

## Our Contributors.

### POLONIUS LET IOSEF AGAIN

HE GIVES THE YOUNG MAN SOME ADVICE ABOUT WRITING FOR THE NEWSPAPERS.

BY KNOXIAN

I am glad to know, my son, that you have become a contributor to the press of our country. It is a noble ambition. There are some certain and some rather uncertain things about writing for the press in this country. One of the certain things is increase of work; one of the uncertain is increase of shekels. Increase in the number of friends is uncertain, but increase in the number of enemies is an absolute certainty. You may make friends, you must make foes. You may make admirers, but you are absolutely certain to make envious, snailing critics. Nevertheless, my son, it is a good thing for a young man like you to take to writing—as long as you stick to plain prose, and do not try to write *too fine*. The discipline of the pen is the very best kind of mental discipline. I hope to see you excel as a writer. I hope to see the day when the leading men of this country will recognize your pen, and acknowledge that your contributions give them profit and pleasure. In order to help you let me lay down a few general rules for your guidance in writing.

And first as to *words*. Never use a short word if you can get a long one, or a common word if you can get an uncommon one. Long words are the kind that tell—yes, they do—that the young man who uses them has—well, we almost said, has long ears. Avoid short words as you would avoid small-pox or measles. Let me illustrate. Supposing your managing editor should ask you to write an article on the human face, how should you go about it? Let me tell you. Never write mouth. Always write *dental orifice*. Never write nose. Always write *nasal protuberance*. Never write ears. Always write *auricular appendages*. On no account mention that the man had teeth. Say he had a *dental formation*. If duty calls upon you to say anything about his feet, never think of writing feet. Write *pedal extremities*. These examples will illustrate the rule—never use a short word if you can get a long one or a grand combination of uncommon words.

To make the rule clear beyond all doubt let me give you a few more examples. Do you expect that you can ever rise as a literary man if you use such a mean word as milk? Impossible. Say *lacteal fluid*, and give yourself a chance. Are you foolish enough to imagine that there is any hope for you if you use such a plain word as blood? Indulge in no such dreams. Say *purple fluid*, and you are on the way to fame. Your father once heard a preacher use the expression *purple fluid* nearly a dozen times in one sermon. That preacher may be on the way to fame, but he has not arrived yet. When he arrives you will no doubt hear of it.

Supposing your managing editor were to ask you to write a brief report of a dinner given by the Lieutenant-Governor, how would you do it? Would you call the place Government House or his Honour's residence, or some plain name of that kind? There is no future for a young man who would be so foolish. Say *gubernatorial mansion* and your future is assured. Call the dinner a *gubernatorial repast*, and your promotion is certain. Would you say that the band played some lively airs? That would never do. Say that *the services of the band were called into requisition*. By judiciously using these fine combinations, and carefully avoiding the use of all short, common words, you may soon make a mark in your profession.

There is one word in particular that I most earnestly advise you never to forget—that is the word inaugurate. Never say that anything began. Always say that it was *inaugurated*. Inaugurate is becoming one of our most useful words; that is to say it is used almost universally by all lovers of big words. Don't forget it, my son. You have as good a right to use it as anybody else. Whatever else you forget never forget to say that everything is inaugurated.

If you wish to go straight to the heart of religious society always stick in that well-worn barbarism—in *our midst*. Never write anything religious or even ecclesiastical without putting that in. If anybody questions your taste you may quote as authority a

circular issued in Toronto the other day, signed by an eminent Q. C., in the first line of which it is announced that — *is in our midst*.

Should any illiterate person hint to you at any time that such words and combinations as have been recommended are not found in standard writers, you just tell him that the standard writers are behind the times. John Bunyan and other writers whose works are still read by a number of people, may have had a decided preference for short, plain words, but they did not live in these enlightened days. Bunyan never got a Ph.D. by a "severe examination," or any other way. You just go on, my son, using the kind of words recommended, and your success as a literary man is assured. In speaking as well as in writing avoid as much as possible the use of plain language. Use long, swelling, sonorous words. You have no idea how such words captivate certain kinds of people. They go away saying, "Wonderful man that," "What marvellous language," "Great scholar that," "What a learned man he is—he ought to be a college professor." Yes! They go away saying these complimentary things. It may be true that most of the people who pay you these compliments are invincibly ignorant, but never mind. Ignorance counts in this country. Pile on the big words, and you are sure to please every ignorant man who is trying to pose as exceedingly clever. Whenever you meet a human compound of egotism, ignorance and conceit always pile on the long words.

In another paper I may tell you something about sentences. Meantime, my son, give attention to these remarks about words.

