

## Our Contributors.

### THE BATTALIONS AT THE FRONT.

BY KNOXIAN.

The stamping out of the insurrection in the North-West has made Canadians somewhat familiar with military terms. Seven months ago some of us may not have known what a "corral" is, but some of us know now. Seven months ago some of us may not have known how to classify majors, colonels, captains, and other officers according to their rank. Of course we all know now. We know, too, what a battalion is; and are familiar with the names of several battalions that distinguished themselves at the front. Suppose we divide up the workers of the Presbyterian Church into battalions and see how the grand army of John Calvin in this country looks in action. There is first

#### THE CLERICAL BATTALION.

This battalion is 700 strong. The uniform is generally a sombre black with white facings. The members of this battalion are all officers. Theoretically, the officers are of the same rank. This is what is meant by "parity of Presbyters." The phrase "parity of Presbyters" is good as a mere phrase, and sounds well in speeches and books on Church government. There is more of it in speeches and books than in actual life. Just how much "parity" there is between a city pastor who receives \$4,000 and a Muskoka missionary who luxuriates on \$400, it is difficult to say. Perhaps the principal points of "parity" are that both are good men, both are Presbyterians, both preach the Gospel and both belong to the Adam family. It would be an interesting exercise to make a few points on the martial qualities of the clerical battalion. Such work, however, is quite unnecessary. The part of the rank and file that hang about the rear, and do nothing but talk, may be safely entrusted with the duty of criticising the clerical battalion. They are always ready to sacrifice themselves in that way. Should they fail in this most important work the members of the battalion may be depended on to criticise each other. It is a way some of them have.

On the whole, the clerical battalion is a noble body of men. A trifle slow perhaps at times, but generally steady and strong. They may not always be the first on the field; but they are always the last to leave. In fact they hardly ever do leave. They don't make as much noise in action as the Methodist battalion; but they are steadier and stay better. The Methodist battalion can beat them on a cheer; but they never beat them on a charge. Never. They are not so showy as the Episcopal battalion; and don't pay so much attention to their uniform. The Episcopal battalion have been known to quarrel about their uniform in front of the foe. As all-round fighters, the Baptist battalion is not to be compared with the Presbyterian. The Baptist clerical battalion fight with desperation if there is a body of water behind them; but out in the open field they are no match for the Presbyterian battalion. Some of the senior members of the Presbyterian battalion have at times been charged with indulging in a little too much strategy in regard to vacant positions on the field; but quite likely the facts have been exaggerated. One weak point about this battalion is that the members are very liable to quarrel about the battalion music. Quarrelling about music in front of the foe is not much better than quarrelling about the colour of the uniform. Next in order comes the

#### BATTALION OF RULING ELDERS.

This battalion numbers 4,626. It is, on the whole, a solid, steady battalion, and has a noble history. In other lands it has done splendid service on many a hard-fought field. In the early history of Canada many of our best positions were taken and bravely held by members of this battalion until the clerical battalion came up. Of late this battalion has been a good deal criticised. It won't do the battalion any harm, perhaps some good. For every penful of ink spent in criticising them, a penful has been spent on the clerical battalion. It has been proposed that the members of this battalion enlist for five years instead of for life. The proposal does not meet with general acceptance and may never be anything more than a proposal. Some heavy ordnance will be needed to carry the proposal into effect. So far a strong case has not been made out. To show that out of nearly five

thousand elders a few are useless and a few worse than useless, is to show nothing at all. In any body of half that size there will always be some useless men. There are only 700 ministers in the Church, some of them are useless and some worse than useless; a number of elders, like a number of ministers, should never have been in their office; a number more, like some of their ministerial brethren, have outlived their usefulness; a number from various causes have become hopelessly soured, just as some ministers have become hopelessly soured; a few are chronic obstructionists, and a few ministers figure in the same way; but these numbers when added are small compared with the whole number. Count them out of the nearly five thousand and you have a body of Christian men that for high Christian character, fidelity to the truth, zeal for Christ and His cause, stands head and shoulders over any body of Christian laymen in the Dominion. Next comes

#### THE FINANCIAL BATTALION.

This battalion is composed of deacons, managers, missionary collectors, missionary treasurers and other officials who collect and take care of the sinews of war. It numbers over 7,000. The members are usually the best business men in the Church and that generally means that they are among the best business men in the community. Last year this battalion collected and handled \$1,558,218. This amount is almost as large as the annual revenue of Ontario. It is larger than the revenue of the smaller Provinces of the Dominion. It is easy to write these facts, but who has any proper idea of the labour and responsibility of handling a million and a-half of dollars in small amounts. And so well is the work done that a serious mistake rarely occurs. The financial battalion deserves the thanks of the Church. The only reward many of them ever receive in this world is impertinent nibbling at their annual statement, quite often made by men who don't pay enough to the Church to keep the Church officer in matches. The financial battalion will get their reward when the Chief Captain returns!

