

# The Church Guardian,

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EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR: REV. JOHN D. H. BROWNE, Lock Drawer 28, HALIFAX, N. S.  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: REV. EDWYN S. W. PENTREATH WINNIPEG, MANITOBA.

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## THE COMPREHENSIVE CHURCH.

THE desire after unity among Christians is, we believe, growing stronger every day. As Unbelief and Scepticism more plainly assert their influence, Christian men, anxious after their own and the world's welfare, will long more earnestly to unite all who bear the Christian name in a solid phalanx against the common foe. Already signs are not wanting that Christian men of all names will unite before long in a demand that more definite steps shall be taken to arrange a basis of union of all Christians. Eminent men among the Presbyterians, Methodists, and other bodies of Christians, have, from time to time, given expression to their inmost feelings regarding this vital question; while on every hand the thoughtful minds of our own Church have sought to promote the same great object. Not only have Bishops and Clergy taken an active interest in this question, laymen also have bent their energies in the same direction. Among others, the honoured name of Earl Nelson occupies a most conspicuous place. For years that noble layman has sought by every means in his power to bring about a union between the dissenting bodies of England and the Church. If he has not been successful, he, at least, has enjoyed the happiness of knowing that his efforts have not been wasted, and that a better feeling prevails on all sides.

Recently, Bishop Vail, of the American Church, delivered a course of lectures on "The Comprehensive Church," in which he advocated a union of the several Christian bodies, and demonstrated that no more comprehensive basis could be found than that which the Church offers. Starting out with the proposition that none could deny the great importance of such a step, he argued that the basis upon which such a union could be made feasible would require to include the leading doctrines, in fact the distinctive principles, of each denomination, and that a Church comprehensive enough for the purpose was not an impossibility. And finally, he was able to show that our Church was that body, that she accepted every positive statement recognized as a vital doctrine in each of the other bodies, and that while concessions and compromises on lesser points might have to be made, the Church could undoubtedly make them, so as to embrace all others in her loving arms.

It is, we trust, a hopeful sign of the times when such a subject can be faced and discussed. Much

of the prejudice against our Church is due to ourselves. We have ourselves to blame for the ignorance which prevails respecting our principles in others' minds. If instead of occupying our attention with matters of ritual, which all, we think, will readily admit are non-essentials, but yet which give outsiders a wrong impression regarding us, we had bent our energies to extend the knowledge of the *essentials* which have been entrusted to us, and had fully explained our position to those around us, we feel sure very much headway would have been made in accomplishing that for which our dear Lord so earnestly prayed. There need be no fear that the Church will be swamped by such a union. The great doctrines committed to her keeping need not, must not, be minimized, but, while holding to every vital principle, nothing should be allowed to interfere with so glorious a consummation.

Having to meet the attacks of a foe growing more alert and more powerful every day, a foe who loses no opportunity of taking advantage of our differences, who wins converts by pointing out the divisions and strifes of Christendom, surely we cannot be satisfied to remain in the position which we at present occupy. If the Church can conscientiously offer to admit into her fold those who are now without, admit them without asking that a single important distinctive principle shall be given up, it becomes our duty, it would be the grandest work that we can engage in, to let it be known that no obstacle on our side need be feared, and that we are ready, with warm and loving affection, to welcome our fellow Christians to a place beside ourselves in the One Body of our Lord.

## LENTEN SELF-DENIALS.

AMONG the Lenten duties which everybody admits are peculiarly appropriate to the Season, the practice of self-denials stands first. In what those self-denials shall consist, is not so universally agreed upon. St. Paul said:—"I keep under my body and bring it into subjection," and that really represents the sum and substance of all self-denial. As has been well said, "either God must raise the body up to the soul, or man must drag the soul down to the body." In other words, we must "crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," we must mortify the body, so that our spiritual being shall have less to contend against. As to the matter of self-mortification by fasting, no one who has prayerfully subjected himself to such a course has failed to appreciate its value, and the fact that our Blessed Lord Himself fasted, and commanded His disciples to fast, would in itself settle the question. But fasting from food does not by any means cover the whole ground of self-denial; it is but a means to an end. It will help us to deny ourselves in many other things which keep us back from making an entire consecration of our hearts and lives to God. Rules, of course, are needful, in this, as in other matters which require to be systematized, and the Church has laid down certain specific directions which, however, cannot meet the peculiar needs of every individual case. As there are different dispositions, different temperaments, and different degrees of physical strength, so there are a host of temptations to prey upon the various forms of human weakness. It is not, therefore, possible, at least it is not advisable, to lay down cast iron rules which shall cover every individual case. While,

as we said, there are rules which the Church has laid down for her children's guidance, yet they necessarily must be, and are, not always applicable in every case.

The work of Lent, so far as it has to do with the practice of self-denials, is intended not simply as a short-lived experience of the benefits of such a practice, but a subjection of our body—its appetites and desires—permanently to the will of God. That each recurring Lenten-tide shall not find us as we were before the previous Lent began, but shall mark a more advanced stepping-stone, a higher plane, in our Christian experience, and in our pilgrimage towards the Promised Land.

Of course it is true that what is a self-denial to one would not be a self-denial to another, but let us not mislead ourselves by this truth to say and feel: "I do not need to practice self-denial. It may be very good for some, but it is not adapted to me; I know it would do me harm instead of good." Do not be led astray, we repeat, by any such temptations of the Evil One—for they are most assuredly temptations of the Evil One. There is none, no, not one, who does not need to practice self-denials. And they who know not by experience the good results of such a practice have made but little progress in their Christian course. The animal part of our nature is sure to overpower the spiritual unless we deny ourselves, for, as the Master has told us, we must deny ourselves, and take up our Cross and follow Him.

"Take up thy Cross, the Saviour said,  
If thou wouldst My disciple be;  
Deny thyself, the world forsake,  
And humbly follow after Me."

Let us, then, follow the Church's lead, let us obey our Blessed Redeemer's injunction, and let us take advantage of the remaining weeks of this Lent, and seek to overcome the evil of our nature, or rather, to bring that evil nature into subjection, in the way and by the means which Christ has ordained.

## THE SECULAR PAPERS.

In a temperate but strong article in the April *Manhattan* on the secular papers, some good points are made against a very serious growing evil, and we hope our brethren of the daily press will carefully read and ponder what has been written evidently in no unfriendly spirit. We are glad to find the magazines taking up this subject. To them the better class of readers look for protection in this matter, and it may be that a vigorous and yet fair criticism will lead to a change being made, or else will arouse public opinion to discountenance those papers which continue the objectionable practise. The writer of the article Mr. E. V. Smalley, among other things, says:—

"Ten or fifteen years ago the best of our city dailies combated what was called 'sensationalism' in the press, a practise of magnifying the importance of news by startling head-lines, which gave to a page the appearance of carrying some very remarkable information, when there was really nothing to be told but the ordinary occurrences of the day. There grew out of these protests a reform which consisted in giving space and prominence of position to matters of news, in proportion to their importance and interest to intelligent people. Of late there has been in many papers a return to sensationalism, not in the old form, but in a new and a worse one; not in head-lines, but