### EXPERIENCE OF A PROBATIONER.

MR. EDITOR,—After wandering to and fro among the vacancies of our Church for three months, will you allow me to relate my experience to your readers? Articles have appeared in your columns from time to time telling of the disastrous effects of long vacancies upon our congregations, and of the demoralizing influence of candidating upon our ministers; but little effort has been made by our Assembly to ascertain the extent of the grievance, and less made to remedy it. There are two reasons for this inactivity. 1. It is always taken for granted that the party making these complaints is a disappointed candidate, who feels soured at his talents not being recognized in some vacant field, and who chooses this method of venting his wrath upon the whole Church, for the sin of non-appreciation in an individual congregation. 2. The second reason is very apparent. Legislation in our General Assembly is carried on almost entirely by ministers and elders, who know little of the condition or wants of our Churches in the villages and country districts. We speak with all respect of our college professors, city ministers and elders. They are superior men, and are not only filling their own places well, but are desirous of advancing the interests of the whole Church. Unfortunately, however, their knowledge of the part of the Church, which is suffering most from our present system of supply, is very limited. Seeing is believing, and in the present instance nothing but seeing would make us believe the true state of matters. Will you accompany me then in my ramble, and learn how ministers are chosen? and at the end of three months you will be ready to exclaim, "Of all possible systems ours is the worst."

The Committee on the Distribution of Probationers made appointments for me in four congregations, and I set out to fill them. In the first of them I received and accepted a call, so that I was perfectly free in the others to enquire into their history, and quite unprejudiced in forming my conclusions. The second Church I visited was in a small town, possessing considerable culture and refinement. Our congregation here has been vacant for two years. During that time they have heard thirty-four candidates—one D.D., one L.L.B., ten probationers, ten retired probationers, eight pastors of congregations, two graduates of April, 1887, and two students of 1888. Nearly all gave entire satisfaction to the people, but none received a call. They wanted a man who would draw. Only a young man, unmarried, would do this. The first thirty were rejected on account of their age and experience. The two graduates of 1887 were called to another field of labour before they came, and the feeling of the congregation was strongly in favour

of waiting for one of the graduates of April, 1888. Gentlemen, here is an opening awaiting you. If you are quite young, unmarried and without any experience, the congregations will at once recognize some of the qualifications required, and you may count upon a call immediately. Old age is very honourable, but it is also very unfortunate. Our ministers know this, and are holding on to their congregations even at the risk of extermination. Scores of congregations are slowly but surely becoming extinct to-day under men whose usefulness is gone in their present fields of labour, but who might do excellent work elsewhere. Who can blame them for remaining with *nothing but uncertainty before them* or shall I say, *certainty of wandering for years with no permanent place of abode*?

My third appointment was to a supplemented congregation. The people promised to pay \$450 a year, which they have never been known to perform, while the Augmentation Committee offer a grant of \$300 on condition of settlement. This is not a very attractive field, so that the numbers applying for a hearing have not been large, and the preaching matches between the candidates have scarcely been so interesting as usual. Three years and seven months have passed away since the last minister left this Church, and still there is no prospect of securing a successor. No minister will be required here soon. In the village all but a few of the staunch Presbyterian families have gone over to the Methodists, while in the country station attached the Baptists are kept busy dipping our young people. The elder with whom I lodged told me they once had large and flourishing congregations; but after their former minister left, they had made in succession three calls, which were all unsuccessful. The people became discouraged, and lost all interest in church work. Those who remain are willing to take any one as a minister, but are in a position to call no one. Supply is obtained sometimes from the colleges, sometimes from Dr. Torrance, but generally from men who were once probationers, but have been compelled to retire from that profession.

To describe to a Presbyterian reader the work done on any field by these men who have been given up by the genial and sympathetic Doctor would be useless. Some sacrifices, graduate of our colleges will consent, at the earnest entreaty of the Presbytery, to spend a few years as a missionary there. The appointment will meet with universal approval. Appointments always have been satisfactory in our Church. The 200 students who have just returned from the mission stations have nearly all been successful this summer. They were appointed. The Presbytery intend making an appointment of an ordained missionary for the congregation next spring, but we cannot help but ask, Why was it not made three years earlier?

The fourth and last congregation visited was in a place having more than one Presbyterian Church at a convenient distance. Upon becoming vacant a year ago it was decided to hear eleven candidates before meeting to make a choice of a pastor. Members of the Church were invited to hand in to the Session the name of any minister whom they wished to hear. Twenty-seven names were given in for consideration. Sixteen had to be rejected, and the friends of these decided at once to take no further part in Church work while the vacancy lasted. They are living at present here as retired Christians, but the relaxation will be an excellent preparation for future work. In due time the eleven were heard. Everybody was satisfied that any one of them would have made a suitable minister for the Church, but two were favourites. Canvassing was done freely for both candidates with good results. Interest in church matters had never been so great. The night for moderation came, and found both parties well organized and ready for the contest. An interesting as well as an edifying discussion took place upon the style, culture, intellect and spirituality of the candidates, after which a vote was taken. The count of the moderator showed a narrow majority in favour of one of the parties, which was received with great applause. A call was made out, but the minority would not sign, and the favourite candidate refused to accept. A few of the more pious among the majority, failing to secure the man of their choice, expressed their willingness to co-operate with the minority, and at a second meeting it was decided to call the defeated can-