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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 1887.

ONE of the advantages of a clerical holiday is that it gives a minister an opportunity to look at his work from the outside. With two sermons a week to prepare, calls to make, the sick to visit, Presbytery matters to attend to and many other duties, a pastor has little opportunity to view the situation as a whole. It is a good thing for him once a year at least to stand aside for a short time, and take a calm view of his work from a new standpoint. A professor is perhaps none the worse for looking at his chair from a distance of a few thousand miles. In fact it is a good thing for any man to look at his work occasionally from the outside. Taking a calm view of the situation in this way, he may see improvements that may be made that he could not see in the midst of the work.

PASTORS who have been fortunate enough to have a holiday are returning to their pulpits. The "stray parson" who has been giving "supply" during the pastor's absence is finding his way to his regular work. Let us hope that all parties have been benefited. The pastor should certainly preach better, and visit more for having had a holiday. Congregations may have profited by hearing a strange voice. On the whole this annual moving about in August is a good thing. Now let the work go on with additional power in all our congregations. Many of our elders, Sabbath school teachers and other workers have had a holiday. They are no doubt all the better for their outing, and should show their gratitude by increased zeal and energy in the Lord's work. A good rest should be followed by good work.

THE defeat of Hanlan the other week on Toronto Bay may be used to point a moral. Assuming that the great oarsman is not the Hanlan of other days, he may be looked upon as a striking representative of the large class of successful men who do not know when to stop. Had Hanlan retired a few years ago with the laurels he had then won, future generations would have looked upon him as an oarsman that was invincible. But he did not retire, and people now look upon him as an oarsman easily beaten. He is a representative man so far as not retiring at the right time is concerned. Scores of business men now in poverty would have been comfortable to the end of their days had they retired at the right time. Many a broken-down politician would have saved his reputation by retiring when his popularity was at its height. It is said that not one public speaker in fifty knows when to stop. Perhaps an equally small number know how to retire gracefully when things are at their best.

IT requires constant iteration to secure the reform of acknowledged abuses. The public conscience is not easily aroused. Only when something of a startling character occurs is popular attention directed to what in time is generally admitted to be a grave affair. The hearing of the official ear is not quite so acute as it ought to be. Meanwhile abuses continue, and their sad consequences are multiplied. For years it has been acknowledged on all hands that huddling poor unfortunates, whose only crime is insanity, in the county gaols is out of harmony with all that is humane

and Christian. Attention has been called to this manifest wrong again and again in grand jury presentments, in official reports, and by the public press. Yet all the while the poor victims of lunacy are sent for safe keeping to the places built for the restraint of the criminal population. Cases to which attention has recently been directed appeal powerfully alike to the public and to our governing bodies that adequate provision ought to be made for the care, and, if possible, cure, of those bereft of reason. No one will surely be found to maintain that it is the proper thing to subject them to the discomforts of a gaol and its wretched associations.

GREAT CALAMITIES.

THE great advancements achieved by scientific research and the marvellously varied practical applications of discovery and invention have strengthened the general belief that chance and accident ought to be excluded from human affairs. Science has demonstrated that we are under the reign of law, and law as it operates in the material sphere is inexorable. The number and severity of recent disasters by land and sea might at first sight seem to disturb the general belief that in reality there can be no such thing as accident. Notwithstanding the degree of perfection in mechanical completeness and directing skill attained in the management on a large scale of railways, the great highways of modern civilization; notwithstanding the immense advances made in navigation in the construction and equipment of great ocean vessels, appalling disasters are of too frequent occurrence. The awful horrors that happened recently at St. Thomas, in our own country, at Chatsworth, Illinois, and several at various places since, the total destruction by fire in mid-ocean of the *City of Montreal*, and such like events, are fitted to give rise to questionings whether man has attained to that mastery over nature of which such boastings are made.

These sad calamities, bringing as they do, mourning and desolation to so many homes, do not in any single instance invalidate the fact that physical laws are universal in their operation. Every such accident can or may be traced to a distinct violation of an obvious natural law. The Chatsworth coroner's jury found that there had been negligence on the part of the railway employees. They omitted to inspect the bridge, whose burning was the cause of the terrible accident. Had they attended to their duty, the bridge would have been unharmed, or at least the danger would have been ascertained in time to prevent the train approaching to destruction. No doubt the manner in which the cotton in the hold of the Atlantic steamer was set on fire may be learned, and it is probable that it may be demonstrated that the calamity might easily have been prevented by ordinary caution and forethought. The obvious lesson that these happenings impress is, that there are moral laws as imperative as are the physical. If, as the jury's finding would indicate, the men neglected to do the work expected of them and said that the bridge was all right, their conduct was most reprehensible, and they are justly held responsible for the consequences of their failure to perform the work entrusted to them. It is not for a moment thought that they had the remotest intention of injuring their fellow-men, but their neglect was the cause of most awful consequences. Effect follows cause with remorseless regularity, and effects sometimes appear to be dreadfully disproportionate to the cause, yet all the same when the cause operates the result is inevitable.

