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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30th, 1891.

WITH regret we noticed, too late for correction, an obvious error that inadvertently crept into an editorial paragraph in last week's issue. The unfortunate and unintended words, "doubtful or dishonest Methodist means" occur. Intelligent readers will at once see that these words neither harmonize with the sense nor sentiment of the paragraph. It is hardly necessary to add that in the Methodist Church there is as high a sense of personal and public honour as among any body of earnest Christians and upright citizens, and we most sincerely regret that an unintentional typographical slip should have conveyed a meaning so different from that intended.

A WRITER in the *Homiletic Monthly* has this to say in the "best parishioner" column:—

The best I have met was on my first station. It was in Muskoka, a new part of the country. Most of the people were very poor. The man with whom I made my home had a large family. His farm being new, he could not raise half his bread, yet he paid \$2 a month for the minister's salary, and made him a home free for the year, and when I was leaving the station I was \$17 short of my salary, which was only \$160 a year. He placed in my hand a parcel, and told me not to open it till I got on the train. When I did so, I found it was \$17, the amount of my deficiency. He had sold one of his two only cows a day or two before, no doubt to raise it. The man is wealthy to-day.

It might be worth somebody's while to find out who this parishioner is. Perhaps Mr. Findlay can throw some light on the question. Everybody will be glad to know that the good man has become wealthy.

THE House of Commons is making an effort to amend the law regulating election trials. THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN has often shown up some of the cruelties of that law. Here is one of them. A decent, respectable, influential citizen of limited means is nominated by a convention as a candidate for parliamentary honours. Contrary to his own judgment and perhaps to the advice of his family and personal friends he consents. The party elect him. He has warned the workers to be careful not to break the election law but some of them break it. A few weeks after the contest the opposite party come down upon the member with a protest. A long, tedious, expensive, worrying trial takes place. The member is unseated and has to meet a bill of costs running anywhere from one to five thousand dollars. The miserable creature who took a dollar for his vote escapes but the man who, contrary to his own judgment, made sacrifices to serve his country is perhaps financially ruined. The savings of a lifetime are swept away by the bill of costs. The law punished the innocent and let the guilty go free. Can we reasonably expect high minded, honourable men of limited means to take such risks? The theory of law is that it punishes the guilty. Any change that makes the law less absurdly unjust and cruel will be a good thing.

IT is always hard for some people to come right down to the honest truth and candidly say we ourselves are to blame. The difficulty is illustrated at the present time by the efforts made every day to account for the Quebec and Ottawa scandals in some way other than charging them right home upon the people of Canada. One favourite method is to blame "party." Party government, it is contended, is the root of the evil. This kind of rubbish is not only common—it is fashionable with a certain class. It is considered evidence of superiority to patronizingly ascribe everything wrong in Canadian politics to "party." Party feeling runs just as high in England as in Canada, but does any party in England defend or condone official rascality. Scotchmen are keen politicians. The Tories and Liberals of the Land of

Cakes know better perhaps than any people in the world how to conduct an election or "heckle" a candidate. Political meetings are as largely attended in Scotland as in any part of the world. There is no people on earth that enjoy a first-class political debate more keenly than Scotchmen. But when were the people of Scotland found defending dishonesty? When did they try to shield a Cabinet Minister by acknowledging that he was an imbecile? It is a libel on the old land to say that party government makes "boodling" a necessity. The root of the trouble is in the people themselves. If they want to punish dishonesty they can do it. If they want clean government they can have it.

A LEADING English journal sneers at the Bill now before the Dominion Parliament forbidding Ministers to receive gifts from contractors. Such legislation, the journal in question thinks, is another illustration of the weakness youthful communities have for curing every ill by acts of parliament. Undoubtedly youthful, self-governed communities do suffer from just that weakness. Our American neighbours have the weakness badly. Their remedy for every evil is "pass a law." The laws pass easily enough but the evil often remains and laughs at the law. The Canadians imitate our neighbours in this regard. Many look upon legislation as the sovereign remedy for sin. The same weakness is often seen in the Church. The brother is afflicted with it who is always curing something by "bringing it up in the Presbytery." In the Presbytery esteemed brethren remedy evils by overturning the General Assembly. The remedy, if any action is taken, is generally a resolution whose precise value is often the paper on which it is printed. If laws are all we need to remove evil we have the decalogue, a law given by God Himself and comprehensive enough to forbid every sin, even the modern sin of boodling. Laws are useful things in their own place, but Canadians should know the Bible well enough to understand that laws are useless without moral power to enforce them. The people need to be toned up before laws can be of much use to them.

