

## Our Contributors.

### CONCERNING SOME THINGS THAT ARE CONTAGIOUS.

BY KNOXONIAN.

*Is it catchin'?* That is a question often asked by people who are more afraid of disease than of clipping the English language. It is a question easily asked, but sometimes not so easily answered. A few diseases, small-pox for example, are undoubtedly "catchin'" as many an unfortunate fellow has found out to his cost, but there are many diseases about which the best authorities are in doubt. They may be contagious or infectious or they may not. There is a vast amount of superstition and ignorance about contagion and infection. If the Ontario Minister of Education could hear some of the little speeches on "catchin'" diseases that doctors and ministers of the Gospel sometimes hear, he would probably make arrangements in the schools for some sound instruction on that subject. If the legislators could see how panicky some of their constituents become when near a disease that is really not "catchin'" they would probably refuse to vote supplies until the arrangements were in progress. It may be wicked to take amusement even from the neighbourhood of sickness, but one can hardly help being amused at the sight of a bearded man going around a block or a concession to avoid a house that has a mild case of bilious fever in it.

But though it may be difficult to determine whether some diseases of the body are contagious or not, there need be no difficulty about mental diseases or even about states of mind that cannot be called morbid. Some mental diseases are as contagious as small-pox. Did you ever notice how "catchin'" *despondency* is. One thoroughly despondent man can give the blues to a whole family, or to a committee or to a public meeting. A torpid liver can hurt a township, or ruin a congregation provided the man who owns the liver occupies a prominent place. A despondent man has a dangerous power and the power is all the more dangerous because the man does not know he has it. He does not mean to injure anybody or anything. He often thinks he is helping, but his mental disease spreads and hinders because despondency is contagious.

*Melancholy* is contagious. Everybody has noticed that when a melancholy looking man walks into a room in which people are in good spirits a change takes place in a moment. The enjoyment goes down below zero in an instant. The simple explanation is that melancholy is contagious. One melancholy subject can give his disease to a score of men, provided the men are not strong enough to resist the contagion.

*Bad Temper* is contagious. One ugly-tempered man can spoil a meeting and has done it ten thousand times. He is irritated, and he makes other people irritable; he rasps and others catch the contagion and rasp him and his friends in return; he uses bad language, and others are provoked to reply in kind; he is under the power of old satan and old satan uses him as a medium through which his satanic influences may be communicated to others.

There is nothing in this world more contagious than *anger*. One angry man can make a hundred other men—better men—angry in a moment.

It is humiliating to see men walking around a block rather than pass a house that has a case of fever in it, but who never give one serious thought to the fact that they may themselves be spreading mental or moral disease every day. It never dawns upon their mind that some mental and moral diseases are just as contagious as small-pox or diphtheria.

There is however a bright side on this contagious question, and to it we gladly and gratefully turn. Good mental states are as contagious as bad ones and perhaps more so.

*Cheerfulness* is contagious. Did you ever notice how a bright cheerful man lights up a room the moment he enters. There is just one creature on this footstool better than a bright cheerful man and that is a bright cheerful woman. Soft young men are often reminded that women are not angels. Softy should reply that he is glad they are not. One bright, cheerful, hopeful, courageous little woman may be worth more to a man in this life than a thousand angels. She may do more for him.

*Hopefulness* is contagious. A hopeful man always inspires other people with hope. Had it not been for hopeful men the world would have gone to pieces long ago. Were it not for hopeful men there would be no Church and no institution of any kind to help humanity. Despair never did anything for the human family. The logical outcome of pessimism is to send everybody to hell and the sooner the better.

*Courage* is contagious. Did you ever notice how one strong, courageous man can tone up a lot of weaker men by a word or two, or even by his presence without a word. It is a grand sight.

*Goodness* may not be contagious, but it has great restraining power. There are men before whom even the most hardened sinners do not care to sin. Those people who are constantly talking about the amount of sin they see, do not pay themselves a compliment. If they were conspicuously good themselves at least some of the sin would hide from them.

*Liberality* is contagious. In many instances the only thing needed is a good subscription to lead off and give the cause a good start.

