

Our Contributors.

THE BABY ARGUMENT VARIOUSLY APPLIED.

BY KNOXONIAN.

A pastor spoke to a gentleman in his congregation about becoming a member in full communion, when the following little dialogue took place.

"I'll not plead the baby argument with you, Doctor."

"What is that?" "Why, that there are a great many hypocrites in the Church."

That gentleman did not wish to declare himself on the Lord's side, but he was too manly to try to justify himself by the baby argument. It is a baby argument. The fact that there are hypocrites in the Church proves that there are many good people there. The existence of a forged bank bill proves the existence of the bank and of many genuine bills. A spurious coin proves the existence of the genuine coin of which it is an imitation. There cannot be an imitation where there is nothing to imitate.

There is another way of getting at those people who use the baby argument for not being Christians. "You don't like hypocrites?" "No." "Well, there are no hypocrites in heaven. Why don't you try to go there? Hell is full of hypocrites. Why do you keep on the broad road that leads there? If you don't like hypocrites, strange that you should shun the only place where there are none, and rush on to the place where they will all spend eternity."

The baby argument is used in many places and for many purposes. It is found in Parliament, in the law courts, on the hustings and in all places where weak Whateleys try to bolster up bad causes. The baby argument abounds in the Church courts. The little fellow comes into Presbyterian meetings, struts about in Synod meetings, and even dares to show himself in the General Assembly. To tell the plain truth one may hear the baby argument about as often in the Assembly as anywhere else.

It is said that in this busy age some fathers are away from home so much that they are unable to recognize their own children. In order that all fond parents who use the baby argument may be able to recognize their own offspring at sight we give a few specimens of the baby argument:

"Charity begins at home. We have heathen at our own doors. I believe in preaching the Gospel to the heathen in our own country before sending it to the heathen abroad. When all the people in our own country are converted then we can do something for other nations." That is the baby argument against foreign missions. The meanest thing about it is that it pleads our failure in home work as a reason why we should not do our duty from home. No properly-trained baby would use that argument.

"Too many colleges—too many colleges. If we had one or two colleges I would support them, but we have so many that I cannot do anything." That is the baby argument against helping on the good work of ministerial education. As a matter of fact every man in the Church is at liberty to support what ever college he likes best.

"Some of the people in those assisted congregations do not pay as much as they might. If every man in every assisted congregation gave every cent he could, I might do something; but, until it is shown that every individual man in every congregation gives the last cent he can, I am opposed to the fund. Anyway, a minister can live on less than \$740 a year." These are the baby arguments against Augmentation. They are twins.

"The old church is good enough. I never saw it so full but one or two more might have been crowded in. I like a plain church. One can worship just as well sitting on a slab as in a pew. If the air comes in through the sides, stuff the cracks with rags. Put a wisp of straw in the holes in the roof. Put a wooden pane in the window. Worship should be spiritual in this dispensation. There is no vital religion in these fine churches. Let us keep to the old church, and true religion." That is the baby argument against building a new church.

"I am opposed to raising the minister's salary. John the Baptist wore a leathern girdle about his loins, but in these days of pride and fashion ministers refuse to dress in that plain way. John lived on locusts and wild honey. Ministers have become so

puffed up now that they won't eat locusts. The apostles wore sheepskins and goatskins. Why can't ministers wear sheepskins now? I have a couple in my barn that I would sell the church for a little over the marked price. No, there must be no rise in the minister's salary. I can hire a man to take care of my cattle for less money than we pay the minister now." That is the baby argument used in some rural retreats against raising the minister's salary from \$400 to \$500.

"Politics are dirty. A Christian should not vote. Voting is mingling with the world. Christians should have nothing to do with public affairs. All these things should be left to the men of this world." That is the baby argument against voting. Probably some of the Christian people of Woodstock have been in the habit of finding this baby argument on the first Monday in January. Perhaps some of them went home from a recent public meeting, feeling that the baby argument against voting leads to some very unpleasant results. On the first Monday of next January they may put the baby argument quietly asleep until they go for a good man as mayor.

"If I had been a merchant, I might have been rich. Had I been a lawyer, I might have made a fortune. Had I been a politician, I might have been a Cabinet minister." That is the baby argument some ministers use to show how much they sacrificed by becoming preachers of the Gospel. Brother, how do you know what you would have been? Had you been a merchant, you might have gone through the bankrupt court several times, and not made any money by the operation. Had you been a lawyer, you might have a watery sensation in your mouth every time you pass a well-regulated butcher's shop. Cabinet minister, eh! If you have not about a million times more capacity for handling political questions than is possessed by those political parsons who tried to make Mowat go last autumn, you would be buried beneath a majority of a thousand in some intelligent Presbyterian constituency. Very few ministers ever know how to ride the Protestant horse successfully, and that is the simplest as well as the wickedest problem in political science. Brother, don't use the baby argument to show what you might have been.

Moral: Never use the baby argument, and when you meet the little fellow in any walk in life, gently use the slipper.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY.

The Audubon Society is about one year old. It is a society formed, not, as some might think from its name, for the purpose of studying the habits of birds, as Audubon did, still less of making those stiff and staring collections of stuffed birds in glass cases, which are only tolerable in museums, formed for educational purposes. The Audubon Society was formed for the purpose of protecting our living birds—the pretty, innocent songsters of our woods, without which we should scarcely know spring when it came. But protecting them from what? In the first place from man the destroyer, but in the second place—and mostly—from woman the destroyer.

