

Our Contributors.

CONCERNING AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE.

BY KNONONIAN.

When Dr Rainy was in Australia a short time ago he was as a matter of course interviewed by the reporters. The great Free Church leader did not take kindly to the interviewing business, probably because he was not used to it. His replies were for the most part brief and non-committal. He did not know whether the Irish would get Home Rule or not and could not really say how the next election was likely to go. To one question, however, he gave a reply that is well worthy of consideration by Presbyterian people the world over. Asked by the reporter of a leading journal in regard to the state of the Church in Scotland he replied,

THERE IS LESS AUTHORITY BUT NOT MUCH LESS INFLUENCE.

That is exactly the condition of affairs in the Presbyterian and every other Church in Canada except the Roman Catholic. There is less ecclesiastical authority, but when the Church does its work in a Christian spirit and with a reasonable amount of energy and ability there is not less influence. What is true of the Church as a whole is true of individual men. It is sometimes said that ministers are not treated in Canada with the amount of respect that was shown thirty or forty or fifty years ago. That depends entirely on what kind of ministers they are. If they are vain, pompous men, who have to pose as little popes, who try to lord it over the people and make their authority felt by everybody; if they are men who must have their own way in, everything, they have a hard time. But if they are real ministers of Christ, men who are willing to make sacrifices for their Master and His Church; men who instead of scheming for office and honour are willing to devote their entire energies to the cause of Christ there never was a time when the people would do more for them.

What is true of ministers is true of elders, deacons and other officers. Given a session composed of men who are all willing to lead in work and in sacrifice, and that session has as much influence to day as a session ever had even in Scotland. What the people don't care for and sometimes kick against is a session or other court that rules and does nothing more. As Principal Rainy observes, mere authority is on the wane, but the influence of an unselfish, devoted, self-sacrificing Christian man is as great as it ever was, and probably he might have said greater.

One sometimes sees the fact stated by the learned Principal illustrated by Presbyteries. A Presbytery composed of a considerable number of able, wise, devoted men, who have power in the pulpit, who build up influential congregations and who are known to be self-sacrificing ministers, has as much influence as Presbyteries ever had in this or any other country. On the other hand, a Presbytery mainly composed of, or influenced by members who are little or nothing more than mere Church court men; members who rely on the mere machinery of the Church; who trust mainly to the little authority vested in them by the constitution of the Church, a Presbytery of that kind never has much influence and has less every day. All Presbyteries have exactly the same amount of authority but no one would say that all have equal influence. The same is true of every other court of the Church. A synod that relied on mere authority without any moral and spiritual power behind it, would have no more influence than an equally large body of men of equal mental attainments chosen from any class of people.

The authority even of a General Assembly would go for nothing if not backed up by moral and spiritual power.

Perhaps some one may say that parliaments, councils, civic courts and other governing bodies that belong to Caesar can carry out their decisions and enforce their laws without putting any moral power behind them. That may be, but parliaments have an army and navy, civil courts have sheriffs and constables with sticks that raise artificial bumps on refractory people's heads. Caesar has gaols, and penitentiaries, and a gallows and other unpleasant appliances for enforcing his laws. The Church has no machinery of that kind for enforcing its laws and hence if they are not enforced by moral and spiritual influence they cannot be enforced at all. The result is that when a Church or part of a Church ceases to have moral influence its laws never are enforced. There is nothing to enforce them with. A Presbytery without moral and spiritual power would have no more influence in a community than the drum of the Salvation Army. No Presbyterian doubts for a moment that authority is vested in the courts of the Church, and that on proper occasions it should be used. To our mind that is clear as anything in the New Testament. But the New Testament assumes that the authority is to be exercised by men who are not only Christians but Christians noted for their zeal, devotion, and self-sacrificing spirit. Put the New Testament description of a minister, elder or deacon alongside of the passages which confer authority upon the Church and you see at once how and by what kind of men the authority can be safely and profitably used.

There is no use in quarrelling with our age. No doubt certain kinds of men would greatly prefer to live in an age when mere ecclesiastical authority could govern without any regard to the character or life of the ecclesiastic. Such days have been, but we may well doubt if they were better days than ours. Anyway Providence has placed us in an age when the influence of unselfish, devoted, self-sacrificing lives can always be greater than the influence of mere authority and we should not quarrel with the arrangement. 'Tis nobler to influence men by worth than by citations.

FRENCH TREATMENT OF THE PRESS.

FROM THE POSTHUMOUS PAPERS OF THE LATE MR. L. HENNING.

