

# Dominion Churchman.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1877.

## THE WEEK.

"THE secret of success in conducting a newspaper consists, primarily, in deciding for what class of readers you intend to write, and then in writing for that class." This advice, given to a budding journalist by a well-known veteran in ephemeral and more serious literature, and one who had assisted at the inception of more than one journal, now of world-wide repute, is excellent for the place and the circumstances with which the speaker was best acquainted; but the further that one gets away from the latitude of London the less applicable does the advice appear to be. If success is attainable on no other conditions, the Editor of a Church paper, in a Colony, may as well, at once, give up the task in despair. Secular newspapers, wherever published, and however widely circulated, may still keep the interests of some particular class more especially in view, if they may fix upon some arbitrary standard to which they will conform themselves. But for journalists circumstanced as we are, such a course is simply impracticable. And the difficulties of the position force themselves more particularly upon us when we commence, as we do to-day, an attempt that will, we hope, form a prominent and attractive feature in the *Dominion Churchman*. It is impossible, even if it were desirable, for any weekly paper to give those minute items of news to which our daily contemporaries devote so much space and attention. The managers of some journals seem to think that the transmission of a message over the wires carries with it its own *imprimatur*; and so the Toronto public is supposed to be excessively interested in learning that a horse in Sydney, C. B., ran away, that a servant-girl in Victoria, N. S., stole her mistress' handkerchief, or that the son of an unknown farmer, in Manitoba, was hit in the eye by a snow ball. Now, it is not our ambition to trespass on the field of minute, and generally senseless, trivialities to which our big brothers pay so much attention; but we intend to give our readers, in the column or two we can spare for that purpose, a pithy, readable summary of the leading events, both at home and abroad, of the past week. And here we are met at the outset by the insurmountable difficulty of not being able to define the class for which we are writing, and, consequently, the impossibility of setting the standard of thought and of diction by which to guide our pen. We want to reach all classes, from the Bishop to the backwood farmer's boy; to put something in the first page from which the cultivated intellect will not turn away as washy trash, while we must be careful not to give to the most illiterate of our readers the disheartening impression that we are shooting far over his head. *Benevole lector* put yourself in our place; try, just for half an hour, to make a readable summary of any day's or

week's doings, which shall neither be dry, nor twaddling, nor abstruse, nor—what is most horrible of all—jocose. Try it, and you will appreciate our difficulty.

From some points of view, and alas! to many homes, the New Year opens sadly. Of fire and tempest and terrific accidents, arising from causes within and beyond human control, the record is a melancholy one. Disasters, like commercial frauds, seem to assume, now-a-days, more colossal proportions than heretofore was the case. The Brooklyn Theatre and its holocaust of victims is rapidly followed by the stupendous calamity that befell the unfortunate dwellers on the delta of the Ganges, when without warning, a wave, said to be twenty feet high, rolled over the low lands and swept away the almost incredible number of 215,000 persons. Then, there have been terrible storms on the coast of Great Britain, more especially Scotland, adding numbers of those ominous little black crosses to the Wreck Chart of 1876. By the breaking up of the ship *Circassian* at Bridgehampton, Long Island, twenty-nine lives were lost within sight and hearing, but beyond the reach of help from those standing on the beach. One of the most terrible of railway accidents happened at Ashtabula, Ohio, where a bridge gave way, carrying with it a long and full passenger train into the ravine below. That any who took that terrible leap escaped unhurt or with their lives is extraordinary, but it is calculated that 120 out of 174 passengers were killed either by the fall or by the burning of the cars, or by drowning. A fire at St. Elizabeth's Convent, in the County of Joliette, sacrificed 13 lives, 12 of which were children; and it is more by good luck than good management that a panic in a Montreal theatre, caused by an alarm of fire, was not attended with serious loss of life.

If we say that the Quebec Legislature has been prorogued by the new Lieut-Governor, we shall say probably nearly all that, until the acts passed by it are before us, need be said on the subject. Our Ontario Legislature assembles this week at a time of year which His Honour, in conformity with precedent, will probably aver to be, in his opinion, the most convenient both for the members and the public business, but which the Opposition declares to be most inconvenient for both. For several months to come a very large part of every newspaper in this much-governed Dominion will be devoted to reports of the proceedings of our several Parliaments, and to the ridiculously contradictory estimates which the creators of public opinion profess to have formed of the opinions and capacities of the various entities who swim on the surface of our political cauldrons. There are many things connected with politics which every reasonable man, in his sane non-political moments, must deplore; many things which it is even permissible to ridicule, if ridicule is the outcome, not of vapid cynicism, but of a

laudable desire to employ that most potent engine for a good purpose. But no thoughtful man will be led carelessly to join in the too common depreciation of our Legislators. Rather let us remember that one of the most intricate and interesting problems which a nation can set itself to solve is the art of self-government, and that we, inheriting as we do the *prestige* and the invaluable experience of centuries of freedom, are now showing to the world, and to ourselves, how much or how little we have profited by our advantages, and how much or how little we are really in advance of those to whom freedom has come as a sudden and therefore dangerous prize. Looking beyond to angry wranglings of the hour and considering the ends sought rather than the means by which they are attained, there is a way in which a Church newspaper may properly and rightly take part in that dangerous thing called politics. The squabbings and personalities, the fraud and dishonesty which seem to some persons inseparably connected with politics and politicians, are merely the parasitic attachment which, when life is active, cumber the growth and weigh down the limbs of the healthy forest tree. The parasites are not the tree, and so far from being necessary to its existence will eventually kill it, unless they are removed in time. Everyone who cares for the noble tree should help to remove the ignoble parasites.

The extent to which clergy should and may legitimately interfere actively in politics is somewhat a moot point. A man is always allowed to exercise what influence he can upon his peers. It is when he possesses some ascendancy, whether it be social, commercial or religious, over his fellowmen that his influence may become, so to speak, unconstitutional. There are few instances on record in which the clergy of the Church of England have been rightly accused of attempting to influence the purely secular votes of their parishioners. But it is far otherwise with the Romish priests. Claiming as they do to possess the delegated "power of the keys," they frequently, as has been proved at the recent Bonaventure election trial, use that assumed power in a manner of which all unbiassed persons must disapprove and which the law should, and does, condemn. In this case it was proved that two *cures* did not only direct their flocks from the altar how they ought to vote, but did distinctly threaten excommunication to those who voted contrary to the instructions then given. Mr. Justice Casault and other Judges declared vacant the seat of M. Beauchesne on whose behalf the priests had thus interfered. The plea put forward by a paper that must know better, that for the law to take cognizance of the claim of power over the souls of men is "virtually to acknowledge that such power is possessed," is very feeble indeed. We have to deal with things as they are, not as things, perhaps, ought to be. The admitted fact that certain persons believe that certain other persons possess the power to exclude them from