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A CONTEMPORARY remarks that a minister's vacation should be in an inverse proportion to his salary—the smaller the salary the larger the rest. Good idea, but how would you carry it out? Dr. John Hall has a salary of ten thousand a year and usually takes a vacation of about two months. According to this arrangement a minister with a salary of less than a thousand a year would have to rest all the year round! For the best of all conceivable reasons no practical difficulty will ever arise on this question. No congregation will ever adopt the theory and try to work it. The ministers with the smallest salaries too often in this country get no vacation at all.

SOME of our American contemporaries said some things about holding the Pan-Presbyterian Council in Belfast, that we thought were not very generous or kind. Unless our memory is greatly at fault, the *Christian at Work* was the greatest sinner in this regard. It was alleged that Belfast, being the home of a very orthodox type of Presbyterians, could not be a good place in which to discuss questions that required great breadth of view. It gives us great pleasure to know that the Belfast Presbyterians fairly took the breath from these Americans by their generous hospitality. According to the *Christian at Work* Dr. A. M. Hamilton, an American delegate, declared in one of his speeches "that Belfast hospitality charmed and delighted the Americans," and all the Americans with an ecstatic shout said "amen." We thought that was exactly how it would be. There is nothing "narrow" about these Belfast men, especially about their dinners. We venture to say that some of the American delegates were "broad" in more ways than in their theology at the close of the Council. The very best thing for an American who thinks that everything in the British churches is narrow, is to set him down at the table of a Glasgow or Belfast merchant prince.

"HAS the world grown better since you came into it fifty years ago?" was one of the questions which an interviewer put to Spurgeon about the time of his semi-centennial celebration. The great preacher's answer was that in some respects it was becoming better, and in other respect worse. People drank more fifty years ago and read worse literature than they do now, but they fight more fiercely and unscrupulously for money now than they ever did before. What answer should be given were this question put in regard to that particular part of the world called Canada? Substantially we think the same answer as that given by Spurgeon. In some respects the people of this country are becoming better, whilst in other respects we fear there is no improvement. Undoubtedly there is less drinking and fighting, but there is probably more lying, cheating, Sabbath-breaking and breaches of trust. The rough old settler often took a glass too much, and a stand-up fight was a common enough thing in the early days and new settlements; but the rough old settler who did such things was usually an honest, truthful man. He would shudder at the thought of telling an untruth in the witness box. In the matter of drinking there is a vast change in public opinion, but we must not conclude that this change is certain evidence of advance along the whole line. Would it were so. In respect for the Sabbath we are most rapidly going back as a people. Probably the only answer that can be given to this question is that in some respects we are becoming better: in others worse.

THE question, "Is the world becoming better or worse?" suggests another in which our readers, no doubt, take a deep interest. "Is the Church becoming better?" Two classes of men answer this important query at a moment's notice. The class that believes that everything good died with our

grandfathers would give an emphatic "no." Those people who think that nearly everything good began to exist a few days ago would say "yes" with equal emphasis. Thoughtful men may not find it easy to say anything definite on the subject. Take our own Church for example: We raise much larger sums of money than we ever did. Do we raise more in proportion to the giving power of our people? That is the real question. Some sharp fellow with a genius for handling figures may get up some day soon and prove by a long array of figures that we are decreasing in liberality. A fine new church that costs twenty thousand dollars may not represent as much real effort and self-denial as the old log one that the early settlers put up fifty years ago. We very much doubt if the new college buildings in Toronto and Montreal represent as much real pinching as the old Knox College did. There is more brotherly love among the denominations now, but is there not a serious offset to the happy state of things in the well-known fact that many people are not bound to their own churches by ties as strong as those that existed fifty years ago. This question is intensely interesting and practical—"Is the Church becoming better?" What do you think?

COMMENTING on the kindly and respectful tone in which Spurgeon, Farrer, Talmage and other eminent preachers always refer to the press, a respected contemporary says—

"If the great living preachers of the day had to depend solely on the 'religious' press for the publication of their utterances, their fame and influence would be confined to pretty narrow limits—hid under the proverbial bushel almost. The 'secular' press as a whole has done and is doing a great deal more to elevate the moral and intellectual tone of the community than some people are disposed to give it credit for. That it is not without defects must be admitted, but neither the 'religious' press nor the pulpit are free from fault."

Were we disposed to be captious we might ask our esteemed contemporary if it is quite clear that certain New York and Chicago journals, along with some others that might be named, publish the sermons of these eminent divines for the simple purpose of elevating the moral and intellectual tone of their readers. May it not be that the fame of the preacher helps to make the papers sell? The paper helps to make the preacher popular and useful, no doubt, but does not the sermons of such men help to increase the demand for the paper? Would one of these journals publish sermons if they lost money by doing so? Whilst saying this much, most cheerfully do we recognize the growing help which the press of Canada almost uniformly gives to church work of every kind. We rarely open an exchange that does not devote more or less space to church matters. Many paragraphs not only help on the good work by giving items of information they make announcements that in the regular order of business should be paid for as advertisements. If "some people" are not disposed to give credit for such generous services all we can say is that they are very shortsighted and ungrateful.

