

Our Contributors.

DISTINGUISHED STRANGERS FROM A DISTANCE.

BY KNOXIAN.

Not very long ago a venerable father of the church when leading in prayer in the General Assembly asked that the members might be enabled to conduct themselves while in the city in a creditable manner. Exactly what the old gentleman meant was not very apparent. The petition was very general in its terms. He may have been anxious that the members should keep out of the hands of the police. He may have been thinking about the theatre, or probably he referred to their social habits, and was anxious that they should acquit themselves with propriety in their temporary homes. Whatever he meant, the petition was comprehensive and covered the whole ground. Perhaps, indeed, the petition was needed.

The rural brethren, however, are not the only ones who need to be prayed for and admonished in regard to their deportment. Some young ministers, and perhaps an occasional one not very young, who labour in cities and towns, make themselves very offensive when they go into the country. If the rural brother needs to be prayed for in the city, the city or town brother may need some healthy admonition about his behaviour in the country. As he is probably not in a receptive mood the admonition must be very faithful and plain:

Dearly beloved brother, when you are invited by one of your rural brethren to speak at his tea-meeting or assist him at his Communion, if you can't go say so and be done with it. Don't cover two sheets of paper telling him of the number of pressing invitations you have for that day. It won't help him any to tell him that *even if it is true*, and if he is a gentleman, as most likely he is, a letter of that kind will lower you very much in his estimation. Gentlemen never boast of the number of their engagements, or tell of the immense demand made on their time and services. Never.

If you agree to go, don't go with the air of a man who owns all Canada and intends buying up the United States. The Prince of Wales visited Ireland the other day, and you certainly may visit your rural neighbour without putting on any top-lofty, patronizing airs. When he meets you at the station don't begin to tell him how very difficult it was for you to get away, how much you had to do at home, and how overwhelmingly important your engagements are. You don't carry the whole church on your shoulders. Your work is not any more important than any other man's work, and there is a remote possibility that the world might continue to revolve on its axis, and even revolve around the sun if you went across to the States.

Now that you are seated in the rural manse parlour and have been introduced to the rural brother's wife, don't turn round and say patronizingly to her: "*I suppose you have been in Toronto,*" or Montreal, or Hamilton, or some other place, as the case may be. A large city or town is a fairly high pedestal. You are a small statue on that pedestal, but you need not on that account act rudely towards a lady in her own house. It is not at all necessary for you to say to her half-a-dozen times during the first half-hour that you really do wonder how she can live out here. You need not remind her with a half-pitying, half-patronizing air that she cannot by any possibility have any society in the country. You probably don't know that there are a few women in this world who can read and think and work for Christ and take care of their families, and live happily without the inestimable privilege of looking at piles of brick and mortar every day. That woman in the rural manse may be a more refined lady than your wife; she may have had a better education, she may be a better Christian, she may be acting her part in life every day very much better than you and your wife act yours. Ten years from the present that ruddy faced boy by her side may go down to Toronto and beat your boy badly at the University. Twenty years farther on, your boy may work for that boy at a few dollars per week. Now don't patronize that lady in the rural manse any more. Some of these rural manse ladies are the noblest women on this footstool.

Now we will assume that you have finished your meal—a very much better one than you usually get at home—you and the rural brother start for the church.

If you drive don't pretend every minute that you are afraid the horse may run away. That may to you seem evidence of refinement and city manners, but it is not. Most gentlemen can manage a horse, and if you are too useless or too effeminate to drive a good roadster at a lively clip you need not try to palm off your effeminacy or awkwardness as evidence of high breeding. If you see any cows along the road, don't sniff and say you never could stand the smell of cattle. The rural brother may know that your father was a farmer and that in your young days you miked cows yourself, "watched gaps" in harvest, and performed various other duties among cattle that need not be mentioned. If you didn't many a better man did.

As you ride along to the church you need not tell the rural brother how many distinguished people are in your congregation. Probably the rural brother and everybody else know that some of these so-called distinguished people are no great credit to it. John Hall never talks about the number of big people in his church. His congregation raised last year \$135,000 for all purposes, which is about \$130,000 more than yours raised, but a man might spend a year with John Hall and never hear him allude to his big people or the amounts they raise. John Hall could shake a better sermon out of his sleeve at five minutes' notice than you could make in a year if your life depended on it. He can say more good things in ten minutes than you ever said in your life; he has more influence for good in the world to-day than you could hope to acquire if you lived on this planet for a thousand years; but John Hall never put on airs in a rural manse, nor wounded a rural brother's feelings by making ungentelemanly comparisons before him.

Now you are in the rural brother's church. Don't assume that no person of any consequence ever preached there before. Dr. Bayne, Dr. Burns, Dr. Willis, Dr. Irvine, Dr. Inglis, Dr. Ormiston, or Dr. Donald Fraser may have been there—may have preached some of their best sermons there. You are not so much greater than these men that you can assume that *anything from you is good enough for these plain country people*. The average of intelligence among these people may be higher than the average in your own congregation. They may know less about the last novel or the last play; they may never have seen a roller skating rink; but they positively do know their Bibles better, and are better judges of a good sermon than most of the people you preach to at home. They have seen your name in the daily papers, because you know one element of your greatness—perhaps the principal one—is that you live in a place where daily papers are published, and they expect something good something very extra in the way of preaching. *They don't always get it*. Sometimes they leave church saying to themselves: "*Is that all?*"

Some years ago one of the most scholarly, accomplished and deservedly influential ministers in our Church happened to be in a city that need not be named. He fell in with a very young clerical gentleman who was noted for his insolent, patronizing airs. They dropped into a book store. Addressing the bookseller, the youth said in a marvellously patronizing manner: "Aw, here is our friend Mr. So-and-so from the country. I brought him in to see the books."

