

Our Contributors.

THE FOES THE CHURCH SHOULD FIGHT.

BY KNOXONIAN.

"Society is honeycombed with infidelity. Agnosticism is rampant. The scientists have destroyed the foundations of faith. The Church has lost its influence and the pulpit its power." These, and similar assertions, are sometimes made by Weakfaiths and wailing Jeremiahs who look on the dark side of everything. They are made by literary snobs, would-be philosophers and cranks who profess to be infidels because they think infidelity makes them "odd." They are made by half-educated young dudes who talk mysteriously about Agnosticism because they think talking in that way distinguishes them from ordinary mortals. By whomsoever made, these statements, so far as Canada is concerned, they are false. The statistics show that there is very little theoretical infidelity in Canada. This is specially true of Ontario. There are few active propagators of various forms of unbelief in cities; one or two towns are unfortunately noted for infidelity. But the mass of the people are not poisoned in that way. Let any reader of this paper just stop here and ask himself how many professed infidels are to be found in the circle of his own acquaintances and he will be surprised, we hope gratified, to find that he can count them on his fingers. No, Canadian society is not honeycombed with infidelity, at least, of the theoretical kind. The returns at the annual ecclesiastical parliaments nearly or never fail to show that most of the churches are continually growing in numbers, influence and financial resources.

Ministers are too often carried away by this cry about the growth of scepticism. They mistake noise for power, forgetting that anybody who has access to a newspaper can make a noise. Noise does not indicate progress. An old, leaky steamer standing still in a fog blowing her fog-horn can make a great noise; but she is not coming any nearer her landing nor adding anything to the commercial power and wealth of the nation. Too many ministers, especially in the United States, defend the Gospel rather than preach it. They stand in their pulpits and beat back imaginary hosts of sceptical scientists and other dangerous people. This kind of a fight is often a farce—a solemn farce, it may be—but a farce all the same. The sceptics are not there. Even if they were, the average preacher must rely on the scientist for the very facts he has to use in dealing with him, and in any discussion when you have to rely on your opponent for your facts you are in his power. Moreover, nine-tenths of the people don't trouble themselves to distinguish between Huxley and Hannibal, between Darwin and Julius Caesar. What the people all need and what many of them want is spiritual food. A number of them hear all they ever do hear about scepticism from their own ministers. The error is perhaps remembered longer than the truth that was intended to explode it. Perhaps, indeed, there was no explosion that amounted to anything. Poison may be retained in the system when the effect of the antidote is gone. Error should be combated by men whose special duty it is to combat error and who are specially qualified for the work. Specialists should reply to specialists. None other can without doing more harm than good.

The worst foes the Church has to fight are within her own household. The enemies that hinder our work are not professed infidels. The Church suffers a thousand-fold more from the conduct of men within her own pale than from all outside influences. The worldly, careless men hanging on the edges of the Church or outside altogether, are often kept out by the conduct of those within. They see men who profess to be, and perhaps are, Christians, wrangling over little matters that have no more to do with vital godliness than the wart on Oliver Cromwell's nose had to do with the English Revolution, and they conclude the whole thing is a farce. Who can blame them if they do?

Here is a congregation wrestling with a question of millinery. Hundreds of men around their church never darken a church door; men within the sound of their church bell are going down to perdition every day; the heathen are perishing; sin is rampant; vice in its most brazen forms is stalking about the streets, and these men who say they were bought with the blood

of Christ are doing what? Wrangling about the colour of their minister's gown.

Here is another congregation greatly exercised over a momentous question. What is the question? Is it, How shall we increase the spiritual power of our people? or, How shall we gather in sinners? What means shall we use to help our pastor and make his preaching more effective? What method can be adopted to bring the young to Christ? Oh, no. The momentous question with which these blood-bought men wrestle is. Shall we have a small melodeon in the Sabbath School? Such small matters as the salvation of sinners, the edification of saints, the progress of Christ's cause, the promotion of the glory of God through and by His Church, are laid aside or trampled in the mire and these heirs of glory proceed with their wrangle over a second-hand melodeon! And when the wretched wrangle is over, and the name of the congregation has been made a stench in the community, the chief pugilists usually leave the wreck they made and attend some other church in which an organ is used in every diet of worship! One such wrangle does the cause of Christ more harm in three months than all the infidels in Ontario can do in a year. And yet some of the pugilists talk unctuously about the inroads that are being made by infidelity.

Here is a third congregation contending about posture in singing with ten-fold more earnestness than many of them ever tried to save a soul. They fight for sitting or standing in praise much more vigorously than they ever fought against the world, or the flesh or the devil.

Here is a fourth congregation greatly exercised about hymns. Their consciences will not permit them to sing: "All hail the power of Jesus' name," "Jesus, lover of my soul," or "Nearer, my God, to Thee." "Men of the world," as they are called, know that some at least of those who say their consciences will not allow them to sing these hymns, drink whiskey quite freely, and that some others have been found on the market with two kinds of grain in their bags and the best kind was not in the bottom. "Men of the world" know that in other matters some of them are not one whit more conscientious than their neighbours. And they won't have anything to do with a congregation that quarrels about such matters. If anyone's conscience is so tender that he cannot sing a hymn and if his conscience is tender all round he never hurts Christ's cause. Such men are often the excellent of the earth and wherever they are they ought to be respected. The men who hurt the Church are those who say their consciences act thus or so in regard to worship, but in other matters display no conscience at all.

