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The Dominion Presbyterian

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P.O. Drawer 1070, Ottawa
C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Manager and Editor

Ottawa, Wednesday, Feb. 10th, 1902.

The question of Sabbath observance is re- ceiving enlarged attention in Scotland. The United Free Church Presbytery of Edin- burgh recently passed strong resolutions on the question, particular attention being paid to the running of the street cars on the Lord's Day. The mover of the resolution among other things said: "What lay before them in Edinburgh was not simply the run- ning or not running of the cars on Sunday, but this particular fact lay in the centre of a great consideration which they had to face—the ever-growing tendency to increase Sun- day labor." Here is a point which should have the earnest attention of working-men everywhere in Canada. If they permit the Sabbath to be secularized, the time will not be long in coming round when they will be compelled to do seven days' work for six days' pay.

It would seem, says the Missionary Re- view of the World, that Russian opinion is at last awakening to the demand for religious toleration. At a recent missionary confer- ence, held to discuss steps for proceeding against heretics, a leading noble, M. Strachovitch, protested against the harsh measures in vogue, and said it was high time for Rus- sia to concede to all the valuable prerogative of liberty of conscience. Tho' the proposal was rejected by the conference, it was taken up strongly in the secular press, which has published luminous articles on the value of liberty in matters religious. This is a hope- ful sign, and the fact that the papers that have ventured on this courageous step have not been suppressed, as would inevitably have been the case in earlier reigns, is a tribute to the new spirit which emanates from the Czar, and which is beginning to permeate downward as well as to rise up from beneath. When toleration becomes a fact in the Russian Empire a great future will be opened to the Russian people.

RESULTS OF GOOD TIMES.

It would be a formidable task to set down in writing, and almost as laborious a task to read of all the results of the good times Can- ada is now enjoying. It was a little surpris- ing to see a considerable falling off in the reading matter taken out of one of our large public libraries, charged to the account of "good times". "People are too busy," it was said, "to find time for reading." We have always supposed that it is when times are hard, when men are at their wit's end to get through each day, when accounts are dif- ficult to collect and money comes in slowly, when investments are shaky, and men cannot sleep for anxiety, that that was the time when they could get no leisure or had no heart for reading. We fear it is rather an optimistic, and too self-satisfied a view of things which would attribute a falling off in reading to the prosperity we are now enjoy- ing. A more likely and more reliable result of the good times, is the last bulletin sent out to the Church by Rev. Dr. Warden, the chancellor of our church's exchequer. It shows that with the exception of the follow- ing four funds, all the other schemes of the church were in a better state at January 31st of this year, than at the same date last year. The four behind are the W. F. M. S., French Evangelization, Pointe-Aux-Trem- bles Schools, and our Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund. The W. F. M. S. is far- thest behind, being \$4,000. This part of our church's work has always been so ad- mirably managed and so successful, that this deficit, if not wholly made up by the end of this month when the church year ends, will at least be greatly reduced in amount. We hope that the deficits in the other funds, seeing that they are comparatively small, will be more than made up.

Another result of the good times of a wholly different kind from either of those mentioned, is the carnival of social dissipa- tion and display that may now be seen in all our cities and larger towns. Look over the "society" columns, and they are not few, of any of our city papers, and what an endless round there would appear to be of social dis- sipations accompanied with ostentations and in many cases most vulgar display. Here is a brief list, such as may be seen any day in our city papers: dances, sleighing parties, assemblies, luncheons, musicales, carnivals, conversaziones; skating, tobogganing, snow- shoeing parties; recitals, lectures, choral clubs; driving, euchre, theatre parties, pedro clubs, with at homes, teas and dinner parties without end. Day after day, week after week the round goes on. What a whirl of most wearing excitement many people must live in, and what high and noble views of life many must have. To what ad- mirable use they are putting the increased means which the good times have put into their hands.

A strange, and not very flattering aspect of society, so-called, attendant on this dissi- pation is the display, and what we cannot but consider, the vulgar publicity with which it is all flaunted before the public eye. By many this must be thought to be the most satisfying and delightful result of good times, the means they supply of gratifying the lower, more animal, and sensuous cravings of our

nature. Time was when a decent or deli- cate reserve was shewn with regard to pri- vate and semi-private feastings and entertain- ments. Now one would fancy that the chief aim is to blazon every such thing before the public, and that this is one great object for which society exists, to make the greatest possible display of itself before a wondering, gaping crowd. The names of those present, the table decorations, the dresses and orna- ments worn are all paraded and served up to gratify the curious or stir up the envy of those who cannot, or who, if they could, did not have such an array of guests, such costly and elaborate tables, dishes, and gay or gaudy dresses as had somebody else. It is all, this craving for notoriety, this posing be- fore the public, vulgar in the extreme. It takes away from the quiet delicacy and re- finement of life and manners which consti- tute one of the chief charms of really elevat- ing and elevated society. The kindly, home- ly virtue of, what is now, almost the old time hospitality, is little or no part of this dance of what is called society. It makes life artificial, unnatural, often a burden and a cruel waste of vital life force which might be so well spent to nobler purpose, and to far higher ends. Good times so used, will one day, when they are gone, only furnish reason for bitter but unavailing repentance or remorse.

Under the caption of "Thomas Paine and the Higher Critics," Rev. Dr. Whitelaw of Kilmarnock, Scotland, has been sending cold chills down the backs of modern higher critics and clipping their wings by pointing out that the principal conclusions of the higher critics of the present day had been anticipated one hundred years before by "Tom Paine" in his "Age of Reason." But this is not all. The Secular Society, through the London Free Thought Publishing Co., has issued a twentieth century edition of the "Age of Reason," in the preface to which the statement is made by the editor that "the positions taken up by Paine are now held by Christian professors," quoting extracts show- ing that Paine's "conclusions were similar to those of the present day critics who call themselves Christians." It is doubtful if the higher critics of our day will care to be so conspicuously placed in the company of Paine in a fashion which practically paints them as followers of the great infidel, rather than as leaders of thought in modern days. Dr. Kilmarnock, in explaining the production of his articles says: "My object in preparing these papers was to advise whoso- ever might read them that the ideas and theories concerning the Hebrew Scriptures which are now being paraded as new dis- coveries, as the latest results of modern scientific criticism, as fresh light from the blazing sun of nineteenth century illumina- tion, were nothing more than a reproduc- tion in genteel phrase, of what Paine had advanced long ago in rather rough and unpar- liamentary speech." The higher critics will have to find out "where they are at."

The true Christian stands before God as if he had already suffered and died for his own sins.