

Our Contributors.

TOMKINS AND FATHER.

BY KNOXONIAN.

A distinguished English visitor saw Tomkins and Father painted upon a signboard in New York City. The name and style of that firm astonished the Englishman. In his slow, old-fashioned country the firm would be Tomkins and Son. Young America had got ahead of his male parent and wrote it Tomkins and Father. The name and style of that firm is very suggestive and explains a good many things that trouble us on this and the other side of the lines.

Tomkins and Father explains why some children come very irregularly to the Sabbath school. Young Tomkins does not feel like going every Sabbath, and Father and Mother Tomkins have no authority to send him. The lad does what he feels like doing, not what he ought to do or is asked to do by his Sabbath school teacher. The result is that Tomkins junr. is very irregular in his attendance at the Sabbath school, his teacher becomes discouraged, the superintendent is asked to interfere, the pastor tries his hand, but all to very little purpose. Tomkins junr. is the managing member of the domestic establishment and he comes and goes as he thinks proper. Sabbath school conventions discuss such questions as "Irregular attendance," "How to keep the larger boys in school," etc., but no convention can mend the matter. Tomkins junr. is the managing member of the home firm and he does just as he likes. The only remedy is for Tomkins senr. to become the head of the firm.

Tomkins and Father explains why it is so difficult to keep order in some Sabbath schools. One would naturally suppose that children assembled to study God's Word in God's house on God's Day would conduct themselves in an orderly manner. Of course the young of all animals are playful, and no reasonable man would expect two or three hundred children, brimful of life, to keep as quiet as grown people. That should not be expected; but there is a well-marked difference between vitality and disorder between the natural outflow of youthful life and rowdiness. Lack of parental authority at home accounts for a large proportion of the disorder that prevails in some Sabbath schools. Tomkins junr. does just as he pleases at home, and he naturally supposes that he should do just as he pleases everywhere. The fault lies with Tomkins senr. and his better half. They allowed Tomkins junr. to become manager of the home firm when he should have occupied a subordinate position in the domestic establishment. If Tomkins senr. would apply the family birch a little to Tomkins junr., the application would do far more good than any number of resolutions passed at a Sabbath school convention about "How to keep order in the Sabbath school." Tomkins senr. should take a lesson from Abraham, and "command" his children to behave themselves. Abraham and Sarah, his wife, were better authority on home training than any convention.

Tomkins and Father explains quite clearly why it is so difficult to keep order in many of our high and public schools. If our excellent Minister of Education for Ontario could tell the number of teachers who lose their situations each year on the vague general charge that they "cannot keep order," the figures would throw a flood of light on family training in this Province. Why is it so difficult to keep order? Simply because young Tomkins has never been kept in order at home. The young scamp has always done just as he pleased at home, and now he thinks he ought to do just as he pleases in school. He has trampled upon everybody and everything in his father's house, and now he expects to trample upon his teacher in the school house. That is exactly how the matter stands. Too often the trustees take the part of young Tomkins. Perhaps old Tomkins is rich, or he is connected with some of the trustees in business, or some of them want his vote and influence, or their wives are on very intimate terms with Mrs. Tomkins. The teacher, perhaps a young woman supporting a widowed mother, or helping to support a poor family, has no friends. Perhaps she is a hundred miles from home. Anyway, she is *only* a poor teacher. It is much easier to dismiss a poor teacher than offend Tomkins and Mrs. Tomkins. So these manly and enlightened guardians of our educational interests meet and dismiss the teacher on the general charge that she "cannot keep order." It makes one's blood

boil to think that such abominable tyranny and injustice can exist and grow on public money, but such cases occur every day. Cases have been known in which Tomkins senr. was a member of the Board himself, and the teacher was dismissed because he or she could not control Tomkins junr. Tomkins dismissed the teacher because his own son was a young Arab or his own daughter an ill-bred, impertinent seditious! It would perhaps be wicked to take any satisfaction from the fact that the day of retribution soon comes to the Tomkins family. Tomkins junr. and Miss Tomkins soon bring the Tomkins family to disgrace and the worst feature of the case is that their own conduct perhaps helped them to bring in the shame.

Teachers of Ontario, put the "bud" on Tomkins junr. Put it on vigorously. Put it on if you should walk out of the school house to-morrow. A rigorous application of the "bud" on the youthful members of the Tomkins family for 1886 will do the country more good than the N. P. ever did.

Tomkins and Father explains why some families go so irregularly to church. Arnot says the finest sight on this side of Heaven is a large, intelligent, devout congregation assembled for worship. It is a fine sight, and the finest part of it is a long pew with a solid-looking man at one end, a fine motherly-looking woman at the other, and a row of handsome, well-behaved children between them. The name of that family is *not* Tomkins. The heads of that family train their children on the Abraham principle, and when these children grow up to manhood and womanhood these parents will have their reward. They will have a higher reward farther on.