I may state at the beginning that I am chiefly indebted for the following facts to a very interesting report, prepared some years ago, by M. Anatole de la Forge, the director of the Paris Press, at the request of the Minister of the Interior. It is written with much fairness, shows immense research and an extensive acquaintance with every department of the subject, so that it possesses great value as an authentic and reliable official document.

The first thing, then, I gather from this paper is the fact that there existed a censorship of the press in France before the press itself even before the invention of printing, for in 1413 the Parliament of Paris ordered a thesis of Jean Petit, a Franciscan monk, to be burnt, and the author had a narrow escape from sharing the same fate. The University was, at this early period, the only responsible publisher of books, and had in connection with it all copyists, miniaturists, illuminators in fact, everyone who had anything to do with the material preparation of manuscripts, so that there was but little room for the exercise of liberty. When printing was introduced during the reign of Louis XI. both royalty and the Sorbonne received with enthusiasm the first printers, granting them an asylum, protection, and all sorts of favours. But this was of short duration, for we find the University and the Sorbonne immediately after meeting to destroy the "diabolical invention" of printing. On the 7th July, 1533, the Sorbonne presented a memorial to Francis I., the founder of the College of France, and of the National Printing Press, and whom the French historians style the "Father of Letters," in which it was stated that in order to save religion it was absolutely necessary to abolish forever the art of printing, which was daily bringing into existence a multitude of pernicious books. The "Father of Letters," after a year's consideration, issued Letters Patent, equivalent to the English Order in Council, abolishing printing throughout the kingdom "under pain of hanging" (Jan. 3, 1534). The Parliament of Paris refused, however, to register these Letters Patent, and the king, by way of compromise, ordered the Parliament to elect twenty-four qualified persons, out of whom the king would choose twelve, to print in Paris books approved as necessary for the public good. From that time to the present day, the printers' trade in France has been "a privilege and a monopoly." Thenceforward a special license from the Parliament of Paris was needed to print a book; and it was ordered that there should be "strict surveillance" over publishers and authors who might be suspected of irreligious or heretical tendencies. Clement Marot's translation of the Psalms and the Cymbalum Mundi were put under the ban of the Censor of the Press in 1538, and two years later Erasmus, Zwingle, Melancthon, and others were denounced as heretics. Search was diligently made in printers' offices and booksellers' shops, and offenders were punished with merciless severity. One of these—Emile Dolet was burnt in the place Maubert, in Paris, in August, 1538. He was accused of giving a wrong translation of some portion of Plato, and for this crime the young publisher—he was only thirty-seven years of age—after the ordeal of torture, was tied to a gallows, under which a great fire was lighted, into which he fell, his body being reduced to ashes.

Under the successors of the "Father of Letters" the press fared no better. During the reigns of Henry II. and Francis II. no book was allowed to appear without the *imprimatur* of the censors—the Faculty of Theology. Charles IX., the author of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, forbade any book or pamphlet to appear without the royal license. This decree, made in 1563, remained in force until 1789. It was the means of driving into exile all the leading printers. Robert Etienne fled to Geneva in 1551, but his partner, Jean Morel, who chose to stay behind, was burnt at the stake, as was also Martin Homme, in the Place Maubert—*lieu commode et convenable*—in July, 1560. For a short time under Henry IV. less severe punishments were meted out to printers, but under Louis XIII. from 1612 to 1629 the most pitiless edicts were enforced against all who dared to speak of public affairs in any terms. The reign of Louis XIV. was equally fatal to liberty of the press. After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, all with whom heretical books were found were imprisoned, if not banished, or tortured and put to death. In 1694 a printer and a bookbinder who "had relations with a printer" were hanged for printing a pamphlet entitled "L'Ombre de M. Scarron." Between 1660 and 1756 no fewer than 869 authors, printers and dealers in books were imprisoned in the Bastille for their connection with books "contrary to morals, religion, the king or the Government." Louis XV. added an additional shackle in requiring, after the 14th of May, 1724, of all booksellers and printers, before they were allowed to enter on the exercise of their profession, a certificate from the priest as to their life and morals, and standing in the Catholic faith. The Jansenists were treated with hardly less severity than the Huguenots. Even philosophers, by an "ordonnance" of 1757, were punished with death if their writings on politics, legislation or finance had a tendency to excite men's minds. In consequence of the accumulation of restrictive laws and tyrannical decrees, it came to pass that during the eighteenth century the most simple exercise of the right of thinking was legally impossible in France. To publish a book it was necessary to obtain the sanction of the censors named by the Sorbonne, that of the police, and that of the syndicate of book-sellers. When the book appeared the author had to dread the judgment of the Council of State, the index of the Sorbonne, the denuncia-

tions of the clergy, the decrees of Parliament, the *lettres de cachet*, etc. Such a state of things justified the saying of La Bruyere, that "a man born a Christian and a Frenchman is greatly embarrassed what to write about, great subjects being prohibited and little ones being forbidden."

