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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 16th, 1889.

THE electors of Toronto replied with an emphatic "No" when asked the other day to vote money for the establishment of an inebriate asylum. One explanation given for their refusal is that they are not sufficiently educated to see the usefulness of such an institution. A more likely theory is that they are so well educated that they see clearly the absurdity of licensing a traffic to make drunkards and then taxing sober citizens to take care of them,

"DIFFICULTIES." A column will be opened for the answering of questions touching theological, biblical and experimental difficulties, by one competent to the task, as soon as we have a sufficient number in hand. And it will be continued every alternate week if need be. This will be a feature of interest, we doubt not, to many of our readers. Many have questions they would like to ask in the above provinces. This section will assume the form of a Question Drawer.

ARCHDEACON MCKAY-SMITH has a highly interesting article in the current number of *Harper's Monthly* on "The Clergy and the Times." Illustrating the well-known fact that many good sermons are spoilt by being made five minutes too long, he says: "We may be glad to sail with an agreeable friend up to the very headwaters of the Hudson, but it does not necessarily follow that we care to prolong our voyage through the Erie Canal." Well put. The Erie Canal must seem very tame and tedious after a sail up the Hudson. So do a dreary string of commonplaces at the end of a good sermon. How often do we hear good people say—What an effective sermon that would have been if he had just stopped at—?

"THIS is a British Columbia winter." "This is a California winter." "This is a Florida winter." Such were some of the expressions heard on the lips of many a few days ago. The reply of most Canadians would be, "Well, if that be so I do not wish to live in British Columbia, or California, or Florida." The constitution of the typical Canadian requires a reasonable amount of frost as certainly as the business of Canadians requires a foot or two of snow. The unusually mild weather of the early part of this winter was pleasant enough in some ways, but there was a generally expressed opinion that it was not the kind of weather for us. Clear, crisp, frosty weather is the kind we need for health and business. The warm, dull, rainy holidays that have just passed should teach us not to scold so much about our climate.

THE *Christian-at-Work* has this to say to the croakers who constantly tell us that the Protestant religion is dying out in the United States:

According to the latest reliable statistics, the growth of the Evangelical churches in the United States for the first seventy years of this century—that is, from 1800 to 1870—was manifested in an increase of 64,000 church buildings, and an increase of 45,000 ministers, and over six millions of members. But for the sixteen years, from 1870 to 1886, there has been an increase of 42,000 churches, 36,000 ministers, and nearly six million of members. This shows that up to the present time (1870 to 1888), a period of eighteen years, the church has increased more in ministers and members than during the seventy years preceding. It is believed that the Evangelical churches now number 131,000 churches, 87,000 ministers, and over twelve millions of members. From all of which it would seem that Protestant Christianity is not losing ground in this country. But we doubt if even this will satisfy some shallow minds, or silence their silly croak.

Of course it won't. The fact that the Protestant church has increased more in the last eighteen years than in the seventy before the eighteen, is nothing to a chronic croaker. His business is to croak. He is sublimely indifferent to facts and figures.

THERE are twenty-four Presbyterian Churches in Toronto, including the Reformed, the Independent, and the two Mission Churches. The "difficulty" about electing a predecessor in the "Reformed"—Carlton Street—has received more attention lately from the city press than all the work that is being done by the other twenty-three. Is that because Christian people like better to read about "difficulties" than about good work? There are twenty-seven Methodist Churches in the city. The wretched wrangle in the Western Methodist Church has occupied perhaps ten times as much space in the city press during the past few weeks as all the Christian work that is being done by the twenty-six Churches that have no sensation. The "decoction" that the ex-pastor is said to have kept in his boat house in Muskoka is a matter of far more importance to the enterprising reporter than the Home and Foreign Mission work of the Methodist Church. In fact that "decoction," whether real or imaginary, promises to tower up above the Federation question. There is something wrong somewhere. Is it with the newspapers, or the reading public, or both?

PROMINENCE brings some serious drawbacks. The Methodist preachers of one or two cities in the West are after that good Presbyterian elder, Benjamin Harrison, President-elect of the United States. They want him to promise that he will have no dancing in the White House at his inauguration. We have no recollection of the fact that they troubled any of the late Methodist Presidents in that way. Possibly they expect a solid Presbyterian President to conduct his household affairs on a higher plane than any of the Methodist Presidents did. Their expectations may be realized. The Presbyterians, too, or rather a few of them, are giving Mr. Harrison a little worry. A Washington congregation has written to him asking him to "take a pew." It is said that when he goes to Washington he intends to judiciously "distribute himself" over three or four congregations, so that he may avoid the vulgar crowd who go to church to gaze at the President and his family. It is a pity to make a "rounder" of a good elder like General Harrison. All the same, it is announced that on Sabbath Day he intends to "distribute his person" when he goes to Washington. An ordinary mortal should be thankful that he does not need to "distribute his person" every Sabbath.

