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## The Canada Presbyterian

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3RD, 1893.

In his recent lecture on Presbyterianism Dr. Langtry says there were no Presbyterians for more than twelve hundred years of the world's history. That was a bad time for the world.

In addition to the report given in our last issue, as to the returns from Presbyteries to the General Assembly of the U. S. Church, regarding the remit on creed revision, 56 additional returns have been received. The returns now stand thus: 20 Presbyteries take no action, several on the ground that the committee on revision was unconstitutionally formed; 30 approve entire, 42 disapprove entire, though in a majority of cases expressing desire for a new creed; 46 approve in part, and 57 request a new creed.

Principal MacVicar winds up a paper in a recent number of the Presbyterian College Journal with the following suggestive and helpful sentences. Would that all perorations were as sensible and useful. "The present is better than the past, and the future will be infinitely better than the present. Away with pessimism in every connection. They are not the highest style of men, and certainly not the true type of Presbyterians, who are constantly looking along the line of their nose into the dirt of this world rather than looking up to God and to heaven and aspiring to things infinitely greater and better than any yet realized. Let our motto ever be—excelsior."

Certainly looking along the line of one's nose into the dirt is not a dignified or elevating kind of exercise for a Christian; but it is exactly what too many of us are doing. The upward look is the right one.

The Bill introduced by the Hon. Mr. Gibson the other day providing for the care of indigent children is a good one and will receive the support of both sides of the house. It is not a little humiliating that in a province of churches and school-houses such a bill should be necessary, but being necessary it is well to have it. From some of its provisions we would be inclined to dissent, but taken as a whole it is an excellent measure and can scarcely fail to accomplish much good. The chief danger, as Mr. Meredith pointed out, will come from fussy, professional philanthropists, who will avail themselves of the law to bolster up their own fads and advertise themselves generally rather than to help poor children. As Lord Macaulay observes, a reforming age is always an age of imposture; but, of course, that cannot be helped. The reform must go on.

The "penurious municipalities" that try to palm off their aged and helpless poor upon other people for support are hearing from various quarters just now. The judges frequently touch them up when addressing grand juries, and the other day the superintendent of the Orillia asylum let in this ray of light on some of their little practices:—

Among the admissions for the year are a few who should be cared for in county poor-houses, aged persons who maintained themselves as long as they were able to work and now that they have become infirm they are palmed off on the province to relieve friends and municipalities of their care. Recently an attempt was made to send to us three vagrants who have for a number of years been confined to the gaol of one of the largest and richest counties, and whose representatives from year to year persistently op-

pose the erection of a home for these destitute people. There is no pretence that these people are idiots, but the authorities and physicians are willing to certify that they are imbeciles; and so are a great many more throughout the country through age and want. If we continue to receive vagrants and paupers it will be necessary to extend the buildings indefinitely. There should be some law to compel penurious municipalities to make provision for the care and support of the poor, instead of committing them to gaol with the hope that they may be ultimately thrown upon the Province for support.

The other day a humane judge ordered the prison garb to be taken off a poor old man, who was put in gaol in a rich county for the crime of being poor, helpless, homeless and friendless.

There is grim humour in saying that the Briggs case will be tried by the General Assembly of the American church in a few days. The trial has been going on for years—in the newspapers. The New York Evangelist has acquitted him every week for over a twelvemonth; and some of the other journals have found him guilty several hundred times. It is quite safe to say that nine out of ten of the members of assembly have made up their minds on the case, and know how they will vote before the court is constituted. In civil or criminal courts journals are punished for trying to influence the jury; but in what are called spiritual courts a journal may find a verdict and then help to pack a jury that will come to the same conclusion. Are we to have trial by newspapers in this country? Having borrowed the Gerry-mander from American politics, it might perhaps be well for the church to borrow the American plan of trying theological professors by newspaper. As the accuser need not sign his name to his charge and can keep himself in the dark, while he stabs the professor the evidence will of course always be truthful.

