

Our Contributors.

THE WAY TO AVOID THE REPORTER

BY KNOXIAN.

Congregational quarrels and clerical "troubles" in cities are armed with a new terror. The new terror is newspaper publicity. The morning after the "row," long reports with sensational headings tell the world how Satan is getting in his work. The clever young men from the newspaper offices have been on the scent, and whether they were allowed to remain at the meeting, or were excluded, they write a report of the proceedings all the same. Everything done at the meeting, wise or otherwise, everything witty or wicked, everything that ought not to have been said or done is laid on the breakfast table. And a goodly number of people take the two columns of congregational trouble or clerical scandal along with their breakfast. In fact, if they did not want it along with their breakfast it never would have been served up. The young men prepared the matter, and the publisher published it mainly because they knew a large number of their readers would like it in the morning before family worship. Whether that kind of literature prepares a family for their morning devotions is a question that need not be here discussed. A great many people read it whether it is good for them or not.

There is a short and easy way by which Churches and ministers may avoid the terror of too much publicity. Just stick closely to the Master's work, and the young gentlemen of the press will not trouble you. They never hover around prayer meetings, or quiet congregational meetings, or Church court meetings at which there is nothing but good plain work going on. Nobody ever heard of the reporters forcing themselves into a church in which the sacrament of the Lord's supper was being dispensed. When was a plain, weekly prayer meeting invaded by pressmen? If there is any kind of revival meeting at which Sam Jones is to figure, or at which a "singing," or "weeping," or "boy" evangelist is to hold forth, two or three pressmen may turn up, but the people of Toronto or any other city may meet in every church in the city every evening for a twelvemonth, and no pressmen will trouble them if they merely pray in a quiet, orderly kind of way.

Congregations that complain about the presence of reporters might make a little experiment. Just meet some evening and add \$200 or \$300 to the pastor's salary, and see if the young men of the press give you any annoyance. Not they. The most they would do would be to drop in at the close of the meeting and ascertain the amount. Next morning there would be a little paragraph in the local column saying that the congregation had added \$200 to their pastor's salary. That is positively all there would be about it. If the people met to turn the minister out, and had a big "row" over the turning, they would get a two-column report with sensational headings. If they met to inquire whether the stuff he drank out of a bottle while away on his holidays was milk, or lemonade, or something stronger, they might possibly get four columns. A meeting held to inquire as to whether a popular preacher did or did not salute one of the sisters in apostolic fashion, would get all the space needed for a long descriptive report, accompanied by notes. Perhaps a portrait of the brother might adorn the head of the report, and his biography embellish its tail. Nothing that happens in modern society commands newspaper space so readily as the trial of a popular minister who is charged with following apostolic precepts too literally in social intercourse. A Presidential election is nothing to it.

A plain Presbytery meeting, at which the members do nothing but the vital work of the Church, is generally considered a prosy enough affair. A skilful pressmen or Presbytery Clerk can squeeze the proceedings into a report of two or three inches in length. But let it be understood that Dr. Boanerges and the Rev. Mr. Poundtext are going "to have it out" on some old sore, and the proceedings are likely to be spun out to a couple of columns.

A minister may visit the sick and dying for years; he may help the poor and do pastoral work among his parishioners for a life-time; he may write and preach good sermons for a quarter of a century, and in all this time no newspaper man may come near

him. But if the report gets abroad that he followed too literally apostolic injunctions in the matter of salutation, a dozen reporters may interview him in one day, and ask him what he has to say about the rumour that he saluted Priscilla.

If you stick very closely and quietly to your Master's work, the reporters never annoy you. The moment a Church or minister is suspected of doing work of an opposite kind, then the pressmen want items and interviews.

And why? Are these young men wicked above all others? Not by any means. Do they delight in church scandal? Not they. They are simply engaged in their daily work, and are hunting for the kind of stuff that they know very well the public like to read.

THE POWER OF CHRISTIANITY.