Can anything be imagined more injurious to the Church of Christ than a wrangle over the strength of the wine used in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Such a wrangle is absolutely revolting to every person of piety and good taste. At most it is a question of percentage of alcohol. And yet that question has done a considerable amount of injury to the Presbyterian Church in the States. There are not wanting signs that certain parties would like to introduce it here. Can any ungodly man of common sense and average taste be blamed for not connecting himself with a Church if he sees that the members and office-bearers can find no higher work in this world of sin and sinners than quarrelling about one of the symbols they use in celebrating their Master's death. Such conduct makes infidels and no wonder that it should.

Many other foes might be named. Meanness on the part of members is one of the worst. Reason about the matter as you may you cannot make a generous worldly believe that the Lord has opened the eyes of a man whose vision can be stopped with a ten cent piece. The lack of anything bordering on self-sacrifice and self-denial on the part of many professing Christians does the Church an infinite amount of harm. One man who denies himself for the cause of Christ has more influence in any community among worldly men than a hundred professing Christians who live selfish lives.

Nor are the foes confined to the ranks of the laity. One of the most dangerous may be found among the clergy. If ministers speak mainly about overtures, motions, amendments, cases, appeals, committees and other parts of the ecclesiastical machinery, there is too much evidence that the running of the machinery has come to be considered the main thing. A minister

who finds more enjoyment in sitting on committees or attending Church courts than he finds in making and preaching sermons is in a bad way.

The worst foes the Church has to contend against are within her. If all were right within, the world could soon be conquered for Christ.

A HOLIDAY TRIP.

A voyage across the Atlantic now is vastly different from that of forty or fifty years ago when sailing vessels were the medium of communication between the Old World and the New; and the average trip was from six to eight weeks. A great improvement has taken place even since the writer first crossed the ocean, now a quarter of a century ago, when we were thirty days between the Irish Coast and New York, including a day and a-half at St. John's, Newfoundland, whither our steamer went for a supply of provisions of which we had run short. That first voyage is brought the more forcibly to remembrance by the fact that a fellow passenger and stateroom companion, then the Rev. Dean Carmichael, of Montreal, was a fellow passenger on board the good steamship *Parisian* which sailed from Quebec at eleven a.m. on the 27th of last month, bound for Liverpool. Among the passengers, of whom there were 153 cabin and about 200 intermediate and steerage, nearly all classes and professions were found. The Bar was represented in the person of Chief Justice Hagarty and others; the Press by Messrs. John Cameron, of the *Toronto Globe*, and Richard White, of the *Montreal Gazette*, who vied with each other in ministering to the entertainment of all on board, while the Pulpit had representatives from several branches of the Church of Christ. The House of Commons sent Mr. Dalton McCarthy, the Ontario Legislature, Dr. McLaughlin and Mr. Dundas, while the whole Dominion furnished its Wimbledon team commanded by Colonel Ross, with Captain Clark, wounded at Fish Creek, as its Adjutant. Some of the passengers were visiting the Old World for the first time, others were revisiting the scenes and friends of earlier years, while a few were going home "for good." It was difficult to find a large company of travellers, the majority of whom were strangers to one another when they met on the deck of the *Parisian* that lovely summer morning at Quebec, more considerate of each other's comfort or more like members of one family. Differences of position, of society, of politics and of denomination, were for the time forgotten, and when in mid-ocean a little child died the hearts of all on board went out in tender sympathy towards the bereaved parents as if they had been the life-long friends of all. A pleasant sail of ten hours down the St. Lawrence brought us to Rimouski, where we received the mails and a few additional passengers, and left at midnight on Saturday. Service was held on Sabbath, and on Monday afternoon we sighted Labrador and Newfoundland and passed the Straits of Belle Isle about five o'clock with scores of monster icebergs on either side. The weather fortunately was clear, and we had good moonlight when the sun disappeared from sight. During the whole voyage the weather was favourable, and it was the exception to find a seat vacant in the saloon at meal time or at the several concerts and other entertainments held during the trip. The first and fourth of July were duly observed.

Concerning the steadiness and sea-going qualities of the *Parisian* there was but one opinion; indeed, during most of the time we were scarcely conscious that the vessel was in motion. Captain Wylie, though not much of a ladies' man, is evidently a thorough seaman. Constantly at his post, with a most efficient and careful set of officers and crew, he is the right man in the right place. For forty years he has been at sea, being captain of an Allan clipper at the age of twenty-one. May he be long spared at his post and may all who hold a similar position have a like sense of their responsibility both to God and man.

We sighted Ireland early on Saturday afternoon, landed a portion of the mails at Moville at seven that evening, reached the bar of the Mersey on Sabbath morning and lunched in Liverpool at one o'clock that afternoon. This was by fully an hour the quickest trip ever made by the *Parisian*—the fastest of the Allan steamers. Taking into consideration the difference in time, we were six days and fourteen hours between Rimouski and Moville, or about seven days and sixteen hours in running from Quebec to Liver-