Last Saturday's London Advertiser says: It was a pleasant incident—a lecture under the auspices of one congregation (Park Avenue Presbyterian), held in the church edifice of another congregation (St. Andrew's). It illustrates the pleasant relation which unites all the Presbyterian pastors and congregations of London. The lecturer was the Rev. Dr. Caven, principal of Knox College; the subject, "A Trip Through Palestine;" the chairman, Rev. W. J. Clark; on the platform, also, Rev. Messrs. Murray, Talling, and Black, and Rev. Mr. Wilson, returned missionary from India. Among those in the audience were likewise Rev. Messrs. Gordon, Aylward and Ballantyne. After the lecture, which was interesting and instructive, as well as entertaining, votes of thanks were passed to the lecturer and to St. Andrew's Church, for the use of their building. Prof. Barron gave some organ music previous to and after the lecture. Of Dr. Caven it is not necessary to speak at length. The Presbyterian Church does not acknowledge any formal "leader," but we doubt if anyone comes nearer to that position without desire on his part, than the worthy lecturer. Few men in Canada unite in so unique a degree, the characteristics of gentleness of demeanor, firmness of purpose, and lucidity of mind.

In his autobiography Dr. Donald Fraser gives his opinion of the church courts he attended in Scotland. He says:

"I attended the church courts as a simple piece of duty. The Presbytery was small and usually dull; the synod was little better. At the first General Assembly, of which I was a member, I was invited to preach, but otherwise I held my peace. In after years I spoke occasionally in the General Assembly, and had no cause to complain of my reception there. But I must say that after I learned 'the ropes' and perceived how successive assemblies are managed by a few expert persons, I have ceased to pay them much deference. They are too big, too hurried, and too liable to a sort of gregarious passion to be of much deliberative value. No conclave or convocation whatever can have much value which will not listen quietly to unpalatable truths, and my observation has been that those who speak such truths

in the Free Church assemblies are apt to be howled down by an impatient throng. There is a great deal of vigorous speaking but the assembly too often resembles a mob cheering a favorite, or jeering at an unpopular opponent rather than a convocation of grave and reverend men deliberating together over the things of the Kingdom of God."

Let those who remember the discussions in the Canadian Assembly on the defunct Scott Act, or on the Jesuit Estates Bill say whether there is not a court nearer, home that too often substitutes "gregarious passion", howling and stamping, for the grave and reverend deliberation that should characterize a spiritual court.

It is a thousand pities that Mr. Mackenzie's bill providing for the early closing of stores on Saturday evening should have been so unceremoniously hustled out of the Local Legislature. Indirectly, if passed it would have prevented a vast amount of Sabbath breaking. In every town and city of Ontario there are vacant seats in the churches on Sabbath forenoon, just because places of business are kept open so late on Saturday night. The only objection to the measure was that it would interfere with business. Fifty laws on the statute book do that very thing.

Speaking and voting for prohibition are not by any means the only ways in which the temperance cause can be advanced. The passing of Mr. Mackenzie's early closing bill would have done a great deal in the way of lessening the temptation to use liquor with which a most important part of the community is beset. Worn out with long hours and weary with waiting on customers, many of them unreasonable, is it at all wonderful that salesmen and other employes in stores are tempted to resort to the use of stimulants on Saturday night? Those who know something of the inner business life of towns know how strong the temptation is; and they also know that in too many cases it is not successfully resisted. The deputation that waited on the government to discuss prohibition might very well have given Mr. Mackenzie a lift with his practical measure, and we think the hon. gentleman himself should have forced his bill to a division; more especially as the principal opponent was a Roman Catholic, whose ideas on the Sabbath are perhaps not noted for strictness.

