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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JULY 25th, 1888.

THE Masonic Grand Lodge was in Session in Toronto, last week. A city journal thus describes the manner in which the brethren conduct their business.

A Masonic Grand Lodge, unlike a Parliament, is not a recording, but it is essentially a deliberative body. A speaker is not tolerated who shows that he can bring no light to bear on a question under consideration. Long winded orators are consigned courteously to silence; the rule being that if a man desires to get the ear of the Worshipful Master and his brethren he must weigh his facts well, present them in the shortest time possible, and not in any way to introduce, with a view to rhetorical effect, matters extraneous to the points at issue.

Masons who have been accustomed to attend meetings of other deliberative bodies, courts of various kinds and ordinary public meetings, must find the Grand Lodge a kind of oratorical paradise.

THE Prohibitionists of Halton have taken the most business-like step that we have known Prohibitionists to take for many a day. An election will soon take place in that well known county. A Prohibition Convention was held last week and it was resolved to ask the candidates if they accept the Alliance platform. If one does and the other does not, the Convention will meet immediately and take steps to help the candidate who accepts their platform. If both decline, the Convention will bring out a candidate of its own. This looks like real business. If one-half, or one-third of the electors who vote for the Scott Act in any county would take this stand, a Prohibitionist could easily be elected in any close constituency. The danger arises from the fact that a sufficient number of electors might not break away from their party to vote for an avowed Prohibitionist candidate on the other side in politics. Still the plan is infinitely better than the Third Party idea. We notice that a large number of the members of the Halton Convention were clergymen. Do these gentlemen intend to "take the stump" for the candidate that accepts their platform? The Convention pledged itself to "make arrangements" to support their man. What does that mean? It should mean active work of some kind.

THEY are having a lively time in Boston over a perplexing school question. The School Commissioners of that centre of culture and refinement excluded a history because it related the plain hard facts about Tetzel and his sale of indulgences. The ground taken by the School Commissioners is that telling young America, Catholic or Protestant, all about the tolerance and other sins of his forefathers will do no good. A Protestant teacher, it is contended may not always hold the scales quite evenly when weighing the facts about Tetzel and his peddling. An Arminian teacher might not do Calvin strict justice if he enlarged on the Servetus transaction. Such being the case, the school authorities thought it well not to discuss too much these delicate historical questions and they excluded a history which gave a description of the Tetzel business that could not fail to be offensive to Roman Catholics. A mass meeting condemned the commissioners for so doing. Dr. Duryea and other eminent ministers defend them. The real question is. Can history be fully taught in a non-sectarian school without offending somebody? Can it be taught without offending more or less everybody whose Church has a history? Would many Presbyterians care to have a red hot Methodist explain to their children Calvin's connection with Servetus? Would any Methodist like to have a narrow, bigoted, High Church Episcopalian explain the rise and progress of Wesleyanism in England? These school questions are perplexing.

THAT solid, orthodox, dignified journal, the *Christian at Work*, published last week a sermon lately preached by Sam Jones. The following paragraph, one of the best in the sermon, furnishes some food for reflection:

God help the preacher who will bring down the judgment of heaven to the level of a backslidden congregation. Preach the truth and let God be the judge. Never mind what they say about sensationalism. Whenever you begin to tell the truth they will call it sensation. As sure as you live if the plain naked truth of God Almighty is sensational, it is a reflection upon every preacher in the land. If calling a spade a spade and a rascal a rascal is eccentric, then I want to be eccentric. It is my fault if I do not tell the truth. In my early preaching they came to me and said, "Sam Jones, you are not making men Christians." Then I woke up, and in the third year of my ministry I began preaching like I do now; and I had just such houses. The old backslidden scoundrels were there for fear I would say something about them when they were not there. I woke up to find things very scanty around home. I went home and found my wife and children pale and hungry. My wife told me members of the church had been there, and I thought they had come to pay me my salary, but they came to tell her that I would have to stop that kind of preaching. I could not look at my wife and face both at once, but I went off and prayed by myself, then I decided to stick to God and the truth.

Well, sir, the fire burned on and the revival fever broke all over my circuit, and from that day to this I have never wanted for anything. Do not let your congregation be your judge. Some congregations when they go to choose their preacher ask if he is this way and that way, and finally they want to know before they take him if he is a pusillanimous puppy, and can we run him as far as we get him? Preach the truth, and above all things live it yourself.

The appearance of Mr. Jones' sermons in a journal like the *Christian at Work* and others of equally high character is pretty conclusive evidence that he is becoming recognized as a man who says things that the people will be the better for reading. The fact that Mr. Jones did what he considered his duty, though duty made him so poor that his "wife and children were pale and hungry" will stir the heart of the public much more than any lay or clerical sneers that may be levelled at Mr. Jones.

IS IT RIGHT TO PRAY FOR RAIN?

