

## THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN

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## The Canada Presbyterian

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, MANAGER.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH, 1893.

There is no system of government in either church or state so bad that good men cannot do a vast amount of good working under it; and there is no system so good that in working under it bad men cannot do a vast amount of mischief. The common mistake of these modern days is tinkering at systems. Instead of improving men.

Ten thousand times during the last few weeks have we all read that the financial troubles in the United States have been largely caused by lack of faith, or, as some put it, lack of confidence. That is no doubt true; but is there any worse thing than lack of confidence? If all the people of any country lost confidence in one another the country would go to wreck in a month.

So far the Presbyterian Church has behaved itself admirably in regard to the unfortunate case now pending in Montreal. Of course there will always be a few who want such matters settled in a rather summary way, but the great body of the people are quite willing to wait and let the law of the Church take its course in a constitutional and dignified manner. The usual howl about heresy-hunting falls so flat that few journals of character and standing will raise it. The Presbytery can be trusted to do its duty; and there is really nothing to get excited about. Our advice to everybody is, Go on with your work.

The Fall Shows will soon be in full blast. We hope the Hon. Mr. Dryden will keep his official eye upon these institutions and withhold the Provincial grant from all that allow gambling or improper practices of any kind on their grounds. Mr. Chauncey Depew estimates that ninety per cent of such crimes as embezzlement, breaches of trust, and similar offences, are caused by gambling. In cities and towns gamblers try to conceal themselves; but at the rural show they range themselves around the exhibition gate, and the farmers' sons take their chances in open day. The "fakirs" in some cases are an important part of the Fair. Mr. Dryden should promptly stop the provincial grant to every show that allows "fakirs" of any kind to operate.

It is interesting to note the difference between the British and Canadian styles of journalism, in the matter of reporting meetings. The British reporter of a certain class tells you whether the speaker was in good form or not, criticizes his method of delivery, notes the presence or absence of good points, informs you as to the impression he made on his audience, and never fails to say the speech was long or dull or bright or happy or tedious or stupid or whatever else the scribe thought it was. The Globe aims at the British style, in so far as good points are concerned, but the old journal is so supremely good-natured these days that it never ventures on adverse criticism. The British style is educational in its effect. A fair, discriminating criticism of the style of each speaker that will accompany Sir John Thompson and Mr. Laurier on their tours would do a good deal in the way of improving our political oratory.

Not long ago it was quite the thing to sneer at clergymen for their alleged lack of business ability. Church courts were said to be places in which men talked but did nothing. Public opinion on this matter is rapidly changing. The other day the Review of Reviews advised the British House of Commons to "go to school to the Assemblies of any of the Scottish Churches" and learn how to do business. The advice is good. The Assembly of any of the Scottish Churches would never degrade itself as the British House of Commons did during the whole of last session. Our own General Assembly has improved immensely during the last few years in the matter of doing business. In ten days the supreme court does more actual business than any local legislature in the Dominion does in double that length of time. The annual revenue of the Assembly is much larger than that of any Canadian province except Ontario, and it is as large as the revenue of Ontario was a few years ago. As a matter of fact, Church business, thanks to the ministers, elders and others who are attending to it, is done very much better than municipal and parliamentary business is done.

The Republican party in Iowa has refused to make Prohibition a plank in its platform, at the fall elections. Heretofore, in State contests, the Republicans pledged themselves to Prohibition; but there was always a wing of the party that either sulked or voted the Democratic ticket, because the managers were in favor of prohibitory legislation. The result at the last election was the election of a Democrat in a strong Republican State. The Republicans could not hold their party together and keep a Prohibition plank in their platform, and so they dropped the plank to save the party. Democratic temperance men might have saved Prohibition by voting with the Republicans, but they did not do so. It is quite within the possibilities that the Republicans will gain nothing by this last move. The anti-Prohibition men will of course come back to the fold; but the stalwart Prohibitionists may form a third party. If this is done, the Democrats are certain to win, and they are not in favor of Prohibition at all. The next discovery made by temperance men may be that dickering with parties is about the poorest way to advance the temperance cause. When the people or a large majority of them want Prohibition, the political parties will vie with each other in giving them a prohibitory law.

The reception that is being given to Mr. Laurier, and that which awaits Sir John Thompson, will, we are sure, prove that the people of Ontario have no prejudice against a man on account of his religion. When we say, the people of Ontario, we of course except the demagogues who try to make money, or business, or popularity, or secure office by constantly fanning the embers of sectarian hate. There are alleged Protestants whose Protestantism consists solely in hating Catholics and in trying to make something out of the historic aversion of Protestantism to Popery, and there are Catholics whose Catholicism is mainly hatred of Protestantism; but these two classes are not the people of Ontario. They are, fortunately, but a small fraction of the people. The great majority are tolerant, and say let a man worship his God as he pleases provided he does not interfere with the rights and liberties of others. This is the historic ground of Presbyterianism, and the strong men of the Church, lay and clerical, never think of taking any other. The Presbyterian Church never asks public favours for its members on sectarian grounds, and it never refuses fairplay to any human being because he bows at a different altar. Ours is one of the few Churches that occupies strong, manly, consistent ground on this question. We ask no favours and we give none. Our men win their public positions in a square, manly fight; and the supreme court never intrigues for their

success, nor whines when they are beaten. If all the Churches were like the Presbyterian this country would not be cursed with so many corporate votes.