There is not as much as people think in a great deal that

is said about the force of evil example. Good example has force too. The force of the good ought to more than counteract the force of the evil. Evil is no doubt contagious, but so is good. Cheerful, hopeful, courageous, good, liberal men have more influence than any other kind. Their good qualities are contagious and help thousands of their weaker neighbours.

Gentle reader, when people *catch* anything from you, what is it? Something good or something not much that way?

### THE AGED AND INFIRM MINISTERS.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE WELL-TO-DO MEMBERS OF OUR CHURCH—III.

BY ONE OF THEMSELVES.

I have spoken of the arduous labours of the Fathers in planting and fostering the congregations that are spread over our country, that have done so much to make our country what it is, and that to-day occupy a principal place among the organizations for good in the land. I will now speak of some of their difficulties and trials that show even more than their labours the character of the men. Before the Rebellion in 1837, money was a scarce article, and those ministers who did not get a share in the Clergy Reserves were poorly paid. Three hundred dollars were regarded a good stipend and for many years after that, and even this small sum was often either not paid in full or paid so irregularly that it could not be depended upon. Sometimes the managers would canvass the congregation at the close of the year to make up the arrears, and sometimes the minister had to throw them off and begin anew in hopes of better times. This shrinkage caused great distress in many a manse; it required the greatest economy at best to make both ends meet when the promised stipend was promptly paid, but when there were arrears from year to year, the minister's circumstances were greatly reduced, his credit endangered and his very word doubted. I know a minister, a most careful and economical man, whose stipend was long past due—he had been expecting it from day to day—actually reduced in a cold winter day to the last stick of wood in the stove; he went out to see what could be done, when it so happened that the first man he met was one of his elders with a load of wood for the market; he told him his story and the sympathizing elder emptied his load in the minister's yard. I know another who had to keep his children from school, because he had not the money to pay the school bill; this was before free schools were established in our land.

I could tell of many such cases, but we did not grumble. I believe that many of the people had just as great sacrifices to make, and we willingly suffered with them. What would our farmers now think of starting from home with a small load of grain at the dusk, travel all night and not get home till late the following night, to reach their nearest market and perhaps not get fifty cents per bushel for their load; or what would they think if they had to go as far with a grist and sometimes have to carry each bag separately on their backs for half a mile or more at a time, because no conveyance could possibly take them across the swamps they had to cross; or what would they think of their grain frozen and they had nothing else that would bring money from the one year's end to the other, and what would they think if their wives had to go to the fields and bring home some leaves and call it tea, or grind peas and call it coffee, and use the maple sugar as long as it lasted, and do without sugar after that? And yet thousands of the early settlers had to pass through this experience. We ministers sympathized with our people and were ready to make sacrifices with them. I have eaten at a table where nothing but boiled turnips mashed up formed the only dish to supply our wants. I have stayed over night when the inmates gave up their only bed to the strangers and themselves slept on a little straw brought in from the barn and laid down near the door.

Another difficulty we had to contend with was the bad roads we had often to travel; we had no railroads in those days. Three of us, young ministers, set out on horseback to the ordination of a brother minister over a charge about twenty-five miles distant. The day before two of us had travelled near the same distance to reach the trysting place; the day was favourable, but the roads were most wretched, clay and mud from which our horses had hard work to pull their feet out, and instead of trotting briskly along as we expected, we had to creep along as best we could, and we arrived within six miles of our destination, when the sun went down, and both men and horses were glad to turn in to a small way-side tavern and feed and rest for the night. We started early next morning and kept our appointment and ordained our good brother, and got back that night to our former quarters, and next afternoon we reached our starting place; it took me the greater part of another day to get home, thus taking about five days, what could now be easily done in one.

Another instance may be given. One of my members was killed by a tree falling on him that he had chopped down; the neighbours turned out in large numbers, there was no way of getting the remains to the place of burial but in a sleigh, though it was in the midst of summer; the road was through a hemlock bush, the large roots spread over the roadway, interlacing each other, and it was deemed impossible to get the body across in any other way; now it is a good gravelled road.

