

## WHO IS TO BLAME?

Every minister knows to his sorrow, and sometimes to his annoyance, how some of his members, when sick will lie for days and fret over his supposed neglect, thinking all imaginable hard thoughts of him and using words to characterize his conduct neither very becoming nor very complimentary, while all the time they have never taken any trouble, nor have any of their household, to let him know the fact of their sickness or anything whatever about it. They take it for granted that he knows all the facts of the case. "He might have seen they were not in church for one or even for two Sabbath days." Yes, he might or he might not, but the fact of such absence did not necessarily imply sickness at all, and at any rate the likelihoods all are that he knew nothing about their being "off their usual." Before they write such bitter things in judgment against him they might at any rate send him word and thus meet at once the law of charity and the direction of the apostle. Many an earnest painstaking pastor has had the very life fretted out of him by such foolish unreasonable grumbling and fault-finding. The minister is not omniscient. He is not supposed to be gathering all the gossip and news of the district. He is not, if what he ought to be, a sort of local cyclopedia with full information down to the latest date of who may have been born, who married, who sick, and who dead. And if he is ignorant of such items, does it follow that his ignorance is of a culpable description? In many cases very far from it, and, at any rate, the ignorance can very easily be removed. Even Christ himself got notification of the sickness of His friend, though in one respect He did not need the information.

But there are other folks besides the sick ones and their relatives, who are both unreasonable and short-sighted in the matter of supposed neglect and blame-worthy ignorance; and ministers are not the only persons who come under the sweep of their unreasonable condemnation. Editors, for instance, suffer in this way very frequently, and in most cases with very little reason. Perhaps the conductors of denominational papers have in this respect to bear a great deal more than their due share. They are regarded in a sense as the property of the Church, to be dealt with very much as each may have a mind to. Their business, it is argued, is to collect news, and news especially of an ecclesiastical and denominational character. Why should they not be kept strictly to account and held up as laggards and incompetents if any church opening, Sabbath school soiree, public meeting, or local surprise party, escape their notice? And yet in a vast number of cases, not a finger has been moved, not a syllable has been written, by those most interested in order to convey the necessary information and secure the much desired notice. It was nobody's business to do anything of the kind, but still at the same time the editor, it seems, by some occult process or other ought to have known. He ought not. There is no possibility of having a local correspondent in every congregation or village throughout the country, and if there is no one of those interested who has so much public spirit and so much common sense as to furnish the necessary information, why, of course, the thing must go to the wall, and there be yet no legitimate ground for any of those overlooked either to marvel at editorial negligence or to "stop the paper" in a fit of righteous indignation and disgust. Write about it we say. It only costs a cent for a postal card, and it will be a good exercise both in penmanship and composition. Or forward a marked copy of your local paper. If, after that, no notice is given or taken, then it will be time to complain of indolence or neglect.

Men who are wise in their generation eagerly avail themselves of every help they can secure from the press, and frequently take no little personal trouble to secure such assistance. It will be very strange if these ever neglect to keep reporters and editors well posted about everything in which they feel an interest, for whose advancement they are anxious to en-

shall be allowed to pass without record or without at any rate all means having been employed to furnish material for record.

It were well if among Congregationalists as well as among other sections of the Church of Christ, there were more of such wise men. There would then be fewer complaints, fuller information, and more satisfactory newspapers. A good many in all Churches are beginning to understand this, but there is still ample room for improvement, and a word to the wise is enough.

