

Our Contributors.

WHY SO MUCH TALK ABOUT PLUCKING UP THE PLANT?

BY KNOXIAN.

Canada in her present form is not twenty-three years old and yet there are three distinct plans suggested for a change of her political constitution. The smoke raised in '67 by the cannon that announced the birth of the Dominion had scarcely died away when some men who would like to be called wise began to mutter about some other mode of political existence.

The agitators for constitutional changes all start from the same point. They begin by laying down an alleged axiom, which they ask everybody to accept. Put into its most compressed form the axiom would be

WE CAN'T GO ON AS WE ARE.

If you asked one of the advocates of Independence or Imperial Federation why we cannot go on as we are he would probably smile upon you with a smile of mingled pity and contempt. Very likely he would say that your early education had been neglected. Perhaps he would express great regret that you had never attended a university in which your ideas might be enlarged into those of a chronic, patronising, pessimist. Possibly indeed he might kindly enquire what lunatic asylum you had escaped from. Many a time and oft, as the great dramatist would say, we have seen that axiom, "We cannot go on as we are," but when we read on and try to find a "why," we generally read in vain. Every speech on Independence or Imperial Federation begins with, "We cannot go on as we are," but the orator instead of showing us the obstacles that block the way usually switches off on his "fad" and tries to convince us that his remedy is the right one. It never occurs to him that it is unreasonable to ask a sane man to take dangerous medicines if he is not sick. Even Principal Grant usually begins his speeches on Imperial Federation by assuming, if not by formally laying down the axiom, "We cannot go on as we are," and when you get interested and feel like saying, "Why not, doctor?" he sails proudly away into the cloud-land of the Imperial scheme. If all the advocates of Imperial Federation and Independence were to give themselves up to incubation for six months they could not produce a reason why we cannot go on, that lively opposition editors did not use forty years ago to prove that Upper and Lower Canada were just going to destruction; and yet Montreal is the richest city of its size in the world, Toronto grows faster than any city in America, except perhaps Minneapolis, and Ontario farmers and dairymen can hold their own against an equal number of farmers and dairymen in any part of the world.

There never was a time when a few people in this country did not feel called upon to say that there was going to be a great crisis of some kind; but we are all here yet and most of us have plenty to eat and wear fairly good clothes. Somehow or other the people who behave themselves and work always get along and the crisis kindly postpones itself. We don't feel the least inclined to admit that "we cannot go on as we are" for a great many years to come. In fact the alleged axiom is no axiom at all. It is nothing more than one of those confident—we shall not say impertinent—assumptions that superior people often make when they kindly take a hand with the Almighty in the future government of the world.

Of the three changes suggested—Imperial Federation, Independence and Annexation—we may have something to say at another time. Meantime we ask our readers not to close their eyes and swallow the statement, "We cannot go on as we are," without asking any questions. No small part of the difficulties we have to contend against as a country, arise from the fact that too many of our people have far too much capacity for swallowing things. If a good many of them swallowed less whiskey and a good many more would stop swallowing every kind of nonsense they hear on the platform, and sometimes even in the pulpit, Canada would have no difficulty in getting on.

Does constant discussion about the future of our country do harm? It does most undoubtedly do a vast amount of harm. No doubt it does some good but the evil greatly predominates. In so far as the opinion of those who advocate constitutional changes means anything it is an acknowledgment that our Confederation has

HOPELESSLY BROKEN DOWN.

Does any one suppose that our shrewd neighbours to the south will not say, "Why, these Canadians are discussing constitutional changes already and their confederation is only twenty-two years old. They cannot govern themselves. They are not fit to be trusted with self-government. They can't run a government of their own. England does not care for people who cannot take care of themselves. John Bull never did care for men who have no pluck. Let us annex these Canadians and if they have no capacity for self-government perhaps they may balance the niggers on the other end of the continent." Who could blame the American people if they should talk in that way about a nation that has three proposals to change a constitution not twenty-three years old?

Too much discussion on such questions produces a feeling of

UNREST.

There is far too much unrest in the country now. There is far too much in some of the churches. One of the weakest

things in the Canadian character is an insane desire to do everything with a jump. People want to get rich in a year, to go through college in a session, to take short cuts into all the professions, to learn trades in a few months, to evangelize cities and towns in a few nights; and this feeling of unrest, which is alike dangerous to family, Church and State, is increased and intensified by constant declarations from platform and press that we cannot go on as we are, and to avoid a crisis must change our twenty-two year old constitution.

But the worst effect that agitation produces is the impression it makes on many minds that

GOVERNMENTS CAN DO MUCH TO HELP PEOPLE.

No more cruel fallacy was ever palmed off on an unsuspecting, illiterate man than that he may be made rich or kept poor mainly by Acts of parliament. This delusion has been the curse of Ireland for centuries and has sent many an honest Irishman to the prison or the gallows. Once convinced that the government can and should make men rich, almost any citizen becomes a rebel the moment he and his family become hungry. Who can blame a man for drawing his sword against a power that he thinks should give bread to his hungry children but refuses so to do. Canadians should be taught that integrity, perseverance, energy, pluck, industry and economy can win under any reasonably good form of government. Brave, manly men—such as Canadians ought to be—never wait to ask many questions about the form of government they are under. Any number of men have succeeded very well in countries in which there was almost no government at all. Everlasting discussion about the benefits of this, or that, or the other form, of political existence will soon lead a certain class of people to think that government can do everything for them.

