

gave a wrong direction to everything in theology or worship that came within its reach. It claimed a lofty superiority over the humble Christianity of the common people, and thus proclaimed itself the very opposite of the true Christian spirit. It rested its exclusiveness on the possession of especial knowledge (gnosis) and this was bestowed only on the "enlightened" and the "select." "It was," as Milman appropriately designates it, "the establishment of the Christians as a kind of religious privileged order, a theophilosophic aristocracy, whose esoteric doctrines soared far above the grasp and comprehension of the vulgar. It was a philosophy rather than a religion; at least the philosophic or speculative part would soon have predominated over the spiritual. They affected a profound and awful mystery and admitted their disciples only by slow and regular gradations." How unlike, in every thing, is Gnosticism to the sound principles and strong sense—the rational piety and wholesome self-denial of Christianity! No mysticism, no asceticism, no licentiousness to be found here. All is simple, rational, real and pure. "In the Christian commonwealth, woman is neither the poor slave of the harem nor the spoilt child of Feudalism, nor yet the Aspasia of Plato's republic, but the help-meet for man, appointed to aid in working out the highest destinies of our race, beginning not in the gymnasia or syssitia of Plato, but in the home of our affections, where must be born, bred and educated a race strong in body, firm in mind and steadfast in principle." The system of the Gnostics was directly hostile to these great objects, tending, as it did, to concubinage instead of marriage, fanaticism instead of piety, asceticism instead of self-command.

Both the precepts and the practice of the founder of Christianity and of His disciples condemned everything that bore the impress of impurity or defilement. There is not a word in the New Testament that would warrant divine contemplation being substituted for holiness of life; whether that contemplation consisted in endless genealogies of divine emanations, or in mystic reveries on the divine perfections, even though these were accompanied with a voluntary humility in the worship of angels, or in fasting and prayer more rigidly ceremonial than those of the Pharisee. In conclusion let us beware of being "puffed up" by pride of intellect. We are still surrounded by many forms of deadly error—Papists, Socinians, philosophizing infidels, rational Christians, and superstitious and enthusiastic deceivers innumerable still seek to "beguile." Let us, therefore, "holding the Head," Christ, who is not only the Head of Government over the Church, but a Head of vital influence to it, not seek to be "wise" above what is written; but in the spirit of true philosophy, let us as little children "receive with meekness the engrafted word which (alone) is able to save our souls."

OUR WATCH TOWER.

This month all congregations begin their winter's work and plans are laid such as are expected to be most helpful for the development of Church life, and the increase of a sound religious interest in all the members. Too great care cannot be taken in the planning, that it be simple, judicious and suitable to the special need of the congregation. Cumbersome and unworkable plans are dead-weights about the neck of a Church. They may look well on paper, and give an air of extensive activity, and yet be of no value to the particular congregation for which they are made. Town and country congregations differ widely in their needs. Let not David try to fight in Saul's armour. But let the fight go on truly and earnestly and grandly. Never slack in that.

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The evangelical interest should be the most prominent. The Church of Christ is a spiritual community seeking the salvation of men. It is not at liberty to turn aside from this. This is its great work. It is to seek it through the regular Sabbath service, the Sunday school, the young people's association, the prayer meeting and every channel of Church life. It is a pleasing feature in the working of congregations to-day, that the literary associations which often degenerated into very questionable meetings, are giving place to Young People's Christian Endeavour Societies. These are well calculated to bind the young people together and to lead them into ways of Christian usefulness, which will be of the greatest possible advantage to the Church. Dr. C. F. Thwing very properly observes in his *Working Church*, "In the organization of young people for Church work, the religious basis must invariably be strongly maintained. No foundation, social, literary, musical, æsthetic, is either worthy or enduring. The young people themselves will accept of a constitution and method which are profoundly religious."

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It is a matter of devout thankfulness that the congregations of our Church are retiring from the means and methods employed for raising money for Christ's work, such as tea-meetings, oyster-suppers, and all that kind of thing, and are embracing the Scriptural plan of giving freely of what God has given them, so that this act becomes a means of grace. God is recognized in the act, God as the giver of everything, and God as he to whom the individual is responsible. In this way the soul is brought into closest relations with God as presiding over every act in life. This mode of raising money leaves the energies of the Church free to pour themselves along the higher lines of Christian endeavour, and also impart to the Church its true character as a purely spiritual institution—the body of Christ upon the earth.

