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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1874.

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

No further particulars of Dr. Livingstone's death have come to hand, though it seems to be universally taken for granted that the high-hearted explorer and missionary is really gone and will see his native land no more.

The famine in India threatens to be a very formidable one. The area of destitution is much wider than was the case in Persia a few years ago. Every precaution possible is being taken by the authorities to prevent the loss of life, but it is greatly to be feared that in spite of all efforts many must starve.

The New Brunswick School Bill still threatens to give trouble. The Roman Catholics insist upon having separate schools; the Protestants on the other hand protest against any such concession, while insisting very strongly on the whole question being one of local interest with which neither the Dominion nor any outside authorities have any thing whatever to do. There can be no doubt at all about the question being merely local, with which none but the New Brunswickers have any business, except so far as to express an opinion on the subject.

The Local House of Assembly has resumed its sittings, but the doings of the week have not amounted to much. The new Speaker does not keep very good order, and hence a very good deal of irrelevant matter is ever and anon dragged into the discussions. The number of members in the House who have any faculty for speaking is very small, the number who have, to all appearance, any acquaintance with the rules of debate, smaller still. Louis Riell issued a manifest setting forth his version of the occurrences of 1869-70 in Manitoba, the murder of Scott as he views it, and the promises of amnesty made by Sir John Macdonald and the Imperial authorities. There is nothing that is really new made known by this document. All the French papers of Quebec strongly espouse Riell's cause and urge the necessity of a complete amnesty being given forthwith.

The defeat of the Gladstone Ministry at the polls, though not so complete as that of Sir John Macdonald, is far more surprising and equally suggestive. No minister of the present century in England has accomplished nearly as much as Gladstone has done during the last five years. He has abolished an established church, revolutionized the land laws of a Kingdom, given a school law to both parts of Great Britain, reduced taxation, paid off debt, carried on wars out of the revenue, introduced the principle of arbitration for the settlement of international disputes, and given the poor and dependent both the protection and security of the ballot. Yet no minister who came into power with such a majority as Gladstone had, five years ago, has lost support more rapidly or has had his triumph so speedily turned into humiliating defeat. He has alarmed the timid and comfortable with fears of revolution, while he has disgusted or at least deterred the dissenters—the advanced guard of liberalism—who have always been his most energetic and enthusiastic supporters, and have now come to look upon him with distrust, if not alienation. It will all come right in due time. The apparent recession is but the recoil of the wave in an advancing tide which will soon touch a higher point than it has ever yet reached. The established churches of Britain must go, and so must the absurd and oppressive land laws. A better preparative for the accomplishment of these great works could not be thought of, than having a professed or real Conservative Government, doing according to its instincts, or according to the pressure from without which it will not acknowledge and at the same time cannot resist. The so-called reaction will land Mr. Disraeli in measures far more liberal than even he ever dreamed of, or it will land him hopelessly high and dry on a rugged shore, far from the safe harbour for which he may be anxious to steer.

THE UNION.

It is as yet too soon to speculate about what may be the decision on the Union question come to by the Presbyteries, Sessions and congregations. This, however, is very manifest, that however much it may be matter for regret, the fact is undoubted that a much larger amount of opposition has been expressed than was at all anticipated. In one or two Presbyteries of the Canada Presbyterian Church the decision has been adverse, while in others the proposed Basis has been approved of only by very small majorities. We are quite sure that in very few instances indeed does this opposition arise from any hostility to Union in itself. It is to the wording of the Articles of Union submitted, and to that alone. There surely ought to be some way possible by which to remove those difficulties and pave the way for a Union in which not a single congregation or minister shall be left out. Of the ultimate Union of all the Presbyteries in the Dominion we entertain no doubt whatever. There is scarcely anything in the future that can be spoken of with such assured confidence. But that auspicious time will not be hastened by mere urgency or by the vote of a mere majority. Compared with other Unions, which have been happily and without a dissentient accomplished, this proposed one has been but a short time under consideration. It can stand a little longer delay and a little more discussion. Patience, prayer, and perseverance will, in this, as in so many other cases, accomplish great things. These negotiations for Union have already done a great amount of good, and we cannot bring ourselves to believe that they are destined to be ultimately abortive.

SCHOOL LEGISLATION IN ONTARIO.

There is at present before the Legislative Assembly of Ontario a bill to modify and improve some parts of the present school law. The Council of Public Instruction is to be remodelled, and some measure of the popular element infused into it by certain members being chosen by the vote of School Inspectors, and the masters of High and Public Schools, while in the case of all the office is to hold only for two years. The compulsory clause for enforcing attendance on some school is strengthened by a rate of a dollar a month being made chargeable against all parents neglecting to give their children some reasonable amount of education during the time specified by law. The Book Depository at Toronto is also so far to be liberalized and trustees of schools being allowed, if they choose, to get books for prizes from ordinary booksellers. This is a step in the right direction. We hope our legislators will make their work of legislation about schools so thorough now as not to require any amendment for a good many years to come. The danger is from over—not under—legislation. Better attendance at school is greatly to be desired, and deliverance from red-tapeism and rote teaching, which, in spite of all our boasting, is, we fear, eating into our school system like a canker.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, HAMILTON.