## THE GREAT SIN OF GREAT CITIES.

It has sometimes been said, by those who profess to know from personal examination, that for its size Toronto is more vicious than London, Paris, or New York. We should hope that this is not the case, though our familiarity with the "night side" of modern cities is not so great as to permit us to speak very authoritatively on the comparative immorality of different localities. We, in Toronto, are bad enough in this respect in all conscience, and we acknowledge that it is but a poor consolation to protest that we are no worse than our neighbours. For many years past our police authorities have been culpably negligent in carrying out the law as it stands, and the "Mail" deserves all commendation for urging them to do their duty. It is at the same time never to be forgotten that mere physical force can go but a comparatively little way in rooting out this and kindred evils. As the moral tone of the general community is raised so will those evils seek the darkness or altogether disappear. In order to this being accomplished something far more potent is to be specially called into operation than the policeman's baton or the magistrate's award. We have no wish to screen the police nor to palliate the negligence of the magistrate. But are the ministers, the churches, and the church members of our city altogether irresponsible for such a state of things having prevailed so long and so openly as it has been represented? Has the "salt" so much lost its savour, that as our churches are multiplied our morality has, as is said, actually decayed? And more than this, has the general community not to bear a large amount of the responsibility by the manner in which it has treated and is treating not a few who are prominent and influential in various respects, but notoriously loose in their morals and foul in their conversation. We have heard a good deal of abandoned women plying their wretched traffic in the streets and speaking to gentlemen as they passed in terms as offensive as they were significant. Have we heard as much on the other side of men, or—as they would themselves insist on being called—gentlemen, insulting ladies by offers of protection, and humble overtures to see them home? Yet notoriously this is not uncommon, and many who make a habit of it are not unknown. We could lay our hand on more than either two or three, "in good name and fame with the best" in unimpeachable broadcloth, members of churches, and all the rest of it, who rather pride themselves on this sort of work. Do these fellows think they are not known? Have they any idea of how narrowly they have once and again escaped cudgelling at the hands of indignant brothers and husbands and fathers? Have they any notion of how their offensive overtures have been made town talk and private jest? "Shall I have the pleasure of seeing you home?" "Oh yes! Mr. So-and-so, if Mrs. So-and-so has no objection!" What about the social standing of these folks? We don't see that it is much affected.

And what shall we say of public men, of more or less popularity, and of all political parties, who are notoriously licentious in their conduct and filthy in their conversation, whose talk is of brothels far more than Samuel Johnson's Durham friend's was ever "of bullocks," and whose lives have been faithful counterparts of their words? Everyone knows with what gusto the last foul story of these people—as destitute of wit as it is reeking with obscenity—is retailed by their admiring *claqueurs*, and comes to be regarded as specially "good." Is it not notorious that these men in their story-tellings will often not spare the blushes

even of their wives and daughters, if indeed under such manipulation blushes have not ceased altogether to put in an appearance? And yet what says "society" about them? Says about them? That they are "charming," a "little fast" perhaps, rather "naughty" but "nice." They walk our streets and the streets of every city on the continent with a harlot's forehead that knows not how to blush, and it may be the first to cry out about low dance houses and filthy prostitutes being a disgrace to civilization and an outrage upon decency. "Punch" some time ago had an illustration of two drunken officers winking at each other in their cups, and moralizing over the threatened abolition of flogging, in the following fashion: "In that case, how are we to keep the fellows from getting drunk?"

Let "society" strike the sinners in broad cloth as impartially as the sinners in rags, and the general atmosphere will become more wholesome,—the waifs and strays both fewer and less debased.—*Canada Presbyterian*.

## THE GOSPEL'S GOOD WORKS.—I.

I name first among good works the *regeneration of individual men*. Evil is like leaven in its character. Its nature is to increase. Men have never yet of themselves been able to keep themselves from becoming worse. When putrefaction or corruption begins in any material substance, it goes on from bad to worse. It cannot arrest its own progress. If that is to be done at all it must be by the introduction of some antiseptic agent, which, coming into contact with it, will bring a curative force to bear upon it. Now, just such a morally antiseptic influence has the Gospel of Christ had upon individual men, and and through them upon the race, wherever it has been preached and believed. If you would have a crucial instance by which this may be illustrated, then look at ancient Greece. There you had the finest intellectual culture, probably, that the ancient world ever saw. But morally, it was, on the testimony of competent and impartial witnesses, sunk in the lowest degradation. "To visit Corinth," was a proverbial phrase for becoming acquainted with the most abominable forms of vice, and the sickening description which Paul gives in his first chapter of the Romans, of the loathsome wickedness of the Gentiles, may well enough have been suggested to him by the sights he saw and the sounds he heard in that very city, from which, indeed, that letter was written. But see what happened, even in that metropolis of Satan. Paul went there without any outward accessories of power, having none of that "wisdom of words" to which the Greeks were so partial, and, on his own showing, knowing nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified; and in a short time there gathered round him some of the worst of the people, to begin and carry on, under the influence of the Lord whom he proclaimed to them, a new and nobler life, so that within a few years after he could write to the church which he had founded there, saying, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God; and such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of the Lord." Is it then a work worthy of ridicule, or of opposition, or deserving the execration of mankind, to effect such a transformation as that? Nor let any one suppose that such results of the proclamation of the Gospel as these are confined to apostolic times. They may be seen among ourselves to-day. The records of every faithful pastor's ministry have cases in them as striking as any of those described in the New Testament; and there are institutions among us whose agents can tell of similar transformations as almost every-day occurrences in their experience. Let any one take up the private register of such a centre of Christian work as the Home for Intemperate Men, which was opened some two years ago in our city; let him follow each case up and discover how first the man was brought to himself, by being led to the Lord Jesus,