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How can every Church service be vitalized? By prayer for the endowment of the Holy Ghost. Let the elders meet for prayer with the pastor before he goes into the pulpit, even though it be but for ten minutes. Let praying souls plead as the service goes on. And at the close of every Sabbath evening service let the young people hold a short prayer meeting and give testimony and exhortation for the benefit of the religiously irresolute; and as a means of stimulating one another in the ways of God. We have not enough of believing prayer. The weekly prayer meeting should be built up by a wise thoughtfulness. Vary the exercises. Make its sweep co-extensive with the work of the Church. Give every interest a place there. Have an evening devoted to the Sunday school, the Band of Hope, the Mission Band and Auxiliary, the Young People's Society, the preaching of the Gospel. Have a prayer meeting, a song service, a Bible reading. Make due announcement of the meeting. Make a stir about it. Proclaim it from the house-tops. Too often religious work is done as though we were ashamed of it. Let us glory in it, and give our strength to it. Our best thought, our best time, our best powers.

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Don't be afraid of printer's ink! Print your programmes of services. In other words, let the people know. Take pains to let them know. It is after all the greatest economy. Place the programmes in the hands of the people at the Church door. Talk about them during the week. By all means let the programme be neat and as beautiful as possible, such as may be preserved. The few dollars spent in this way are returned often ten-fold in money, in the interest awakened in some minds, in the fellowship created in the work of God. In regard to this many a congregation is penny wise and pound foolish.

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Enlist the young people in Church work! The old are in it and will remain till they die, it is a second nature with them. Prepare the coming generation to succeed them. Find a place in every department for them according to their gifts. Be careful not to misplace a man, he will be a cause of disturbance in the wrong place, but of peace and strength in the right place.

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Take time to shake hands! Be brave enough to do it, especially with the stranger, the friendless, the poor, the boys and girls. Great power lies here, and this power is easily lost. In the Church the rich and the poor meet together and the Lord is the Maker of them all. There they are on an equality. They are before God. They are in the presence of Eternity. All stiffness and pride and arrogance are out of place there. The kindly word of recognition and the grasp of the hand is the triumph over them. Let your Christian feeling and thought flow out this way. Touch, and come into touch with all your fellows. We repeat, be brave enough to do it.

SENTINEL.

FRAGMENTARY NOTES.

POINTS OF INTEREST—BANFF—ITS CHURCHES—CLERGY—MEN AND SURROUNDINGS.

Accounts of travel and descriptions of scenery in these days fall flat on the public ear, and when the eyes of sensible folks catch these in respectable journals, they are apt to cry out "chestnuts," and Mr. Editor, you will fare well if some keen-eyed reader does not salute you in the same way.

Retracing our steps at Ottawa, we suddenly turn towards the setting of the sun, and with the Fair in full blast at Toronto, a Pullman berth was at a premium. Having remained over there a couple of days, we found ourselves in a homogeneous crowd on the fast express for Owen Sound to catch the *Althabasca*, which we found ready to do battle with the violent waves of Lake Superior.

At the appointed hour the ship left the wharf, and soon the passengers were on deck, viewing with pleasure the beautiful scenery which everywhere met the eye, and on those who saw it for the first time it made a most favourable impression. The "Soo" was reached; but there our troubles began. Those locks, "the largest in the world," yet a fleet of cruising crafts had possession of them before it came our turn to get through, which we did all right, just in time to get the tail end of a severe storm which had raged severely for a day or two. We had about seven hours experience of it, and it was the means of clearing the saloon of the passengers, who with pale faces and tottering steps made for their comfortable staterooms. No more singing and dancing. No more social conversation. The supper table had scarcely a half dozen of guests seated at it. After a storm there comes a calm, and the morning light showed a peaceful sea, and bright and happy faces. People seemed forgetful of the past, and were radiant with the hope of seeing the land of promise—the Pacific coast.