From the annual report of this congregation we notice that the past year has been one of great prosperity. Total tithes collected during 1873 were \$3,285.65, an increase over the previous year of \$440.65.

Ordinary Sabbath collections amounted to \$3,374.51, showing an increase over 1872 of \$877.28. The congregation have built a manse, exceedingly handsome in appearance and convenient in arrangement, and which will be ready for occupation about the beginning of March.

Attention has already been called through this paper to the work of Mission Sabbath schools in which the congregation is engaged. The contributions to the schemes of the General Assembly amount to including collections from the Sabbath Schools \$1,247.64, which, though less than it should be, shows a considerable advance on the previous year.

The total annual income of Central Church for 1873 is \$10,363.61, about \$10.50 per member for congregational purposes, and \$4.50 per member for purposes of society and benevolence.

The additions to the communion roll were 94. We observe in the report and interesting "Outlined History of the congregation from its formation in 1841."

A correspondent of the *Madras Athenaeum* describes a procession in Salem, Madras Presidency. He says:—"I observed some devotees had their tongues pierced with iron rods; some had pins stuck all over their bodies and garlands hanging from them; some had made incisions in their sides, in which were inserted iron rods; some passed through these incisions large ropes, held both sides by two persons; and some employed men to carry a small ear, the middle of whose axle passed through their sides." Such heatheens have not advanced far in civilization.

OUR MISSION TO THE CHINESE.

All in our Church interested in this Mission, as well as the personal acquaintances and friends of Dr. Fraser, will be as glad to learn as we are to let them know that they are not alone in the interest they take in this great work. It is very interesting to hear from all quarters of our Canadian Church of the favour with which the proposal of our Foreign Mission Committee, to undertake a Medical Mission in Formosa, is regarded; but it is, if anything, almost more encouraging to hear from friends in our sister Church in England which has long been engaged in the same work that they look upon our sending out a Medical missionary as the best thing we could do.

Dr. Fraser lately received a most kind and encouraging letter from Dr. Maxwell, who has, for many years, and with the most gratifying results, conducted a medical Mission at Tai-wan-foo, the capital city of Formosa, but who returned to England last year, to superintend the printing and publishing of the translation of the New Testament which he had made, into the Amoy dialect of the Chinese, the language spoken by about 30,000,000 on the neighboring mainland and the island of Formosa. (The language in which the Bible Society issues the Chinese Bible is used over the whole extent of the Empire in books and all written documents, is understood only by the educated, and is almost as unintelligible to the masses of the people as it is to us. Each province of this vast empire has its own dialect, which is understood and spoken by everyone, high and low, educated and ignorant, in the province, but not beyond its bounds. Thus arises the absolute necessity of having the Scriptures published in the "spoken language" of each province. By years of untiring exertion, Dr. Maxwell has given to the province of Fokien, of which Formosa forms a part, the Word of God in their own tongue, printed in the Roman character, which is far more easily read both by themselves and us than their own.) Dr. Maxwell with missionary zeal as yet unabated, proposes next autumn (D.V.) to return to the field in which he has already done so much hard work, and it is hoped that such arrangements will be made as to enable Dr. Fraser to make the journey in his company and thus profit by the vast stores of experience which he has amassed as a medical missionary. The letter which he sent was full of the most valuable suggestions and information respecting preparatory work.

In addition to this Mr. H. M. Matheson, of London, the Secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee, of the English Presbyterian Church, has sent not only a kind letter, but also a most valuable present of books,—books recommended by Dr. Maxwell, and specially valuable, both as being difficult to procure, and as being almost indispensable to Dr. Fraser's rightly understanding the nature of the work to which he has given himself. Very little indeed can be learned of this most difficult language without the help of a teacher, but much invaluable information regarding the people and all that concerns them, physically, socially, morally, and religiously, may be acquired from the books which have been sent, even before the missionary sets out.

Our own people will surely be stimulated to new zeal, and more open-handed liberality, by these practical tokens of sympathy and co-operation from another land. The time is probably far distant when the "rest and be thankful" spirit will be the appropriate one with reference to our mission to the poor Chinese. In the meantime, let us on to fierce conflicts with, and more glorious victories over, the hosts of Satan both here and there!

HERESY OF DR. CAIRD.

