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FOR 1883.

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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 17, 1883.

MR. JAMES MICHIE, a prominent business man, a good citizen of Toronto, and a devoted Christian died on Saturday last. His illness was short. He was in his accustomed place in St. Andrew's Church at the New Year's morning service, and now the end has come. He was an active and devoted worker, a man of large-hearted and discriminating liberality and unaffected simplicity of character. He was a trustee of Queen's College, and a member of the Temporalities Board. Warm and graceful allusions to his worth, and the loss sustained by his death were made in St. Andrew's and in St. James' Square churches.

A FEW months ago it seemed as if the Northern and Southern Presbyterian Churches of the United States might soon be united. Fraternal salutations passed between the Assemblies, and it was generally thought that fraternal relations would soon be established. A delegation was appointed by the Southern Assembly to attend the Northern Assembly in May at Saratoga, and everything seemed to promise friendly relations, if not organic union. Scarcely had the Assemblies adjourned when several scores of the brethren began discussing the question in all its bearings in the press and in the church courts. The discussion continues until this day, and in some instances waxed warm. All the old sores have been opened. The meaning of the fraternal resolutions is vigorously debated. The brethren seem to go into the union business, as we would have done if we had gone back to '43 and '44 and discussed all the vexed questions of that stormy period. Their case is worse than ours would have been because their wounds are more recent. Our neighbours know how to do a great many things but how to form a union quietly, judging from present appearances, is not one of them. They discuss these "fraternal relations" until no relations are left.

It is generally conceded that in most of his appointments to judicial positions Sir John A. Macdonald has selected the men best fitted for places on the bench. Men learned in the law and who possess the necessary qualifications for administering justice are usually chosen. Mere political partizanship would in itself be a poor recommendation for judicial office. The latest appointment of this kind gives general satisfaction, and the people of Manitoba are to be congratulated on the filling of the judiciary chairs rendered vacant by the sudden death of Justice Wood and the return of Justice Miller to the arena of political life, by Mr. Lewis Wallbridge and T. A. Taylor, Q. C. and Master in Ordinary, of the Supreme Court of Judicature of Ontario. Mr. Taylor's long experience and his many excellent qualities render his appointment to the vacant puisne judgeship a most popular one. There is reason to believe that it has been made in deference to the expressed wishes of the members of the Manitoba bar. By his removal from Toronto Winnipeg gains an exemplary citizen, and

the cause of Presbyterianism there a wise and useful office-bearer. As most of our readers know, he has taken a prominent part in the public business of our Church, and he will doubtless continue to render it valuable services in the future as he has in the past.

JUDGING from the following paragraph which we clip from the "Christian at Work," the Presbyterians of New York and Brooklyn are about to take a new departure:—

"Our Presbyterian friends are working hard to remedy their deficiencies in this city and Brooklyn so far as Presbyterian exclusion is concerned. The New York Presbytery on Monday decided upon the appointment of a committee of fifteen, composed of seven ministers and eight laymen—they to provide a superintendent if necessary. This is not the plan proposed some little time ago of a Presbyterian bishop, a real *episcopus*, but it is one which will unquestionably do something to revivify a decidedly passive Presbyterianism in New York and vicinity,—passive, we mean, so far as its growth and development are concerned."

There are several things about this business which we don't understand. We never knew that Presbyterianism in New York is "decidedly passive." We have always had the impression that it was a decidedly active kind of "ism." If passive, how is a superintendent going to make it active? Above all, what are the "deficiencies so far as exclusion is concerned," and how is the superintendent to remedy them? We have looked in vain at our New York Presbyterian exchanges for a solution of these mysteries, but can find none. Perhaps the "Christian at Work" gets beyond its depth when it touches Presbyterian topics—our friend should fish for paragraphs in the shallow waters of Congregationalism.

AN exchange says:—

"In all ages people have been fond of scandal. And as in the days of Horace even now there are plenty who roll the savoury morsel under their tongues. We do take a morbid delight in finding out something bad about somebody. We tell it to our neighbour in the strictest confidence, and he does the same, and so the story goes through the community until everybody has been told of the mishap and enjoined to keep it a secret."

Yes, and we venture to say this love of scandal does the church of God as much harm as any other form of sin, drunkenness not excepted. A large proportion of the wrangling and strife that destroy congregations, disgrace Christianity, and ruin personal character, is often caused by the scandal mongering habits of a few persons. Many a minister has been gossiped into his grave. The worst feature of the case is that no law can be passed to stop this form of evil. There is no Crooks' Act to regulate lying; no N.P. to put a tax on gossip, no prohibitory law to stop scandal. The image says when the Devil has any work to do in Brooklyn, so mean that he is ashamed to attend to it personally, he always gets a few local gossips to do it for him. Work that the devil is ashamed of must be rather bad. The man who trundled his wife's body to the cemetery in a wheelbarrow to save the price of a hearse is an apostle compared with the man who enjoys destroying his neighbour's reputation.