How did it fare with the journalists? Journalism in France had a peaceable and prosperous beginning. The first periodical made its appearance under the name of the *French Mercury* in 1611, during the reign of Louis XIII. It had certainly nothing to frighten the king, "by whom and for whom are all things," according to this gazette, "all other people serving but as accessories." This was the commencement of official journalism, which has always been wanting in interest, in pleasure and life. Nothing can appear but what is authorized and approved. Political journalism, properly so-called, did not appear before 1789. Literary journalism between 1630 and 1789 manifested a little independence, which was dearly paid for—Morellet, Marmontel and others having to expiate in the Bastille the crime of not sufficiently admiring the merits of a favourite author or the talents of a popular actress. Hardly had the States General been convoked when thousands of *brochures* and journals sprang into existence. Mirabeau commenced the publication of "The Journal of the States General," on the 2nd of May, 1789, but the second number was suppressed by a decree of the King's Privy Council. Mirabeau decided to continue his work, however, and changed the name of his journal to "Letters of Count Mirabeau to His Constituents." This clever device had the effect of intimidating the Government, who were afraid of interposing between the representative and his constituents, so that liberty of the press had thus been secured in fact before it had been gained by law, and to this was attributed the taking of the Bastille and the revolution which followed. Mirabeau defended the freedom of the press by his acts, his speech, and his pen, and on the 19th of May, 1789, the king permitted the journals to publish the proceedings of the States General, and on the 24th of August of the same year, through Mirabeau's influence, the Assembly decreed that "every citizen can speak, write and print freely." The silence of ages being broken, liberty was soon converted into licentiousness. The Convention passed a law, however, that whoever should be "convicted of writing or printing anything tending to re-establish royalty, should be punished with death," and this law was put into force in some cases, Robespierre, Danton and others, excusing the contradiction between their principles and their conduct by the exceptional position in which the coalition of Europe and the rising of the Royalist provinces placed them. The Council of Five Hundred put journals and presses under police protection, and sentenced the proprietors, authors and editors of sixty-seven papers at Paris and in the provinces to transportation. This not being deemed sufficient, domiciliary visits were ordered, printing presses broken up and carried away, and journals suspended, and in all this the Jacobins actually believed they were serving the interests of the Republic. The Consulate and Empire, which followed soon after, taught them that they had been working against themselves. No party admitted that liberty of the press was an evil in itself. On the contrary, so long as it advocated their own cause, liberty appeared to be good, necessary, indispensable. It was only when it approved of something in the principles of their adversaries that liberty became detestable.

On the 18th Brumaire arose a man who silenced all parties. Napoleon suppressed at once both the tribune and the press. In January, 1800, he put all journals into the hands of the Chief of the State, by a decree arbitrary enough to please an Asiatic despot. He wished, as he himself expressed it, to be able to dissolve all dangerous associations and to silence all dangerous orators—journalists he regarded as haranguers, subscribers to a journal as forming a club, every member of which became in his turn an orator; and yet shortly after he made the *Moniteur* say that "Liberty of thought is the chief conquest of the age." Again, in 1810, to show how he valued this "chief conquest of the age," he established a censorship of the press, limited the number of printers, imposed a tax on every sheet issued, and in 1811 he ordered that henceforth only four daily papers should appear in Paris, and that these should confine themselves to giving "political news," not to the discussion of politics—Napoleon, we see followed in the wake of his predecessors in his treatment of the press. The old *regime* had spoken in this way; and it fell; the Convention had exhibited its wrath against writers, and it became discredited and unpopular; the Directory transported journalists *en masse*, and it was overturned by the 18th Brumaire; Bonaparte silenced all France, tribunals, journals, books, inspiring writers with terror and adulation alternately, and finally banishing them—and he, too, fell, France being relieved and comforted by having no longer at her head a man who had passed through the world like a trail of fire.

The Restoration, faithful to the examples of the past, began its career by affirming the liberty of the press, but very soon subjected all journals to the authorization of the Ministry, and all periodical writings to the examination of a Commission. Between 1815 and 1817 several writers were fined, imprisoned, and subjected to surveillance, some for expressing their opinions on the state of liberty in France, others for being suspected of a tendency to Bonapartism. This gave rise to a very general feeling in favour of liberality, and the law of 1819 was passed, most of which is still in force. This law enumerated and defined offences of the press, and fixed for each a particular penalty. It created an offence of outrage to public morals and religion which gave rise to numerous law-