

## Our Contributors.

### NO CHANCE TO DODGE

BY KNOXIAN.

One evening, a few years ago Dr. John Hall preached in a large city across the lines. The church was crowded and the Doctor was at his best. The sermon was intensely practical and sent the truth right home. In the closing part he took up the current excuses that men make for not believing on Christ, and fairly tore them to tatters. Iron logic and strong common sense, mingled with an occasional gleam of humour and the least touch of sarcasm, made the excuses, or at least some of them, appear supremely absurd. The great audience were visibly impressed. At the close of the service a rather careless looking American citizen made this remark to a friend: "The old man gives a fellow no chance to dodge, does he?" Probably that Yankee unconsciously paid Dr. Hall the highest compliment that has ever been paid to him. What better thing can be said of a preacher than that he gives careless sinners no chance to dodge? That style of criticism is so seldom heard that it is both fresh and refreshing. We hear a great deal about the preacher's manner, his voice, his style, his delivery, especially if we worship in a church that is hearing candidates, but we rarely hear it said of preachers that they give sinners no chance to dodge. Perhaps the critics are not in search of those qualities that prevent dodging. Possibly, they don't admire such qualities. There is a remote possibility that some of them would not care to call a man who gave no chance to dodge. And yet what higher encomium could be passed upon a preacher than to say that he gives his hearers no chance to dodge.

"His elocution is simply perfect. His tones are pure, his articulation distinct, his emphasis well timed, his inflections perfect, his pitch just right; his gestures graceful, his delivery faultless." Good! Good elocution is a great thing. The Lord's message should be delivered in the best possible style. A man ought to be ashamed to deliver the glorious doctrines of grace in a slovenly, slipshod manner. But to say that a preacher is a first-class elocutionist is not half as good a thing to say of him as that he *gives sinners no chance to dodge*.

"The sermon was well composed, the diction chaste, the sentences well rounded, the logic faultless, the illustrations well chosen and light giving, in fact, the literary execution was high." Capital! It is a good thing to have high literary work on a sermon occasionally. At all events it is a good thing for a preacher to be able to do good literary work if he wishes to. But did this well written sermon give the *hearers a chance to dodge*? That is the main question.

"As a piece of homiletic work, the sermon was simply perfect. The introduction was suitable and of the right length. It led naturally up to the subject. The division was faultless. The discussion would have gratified Shedd or Dabney. The unity and progress would have satisfied even Dr. Proudfoot. The application was a model. It gathered up the truth discussed, increased in strength and ended in a fine climax. It was just such an ending as would have pleased Phelps." Splendid! That is the kind of sermon one likes to hear. But listen. Did this model of homiletic art give the sinners a *chance to dodge*?

One characteristic of good preachers is that they never give hearers a chance to dodge. Nathan didn't give David a ghost of a chance to dodge when he said, "Thou art the man!" Elijah gave his congregation on Carmel no chance to dodge when he rang out the challenge. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Peter gave the Jerusalem sinners no chance to dodge in his Pentecostal sermon. Paul gave Felix no chance for dodging. Spurgeon never gives any one a chance to dodge. The man who can dodge Talmage must be a very artful dodger. Of course any hearer can dodge if he tramples down conscience, truth and the strivings of the Spirit, but if he does so the responsibility rests on him. The great problem is to present the Gospel in such a manner as to make dodging impossible unless the hearer deliberately takes the responsibility upon himself. That American citizen felt in his heart of hearts that if he dodged, the fault was his own—not Dr. Hall's.

Dodging began when sin began. Adam dodged when he hid among the trees of Eden, and too many members of the Adam family have been dodging the

truth ever since. One of the surest ways of dodging the sermon is to go asleep every Sabbath. If a man can get himself soundly asleep he has no further trouble. A man who goes asleep in the early part of the service gives his minister no chance. An unfortunate preacher who had a number of sleepers of that kind in his congregation, addressed them in this way. "Brethren, this is not fair. You go to sleep before I begin. Can't you wait and see whether the sermon is worth hearing or not? Give a man a chance." That brother was right. You have no sort of chance if a hearer dodges you by going to sleep before you begin.

But a hearer may be asleep for all the purposes of the sermon without having his head down or his eyes closed. He may dodge the truth by thinking about his farm, or his office, or his store, or his election, or any one of a hundred other things. The problem the preacher has to solve is to keep him from dodging in that way. It is no easy problem. A ship-builder said he could lay the keel of a vessel while listening to any preacher in Scotland but Guthrie. Guthrie, he declared, would not allow him lay a *single plank*. He meant precisely the same thing as the American citizen did when he said John Hall would not let him dodge. Without the slightest disposition to find fault, may it not be asked if the art of bringing divine truth to bear directly on the hearts and consciences of men is sufficiently taught in our theological halls? An essay of an impersonal abstract character is of very little use in the pulpit. Men will dodge the essay every Sabbath without the least effort. The art of putting things, the art of bringing doctrinal truth so to bear on the heart and conscience as to influence the will and change the life, is really the main thing in preaching. The very highest work of the pulpit is to do what John Hall did that evening—present the truth so that a hearer has no chance to dodge.

