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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

The Canadian Ministers have fallen and a new administration taken their place. We hope that, warned by what has befallen their predecessors, the present Ministers will set their faces against any kind of political corruption.

DUKE OF ARGYLE ON CHURCH ESTABLISHMENTS.

It is curious to note how the most acute and conscientious get confused and involved in contradictions when they commit themselves to the defence of "State Churches." We have an illustration of this in a late speech delivered by the Duke of Argyll at Helensburgh, Scotland, in connection with the endowment scheme of the Church of Scotland.

Why not extend the "greatest national blessing" as well as "cherished maintenance" it? The Duke gives no reason, nor can give, except that such is his opinion. We think he is correct in saying State Churches cannot be extended, but then in that case what becomes of his argument?

Then the Duke adds that "the weak point of voluntarism is that it does not provide for the poor and thinly scattered districts. It provides for the rich. It necessarily does so to the neglect of the outlying districts."

Voluntarism is not congregationalism and as little is it optionalism. It is very true, that in practice, all Churches and Christians come far short of the ideal set before them, but they do not do this because of their voluntarism but in spite of it.

gospel be turned into anything like the valley and shadow of death, or be made the habitation of atheists or idolaters, of the impure and degraded of every kind, as we are often weakly and atheistically told it would;

IN MEMORIAM.

MR. ALEXANDER LAIDLAW, B.M.'S

At his residence, Mono Centre, on the 10th September, 1873, Mr. Alexander Laidlaw, sen'r., died. After a short illness, he peacefully passed away, at the ripe age of 78.

Born about the beginning of the century, of religious parents, in Lanarkshire, Scotland, he received the education and training common to his class in that much favored land. He began life in the employment of agriculture, and continued it to the end with distinguished success.

During the 21st year of his life he emigrated, first to New York, where after four years he contracted a very happy marriage with Miss Margaret Fraser—also from Lanarkshire—who still survives him, with seven grown-up children, to mourn their bitter bereavement.

Next he removed to Rochester, in 1833, whence, after spending a few more years of early married life, he moved with his wife and three children into the township of Mono. Here was a special field for the display of those manly Christian gifts which Mr. Laidlaw so largely possessed.

The year after his entrance in the woods a school-house was erected—the first opened, we learn, in the township. Shortly afterwards a church was raised for the worship of the living God, entitled Burns' Church, in honor of one of Canada's most distinguished missionaries; and still later a comfortable manse beside the sanctuary.

In 1836, he, along with two others, was elected an ordained elder in this first Presbyterian congregation, Mono. The responsible and arduous duties of this high office he discharged with singular acceptance and fidelity till very near the close of his long and well-spent life.

In connection with the Bible Society he labored zealously, and very perseveringly, to the latest period of his life. As the best

and shortest comment of labor in this useful department we quote the true and pithy statement of one of the ablest, most energetic and successful of the Society's travelling Agents: "Mr. Laidlaw is the sum-total of the Mono Centre Branch."

As a Christian he was humble and devout—a man of prayer, he wrestled with God—seemed to live near Him all his days, and took sweetest pleasure in these acts of devotion. Strong in the belief of the cardinal truths of the Bible, he never shrank from the prosecution and was strenuous in the advocacy of them.

The many missionaries throughout our section of the Christian Church, who have visited and labored in Mono Centre, will reverentially speak in memory of him, and think of the warm, devoted friend they ever found in him, of the cordial welcome they received to his hospitable abode and of the comfortable lodging there so long as needed.

The aged elder has now gone from the scene of his earthly toil and entered on rest in the heavenly mansions, "but being dead he yet speaketh." Oh that those who remain could hear and wisely learn, how blissful would be the result!

HOME MISSIONS.

We call special attention to the letter of the Rev. William Cochran which will be found in another column. The case is urgent, and ought to meet with a prompt and liberal response. Never was there a time in the history of the Canada Presbyterian Church when the openings for usefulness presented were more numerous or more inviting.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JOHN S. MILL.

