

The Canadian Spectator.

VOL. III.—No. 25.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, JUNE 19, 1880.

\$2.00 PER ANNUM.

CONTENTS:

THE TIMES.
TORONTO AND AROUND.
TRADE, FINANCE, STATISTICS.
BANK OF MONTREAL.
COMMERCIAL UNION WITH THE UNITED STATES.
CLERKS AS FARMERS.
BEET-ROOT SUGAR.

THE FUTURE.
THE FRENCH PROTESTANT PEOPLE IN MONTREAL.
COMPLIMENTS.
DOMESTIC ECONOMY.
CORRESPONDENCE.
MUSICAL.
CHESS.

THE TIMES.

Montreal has been blessed with the presence of many Ministers and representative church members during the past week, and the Conference meetings appear to have gone off in a most satisfactory manner. The Presbyterians and Congregationalists have discussed the different phases of their life and work, and have found sufficient reason to be well content with themselves. But a few things may be noticed as noticeable.

Each assembly was evidently under the rule of a very limited number of men. The same names occurred again and again. Dr. So-and-so, M. A., etc., was constantly on his feet, while the majority sat and listened and voted as they were directed. The Congregational ministers and delegates appeared to be at the mercy of a "ring." Everything was brought forward cut and dried, and nobody seemed to have the courage to offer a criticism or opposition. Whatever a committee proposed or recommended was instantly accepted, and red-tapism had it all its own way.

I was glad to hear the discussion in the Congregational Union of the matter of ministerial education, but sorry to find it all ending in nothing practical or useful. The Rev. Hugh Pedley, of Cobourg, strongly insisted upon the urgent need for a closer study of New Testament exegesis on the part of students. And I think he was right. Ministers are expected to have an understanding of the Bible, but during their college course it is the one book they study least. They give more time to Homer than to St. John, more attention to Cæsar and Cicero than to St. Paul. They are not going forth into the world to preach Homer, and the smattering of Greek and Latin they get is of little or no use to them when they leave college—for if they know classics enough to use Ellicott and Alford, that is all the majority of ministers require.

One gentleman, a layman, and otherwise supposed to be a practical business man, for he holds a responsible position, coolly suggested that the time had come, or at all events, was nigh at hand, when the Congregationalists should only accept as students for the ministry those young men who have gone through a course of training at the university. It does not seem to have occurred to him that young men who can command such advantages will probably look for some kind of return in the way of social position. What can Congregationalism offer an educated young man in Canada? A start in a small town or village, with a salary of about six or eight hundred dollars per year, and not much chance of winning "promotion by merit."

The ministry has become a profession; the missionary idea has died out, and the minister has to make his salary just like any other professional man. He must have ability of some sort or he will not succeed; it may be ability to cringe; to hide his own convictions; to pursue a policy of pleasing everybody; to put his manhood down to serve as a hassock in some rich man's pew; or, to bravely assert his

right to be true and save his soul from the unpardonable sin of meanness—but ability he must have, for he cannot rely now upon the power of the simple truth he preaches, and the commanding dignity of his office. St. Paul would hardly be considered a great preacher in these days, and St. John's sermons on "Love" would have no influence whatever on the individual members of a "Union." A full exchequer is the basis of our unity, and money is our bond of affection. While that is so our laity may as well understand and recognize the fact that the first thing they require in the minister is the knack of making money.

It seems to me a mistake to educate the ministry much beyond the general run of people. A minister should be a little abreast of his people, but not very much. Any great difference between him and them must result in misunderstanding and trouble. The Congregationalists should consider where their ministers have to work, and train them accordingly. Let them have the kind of education they need for the work they actually have to do. It rarely happens that an accomplished scholar can succeed as a pioneer. Our first-class classics are not likely to find much friendship in the farming villages and backwoods, and Canada has villages and backwoods to a very considerable extent. It is a waste of time and money to train men for work they will never have to do.

The one thing neglected in our colleges is the art of preaching. Students are sedulously taught how to construe Homer and Cicero, and answer Strauss or Bauer, but how to construct a sermon, so as to interest and enlighten an audience they are not half taught. That arises from the fact, that often college professors are pulpit failures. For example, there is * * * * and some others I could name.

What the minister really requires is this; first, instruction in the positive truth he has to preach; second, as to the errors he has to meet; third, the humanity he has to influence for good; and fourth, the manner in which his work must be done.

One thing, however, was made plain at those meetings: the churches of Canada are making progress in matters of religious thought; the old narrowness is giving way on every side. Principal Grant—a man of large heart, liberal ideas, and a cultured mind, just the very kind of man to be at the head of a University—rejoiced in the fact that this is a sceptical age, because scepticism is a proof of thoughtfulness. Dr. Stevenson, as chairman, in his able address to the Congregational Union, was as broad and liberal as broad and liberal can be, even venturing to assert that the time may be, and probably is, at hand, when the theory of evolution will be found in no wise contradictory of the Gospel of the New Testament.

The Rev. Hugh Pedley, to whom I have already referred—a young man of whom Canadian Congregationalists and others will have reason yet to be proud, I think—in a very able speech pleaded for free thought. Of course, when he spoke of "unfettered Congregationalism," he had the ideal, and not the actual Canadian Congregationalism before his mind—but none the less was his word in season and greatly needful. Mr. Roy made a speech—in every way good—in precisely the same direction. The truth is, and I may as well confess it, that I find myself being left behind in the march of progress. My friends are going fast—I begin to think a little too fast; still, as Principal Grant said, better scepticism than stagnation.