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## THE PRESBYTERIAN UNION.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE, we purpose giving views of the SYNODS in session in ERSKINE CHURCH, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, KNOX CHURCH, and the AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, in this city. Also portraits of the four MODERATORS, and an illustration of the UNION SOCIAL GATHERING in the VICTORIA RINK on Tuesday evening.

## CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

Montreal, Saturday, June 19th, 1875.

### THE LOSS OF THE VICKSBURG.

Unfortunately, we have only a brief and partial account of the circumstances under which the ill-fated steamer Vicksburg went down into the sea with her precious cargo of lives and merchandise. We have merely the statements of JAMES CROWLEY, the boatswain's mate, who was rescued by the Georgia, with four of his companions, and that of a seaman who was rescued in the second officer's boat, and basing our judgment on those declarations, were are bound to say, that the history of the loss of the steamer is far from satisfactory. We learn from CROWLEY that the Vicksburg first fell in with a field of ice, on Sunday evening, May 30, and was soon surrounded by it. She was stopped till daylight on Monday, when she proceeded again with little ice in sight. At half past nine, on Monday night, the 31st of May, she stopped again amid heavy ice, and then, to get clear of it, proceeded at full speed in the direction of the south. Now, this statement, if correct, gives rise to serious misgivings. Steaming at full speed through a field of ice strikes one as a dangerous experiment, and so it proved, for at one o'clock, on Tuesday, the 1st of June, the vessel, which had already moderated at half-speed, struck the ice heavily aft, on the port quarter. This was manifestly a terrible collision, as the fans of her propeller were carried away and a hole was knocked through the plates, on that quarter. So much water was instantly shipped, that all hands were ordered to heave the cargo overboard. Here was evidence of extreme danger. The work proceeded till six o'clock of the same Tuesday morning, when on sounding, the after steeage was found full of water and five and a half feet of water stood in the main hold. With this immense amount of rising water, it would seem that the ship could not live, yet we are informed that the Captain ordered his men not to mind the boats, as he thought he could make St. Johns, Newfoundland, 120 miles to the north-west. It was only when he discovered that the fires in the engine room were drowned out, that he gave orders to launch the boats, with their respective crews. It is evident that, at this moment, a panic ensued. Only three boats were lowered, No. 1, containing CROWLEY and his companions, the second officer's boat with ten men, and No. 2, with the chief officer and some thirty persons, which was floated from the stocks only at the last moment, when the ship went down with a rush. This phase of the tragedy is inexplicable. By reference to our engraving on another page, it will be seen that the Vicksburg carried seven boats.

Each of these boats could hold comfortably at least thirty persons, or a total of over two hundred passengers. The Vicksburg had comparatively few souls on board—ninety-two all told. If the boats had been properly lowered, in the interval from the first signal of extreme danger to the time she sank—a space of a full hour and a half—there is reasonable ground for supposition that every body would have been saved. The salvage had the inappreciable advantage of broad day light. We are not told that the sea was dangerously rough, indeed, in his drifting from Tuesday morning, till the next Saturday morning, when he was picked up by the Georgia, CROWLEY complains of the cold, but says little of a boisterous sea. Altogether, there is a painful mystery hanging over this dreadful disaster. It is due to the memory of Captain BENNETT, whom we know to have been a consummate sailor, that a strict investigation should take place and that CROWLEY and all the survivors should be thoroughly cross-examined. Light must be thrown, in the interests both of the Dominion Company and of the public, on the following salient points:

I. The steaming, at full, and later at half-speed, through a field of ice on a dark night.

II. The order of the Captain countermanding the clearing of the boats at six o'clock on the morning of the first, long after the ship had struck.

III. The reason why three boats only, out of the seven, were launched.

In terrible calamities of this sort, there must be no squeamishness as to complete investigation. From a mere business point of view, security of travel is an indispensable guarantee to trade. The Vicksburg was more a freight than a passenger ship, and it is only this fortunate circumstance which prevents us from chronicling a disaster equal in horror to that of the Schiller.

### PRESBYTERIAN UNION.

The meeting of the different Presbyterian Synods in this city is one of the most interesting and important ecclesiastical events which have ever taken place in Canada. We have been used to the annual assemblies of these various bodies, and they have always been imposing, as all gatherings of clergymen must be who seek to promote the great work of the Gospel—but this year, the convocation has a higher historic significance, as it is mainly occupied with the pregnant question of Union. The idea of consolidation and centralization is especially popular in our day, and its wonderful results in political and social life are patent to every observer. That it should be attended with like effects in the spiritual sphere cannot admit of a doubt, and the example of the Church of Rome is there to show what immense power can be wielded by the system of cohesion.

The old Church of Scotland, or, as it is technically called, the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, the Canada Presbyterian Church, the United Presbyterian Church of North America and the Church of Scotland in Nova Scotia, now find themselves in presence for the first time. They meet, represented by nearly one thousand delegates, to lay the foundations of a general Union, which shall be known as the Presbyterian Church of Canada. It must be borne in mind that all these Presbyterian denominations have a fellowship of doctrine, and that they have hitherto been divided on simple questions of management or discipline. The chief of these is the State Aid or money grant which, from very early times, has been allotted by Government to the Church of Scotland. In the event of Union, this State Aid would have to be poured into the general fund, and the reluctance in some quarters to such destination of the money has hitherto been one of the objections to the Union. But we trust that difficulties arising from this source will be surmounted. The aggregate sum is not relatively large, and even if it were, means

might be found so to order the distribution as that the original grantees would suffer little or no loss. Certainly we have no idea that a mere question of temporalities will be allowed to stand in the way of a great spiritual consummation, or that the magnificent results of Union will be suffered to hinge on a matter of dollars and cents. Minor points of difference connected with the hymn book and the organ in the churches have already been settled in a Christian spirit of compromise, and we expect in the next issue of the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS to be able to publish sketches representative of the celebration of the Union *de facto*.

