

ministers of that Assembly were personally total abstainers, as a mere matter of course, and the great majority of even the most out-and-out type of Prohibitionists. This may not be actually the fact, but it is what naturally strikes a stranger coming among them, and marking the way in which they discuss the whole question of temperance as one of the most important of the hour. The orthodoxy of the Assembly is also very unmistakable. The members are all Calvinists of the most pronounced type, and are neither ashamed nor afraid to avow that fact, and manfully to defend their position against all comers. We should, indeed, be inclined to suppose that there were no "advanced thinkers" among them at all, or if there were that they took remarkably good care to say nothing about that fact. Nor is their adherence to the Confession of Faith a something merely received from the fathers to observe. They have evidently thought out the whole matter for themselves, and the old wine seems to agree remarkably well with the new vessels into which it has been put. It is curious, let us add in conclusion, to notice how comparatively few are present during the devotional exercises at the morning sederunts. This was quite as marked a feature at Buffalo as with ourselves, and it is one for which it is not possible either to say a good word or to find a passable excuse. It is very likely also that there is a good deal of smoking going on during the day. If so, it is strictly private. The public is not ostentatiously asked to "assist," as it too often is at a good many similar meetings in Canada.

THE DISASTER AT LONDON.

EVERYONE is already familiar with all the details of the shocking accident which took place at our Canadian London on the Queen's birthday. We do not require to add a single word of narrative, or to supply a single incident to the already very complete and saddening record. With all safety it may be said that such a disaster has never occurred in the history either of our Province or Dominion. Indeed, we question if a parallel could be found to it in all the record of past accidents on our continent, sad and overwhelming as many of these have, no doubt, been. For so small a community the number of victims was distressingly great, and they were almost all near neighbours—in many cases intimate friends and relatives. So far this gave to the occurrence an element of sadness which that of even the "Princess Alice" did not possess. The unlikeliness also of such a disaster in a supposedly shallow stream, which could scarcely be dignified with the name of a river, made the whole thing still more distressing, while the number of women and children so suddenly and so unexpectedly cut off imparted a character and tenderness to the disaster peculiarly its own. On very few occasions has there been more heartfelt and more widely extended sorrow, or has there been shed so many and such genuinely sympathetic tears. The heart of the people has been moved like that of one man, and in their great sorrow the bereaved ones have had a whole community for fellow-mourners as if each had suffered a personal loss, and as if in each home there had been found a vacant chair.

It will not be well, however, if such a calamity shall pass with mere expressions of sorrow and mere sympathy, however genuine, with the bereaved. Everyone is convinced that there were in this case a culpable fool-hardiness and neglect of all ordinarily prudent measures which could be characterized as nothing short of criminal. It will be more difficult, however, to say who were the great offenders. The easiest way, no doubt, is to fix upon the owners and officers of the boat, and to let the full tide of popular indignation fall upon their devoted heads. But could this be quite fair and quite reasonable? That these persons are more or less to blame is, no doubt, past all reasonable question. How far they are so will, no doubt, be settled in due time, both as a matter of law and of morals. But it would not be right to be satisfied with the mere condemnation and punishment of the responsible parties connected with the "Victoria." Let us be just even in this time of very natural excitement and indignation, and so far let us all take guilt to ourselves as being more or less to blame for this most deplorable accident. The boat may have been a poor, ill-put-together thing—a mere paste-board tub, and rotten at that—for ought we know. The outcry against it may be all only too well founded. The owners may have been bound in their

own minds to make the largest amount of money at the smallest amount of outlay, and may have had little regard for either the comfort or safety of their patrons so long as they could put money in their own purse with anything like personal immunity. The captain may have been as reckless and as criminal as he is represented, and all the hard things said both publicly and privately about all concerned may be so far well founded; but there is a necessity for going farther back than all that. We are all so far to blame in not having long ago applied an effectual remedy to what has been quite well known to be a crying and most unquestionable evil. The rage for cheapness is not by any means confined to steamboat owners. The eager desire to make money as rapidly and as easily as possible, without much regard for either the comfort or advantage of others, is too widely spread to be spoken of as the special sin of particular individuals or classes, while the precautions taken for the safety of the public have in too many cases degenerated so much into mere red-tape formalities that it is not in the least surprising they should have come to be treated with contempt when they have been so often violated with impunity. We have laws about steamboat inspection, but what do they amount to? This very boat which has come to have so much notoriety and that of so disagreeable a character, was duly "inspected" according to law, and "certified" as all ship-shape and reliable—engines good, hull substantial, lifeboats all right, and everything such that Her Majesty's lieges might travel thereby with all comfort and safety. What has been the result? Why, that the whole thing went like a castle of cards, and has been freely spoken of as "a floating coffin" and "murder trap"—with the engine insecurely fastened, timbers rotten, deck supports unbraced, and these so unsubstantial that at the very first strain they went like pipe stems! Who is responsible for all that? We shall not say who is formally and legally so, but the community as such, and their representatives and officials, cannot altogether wash their hands in innocence and say that they are free. What guarantee has the public that this is a solitary case, and that there are no other "murder traps" afloat in Canadian waters?