Everybody has noticed, and some people with much pain, the enormous number of dead birds which have been recently mounted on hats and bonnets—with a mistaken view to adornment. These birds had to come from somewhere. Members of the American Ornithological Society began to notice with alarm the comparative rarity of many of the most beautiful birds, and with such a market for the slaughtered innocents it was not difficult to account for the disappearance. From the *Audubon Magazine*, dedicated to the interests of this society, the following facts are taken:—

The Audubon Society was founded in New York City in February, 1886. Its purpose is the protection of American birds not used for food from destruction for mercantile purposes. The magnitude of the evil with which the society will cope, and the imperative need of the work which it proposes to accomplish, are outlined in the following statement:

"Within the last few years the destruction of our birds has increased at a rate which is alarming. This destruction now takes place on such a large scale as to threaten the destruction of a number of our most useful species. It is carried on chiefly by men and boys, who sell the skin or plumage to be used for ornamental purposes, principally for the trimming of women's hats, bonnets and clothing. These men kill everything that wears feathers. It matters not if the bird be a useful one which devours the hurtful in-

sects that destroy the farmer's crop, or a bright-plumaged songster, whose advent has been welcomed in spring, and which has reared its brood in the door-yard during the summer, or a swift-winged sea swallow, whose flight along the shore has often, with unerring certainty, led the fisherman to his finny prey—whatever it be, it must be sacrificed to the bird butcher's lust for slaughter and for gain. Besides the actual destruction of the birds, their numbers are still further diminished by the practice of robbing their nests in the breeding season.

"Although it is impossible to get at the number of birds killed each year, some figures have been published which give an idea of what the slaughter must be. We know that a single local taxidermist handles 30,000 birdskins in one year; that a single collector brought back from a three months' trip 11,000 skins; that from one small district on Long Island about 70,000 birds were brought to New York in four months' time. In New York one firm had on hand on February 1, 1886, 200,000 skins. The supply is not limited by domestic consumption. American bird-skins are sent abroad. The great European markets draw their supplies from all over the world. In London there were sold in three months, from one auction room, 404,464 West Indian and Brazilian birds. In Paris 100,000 African birds have been sold by one dealer in one year. One New York firm recently had a contract to supply 40,000 skins of American birds to one Paris firm. These figures tell their own story, but it is a story which might be known without them. We may read it plainly enough in the silent hedges, once vocal with the songs of birds, and in the deserted fields where once bright plumage flashed in the sunlight.

"The objections to this cruel and wanton destruction of bird-life are not sentimental only. If continued it will soon not only deprive us of one of the most attractive features of rural life, but it will surely work a vast amount of harm to the farmers by removing one of the most efficient checks on the increase of insects. Agricultural interests are at stake."

Unless some check is imposed on this barbarous and unnatural traffic, there will soon be no more possibility of killing and torturing birds, because there will be none left to kill and torture! For of course the fashion set by the higher classes is copied by all grades of society down to the beggar girl who comes to ask charity with a draggled bird of once brilliant plumage conspicuous on her shabby hat. And while the demand seems to be practically unlimited, the supply is not so. Most of us, however, would prefer that the traffic should be ended in some other way than by the annihilation of our feathered friends, which every poet loves and every woman is supposed to love! It would be a poor exchange for the life and animation of the summer woods by this bright and happy race, to have a few tons of old feathers as its sole memorial! Had Burns lived in this age we should doubtless have had a spirited lyric from his muse—possibly entitled "Lines Suggested by a Dead Bird on a Lady's Bonnet"—with all the burning thoughts wherewith he would have "moralized the spectacle," and possibly—as song is the most potent force to mould the heart of a people—this would have produced more effect than seems to have followed her gracious Majesty's appeal to ladies on this subject, which, some may remember, was mentioned here last winter by our present president.

There is only one explanation of the anomaly that the more tender-hearted half of creation—most of whom would shed tears over the death of one pet bird—should lend themselves, by their patronage, to such a "slaughter of the innocents"! It is, that, in the first place, the barbarous and destructive nature of the traffic to which they thus become "accomplices after the fact" has never been realized by them; or, in the second place, it does not occur to them when purchasing the poor victims that as surely as the law of supply and demand exists, so surely will their present patronage ensure the destruction of fresh victims for the following season! There is but one remedy for the evil: when ladies cease to buy birds, birds will cease to be ruthlessly destroyed.

The American women have at length realized this, and the Audubon Society, like the similar Selborne Society in England, has been formed for the purpose of pledging all willing to help in discouraging the wanton destruction of birds. It has now more than 2,000 members, several hundred of these being from Canada. The pledges are threefold, and include abstinence from killing or capturing wild birds not used for food, from injuring or disturbing nests and eggs, and from using their feathers in decoration. Any one can have pledges sent on application to the secretary of the society, 40 Park Row, New York City.

Young ladies with a large circle of acquaintance can do a good work by sending for a number of such pledges, and getting them signed by all willing to become members of the Audubon Society, and so help to save our birds from reckless destruction.

FIDELIS.