Port Arthur was reached some hours late, but in ample time to catch the through express, which came boldly to the station, apparently regardless of wind or weather. As soon as the immigrants with their children, wives and cousins, were carefully packed away, we resumed our journey, smiling at difficulties, buoyant with hope, and in our minds realizing a fortune in the near future. Other tourists have described the points of interest on the way; and politicians have exaggerated or depreciated the line as it suited their purpose, but we were bent "on getting there," and mountains to us seemed mole-hills; and really sometimes *vice versa*. We

were all happy, but suddenly the thermometer runs down to freezing point, the fire goes out in the Pullman, the "cullud gentleman" gets coal-oil, strikes matches, runs up and down the car, and although he has an endless stock of fine towels, Pears' soap, etc., no use. Ladies are calling for their wraps and fur capes, and gentlemen hustling to the baggage car for their heavy overcoats, while others calmly taking in the situation, asked, What sort of a country is this?

Winnipeg is reached, and we have an hour for lunch. Here we are joined by two distinguished travellers, the Dowager Countess of Shrewsbury and Lady Selkirk, who were "doing Canada." They were escorted to the station by a number of citizens, and seemed to enjoy very much the scenery and democratic life of this land, probably destined to be the Greater Britain.

Lady Selkirk is widow of the late Lord Selkirk, whose grandfathers came out here in 1810, and who has representatives scattered all over the country, and who still remember with gratitude Lord Selkirk's unselfish acts. The Dowager Countess of Shrewsbury is also a widow; and is mother of Lady Londonderry, wife of the late Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The Dowager is young-looking for her age, and seemed to take an interest in everything going on. Having learned that your correspondent had been over the ground before, they asked a number of questions, some of which would puzzle a philosopher to answer. But my interview with them did not lessen my opinions of the English aristocracy generally, with this exception, that they would learn a great deal by travelling in this country, and mixing with Canadians, whose greatest pride is that they are working people.

BANFF,

of which we hear so much, was reached on Saturday, where we spent Sunday. This is an interesting place. Here the celebrated sulphur springs are in perpetual motion. Even when the thermometer runs down to forty below zero the water from these springs will register as high as eighty. The hotel nestles cosily at the base of the mountains, and is about one thousand miles from Winnipeg.

We have a good, comfortable and convenient church there, built of brick, erected about a year ago. The minister is the Rev. Mr. McLeod, a graduate of Knox College, and of whom a resident said that he was "not only the best preacher in the place, but the best preacher who has ever been there." I was afraid he would go on to say that he was the best who would ever be there.

LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE.

One of the sure signs of Christian union is given in Banff, where the English Church clergyman sings in the choir at the morning service, and holds his own service in the church in the evening. Mr. McLeod afternoon and evening supplies the outside stations.

The choir contained some splendid voices, one a pupil of Signor D'Auria, who has lately taken charge of the music in St. James Square Church, Toronto. On the whole, the music was a credit to the spirited and energetic congregation which lies hidden from public view, near the summit of the Rockies. The pastor, Rev. Mr. McLeod, was absent on his holidays, but his place was acceptably filled by his brother-in-law, Rev. Mr. Rowan from Manitoba, who will be in charge for some weeks; and if his first sermon which we heard was an index of those which were to follow, the congregation are to be congratulated. When one sees the work which Mr. McLeod has done, and the work he is capable of doing, he can better understand the inducements which were held out to him from the east to labour in more prominent and important fields, and it is not overstating the matter when we say that his removal from Banff would be a serious loss to the Church and neighbourhood.

Banff is a pretty place, and was visited by thousands during the summer, but its trade must largely depend on the trans-continental traffic. It should prosper. It has three clergymen,—Presbyterian, English Church and Methodist. The Roman Catholics have a small church, where service is held once a month. Equal rights are conceded by all, and to all. There are no saloons, no lawyers, no insurance agents, and no real estate agents. I heard that it was threatened with a book agent and lady medical doctor, but later reports do not confirm these rumours. It has a livery stable, post office and drug-store, and a "crutch" suspended from a tree with a card informing the public that the man who came there on the crutch was cured, and did not require it any more.

K.

Banff Springs Hotel, Alberta.

A DYING REQUEST.

"Promise me one thing," said a dying father to his son: "It is my dying request; will you grant it?"

The son, sobbing, gave his assent.

"I want you, for six months after my death, to go quietly and alone to my room for half an hour every day and there think."

"On what subject?" inquired the boy.

"That," replied the father; "I leave solely with yourself—only think!"

He had been a disobedient son, but he felt he would try to make some amends by keeping to his promise, and after his father died he did try. At first his thoughts wandered to all sorts of subjects, till at length conscience began to work, and he was awakened to a sense of his wickedness and evil doings, and he set himself to amend his life and ways.