Our Contributors.

A NEEDED QUALITY.

I have had a good many occasions to remind me very forcibly of the fact that a minister, although he may be intelligent in many respects and have much education of a literary character, ought to have a large measure of wholesome good sense. People often say of certain ministers that they lack common sense. In practical matters they are stupid and frequently make damaging blunders. For several months this subject has been in my mind, with the intention of writing on it, and today I found in the *Christian Observer* an editorial on the topic, from which I quote the following words: "A layman stood by our desk the other day, one who has had a wide acquaintance with ministers and with congregations, one who is himself characterized by sound common sense, and made a comment which impressed us. After speaking of several vacant fields and their needs, he remarked that the great need of a preacher is strong common sense, clear mule sense, the ability to understand men, to appreciate their good qualities and to perceive how to approach them. The minister may lack eloquence in the pulpit, he may be defective in mannerism, but if he will study the Word of God till it is his own, and expound it in a plain, simple way, and at the same time conduct himself with good common sense, he will be acceptable to the people and enjoy a long, continuous pastorate and have a fruitful ministry. And a reflection upon the history of many pastorates leads to the conclusion that he is about right."

Yes, he is wholly right. I know some pastors who are eager Bible students and have clear ideas of Bible doctrine, but their lack of a fair degree of sound sense in relation to dealing with men is lamentable. Indeed, they are immense failures. They disgust sensible people. Even young folks soon say, after a short acquaintance with them, that they do not know much, and, with such an idea, they lose respect for the pastor. But what can be done for such a minister? One hindrance is, he will not believe that he is deficient in good judgment. If one should tell him, in the kindest manner, that he lacks practical common sense he would be warmly indignant. He speaks of such a deficit in other ministers and other people, but as for himself he is wise! My belief is that such ones should quit the ministry.

C. H. WETHERBE.

AN OLD WOMAN AND HER TIN CAN.

As I gaze for a moment out of my office window I see an old woman on the opposite side of the street shuffling slowly along. The day is warm, and the window being open, I can hear the heels of her shoes, as they drop to the pavement ahead of her feet, and the sound is as though she had on very loose slippers. She is dressed in a shabby costume with black skirt that is too long behind, and I cannot see her feet, so I wonder whether she wears stockings or not. She has a loose black cape, and a very old-fashioned hat of the same color, and she carries a tin can. One might think it was her husband's lunch she was taking to him, save that the hour is 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

I can just see that her face looks wizened, her hair is untidy and very gray, and altogether there is about her an air of utter neglect.

"Poor old woman!" I find myself saying, "how sad a fate is thine."

Nobody cares for her and she cares probably for nobody.

It is rather sad to look back and wonder a few moments what her career has been. Once she was a small baby, the darling of her mother perhaps, and then a little child going to school, happy as the day is long, and so a young girl with all the fond dreams of maidenhood. Perhaps she had a handsome "beau" who made love prettily, and maybe she had several who all did likewise. Then peradventure she was led to the altar or was led on another road —— astray. Afterwards, she may have had a husband who beat her and treated her shamefully, or again she may have been the toy and butt of many. How sad indeed if she had a daughter or a son who had no love for her.

So these thoughts came into my mind as I saw her pass slowly by carrying the can as though it had been full of treasure. It contained what was worth to her more than all the treasures in the world at the time.

Yes! Inside of that tin can was her idol, her God, her absolute master, to which she had bound herself in abject slavery. It was something that was to her more necessary than life almost, and to it she had bartered not only her self-respect but her whole nature, yea and her very soul.

Nothing to us is powerful and absolute unless we make it so, and a healthy minded person might have taken off the lid of that tin can and poured the contents down the gutter in utter disgust.

It was beer! one of the liquids that men and women put in their mouths to steal away their brains, and their souls also, as its like had gradually done in this case.

Again, I could only repeat, "Poor woman!" What does she think, if indeed she ever thinks at all.

Often had I seen her carrying that same tin can before, and often would I see her again, and when I cared to look I could observe her leave the saloon by the back door.

Evidently, therefore, she felt a little shame, but even that would depart rather than she should fail to procure her beloved draught.

Could nothing be done to redeem her? No! it seems not, for she has sunk exceedingly low, and now old age has come upon her.

We would all of us do something if we could, but we cannot give moral life any more than we can give physical.

We turn in horror from the picture which represents one of the tragedies in human life, and the demon which the associations of a sordid world has fostered in this woman's mind can only be destroyed by the divine spark which can be rekindled in God's good time.

C. W. GUEST.

"RING OUT THE OLD."

Before saying farewell to the old year, let us not miss getting the impress of 1903, and not forget the good things the year has bestowed. To moralize comes handy to most of us. Some say it is as easy as preaching—some preaching. At least, whatever may be said of preaching, it is not hard to be wise after the events.

One event will mark 1903 as memorable, and that is the French treaty, by which it is agreed as between the United Kingdom and France that all future difficulties shall be adjusted by a court of arbitration. That is an event of first importance, and of far-reaching effect. The world moves, and in this instance grandly. Our illustrious King has earned nobly the title of "peace-maker." He certainly paved the way to this wise, sensible and rational and Christian conclusion. May the good step taken be a world-wide augury of that to be in the coming days, must be the prayer of all who glory in "the Prince of Peace."

Another event of 1903 that has made a deep impression in this dominion is the Alaska award, and that for good. The disappointment in the award is deep, and the effects will not readily be effaced. Yet, out of seeming evil good has come: (1) in the awakening to the need of a solid north, honestly rounded out; (2) in a sturdy expression of "mistress in mine own house," within the empire family, beneath one flag, bound to one throne.

To further elucidate it would mean a controversial tangle, so "hold enough!"

Again, in 1903 we have had another example of the rubber-band elasticity of the Monroe doctrine. Colombia is neatly sliced in the exigencies of Uncle Sam's expanding needs. Panama is swallowed, and the "doctrine" still "does business at this old stand." That is one of the strange things of 1903.

"Republics die of indigestion." Let us hope this last Christmas-box won't have any bad effect, when added to the Philippines and divers other remote places. Perhaps by annexing the North Pole the load may be made easy to digest.

Also, 1903 has, to our good neighbors to the south of us, been a year of surprises. The "Barons" are in the saddle. Oligarchy has found a resting-place, and the grip is firm. Still each fourth of July will be repeated, "a government of the people, by the people," etc. Some wonder if soon a big collapse and general shake-up will not be the dawn of a new start. Avarice has not the right of road in a God-governed world. "Time tries all," and wrong does not live forever.

Nineteen hundred and three will be noted as a turn in the tide of hopeless, dreary materialism. Evolution of the Darwin type has had a long run. The *cui boni* of philosophy has not proved the end of quest. Limp and lame as unexplanation of "why" and "wither," it fails to explain "beginnings and ends."

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