed a Declaratory Act stating clearly what the law of the Church is, and that would have settled the matter so far as the Assembly was concerned. It would then have been in order for any one who was dissatisfied with the decision to have sought for a change in the law in the regular and constitutional way, and in this way the interests of the Church would have been conserved and no violence offered to its authority, which, it must be confessed, has been done.

A good deal has been written about the "equality of teaching and ruling elders." Theoretically this is correct. But in this, as in many other things, theory and practice are very far apart, and with the single exception of voting power in Church courts, this equality does not exist, nor will the so-called liberality and broader views, now so generally entertained both in Church and State, and the so-called great and glorious democratic principle which pervades the thought of this continent, the equality of all men both in Church and State, and especially in the Church, where the danger of clerical domination is imminent, does not tend to bring them (theory and practice) together. The arguments brought forward in support of this equality from apostolic times and apostolic practice, do not accord with the altered conditions of the Church at the present time. We do not read anywhere that the Apostolic Church had theological colleges for the training of ministers, or that they were required to take an arts course, which students of the present day are required to take. Now I do not wish it to be supposed that the ministers and elders of the Apostolic Church had no training for the right performance of the duties pertaining to the office. On the contrary, they were all trained specially for the duties each had to perform by a Teacher who never made a mistake, for they taught as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance, and to this fact is due the equality which existed among elders in the Apostolic Church. The days of miracles are now past, and colleges have been established for the training of ministers of the gospel, and at no time in the history of the Christian Church has the necessity of an educated ministry been felt with greater force than at the present time, so that they may be able to maintain the truth of the glorious gospel of the grace of God in the face of scepticism, agnosticism, and the oppositions of science, falsely so called. It will be admitted, that elders are not required to undergo any course of training to fit them for the exercise of their office, and because of this a large majority have not the requisite knowledge of ecclesiastical business that would enable them intelligently to preside over Church courts; and I believe if a poll was taken of the elders of the Church as to the propriety of having elders as moderators, nine-tenths would vote against it. In view of this the question may properly be