FIFTY years ago there was grave doubt in the minds of British statesmen as to whether Canadians should be entrusted with the power of governing themselves. The early settlers had come from different countries and had been brought up under different forms of government. Many of them were poor and many had not enjoyed the advantages of early education. There was much to attend to in this young country. The burdens were heavy enough without the burdens of self-government. It is quite easy to understand now how statesmen trained to statesmanship should doubt whether the early settlers had the intelligence, self-control, and business ability necessary for self-government. Half a century has passed and the old question of self-government comes up again. This time the question is: Have Canadians enough of moral power to govern themselves honestly? No one doubts the intelligence of the people. We know enough. The average of intelligence is high, perhaps as high as that of any country in the world. No one asserts that our system of government is not fairly good. The Confederation compact may not be perfect, but no system of government is perfect. There is no tyrannical power of any kind to contend against. The people have the power in their own hands. It is terribly humiliating to have to stop and ask the question: Is there enough of moral power in this country to govern it honestly? but that question must be faced before we have anything lasting in the way of improvement.

IT is very humiliating to have to acknowledge that the question which lies behind all the others raised by the Ottawa and Quebec scandals is whether there is enough of honesty left in the Canadian people to govern themselves. Thousands of teachers are teaching; thousands of preachers are preaching; dozens of colleges are in full blast and young men by the score go out of these institutions every year trailing their academic glory behind them. If there is one society or association in the country existing professedly for purposes of moral and religious reform there are fifty. The initials of these societies and associations have become so numerous that we must soon have a book explaining what they all stand for. Perhaps no country in the world of its size has so much machinery for moral reform purposes as Canada. And yet when all this machinery is running at full blast and with much

noise quite a number of the people seem to have some doubt as to whether it is wrong for a man to take money that does not belong to him. Many contend that thieving at Ottawa is palliated by thieving at Quebec. The tone of public morality is so low among many that "you're another" is amply sufficient as an answer to any charge. It is terribly humiliating but humiliation is the right feeling to have. No improvement will be worth a straw that does not begin with shame and humiliation.

THERE is much food for reflection in the following which we clip from the *Interior*—

Your session—if the Church be rich—will climb the top of the spire and scan the horizon of the sea-shore, or look clear across the sea, for a man to fill your pulpit, when there is a better man than you will call not ten miles away. As you see them far off they are mighty big men, tremendous fellows, four feet taller than Goliath and broad in proportion. The fact is you can not find a better man in the world, better friend, neighbour and citizen than you can find within three miles of your farm, or two blocks of your office—and if you can not get a preacher to suit you inside of your Presbytery, you will never find him though you roam the wide world all over.

As Abraham Lincoln would say that reminds us of a little story. Not long ago a large and influential congregation was vacant, we shall not say where. Within the bounds of the Presbytery and a few miles away was an excellent minister well known to the congregation. He would have filled the place and done the work admirably but apparently no one thought of him. He lived too near and had not the advantage of that peculiar enchantment which distance gives to the view. One day a city congregation called him and no sooner was he called than the neighbouring congregation began to wonder why they never thought of him. One of the objections made against the system by those who do not believe in it is that congregations seldom or never call a minister who lives near no matter how good he is, and often call inferior men simply because they are far away. Distance, objectors say, is one of the main factors in getting up a call.

DR. VINCENT ON EXEGESIS.

IT is frequently asserted and generally believed that the age of chivalry has passed away. The grotesque features of the mediæval institution have certainly disappeared beyond recall, but whatever was real in it has survived and is not likely to perish from among men. The defence of the weak, the unfortunate, shielding from the oppression and tyranny of the strong, awaken a response in every generous heart as effectively now as in the days of Amadis de Gaul. In the attitude of Union Theological Seminary toward Dr. Briggs we have an evidence of present-day chivalry. The learned and aggressive professor has found most ardent defenders in the institution with which he is connected. The Seminary itself is on the defensive, and appears to lose no opportunity of justifying the position in relation to the Higher Criticism it has assumed. The opening address of Dr. Vincent on Exegesis is a strong effort, containing many excellent and true thoughts, but it is evident that in its preparation he had distinctly in his mind the bearing of the Briggs controversy on the interests of the Seminary. At another time a lecture on so important a theme would have been free from local apologetic.

With his definition of exegesis and the importance rightly attaching to it, few who are competent to form an opinion on the subject would care to quarrel. He says:—

In the logical order, in the order of fact, in the order of importance, exegesis precedes theology. This is the logical consequence of the position of the Evangelical Church respecting the Bible, namely, that the Bible contains a divine revelation which is man's only infallible rule of faith and practice. Theology rests upon revelation. Its function is to classify and systematize the material furnished by revelation.

This much at least will be conceded, but it is doubtful if assent will be unanimous when he goes on to say, "It is true that the word of God is not in the Scriptures alone; that the terms 'Bible' and 'Word of God' are not synonymous. The latter term is never applied by Scripture to itself. The formula of the Reformation in its last days was not 'Scripture is the Word of God,' but 'Scripture contains the Word of God.'" If the Scriptures are not the Word of God, how shall the average reader be able to determine what is and what is not the Word of God? If learned critics differ widely in their efforts to discriminate between the divine and human in the Bible; and if they come to widely different conclusions, being guided largely by subjective reasons, how can ordinary people be expected to reach conclusions more satisfactory? If the Bible is