The largest battalion in the grand army of John Calvin is

#### THE SABBATH SCHOOL BATTALION.

This battalion numbers 11,014. They teach in round numbers 100,000 scholars. The battalion is largely composed of ladies and is all the better on that account. Like the elders, these teachers have been favoured with some adverse criticism of late. It is proposed that they should stand examinations as a test of their fitness to teach. On the whole they do their work quite as well in the Sabbath school as the preachers who proposed to examine them do theirs in the pulpit, and in many instances very much better. It is said that some of those who clamour the loudest for examining Sabbath school teachers, used to dodge their own examinations in college. Taken as a whole our Sabbath school workers are the best people we have. They work fifty afternoons each year for the Church and teach many a child more Gospel truth in one afternoon than its parents would in a year. There is many a child in the ransom thrown around the throne who was shown the way thither by the faithful and self-denying teachers of our Sabbath schools. Now we come to

#### THE MUSICAL BATTALION.

There is no column for this battalion in the Blue Book. As there are about 900 congregations and many of them have choirs, there must be over 3,000 people engaged in one way or another in conducting the psalmody of the Church. This is the most severely criticised, worst abused and least-thanked battalion in the whole army. High-toned choirs are severely criticised; medium-toned choirs are treated in the same way; while the lone precentor who stands up "alone in his glory" and does the best he can, is often mercilessly criticised even by those who like him and are abused by those who don't. Men who cannot sound "Doh" to save their lives, who don't know the National Anthem from Old Hundred, who don't know sharps from flats, though they ought to be very familiar with flats, can always find fault with the singing. We can remember but one congregation in the Church—St. James Square, Toronto—that gives a vote of thanks to its choir at the annual meeting. There may be others, but certainly not many, that even go through the form. We have attended church with commendable regularity all our lives and we never

heard one petition offered in a Presbyterian pulpit for those leading in the service of song. Is this right? The service of song is one of the most important and might be, and sometimes is, one of the most edifying and impressive in public worship. Too often it is little more than a bone of contention between the more conservative and more advanced elements in the congregation.

It has often been urged that choirs have been the cause of much trouble in churches. Even Talmage, who is genial almost to a fault, says that when the Devil cannot get into a church in any other way he can always get in through the choir. If some musical man were to challenge the popular verdict against choirs, it might be very difficult to show when you come down to hard facts that choirs have caused more trouble in churches than ministers or elders, or some people who are nothing and do nothing, have caused. But assuming that musical people are sometimes very sensitive, envious or jealous of each other, have they a monopoly of these qualities? Are they any more sensitive or envious or jealous-minded than some ministers are?

A good choir practises once a week which means fifty-two evenings a year given to the Church. They sing twice every Sabbath which means one hundred services of very difficult and easily spoiled work. Even if musical ability goes for nothing, and it is worth a great deal, the labour involved in all this is no trifle. Surely the persons who do it without fee or reward are at least entitled to the gratitude of congregations. And then who can estimate the value of good singing to a congregation? Many of those who find fault with choirs and their work do not, never did, and perhaps never will, spend an hour a year in working for the Church. Surely there is room for improvement in the manner in which too many congregations treat those who lead them in the service of song every Lord's Day. It cannot be denied that choirs have been the source of a good deal of congregational friction. The fault may not always have been theirs; and if they were treated more generously and prayed for occasionally, there might not be so much friction. Sometimes it will be found that when young people in a choir quarrel badly, there are old people behind them—sometimes the mothers of the young ladies—who, instead of throwing oil on the troubled waters, do exactly the opposite.

#### WHAT THE RANK AND FILE SHOULD DO.

Help the battalions at the front. Pray for them. Cheer them on. Support them. And send on abundant supplies, especially to the financial battalion.

#### A HOLIDAY TRIP.

LONDON.

London is, *par excellence*, the city of the world. With a population nearly equal to that of the Dominion of Canada, one meets with people of almost all nationalities and all grades of society. It is said to contain more Scotchmen than are to be found in Edinburgh, more Irishmen than in Dublin, and more French and Germans than in many of the larger cities in Germany and France. To do it at all thoroughly would require not the few days or weeks usually given to it by transatlantic visitors, but several months. We have spent fully three weeks here, and though we have sought to utilize our time as advantageously as possible, there are yet many places on the list of those we purposed visiting which we have failed to see.

On arriving in the city, the first matter requiring attention is to find a suitable home during the period of one's stay. Hotels there are in abundance, and that at rates to suit almost any purse. While some of these are conducted on the American principle, of so much per day, including everything, the general plan is to pay so much for your room and attendance, and take your meals either in the hotel or other restaurant, paying for what you get according to a printed tariff supplied on entering. The plan we adopted, and which we found most satisfactory in every respect, was to take rooms at a private hotel on a quiet respectable street, near the centre of the city, paying a certain sum per day for rooms, attendance and breakfast, and taking lunch and dinner at some restaurant wherever we happened to be. In connection with all the parks, museums, places of entertainment, etc., there are good restaurants in abundance, where meals may be had at prices to suit one's taste or purse. A good comfortable room in such private hotels, with breakfast and attendance,