

THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN,

— PUBLISHED BY THE —

Presbyterian Printing & Publishing Co., Ltd.,

AT 5 JORDAN STREET, TORONTO.

Terms: \$2 Per Annum in Advance.

ADVERTISING RATES.—Under 3 months, 15 cents per line per insertion; 3 months, \$1 per line; 6 months, \$1.75 per line; 1 year, \$3. No advertisement charged at less than five lines. None other than unobjectionable advertisements taken.

The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, MAY 14th, 1890.

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THE PRESBYTERIAN PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CO., (LTD).

5 JORDAN STREET TORONTO.

IT is well worthy of note that not one Presbytery of the 128 in the American Church that voted in favour of revision has suggested any change in the chapter on the Holy Scripture. The revision committee of the English Presbyterian Church has formulated an article which comes a long way short of saying that the Bible is "the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

THE burning of the Montreal Insane Asylum, sufficiently horrible in itself, is made still more horrible by the strong suspicion that there were patients in the institution who were really not insane. The government pays so much per patient for maintenance and it is alleged that aged and infirm persons were put into the institution by unfeeling relatives to keep them out of the way. The government should revolutionize the entire system. Ontario people are not sufficiently grateful, we fear, for the splendid management of our asylums.

THE one hundred and second General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States meets in Saratoga on Thursday of this week. The vote on revision stands 128 in favour and sixty-two against. Several Presbyteries declined to express an opinion and fifteen had not been heard from at last count. We have not heard how the balances stand in the accounts for the schemes of the Church, but no doubt the contributions are, as usual, liberal. Our neighbours are a generous, large hearted body of people and they do send in the money for missions.

OUR sprightly contemporary, the *British Weekly*, sometimes describes average sermons, lectures, speeches, books, magazine and newspaper articles by simply saying they did not rise above the common place. That is a plain way of speaking, but it is honest and manly and should be more generally adopted by the religious press. The old phrases usually applied to sermons are overworked and should be allowed to have a rest. All sermons delivered on special occasions are not "suitable and impressive," or "powerful and impressive," or "eloquent and impressive." Some of them are distinctly the reverse. If a sermon or speech has no special features it is quite enough to say it was delivered.

PROFESSOR CAMPBELL, in closing for the session his inimitable "Talks about Books" in the *Montreal College Journal*, good naturedly remarks that he has not pleased everybody and that he never intended to do so. It was a good thing for the *Journal* and its many readers that he had no such idiotic intention. Had the learned gentleman simply endeavoured to please everybody by his work his "Talks" would have been as vapid, as insane and pointless as the average review. We stand by the opinion, more than once expressed, that Professor John Campbell is, taking him all round, the best book reviewer in the Dominion. Had he tried to please everybody he might have been one of the poorest.

DR. JOSEPH PARKER publishes an open letter in the *British Weekly* addressed to Spurgeon in which he remonstrates with the Baptist divine for various alleged short-comings. Among

other things he accuses him of "cruelty in his theological judgments," of "the heterodoxy of one-sidedness" of "want of spiritual discrimination," and of "a bluntness which can only be accounted for by the worst kind of spiritual ignorance." The letter is written in a good enough spirit but is characterized throughout by that "brutal candour" which is always harder to bear than direct attack. Should Spurgeon return the compliment by playing "candid friend," Dr. Parker had better prepare for the worst.

SPEAKING from the chair, the Rev. Mr. Hooke, president of the North Wales Congregational Union, advised the members of the Union to keep themselves more free for the cultivation of true spiritual life by the avoidance of too many technical discussions, and to be watchful over their young men that faith may not be lost in the transition of national thought. Would that such sound advice were more frequently given from high places in the churches. Too much discussion about technical, non-essential matters is both the cause and the effect of spiritual dry-rot. A church, a congregation or a man that has little or no spiritual life is sure to make a great ado about the mere externals of religion, whilst a live church, or congregation or a really good man may decline rapidly in spiritual life by fighting about non-essential questions. Controversy is not spiritual food and when discussion about non-essential matters becomes the main part of religious life spirituality must decline.

NOT for many a day have we seen in the same space as thorough an exposure of the evils of Plymouthism as that given in the current number of the *Presbyterian Journal* of Montreal by the Rev. John Nichols, of that city. Mr. Nichols manages to go over much ground in a short time and does his work thoroughly. He writes in a terse, trenchant style, calls a spade a spade and paints Plymouthism in its true colours. We hope the rev. gentleman may extend his admirable paper a little and publish it in pamphlet form. There is ample room for the right kind of pamphlet on almost any subject as witness the great circulation of Mr. McKay's work on baptism and Professor McAdam's admirable little work on the Lord's supper. Mr. Nichols thinks the errors of Plymouthism "are more numerous and fatal than those of the Roman Catholics." We have long been of the same opinion and have often wondered how some men can fraternize with Plymouthism and at the same time profess to be very jealous of Romish influence. Mr. Nichols being a resident of Montreal should understand the working of both systems.