The Presbyterians will thus become one of the most important ecclesiastical bodies in the Dominion, and their progress, dating from their amalgamation, will be certain to take a sudden rise. One of their first works will be the establishment of a central college or theological seminary, where all the best teaching talent of the Church will be gathered, and where all the young aspirants to the Ministry will receive the highest training and instruction necessary to the successful accomplishment of their evangelical labors. The Missions will also receive a decided impulse from concerted action, and we may look for the pushing of outposts to the furthest limits of our western deserts.

We are pleased to have this opportunity of congratulating our Presbyterian friends, through all the Provinces, on the great work which has been accomplished and which is destined to mark an era in the history of Canada, and we trust that the few churches which still remain outside of the Union, may speedily see their way towards coming to a harmonious and amicable understanding.

### CANADIAN RAILWAYS.

Mr. POTTER, President of the Grand Trunk Company, has gained a victory, and Sir HUGH ALLAN has experienced a defeat. The attacks upon Canadian credit in general, and upon the Montreal Northern Colonization Railway in especial, have had the grave effect of preventing Sir HUGH from negotiating a loan for his line. Were this a check to the Northern Colonization alone, the evil would be less, because partial, but in as much as it proceeds from a diminution of confidence in all Canadian railways, we must regard it as a matter of very serious import. It is only due to truth, however, to observe that Mr. POTTER is not solely, nor perhaps primarily responsible for the present altered state of feeling. The main cause is remoter and clearly traceable to the disastrous failure of the Union Pacific, and the bankruptcy of JAY COOKE. With that event, all American railway securities received a shock throughout Europe, and particularly in England, from which they have so little recovered, that American railways, almost without exception, are in a worse financial condition, at present, than they have been at any time since their immense development during the Civil War. Of course, and not indeed without reason, Canada has had to pay the penalty of her contiguity to the United States. The British distrust of American railway stocks naturally extended to Canadian railway enterprises, and Mr. POTTER's letter to the *Times* may be said rather to have given emphatic expression to this distrust, than to have increased it.

Of course, we have to accept the situation with as much philosophy as we may. Indeed, it depends upon ourselves to draw a measure of advantage therefrom. While we still hold, as we did in several previous articles, that in the particular case of the Northern Colonization Railway, sufficient substantial guarantees were offered to the British capitalist, it is nevertheless true, in a certain degree, that all our railway ventures do not present the same advantages. We shall go further and affirm that the failure of Sir HUGH may serve as a lesson which it would be wisdom on our part to accept and ponder.

Mr. WALTER SHANLY warned us, nearly a year ago, that the railway business was being overdone in Canada, and the indications are that he is right. When railroading is turned into a speculation, instead of remaining a legitimate branch of business, it becomes dangerous, and there is no doubt that much of this fascinating speculation is getting rife in Canada. It is an axiom that railways build up a country. But that proposition is correct only within certain limitations. Between two or more important centres, a railway builds up the intervening country, as the Grand Trunk and Great Western have proven. The Northern Colonization will do the same service to the fertile interval between Montreal and Ottawa. But until the trade of these centres imperatively demands the increase, two competing lines between them are sure to injure one another and result in the failure of one or both. On the other hand, a railway, starting from a large centre and leading to some indefinite spot in the interior, does not so much build up the country, as it depends for its success upon the country being built or building itself. In other words, a railway may precede the march of colonization into the interior of a new country, but it must precede it only by a small number of mile posts, relying upon progressive settlement in its rear to justify it in moving onward by a few chains. The reckless pushing of lines into the wilderness, the building of railways leading nowhere, as the *Times* expresses it, is not to be encouraged either by Government subsidies or by private capital.

It seems to us that the Province of Quebec has set a good example in this respect. Its railway policy has been generous, yet prudent. The sums allotted from the Treasury for the aid of lines in the different parts of the Province make a considerable total which has resulted in the accomplishment of a good deal of work, but the disbursement has been within the limits of the public means, the Provincial credit has been benefited rather than injured by it, and many miles of important railway were laid, while all tendency to speculation has been kept in the back ground. A similar policy on the part of the Federal and the Provincial Governments would enable us to build nearly all our railways as fast as we need them, and make us relatively independent of foreign capital.

### HONEST JOURNALISM.

The political meeting at Ste. Croix on the 6th inst., was so novel and so thoroughly French in all its appointments, that we felt an unusual curiosity to learn its results. The fantastic challenge of Mr. JOLY, the ingenuous acceptance of Mr. DEBOUCHERVILLE, the quiet Sabbath of a country parish disturbed with a display of logomachy, the amusing spectacle of three thousand people standing from eleven in the forenoon till seven in the evening listening to a tempest of talk—these circumstances invested the Ste. Croix assembly with an interest which neither the speeches, nor the results likely to flow from them at all warranted. Hence, as we have said, our anxiety to know all about it. Ten days have elapsed and our readers will be surprised to be told that we have yet to learn the truth about that meeting. We have read all the Montreal and Quebec papers—French and English—and have obtained only garbled and absurdly partial accounts. The Ministerial papers belittled the utterances of the Opposition speakers and described the result of the day as a signal Conservative triumph. The Opposition journals truncated the orations of the Ministerial debaters and represented the tournament as an unequivocal Liberal success. Some papers deliberately omitted all the speeches of their opponents, while they published those of their friends in full. Others printed the speeches of their adversaries with running comments of their own, while they put forth those of their friends with all the ostentation of "cheers," "laughter" and "bravos."

If this mode of reporting were a solitary