

and, promising to tell them something more spicy next week, and to save ten thousand souls, sits down "panting hard, and looking very red in the face"—as the *New York World* has it.

The English papers are speaking with a good deal of ignorance on "The Canadian Situation." They seem to think that we have decided for Protection, pure and simple, and even to contemplate setting up for ourselves independently of the mother country. But that is not so at all. We have only decided on readjustment of tariff—which as yet is only a phrase—a thing to charm by. Independence may come; but it will not come yet, and a prohibitive tariff as against England will not be introduced by the Government just entered upon power. We were reckless during election time, but we are going to be careful and cautious in the matter of changes. We are going to try a trade skirmish with the forty millions over the border, but we are not disposed to say good-bye to Great Britain. If English writers knew Canada better they would write differently.

The whirligig of time in the course of its spinning brings most unlooked for things to pass. Here is one: Lord Beaconsfield has subscribed ten pounds towards a memorial to Earl Russell. His opinions must have undergone a considerable change, for in the "Runnymede Letters" he writes thus:—

"Your character is a curious one. You were born with a strong ambition and a feeble intellect. Cold, inanimate, with a weak voice and a mincing manner, the failure of your intellect was complete. . . . You are now exhaling upon the constitution of your country all that long-hoarded venom and all those distempered humours that for years have accumulated in your petty heart. . . . Your aim is to reduce everything to your own mean level, to degrade everything to your malignant standard. In all your conduct it is not difficult to detect the workings of a mean and long-mortified spirit. . . . Your part in the mighty drama must soon close. I can picture to myself an intelligent foreigner visiting this country, and can conceive his appalled astonishment when he is told to recognise a Secretary of State in an infinitely small scarabæus! When our traveller learns that you are the leader of the House of Commons he may begin to comprehend how the Egyptians worshipped an insect."

The Afghan war threatens to assume serious proportions, and is creating profound uneasiness in the English mind. The brunt of it will be thrown upon India, and it is said Lord Lytton is vigorously preparing to avenge the affront which Shere Ali offered to England when he rejected the English mission. But it may very well happen that the work of vindicating British honour in Afghanistan may be more than the Indian army can accomplish—and if that should prove to be the case, it will be serious work for England. This is not the time she can afford to have an Asiatic war on her hands. The *World* seems to think—and not without some show of reason—that the policy of Russia is to create difficulties in Asia which shall absorb the attention of England, that she—Russia—may work her will in Europe. Whether that is so, or not, certain it is that Europe is beginning to learn the worthless nature of the Treaty of Berlin.

EDITOR.

"FIFTY YEARS OF MINISTRY."

It is not often that in this age of terrific energy—when men think fast, and work hard, and wear out quickly—that it is given to any man to speak of fifty years of labour. We are greatly developed: in a wonderful degree we are masters of ourselves, and the press of circumstance is so severe that we are compelled to do much work in a little time. Therefore it is the more to be noted that Dr. Wilkes, of Montreal, could stand up and say: For half a century I have been a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. With bodily force somewhat impaired, but, with mental vigour unabated, he stood forth and spoke his words of history and of hope.

It was a rare occasion, and the audience was a sight to witness. Almost every Protestant Church was represented. Old men and women went to hear again the voice of him from whose lips they had heard in the youth long dead—but not forgotten—words of counsel and rebuke. What a flood of memory must have rushed in upon them. Fifty years of battle—sometimes marked by defeat and sometimes by victory—hopes kindled and quenched—joy and sorrow crowding each on the heels of the other—all looking back through a long vista of years, and on to the coming of night. How much work the preacher had done in that time, not even himself could tell; enough that he had set in motion great influences for good, which have gone working on making men out of children, and good out of stuff indifferent.

At about twenty-two years of age Dr. Wilkes relinquished a good and promising commercial position to enter upon the Christian ministry—passed through the ordinary college course of training in Scotland, and then undertook a charge in the city of Edinburgh. It was curious, and still more instructive, to hear the good Dr. talk of his early troubles with orthodoxy. He is now regarded as the main pillar and stay of orthodoxy; that he holds to what he called "the grand old verities of the Gospel" with strong faith in their truth and power to save—although every body knows that the Dr. is a marvel of liberality which arises from his general kindness, and not from any lurking doubt—and he is often quoted as an example to those of us who—led, perhaps, by impulses peculiar to the young and the hopeful—are disposed to question the right of some old things to life and veneration. But we can take comfort from the fact that Dr. Wilkes when young had—in the name of truth and his

own conscience—to withstand the charge of heresy. The heresy of that day is the orthodoxy of this, and one could but wonder at the rapidity with which changes take place in the world of theology. In this age—when men are fingering at the roots of all our fine thoughts of God and man, time and eternity—when we have to make sure once again of our foundations—when our fundamental dogmas are assailed in the name of Mathematics, and Philosophy, and Science, and Art—it is almost startling to be told by a preacher that when he was young the grave and reverend Rabbis of the time rebuked him for declaring that the salvation of Christ is universal. Those same grave and reverend Rabbis have nearly always been wrong. Time seems to have the habit of crystallising its children. We rush away from the doomed place of settled ways—look back—and, go no further. I am getting to believe that the old proverb is true: "Whom the gods love die young."

