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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 31st, 1890.

READERS will notice that the first paper of the special series by distinguished American and European writers is concluded in this week's issue. The thoughtful and inspiring communication by Professor Fisher, of Yale University, on "Modern Scientific Research and Modern Doubt" commends itself to the careful attention of the intelligent reader.

THE crushing defeat of the Parnell candidate in Kilkenny shows that priestly interference with elections is not everywhere and always a bad thing. Parnell himself admits that the priests defeated him and speaks of contesting the election on the ground of undue influence. If the hierarchy never do anything worse than keep a brazen adulterer from being a leader in the British House of Commons no reasonable Protestant will say that their interference with politics is an unmixed evil.

THE leading statesmen and journalists of this Dominion are quite unable to agree upon the financial condition of the country. Some of them contend that Canada is one of the most prosperous countries in the world while others declare that blue ruin stares us in the face. Some people reject religion because theologians are not agreed upon all points and because the Bible does not make everything quite clear about events that occurred three or four thousand years ago. It would be just as reasonable to say there is no Canada or no business in Canada because politicians disagree about the state of trade.

IN taking leave of his congregation the Sabbath before his successor was inducted, Dr. Cuyler uttered the following wise and noble words:—

If my dear brother Gregg shall ever voluntarily ask any counsel or assistance that I can render him, it shall be cheerfully given. But it is wisest and best that he should conduct his pastorate in his own way, and without any interference from his predecessor. As you have never come up into the pilot-house to put your hands on the wheel, so I shall follow your good example, and never lay mine on the wheel that steers this magnificent vessel in all its future voyagings.

Dr. Cuyler is just as good and great in his retirement as he was when pastor of one of the best congregations on the continent. Phelps says some preachers sustain the pulpit and some are sustained by it. The Brooklyn Doctor belongs to the class that sustain the pulpit.

THE mayor of New York has appointed an ex-saloon keeper to the office of Police Justice at a salary of \$8,000 a year. The election of the mayor was strongly opposed a few weeks ago by the Citizen's Association, a body composed of leading citizens of all parties and most of the clergymen of the city. Tammany's candidate, however, was elected, and now an ex-saloon keeper dispenses justice instead of whiskey. No doubt his justice will be as good as his liquor. Had the clergy who took such an active part in the municipal contest a few weeks ago made their influence felt years ago, Tammany might not now be triumphant and an ex-saloon keeper might not be on the bench. It is much easier to keep the roughs out of power than put them out after they get in. Some of our clerical readers may do well to think of this next Monday morning.

IF there is any truth in the theory that capital punishment is a deterrent, Canada should have no murders for a long time to come. Eight executions in a little more than as many months and three within a few days of each other should have a salutary influence if hanging men is a deterrent that

deters. But after all that has been said on that point why should any reasonable man expect capital punishment to deter. If a very large majority of murderers die in triumph and go direct to heaven after a moment's suffering, said by those who ought to know not to be specially acute, it is difficult to see why their fate should deter anyone. Heaven is a much better place than earth even if you do go there by the gallows. There is something horrible in the idea that a man unfit to live on this earth is sent in a moment into the society of God and Christ and the angels and the glorified saints, but that is where nearly all men who are hanged seem to go in triumph. How can making a hero of a man on earth and crowning him in heaven deter any one from doing what he wants to do.

THERE is some reason to fear that the strike on the Scottish railways may be much more serious than similar strikes have proved in America. The Scotch elder who prayed "Lord aye keep us recht, for Ye ken we're very positive" knew the reason why. The dogged perseverance which makes Scotchmen succeed in so many good causes the world over may make them very difficult to deal with when they go on strike. Presumably many of their employers have the same national characteristics and that will not help to mend matters. The one thing clear is that capital and labour are still at war. It is not to be supposed that 9,000 Scotch railway men strike without any cause nor is it conceivable that that number of presumably intelligent Scotchmen are led by such labour demagogues as rule in the neighbouring Republic. There is no use in concealing the fact that there is something wrong somewhere. Nine thousand Scotchmen never stop earning money without some reason. They like the "bawbees" far too well for that. There is a grand opportunity for some peacemaker in Scotland at the present time.

AT this season of the year many of our contemporaries suggest changes in the municipal machinery of the country. Perhaps some changes are needed, especially in cities, but we doubt very much if any number of changes would bring about a municipal millennium. What the country needs is first-class men to work the system we have. In Church matters we constantly meet the same cry for changes in the ecclesiastical machinery. Manage Home Missions this way, and Foreign Missions that way, and the Colleges some other way, and great results will follow. Abolish pews, elect deaconesses, change modes of worship, make half-a-dozen other experiments, and the congregation will prosper. When will men supposed to be sane, sensible and partly sanctified learn that what the Church needs is more life, not more organization? There is machinery enough in the Presbyterian Church to evangelize the world. But then it is so easy to stand up in a Church court or convention and outline a new plan and so hard to crucify sin and practise self-denial. Writing a letter to the press about some new mode of working is much easier than putting your hand into your pocket and taking out a ten-dollar bill for missions. If all or even a large majority of the members of the Church could be brought to confess that what we need most is more spiritual life, something would be gained. So long as tinkering at machinery takes the place of consecration, self-denial and honest persevering work, little improvement will be made.