We have no intention of giving any outline of the recently published autobiography of the late Mr. J. S. Mill. It is certainly a courageous book and brings out very truly the writer's views on religion, marriage, &c.

leave the matter to those who are more advanced than we at all profess to be. Of his religious ideas he speaks thus:—

"I was brought up from the first without any religious belief, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. My father, educated in the creed of Scotch Presbyterianism, had by his own studies and reflections early led to reject not only the belief in Revelation, but the foundations of what is commonly called Natural Religion. I have heard him say, that the turning point of his mind on the subject was reading Butler's Analogy. That work, of which he always continued to speak with respect, kept him, as he said, for some considerable time, a believer in the divine authority of Christianity; by proving to him, that whatever are the difficulties in believing that the Old and New Testaments proceed from, or record the acts of, a perfect wise and good being, the same and still greater difficulties stand in the way of the belief that a being of such a character can have been the Maker of the universe. He considered Butler's argument as conclusive against the only opponents for whom it was intended. Those who admit an omnipotent as well as perfectly just and benevolent maker and ruler of such a world as this, can say little against Christianity but what can, with at least equal force, be resorted against themselves. Finding, therefore, no halting place in Deism, he remained in a state of perplexity, until, doubtless, after many struggles, he yielded to the conviction, that concerning the origin of things nothing whatever can be known. This is the only correct statement of his opinion; for dogmatic atheism he looked upon as absurd; as most of those, whom the world had considered Atheists, have always done."

I have a hundred times heard him say, that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked, in a constantly increasing progression, that mankind have gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise, and have called this God, and prostrated themselves before it. Thus, as plus ultra of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity. Think (he used to say) of a being who would make a Hell—who would create the human race with the infallible foreknowledge, and therefore with the intention, that the great majority of them were to be consigned to horrible and everlasting torment. The time, I believe, is drawing near when this dreadful conception of an object of worship will be no longer identified with Christianity; and when all persons, with any sense of moral good and evil, will look upon it with the same indignation with which my father regarded it.

It would have been wholly inconsistent with my father's ideas of duty, to allow me to acquire impressions contrary to his convictions and feelings respecting religion; and he impressed upon me from the first that the manner in which the world came into existence was a subject on which nothing was known; that the question, 'Who made me?' cannot be answered, because we have no experience or authentic information from which to answer it; and that any answer only throws the difficulty a step further back, since the question immediately presents itself, 'Who made God?' He, at the same time, took care that I should be acquainted with what had been thought by mankind on these impenetrable problems. I have mentioned at how early an age he made me a reader of ecclesiastical history; and he taught me to take the strongest interest in the Reformation, as the great decisive contest against priestly tyranny for liberty of thought.

I am thus one of the very few examples, in this country, of one who has not thrown off religious belief, but never had it: I grew up in a negative state with regard to it. I looked upon the modern exactly as I did upon the ancient religion, as something which in no way concerned me. It did not seem to me more strange that English people should believe what I did not, than that the men I read of in Herodotus should have done so. History has made the variety of opinions among mankind a fact familiar to me, and this was but a prolongation of that fact. On religion in particular the time appears to me to have come, when it is the duty of all who, being qualified in point of knowledge, have on mature consideration satisfied themselves that the current opinions are not only false but hurtful, to make their dissent known; at least if they are among those whose station or reputation gives their opinion a chance of being attended to. Such an avowal would put an end, at once and for ever, to the vulgar prejudice, that what is called, very improperly, unbelief, is connected with any bad qualities either mind or heart. The world would be astonished if it knew how great a proportion of its brightest ornaments—of those most distinguished even in popular estimation for wisdom and virtue—are complete sceptics in religion; many of them refraining from avowal, less from personal considerations, than from a conscientious, though now in my opinion a most mistaken apprehension, lest by speaking out what would tend to weaken existing beliefs, and by consequence (as they suppose) existing restraints, they should do harm instead of good.

Of unbelievers (so called) as well as of believers, there are many species, including almost every variety of moral type. But the best among them, as no one who has had opportunities of really knowing them will hesitate to affirm, are more genuinely religious, in the best sense of the word religion, than those who exclusively arrogate to themselves the title.

Of his relationship to Mrs. Taylor during her first husband's life he speaks as follows. The last sentence showing that though he might so far yield to the absurd restraints of society it was simply from a wish to preserve the conventional respectability of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor. Many of his disciples who may adopt his principles may have no such scruples. And indeed, why should they?

All these circumstances united, made the number very small of those whose society, and still more whose intimacy, I now voluntarily sought. Among these, was the in-