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Edited by Rev. Wm. Inglis.

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OUR PREMIUM PICTURES.

At last the Premium Engravings are ready for delivery. All week busy hands have been doing them up, and sending to the Post Office. Already large numbers have reached their destination, and have told their own tale more eloquently than any words of ours possibly could. In this city all who have seen the pictures unanimously pronounce them "exceedingly fine," and the verdict is, that "the publisher of THE PRESBYTERIAN has more than fulfilled his promise." In view of the satisfaction expressed with paper and Premiums, would it not be well for old subscribers to try to help us to a few names during the present month? How many old friends of the paper will each send us ANOTHER NAME? Two or three thousand could easily do so if they tried. Nothing but the asking is necessary!

DEBASING THE SPIRITUAL CURRENCY.

SOME months ago, in a vivid story in the "Atlantic Monthly," entitled, "Irene the Missionary," the author, in describing his heroine as not being so much shocked as might have been expected at a "Scriptural joke," explained it by the fact that as these subjects had been so familiar to her from childhood, a liberty taken with them did not seem to her a very serious matter. Another writer in the same magazine refers to this as being a true touch of real life, and explains the supposed propensity of ministers to joke with such subjects on the same principle,—that our jests are generally taken from those things which lie nearest to us or with which we are most familiar.

Now, it seems to be saying a great deal too much to assert that ministers are more given to joking about sacred subjects than are other men; though, according to this writer, a minister is sometimes recognized as such, just through this very habit. In both the United States and Canada, judging by their current literature, it does not seem uncharitable to set down secular writers as far greater sinners than ministers in this respect. Still, the very fact that such things can be said in the pages of a first-class American monthly, would suggest that they are not, in the United States at least, so careful as they should be to avoid the evil of lowering, in the mind of any one, what ought to be a sacred idea. Are they, and are Christians generally, quite as careful as they ought to be, even among ourselves?

Does our "Shorter Catechism" explain the third commandment too stringently by saying that it "requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works," and that it forbids "all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God maketh himself known." If not—if this is a true statement of its meaning—then, are not what are usually known as "Scriptural jokes" among the category of forbidden things? Once associate a jest, or even a conundrum, with a passage of Scripture, and the light recollection will intrude itself many a time afterwards, when it is not wanted—dulling and eclipsing the true lesson of the passage, perhaps for a year.

George Eliot, in her last collection of essays, has a

very true and much needed one on the evil of "Debasing the Moral Currency." She shews powerfully how the lowering, by misapplication, of the words meant to express our highest thoughts must tend also to lower our very thoughts themselves. But great as is the danger of debasing the moral currency, is there not far greater danger in debasing the spiritual currency? We are so dependent on words that the associations we attach to them have no little reaction upon our feelings themselves. If, then, the most sweet and solemn words that our lips can frame on earth are debased by some light and trifling association, must not this have its effect in lowering also the feelings which the word, rightly used, should awaken? If we take a word which to the Christian is full of sweet and sacred meaning, and link it, even transiently, with a passing jest, or a ludicrous misapplication, do we not thereby help to debase our spiritual currency? Will the word—when we try to use it again in its true sense—come back to us with its original sacredness and purity? It may be so, with those who use it, but sometimes with those who hear it, it may never entirely lose the taint of the degrading association. Ministers who venture to treat carelessly on holy ground may never know how the souls which on one occasion they may have touched to finer issues by their solemn and earnest appeals—may, on another, be thrown back and hardened by hearing the same voice use the same words and forms of expressions in so different a tone and so different a connection. And when this happens, can they be held quite guiltless? We have no sympathy with the idea that earnest Christian people or Christian ministers need to wear long faces and eschew the innocent playfulness and legitimate humour of the "cheerful heart that doeth good like a medicine." But this may be enjoyed to the fullest extent, without trespassing on sacred ground, and some of the merriest-hearted of men have been the most truly reverent. But we do need, for our own sakes and that of the outside world, to beware how the American national sin of irreverence, and flippant trifling with sacred things, gains ground among ourselves.

There is no sin against which we have more solemn warnings in Old Testament history than the sin of touching any part of the Ark of God lightly. And there is nothing, probably, that more tends to encourage the growth of a defiant scepticism than the idea that Christians do not realize their own beliefs—an idea which is sure to be confirmed by the light use of words which they know we consider sacred. However lightly they may regard them themselves, they are very wide awake to anything like irreverence in professing Christians. Do we not then—ministers and people—need to beware lest in this way we may unthinkingly neutralize the very prayer we so often offer: *Hallowed be Thy Name!* Do we not need to be more on our guard, in the excitement of social meetings, and in the freedom of family life, against these "little foxes that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes!"

