

certainly lead to failure. The liquor men are not likely to have much to give them if the plebiscite succeeds, and to court their support would not be calculated to increase the liberality of the many friends of prohibitory legislation.

#### THE DESTRUCTION OF CALVINISM.

THE Rev. S. G. Bland is one of the ablest and most thoughtful of the younger Methodist ministers in Canada to-day. At the meeting of the Montreal Conference last week he gave a carefully prepared address on the changes now proceeding in religious thought and life. In the course of this he is reported as saying:

"Probably of all changes in the religious thought and life of to-day the most pregnant was found in our changed conception of God. The democratic spirit of the nineteenth century had co-operated with Methodism in the destruction of the Calvinistic idea of sovereignty and the substitution of the idea of fatherhood, for the genius of democracy was friendliness. It was inevitable that the rights of man should be asserted as well as the sovereignty of God. A God above ethical criticism had to disappear as well as a king who ruled by divine right."

We have no wish to be hypercritical in matters of this sort, and perhaps at bottom we are substantially at one with the speaker, but we cannot help thinking the above mode of stating his position most unfortunate and an unhappy survival of the systematic misrepresentation of Calvinism once so common among the more ignorant Methodist preachers. There seem to be several presuppositions involved, against which we are bound to protest.

It is implied, for example, that the Calvinistic idea of God's sovereignty is fundamentally opposed to the democratic spirit and that it was bound to disappear with the triumph of democracy along with the old idea of the divine right of kings. But surely Mr. Bland must have read history to little purpose if he does not know that the cause of freedom and the progress of true democratic ideas owe more to the adherents of Calvinism than to all others combined. It was the idea of the sovereignty of God that gave the death-blow to the fiction of the divine right of kings. Its defenders were Arminians almost to a man. The modern Methodists have but entered into the heritage of liberty won for them by the Scottish Covenanters and the Calvinistic Puritans of England. Even the Methodist Church was and continued to be a despotic body until it adopted Presbyterian methods of government learned from their more democratic Calvinistic contemporaries.

Then it is implied that the idea of God's sovereignty is somehow antagonistic to the idea of the divine fatherhood, and that Methodism deserves credit for bringing this last idea to the front. Well, if they have helped we are glad of it, but we venture to say that in the past the preaching of "hell fire" as a means of frightening men into the Kingdom of Heaven has been more characteristic of the Methodist ministry than of any other. When a Calvinist emphasized that aspect he was at once noted as exceptional. Jonathan Edward's sermon on "The Sinner in the hands of an Angry God" is remarked to this day. Calvinistic Scotland had its "hell fire Johnnies" but they were few and far between. Spurgeon in his younger days was nicknamed "brimstone," though in all his maturer years he dwelt upon the grace of God rather than on the terrors of the law. No Methodist ever won such an unenviable distinction, simply because they were practically all of that class.

Further, it is implied that the Calvinistic idea of God was that of a Being above ethical criticism. If that means that Calvinists believed there was no ground for such criticism but, that the Judge of all the earth would do right, then we agree with him. But, if it means that He was supposed to be indifferent to ethical considerations, then we repudiate it with all earnestness. Calvinists always made much of the Old Testament and one of the great features of its teaching has always been recognized, to be absolute righteousness and holiness of God.

Finally, it is implied here that Calvinism is dead or nearly so. We agree that the Calvinism of Methodist caricature is dead, for it never lived. But we venture to predict that the Calvinism of history will live for many a long day to confound the heralds of its approaching dissolution. There never were so many Calvinists in the world as to-day and the Shorter Catechism was never before studied by so many as now. It is making conquests too in quarters little suspected. Under the new names of evolution and heredity, modern science pays its homage. We have even met not a few Methodist ministers who were as Calvinistic as one would wish to see without knowing it. Conceal from them the old familiar battle cries and most of them welcome its teaching as the very truth of the Gospel.

#### LIFE AND WORK.

THE report which will be read with most attention by those interested in the spiritual health of the church is that on life and work. It covers many pages and deals with many important topics, such as the regular work of the ministry, religion in the home, church services, systematic giving, temperance, the Plebiscite, and Sabbath observance. The report contains statements which are cheering and encouraging on the one hand, and on the other "things fitted to fill the Christian heart with feelings of deepest grief. Among those latter are the decreasing number of homes in which the family altar is honoured. Family worship is declining, not growing in favour among the church members and in many cases even where family prayers are said, the exercise is a mere formality. This condition is very justly deplored, and demands the serious attention of the Church. The home life is the corner stone of the fabric of church work, and weak here the superstructure will prove faulty. Here also is to be found the explanation of another complaint in the report, namely: that so large a proportion of our young men make no profession of faith in Christ and decline to give Him any pledges of their love and service." The young people are influenced by home ties and example more than by any thing else in religious matters. When, therefore, example is wanting in the home, and no mark of vital religion is there the young men and women do not come forward as professing Christians.

The bright side, however, is not wanting in color. Against the back-ground are many pleasant pictures. The Gospel is preached in its purity and power, genuine followers of the Lamb are neither few, nor faithless, the eldership, the Sabbath school, the various agencies are manned by fearless witnesses for the Lord and Master, and the good seed is bearing golden fruit in many hearts. It is the old story. Side by side in the church are the representatives of the wheat and the tares, of the empty professor and the real disciple. How to so labor as to rescue the former and nurture the latter is the problem of the Church and the influence of the home, and of the public example of the real Christians cannot be over-estimated as means to the desired end.