

to find a way out of a crisis which, if not dealt with in some such manner, threatens to lead to very grave consequences indeed. Should this be successful, no doubt very careful attention will be given hereafter to the points in the Constitution, the weakness of which the present trouble has made so patent.

While our ephemeral weather prophets only look twenty-four hours ahead, and even Mr. Vennor does not venture to suggest a climate more than three or four months in advance, and while comparisons of this with previous Canadian seasons are only made within such reasonable limits as twenty or even fifty years, Russian climatologists aver that nothing like the present winter has been experienced for the past 123 years. In our north-west territories the frost has been very intense; at Battleford the thermometer approaching somewhat to Captain Nares' experiences; and yet there is no medal for those who winter in those latitudes. A paternal Government should institute a decoration suitable to the situation; Mr. David Laird, as first Governor of the north-west, being premier Knight Bachelor of, say, the *Ursus Borealis* Order. Certainly for Toronto such continuous frost is very unusual, and it has had much to do with intensifying the poverty that is unfortunately so prevalent in the city. Many traders, such as painters, carpenters, bricklayers, &c., are for the time paralyzed by the cold, and the small provision which even the provident had been able to accumulate is, in most cases, long since dissipated. There are yet six or seven weeks during which hard weather may be anticipated, and during which the demands upon charitable societies and individuals will continue. We are glad to find that the proposal for closer unity of action between the different societies, about which we spoke lately, is bearing good fruit.

From the East the shadow of a dark cloud is spreading over Europe. The Porte, as we intimated would possibly be the case, finds it impossible, consistent with its own sovereign supremacy, to admit the demands made by the Conference for the appointment of Christian governors and the establishment of an international armed force in the disaffected Provinces. But it offered to discuss the minor points in dispute. Thereupon Lord Salisbury, on behalf of the Plenipotentiaries, declared that, as there was no longer any common basis for discussion, the Conference was at an end. General Ignatieff made a similar declaration; and all the members are preparing immediately to leave Constantinople. Everybody asks, what next? Europe has given advice, which the Turk rejects; but he promises in his own way to do more than the Conference asked. That he will carry out his promises, except under pressure, no one believes. The most obvious applier of pressure is Russia, and the failure of the Conference has, it seems to us, undoubtedly given moral strength to her position. Her diplomatists will be bunglers indeed if they do not throw over her subsequent proceedings the pretence that, in putting the screw upon the Porte, Russia is only carrying out the wishes of Europe. But, as we

have said before, the Czar is as little to be trusted as the Sultan; while if freedom is what we are really contending for, it is quite as likely to flourish under Mussulman as under Russian autocracy.

News from the Cape of Good Hope is somewhat ominous. The Kafirs in Krelies country are much excited. The Transvaal Republic is in a sad state; the Boers' forces have been defeated by Secocani, and if President Burgheers persist in his refusal to allow the country to be taken under British protection, disaster must follow. Our sole object is peace and good government, and only to obtain these will the crown consent to annex more territory. It has been urged that England is really an Asiatic power. With equal force the same remark applies to Africa, with the destinies of which vast continent it seems to be the will of Providence that England shall be connected. What an expanse of noble work is opening to us in North, Central and Southern Africa! Colonel Gordon returns from the Nile region, leaving tranquility behind him, having annexed vast districts to Egypt, having reimbursed, by trade, the expenses to the Khedive of the expedition, having done much to abolish slavery, and having opened a way into the heart of Africa for English enterprise, civilization, trade and Christianity. Verily England may be proud of the men who have carried her name, and with it her religion, into the deepest recesses of that benighted and mysterious Continent.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

OUR services are now to assume another complexion, of a character altogether different from those of the last few weeks. Exultation and triumph have formed the burden of our songs; now humiliation and self-abasement are to be the subjects we cultivate. The Sundays are now reckoned with reference to Easter, and the three Sundays, of which Septuagesima is the first, are intended to form a connecting link between the Epiphany and the Lenten fast. This is at least the present arrangement made by the Church; and therefore all the outward expressions of joy and gladness are now to undergo a change—all the *Christmas decorations being removed before this Sunday.*

The origin of the observance of the three Sundays is enveloped in some obscurity. The best Liturgical writers concur in thinking that the different periods of beginning the season of Lent, in different parts of the early Church, originated the observance. In some parts fasting was not permitted on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, and yet the fast was to continue for forty days. It had therefore to begin at Septuagesima. In other parts, Thursdays and Sundays only were omitted; and then the fast began on Sexagesima; while another class, omitting only the Sundays, began at Quinquagesima. The names of the Sundays are clearly derived from the respective intervals between them and Easter.

When, in the days of Gregory the Great, the present custom in fixing the time of keeping Lent was arranged, the Church still

retained the penitential tone of these three Sundays; and the Gospels and Epistles for the three Sundays are appointed with a reference to Christian self-discipline. On Septuagesima, the Epistle of the Christian strife for the mastery expresses the necessity for the virtue of Temperance or moderation in all its branches. The parable in the Gospel is an answer to the question in the sixth chapter of St. Matthew; "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" In more general terms the Lord had answered the question by informing the Apostle that when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory in the regeneration of all things, they which have followed Him shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; so that they were assured of an abundant reward. At the same time, the question, "What shall we have therefore?" was not a right one. It was putting their connection with their Lord on a wrong footing, because it indicated a disposition to value their work too highly, as deserving a reward; whereas, the Lord would teach them, after they had done all, to say, "We are unprofitable servants." There was a self-complacency lurking in the minds of the disciples—a self-exaltation, because they had not shrunk back from the command to forsake all, while the young man who went away sorrowful found the requirement too hard for him. The Lord's answer would probably have increased their conceit, had He not added the impressive parable of the laborers in the vineyard.

The disciples had forsaken all for Christ, and their reward was to be a great one. But yet it was necessary to warn them against a self-satisfaction at their own work, a kind of attempt to bring in God as their debtor. To the Apostles, says Bengel, the parable was not a prediction but an admonition. It was an admonition, a solemn warning that, however long continued their work or abundant their labors, if they had not this humility before God, they were nothing. And the lesson it teaches for all time is that the first may ultimately be altogether last—that those who seem most abundant and most successful in the work of the Gospel, yet, if at the same time they forget that the reward is of grace and not of works, and begin to exalt themselves above their fellow-laborers, may altogether lose that for which they have been working; while those who appear to be last, may yet, by preserving their humility, be acknowledged first in the great day of God. Conveying, as the parable does, these important lessons, it forms a most appropriate introduction to the approaching season.

The Lessons in Genesis relate the creation of the heavens and the earth, the formation of the first happy pair, with the absolute innocence of both, as preparatory to the account to be given on the following Sunday of the fall of man, his great wickedness, and his punishment by the Deluge. The present lectionary also adds Job xxxviii, which descants in the sublimest and boldest manner and in the most magnificent language, on laying the foundations of the earth and fixing