## THE GOSPEL IN GREAT CITIES.

THOUGH the number of papers read at the Presbyterian Alliance Meetings in Belfast was not so great as at Philadelphia, it was still open to the objection of being unduly large. According to reports, and judging from the outlines of papers published, they varied in intrinsic merit. It cannot, however, be ascertained beforehand what may be the value of a paper by a given writer, and no one would care to submit his manuscript to the censorship of a committee, so that this inequality of treatment will be apparent in the papers read before future meetings of the Alliance. One thing, however, seems to be taken for granted that fewer papers will be quite sufficient for all practical purposes when the next Council meets. The tendency to crowd as much as possible into given space and time, will render it difficult for the Committee of the Alliance to curtail the number of papers very much. It is felt that the discussion of subjects introduced is decidedly more interesting than listening to a succession of elaborately prepared essays. Discussion is not only interesting but profitable. The assembled wisdom of the Council is able to throw a great many crosslights on the important questions submitted for consideration and is much more stimulating and fruitful in practical results.

One topic of great and pressing practical interest was introduced by Dr. Waters, of Newark, N. J., and widely known in the Canadian Church from his long

connection with it. He dealt with the problem of religious neglect in large cities. Dr. Marshall Lang, the successor of Dr. Norman Macleod in the Barony parish, Glasgow, followed the reading of Dr. Waters' paper with an able and eloquent address on the same subject. These valuable contributions to the consideration of a most important subject have only appeared in the reports in very meagre outline, and we must wait for the publication of the volume containing the proceedings of the Council before an adequate estimate of their value can be formed.

Dr. Waters is credited with having stated that the only dangers to civilization, nowadays, sprang from cities, not from criminals only, but from socialists, the discontented and the hungry. Every observer must admit that there is much truth in the statement. It indicates a great change from earlier days. The term civilization, itself, owes its origin to cities, and pagan, in its original significance, applies to a dweller in the country. It has to be remembered that city populations are constantly augmented by the influx of people from the rural districts. Socialism certainly finds its congenial home among the overcrowded tenements of large cities, and there finds its willing disciples. Discontent has a wider habitat. It is to be found uttering its hoarse murmurs in the crowded city; but it is no stranger in the pastoral home. Then the hungry are a danger to civilization. But what kind of a civilization is it that notes the fact of discontent and hunger with a calm philosophic eye and goes on piling up its wealth, gathers costly stores of bric-a-brac, and amuses itself generally, without much concern in seeking to ascertain the causes of discontent and hunger, and indifferent as to devising means for their removal. Civilization, to become the blessing it should, must have a much larger infusion of the Spirit of Christ. The want of the time is a Christian civilization.

This is fully recognized by Dr. Waters, for he claims that the apostles seized upon the great cities as the propagating centres of Gospel blessings, and he says, what cannot be too strongly emphasised, the Church to-day must follow their example. In following that example they would be walking in the footsteps of Him who beheld the city and wept over it.

Dr. Lang, who like his predecessor, has the condition and wants of a great city constantly before his eyes, has done much to bring the Gospel into living contact with the sordid and cheerless dwellers in the slums. He notices a growing indifference to religion, not alone among the poor, but among all classes, and asks how is it to be checked? He says there must be more life in all the churches; a living congregation turning out upon a district to evangelize it. He advocates the discontinuance of pew rents, more elastic methods of working, and greater union among the churches. These are the recommendations of a practical worker, not the theses of a speculative theologian. They are obviously in the right direction.

In Canadian rural districts it may be thought that in this highly-favoured land we are not affected by the dangers that are so characteristic of older European civilizations, and the great cities in the United States. Our thankfulness for freedom from their social dangers, however, must not be of too complacent a character. No resident of our larger Canadian towns and cities—no visitor can avoid knowing that there is an increasing indifference to religion, an open disregard of its claims that should awaken concern. If earnest efforts are not made to prevent them, hunger, discontent, and socialistic theories will soon show a stronger front than happily they do now. The larger cities are constantly growing larger. The shiftless and the dissolute naturally gravitate thither. Are the efforts now made—and in most of our cities and towns we do have earnest Christian workers—anything like adequate to meet the needs of those who are beyond the pale of Gospel influence?

The members of the Presbyterian Ministerial Association, of Toronto, have been giving serious attention to the question, and efforts have been made to begin work in this clamant field. To be of value it must be prosecuted with earnestness, faith and untiring energy. The various congregations must take an active interest in the work and have a greater realizing sense of their responsibility in this direction than has yet been manifested. The organization of town and city mission effort is a pressing necessity. Above all we need more of the Spirit of Him who came to seek and to save that which is lost. We do need more of a living Christianity in all our churches.