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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, MAY 15th, 1889.

THE question of moving Victoria University to Toronto has got into the Court of Common Pleas. The board of regents met some time ago to arrange for the erection of the new building in Queen's Park, but were served with an injunction, and instead of going on with the work, had to begin what may prove a tedious and expensive law-suit. A mortgage on a building is bad enough, but it is not half so bad as an injunction. A mortgage does not prevent people from working to raise money to pay it off, but an injunction stops everything but the law-suit. Until this injunction is removed, the Methodists cannot take another step in the way of carrying out the decision of the General Conference. We have a thing to say about injunctions in such matters, but we will let it go until the case is decided, as comments at the present stage may be considered contempt of court. The court, however, may not consider it contempt to say that some of these anti-federationists seem to be in danger of falling from grace.

ON another page appears a circular signed by the chairman and secretary-treasurer of the Board of French Evangelization in behalf of the Ottawa Ladies' College. The transfer of this institution to the control of that Board is an eminently wise proceeding. The conditions on which the transfer is made are exceedingly favourable. Most Presbyterians will share the confidence expressed in the circular "that there is a sufficiently strong Protestant and missionary spirit in the Church to ensure a successful response." Now that the Protestants of Canada are awakening to the fact that it is most unwise for parents to send their daughters to Roman Catholic institutions for higher education, it is both their duty and privilege to extend encouragement and support to the ladies' colleges that have been established and equipped to supply what has been a long-felt want. It is to be hoped that the present effort will be crowned with complete success, and that the Ottawa Ladies' College will prove a most successful and efficient institution, and a great benefit to the residents of Eastern Ontario.

THE repeated defeats of the Scott Act should not be construed to mean that the people of Ontario are any more friendly to the liquor traffic than they were when the Act was adopted by immense majorities. The vote for repeal shows that the people have lost confidence in the Scott Act, merely that and nothing more. Many who voted for the Act never had much confidence in it but they were willing to give it a fair trial. There is no difference of opinion among decent men as to the evil of intemperance. The vast majority of the people of this Dominion are agreed in thinking that the liquor traffic should be abolished or hedged around with such restrictions as would reduce its evils to a minimum. The question to be decided is the best way to do it. On this question there is great difference of opinion and those who hold these different opinions have not been any too careful in speaking about each other's motives. Unity of action would bring prohibition or something practically as good, but unity of action seems as hard to secure as convictions used to be in some counties under the Scott Act.

THE centennial celebrations have raised the old questions. Was Washington a Christian? Was he a member in full communion of the Episcopal Church? Dr. Cuyler puts together a chain of evidence in the New York *Evangelist* which would convince any jury that Washington once communicated in the Presbyterian Church at Morristown, New Jersey, on the strength of his own statement that he was a member in full communion of his own Church.

The Army happened to be encamped at Morristown where the Lord's Supper was being dispensed there in a Presbyterian Church ministered to by a relative of Dr. Cuyler's. The General asked the pastor if members of other Churches were permitted to sit at the Lord's table with Presbyterians, and on being assured that they were he and several officers came and partook of the sacrament. It is grossly unfair to assume that men like Lincoln, Lord Macaulay, Washington and others who are reticent as a rule on religious questions are infidels or atheists. Quite frequently they are better Christians than some loud professors who continually thrust their alleged religion in your face.

ONE hundred years ago the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States said:

"We perceive with pain and fearful apprehension a general dereliction of religious principle—an abounding infidelity—a dissolution of religious society seems to be threatened. Formality and deadness, not to say hypocrisy, visibly pervade every part of the Church. The profligacy and corruption of public morals have advanced with a progress proportioned to our declension in religion."

We often hear about the goodness that existed in the "days of the Fathers." Manifestly the fathers of the American Presbyterian Church did not think very highly of the state of religion in their day. Perhaps the liberality, activity and missionary spirit that are now marked features of the American Church owe their origin to the faithfulness with which the General Assembly rebuked the abounding infidelity, formality and deadness of the Church of 1789. How foolish it is for living men to be constantly prosing about the "good old times," and "the early days," when we find the really good men of their times vehemently denouncing the abounding evils of the good old days.

AMONG other things suggested by the Washington Centennial was a comparison between the treatment of prisoners now and the treatment a hundred years ago. A contemporary says:

Criminals could hardly get across the line then to enjoy their boodle in the luxuries of Canada. In fact, they were handled rather roughly. The counterfeiter got his ears cropped, and was exposed to the jeers of the public in the town pillory besides. A thief was made to sit on the gallows as preliminary to being tied to a whipping post for thirty-nine bloody lashes. A forger got a red-hot brand applied to the palm of his hand. A pilferer would be sold into slavery for six months or two years. A burglar had his neck stretched until when taken down he would never burglarize again in this world anyhow. And if a man contracted debts that he could not pay he went to the vilest, filthiest and darkest prison that could be devised, frequently out of some old abandoned mine that was without light or ventilation.

