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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23rd, 1889.

THE proceedings of the Presbytery of Guelph, as reported in the *Globe* of Friday last, must have proved very interesting reading to the Methodist preachers and others who rushed in to attack the Session of Knox Church, Galt, and champion the cause of the persons the Session suspended. Before this business is over, those impertinent meddlers may find heresy causes like poverty and politics, sometimes lead people into strange company. The *Guardian* pursued a dignified, neighbourly course. Brother Dewart does not love Calvinistic doctrine, but he takes no risks in the way of companionship, for the mere purpose of having a slap at Calvinism.

THE *Christian-at-Work* is surprised to learn that four Justices of the United States Supreme Court and one ex-President have given it as their opinion that the Constitution of the United States needs no amendment. The ex-President—Hayes—very naturally thinks it would be an amendment to lengthen the Presidential term, but he does not know of any other improvement needed. The *Christian-at-Work* wonders why these distinguished personages cannot see that the matter of divorce ought to be attended to. There are now forty-six different divorce laws, prescribing thirty different causes, and the divorce courts annul about twenty per cent. of the marriages. Our contemporary need not wonder that these distinguished personages see no need for a reform. When did any reform begin in the higher strata of society and work downwards? Reforms usually begin with the people and work upwards. Our neighbours will have one divorce law for all the States when public opinion forces their rulers to make one, and not a day sooner.

SO far as public opinion is concerned, an investigation unduly prolonged has little or no moral weight. The common sense of the average man tells him that what cannot be proved in a reasonable time cannot be proved at all. If the *London Times*, with half-a-dozen leading counsel and a small array of detectives, cannot connect Parnell with Irish outrages, either there was no connection or the connection cannot be shown. If half-a-dozen most energetic and able prosecutors, aided by a lawyer, cannot prove in ten days that a Methodist preacher takes too much whiskey, the chances are a million to one that he doesn't take any at all, or, at all events, very little. The importance attached to a "smell," which the witness said may have come from without; to an alleged boathouse "decoction," which may not have been liquor at all, and to a red face, which scores of witnesses will swear is always red in hot weather—the importance attached to these trifles will go a long way to convince fair men that there is no case. If it takes ten days or a fortnight to establish a "smell," the *terminus a quo* of which was doubtful, most people will conclude either that the legal machinery is wretchedly bad or there isn't any serious evidence.

IT is an interesting fact that, towards the end of his life, Darwin believed in and supported Foreign Missions. On one of his voyages he writes;

Tahiti is a most charming spot. Delicious scenery, climate, manner of the people, all in harmony. It is, moreover, admirable to behold what the missionaries, both here and in New Zealand have effected. I firmly believe they are good men, working for the sake of a good cause. I much suspect that those who have abused or sneered at the missionaries have generally been such as were not very anxious to find the natives moral and intelligent beings. They forget, or will not remember that human sacrifice and the power of an idolatrous priesthood; a system of profligacy unparalleled in any other part of the world; infanticide, a consequence of that system; bloody wars, where the conquerors spared neither women nor children—that all these things have been abolished, and that dishonesty, intemperance and licentiousness have been greatly reduced by the introduction of Christianity. In a voyager, to forget these things is a base ingratitude; for

should he chance to be at the point of shipwreck on some unknown coast, he will most devoutly pray that the lesson of the missionary may have extended thus far.

We should think he would. If the missionary has never been there, the natives may use the voyager for table purposes. If the lesson of the missionary has been learned, the voyager is safe. Darwin was not an eminent Christian, but he had more sense than some clergymen have—Canon Taylor for example.

A VERY clever Episcopal minister writing in one of our exchanges, illustrates what he considers the weak points in non-Episcopal churches in a painfully striking way. Diotrephes and Jezebel are raising a disturbance in Mr. Jones' church. The Presbytery or classis—classis is the Dutch reformed name for a Presbytery—talk the matter over at the spring meeting, say it is a "shame," "too bad," etc., but do nothing. When the fall meeting comes round the case has become worse and a committee is appointed to visit Mr. Jones' church, and deal with Diotrephes and Jezebel.

Then the august body appoints an august committee to go down to X—and settle the difficulty. But the august committee find that task an easier one to talk about than to do. When they reach X—, if it was a debt that had broken them down, they meet a people with the courage all oozed out of them; or if it was the social rock on which the church had split, there are Diotrephes and Jezebel in full swing and holding the ground, triumphant. "No thank you, no august committee of classis for us. We want none. Classis had better mind, etc., etc." And the august committee reports accordingly. But in the meantime "greivous wolves enter in, not sparing the flock, and among their own selves men arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them." So the church is deported, piece by piece, as in old times the conquering kings deported cities beam by beam and stone by stone to build up other cities. There had been oversight in this case. But it was put in the wrong place. Classis or Presbytery shakes out its skirts and says: "We did all we could, but they rejected our intervention." But the intervention was ill-timed and too late; as much so as the reserves of the great Emperor at Waterloo.