Tomkins and Father explains why crowds of half-grown boys and girls are seen gadding about on the streets of our cities and towns at unseasonable hours. The youthful members of the family go out and come in when they please. The house is too small to hold them at night, and the result quite frequently is that some of them get shut up in a good deal smaller room than any room in the Tomkins homestead.

Tomkins and Father explains why a very large proportion of the convicts in the Kingston penitentiary are very young men—some of them mere boys. Tomkins would not control his family—perhaps Mrs. Tomkins would not allow him to do so—and the Sheriff undertook the duty for him. That is how it too often ends.

A good thing to do at the beginning of this year would be to change the name and style of this firm. Instead of Tomkins and Father, make it Tomkins and Son with all that the change implies.

AMERICAN CONGRESS OF CHURCHES—III.

PROCEEDINGS CONDENSED FOR THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

The third subject discussed in the addresses given at the Congress was: "The Attitude of the Secular Press of America toward Religion." On the whole, the verdict of the speakers is not unfavourable toward American journalism, admitting its desire in the main to treat religion fairly at least, even if with no warmer sympathy or appreciative intelligence. They also point out that the average newspaper must be *what its readers insist on having*; therefore, "like people, like paper." The following passage, taken from the address of the Rev. Julius Ward, of Boston, is striking, both in itself and as coming from an American, brought up in the native home of "voluntarism."

"The treatment of religious questions is finding a place in the secular press, and is beginning to influence the spiritual thinking of American communities. The escape from the necessity of partisanship is not more necessary in politics than in religion, if the best features of Christian culture are to be promoted. The difficulty in our religious organizations and growths in this country is that they are too democratic, and too much detached from historical precedent. There are plenty of "isms," but there is no Church. There are plenty of views of religion, but there is no organization of religion that affects the spiritual welfare of men as the nation affects their social and political welfare. It may be that the time is near, when the organization of a State Church—like the National Church of England—will be an impossibility, because society will be too much disintegrated to maintain it; but there can be no question that the best feature of English life to-day is the pervasive and penetrating influ-

ence that comes from its national organization of religion. There is nothing like it in the United States; nothing at all that is at once so constructive, so helpful, so uplifting. Our Christianity lacks the power to organize society and teach the Christian religion in its integrity. The prevailing religion is the religion of party, and works, as party always works for the protection and conservation of party interests; but it fails precisely where society demands the constructive power of large Christian beliefs, in organizing the forces of the community for the development of the best features of Christian society. There is hardly a village in New England where society is not hampered in its religious development by what may be called the hindrances and negations of Christian organizations that seem to exist chiefly to neutralize one another's influence. How can Christianity in America escape from this false position, and work for the benefit of the whole community?

"It would seem that this should be the supreme question in the Church press; but it is actually the question which the denominational journals decline to discuss. The point with them is not so much to advance the religious welfare of the community in the development of a many-sided Christian life as to act as the faithful watch-dogs of religious party, and maintain the differences that keep Christians from uniting in the works which bring hearts together, even though the heads may seem wide apart. The Church press to-day does much to provide a pure and wholesome literature for the family; but it seems to be hardly conscious of the great movements in religious thought, or of the spiritual necessities of the people at large. These journals are wrapped up in religious partisanship, and fail to see the wood for the trees. The fresh and vital thinking of the nation along the lines that determine the religious belief of the next generation goes on in the secular press, and has been forced into that channel, because it must have expression and could command no other." Is there not truth in these remarks among ourselves, as well as in the United States?

Dr. Pullman, of Lynn, Mass., is still more hopeful. "I believe," he says, "that the Church, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, has received but a trifle of the benefit it is to receive—both of approval and criticism—from the secular press. When we shall be happy enough to succeed in doing away with the contentions of differing sects, when the dawn of that day shall shine over the Church, when, in the splendid words of Norman Macleod, we shall see a Church broad with the breadth of Almighty God, and narrow with His narrowness, then the attitude of the secular press toward religion will be all that its most enthusiastic adherent can desire." Dr. Langdon says in the same strain: "There comes a time—and I believe many here will see it—when the Church will have succeeded in clearing away these barriers, and will stand as one mind, giving voice to God's teachings. When the Church has one voice, the secular press will re-echo it."

The last and most vital subject discussed at the Congress was: "The Historical Christ considered as the true centre of Theology." The following is the conclusion of the paper of Dr. James Freeman Clarke:

"Around this divinely human character, Son of God, and Son of Man, laying aside their prepossessions about Him, Christians must one day unite, and be willing that all men shall sit at the feet of the Master, and hear His words. Then His sublime prayer will be fulfilled: As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me. Not till the Church is thus one, can the world be converted to Christ.

"This unity will not be a tame monotony, but the consent of many tones in one vast harmony of purpose and work. We shall not be all absorbed in an organization, as the Church of Rome has dreamed, gaining union by sacrificing freedom, nor shall we remain divided, as the Protestant Church has been, preserving freedom and losing union. According to the image of the apostle, we shall be many members, but one body, one denomination being the eye, another the hand, another the foot, but all working together to bless and save the human race. What evils can resist such a combined action? With such a united Church, how long would the outcast heathen