The culture of the imagination. The imagination, which is a hand-maiden to the intellect, is a necessary factor in the presentation of truth, in beauty of expression and in the evolution of thought in all the departments of knowledge. Imagination has much in common with fancy, but the one differs from the other in specific aim. Fancy only employs itself about things without regarding their nature; but imagination aims at tracing and getting a true copy. Of imagination, which has just been defined, there are two kinds. The first is what is called descriptive imagination. This kind of imagination is interwoven into the very texture of Scripture, and gives to its context life and sweetness, as Christ is the Rose of Sharon, the Lilly of the Valley, the Root of Jesse, the Branch of Righteousness, the Bright and Morning Star, the Dayspring, and the Sun of Righteousness. In each of these designations of Christ, the grand truth which it expresses is enshrined in beauty, and it is so with many passages which begem the pages of Scripture. Christ addresses His people in the fine poetic strain: "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines, with the tender grape, give a good smell. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away." Glowing with gratitude and sparkling with joy, David, the sweet singer of Israel, depicts the goodness of God in a fine pastoral scene,—"Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness and Thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." The prophets and the apostles abound in similar strokes and touches of imagination. What is the native effect thereof on the human mind in practical matters, in commonplaces and in speculative themes? On the one hand, the effect on the minds of men in general is a pleasing apprehension of the truth so set forth, and a retentive hold of it in the moral tone and in the tenor of their life; on the other hand, the effect on the minds of writers in particular is refinement in taste and elevation in the habit of thought, or it stands out in their lucubrations with clearness both in matter and in form, as in Dante, Tasso, Thomson, Cowper, Milton and Shakespeare. Besides, in history and in the whole region of concrete facts, imagination is as necessary as in poetry; the historian, indeed, cannot invent his facts, but he must mould them and dispose them with a graceful congruity; and to do this is the work of the imagination.

It is true in the narrative portion of Scripture, as well as in the poetry of Scripture, as in the Mosaic sketch of creation, in the marvellous story of Joseph and in the history of Jesus in the four Gospels. It is, indeed, imagination that gives point, vivacity and brilliancy to every species of composition. The second is what is called creative imagination.

Imagination is so called because imagination, in its highest use, is but another name for absolute power, clearest insight, reason in her most exalted mood.

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
And as imagination bodies forth
The form of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

In Scripture, imagination is used to construct ingenious frameworks in which to set forth grand truths, as in the parable of the trees in the choice of a king,

in the parable of Nathan in regard to David, and in the parables of our Lord. In Scripture, the soul soars on the wings of imagination to transcendental heights in order to contemplate God in the creation of the universe, as in the adoring converse of the soul with God: "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, Thou art very great, Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain, who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters, who maketh the clouds His chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind." In Scripture the soul is carried in imagination through the boundless universe in search of an answer to the question, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" The finite cannot measure the Infinite. When the imagination is thus so much used in Scripture, it is clear Christianity fosters and expands in us that faculty which is necessary to make progress in the knowledge of things. It is imagination that enables us to trace facts to their source by ingenious devices, and to sift them in every possible way in order to acquire an exact knowledge of them. It is imagination that enables us to conjure up in our minds what is necessary to the solution of problems and theorems in mathematics or in physics or in any other of the sciences. It is imagination that enables us to form distinct conceptions of phenomena and to contrive how to decipher them. It is a well-known fact that the highest class of scientific men have been led to their most important discoveries by the quickening power of a suggestive imagination.

The condition of things necessary to progress. God, who created all things, continues to uphold things in their laws and properties by the word of power. God is distinct from, and independent of, all created things, but He manifests His presence in them as in the growth of plants, in the motion of bodies and in the energies of animals or as in the beauty, the grandeur and sublimity of things either in the material or in the mental world. As all things which God has created are sustained by Him in the continuance of their existence and in the performance of their functions, so all things bear the plain marks of His handiwork in unity of design and in the accomplishment of special ends assigned to them in creation. In this connection of things with God there is certainty of progress or the relation of things to the Creator is the ground of its continuous unity, and unless there be unity we have no right to speak of progress; for succession is of many, but progress of one. Things differ from one another in kind and purpose, but they all stand to each other as parts to a whole in the economy of nature, and invite investigation or stir up intellectual activity. Mind differs from matter as wide as the poles, but the one stands in fine adaptation to the other, and we can accordingly read, understand and explain phenomena within us and without us. The great law of unity is variety, which shines out with radiant light in Scripture, runs through nature and constitutes the basis of metaphysics, philosophy, science and art. The scriptural idea of God is essential to the processes of generalisation, the ordinances of religion facilitate progress in the knowledge of things, and the means for the spread of the truth among the heathen contribute towards the same end. Science is indebted to the Christian missions for their contributions to the study of language, ethnology and comparative religion. In certain quarters, however, the scriptural idea of God in nature is ignored, and the processes, by which God carries on the system of things in the universe, are substituted in His place. What is the character or what value can be attached to the conclusions of a philosophy, which shuts out what is essential to universal concepts? The philosophy, which substitutes the idea of law in the place of the Creator, is the baseless fabric of a vision, and it is therein without value, inasmuch as "the fundamental conception of law is an ascertained working sequence or constant order among the phenomena of nature. The natural laws originate nothing, sustain nothing. They are modes of operation, therefore not operators, processes, nor powers."

Such a mode of philosophizing is the outcome of antipathy to religion on the part of some, and of pretension on the part of others. With not a few, there is the free use of philosophic terms, but there