

The Canadian Independent

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TORONTO, AUGUST 4, 1881.

GAVAZZI.

The Gavazzi riots in Quebec and Montreal (1852) are still in remembrance, which, with other recollections, are evoked by the visit last Sunday to this city of the Italian patriot, now seventy-three years old, tall, erect, still burning with Italian fire. In youth he was a Barnabite monk, but soon evidenced more of the patriot than of the ecclesiastic, and with Garibaldi may be said to have been the popular instruments of enkindling among the Italian people the fire which eventually was to fuse discordant elements, and form an united Italy. No ordinary man could have aroused the Italian spirit which gathered together 25,000 men ready to hurl themselves on the Austrian battalions and redeem Venetia, but the new republic he and his coadjutor had formed soon yielded to French bayonets, and Gavazzi was an exile. As an exile he visited these shores; now as a patriot, who has lived to see many of the dreams of his youth realized, and Italy united.

He gradually broke with Papal Rome, but has never pronounced in favour of any of the Protestant bodies, save in general sympathy. He appears to aim for the establishment of an Italian Church, maintaining national traditions and history, not a reformed (for Rome to him now appears hopelessly beyond reform), but a resuscitated Evangelical Church of Rome. The nucleus of that church he finds in the "Free Christian Church in Italy," in the College of which at Rome he now holds a professorship, his colleague being Rev. J. Henderson, M.A., formerly of the Free Church of Scotland.

"THE FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN ITALY" presents some features of denominational interest. It issued unanimously at Milan, June, 1870, from its assembly or union, a declaration of Principles which avowedly "does not pretend to infallibility, the Word of God being alone infallible and immutable"—the declaration is "simply the outward bond of unity in the faith, and the banner of the church."

The eighth and last article is Millenarian in its utterance, which gives that church a somewhat unique position among the Protestant bodies, especially as the declaration is not designed as a creed.

The sixth article thus reads, "Believers, regenerated in Christ, form the Church, which cannot perish or apostatize, being the body of the

Lord Jesus." From this root principle starting we are not surprised to read in its constitution, "The Free Italian Church in Italy is established on the basis of independence; that is to say, each assembly or particular church, in its local affairs, is independent of all the others, being united with them only in the same faith, the same constitution, and the same work." Article Four reads, "Gifts are recognized and acknowledged, according to the Word of God, by each particular church at will, but these gifts cannot be exercised in the other churches of the Union without previous recognition and acknowledgment by the Assembly." In fact their polity is essentially that of American Congregationalism, and yet they are admitted freely into the Great Presbyterian Alliance which has twice met, at Edinburgh and Philadelphia. The Church at present numbers seventy-one individual churches, 2,000 members, and 1,000 Sabbath-school children.

There is also the native "Evangelical Vaudois Church of Italy," which is the result of earnest mission work on the part of the Vaudois, who thus bring back to the people that have so often wasted them with fire and sword the blessings of peace and of God's good will. The Vaudois Church as at present constituted is formed after the model of the Reformed Churches of the Continent, with its consistories and synods, and in its earnest missionary spirit manifests much of the zeal which has given to the Vaudois Valleys an undying interest in the annals of the Christian Church. It would seem to us to be distinguished from the Free Church chiefly by its more pronounced church polity. Certainly the Church of Gavazzi, notwithstanding its position in the Alliance, is more Congregational than otherwise, and in that sense Free.

DR. CUMMING.

There are probably but few of our readers who have reached middle age and have not heard of, even if they have not heard, Dr. Cumming, at one time the most popular preacher in London. They may have seen lately short paragraphs going the round of the papers announcing first his sickness, then the failure of his mind, and, following very quickly, his death. The *Times* devotes a lengthy article to his life, which Dr. Parker reprints in the *Fountain* with the following introduction:—

"The following tribute and criticism, taken from the columns of the *Times*, give the best view of the delicate subject we have yet seen":—

We omit the latter portion of the article as it is too long to insert entire; this portion is, however, complete in itself:—

"Something more than a brief obituary notice is due to a luminary that less than twenty years ago was blazing in the mid heavens, and outshining the light of day. It is not that distance of time since Dr. Cumming occupied, not merely the principal niche, but the very pinnacle, of the Temple of Fame. His name was everywhere; his announcements were on every wall and in every journal; his publications were innumerable, and on every table. In one way or another his figure was as familiar to most people as that of a near relative. To multitudes, not of the poor