Sometimes we got lost in the woods. I had announced a prayer meeting in an outlying part of my congregation. I left home early that I might visit a neighbouring minister and spend a pleasant afternoon with him. I set out for my meeting about three miles distant through the woods, but the darkness overtook me and a crooked creek added to my perplexity. I wandered for long, scarce knowing where I was going; at length some one halloed in the distance, I supposed from the place I should have come out; I shouted in reply, and, following the sound, I was extricated from my difficulty and warmly thanked the kind friend who had so considerably bethought of this expedient. Indeed it was no unusual thing to get lost in the woods. At night we could not see the blaze and that was all we had to guide us in many places.

Another of our difficulties was the prevailing desecration of the Sabbath. Many of the early settlers had been without the regular Sabbath service for some time, and while they abstained from manual labour, they spent much of it in visiting friends and neighbours, or in fishing or hunting. I often heard the crack of the gun when riding from one station to another. It was difficult to get the people to give up these bad habits, but the ministry was true to the Lord and enforced the sacred observance of His day; the present generation is reaping the fruits of their labours in the quiet Sabbath Day. The inhabitants of Toronto were greatly praised, and deservedly too, for the firm stand they took lately on the Sabbath question; thanks to the early ministers who sowed the seed.

Intemperance was then, as it still is, a great hindrance to the spread of the Gospel; it had this peculiarity about it however: many of the early settlers brought their old country habits with them, they could see no harm in taking a little drink, which too frequently ended in drunkenness, either because of the kind of drink Canada produced, or its cheapness compared with the Old Country; the temperance movement was just in its infancy, its advocates met with great opposition, even the religious world justified the moderate use of intoxicants, and as yet little odium was attached to it, many of the hotel keepers were themselves sober men, church goers and church supporters. This made the fight more difficult, but the friends of temperance kept at it till all this has been changed, and though we may yet be far from total prohibition, we are yet in the enjoyment of restrictions in the traffic; our youth are protected and the respectable part of the community shun the dram shop, and by their example encourage others to abandon the evil habit of treating—thanks again to the pioneers.

I might greatly enlarge on this subject; it is hardly possible to exaggerate the immense labours of the Fathers of our Church in their planting and fostering hundreds of our congregations that are now in a prosperous condition, liberally supporting their own pastors and giving largely to the schemes of the Church; I might also go on describing in glowing terms their untold difficulties and trials, but enough has been said to awaken your interest in the Aged and Infirm Ministers, and I will leave them and their claims upon you in your own hands. We have written to you as brethren in the Lord. We serve the same Master, we believe in the same Saviour, we are His ministers, you are His stewards. He has called us to preach His Gospel, and for thirty, forty, or fifty years we have held up Christ and Him crucified to our fellow sinners, ever warning them to flee from the wrath to come, and urging them to lay hold on the hope set before them in the Gospel. He has entrusted you with His talent, saying occupy till I come; in your hands the talent has become five other talents. For what purpose has He so prospered you; is it to spend it all on yourself and family, or to hoard it up for those who may come after you; has God the giver of all no claims upon you; is there no call from heaven or earth to open your heart and induce a grateful liberality? I set before you this other opportunity of placing a portion of your abundance to usury in the cause of the Lord's servants. By and bye, He will call on you to give an account of your stewardship; your money, your property, will then pass into other hands; ere that day come, would it not be well for you to consider the claims of the Aged and Infirm Ministers? We have ministered to you in spiritual things, is it not just and Christian that you minister to us in temporal things? We hope to meet you before the throne on high—we His ministers, you His servants; we will welcome each other there; we will talk of the past, of our days of youth, of our labours of love, of our devoted service, of the helping hand we reached out to one another, and, tracing all to the grace of God in Christ, we will cast our crowns at the Saviour's feet crying out, "unto Him who loves us—unto Him be glory and dominion for ever." While we have yet the opportunity and the means of ascribing to His glory here, let us rejoice that we are able to help forward the cause that is dear to His heart, and thereby lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven that will endure for ever.

### A MISSIONARY'S VOYAGE.

The following letter is from Mrs. Marling, who was on her way to join her husband, Rev. Arthur Marling, missionary in Africa. It was primarily addressed to her parents:—

When we reached Liverpool it was with no little apprehension that I learned our passage had been taken in the steamship *Ambree*, as a former voyage by her had proved she was a miserable ship. Of course our agents knew nothing of all this. The vessel, however, was strong, or it could never have stood the recent fearful gale. We jam-