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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 1886.

A CORRESPONDENT, writing from London, propounds a question to which he desires an answer in our columns; but he and occasionally others fail to comply with the universal journalistic law, Medo-Persian in its rigidity, that all communications must be authenticated by the name and address of the writer, "not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee," etc.

THERE was something grandly appropriate in the manner in which John B. Gough's life closed. Addressing an audience of young men, he leaned over the pulpit, and, in most earnest tones, though in a voice somewhat husky, said:—"Young men, keep your record clean." As these words fell from his lips he staggered, fell back against the pulpit sofa, and never spoke again. He fell at his post. The last words uttered by his eloquent voice were just such words as we believe John B. Gough would like to have been his last:—"Young men, keep your record clean." What more suitable exhortation could have crowned his life work? And what exhortation more needed by the young men of the United States and Canada? What shame, what sorrow, what disgrace, what remorse would be avoided if every young man took the orator's dying advice and kept his record clean? We reiterate these dying words, and say to every young man into whose hands this paper comes, "Young man, keep your record clean." Be clean in thought, in speech, in action. If your record is once besmirched it may cost the efforts of a lifetime to remove the stains. Gough himself used to say that he would give a world if he could remove entirely from his mind all the bad effects of his youthful follies. Young man, whatever else you do, keep your record clean.

MANY most important lessons may be learned from the congregational reports published at this season of the year. One of the most important is that other things being equal, or nearly equal, the best organized congregations do the best work. The difference between liberal giving and giving that is not liberal is, nine times out of ten, the difference between thorough and defective organization. Organization that works regularly and systematically and reaches everybody will produce good results in the end. The weak point in many a congregation is lack of such organization. This fact often strikes one forcibly when visiting congregations that are doing little or almost nothing for the Church. You look at their contributions in the Blue Book and conclude that the people must be—well, not very generous or loyal to the Church. You visit them, speak to the office-bearers, talk about church matters, see some of them in their homes, and you are astonished to find that they are remarkably like other good Presbyterians. Individually considered they are quite the equals of many who figure to greater advantage in the statistics. In most cases all they need is proper organization, and in a few years their contributions would be quite creditable. For want of this organization they do nothing. A crowd of the bravest soldiers in the service would not make a regiment. There must be order, discipline, equipment. Two or three hundred of the best men on earth would not make a good congregation without organization.

THERE is one part of the proceedings of the Local Parliament that we always watch with interest. We mean the steps taken to open up new territory and bring new lands into the market. Wherever lands are sold, and colonization roads built, there our home missionaries must go. There is every reason to believe that we will soon have an extensive Home Mission field between Lake Superior and Rat Portage. The territory so long in dispute is now in possession of the Ontario Government and, no doubt, large portions of it will soon be settled. It was stated in the Legislature the other day that in the Rainy River district alone there is a fertile belt of nearly three hundred thousand acres. A colonization road has been built and there are 126 settlers already in the district. As the lands are free, doubtless there will soon be more. The day is not far distant when our Home Mission stations will extend in a direct line from the Ottawa Valley to the Rocky Mountains. With the exception of the North Shore of Lake Superior, we have stations on the greater part of that line now. Some of the most promising stations in the Muskoka field are on the C. P. R., and there will be more as soon as this road and the connecting line from Gravenhurst are opened. There was a time when the newer portions of the London, Huron and Bruce Presbyteries were looked upon as an enormous Home Mission field. If these Presbyteries were all mission fields they would scarcely be missed out of the field the Church is now trying to work. The fact is very few even of the ministers of the Church who have not made the matter a special study have any idea of the extent and requirements of our Home Mission work.

THERE are many who hold that the General Assembly is the most unsatisfactory court in the Church. It is said in support of this contention that a few permanent members do the work and often do it badly; that much time is spent on small questions and important issues handed over to committees; that the standing committees are not fairly struck; that the eldership is ignored; and that pastors, especially those from the rural districts, are not permitted to take any considerable part in the Assembly's work. All these charges and several others we have heard for years, and each year they become more vigorous. At the close of each meeting there is a storm of indignation. The most serious charge of all is that there is a determination on the part of a few to centralize the business of the Church and keep it in their own hands. Now, we don't profess to be able to say how much ground there is for these complaints. Where there is so much smoke there must be some fire. What we wish to say, and say most emphatically, is that Presbyteries have the remedy for all these ills, if they exist, in their own hands. They make the next General Assembly in the next two months. If it is not properly made, who is to blame? Every member of the Assembly will be sent there by some Presbytery. There is not much sense in sending members to the Supreme Court year after year, and then complaining of the manner in which they conduct themselves. Two-thirds of the ministers and elders of the Church should surely be able to regulate the other third. If there is anything wrong in the Supreme Court the Church itself is to blame for allowing the wrong to exist. That is exactly what it comes to.