### NOTES FROM QUEBEC.

In a blinding snow-storm, with the thermometer at zero, I arrived at Levis, and was immediately besieged by a crowd of the most industrious hackmen I ever met, each one striving for my grip-sack, as if it and its contents belonged to him; and each one informing me that he drove me the last time I was there. As it happened, I never had crossed the river at that particular spot before. The tussle for the satchel lasted some minutes, but finally a muscular son of Erin proved his claim to the job by snatching the satchel and depositing it safely in his sleigh, and then came to look for his passenger, whilst the almost benighted passenger was searching for his bag.

Quebec, the ancient capital, formerly known as Stadacona, was captured by Jacques Cartier in 1535, and in 1759, by the victories of Wolfe, was brought under English rule. His bones peacefully sleep here, marked by a monument to his memory. As might be expected, strong national feelings existed for some years, but as civilization advanced and emigrants arrived these feelings gradually died away, and the city soon became prosperous, and now claims a population of about 50,000, of whom about 7,000 are Protestants, the large majority being French and Irish Catholics, who, true to their traditions, are enthusiastic in the support of their religion.

The city is situated on the upper bank of the St. Lawrence River, and has been appropriately styled the Gibraltar of America. It commences at the water's edge, and rises in terraces to the Citadel. In summer the city is reached by a ferry boat from Point Levis, but in winter the ice bridge is used, and teams cross and recross. Just at this time a delegation were in Ottawa, interviewing the Government on the "Short Line Route" and what is known here as the "New Bridge Scheme." The latter alone would cost about \$5,000,000, and when the delegation returned some one said they had got the "bridge," meaning the ice bridge, which is an excellent one.

Like every other old city, Quebec is open for any number of favours from the Government of the day, and he would be a bold man, and at once written down as stupid, who questioned their just claims to the whole Bill as presented by the delegation. The citizens are famed for their hospitality and social qualities, and their regard for English customs is almost surprising to a western visitor.

The streets are narrow and the houses very substantial and comfortable, and evidently do not look as if they had been rebuilt within the last ten or twenty years. A large number of charitable institutions is

supported, prominent among them is the Asylum, three miles out of the city, which sits on a plot of 200 acres, and receives from the Provincial Government a yearly grant of \$120,000.

The principal business streets are St. Peter, Fabrique and Joseph Streets, the first named are where the wholesale, and the latter where the retail trade is located. They can boast of stores as good, if not better than any in Montreal or Toronto.

New Parliament buildings have been erected at a cost of \$1,250,000, which add considerably to the beauty and appearance of the street on which they are situated—Grand Allee, which contains quite a number of handsome residences, including that of Mr. Richardson, a member of our Church.

I was kindly shown through the buildings by Mr. Oliver, the Law Clerk to the House, who is son-in-law of the esteemed minister of Zion Church, Toronto.

### THE LOCAL PARLIAMENT

was in session. It has sixty-eight members and comprises a number of eloquent speakers, both French and English, who receive a salary of \$800 per year. Although largely French, yet the House was adjourned in honour of St. Patrick's Day. The population of the Province is over 1,250,000, but, as in other Provinces, the people complain loudly of taxation, and imagine that they could get along very well with a little less government, if this would be pleasing to the powers that be.

There is a large area of good farming land in Quebec Province, but the principal export is lumber, which runs up to the handsome figure of nearly \$1,000,000 in the year.

The drives in the suburbs of the city are charming, a favourite resort being Montmorency Falls, about eight miles distant, where large crowds of pleasure seekers resort. Your correspondent was one of an interesting party who visited this place on the kind invitation of a friend. Beside the Falls is the celebrated "Cone," about 100 feet high. It attracted the young folks of our party, and some of the older young men had to go through the inevitable toboggan slide to the great amusement of all.

### THE PROTESTANT POPULATION

of the city has not been increasing of late years. The migration westward has been felt by the various Churches and Evangelical organizations all the more as this part of the population is relatively small.

The Y. M. C. A. building is one of the finest in the city, and occupies a prominent site on St. John Street (without the gate). The building is thoroughly equipped, containing lecture hall, reading room, parlour well furnished, and a very comfortable room for the Secretary, with suitable table, easy chair, etc. In the rear is the foundation for a gymnasium, which, in course of time, may be completed. This fine building owes its existence largely to Mr. J. C. Thompson, the indefatigable President, and who is also an elder in St. Andrew's Church. The work of the Association is much hindered by a heavy debt that presses on the members, which, it is hoped, will soon be lessened if not altogether paid off.

### OCTOGENARIANS.

Quebec can boast of four ministers over eighty years of age, who are still able to discharge the duties of their office when occasion demands. They are Rev. Messrs. Sewell, English Church; March, Congregational; Clark and Cook, Presbyterian. Mr. Clark was minister of Chalmers Church, and Dr. Cook, the well-known minister of St. Andrew's, only recently retired from the active duties of the ministry.

### PRESBYTERIANISM.

We have two good, substantial churches in the city, creditably representing the denomination. Chalmers Church has for its pastor Rev. Dr. Mathews, who succeeded Rev. W. B. Clark. Dr. Mathews is an eloquent preacher, and is prominently identified with the Pan-Presbyterian Council. He held a charge for some years in New York, when he moved to Quebec where he is highly esteemed by an appreciative congregation.

### ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH

is one of the oldest, and, at one period of its history, was one of the wealthiest in the Church. For over half-a-century it has been ministered to by Rev. Dr. Cook, who is still hale and hearty, and who—besides attending to the wants of an important congregation—was Principal and Professor of Morrin College, situated near the church property. St. Andrew's Church is taste