There is another lesson that these calamities teach no less impressively. We are so accustomed to rest in the operation of physical law that we are disposed to forget that the moral government of God is just as unerring and as universal as are His laws governing all material things. It is not the dictate of superstition that impels the passengers on an imperilled railway train to cry instinctively to God for mercy, or voyagers at sea, appalled by the wild rush of the elements man cannot control, are moved by a strong impulse to cry for help to Him that holds the waves in the hollow of His hand. If it is right to prosecute physical research to the utmost, and to conform to the requirements of natural law, it is no less incumbent on us to ascertain the nature of those laws that operate in the moral and spiritual realm, and to be in harmony with their behests. Here likewise in neglecting to obey them there may be no purposed

intention of doing wrong, but the consequences of simple neglect may be terrible. God's law is perfect, and in its keeping there is a great reward.

If one has been in the presence of a great calamity by land or sea, he cannot fail to be impressed with the eagerness with which most, whatever may have been the current of their thoughts a few moments before, beseechingly appeal to God for protection. In the life of Dr. McDonald, the Apostle of the North, a significant thing is recorded. The vessel on which he had embarked for America was wrecked on the Scottish coast. Many of his fellow-passengers were rushing about and frantically crying for mercy. He was calmly pacing the deck, self-possessed. Several thought him awfully callous, if not wicked, and called on him to pray. His answer was to the effect that if he had neglected to seek God till he was imperilled by imminent danger, it would not say much for his piety. Compliance with the laws of God's gracious kingdom will encourage men to face danger undismayed, fearlessly and with composure to do their duty in positions of deadly peril, and enable them to trust in the infinite mercy and love of their Heavenly Father, who doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

EVANGELICAL PREACHING.

THE doctrines known as evangelical have held a prominent place in the history of the Church. There have been times when they were all but obscured by the prevalence of worldliness and indifference. Superstition has not unfrequently almost displaced them in the minds of the people, but when the spirituality of the Church was at its lowest ebb, the doctrines of grace have never been extinguished. They have found asylums in pious hearts, in obscure homes, and even in monastic seclusion. In early and medieval hymns we have abundant evidence that the truths preached by the apostles and confessors, by Augustine and others, were the solace and strength of those who in degenerate times longed for God's salvation. At the Reformation, evangelical truth was felt to be a power that recalled new life to European civilization and shook the all-powerful Church of Rome to its centre. In all great spiritual awakenings evangelical preaching has been the means blessed of God for the revival of the Church, the conversion of sinners and the animating principle of all missionary and philanthropic endeavour.

And yet the truths so clearly revealed in Scripture, especially those expressed in the familiar formula, Ruin by the fall, Redemption by Jesus Christ and Regeneration by the Holy Spirit, have had to sustain constant criticisms from various quarters. The speculative mind, intent on the why and wherefore of everything, has raised subtle metaphysical objections to the nature and reality of the Atonement. Opposing theories have been suggested as explaining its nature, extent and efficacy. Some have so endeavoured to refine its significance that were their views to prevail it would have little or no significance left. The same may be said of the other doctrines generally included under the term evangelical. The opposition arises from two main tendencies within the Church. One goes strongly in the direction of Naturalism, and the other toward Sacerdotalism. These forces are plainly visible at the present time.

Those who value the doctrines of grace recognize their divine origin. It is because they are of divine not of human origin that they are so potent and so precious. God the Father devised the plan of redemption; God the Son came from heaven to earth to make His soul an offering for sin and become the Author and Finisher of our faith; and God the Holy Ghost applies savingly the truth of Christ in regeneration and sanctification. Like Nicodemus, Naturalism is constantly asking, *How can these things be?* and engages in endless discussion as to man's total depravity, the freedom of the will, the vicarious character of Christ's death, and such like questions. The new birth into the kingdom of God is as mysterious to us as it appeared to Nicodemus, but the answer he received may well satisfy the people of this generation. We need not look for one more explicit or more satisfactory. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit. . . . If I have told you