and unlearned, but of the high and the cultivated, he was the Heaven-sent seer, commissioned to receive the light of prophecy and throw it over the dark and stormy course of human affairs. No prophet or fortune-teller of the professional class ever achieved such a hold upon the frequenters of his shrine. Nature, it must be said, had been kind to Dr. Cumming. He was handsome and of a good figure. His bearing denoted perfect self-confidence and absolute certainty of conviction. He showed the gaiety and cheerfulness of a man who had every reason to be satisfied with himself, and who had the good word of everybody he cared for. Notwithstanding his immense labours, and the awful gravity of the utterances of which he was the authorised and inspired medium, he was a boy to the last. Though he was loyal to the Kirk, and proud of his loyalty, his position amounted to a practical independence, which he knew how to turn to the best account. In the sober lines of an establishment, and on its own native soil, few preachers would find it easy to go on for a whole generation delivering a rapid succession of new prophecies seriously affecting the churches, the races, and the destinies of man. Their congregations would rebel, their ministerial brethren would protest, and their Church would decline to be compromised. But Dr. Cumming had all the metropolis and its country visitors to draw upon. No matter to what order country people belonged, they could not return home without being asked whether they had heard Dr. Cumming. He preached twice before the Queen, and people were charmed to read the sermons which he had preached and Her Majesty had listened to. His church was in a quiet little court, where you might fancy yourself, if you pleased, on Sunday at least, in the dullest part of a small country town. But it was in the immediate vicinity of some of the noisiest and busiest institutions in the British Isles: the two great theatres, Covent-garden Market, and the central police-court. Within a few yards of the brilliant crowd at the opera or the ballet, Dr. Cumming was soon to pour out the vials or the bowels of divine wrath, over peoples, lands and seas; to track the course of divine vengeance, to prefigure Anti-christ, and to assign to all nations their part in the great drama and their shares in the approaching doom. As there is no such solitude as in a crowd, the locality was the more awful through its strange surroundings. For many years Dr. Cumming had a body of believers and devotees that a man of the highest genius and the most undoubted probity might have envied. In at least half the religious households of this country a guest would have to consider well before he intimated the least misgivings of his piety or his sagacity. With such personal qualities and such miraculous gifts it was no wonder that he occupied a large place in the affection of those good ladies who can reserve a special corner in their heart, over and above its strictly loyal obligations, for a spiritual and sympathetic guide. His great frankness and simplicity secured him from ill surmises, and though he certainly did sometimes amuse the captious and suspicious, nobody had a word to say against him in the matter of his social relations.

"Yet now for some years this luminary has set, and, it must be added, has set in darkness, and, if not in actual disgrace, in much disparagement. We have to ask how this was, for it is one of the notes of a good career that it should endure to the end, and shine all the brighter when the shadows grow long and the night closes in. Dr. Cumming unwittingly educated his crowd of dupes not only to credulity,

but also to increased greediness and voracity for positive, particular, and circumstantial predictions. Every fresh publication gratified them one day only to make them more hungry for the like aliment the next. There are children who as soon as you have told them a monstrous story insist on you telling them another still more monstrous. They will have minute descriptions, the very numbers and dimensions, and the characteristics that most simulate truth. Perhaps Dr. Cumming might have been content to place his terrible prophecies a long way off and after his own probable lifetime; but this would not satisfy his readers, and it is quite possible that his own mind was undergoing the same development, and that he became his own dupe. He became more and more positive and definite. About twenty years ago something induced him to name the year 1868 as that in which very terrible events were to take place. The year was not without events, but they failed to satisfy the strong and yet fastidious appetite of his followers. Dr. Cumming employed an immense amount of ingenuity to prove that what he had prophesied had come to pass, but he laboured in vain, and from that time his popularity declined. Then followed blow after blow. Family troubles, not to say family disgrace, supervened, and the rewards of divination had to be spent in the discharge of bills and loans. Dr. Cumming had one infirmity in common with the majority of literary men, reformers, preachers of faiths, propounders of philosophies, and teachers of morals. He was not a business man. He was generous before he was just. He spent other people's money freely in good causes, and his own money freely too. He had always something to be done, and it was always something that cost money. It came out at last that he was penniless, and his admirers, even though they had ceased to put implicit confidence in his forecasts of the future, subscribed handsomely to place him above difficulty and want. Perhaps his nature was one that required the support of flattery and the stimulus of a cause. Two years ago he began to fail, his heart probably leading the way, and his death at an age when many men are still in possession of all their spirits and their mental powers is now but the fall of a leaf in the midst of more real or more serious changes."

PITCAIRN.

Among the newspaper items we read that the Queen has presented the Pitcairn Islanders with a fine organ, which arrived by H. M. S. *Opal*, at night. Wading out to the boat through the surf, the sturdy islanders bore it royally on their shoulders to the church, where the people assembled, and the first tune played we can readily understand was "God save the Queen."

The history of the Pitcairn Islanders has its religious teachings, for the sake of which we will briefly recapitulate an oft-told tale. The *Bounty*, under Captain Bligh, was sent out in 1787 to Tahiti, one of the Society Islands in the South Pacific, to obtain bread-fruit-tree plants for the West India colonies. Bligh was evidently an energetic and capable officer, but an exacting disciplinarian. At Tahiti the vessel remained six months. The seamen ashore had contracted alliances with the native women. The climate is luxurious, land naturally fertile, tropic skies and vegetation, rendering life in its necessities comparatively free from