SHALL the women of Ontario have votes at the Parliamentary elections? This is one of the questions that will not remain down. It was up again for discussion in the Local Legislature last week. Mr. Waters introduced his Bill giving votes to single women and widows. A lively discussion took place. No new points were raised, perhaps because there are no new ones to raise. The question was well handled last session in the Legislature and thoroughly threshed out in Ottawa last spring. The reading public are familiar with the arguments on both sides. In the debate last week Mr. Dryden used with considerable effect Gladstone's argument that if women are to have the Franchise, married women have stronger claims to the privilege than single women and widows. There is a good deal in this argument; but it is an argument for the extension of the Franchise, if an argument at all. To prove that married women should have votes certainly does not prove that single women and widows should not. It is interesting to notice how party ties are always thrown to the winds in this question. Mr. Waters, who introduces the Bill and

supports it with marked ability, is a sturdy Liberal; but one of its strongest opponents is the Hon. Mr. Fraser. Mr. Mowat is supposed to be in favour of the measure; but one of his staunchest friends, Mr. Dryden, is opposed to it. Mr. Meredith is strongly opposed, but some of his followers are as strongly in favour. The simple fact is, if the women of Ontario want the Franchise they have only to say so, and a majority of the Legislature will give them votes. The matter is entirely in their own hands. As a whole the women don't seem to care whether they have votes or not.

THE MORAL INFLUENCE THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT.

THERE is a dogmatism born of ignorance. The public teacher who has been able only to comprehend a narrow circle of truth, which he sees clearly and holds firmly, is not unfrequently both dogmatic and intolerant. Others whose range of thought, reading and experience is much more extensive may also adopt very positive forms of address, but in their case the unlovely feature of intolerance is generally absent. Earnestness and profound conviction are always impressive, even in spite of an obtrusive self-assertion. Joseph Cook cannot fairly be classified among dogmatists, though from his strong individuality he occasionally approaches the oracular style of address. He thinks keenly, and is able to present the results of constant and profound study with remarkable clearness. His Monday Lectures are as fresh and instructive as ever. There is no evidence that they are waning in interest and influence, and there is certainly no reason why they should.

The last published lecture deals with a subject of vital importance, the essential nature of the Atonement. It starts out with an important truth that seems to be very much overlooked at present—the nature of repentance. The duty of forgiveness is sufficiently insisted upon, but the ground of forgiveness is not so generally explained. One who has injured a fellow man may afterward regret having done a wrong to his brother. Is that regret in itself, however fully expressed, sufficient cause for forgiveness and reconciliation? The one to whom the injury has been done may be generous and magnanimous, willing to have the broken friendship restored. The offender, however, if he is a just and honourable man, will be anxious to make reparation for the injury he had inflicted. A sense of justice makes this demand. In speaking on this point Joseph Cook says:

Will human law, will the public conscience, justify the assertion that mere repentance on the part of a traitor is sufficient ground for his restoration to the favour of the government he has betrayed? History and human nature answer this question unhesitatingly in the negative. We live under a government to which we have all been traitors. It is a government of infinite excellence. It is a government which our consciences always support. The fact of our treason we do not deny to ourselves.

This line of reasoning leads inevitably to the conclusion that an atonement for sin is necessary. Then, dealing with the moral influence theory of the Atonement, while admitting all that is positive in the teaching of those who adopt it, he shows conclusively that it is utterly inadequate to meet the soul's need, the requirements of conscience and to harmonize with the clear and explicit statements of Scripture that Christ's sacrifice was vicarious. So numerous and plain are such passages that upholders of the moral influence theory feel called upon to explain them, and the explanation offered is that they are figurative expressions. Suppose that this explanation were correct, the difficulty remains. Why should there be such uniformity in the figures employed, and why should they conform so closely to the sacrificial idea embodied in a divinely instituted ritual, as well as in every form of human religion?

Mr. Cook quotes Archdeacon Farrar's recent utterance that "no theory of the Atonement ever formulated has been accepted by the universal Church, or can put forth the slightest claim to catholicity," and answers thus:

My conviction is that the facts represented in these scriptural declarations are a theory of the Atonement broad enough to make it certain that it is a sacrifice. As Henry B. Smith has said, and the language goes to the heart of much recent discussion, "The very nature and essence of the sufferings and death of Christ is that they are an expiation for sin. This is the very idea of a sacrifice. It is the thing itself, and not a deduction or inference from it. This is the fact, and not a theory about it."

After explaining the nature of imputation and