FROM PRINCE ALBERT TO MIS-TA-WAS-SIS RESERVE.

BY REV. JAMES SIEVERIGHT.

"You going to Prince Albert? Why soon half the ministers of the Presbyterian Church will be there!" Such was the jocular remark of a Hudson Bay Company's official that greeted me on my way to my distant sphere of labour. To judge from the number of commissioners and ministers that have visited this remote and largest settlement in the North-West Territories, its name at least should be familiar to every Presbyterian. The term Prince Albert is often applied to a settlement seventy miles in extent, the electoral district of Lorne. Prince Albert proper may be said to extend four miles along the bank of the North Saskatchewan from Captain Moore's grist and saw mill to Emmanuel College. At least, the rival candidates for the honour of the future town, almost as numerous as the places that claimed to be Homer's birthplace, are comprised within these limits—all the claims for miles around are taken up. The country on the north bank of the Saskatchewan is a sandy waste covered with poplars and firs broken up by marshes and lakes till Shell River is reached, eighteen

miles north, which is said to flow through large sections of choice land not yet surveyed. Our course lies along the bank of the river for seven miles, thickly dotted with farm houses, and thence southward through a tract of land more sparsely settled, yet rapidly filling up. The first day's journey (twenty-two miles) was made through a cold, incessant rain storm, often through swollen creeks and sloughs—to use the phraseology of the country, "mean" weather to travel in. In a ducked, bedraggled condition I reached the hospitable shelter of a farm house, in a thriving settlement, where fourteen years ago the buffalo roamed, the prey of the hunters who supplied the mission with meat. Cattle and sheep now graze there. Wolves, bears and Indians are almost numbered among the things that were. Next morning the heavy clouds passed away and the journey from the "Forks of the Road" to Carlton (twenty-eight miles) was rendered more enjoyable by sunshine enlivening hill, dale, meadow, lake, and glistening stream. The trail winds chiefly through a sandy plain. For twenty miles the smoke of settlers' cabins curls faintly upward from the dark, green bosom of the prairie. The road now conducts through open meadows, gay with tender forest flowers and enlivened by songs of birds; now skirts marshes, from which the voice of 40,000 frogs rises in varied chorus; now through a dense wall of poplar foliage, through which only a narrow ribbon of bright blue sky is visible; now through darkly shaded labyrinths of fir trees, the wind moaning through the jagged tops like whispering footsteps in a grand and stern temple of Nature. At times no light or sound of life may be descried in the hard, dry plains. Then here and there little dribbling brooks, from whose cool waters the startled little water birds rise, filling the air with cries and flutterings, or clear pools in whose streams the wild duck dives and splashes. The well worn path, winding from side to side to avoid obstacles, now skirts the ashes of encampment fires, or dead trunks of trees blackened by the prairie fires, or mouldering through its grassy pathway the bleached bones of the buffalo once swarming in this region, or the skull of an ox or the skeleton of a horse that perished from the experiment of extracting too much work from too hard fare—a scanty feast for the wolves and vultures. The traces of an Indian encampment are here and there seen, lodge poles placed in a circle, fastened at the top with cords of bark, point out the spot where squaws erected a rude tenement covered with mats or skins for some lazy warrior of the forest. Early in the afternoon, through a gap in the rich masses of foliage, the river was seen gliding, bounded by high grassy hills thickly studded with groves, and at the foot of a steep descent the white buildings of Fort Carlton appeared, recalling memories of the olden times when the names of the roving prairie tribes were a terror in the surrounding plains and forests. It is a stockade fort. Its four corners are flanked by wooden towers pierced with loop holes to serve in time of need as a place of defence. Within the palisade are store rooms, offices, and apartments. When danger was anticipated from the plains, sentinels, gun in hand kept watch, walking their weary rounds on a scaffold placed near the top of perpendicular walls. The neat cottage of the Chief Factor, where I met a kindly welcome, with its modern surroundings built outside the barricade, pioneers of advancing civilization or proofs that the dominion once claimed by terrible foes of the dark forests has long since passed away. The power of these fierce marauders depended for its strength on the chase, and with the extinction of the buffalo has been broken down. Six miles west of Fort Carlton begins the settlement of French Half-breed, scattered in groups through the sandy plains between Carlton and the North Saskatchewan. They are more akin to the Indian than the white man. Their spiritual interests are controlled by three priests, one of whom, it is said, when milder arguments were of no avail used to employ the whip liberally with his intractable flock. How different the destiny of the great North-West had the efforts of the French Jesuits, these pioneers of the western wilds, been crowned with success! Absolutism in religion and despotism in government would have crushed advancing liberty and civilization. Next morning opened gloomily, the rain pouring in steady torrents. The Saskatchewan is constantly changing its course, altering its channel. The river was now high, and crossing in the scow, the only one for hundreds of miles, was rendered difficult by the rapid, eddying current and