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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17th, 1892.

SUBSCRIBERS in arrears are kindly urged to remit *at once*. If you have been missed in rendering accounts, the date to which your subscription is paid is indicated on the address label.

THE rush to the North-West will soon begin. Congregations in Ontario and some of the other Eastern provinces will suffer, and there will be more work to do in Manitoba, the North-West and British Columbia. The work can easily be overtaken in the summer, but unless the General Assembly does something effective in June the old problem of winter supply will come up in a more acute form than ever. As matters stand at present the trend is decidedly in favour of Summer Sessions in Manitoba College.

SPURGEON stands post-mortem eulogy well. As a rule the eulogies delivered over dead men are largely imaginative and intensely cruel. They are imaginative because qualities are often ascribed to the deceased that he never claimed, and all his surviving friends know he did not possess in any larger degree than most of his neighbours, if he possessed them at all. Such addresses are exceedingly cruel because indiscriminate praise always suggests a man's failings and faults, and the best of men have faults and weaknesses. Spurgeon's memory is mercifully delivered because it takes all the time of the eulogist to make an inventory of the dead man's works.

SPURGEON seems to have comparatively few imitators in the pulpit. His sermons have helped many a weak brother on a busy Saturday, but his style was not the kind that ambitious weaklings try to imitate. He was a robust John Bull, and John Bull does not excite the admiration of a clerical dude. The principal thing about the great preacher that some young Baptist and other youthful divines imitated was his beard, and some of them could not do even that with marked success. It has often been said that the attempt to imitate Dr. Chalmers ruined many a Scotch student. The attempt to "soar like Cooke" brought some ambitious Irish lads to grief. Where is the army of incipient Moody's that used to parade the streets with soft-felt broad-brimmed hats on their heads and limp Bibles under their arms. The imitation business soon sends a man to bankruptcy.

MORE than once have we heard people express astonishment at the fact that the Ontario contribution to the population of Manitoba and the North-West goes largely from Huron and Bruce, two of the youngest and most prosperous counties in the Province. We believe one explanation is that

the residents of these great counties are largely Scotch Presbyterians. They leave Huron and Bruce for the same reason that their fathers left Scotland—to make a home and bread for themselves. Other people may be satisfied to live on their relations, but the typical Presbyterian wants a spot he can call his own. Highland Scotch Presbyterians may have their faults, but they are rarely loafers and dead beats. The man who speaks the "original language" generally does something himself and always wants to give a good chance to his son. These are the people that the Church must follow to every corner between Winnipeg and the Pacific. We cannot afford to lose them.

THE week before last the *Interior* published the following list of subjects of sermons recently advertised in the daily papers, and adds some strong words of disapproval:—

"A Youthful Heroine."
"Whittier, the Quaker Poet."
"Errors of Police Courts."
"A War with Chile."
"A Rain of Righteousness."
"That Night Interview."
"A Delightful Journey."
"The Function of Particularism."
"A Scarlet Thread."
"Pretty Women."
"Character of Hamlet."
"Boomerangs and Monkeys."

Last week our contemporary weakened and gave an explanation, which practically amounted to an apology, for criticizing these announcements. The sensational pulpit must be strong in the West when a paper of the standing and influence of the *Interior* feels called upon to explain itself for saying anything about advertisements like the foregoing.

THE broad brethren who wish to attract attention by their more or less pronounced heterodoxy have a queer habit. The moment they are brought sharply to book they cry out that they are misunderstood. Then all their admirers join in the cry and a universal shout goes up, *they are misunderstood*. This cry serves a double purpose. It suggests that the heterodox aspirants are so learned and profound that it is hard to understand them and that their critics are deficient in the acuteness and knowledge that are necessary to the understanding of great men and their works. Probed a little, the cry about not being understood is not half as complimentary as it appears to be at first blush. The business of a preacher is to make himself understood, and if he cannot do so he is not a good preacher. The duty of a professor is to make his teaching clear, and if he cannot do so he is unfit to be a professor. One of the strong points the friends of Dr. Briggs tried to make in his favour was that people did not understand him. We doubt very much if Dr. Briggs ever felt thankful for that kind of service. He would hardly consider it a compliment to say that he cannot write English intelligibly.

THE *Herald and Presbyter* gives this pen-and-ink picture of a typical minister unfortunately too common:—

We knew a minister of ordinary abilities who preached to moderate congregations. The newspapers never reported his sermons, and the world outside his little circle seldom heard of him. By the by he startled his brethren with a heterodox sermon. The newspapers printed it in full. Then he moved from his church to a hall, and his sermons were telegraphed to the papers of other cities. For a time he was the greatest minister in the whole region, but he very soon dropped out of sight.

