

The Canadian Independent

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TORONTO, OCT. 13 1881.

We again make our request for PROMPT REMITTANCES. Money is needed to pay printer. LOOK AT YOUR LABELS. Will those friends who have so kindly acted for us in the various churches in the past perform the same favour now.

BIRMINGHAM NOTES.

Being in Birmingham Sunday morning, I found my way to Carr's Lane Chapel, so long ministered in by the late John Angell James. The building stands in amid the shops and warehouses of the lane, the exterior off the street being plain brick with no attempt at ornament or design. A new front, enlarging the old structure, has been recently added; yet even with it one might easily distinguish it as an old dissenter's chapel. The inside, however, has been frescoed and painted, there is a fine organ behind the pulpit, which is somewhat spacious but pulpit-formed, with miniature Corinthian columns around. The gallery is deep; the ceiling, which is square, panelled off; and were it not for the old deep, straight up pews and doors, the interior is fairly modern.

THE chapel was filled, not crowded, which means that as its seating capacity is about 1800, some 1200 were present. The audience was not a fashionable one, somewhat less dressed than one of our general city audiences would have been, the preacher himself, R. W. Dale, D. D., did not set a fashionable example. A black necktie and ordinary morning coat, the ecclesiastic far away. I should judge Dr. Dale would contemptuously sit upon an ecclesiastical exquisite. There was nothing specially characteristic in the face of the congregation, which was chiefly made up of life's youth and prime, the singing was fair, in staccato style, and varied with expression, wanting the massiveness of thorough congregational singing as well as the ornateness of professionals; behaviour thoroughly decorous, though the sermon evidently was over the heads of the majority there. Dr. Dale would repudiate the idea of coming to worship merely on a holy place, and yet it is questionable whether the numerical majority who were present that morning came under any other sense than that of spending an hour in God's house; nevertheless, youth and age must indirectly be immensely benefitted by

sitting continuously under the thoughtful and vigorous ministry of the present pastor of Carr's Lane Chapel. We missed, however, in the congregation assembled, the strongly marked, middle-class, intelligent look which we have elsewhere associated with many of our leading Independent churches.

DR. DALE is a man of average height, strongly built, unshaven, wearing hair and beard short but abundant; dark, with features strongly marked, a voice set somewhat in the tenor key, decided, strong. You see in him a thoroughly practical, independent Englishman, from whom you would expect all cant to be as far removed as profanity. The service was simple, the style of the sermon terse, chaste, thoughtful, read closely yet deliberately, naturally, forcibly. The text, Eph. i. 11-14, treated topically rather than textually. The subject, the present, indwelling Spirit, a truth not yet, according to the preacher, practically realized by the Church of Christ, which only slowly is reaching on to perfection. God's purpose is to sum up all things, absolutely all things, in Christ, in whom alone is permanence, and from whom all that is cut off perishes. The perversity of moral beings is ever thwarting the purpose of God, who, however, true to His purpose, ever works on to this one end, for which the gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed, which gift, as an abiding life, the Church is slow to recognize. The sermon would impress by its intellectual grasp, not by deep sympathy knocking at the inner shrine of the heart. Dr. Dale is a thorough dogmatist of a broadening school, and Birmingham in his general English sympathies. The power of Carr's Lane Chapel we should judge lies largely in its pulpit and platform, as filled by Mr. Dale.

IN the evening we strayed to Francis Road and found Edgbaston Congregational Chapel under the pastorate of Mr. Clarkson. This chapel was built near the house of John Angell James in commemoration of the jubilee of his ministry. It is in the perpendicular style, with spire and transepts in which are the galleries. The pews are still straight up and enclosed with doors, though not as high as Carr's lane. The attendance was about five hundred, supposing the church capacity to be eight hundred, and the services thoroughly evangelical in the ordinary sense of that term. Certainly more of the theology and tone of John Angell James survives in the younger and earnest ministry of Mr. Clarkson than under the massive intellect of R. W. Dale. Not that the pastor of Francis Road Chapel is behind the times, or staidly orthodox, but we can imagine John Angell James, as circumstances changed, preaching as Mr. Clarkson preached; we cannot possibly imagine a Mr. Dale evolved therefrom. We left Carr's Lane thinking; we left the chapel on Francis Road with a feeling of Sabbath evening peace.

THE text was John vi. 45, divided in old-fashioned form though the preacher is one of the younger men. I., the teacher; II., the taught; III., the result, "coming unto Jesus,"

which result was summed up in coming as we are to Jesus as He is, and abiding there.

OUR SUNDAY-SCHOOLS—II.

