

OUR NEXT ISSUE AUGUST 11th.

In consequence of taking our ANNUAL HOLIDAY, our next ISSUE will be the 11th August.

PLAGIARISM IN THE PULPIT.

A VOLUME of sermons recently published by the Rev. Canon Fleming, contained a discourse taken almost bodily from Dr. Talmage. The Canon who committed this marvellous theft must be a preacher of rank to challenge criticism in England by publishing. In spite of this scandal he was nominated for the Bishopric of Sodor and Man by the *Rock*, the chief organ of English Evangelicals, and an honour to the party it represents. This plagiarism is mysterious for its utter folly. A friend of the Canon's writes: "It is carelessness, culpable carelessness, and nothing more. It is simply ludicrous to suppose that a man of Canon Fleming's exceptional powers in preaching should have any need to steal from a friend's productions. And it is downright preposterous to imagine that he would steal from the sermons of such a man, and perpetuate a despicable theft, bound to be soon discovered and unmasked." A preacher who stands in a prominent pulpit in London, must be the superior of Dr. Talmage, whose popularity arises from the low literary taste prevailing in the States, where verbal fire-works command vast audiences, who attend service not to worship God but to have their ears tickled by a popular orator. We have the same class in Canada, as is manifest by the clap-trap announcements of the subjects of their sermons by many sectarian ministers, who preach "themselves," and not "Christ crucified."

The sin of plagiarism sits lightly on the conscience for several reasons. Human nature seems incapable of being stirred by fear of dangers to which it is not specially liable. A gipsy fears not the burglar, nor he who writes not, the forger, nor the tramp, the pickpocket, nor does a prize fighter stand in dread of personal assault. The conscience of these classes in regard to such offences is notoriously inactive. Few living authors run any risk of being plagiarised. The number of those whose culture enables them to understand what plagiarism means is small, while even of these only a limited portion are able to detect such literary thefts. So that the plagiarist runs little danger of exposure, when exposed, the vast public do not appreciate the nature of his offence, and if his stealings add to the attraction of his work as a party writer, or his fame as a sectarian preacher, he is certain to win applause by deeds of larceny. The idea of there being property in ideas or language is even repudiated by some. Look at the wholesale robbery of British authors by American publishers! The Contemporary Review for June has an able article by Mr. Long on this topic. Perhaps no instance ever made a greater noise, on discovery, than the use of a brilliant passage from M. Thiers by D'Israeli, in his oration on the death of Wellington. We pointed out at the time

that D'Israeli's own phrases were equal in style to those he was charged with using as his own, we said "this is a case of a diamond merchant charged with filching a stone no better than those in a mine of which he is proprietor." To quote Thiers in the House of Commons was to quote Scripture in Church, the orator assumed every auditor to know the passage quoted. There was no intention to deceive, and *it is in an intention to deceive* that the shame of plagiarism alone consists.

The Reviewer alluded to remarks that "Shakspear, Moliere, Virgil, Pausanias, Theocritus and Lord Tennyson are all liable to the charge of theft." But, we may add, they took raw material as it were, and wrought it into things of beauty to be joys for ever.

We remember two cases worth recording, for their cautionary lesson and for the discovery they make of the basis upon which many a pulpit reputation is based among the sects. At a public dinner held at B——, England, the Independent minister of the town made a great sensation by his speech on Education. We sat silent while rapturous cheers greeted each eloquent phrase, for we suspected they were not his own. On reaching home we found the speech in a volume of Dr. Guthrie's sermons, and on placing the book in the hands of the Mayor, who had been Chairman at the feast, he read aloud a few sentences and exclaimed, "Why, this is Bain's speech!" Unluckily having a grudge against the plagiarist, he literally hunted him out of the town by denouncing the fraud. At a book auction in Toronto many years ago, a set of Dr. South's sermons were offered for sale. A Wesleyan minister asked our opinion on the author, and their value, South's name naturally being to him unknown. He bought them. In a few weeks one of these sermons was reported at length in a morning paper, as having been preached on the preceding Sunday evening, and the report stated that the discourse had greatly raised the reputation of the preacher! Not caring to injure a man whose folly would find him out we kept the fact secret, so this sermon of Dr. South went all over Canada as the composition of the pastor of a Wesleyan flock in Toronto. This sermon has been preached frequently since without detection. Sermons by Dr. Liddon and other Church of England divines are constantly preached without any acknowledgment by nonconformist ministers. Our clergy might secure far higher reputations as sermonizers were they equally ready to plagiarise. But scholastic training has given them a literary conscience, hence the sermons of our clergy, though less ornate than their neighbours, are more truthful and honest. Although the mass of Church attendants would never detect plagiarism, nor censure it if they did, still there are few Church congregations without some auditors whose culture enables them to discern differences in style between stolen and original matter, and who would severely condemn any flagrant attempt to pass off the former as the latter. While then our pulpits are not disgraced by wholesale plagiarism, as those of the sects are, they might be

made the vehicle for giving our congregations the noble lessons of instruction and inspiration found in the sermons of great masters of pulpit oratory. When this is done beyond the limits of a few quoted sentences, the source should be named, as we have heard done by preachers of no mean rank in English churches.

SLANDER OF ENDOWED CLERGY.

THE decision given by the Supreme Court, by which the funds hitherto given to one Church, St. James' Toronto, out of which a large private fortune was accumulated, are in the future to be divided amongst a considerable number of congregations, has given deadly offence to our local pseudo Church contemporary. He asserts that the spreading of these funds will tend to the fostering and retention of incapable and incompetent clergy. It is marvellous to see how some men seem incapable of logical thought. The editor alluded to was a worshipper of the one clergyman who grasped the whole of the St. James' endowment. Does he consider that the endowment made the late Rector of St. James' incapable and incompetent? His contention is that if a Rector get, say \$15,000 a year from an endowment, he is not injured as a spiritual workman, but if 15 clergymen each get \$1000 a year from that endowment, they thereby are made incapable and incompetent! "The bigger the dose the less the effect," is his theory of endowment poison. It is highly entertaining to reflect that our contemporary was practically a party to the litigation, in the hope that he and his college would share in the funds, if St. James' won. Does he think such sharing in these funds would have made him "incapable and incompetent?" No endowment is needed to produce such a result.

Our disappointed and therefore atrabilious neighbor asserts that there are churches in Toronto with congregations of only 9 to 20 persons. We beg to tell the writer that he has again been hoaxed. One word of really friendly advice. A newspaper editor should do his own reading, to take his history from persons from whom he seeks such information as is known to most schoolboys, subjects him to great risk of being crammed with jocosities, such as his nonsense about a mediæval church. To take his facts from *gossip* subjects him to the risk of publishing absurd and malicious rumours, such as his tale about Toronto congregations of only 9 persons. Does not our friend see that he opens a very dangerous spot in the party armour by such references? We decline to take advantage of such clumsy fencing, because to expose the malignancy of the allusion would compel us to mention the names of several of our contemporaries' most ardent party friends, for whom we entertain personally the highest respect.

His article is nothing but a cry of "sour grapes;" his coterie tried hard to get possession of the endowment in question, but failed, and now he bewails the fate of those who succeeded as having acquired that which will make them incapable and incompetent! Let