Of course he very soon dropped out. The newspapers could not sustain him. On any Sunday they would let him and his heterodox sermons alone if they got on the scent of what the old lady called "a good murder." Sensational newspapers care about a sensational preacher just as long as they can make a little money out of him and no longer. Were it not for the harm that a preacher of that kind does, while he is on the wave, the right course for his church to pursue would be to let him go down in due course. The moment a Church court touches him he poses as a martyr, rolls up his eyes, bellows about his conscience, and the newspapers duly advertise his sufferings. To allow him to commit ecclesiastical suicide quietly would be a good thing if nobody were involved but himself. But all the time he is performing he is doing more or less mischief. When he moved to the hall he of course took some weak brethren and strong sisters with him. All the time he performed there he disturbed neighbouring congregations and Sabbath schools, and just as long as he can get a newspaper

to publish his views they will be thrust under the nose of hundreds of readers every morning. As a rule the best thing to do with a brother of that kind is let him severely alone. That is one thing he cannot stand.

DR. CUYLER fears that even among evangelical ministers there is beginning to be a lack of impassioned earnestness in the pulpit. In a letter in the *Christian at Work* the veteran Doctor asks:—

Is the Christian pulpit cooling off? Is the present tendency towards a diminution of impassioned earnestness in both thought and utterance? I fear that the trend is in just that direction; and that blood-earnestness is not as common—even with evangelical ministers—as it was forty or fifty years ago. If this be so, then it is a fact to be deplored. No sensible man approves of boisterous rant, or wants to see solid argument and strong Bible-doctrine degenerate into mere effusive gush. Preaching should not be all hortation; and the reason and the conscience must be addressed as well as the sensibilities.

But let it be remembered that the sole object of preaching is not to instruct—nor is it only to convince; it is a failure if it does not also move the heart and persuade to action.

We fear it must be admitted that there is a "cooling off," at least so far as the utterance is concerned. Various causes may be assigned without saying anything about earnestness. Oratory in Parliament, at the Bar and on the platform has, to a great extent, given place to what people call "business talk." The change began in England years ago. Gladstone is now the only living representative of a school of orators that made England great in oratory. A typical "business talk" is generally a slovenly presentation in bad English of the talker's views on some question. If he can manage to mutter so as not to be heard at any distance, and to keep his hands in his trousers' pockets while he is talking, so much the better. This kind of a performance is supposed to be an improvement on the style of Fox, Pitt, Sheridan, Burke and other old fogies who made England famous. The pulpit unfortunately sympathizes to a certain extent with this change, and we have preachers, unfortunately too many of them, who think a sermon ought to be just a "talk to the people." Then, too, there is the manuscript difficulty. The antipodes of the "mere talk" preacher is the man who goes to the other extreme, and for fear that he may become the least like the "mere talk" brother, reads every word from a manuscript. Between these two extremes the pulpit is on rather hard lines at the present time.

PULPIT SENSATIONALISM.

PEOPLE are appealed to on every hand. Ingenuity in these days is taxed to the utmost to catch the public eye and gain the public ear. The average man is bewildered by the endless efforts to secure his attention. Schemes of beneficence, philanthropy and amusement are constantly pressed upon his attention, and he can only find relief by taking refuge in a callous indifference and declining to interest himself in anything beyond what immediately concerns him. There are those who are of opinion that the cause of religion can gain by following prevailing fashions, and in our time we have methods of appealing to the public which would have made those of a former generation look with horror on the degenerate ways of their immediate descendants.

It does not follow, however, that methods of conducting Church work are to be stereotyped and that no alterations are proper and admissible. The tendency to get into deep ruts of custom is strong, and is in the end most injurious. Nothing is more uninspiring and barren than the discharge of sacred duty in a routine and perfunctory manner. It injures both preacher and hearer. Devout feeling is chilled and religious activity hampered. A living Church is what this sin-burdened world needs most at the present time. Endeavours to attract the attention of the careless and indifferent are perfectly legitimate, nay, in these days they are urgently needed. The Church bell is not the only means required for summoning people to the House of Prayer. Its sound is pleasant and calls up many hallowed associations, but people in increasing numbers heed not its inviting tones, and in whose hearts it awakens no delightful memories of the past. Directness of appeal is what this age seems most clearly to understand and appreciate. A frank approach to those who are estranged from religious services is in general met with equal frankness, and it is by no means difficult to establish a good understanding between earnest Christian men on the one side and those who have grudges against the Churches, real or imaginary, on the other. Catch-