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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16th, 1892.

A GOVERNMENT has no right to tax the whole body of the people for the benefit of a few private individuals. At least that was the opinion given at the polls last week by the people of the United States.

IT pays in the end to have principles even in politics and to stick to them. Four years ago Grover Cleveland annoyed some of his friends and strengthened the ranks of his opponents by manfully laying before the people his policy of tariff reform. He went under in 1888 because he dared to say what he thought was right. The revolution of last week seems to say that even in politics honesty is the best policy—in the end.

THE Inter-Collegiate Missionary Alliance held its annual conference in Woodstock last week. The various colleges were well represented, Knox College, Queen's University and the Presbyterian College, Montreal, sent a number of delegates. The other denominational colleges each sent a worthy contingent. The proceedings show how the missionary spirit has begun to pervade college life, and how deep an interest is felt in the work of the world's evangelization. It may be expected that many of the young men who take an active part in college missionary organizations will in due time devote their talents and energies to the work of the Gospel in heathen lands.

THANKSGIVING DAY was the bluest seen in Ontario for many a year. It was a "raw and gusty day" and there were two or three inches of snow on the ground. Congregations were of course thin, and we fear the collections were thin, too. It is to be hoped that the large number of people who were afraid to venture out gave thanks at home. If the gratitude of the nation is to be estimated by the number of people in some of the churches, a day of humiliation would be a more suitable thing than a day of thanksgiving. In every town and on every concession in the country people may be found complaining about dull trade, low prices and ills of various kinds, real or imaginary. If people will not go out one day in a year to thank God for His mercies what do they deserve?

THE trial by jury of the ex-Premier of Quebec was one of those blunders that a celebrated Frenchman declared to be worse than a crime. Mercier was deposed by the Lieutenant Governor, tried by a Commission, tried again by the people, and condemned at the polls. His property was then sold out and he was politically as dead as Julius Cæsar. His opponents insisted on indicting him for a criminal offence, in order that he might be imprisoned. They outraged the feelings of every lover of British fair-play at the start, by showing a desire to keep the charges hanging over the head of the accused. The trial was forced on and he was acquitted, as everybody who understands human nature knew he would be. If one of those revolutions in public opinion, so common in old France and quite possible in Quebec, should make him Premier again his opponents will have the grim satisfaction of knowing that they took him from under the lowest rung of the political ladder and gave him a fresh start upwards.

WHAT mean these union thanksgiving services, and platform meetings and thanksgiving concerts, and various other substitutes for the old-fashioned thanksgiving sermon, that we see reported in so many journals? Do they mean that the pastors are so busy that they cannot find time to prepare a thanksgiving sermon? Or do they mean that the people refuse to attend their own churches in numbers large enough to make it worth while to prepare a sermon for them? Are the people, even the Presbyterian people, tired of preaching, so tired that they prefer two or three semi-political addresses? Or have they become so ungrateful that they will not go to church and thank God for His mercies? What do these substitutes for preaching mean anyway? We very much fear they mean ingratitude on the part of the people and decreasing influence on the part of the Ontario pulpit. They are not good signs. A union meeting is often a flag of distress.

THE *Interior* compares the Presidential campaign just closed with the contest of the good old times:—

> The political campaign which has just closed will be as remarkable in history for its quietness as that of 1840 was for its noise. There has been no excitement, but a great vote. The country will probably never again see the campaign scenes of the past. In 1840 we had log-cabins and cider; in '44 barbecues; in '48 military bands and banners; in '52 the same; in '56 a fiery campaign, the preliminary skirmish of the civil war, the people filled with passion; in '60 still deeper feeling, but not so demonstrative as it was four years before, because the impending conflict was foreseen; in '64 it was all one way, also in '68 and '72; in '76 the old political ardour came on again, which was reproduced in '80, '84 and '88, but at each election with diminishing heat. And now in '92 we have a quiet thoughtful vote, and this we may expect for the future, until some impending question, like the labour question, come to a sharp issue.

Our neighbours seem to have entered upon an era of common sense in political matters. Why civilized men should act as lunatics or knaves when they elect their rulers is not a question easily answered. Perhaps the best of men are civilized only in spots.