VERY DECIDED "CROOKEDNESS."

THE late trial of Boyle v. "Globe," has brought to light a state of things which it is not pleasant to contemplate, and which ought to awaken the moral indignation of all who wish well to Canada's future. We do not think it necessary to go into details; these have been already given at great length in the daily newspapers. What we would specially draw the attention of our readers to is the utter moral deadness exhibited by all the chief actors in this Government Printing affair. Corruption of the most impudent, outrageous character was brought to light, and generally from the statements and acknowledgments of the parties implicated; and yet all was taken, apparently, as a matter of course. They had all seemingly foreheads of brass which knew not how to blush. Those who had the contract were ready to bribe, cajole, and flatter any and every one who might stand in their way or might threaten to prevent their getting the work for other five years on their own terms. Others were quite as ready to be bought and anything which came in the way was acceptable from \$12,000 down to a suit of clothes, a dinner, or a dram. And all through, the miserable fellows talked of their honour, laid their hands upon their hearts and swore, in many cases most falsely, about this that and the other thing which they had said, done, or intended. But in the midst of all this degradation and moral rottenness

there was a general air of easy personal satisfaction, as if it were all right, and only, at the very worst, a good joke, but all in the way of honourable business! Apparently they had all breathed, for so long a time, the atmosphere of a moral dunghill, that they were astonished when any seemed inclined to wince under the experience, and even metaphorically to think of putting their handkerchiefs to their faces.

Nor do we wonder that they should have been astounded at either surprise or indignation being expressed at their exploit. The excuse was only too ready—"Everybody does it." And though it is not true that "everybody" follows such "crooked" ways, yet such practices are so common that we cannot be surprised at the impudent moral obtuseness displayed in the case throughout. In hundreds of ways and in hundreds of instances, things equally bad are continually going on. Breach of trust is becoming so common that it is scarcely remarked upon. Those who are a little particular in their phraseology call the manipulation "borrowing," or "transferring," and if they are at all "respectable," or have influential friends, when caught red-handed in the theft, they are allowed to "pay back" the amount of their "peculations," and have the whole thing "hushed up." Why, there are those who walk the streets of Toronto, and of other Canadian towns and cities, unabashed, unashamed, and untouched, who, in any right state of things would be sent to a social Coventry, or be made practically acquainted with all the mysteries of oakum-picking. But it is "all right," apparently! We need not wonder, however, when such things are, that the whole moral frame-work of society should every now and then get rudely shaken, and that the petty pilferers, and ragged wretches of society should think themselves rather hardly treated when they are sentenced for years, or for life, to a felon's dress and a felon's drudgery. We are not saying that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor, though, curiously, it too often comes round that the educated and respectable rascals and swindlers are "let down" very gently in comparison with their brutal, bullet-headed and uneducated compeers. But this we do say: that it will not be well with our country till the "jury of the streets" equally with the jury of the law courts puts its special hand upon criminals who, by their education and entire social surroundings had more restraints laid upon them, and were, therefore, when they did the immoral and dishonourable thing, less excusable than those who, in the language of a great modern philanthropist, may be said: "never to have had a chance."

ANOTHER CONFIDENCE GAME.

A RATHER clever confidence game, was, last week, only too successfully tried at the expense of a good many young men who could but ill afford the outlay, and we have no doubt would be still more annoyed at being "caught napping" by what in the light of experience seems a not very intransparent fraud. For some days the following advertisement appeared in the daily papers:

"Travelling tutor—college graduate; salary liberal. Apply, sending diplomas, etc., to J. V. Lee, Windsor Hotel, Montreal."

Of course the attraction was great and the applications many. The Mr. Lee, the principal, disappeared on the first inquiry and gave place to his lawyers whose lithographed office paper figured in reply. These lawyers are, as they appear in the lithographed paper before us, G. R. Pingsley, LL.B., Hon. J. R. Crawford, M.E.C., and W. Pingsley, jr., A.B.; while the words "*St. John, N.B., 188*," complete the mystic lettering. We believe there is such a legal firm in St. John, N.B., and of high respectability. If so, either their office paper has been stolen, or feloniously imitated. Of course, every applicant was assured that he had been successful in getting the tutorship at the modest (!) salary of \$1,200, with all travelling expenses and board supplied. Need it be added that a most polite hint was appended to the effect that the official fee was \$10, and that it would be necessary to forward that immediately to "Room 128, St. Lawrence Hall, Montreal?" Of course, those who did, have seen the last of their money and testimonials. When will people be wise enough to make such swindles impossible or unprofitable? We grant that they are not worse than many things which are successfully carried through in what is called "honourable business." Still it is about time that all this sort of work