Three clergymen representing the Anglican, the Presbyterian and the Methodist churches respectively—the first named the Rev. Dr. Brooke from England, the second, the Rev. Mr. McGregor from Scotland, and the third, the Rev. Mr. Inwood from Ireland—have been spending the last week in Toronto, and have held afternoon and evening meetings for four consecutive days in Association Hall. These meetings have been well attended, and the people evidently interested and profited by them. The range of subject with which they have dealt has been wide and practical. The sins of intemperance, impurity of life and language, the various forms of worldliness, and general indifference to earnest religious life in the ministry and in the churches, have been dealt with in great faithfulness by Biblical, rather than strictly theological teaching of a very high order. To speak, however, of Christian evolution, modern scientific theories and the higher criticism as among the merely, though subtler religious fashions that interfere with the true relations which should exist between God and the human soul, is we think to weaken rather than strengthen the good work in which they are engaged. It is true that any modes of thought not excluding those of the Bible itself, may really be made a hindrance to rather than a means of promoting spiritual life. To deepen spiritual life is the great object of these brethren, and this is to fill every legitimate mode of thought and operation of life with the divine in-breathing of love, righteousness and power, so that God in Christ may be all in all. They are visiting a number of other cities in Ontario on their way to Chicago where they go to

assist Mr. Moody in evangelistic work during the World's Fair. They are all ministers in harness, their congregations supply their own pulpit during their absence, pay them their regular salaries and give them permission to go on this work. They personally receive nothing for what they do, and are glad to do what they do in the United States and Canada on the strength and confidence of their own churches at home. This is certainly commendable both on the part of the churches and their ministers; and all who have listened to them will be ready to bid them God-speed both for their own, and their work's sake.

## PROHIBITION.

If not serious division just now in the Prohibition ranks in this Province, there is at least some confusion; and if not positive jealousy, a slight degree of overheated enthusiasm on the part of that wing which prides itself on being in advance of everybody else on the subject. Prompt and total prohibition of the manufacture, importation and sale of all intoxicating drinks as a beverage just as soon as it can be enacted with safety to the great objects sought by such a measure, should be the motto of all who acknowledge the immense evils of the liquor traffic. But the man who has his foot upon the breaks in certain junctures is even a more valuable man than he who with whip in hand hastens the speed when steadiness and caution are to be exercised.

We believe this country to be ripe, in one sense, for such a measure. In another sense, it is not. To bring it within easy compass of thought, suppose this Province to consist of one hundred, of what use would seventy be in any contest, providing the remaining thirty had command of tactics, skill and advantage of preoccupation or position, so as to be able to throw their opponents in the political arena? Popular majorities are not always able to rule in Canada.

It must be remembered that Ontario does not stand alone. She is a part of the Dominion of Canada. Yea, she is a part of the British Empire. And it appears that "the privy council has repudiated the idea of there being any distinction between retail and wholesale." If, then, there be no such distinction in law and the Ontario Legislature has power to do anything, it has power to abolish both the wholesale and retail traffic. The Marter bill, then, is only a half measure; and our prohibition driver shouts and cracks the whip to make but one wheel of the coach spin while the other three refuse to turn. For ourselves, we accept the full and candid statement of the Premier as honest, and true to the best interests of the prohibition of the liquor traffic. It taxes our patience to be told what he has said so plainly and clearly, but the cultivation of that virtue may stand us in good stead in the time to come. And we can afford to wait when he has so frankly said that he thinks there are ways in which to test the validity of prohibition with considerable promptness, "and I think these ways ought to be taken and I think they will be taken." In the meantime, is it too much to expect temperance men to do some necessary work for the lubrication of the other three wheels of total prohibition of the manufacture, importation and wholesale traffic of liquors, as well as of the retail traffic?

It is a matter of sincerest gratitude that under our present license law and local option work, the number of licenses granted diminishes every year in the province; and as we pointed out last week, at the present rate of decrease, would all cease to exist in about thirty years.

The London Advertiser, in an article headed "Yes, there will be a Plebiscite," says, "As to the plebiscite idea, we challenge anyone to suggest anything of equal educational value."

The experience of this city is again available. Here a plebiscite was taken at the annual municipal elections (and at no extra expense except for the printing of the voting papers) on this simple question.