DR. JOSEPH PARKER'S recent lecture on the "Modern Sermon" bristles with well-made points. He began, says the *Christian World*, by repudiating the idea that the word sermon need be associated with "dulness, prosiness, depression, and a general sense of burdensomeness and monotony." Unless on very special occasions a sermon should not be more than half an hour in length. The people are not as well prepared to hear as the minister is to preach, and many of them are not accustomed to prolonged and intense listening. Some modern sermons ought not be preached:—

There are some sermons that ought to be got rid of, as, for example, those that might be published under the title of "The Gospel Made Difficult," where the preacher presents a marvellous procession of sights and sounds; here a profile of Darwin; there an outline of Huxley; yonder a blow at Tyndall; and beyond all this references to books with Latin titles, and as the scene rushes on, sounds like the following are heard: basis, hypothesis, incognoscible, rationale, morale, esoteric, ethic, and the like. Little children turn away from it; broken hearts sink in despair; troubled lives are plunged into deeper bewilderment. Then there are the sermons in

which a young lady in the pulpit talks childishly to another young lady in the pew, the simpering, mincing, chattering sermon; and the portmanteau sermon, into which the giddy young preacher stuffs everything he can lay his hands on—the scrapbook, ragbag, pulpit album, Berlin-wool and-fancy-repository sermon.

Students, the Doctor thought, should be carefully trained to preach, but "they must not worship the prim idol of puerile neatness." The most Parkerish part of the lecture was a sermonette which the Doctor preached from the text, "How are you all today?"—a text taken, the lecturer said, from "The Epistles of Lord Beaconsfield." It was a clever caricature of the modern sermonette. Taken as a whole, the lecture was stimulating and suggestive. Dr. Parker is one of the men that never grow old or dull.

THE DEPARTING YEAR.

THE last decade of the wondrous nineteenth century is steadily verging into the irrevocable past. A few more years and the twentieth century of the Christian era will have dawned. Marvellous as have been the advances during the past, the triumphs of the future may be more remarkable still. The year that closes at midnight is not marked by outstanding events that will distinguish it from those that preceded it, or those that may immediately follow. During its progress, however, the world has not been standing still.

Despite the gloomy anticipations of the last few years that a gigantic European war might break out at any moment, it is matter for fervent gratitude that profound peace still reigns. Present signs are also reassuring. Not that all causes of offence have been removed, neither have any of the Great Powers begun the work of disarmament, for still all Europe re-echoes the tread of armed millions, but Governments and peoples are in a less belligerent attitude than they have been for some time. French jealousy of Germany is not so intense and the utter collapse of the Boulangist movement has dulled the popular desire for revenge for the loss of the Rhine provinces in 1870. Russia and Austria are still suspiciously eyeing each other, and so far as they are concerned the future appears uncertain. The present quiescence may be but the delusive calm that precedes the outbreak of the storm. Let us hope, however, that the period of comparative quiet will lead these powers to reflect on the serious responsibility that rests on whoever first kindles the torch of war.

The uneasiness felt when Kaiser William II. ascended the imperial throne of Germany has disappeared. The gasconade with which he was credited has been greatly modified, and we hear less of his posing as a great war lord. The relegation of Prince Bismarck to the seclusion and inactivity of private life has not to all appearance brought evil to the German Empire, neither has it had an injurious effect on the young emperor. Instead of war-talk we hear more of designs to promote the welfare of the people, and efforts to lighten the burdens of the toiling masses. Whatever may be the ultimate success of German socialistic legislation, as yet at all events, neither the hopes of its friends nor the fears of its foes have been realized.

In Italy the struggle between the Pope and the National Government for supremacy in the State has not materially changed. The Vatican shows no sign of modifying its claims to temporal sovereignty and the Italian Government has given no indication of compromise. The hands of the latter have been greatly strengthened by the result of the recent elections, the Government having received increased support from the people who are evidently far from being in a repentant mood for having cast off the rule of Pope and cardinals. Their preference decidedly is for modern constitutionalism. It is also gratifying to see that evangelical Christianity is making appreciable progress throughout the Italian peninsula.

During the year the economic war has been less fiercely waged than in the few years preceding. It is not apparent that the relations of capital and labour are nearer adjustment than they were. The antagonism may on the surface be less pronounced, but it still rankles. Though at the present moment there is a strike of some magnitude among Scottish railway employees, the strike mania has been less acute during the year now nearing its end. It is being discovered that the strike and lock-out are barbarous methods of adjusting differences that competent arbitration could readily solve without the development of the bitterness and alienation which industrial conflicts inevitably evolve. These however, are apparently experiences that have to be