REVISION OF THE CONFESSION.

MR. EDITOR,—As a revision of the Confession of Faith seems to occupy the attention of Presbyterians to quite an appreciable extent just now, would you kindly grant some space for the consideration of one of the chief articles therein, upon which there seems to be most desire for a new rendering, viz., the "Decrees of God."

Confession of Faith, chap. III. and section 3rd, "By the decree of God for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death." Proofs to this sec. as given in the Confession: "Those predestinated to everlasting life I Tim. v. 21, "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels, etc." Those to everlasting death, Matt. xxv. 41. "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

These passages prove, conclusively, that some men and angels were predestinated to a life of endless blessedness, and that likewise there were some men and angels (of which latter class of beings doubtless the devil was the chief) who had rebelled against the authority of Jehovah, in being disobedient to His high behests, and who therefor were driven from heavenly places to be consigned eternally to a place of woe, prepared expressly for the devil and his angels. And to which place of endless torment it hath also pleased the Almighty to assign unto wicked men their portion, at the final day of judgment and retribution for the deeds done in the body. And all such being foreknown to the Eternal by reason thereof, as He willed, they were foreordained thereunto.

But a careful study of our Saviour's declarations, as recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, from the beginning of the twenty-fourth unto the end of the twenty-fifth chapter, must make it quite apparent to any unbiassed reader, that there are conditions attached to the final judgment which make man responsible for the condemnation which may be passed upon any; and likewise conditional to the redeemed, in that they have accepted of the only means of reconciliation with Deity offended, yet which, albeit, hath nothing meritorious in it, on the creature's part, being entirely of God's sovereign grace freely offered unto all.

Again, further, as to others foreordained to everlasting death, the proofs following are given in the same section Romans ix. 22. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," vs. 23. "And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory." Eph. i. 5. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will," verse 6. "To the praise of the glory of His Grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Prov. xvi. 4. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."

The apostle had been showing forth in the previous verses of this chapter that they are not all Israel which are of Israel; that the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. As it was promised unto Sarah and again unto Rebecca, when Jacob was chosen and Esau rejected, that God's purpose was to bless only the seed which He foresaw would exercise the faith of Abraham and Isaac, and hence the proclamation before the birth of Jacob and Esau that the latter should serve the former; and against Esau the hand of the Lord was directed; and likewise, most emphatically, against his descendants, as found in various parts of the inspired records. In the seventeenth verse of this same chapter (Romans ix.) Paul

gives us a very good explanation of the twenty-second verse, when he said that Pharaoh was raised up that God "might show forth His power in him, and that his name might be declared throughout all the earth," and, as in the twenty-second verse, that "He had endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath," and, without doubt, on account of their wickedness, "fitted for destruction," and also "that he might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of His mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory" verse 24. Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. Because being called to believe upon the Messiah they had accepted the call, which had been prophesied by Hosea. "I will call them my people which were not my people and her beloved which was not beloved, and in the place where it was said, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God." And the apostle at the thirtieth verse enquires why it was that the Gentiles which had not followed after the righteousness of the law had attained to the righteousness which is of faith. And that Israel which followed after the law of righteousness had not attained to the law of righteousness. And at the thirty-second verse he assigns the reason thus, "Because Israel sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed."

Undoubted testimony this, proclaimed by Paul that the Almighty, out of His good pleasure, allowed to the creature, man, the freedom of will to accept or reject His appointed way of reconciliation unto His favour, and, thereby their consequent fore-ordination to everlasting happiness or endless woe.

Returning to the Confession, chapter III. section 4, we find it laid down that "these men and angels thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished. Proofs of the foregoing section, II. Tim. ii. 19, "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are His. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." John xii. 18, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen, but that the Scripture may be fulfilled: He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." These affirmations and proofs in sec. 4 harmonize, and certainly they must be acceptable to all who believe Jehovah to be an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent Being.

Confession, chapter III. section 5, "Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto, and all to the praise of His glorious grace." Proofs given for the foregoing asseverations in section 5, are the subjoined: Eph. i. 4, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Verse 9, "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself." Verse 11, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." Rom. viii. 30, "Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called them He also justified; and whom he justified them He also glorified." II Timothy i. 9, "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." I Thess. v. 9 "For God hath not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

No one sound in the Christian faith but must agree with the compilers of the Confession when they assert that God out of His mere free grace and love hath chosen some in Christ to everlasting glory. For all must acknowledge that it was entirely of free grace and love that a ransom or scheme of redemption was planned in the counsels of eternity, wherein the second person of the Trinity should, in the fulness of time, empty Himself of glory and become "God manifest in the flesh," Jesus, the Saviour of His people. But as the inspired Word repeatedly proclaimed unto mankind that our Heavenly Father willeth not the death of the sinner, yea, rather, that he would turn unto Him and live. Which is very clearly shown by the prophet Ezekiel, as in the thirty-third chapter from the eleventh verse, "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel." Verse 12, "Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression. As for the wickedness of the wicked he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness, neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth." Verse 13, "When I shall say to the righteous that he shall surely live, if he shall trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered, but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it." Verse 14, "Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, if he turn from his sin and do that which is lawful and