Then, as to the overcrowding, what is to be said? Is that a thing so rare all round our coasts that Captain Rankin may be justly held up as a singular and solitary monster of iniquity and heartlessness because he allowed so many on his wretched little craft and did not manage to carry his large living freight in safety to its destination? Everyone knows the reverse. We don't pretend to any acquaintance with the particulars, but we have a shrewd suspicion that it was neither for the first nor the second time that such a large company clustered on the decks of the "Victoria," and that because all was well that ended well nothing was said about the danger and not a voice was raised against this overcrowding. Nay, we are pretty sure that had the last disastrous voyage ended prosperously nothing would have been said on the subject, and the fears of the so-called timid and the wet feet of the cheaply, because ignorantly brave, would have been matters for subsequent jest and self-satisfied merry-making. And have the Londoners been the only ones who, by their silent, unprotesting use and wont and *laissez faire*, have so far condoned all this overcrowding with its miserable possibilities, and its actual and uncalled-for discomforts? No at all. We are all in this matter verily guilty, and ought all in penitential sorrow to see that an effective remedy should be applied to an evil long known as universally prevalent and in no common measure both dangerous and disgraceful. Indeed, in the case of the London boats there was more excuse for such a state of things than in many others. The river was shallow; the banks were near. For the vessels to ground was fun; for them to be wrecked was thought impossible. What about other places in very different circumstance, nay, and on that very day too? What has been the state of things in Toronto, and Hamilton, and Collingwood—indeed all round our coasts for years upon years? Just as disgraceful as it possibly could be and just as notorious. Any day for years past might have witnessed just such a catastrophe as this London horror. Everyone knows plenty of people who have drawn a sigh of relief every time they got ashore, and have yet with a nervous laugh ventured again. Individual protests and warnings have been raised, but they have been like voices crying in the wilderness, and the thing has gone on,

condoned by public indifference and intensified by continued in unity and personal cupidity, till we see what we see. For years past a good many have been saying that nothing but a terrible catastrophe would effectually cure such a state of things. The catastrophe has come. It is to be seen whether the cure will follow. In the meantime let us be just, and not lay the whole blame upon individuals when all have been so indifferent as to be practically responsible.

And what shall we say about the conduct on too many of these pleasure boats? Simply this, that while on many it may be all that could be desired it is only too frequently in the last degree disgraceful. Drunken ruffians are allowed to come as passengers to destroy all comfort and to add very considerably to the danger. Liquors which with bitter irony are called "refreshments" are sold on board, or so easily procured that long before the return trip takes place there are scenes witnessed and return passengers permitted that make reasonably decent persons turn away with righteous indignation and unconcealed disgust. We don't say that this was the case in the slightest degree last week in London. Very likely it was all the reverse. That it was so in other places on that very day we are quite sure of, and that it has been so on every public holiday for years past nobody in any reasonable manner acquainted with the facts of the case would ever think of denying. It may have been that lager and light wines (which we are assured on good authority are rather promotive of sobriety than otherwise!) were the only liquids in requisition, but the drunkenness and disarray were patent all the same.

We have no wish to specify particular places or particular boats, though we could easily do both. What we wish to do is to call attention to a great and growing evil which if not effectually put down may issue in disasters far more formidable than even that over which the whole country is at present in mourning, and for the existence and continuance of which individuals ought not to be held either chiefly or exclusively responsible. Law can do something, can do much, in the application of an effectual remedy; but a healthy, enlightened and active public opinion can do far more, and with that both the law and its enforcement must eventually rest. We think Canadians generally will insist upon a reasonable amount of safety being guaranteed to them in their summer pleasure-seeking, and the quiet, respectable portion will more and more see to it that they are undisturbed by the rowdy element in all its phases, or they will "leave severely alone" both the places and pleasure boats that tolerate such an element even in the most microscopic quantities.

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES.

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY for June. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.)—This completes the 47th volume of a popular and prosperous periodical. Among other articles is one on "Who lost Waterloo?" The answer given is in accordance with what was always said by Napoleon himself, viz., "Grouchy."

S. S. LESSON HELPS.—Among the most serviceable aids in the preparation of the International Lessons, Sabbath school teachers will find "The Westminster Teacher" (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication), and "The National Sunday School Teacher" (Chicago: Adams, Blackmer & Lyon Publishing Company).

THE numbers of "The Living Age," dated May 21st and May 28th, contain articles on "The Rise of the Huguenots;" "Poets in Active Life;" "The Father of Penny Postage;" "The Boers at Home;" "The Morality of the Profession of Letters;" "Val-lombrosa;" "The Youth of Henry V.;" "William Blake;" "A Night on Mount Wash.ington," by Prof. W. G. Blaikie;" "Dr. Southey and Thomas Carlyle," and "Unpublished Letters of Dr. Johnson;" "Catching Cold;" with instalments of "Visited on the Children;" "The Freres;" "Round Delia's Basket;" the conclusion of "The Beautiful Miss Roche;" and the usual amount of poetry. For fifty-two numbers of sixty-four large pages each (or more than 3,300 pages a year), the subscription price (\$8) is low; while for \$10.50 the publishers offer to send any one of the American \$4 monthlies or weeklies with "The Living Age" for a year, both postpaid. Littell & Co., Boston, are the publishers.