

## THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

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Edited by Rev. Wm. Inglis.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1881.

THE collection for the common fund intended for the support of *all* our Colleges will be taken up on Sabbath, the 11th inst. We direct attention to the circular regarding this matter reprinted in another column of this issue. A circular to the same purport has been sent to student missionaries, each of whom is called upon to "loyally put forth a vigorous effort to obtain a good contribution from his field." We trust that the collection all over the Church will be commensurate with the great and vital importance of the object for which it is made.

## TENDENCY TO EXTERNALISM.

THERE is no feature of this busy stirring age more deserving of the serious attention of Christian men than the tendency to externalism. That which attracts attention and shews is deemed a success, and on the other hand no matter how valuable the gift or how important the knowledge, unless it can be made visible and popularized it is deemed worthless—it is a failure. Doubtless this is but a passing phase resulting from the progress of these times so wonderful, and ere long true excellence will assert its right and move itself superior to show. As intelligence and morality advance, society will be more and more purged from vain show. Meanwhile, however, it becomes us to be on our guard, lest, under the semblance of real excellence, mere show and sham retard the advancement of the race.

Externalism begins early. It shews itself in our modern school theory of estimating the success of education merely by answers to questions for which in too many cases the candidates have been coached. In this way no value can be attached to the real education so far as forming the inward character is concerned. Following out this beginning society opens her arms to any one whose ostentatious claims are forced upon her notice by frequent advertising. The public seems increasingly to favour amusements and pastimes of a showy nature, while it is too negligent of the claims of the noble, pure and modest engagements which affect our inner manhood. The great are those who shew most and hesitate least. It may be said that the world has always done this; that "the vain glory of life" has in all ages been the great object of human ambition. This is true. Nor do we wonder that, so long as nothing better was known, poor humanity sought her portion amid the external glories of this present world. Now it is different. The religion of Jesus has for eighteen hundred years held up before the nations something better than worldly grandeur or vulgar applause; continually it reminds us that the greatest and best man that ever trod our earth was, judged by the world's maxims, a failure, and that the noblest and grandest work that was ever accomplished had no external glory, but was done in the hearts of men. Modern society owes its greatness to that inward force. No greater mistake can be made than to suppose that the external results in which men now glory can continue if the internal moral force of Christianity is not supplied. Still more is this true of the Church of Christ. We are often told that the Church is becoming worldly; but it would perhaps be more correct to say that the Church is in danger of using the world's methods and adopting the world's maxims; of giving so much attention to externals as to neglect the internal work of grace. We have commodious and beautiful churches and Sabbath school rooms; attractive hymn-singing; pleasing literature; schemes, plans, helps, associations, parliaments, picnics, and other such external aids, for the work of preaching and teaching the young, and the success of our churches

and schools is judged by the multitude, variety, and agreeableness of these external things.

We may be told that the conversion of souls is more than ever before the object aimed at. It may be so, but we doubt it nevertheless. Is it not true that by directing attention so exclusively to church and school externals, we may be tempted to think that all is attained when these are externally a success? Nay, further, even in this matter of conversion of souls, are we not warranted in saying that modern methods, such as religious processions by Ritualists to attract the thoughtless multitudes to the church, where imposing ceremonies are performed, equally with the extravagancies of the Salvation Army, and the large gatherings at revival meetings and camp-grounds, with eloquent and sensational addresses and sentimental music, all depend for success on the tendency to externalism and desire for amusement which pervade society.

The quiet, earnest, simple inculcation of truth and duty has no attraction for very many. Truly it is said that in order to hold our young people we must make churches attractive, and accommodate the services to the taste of those who have no spiritual relish for divine things. A church is counted a success, not when a company of true Christians assemble to worship God, but when by advertising something novel and interesting, either by way of discourse or ceremony or musical performance, a crowd of godless ones are gathered together in the hope that they may get some good, or at least may give an outside support to the Gospel of God's grace. Thus men come to plead for attention to externals in order to advance the inward work of God's grace. And with what result? Large external things; fine churches; large gatherings of a popular nature, where everybody is pleased; large sums of money spent on making the services enjoyable. These indeed, but also a hankering among our young people after a sensuous religion which pleases the taste and does not probe the conscience, with an impatience of doctrinal teaching and a doubt whether after all there is any need of a change of heart or any inward dealing of the soul with God, and still worse, a holding back of many from what is seen by them to have no spiritual reality behind the show. We point out the danger, not because we think God's Church is going to ruin, but to lead Christian men to consider well whether it would not be more honouring to God and safer for the people to make less of external success and regard more the *graces* of the Christian life, which, like the lowly lily of the valley, cannot flourish in the bright glare of worldly vain-glory. It is foolish to suppose that we can ever make Christianity attractive by decking it out with the vain-glory of the world; Christ's Church has before this been corrupted and decked with gairish ornaments, and accommodated to the taste of worldly men, but when that was done the bride of Christ was no longer a chaste virgin but the harlot that made all nations drunk with her Popish abominations. Externalism in religion without living piety will pave the way for a revival of the apostacy.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR TOURISTS.