Principal Caird, of Glasgow, is being charged at present with heresy. From his being a leader of the Broad School in the Church of Scotland, not a few would be quite ready to suspect Dr. Caird on the very shinnest evidence. It is thought so natural that he and his friends should almost instinctively depart from the truth, that a good many are ready at the shortest notice to jump at the conclusion that such a thing has actually taken place. We have not seen the service complained of, but the following extract, which contains the gist of the charge, gives something like a *prima facie* support to the charge advanced. Discussing the present question whether or not the New Testament regards disbelief in Christian truth as penal or culpable, the Dr. says:—

"The answer which he felt compelled to give was that the Scriptures do not sanction any such doctrine. The same canons of criticism that are applied to other historical and ethical works, the same methods of proof that are applied to other sciences and disputed questions in the domain of law, are to be applied to the interpretation of Scripture; and when men who earnestly and honestly apply these canons and methods fail to arrive at conclusions in accordance with the truth cherished by the Christian Church, they are no more morally guilty than are they who believe or disbelieve the story of Romulus and Remus; who believe or disbelieve the atomic theory

of matter, or the truth or falsehood of the claim of the defendant in a notorious criminal trial. To make disbelief in the generally accepted interpretation of Scripture a punishable sin, one condition is absolutely necessary, and that condition is an infallible interpreter on earth. In the absence of such condition men are bound to accept the conclusions which their own reason and conscience force upon them. If reason and conscience lead them from the path of truth, Christians have no right to condemn them. Thinkers of our own time, like Carlyle and Frederick W. Newman, have arrived at conclusions which are opposed to the cherished convictions of most Christians in this country. To hold that in the next world they will be damned for their honest doubts, or their ignorance in this matter, is to hold a doctrine wholly opposed to the true conception of God—monstrous and even blasphemous."

This is surely strong and strange language from a Presbyterian pulpit, and we can scarcely wonder at its causing considerable excitement both within and without the Church of Scotland. Among others who have grappled with the matter the Rev. Allan Pollock, late of New Glasgow, N.S., uses the following language:—

If Principal Caird were correct, the sole remedy for unreasonable belief would be a perpetual repudiation of evidence. But what greater evidence could the Jews have had, when they defied Heaven under the mount, when they despised the miracles and miracle-working life of our Lord? Were they told, then, that it was because they had bad heads. No; but because they had bad hearts. It was because "they were evil." If the evidence for Christianity were inadequate, I admit that it would be a serious deficiency. But the messengers of the Cross took the high ground that it is true, and that men would see it and feel it, but for their passions. The Gentiles, who everywhere received it, had not half the evidence of the Jews who rejected it. Hence, the Word declares that, while there is no merit in faith, for "by grace are ye saved through faith," unbelief is full of demerit, and the greatest of all crimes, an insult to the Divine glory, the very head and front of rebellion, and peculiarly demonstrative of an obstinately bad heart.

There is such demerit in unbelief that the Almighty declares that he will punish it upon soul and body as he does now upon the whole Jewish people.

It is a curious corollary to the Principal's views that there is no escape from his conclusions except in an infallible living authority. The history of the world illustrates this in a way he may not have remembered. Whenever men exalt reason above Scripture, they become like the unclean spirit that walked in dry places seeking rest and finding none, and at last, take possession of a house either "swept" of everything, or too much "garnished" with everything. They either become sceptics or Papists, and their latter state is worse than their first. And is there really no middle ground? I thank God that there is, and that millions have found it. It is not the light of reason, an *ignis fatuus* rushing up and down the world, not the ridiculous assumptions of Popish Infallibility; but it is the infallible Word of God in the Church accompanied by the living Spirit, who will never cease to renew, and regenerate, and beautify this moral creation till it is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

I can fancy an enquirer coming to Principal Caird and saying—"Sir, what shall I do to save my soul?" (as the Principal would say.) The first reply would doubtless be, "Are you honest and sincere in your unbelief?" Sincere! he would say; "I was never so sincere in all my life. I don't want it at all. It certainly contains some things that appear to be true; but then it contains other things that I cannot believe, and won't believe. What am I to do?" For this the Principal would of course reply, "Never mind. Thy unbelief hath saved thee; go in peace." To this he might add, as a peculiar gratification, "And I am happy to inform you that you are as good as many of your neighbours, as there is neither merit nor demerit in belief or unbelief."

Book Notices.

THE BRITISH QUARTERLY for January, 1874, has come to hand. It is fully up to the high standard which it has made for itself, and contains nine articles, all able and interesting, with the usual thorough and necessary resume of the contemporary literature of the past quarter. Our wealthy men could not do a kinder or more graceful thing than to send such a *Review* as the *British Quarterly* to every Presbyterian Minister in the Dominion. If each were to begin with his own, or some neighboring Minister, the matter could be easily accomplished.

Our New Premier.