IN the Province of Quebec, the liberty of the press is liable at times to summary suspension. Ecclesiastical authority steps in whenever, according to its opinion, criticism has been freely directed against frightful abuses which cannot be concealed. The recent flagrant case in which a priest was involved led to vigorous denunciation of existing immorality and, what struck home, the dangers of the confessional. The bishops tried by comparatively mild methods to silence press utterances on these subjects, but scathing criticism was continued. This was too much. The Archbishop of Montreal has issued a pastoral which was read in the Montreal churches last Sabbath in which the worst offenders, the *Canada Revue*, and the *Echo des Deux Montagnes* are placed under the ban, and diverse spiritual penalties denounced on all who in any way give countenance or support to the offending publications. This summary mode of answering opponents is less troublesome than refuting them by argument. Even archi-Episcopal authority may be carried too far, and the pent up deluge may break forth with still greater violence.

THE next General Assembly should take decided action in regard to Thanksgiving Day. If the day is to be one for sport, for military reviews, sham battles, football matches and the like, the Supreme Court should instruct our ministers and people to stop mocking the Almighty by calling it a day of national thanksgiving. It is quite true that Thanksgiving Day is not the Sabbath, but if the name means anything it means a day on which the people should give thanks to God for His mercies. If the day appointed by the Government is to be merely a day for sport, the Assembly should memorialize the Government to change the name or stop making any appointment whatever. Theoretically the present arrangement is good; practically it is becoming a mockery. If matters go on as they are, what is called Thanksgiving Day will soon be nothing more than a day of amusement—a day for sport with heavy betting and equally heavy drinking. Surely this nation has sins enough to account for without officially mocking God by calling a day of that kind a Thanksgiving Day. The General Assembly has often spent a good deal of time on matters of far less importance than national thanksgiving.

IT seems difficult for some of our Presbyteries to realize that the conditions in regard to population have been reversed in Ontario. Heretofore, especially in the western part of the Province, the Church has worked in an increasing population and that kind of work is always easy and agreeable. Now the tide has turned and we have to work in many places with a stationary population and in many others with a population steadily though perhaps slowly decreasing. The wisdom of the Church will be shown by an immediate adjustment of our work to the new conditions. But that is exactly what does not always take place. The civilized world knows how prone Presbyterians are to do everything "as it was done before." A few years ago many of our western Presbyteries might open a mission station or erect a congregation as often as they were asked so to do. No small part of their work was to grant new organizations. It is painfully clear now that some of them organized too much. The country was new and it was not always easy to know what place would grow and what dwindle. Besides this ever-present uncertainty railroads have made havoc of some places and have built up others. There need be no difficulty now in knowing exactly what the policy of the Church should be in the older parts of the country. No new organization should be granted until it is made reasonably clear that there are people there to organize and that the people are likely to remain. If Presbyteries will persist in opening unnecessary stations and establishing unnecessary congregations the Home Mission and Augmentation Committees should refuse aid. If people will persist in calling for the opening of unnecessary stations and congregations call for church extension let them pay for their theory with their own money. The true policy is to "double up" in the old parts of the country where the population is declining and extend in the new where the population is increasing. We must do that or die.

THE religious papers across the line are dealing vigorously with the odious crime of buying and selling votes in political contests. The *Christian at Work* says:—

> The statements are made in the daily press and not denied, that large sums have been sent into different States, not for the purpose of procuring speakers—the money was not sent till last week, just as the campaign was closing—but for the purpose of bribing voters. Of such bribery there seems to be not the slightest doubt whatever. It was hoped by many that with the adoption of the secret ballot by forty of the forty-four States, bribery would measurably cease; but it seems that the politicians are willing to take their chances on securing the votes which they assume to buy; while the other alternative still remains,—that of bribing political opponents not to vote at all. Such a vote counts one, against two when the voter casts a purchased ballot,—but abstinence in voting seems to have its value in the market. Both forms of bribery, however, prevail all through the country, and are practised by both the great political parties. It is a crying shame that this abuse should exist, evidenced in the fact that bundles of currency of the denomination of one and two dollars have been shipped all over the country till there is a dearth of small bills here. Of course this means bribery at the polls; speakers are not paid in these small bills. It is clear we must have a recasting of our statutes bearing upon the franchise, before the purity of the ballot box can be assured.

"Recasting" the statutes is no remedy. In Canada the statutes have been cast and recast and cast again and bribery in one form or another still exists. The only effectual remedy is to recast the people. Just how that can be done is the problem. The only power we know that can recast them is the Gospel and unfortunately venal voters are not much under the influence of the Gospel and do not wish to be. Our contemporary adds:—

> This use of money is the great crying evil that threatens us at the present time; and it is only the simple truth to say that no nation, least of all a republic, can maintain itself with a purchasable franchise. The announcements of the use of money for vote-purchasing have scarcely aroused any expostulation.

Responsible government has ceased to exist in any nation in which a large proportion of the voters are venal and the nation itself must soon rot out of existence. In the last analysis the stability of any