All this may be true and perhaps happens in some Presbytery every day, but *why* should Presbyterian oversight be in the wrong place, or Presbyterian intervention be ill-timed and too late. The fault is not in the system. If there is any fault it must be in the men who administer it. There is no reason why the oversight of a Presbytery might not be quite as efficient as the oversight of a bishop and much more so. It is sometimes urged that bishops are better qualified to exercise supervision than ordinary Presbyters; that they are highly educated gentlemen, with well cultivated judicial faculties and much experience in controlling themselves and others. Presbyters on the other hand, it is contended, are often young inexperienced men, or men totally devoid of judicial training or ability, and sometimes men who are strongly biassed by personal or local influences. Though all this should be true to a certain extent the Presbyterian system makes ample provision for the difficulty by the right of appeal. One move upward from the local court puts the matter in the hands of as fair and as able men as any bishop. There are few intelligent Episcopalians in Ontario who would not admit that Dr. Reid, Principal Caven, Dr. McLaren, or Dr. Gregg, are as capable of dealing with any difficult matter as any bishop Canada ever saw. It is easy to hold up the "august Presbytery" and the "august committee" to ridicule in their efforts to deal with Diotrephes and Jezebel. There is a stronger arm farther on, and when that arm makes itself felt Diotrephes and Jezebel not unfrequently go over to the Episcopal Church and are received without any certificate.

SABBATH-SCHOOL CONFERENCE.

A SERIES of meetings of great interest to Sabbath-school teachers and to all actively engaged in the religious training of the young, was held in the capacious lecture-room of Knox Church, Toronto, last week. That those engaged in Sabbath-school teaching are deeply interested in their work, and are desirous of making it as efficient as they can, is evinced by the large number of teachers present at the successive meetings of the Conference. It is true that the number of lady teachers largely predominated, especially at the day meetings, but that is easily understood. Many of the young men who do excellent work as Sabbath-school teachers are so occupied during the week that attendance at day meetings is not within their reach, and their evenings are so encroached upon that they have to forego many an interesting and profitable meeting which, had they more time at their disposal, they would be glad to attend. Many, both men and women, whose time is busily occupied, nevertheless, devote as much as they possibly can to the faithful and diligent preparation of the Sabbath-school lesson, because they are rightly convinced that, thorough, intelligent and prayerful preparation of the lesson is indispensable to efficient and profitable teaching.

The interesting conference, held last week, serves to mark the progress and improvement achieved in this most important part of practical Christian work. The aimless and slipshod methods of teaching, now almost things of the past, would break down almost any Sabbath school of the present day. The absence of order and system which rendered profitable instruction well-nigh impossible is also among the things that were. In our best Sabbath-schools the proceedings are marked by an orderliness and method that are productive of the very best results. Advanced Sabbath-school superintendents and teachers are working up to the realization of perfectly orderly and well-behaved schools, not by cast-iron rule and reducing all to mere mechanism, but by the free exercise of intelligence and right moral influence. Even the method of governing a Sabbath-school successfully is in itself a valuable educational influence.

Though here and there at rare intervals a mild objection may be uttered against the International series of lessons it is all but universally recognized as one of the best that can be adopted. It is non-sectarian, not designed to advance at the expense of others the interests of any one denomination, but constructed by several of the ablest and most distinctly representative men of all evangelical churches. It secures the uniform study of the Scriptures, while giving just prominence to the inspired teaching concerning the way of salvation. The wide adoption of this series is in itself a practical embodiment of the precious truth contained in the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the Communion of Saints." On all the continents of the globe, earnest Christians of every denomination are directing their studious inquiries to the same portion of Scripture, and on Sabbath millions of children are learning the same precious truths that are designed to save and bless mankind. May it not be that the large accession of missionary impulse in which the church is at present rejoicing is in some measure owing to the unity of effort throughout the world in Sabbath-school work. Yet larger and greater blessings may reasonably be anticipated from the use of the International series of Sunday-school lessons, when successive generations of scholars have taken their places in the activities of the church and of the world.

Conferences and conventions of Sabbath-school workers, like everything else, may have their defects, but on the whole they are eminently useful, and to younger teachers they oftentimes prove very valuable. Full and intelligent discussion of Sabbath-school methods cannot fail to be eminently helpful to all whose ideas are not rendered immovable by preconceived notions. Several valuable addresses were delivered at last week's conference by men of eminence in Christian scholarship and in practical experience in Sabbath-school teaching. Circumstances justify special reference to some distinguished strangers who attended the conference and rendered valuable service in connection with its proceedings. Dr. Dunning, of Boston, contributed not a little that was interesting and instructive to those who had the good fortune to hear his address, but the chief feature of interest was the presence of Mrs. W. F. Crafts, of New York, who has been endowed with rare natural aptitude for teaching which has been diligently and conscientiously cultivated, enabling her to secure and retain the interested attention of the youngest pupils. Many will profit by the numerous valuable hints thrown out in speech and experimenter.

CANON KNOX-LITTLE.

THE Rev. Canon Knox-Little has, after an interval of several years, paid another visit to this continent. The favourable impressions produced by his former mission have been revived and deepened by his return. Wherever he speaks, he is sure to attract a large number of sympathetic listeners. He is possessed of many valuable qualities that enable him to be an earnest preacher of righteousness. In his case, and in others, it has been clearly demonstrated that rampant sensationalism is not needed to attract multitudes to the preaching of the Gospel, and to attract the notice and arouse the interest of the careless and the indifferent. Many good men who think oddity of expression and outrageous statement, not only legitimate, but absolutely necessary to draw the multitude, by their own earnestness and the force of the Gospel truths they utter, produce favourable impressions on their hearers, in spite of the sensational and catch-penny devices to which they think it wise to resort. Direct believing, earnest speech on religious subjects, will in most, if not in all cases, command respectful attention. The monotony of merely conventional address is never rousing; it is soporific rather, but when a man is dominated by sincere religious conviction, he is usually able to speak from the heart to the heart.