## ARE WE BECOMING CONGREGATIONAL?

The statement is now often made that, as a body, Presbyterians are becoming less Presbyterian in Church government and more Congregational. It cannot be doubted that at the present time, there is in many directions, and in Church government among others, a strong tendency towards individualism, an impatience of control, an unwillingness to recognize and submit to constituted authority. The conduct of many congregations towards their pastor, and the weakness many presbyteries show in dealing with cases of friction between congregations and ministers, yielding to what is often felt to be the unreasonable, to use a mild name, demands of a clamorous and persistent minority, and dissolving the pastoral tie, often without removing the source of evil in the congregation, nearly always to the injury of the minister—cases of this kind which are by no means infrequent, have no doubt given rise to and give some colour of work, as well as to the charge in question. The action of the Presbytery of Toronto the other day in two cases which came before it, is instructive as throwing some light on the subject under discussion. The Rev. J. M. Cameron, of East Toronto, pastor for nearly twenty-four years of his present charge, and bearing an honorable record, presented his resignation to the Presbytery, and expressed his desire that it should be accepted. Commissioners from the congregation, session and managers attended, instructed simply not to oppose the resignation. In this case, the Presbytery declined to accept it, but in the exercise of its presbyterial care and oversight of the congregation, and with a view to the good of the Church as a whole, appointed a committee to meet with all the parties, and ascertain more fully what were the grounds for Mr. Cameron's resignation, and whether they were sufficient to warrant the granting of his request and taking so serious a step as severing the pastoral tie.

Another member of the Presbytery, the Rev. Alfred Gandier, of Brampton, is called by Fort Massy congregation, Halifax, and in this case, although the most harmonious relations exist between pastor and people, and a strong desire is expressed by the congregation that their pastor should be continued amongst them, yet Mr. Gandier, unable to see the way of duty so plainly as to enable him to decide, having put himself and the whole matter into the Presbytery's hands, it determines, with a view to the good of the Church as a whole, as it believes, to set aside the desire of the Brampton congregation and transfer Mr. Gandier to Halifax. If cases of this kind were frequent and could be pointed to, they would furnish a sufficient and satisfactory answer to the question, are we becoming less presbyterial and more congregational in our government, if indeed the question would have answer. The action of the Toronto Presbytery in this case, is truly and wisely presbyterial, and may well be instructive to the whole Church. It might be said to be an object lesson to the whole body, and is well worthy the attentive observation and imitation of all our presbyteries, and still more of all our congregations, for it is usually because of their too exclusive, selfish and therefore mistaken regard for their own individual interests, and their unwillingness to recognize and accede to the authority of Church courts, which they themselves, under God, according as we believe to the teaching of His word, have called into existence, and whose authority they have voluntarily agreed to bow to, that this charge of our polity becoming congregational, has arisen we fear with too much reason, and which if it be true, is to be deeply regretted and wisely guarded against.

## CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT.

Contentment is a thing of very general of all but universal pursuit, but few there be that find it. Acknowledged thus to be so desirable, it is worth while devoting a little thought to it. There is, we may say, a contentment which is not Christian, as well as something which simulates, but which is not contentment. Contentment is a rational and intelligent as well as desirable state of mind, and rests upon an intelligible and well defined basis. A mere phlegmatic disposition or temperament is not contentment. Neither is an indolent acceptance of things as they are. The torpor of an animal gorged with food, the sleep of a bear during winter, is not contentment, and neither in man is mental stupor or stolidity, or that impassive dulness which nothing can disturb.

There is, however, a real contentment which we may call natural, as distinguished from Christian. It arises from a certain happy temperament or constitution of mind, the sound mind in the sound body which is proof against the common ills of life. Some are blessed with an irrepressible hopefulness, a capacity for seeing always the bright side of things, of finding something good in everybody, some compensation for every evil, so that they live always in a state of sweet, happy natural contentment. This is found more generally in the earlier part of an ordinary lifetime, before the spirits have lost their buoyancy, and hope has been too often deceived or betrayed. It is also sometimes found in old age, and then nothing in the natural man is more beautiful. But inasmuch as this has no necessary connection with God or divine things, it is not Christian. It is this close and conscious connection with, and resting upon God which distinguishes Christian contentment from all its counterfeits. The Apostle Paul furnishes a bright example of it, and well expresses it when he says, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." The secret of this happy state of mind lay in letting his requests in everything be made known to God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, and having done this, the peace of God that passeth all understanding, kept his heart and mind through Christ Jesus. This kind of contentment is truly and distinctively Christian. It has a rational, intelligible, and abiding foundation in the character of God, as revealed to us in His word as our Father in heaven, and all that the name and character of Father implies, protector, provider, guide; especially is this so when we also know that our Father in heaven is infinitely wise, powerful and good. Faith lays hold of this, and is, so to speak, the manward side or ground of Christian contentment. Paul being habitually in this frame, could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound everywhere, and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." This contentment has a solid, abiding and sufficient foundation to rest upon at all times and under all circumstances. So Paul and Silas with feet fast in the stocks in the jail at Philippi, and backs bleeding and raw with scourging, could still sing praises to God. For Paul to live was Christ; to die was gain: living or dying, he was the Lord's. So was it with David. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and with Job. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

It is in Christ that God comes to us most closely, and work in us this blessed state of mind. It is through Christ Jesus that the peace of God keeps our hearts and minds. And naturally this happy frame of mind extends beyond earthly things. This is the first step to that which is higher and better indeed towards casting all our earthly care upon