IN various sections of the Province of Ontario no rain had fallen for a number of weeks until the other day when there were refreshing showers. The crops suffered seriously, and in some places it is thought they cannot recover. To the farming community and to others as well, the outlook has caused great anxiety. The prospect is by no means cheering since last season the harvest in Ontario was considerably under the average. Many have thought that prayer for rain was appropriate and becoming in the circumstances. The suggestion has raised a discussion of considerable interest, as such proposals generally do. Some people who affect to be guided chiefly by science and philosophy speak in lofty terms of the weakness and superstition of those who believe in the efficacy of prayer, at all events of prayer in the sphere of material things. There are, among those who deny that prayer can have a place in the region where natural law operates, several who admit its propriety in spiritual things, and hold its chief value to consist in the benign reflex influence it is fitted to exert on the suppliant. If such a belief were to become general it is certain that the exercise of prayer would soon become a meaningless form. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man of which the Apostle James speaks would speedily disappear.

It is held by some that the all pervasive operation of natural law necessarily excludes prayer, and all expectation of change in the order of material things is therefore inadmissible. If this universe were governed by an inscrutable abstraction, named law, owing its existence and operation to no living personality, then man would have to bow hopelessly before the inexorable. But is not this a conclusion from which even the most materialistic of our modern scientists instinctively shrink? The world by its wisdom may be unable to know God, but scientists who decline to accept revelation admit a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. If material things operate in accordance with the laws to which they are subject, those laws are the result of the infinite wisdom of the Maker and Governor of the Universe. In actual experience the results of natural laws are not absolutely uniform. There are constant variations. The rainfall is not exactly the same in the same locality two years in succession; the degree of heat in summer or of cold in winter is not of the same intensity. Laws may operate with unfailing uniformity, but conditions vary; and as a consequence there is

variety in results. May it not be, then, that even in the sphere of material things there is provision for the operation among other spiritual forces of that which has exercised such a vast power in human action—prayer?

Prayer is a natural impulse. The untutored savage recognizes a power beyond and above himself. He desires that evil may be averted and good experienced, he therefore calls for help in prayer. He is but a savage and knows no better, but we—we who live in the nineteenth century, inheriting "the long results of time," and the illumination which science has shed on life and its problems, know better. Let a company of nineteenth century scientists be confronted by some appalling danger by land or sea, their first impulse would not likely be to formulate a syllogism expressive of the uselessness of prayer. Nine out of ten would utter a short, sharp cry for mercy.

The Christian, who takes the Bible as his guide, may not be able to solve the speculative difficulties that are occasionally suggested as to the efficacy of prayer, but he has no room for misgiving. The teaching of Scripture is uniform and clear. God is revealed as the hearer and answerer of prayer. The duty of prayer, public and private, is clearly taught, and the promises of answers to prayer are numerous and encouraging. God's kingdom ruleth over all Temporal as well as spiritual things are under His control. If answers to prayer for material blessings were impossible, would the Son of Man have taught us to pray: "Give us this day our daily bread?" Everything that concerns us may be made a subject of supplication at a throne of grace. Prayer to be genuine must be both believing and submissive. With the example of earnest, fervent importunate prayer which our Saviour has given us, there is no room for doubt as to the duty of following the apostolic exhortation "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Can there possibly be a more impressive exemplification of earnest prayer and its true spirit, than is seen in the garden of Gethsemane, when, in the hour of His awful sorrow, the God-man agonizingly cried "O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not my will but Thine be done." No good reason has yet been assigned why any professing Christian even in temporal matters should lay himself open to the prophet's reproof "Thou restrainest prayer before God."

DEGRADATION IN HIGH LIFE.

IN his "Latter-day Pamphlets," Carlyle gives rein to his grim and sardonic humour when treating what he called the condition of England question. With a quotation giving a glimpse of the splendour of fashionable life from Lord Lytton's "Pelham," he depicts the life of the Dandaical Body, and by way of contrast next shows his readers the interior of an Irish cabin, where in obedience to their vows of perpetual poverty the members of the Drudge Sect perform their sacred mysteries. Had the Chelsea sage lived in this present year of grace he would have found abundant material for startling and dramatic effects in the social and industrial life of our time.

A committee of the House of Lords has been inquiring into the condition of workers in the East End of London. The facts disclosed in evidence are simply astounding. The employment of indigent foreigners in various occupations has made the condition of native operatives almost unendurable, and the poor drudges from abroad are reduced to the lowest possible depths of industrial degradation. Well, these people are willing to work for what is offered them, and is not that in accordance with the unalterably beneficent law of supply and demand? After nineteen centuries of the Gospel of God's love to man these things are possible in the world's metropolis, in the very heart of Christian England.

How fares it at the other extreme of the social scale? How does what is known as "Society" comport itself? Popular sensations are exciting while they last but they are practically soon forgotten. They give place to newer excitements as they arise. The degradation and vice found in the higher circles of English social life did not end when the echoes of the *Pall Mall Gazette's* terrible exposures died away. Periodically there are surface upheavals that testify to what is seething underneath. One of the latest social events in what is termed high life cannot fail to set many people thinking. The great house of