Teaching.—We know that in discussing this we are touching a delicate point. There are thousands of teachers whose hearts are in the work, but who have never had the education or training to fit them for it. Shall these, it may be asked, be excluded from the work? We would say no, most certainly not; all honour to them for their labours, so often productive of blessed results. But may it not be suggested that for their own sakes as well as for the sake of the scholars they gather around them, they should endeavour to lessen these defects as much as possible—they should study, and study hard, not only on the line of their lessons, but in general literature and learning—Biblical especially, that they at any rate be abreast of their scholars. We have heard scholars laughing together at a blunder of their teacher in some matter of common, everyday knowledge. We visited a school on one occasion where a teacher whose voice was heard above the others, and who attracted our attention at once, was slaughtering the Queen's English in a wholesale fashion. It was an offence, as we soon discovered, to more than one class, but nothing could be done. The teacher was a really excellent church member.

This is not, however, the worst class of teachers found in some of our schools; there are the indolent, lazy, heartless teachers; men and women, with so little of even the appearance of interest, that you wonder what on earth possessed them to attempt to teach. It is hard, very hard to say. Listen, if you have the opportunity, to the way one of this class of teachers handle the lesson. Notice how soon the few ideas they have on the subject are pumped out, how utterly dry and helpless they become, and you will pity teacher and class alike. Likely enough the conversation will drift into some outside subject, or a tale is read from some book conveniently carried for such purpose, and a sigh of relief is given when the signal for closing is made.

The spread of Normal School training for teachers of Sunday-schools is one of the excellent features of to-day; our only fear is that, like many other good things, it will be spoiled by being over-loaded. The work has been very much in the hands of men who are professional teachers, and the tendency on their part is to overlook the simplicity and narrowness (in a literary sense) of S. S. teaching and make the programme one that deters those who have but little foundation of knowledge and still less time to give to study. Every Sunday-school, when it is at all practicable, should have a teachers' study meeting, and all the teachers should endeavour to be present. Some may not, do not, need it as others, but their presence will help, and their knowledge will contribute to the value of the meeting. It is not just to the leader to leave it in his hands entirely, neither for his own sake, or for the sake of the teachers.

This is a matter that should engage the earnest attention of pastors, who should seek to direct the most suit-

able of their people into the work, and should themselves give all the aid they can privately and in public services; such a pastor is a help indeed.

To sum up under this head; if our teaching is to be effective, (of course we are speaking from the human standpoint), we must have teachers whose heads are full of knowledge, and hearts full of love, and who have the wisdom to impart what they know. Just in proportion as we fall below this standard just in proportion we shall have weakness and want of success.

Support.—On this we need say but a few words. We remember on one occasion asking a superintendent how his school was supported. "It is not supported at all," was the reply. We fear that too many schools are like the unowned dogs and cats that are found so plentifully in some places—they have to forage for a living—a stray subscription now, a meeting then, a concert or a tea-meeting, or by great favour a Sunday's collection once a year, or worst of all an appropriation of the money subscribed by the children for missionary purposes. This is how they live. Let it be said briefly and finally, that the school should be supported just as the Church and its services, that it is entitled to a share in the moneys raised for Church purposes, it is in the fullest degree Church work, and should be recognized and supported as such.

The subject is far from exhausted, and we shall return to it the first opportunity.

WE are as yet without any details as to the Jubilee meetings of the Congregational Union of England and Wales which closed its meetings on Friday last. We shall hope in our next to give some particulars, necessarily brief, of what will probably prove the most important series of meetings held by the Congregational body. The *Nonconformist* proposes to devote three issues, each greatly enlarged, to the proceedings of the Union. When will the spirit of our people in Canada enable the INDEPENDENT to enlarge its space as occasion demands?

LATER.—The Cable, under date of October 4th, tells us that the Union Meetings had commenced in Manchester, and that the attendance was sixteen hundred, a noble gathering, which must tax the hospitality of Manchester to its utmost. May the results be in proportion to the interest manifested by the gathering.

WE would call attention to the very interesting sketches sent from the other side of the Atlantic by our associate editor. Last week we published "Liverpool Notes;" in this issue we give his jottings on Chester, Birmingham and London. Those who are familiar with these places will enjoy the recalling of old associations, while to those who are not familiar, these chatty notes will tell some things not otherwise to be gleaned. Chester and London crowded out; will appear next week.

WE thank those friends who have replied to our invitation for advice as to the future of the INDEPENDENT. Each of the three forms—weekly, fortnightly and monthly, has its advocates. We shall refer again to the matter in a week or two, in the meantime we would ask others to give us their views.