The *Christian World*, of London, England, is a prominent undenominational publication, and being non-partizan in politics, especially Canadian politics, its opinion of the Hon. Alex. Macenzie, the workingman Premier of Canada, is worth something. It says:—"From all that we have heard, he is a man of whom the Baptist denomination may be proud. Setting out in life with no capital but his brains and hands, Mr. Macenzie was first of all a stonemason, and afterwards a farmer. By his persevering energy and sterling integrity he has raised himself to First Minister of the Crown, and there can be no doubt, from recent revelations, that the political life of Canada will be much the better of a strong effusion of the moral qualities by which Mr. Macenzie is distinguished, existing as they do, in union with a well-trained mind, a clear intellect, and a shrewd, practical knowledge of human nature."

Ministers and Churches.

The Session and congregation of Dunfermline Church, East Lothian, have approved *simpliciter* of the Basis of Union.

The call from North Bruce to the Rev. J. Scott, of London, was not sustained, so that he continues pastor of St. Andrew's Church in that city.

The Rev. D. B. Whitnister, of Meaford, is announced to lecture before the Mechanics' Institute of that town, on the 25th instant. Subject: "Men and Women of 29 years to come."

At the annual meeting of the Presbyterian Church, Petrolia, an appropriate and affectionate address, along with a purse containing \$67, was presented to the Rev. J. McRobie, as an expression of gratitude and esteem. Mr. McRobie replied in suitable terms.

Since the induction of the Rev. Mr. Whitnister over the Presbyterian Church, Meaford, the old building has become too small, and the congregation has under consideration the feasibility of erecting a new church. We hope the project may be carried on to a successful issue.

We notice that the Rev. J. M. Gibson, M.A., of Erskine Church, Montreal, has received a unanimous call to the second Presbyterian Church, Chicago, with an offer of \$6,000 salary. The Church is one of the oldest and wealthiest in the city, and the new building is said to have cost \$250,000. We trust that Mr. Gibson may see it to be his duty to remain in Montreal.

In acknowledgment of valued services during a period of three months, the Little Toronto congregation recently presented the Rev. Mr. McLennan with a purse containing \$76, besides subscribing the sum of \$19.50 to aid a neighboring station under Mr. McL's charge.

The Rev. John Laing, M.A., of Dundas, lectured at the annual social of Erskine Church Sabbath School, Ingersoll, on "Scenes from the Betrayal." The *Chronicle* says:—"The lecture was indeed a rich treat to all who heard it, and we congratulate Mr. Laing on a production so perfect as a work of art, faultless in literary execution, rich in poetic beauty, and fruitful in lessons of deep wisdom and solemn warning."

The annual meeting of Zion Presbyterian congregation was held last week in the lecture room, the Rev. Mr. Cochran in the chair. The Treasurer's report for the past year was read by Mr. James Wallace, showing a balance of one hundred dollars in hand, with the Pastor's salary paid in advance to May, 1874. After the new Board of management had been elected, resolutions were passed regarding repairs upon the church and Sabbath school room, and a committee appointed to take steps for procuring an organ for the church. It was also unanimously agreed that \$400 be added to the Pastor's salary. A similar addition was made two years ago. Altogether, the congregation of Zion Church have much reason for thankfulness in view of their prosperity.

The Presbytery of Picton, says the *Advocate*, met on the 14th Jan., and inducted the Rev. Archibald C. Gilles into the pastoral charge of the congregation of Sherbrooke. The Rev. John McKinnon preached. His text was Heb. xiii:17. His sermon was able and impressive. The Rev. Mr. Goodfellow addressed the minister, and in very appropriate terms. The Rev. A. McLennan Sinclair presided and addressed the people. The congregation joyfully welcomed their new minister at the door of the church. The managers paid him a quarters salary in advance. The call to Mr. Gilles was unanimous. His people are quite proud of him. The Presbytery gladly welcomed him as one of their number. We pray that Mr. Gilles may be long spared to labor in Sherbrooke. He has a kind-hearted and intelligent people.

The Dominion elections are now nearly over, and have resulted in an overwhelming triumph for the new ministry. The majority, will to all appearance, be considerably over a hundred.

The best way to get new scholars in the Sunday-school is to ask them to come. The best way to find those who should be scholars is to go and look for them. There are enough outside who ought to be in. Not a few of these would come in if personally invited. They are not to be swept in by crowds. They must be led in one by one. Such is the advice of a writer in the *Sunday-School World*, and it is hard to be improved upon.

It was Dr. Norman McLeod's grand achievement to read "Tam O'Shanter" to her Majesty, a tale of laughter were running down her royal eyes, and alternated with feelings of supernatural awe, as he, in low and deep tones, read the enumeration of articles upon the weird table of the witches, and with quick pants of hurried breathing, as he gave their pursuit of the immortal Tam as far as the keystone of the bridge.