THE feeling is becoming pretty general in Presbyterian circles on the other side of the line that the Union of the Northern and Southern Churches is being delayed by a few clergymen on both sides whose motives for opposing Union are mainly personal. There is no earthly reason, and certainly no heavenly one, why these two bodies should not be united at once, unless the old war-feeling is a reason. Everybody knows that both bodies travelled beyond the letter of the Standards, if not beyond their spirit in the deliverances given immediately before or during the Civil War. No matter what the Confession says on the subject, Churches will in times of national excitement and peril, pass upon subjects that are not distinctively spiritual. If both Churches did it, what is the use in hair-splitting about the matter now. It is alleged that several of the leaders on both sides allow old antipathies to influence them against Union, and the question is being asked on all sides how long the personal ambitions and antipathies of these men are to be allowed to keep the Churches apart. The people will rise in a body some day soon and brush aside the obstructionists. Ministers are never in a more dangerous position than when blocking the progress of people in the path of duty. They should lead the people, and when they obstruct instead of leading, their usefulness is gone.

SHOULD THERE BE A PRESBYTERIAN LITURGY.

THE plain and simple form of Presbyterian worship has for generations commended itself to the understanding and affection of a steadily increasing number of people. The idea is now pretty much discarded that only to Scotchmen and North of Ireland people can Presbyterian forms of worship have any special attractions. The attempt to represent the present system of Knox or Calvin, and we may add the system of Augustine and the Apostle Paul, as only fitting for a rude people utterly devoid of all artistic faculty and all refined taste, brings no discredit to those at whom it is levelled, it only reflects the narrowness or dishonesty of those who

have the temerity to exalt their own superior refinement and æsthetic endowments at the expense of their brethren who neither feel the humiliation and inferiority which some very extra superfine people profess to deplore.

There is no special merit in extreme plainness and simplicity of church adornment and service any more than there is in splendid decoration and elaborate ritual. The Presbyterian may worship as fully in spirit and in truth, in spite of the plainness of his sanctuary, and the simplicity of his devotional forms. So may the devout Episcopalian render acceptable homage to the Hearer and the Answerer of Prayer, in spite of the gorgeous ritual that might tend to distract rather than aid the worshipper. Much depends on association. Those who have been trained to the use of liturgical forms and accustomed to them all their days might naturally be expected to cherish a decided preference for such accessories of worship. So in like manner the grave, sweet melody, the fervent and direct prayers of the sanctuary may have a charm that will outlive in the memory all subsequent changes in the experience of those whose first associations were fostered in the plain and unadorned rural Presbyterian Church.

That there is a tendency in the direction of adopting symbolic and impressive forms of worship is plain. It may be traced in the entire history of the Christian Church. The effort at artistic adornment is not confined to seasons of outward peace and prosperity, and when luxury invites to display both in the Church and in the world. In the Church in the Roman catacombs, when Christians were driven by persecution to underground recesses, they adorned the walls of their primitive sanctuaries with the emblematic devices that have been reproduced in our own time as testimonies to the unity of the Christian faith and hope in every age. Between the gorgeous scenic splendour of modern High Churchism and the entire absence of all decoration which marked the Presbyterianism of an earlier time there is a wide gulf. In all extremes there is danger, and surely there may be found here as elsewhere a golden mean. That the place where God is worshipped should in some degree be worthy of the exalted purpose for which it is dedicated is now generally recognized, and there is an effort to make the House of God attractive. These efforts, however, should be conditioned by other considerations than a desire merely to outvie a neighbouring congregation. There is more than enough of the worldly spirit in the Church without the introduction of a spirit of ungenerous rivalry which cannot have a good influence on the spiritual nature of those who cherish it. The urgent needs of multitudes both at home and abroad forbid lavish expenditure on church edifices, and all the more imperatively when these grand structures are weighed down with a burdensome debt. In these, as well as in other respects God requires mercy and not sacrifice.

In some of the Presbyterian Churches there are signs that an agitation is beginning in favour of a liturgical service. Ritualism in any section of the Presbyterian Church is as yet very modest and very moderate in its desires. So it has been in every Church at first. Its elaboration has been the work of time, but in every instance where it has been introduced it has shown itself possessed of remarkable powers of expansion. The introduction of liturgical forms in the Presbyterian Church would not satisfy the super-æsthetic cravings of those who long for ornate forms of worship. Even rigid and order-loving Presbyterianism would fail to moderate ritualistic ambition. Some urge the reading of the prayers because their finer sensibilities are hurt by the rude and inaccurate petitions of plain Presbyterians, and it must be confessed that there are some who think that there would be an elevation in tone and a greater degree of respectability in the use of a liturgy.

A question of much more importance is, Would the introduction of reading set forms of prayer increase the spirit of devotion in the Church, and help to make the people more spiritually minded? If that could be satisfactorily answered in the affirmative, it would be a strong point in its favour. But this may be more than doubted. It might be well to give greater attention than is now given to make the services of the Church more completely devotional than is now the case. Ministers have concentrated their attention almost too exclusively to the sermon, and too little to the purely devotional portions of the services. With care, thought, and preparation, much might be done to improve this most important part of public worship, much to elevate and spiritualize the affections of the worshippers, much to render the service more acceptable to Him to whom the homage is offered. When efforts have been made in this direction and have failed, then the time may have come for the consideration of a Presbyterian liturgy, but manifestly the time has not yet come.