WHATEVER theory one may hold in regard to creeds and confessions one cannot help sympathizing with some of the most strenuous advocates of revision on the other side of the line. The most earnest advocates of certain verbal changes were pastors in the West who have suffered long from misrepresentation of Calvinistic doctrine. Campbellites and saddle-bag preachers of every kind have for years been breaking up or trying to break up Presbyterian congregations by twisting statements in the Confession that a designing man can too easily twist. What these earnest, hard-working pioneers want is not a change of doctrine but such changes in the statement of one or two doctrines that unscrupulous tramps cannot so easily misrepresent the Calvinistic system to Presbyterian people. For the opinion of the mere theorist who wants a change simply as a matter of theory, for the views of the restless innovator who wants to change everything a year old, no sensible person cares much, but the experience of a hard-working pioneer who is trying to build up the Church in the face of tremendous difficulties is an entirely different thing.

THE Ministerial Association of Toronto had a regular field day last week on Sabbath Observance, or perhaps we should say on various forms of Sabbath desecration that prevail in the city. Sabbath processions, the so-called Gospel temperance meetings that are held on Sabbath afternoons, and several other kinds of meetings were handled with an amount of vigour that must be truly refreshing to all lovers of a quiet Sabbath. Dr. Parsons is reported to have described the Pavilion discussions on Sabbath afternoons as a "mixture of politics, reform and religion;" a recent Orange parade on the Sabbath to one of the Methodist churches he considered "an insult to God and His Gospel;" the parades of the Salvation Army, he thought, should have been suppressed long ago. Mr. Milligan "believed that the

meetings in the Pavilion are to blame for taking off the edge of Sabbath observance." Dr. Parker "wanted processions indicted as bad. He never saw anything more disgraceful than a parade of a lately-incorporated body at his own church last fall when war to the knife was preached and efforts made to set one part of the Dominion against the other." Sermons on Sabbath observance will be preached on May 25 and June 1. Meantime laymen who love a quiet Sabbath may well ask what is the use in fighting against Sabbath newspapers and the running of street cars on Sabbath if clergymen deliver semi-political speeches on Sabbath afternoons at the Pavilion, or preach so-called sermons elsewhere in which they urge Canadian citizens to take one another by the throat. Dr. Parsons well deserves and will receive the thanks of the best part of the community for handing in his report in such vigorous style, matters that too many are afraid to touch.

THE TEACHING FUNCTION OF THE MINISTRY.

IN this month's number of the *Old and New Testament Student* there is a short but suggestive paper on "The Teaching Function of the Christian Ministry," by Professor Barstow, of Yale Divinity School. It presents an important function of the sacred office in a somewhat new light, and one which at the present time merits consideration. There is not a little impatience with what is usually designated dry doctrinal preaching, and from this has originated the tendency to avoid as much as possible the clear and consecutive elucidation of the great doctrines of Christianity as revealed in Scripture. The demand of the time is for practical religion, and the preaching that more directly appeals to the emotional nature receives a cordial welcome. The mistake seems to be that doctrinal and practical preaching are mutually exclusive, that the one form of pulpit discourse is necessarily antagonistic to the other. Such, however, is far from being the case, if the true end of preaching is steadily kept in view. Masses of people are moved through their feelings, but behind all appeals that stir the popular heart there must be some clear-cut tangible idea, or what will plausibly pass for such, that the people can grasp and that will keep them steadily to their purpose. All mediæval Europe was stirred by the preaching of Peter the Hermit. Behind all inflammatory appeals was the fact that the Holy Sepulchre was in the hands of the infidel, and that for the honour of the faith it must at all hazards be rescued. Emotion driven hither and thither at the will of a passionate orator will never be anything more than a disturbing force unless the orator rests his appeals on a solid basis of fact and principle.

The student of Homiletics will find the best examples of his science in the Scriptures. The prophets of the old dispensation taught the people, and on the basis of their teaching made those appeals that yet retain undiminished power. The great truths of the heavenly kingdom were unfolded by Him who taught with authority and not as the Scribes, and the preaching of Jesus is unsurpassed in simplicity and in power. The preaching of Peter blended exposition and appeal in due proportion, and we have the testimony of Luke that its effect was immediate and practical. The same characteristics are equally apparent in the preaching and in the writings of the great apostle of the Gentiles. He uniformly sets out with a lucid and well-reasoned exposition of fundamental evangelical truth, and then proceeds to enforce and apply it to the hearts and consciences of those addressed. As a general principle it would be difficult to see how such methods and examples could be improved upon. The truth of God is the only effective instrument by which the human heart can be savingly won.

The chief work of the Christian ministry in teaching is twofold: the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints. The source whence material for its accomplishment must be drawn is the same—the Inspired Word. Thence must come the arrows that pierce the hearts of the enemies of the King; in the same inexhaustible mine the truths are found by which the believer is built up in his most holy faith, as the Scriptures uniformly testify. In the intercessory prayer the petition occurs, "Sanctify them through the truth; Thy Word is truth." The writer of the paper referred to does well when he calls attention to this particular and most essential department of ministerial work. He may be right or he may be wrong when he says that "pulpit teaching has been too limited in its range. It has not compassed the whole life of the Church. Moreover, the whole work of teaching has been limited too exclusively to the pulpit, and has dealt too