That was one extreme. The other is to look upon a criminal as a kind of hero, to visit condemned murderers and make such a fuss over them as tempts weak, vain men to think that the surest way to gain notoriety is to kill somebody, to interview murderers and other criminals two or three times a day, and publish all their sayings and doings in the press under sensations. There must be a happy medium somewhere between branding criminals and giving them an amount of newspaper attention that would scarcely be given to Gladstone.

THE religious journals across the lines have made good use of the centennial celebration by comparing the state of religion in the country when Washington became President with the state at the present time. In 1789, the *Christian-at-Work* says:

Infidelity was common and rampant. "The boys," says Lyman Beecher, "who dressed flax in the barn read Tom Paine and believed him." The students of Yale and Harvard were almost to a man professed and aggressive infidels and atheists. At West Point so late as 1825 there was not one confessing Christian among the professors or cadets. It was difficult for a clergyman to get justice from a jury.

The churches themselves, it must be confessed, were in a low state. Lotteries were authorized under their aid for endowing Harvard, and Dartmouth, and Union, and Princeton, and Rutgers; nay for the advancement of religion! The slave trade was in full blast, and the selling of wives and children away from their husbands and parents was common all over the States.

It almost takes one's breath away to read that old Princeton was partly endowed by a lottery. If there are any Christians on the other side who sigh for the "good old times" they must belong to the class that read no newspapers. They nearly always do. And still due allowance must be made for the men of those days, even for the men who bought and sold slaves. It is manifestly unfair to bring men down a century and judge them by the standards that obtain a hundred years after their own time. It may be hard with most of us if we are to be judged by the standards that prevail a hundred years hence.

THE WASHINGTON CELEBRATION.

THE doings which made New York the other week a centre of attraction to the American Union have passed into history. The pageantry and pomps are laid aside for the practical routine of every day life, the parades on land and water are all disbanded, the oratory has lapsed into silence, the ball room, ablaze with grandeur, and disgraced by dissipation, has been deserted and all the incidents have been left behind and the nation goes on its way to the accomplishment of its destiny. Has the immense celebration been a help or an impediment to an onward and upward progress? Like all other retrospective occasions it will no doubt prove productive in both ways. The amount of attention concentrated on past events has enabled men to form a more vivid perception of the differences between the condition of affairs in Washington's time and the present. The contrasts in many ways are striking. The immense progress in the development of the industrial arts and commerce, the vast expansion of natural capabilities, the gigantic increase in population and influence, the advances in educational and religious resources afforded unlimited scope for oratorical expansion. The considerations suggested by these undisputed evidences of growth might properly awaken a just pride in the hearts of the citizens, and also might prompt an inordinate vanity in some minds, which latter can only be deplored.

A nation cannot live on its past reputation any more than an individual can count on the respect and esteem of his acquaintances merely because his ancestry succeeded in making honoured names for themselves. The past achievements in a nation's history are a precious heritage; they are a stimulus for high endeavour for the future. Whatever of value has come down from the past is worthy of being cherished and the responsibility rests on each succeeding generation to perpetuate and extend the blessings they have inherited. There can be no sadder sight than that of a once famous nation sinking with ever-accelerating steps into decadence and dishonour. The memory of former virtues and achievement only make the contrast the more painful and indicate the height from which a once illustrious people have fallen. If reflection on the past has inspired the American people with a desire to cultivate, as the best of their ancestors did, the righteousness that exalteth a nation, then the centennial celebration was worth vastly more than its entire cost.

There is no reason why American citizens, or even those who were only dispassionate onlookers of their doings, should take a pessimistic outlook of their national future. In every department of activity there is room for the deepest gratitude and the fullest hope. It is true that the future prospect does not present an altogether serene and cloudless sky. There are forces and tendencies discernible from which serious trouble may spring, but none that yet threaten the stability or healthful progression of the nation.

The address delivered by Bishop Potter in St. Paul's Church before a crowded and distinguished audience, including the President and his Cabinet, has attracted more than ordinary attention, and deservedly so. The Bishop seems to have realized the greatness and the full responsibility of the occasion, and in plain truth it can be said that he was equal to it. To a man of weaker moral fibre the temptations were great. He might have made a brilliant display, and succeeded in obtaining the hearty applause of the multitude for the magnificence and dazzling splendour of his oratory, but the bishop reached a far higher level. He spoke with the dignity that belongs to the words of truth and soberness. His thoughtful and solid address comprehended the good done in the past, a grateful recognition of the guiding hand of Providence in the national history, a frank acknowledgment of what had been realized, and a faithful warning as to the dangers that ought to be guarded against. The following extract will show in what manner the outspoken bishop dealt with this part of his subject. As truth is unlimited by national or geographical boundaries, there may be hints in his words that Canadians would be not the worse for considering:

The conception of the National Government as a huge machine, existing mainly for the purpose of rewarding partisan service—this was a conception so alien to the character and conduct of Washington and his associates that it seems grotesque even to speak of it. It would be interesting to imagine the first President of the United States confronted with some one who had ventured to approach him upon the basis of what are now commonly known as "practical politics." But the conception is impossible. The loathing, the outraged majesty with which he would have bidden such a creature to begone, is foreshadowed by the gentle dignity with which, just before his inauguration, replying to one who had