As a rule that is—for Dr. Wilkes is a splendid exception. It can hardly be expected that he should have broadened much in the last few years—for men do not materially change their habits of life and thought after forty—but the Dr. has so fine an admixture of generosity in his nature that he could not be narrow and a bigot without doing violence to his deepest and strongest instincts.

Forty-two years ago Dr. Wilkes came to Canada in a semi-missionary character. Congregationalism was hardly known here, and the Dr. thinking it should be well known, and having convinced the Church of that name and order in England of the same necessity, obtained the needful help. That missionary character has been sustained by him throughout his long and useful career. He has been from the first until now the head of the denomination—its principal counsellor and guide—second to no one as preacher—the accredited leader in all matters of organization—filling all possible offices—doing all possible work—as preacher going from end to end of the country—as secretary for various societies—as treasurer administering their funds—and as president of the only college in the denomination in this country. This last was inevitable, for the Dr. always took a warm and wise interest in the work of educating young men for the ministry. Knowing well the advantages of culture, he sought to send forth men well prepared for their sacred work.

But along with all this general work for the denomination has been carried the particular function of a pastor in Montreal—which means that Dr. Wilkes found here a church having a membership of a little over forty—worked on, winning the esteem of the whole Protestant community—preached on, drawing many by the strength of his words—and so built up a church, which for numbers, for wealth, and for influence was hardly second to no church in the Dominion. To do that in the City of Montreal meant the exercise of ability and patience of no ordinary kind. For Congregationalism is a kind of Church life and government but little understood and appreciated in this city. No wonder—for we are brought into contact and collision with the greatest and best organization in the world—that of Popery—and it looks as if only an organization equally perfect can hold its own against it. So the Presbyterians, and the Methodists, and the Episcopalians have occupied the ground.

And then the Protestants of the city, by the very nature of them, are not Congregationalists. If they are Scotch, the Presbyterian Church claims them. If they are English, the Episcopal regards them as its own. If they are Canadian, they seem to turn to Methodism. But few English Congregationalists come to this country, for the reason, probably, that as a class in England they are wealthy and not much in need of wandering far to find a living. It is evident enough, then, that the denomination to which Dr. Wilkes belongs is at a great disadvantage in this country. The people are too busy about their worldly affairs to give much time and attention to church; so they fall into the Church to which custom has led them, and which imposes upon them least individual thought and trouble. That Dr. Wilkes gathered about him a large and wealthy congregation in spite of all those difficulties, is proof of his ability and the strength of his character.

But the work was not accomplished without hard toiling and pain, as the Dr. told us on Sunday morning. There were times of heart-sickening disappointment—times of weary waiting in comparative obscurity and poverty which must have been a sore trial to the man's faith. It is hard to believe that we are right in our calling and our choice of place when success will not be wooed nor commanded; hard to believe that we ought to work on and wait when we cannot see what the working and waiting will bring. Yet that is just what Dr. Wilkes did; uttered no complaint; refused to lose heart or hope; went bravely on, and found his reward in the appreciation of many people and the satisfaction of his own heart.

Success was achieved by good and constant work, rather than by brilliance—as he himself tells us. The Dr. seems to have been haunted by a dread of making too manifest his own personality—of appearing to make an effort to shine by his own proper light; a ghost that one should hardly respect in these or any other days. Heaven intends that man shall do his best, and will only consent to supplement that best. Many of us would have been glad to possess some memorial of the Dr. when all his energies were put forth to produce a sermon. Brilliance in the pulpit is as rare as common sense—the Dr. had the latter, and if he had put it out in a still more attractive form we should have reaped the benefit. I was glad to hear from his own lips that he did not recommend the same excessive modesty to young men of this day. But worth all the rest was the splendid protest made that self-sacrifice is worth the doing. I looked up in wonder and admiration—an old man with robust frame and kindling eye, and hand uplifted to Heaven—was telling us in tones that rang out clear and strong over the great audience, that to live unselfishly, in poverty and disappointment, for men and for God, is the way to peace. An old man of seventy-three years told us life is worth the living and death is not a thing to fear. A man who has preached for half a century all he knew of truth and hope and life, was still glad to preach and speak strong words of comfort to young and old. There was no complaining, no halting—no bitter criticism of men and institutions, but a broad charity—a living hope, a clinging glad faith in well nigh every sentence. I hope the whole denomination will seek and find some way of conveying to our good Dr. its sense of his worth. I hope he will get some of the honour he so well deserves while he is able to enjoy it. It is good to have the sermon—it will be better if we can copy the example he has given of good living and patient able working.

EDITOR.