ABOUT the poorest thing the Presbyterian Church ever saw was the old-fashioned missionary meeting. Our readers remember the missionary meeting—we mean the one the Presbytery used to get up. It was always held in winter, and nearly always on a very stormy cold day. When the speakers came—sometimes they didn't come—they usually found a few people sitting round the stove. Whether they were warming the stove or the stove warming them was an open question. The other end of the church was generally cold enough to freeze a speaker as peppery as Talmage. The singing—well, the psalmist says when we sing we should make a loud noise skilfully, but the old time missionary meeting did not come up to either of these requirements. The speeches were often good but those who needed them most were never there. Missionary meetings under the auspices of the Presbytery are not now usually held. Congregations or missionary associations that wish to have a missionary meeting arrange for it themselves. A good many ministers preach on the scheme, which is a good plan. John Hall says the great secret for getting money for missions is "inform the people." He is right. Good church literature in the family helps wonderfully. A tract containing a short statement of our mission work and other schemes is a good thing. Any plan that will "inform the people" and increase their interest is good.

SABBATH DESECRATION.

THE sacredness of the day of rest is being steadily and persistently encroached upon. Sabbath labour beyond the most liberal requirements of necessity and mercy is in many cases exacted from overworked toilers. Gigantic railway corporations cease to have respect for the sanctity of the first day of the week. It is true that the usual number of passenger trains are not run on that day, but in most cases there is no diminution of the great volume of freight sent over all the leading lines of railway. That is the day specially selected for its transmission. Were statistics available, it is would probably be found that on that day more freight is moved than on any other day of the week. Several companies crowd all the work they can into the repair shops in order to avoid delay on other days. In the summer season, especially in the United States, an immense number of heavy excursion trains are run on Sunday. It has been observed that the railway, one of the mighty agencies of modern civilization, brings along with it a demoralizing power. Specious excuses are from time to time offered in palliation of its infringing on the day appointed for rest and worship. These excuses are flimsy and inadequate. The real reason for the great desecration of the sacred day is obvious enough. The love of gain is the one potent cause for the increasing amount of Sunday labour the railways are imposing. It is wonderful how philanthropic railway boards that disregard the Sabbath can become. They assume a virtue if they have it not. All their solicitude for the enjoyment they provide for the toiling classes would speedily vanish into thin air, if Sunday pleasure excursions were not the profitable speculations they are. We know how accommodating in other respects these railway magnates are to the business and other wants of communities if they happen to be relieved from the useful effects of a healthy competition. The great amount of business done by railways on Sunday necessitates the constant employment of a large number of men who are deprived of one of their most valuable privileges. These railway employes, by the very nature of their occupation, are, under the most favourable conditions, deprived to a certain extent of home life and its influences, and it is a greater hardship still to take them from the society of their families on the Lord's day. Most of those men—and they are a worthy and exemplary body—feel the deprivation keenly. They have in several instances moved for relief from this grievous burden, but hitherto in vain. There is a movement now in progress among employes of the Grand Trunk to secure release from Sunday labour. From the Christian community they deserve more than sympathy and well wishes in their endeavour. Their efforts ought to be seconded by the churches. Christian people who enjoy the blessings of a free Sabbath ought to aid those less fortunate in securing the same advantage.

In all large cities in the United States the Sunday edition of the daily newspaper is now an established institution. Twenty years ago it was an exception, it is now the rule. During the conflict between North and South people were eager to learn the latest news from the battle fields. Ministers read despatches as they arrived to their congregations. The leading journals issued Sunday editions, and thus the Sunday newspaper was added to the other forms of Sabbath desecration. The proprietors of these journals put forth special efforts to print mammoth sheets containing much that by no stretch of charity can be called Sunday reading. The power of the press as an instrument for the promotion of enlightenment cannot be overrated, but in the instance now under consideration it becomes a demoralizing power. To many thousands it offers a plausible excuse for neglecting its higher duties of the day. Instead of fostering morality and virtue, the usual political discussions, commercial intelligence, and general news are served up as on other days, and the specialty of the leading Sunday papers is to present a larger amount of amusing and sensational reading than usual. Here again there is the added cruelty of imposing unnecessary and burdensome labour on a large class of journalists whose occupation is sufficiently exacting without the addition of bringing out a Sunday paper. Then the printers, a large proportion of whom have to be constantly employed in night work at a trade not over healthy in the most favourable circumstances, are made to undergo an amount of work that makes them