SITTING at our desk this sultry day, our thoughts moved away from amid the immediate surroundings, and paid flying visits to Portland, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and sundry other places, and in spirit we congratulated those who have managed to find time as well as money for the exhilarating and invigorating influence of change for a season.

The late William Jay, one of the most eloquent preachers of his day in England, was withal very quaint and eccentric; and on one occasion, about the commencement of the tourist season, he preached a sort of temporary farewell sermon to all in his Bath congregation whom it might concern. To those going off to the sea-side or elsewhere he submitted a series of matters for thought, and in closing said something like this: "Finally, my dear friends, above all let me admonish you to see to it that whatever else you leave behind you for the summer, you be very sure that you take along with you your religion." Now, whilst Canadian Christian tourists may take with them their religion, some of them may possibly fail of taking with them a little thoughtfulness of a particular kind in certain very desirable directions; for tourists, for want of a little thought, may fail of doing anything like justice to the real benevolence and generosity of their nature; e.g., one may next Sabbath be much

pleased and profited by the ministrations of some worthy preacher in some obscure spot. How cheering to that minister were the tourist to see him somehow before leaving, say a kind word, and perhaps hand to him some book that he had done with, and which might be a little change to the minister from his more solid reading. Another might cheer some superintendents and teachers by visiting the Sabbath school, giving a book or two to the Sunday school library, or, better still, taking the address of the Superintendent and telling them all that he would send a number of copies of a Sabbath school paper to them for the next twelve months. A third falls in with two or three energetic men in some rural congregation, where great efforts are being made to get up a new church edifice; and even a very small contribution to the building fund, and the spirit of the act, would be worth not a little to the few doing what they could. Such are some of the ways in which Christian tourists have been known to leave blessings behind them, and to have greatly added to the pleasantness of their own reminiscences; and doubtless the number of such kindly acts would be greatly increased by a little more consideration in those directions. As "a word spoken in due season," so an act done in due season, "how good is it!"

## STREET PROFANITY.

THE almost incessant stream of profane language that assails the ears of the pedestrian on the streets of our cities, towns, and villages, and even on our country roads, and, sad to say, on many of the playgrounds of our public schools, is most offensive, not only to religious people, but to all who have any sense of the proprieties of life left. Our own city perhaps takes the lead in this as in other respects. A correspondent who, by his vigorous style and the no less vigorous remedial measures which he proposes, shews that his sensibilities are by no means abnormally delicate, wrote to one of our dailies last week as follows:

"Is it not time that either the Government or corporation took up the question of the punishment of children, and even adults, for using profane language? I refer more particularly to the youth. The oaths uttered by these youngsters are simply shocking, and certainly a disgrace to any civilized community. One would scarcely think that we had so many churches and Sunday schools in Toronto when they hear the horrid language used by the children. I can safely assert that you will hear more of such language in Toronto in one day than you will in a week in the city of New York. I would suggest that the police be empowered to carry a rawhide, and to administer on the spot punishment for bad language and stone-throwing."

We may have a fling at the stone-throwers some other time. In the meantime let us confine our attention to the other evil, for it is the worse of the two. Time was when profane swearing was one of the fashionable vices. The royalist "gentlemen" of the English Revolution swore; the yeomen and peasants of the Parliamentary army didn't. Under strict Puritan rule the loud oath and the profane jest had to give place for a time to the muttered imprecation; but with the restoration of the Stuarts came also the restoration of the old vocabulary, with additions and emendations; and down to a period within the memory of men still living profanity was, in some places at least, regarded as a mark of gentility. It is not so now. This disgusting vice has been banished from polite society, and even roughs and blacklegs have come to understand that "in the presence of ladies" they must abandon their habitual mode of speech, however hard a task that may be to them. This change is partly owing to the influence of Christianity, and partly to æsthetic culture. Mere culture never saved a soul from sin, but it must at least be admitted that, by keeping down the offensive outward manifestations of corruption, it has acted like a sort of chloride of lime upon the moral atmosphere of many a drawing-room since the days of "good Queen Bess," and brought to them some degree of "sweetness" if not "light."

The writer of the communication which we have reproduced above seems to make our "churches and Sunday schools" in some way accountable for the profanity to be heard on our streets. He does not seem to be one of the unco' refined himself, but in this matter he follows their example, for if there is any "evil in a city" they always call religion to account for it. Our churches and Sabbath schools are doing their best to reach all classes, but this cannot be done in a day nor in a year. The man is quite right