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The Canada Presbyterian.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, MANAGER.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17TH, 1894.

ORILLIA is said to lead the towns of Ontario in the Plebiscite vote, the majority for prohibition in that beautiful northern town being three and a half to one.

THE *Christian At Work* is a sober, staid, in fact, somewhat dignified kind of a religious newspaper, but it becomes positively funny when, commenting on a criminal trial that took place the other week in Scotland, it says, "They conduct trials differently in Scotland than in New York." We should think they did. Many a time have we read—in the *Christian At Work* if memory is not greatly at fault—that some of the New York judges are criminals themselves.

MR. PATERSON'S address, published in recent issues of this journal, has no doubt led many of our readers to think seriously over some of the problems they meet every day in doing church work. This is just the kind of thinking the church needs. We have a sufficient number of theorists who are willing enough to air their theories. We are well enough stocked with men who can tell us what was done in other lands and in other ages. What the church needs is men who can suggest the best thing to be done now and here.

THE politicians are trying to make some capital out of existing financial depression. Across the line the Democrats say the hard times have been brought about chiefly by the tariff, while the Republicans, of course, declare that the proposal to change the tariff has caused most of the trouble. Here it is pretty much the same. The Liberals say the tariff has partly caused the stringency and the Conservatives hold that but for the tariff the depression would be much worse. One cannot help wondering why there is any proposal to change tariffs that have done such good work on both sides of the line.

BY the way, why do men of the standing and experience of Mr. Paterson not discuss church questions more frequently in the church press. The learned gentleman is a son of the manse, an elder and superintendent of one of the Sabbath Schools in the city and is known to take an active interest in everything connected with Presbyterianism. Why should not he and others equally well qualified give the church the benefit of their views on practical questions as such questions arise, and they are continually arising. It has often been said that the Presbyterian church has a larger number of intelligent influential laymen within her pale than any other church in the Dominion. We believe she has and we also believe that they might do their church good service by making their views known through the press and by taking a far more prominent part in our ecclesiastical meetings.

PRINCIPAL MACVICAR has a strong paper in the current number of the *Presbyterian College Journal* on "The church and the labor question." The Principal is decidedly of the opinion that the problem can be solved in only one way. The church should purge itself of mammon worship, take off its kid gloves and go to work without any fuss or feathers among labouring men and all other kinds of men that are falling a prey to the pestilential heresies taught them by designing demagogues. Nor is the learned gentleman of the opinion that there is any special difficulty in the work. The determination to test in the severest possible manner all schemes proposed for the good of our race Dr. MacVicar considers a hopeful

movement. So it is. Let the church show laboring men that it can do more for them than can be done by any other institution; let the minister show them that he is a better friend than the demagogue who leads them astray and the divorce between the laboring classes and the church will soon come to an end.

NO one should conclude that some strange thing has happened because a wave of financial depression is passing over the world. Every middle-aged man has seen several such waves. In fact, many business men hold that business is now done in such a manner that financial crises more or less severe may be expected every ten years. People live so extravagantly, speculate so recklessly, try to get rich so quickly, and overdo in every line so much that a crisis has to come at regular periods to straighten things up. Over competition in every kind of business necessarily ruins a certain number of people. Goods honestly obtained cannot be sold below cost, though most people like to buy them at the lowest possible figure. If ten men, or ten firms are struggling for a business large enough to maintain only five, some of the ten must come to grief. A man cannot long work for nothing and board himself unless he has an independent source of revenue so fixed that his creditors cannot touch it. There is no sort of sense in whining about our business depression. God has given us one of the best countries in the world and if we cannot take care of ourselves we have ourselves mainly to blame. The financial troubles of other countries hurt us a little, but our extravagance and insane competition hurt us very much more.

FEBRUARY and March are rather dull months in business. Wheat is low in price and money is scarce. There will of course be the usual amount of talk about economy and it is greatly to be feared that in too many cases retrenchment will begin and end with religious and charitable contributions. Now whatever else is done that should not be done. If it has pleased God to permit a wave of depression to pass over the country, instead of serving Him less we should deny ourselves and try to serve Him better. The duty of the hour is patience, prayer, self-denial, self-sacrifice. Behind the secondary causes that are at work in producing financial stringency we should see the hand of the great First Cause God himself. We should humble ourselves, confess our sins and if possible do more rather than less to carry on gospel work. Canada is suffering less from the depression than perhaps any other country in the world. What right have we to expect entire exemption from financial trouble? Do all our people make such good use of their money when they have it that they can afford to complain if they are sometimes pinched a little? Are we so free from national sins that we need no national discipline? A lesson in economy is a good thing, but its good effects will be worse than lost if it does nothing more than lead us to cut down our contributions for religious purposes.

WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

THIS is the title of a book, sent by Drysdale & Company, which has been now some months before the public, but because the subject of it is of surpassing and permanent interest, and because an examination of it is to occupy four lectures by Prof. MacLaren in the post-graduate course arranged for in connection with Knox College, it will not be untimely again to draw attention to it. The arraignment of two theological professors in the American Presbyterian Church, and of one in our own for the views they hold upon the subject of inspiration, gives the question great present interest. The point of view from which this treatise is written, is at once made apparent in the following sentence: "It has been claimed, and is not denied, that Christian scholarship in this specialty (of inspiration) is nearly unanimous in discrediting the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures." This state of things has been felt to be very disquieting by great numbers who have all their lives been taught to think quite otherwise. Something needs to be done to allay their distress, and this essay is designed as a contribution to this end. Dr. DeWitt, the author of it, has spent the most of his life in teaching and in studies connected with this subject, and has been anxious to do his part in shedding light upon what are confessedly its difficulties.

The dispute is between those "who maintain the most literal verbal inspiration on the one side, and

on the other, those who hold to an inspiration in the *thought* rather than in the words, that produces the results that are infallible in all matters of faith and practice, but which does not preclude inaccuracies in matters not affecting the substance of religious truth." The former view has been the one chiefly held hitherto, but by many it has been receded from because the facts of revelation as contained in the scriptures, it is alleged, will not sustain it. These facts have been brought out in the course of a long pursuit of biblical studies which have become known under the name of Biblical Theology, and which consist in a most thorough examination and comparison of the various books which make up the Bible as to their origin, age, contents, language, teaching and their correspondence with the facts of history. This investigation has brought to light, it is affirmed, such inaccuracies as to facts, and such moral incongruities between the teaching of Old Testament writers and those of the New, above all of Christ, as indicate so large an admixture of the human element, and human infirmity and limitation as to the apprehension and statement of the materials of which scripture is composed, as will no longer warrant the affirmation of that absolute infallibility of the scriptures in all particulars which has hitherto been considered to be their distinguishing attribute. In other words, to employ the term now used, the scriptures can no longer be regarded as absolutely *inerrant*, that is, they contain errors as to some matters of fact, and they contain a teaching in not a few instances, as to other things, which cannot claim divine authority. This position has been arrived at by a careful examination into, and an honest admission of the *facts* of revelation. Hence a new doctrine or statement of what inspiration consists in is required to correspond with this new view of revelation.

In this view of revelation, regard must be had to the fact, patent on the face of it, that it has been *progressive*, and that it is an *evolution*, in a different sense from that held by Herbert Spencer and men of that type, but yet in a real sense, one which regards "the living, personal God as the centre and source of all life, of all organic development, of all advancement to more perfect modes of existence, processes and functions." In the recognition of these facts of revelation, its being an evolution and progressive, and also of the admixture in it of human imperfection in the apprehension and statement of matters revealed, and of the divine will as to conduct and action in many instances, we may find an explanation of inaccuracies in the statement of supposed facts, and of moral incongruities of teaching, which does not necessarily militate against the divine character and authority of the scriptures as being the Word of God. Much of the book is taken up with a discussion of the nature and purpose of revelation, especially in its progressive aspect as adapted to the state of men's moral and spiritual conceptions at various stages, as calculated at the same time to raise him in these respects, and because the nature and purpose of God in revelation must determine and lead to a correct idea of inspiration. This view of revelation as progressive, "contemplates," the writer says, "the certainty in an earlier revelation of an admixture of the true and the false, the divine conception tarnished or discoloured by the imperfect medium through which it must reach the hearts of men." Absolute infallibility in every jot and tittle, and the highest spiritual standards in every age alike, were not needed to accomplish the purpose of revelation which was, "the production of a perfect humanity at first in an individual, and afterwards through him in the race."

Those who hold this view of the errancy of the scriptures are far from thinking or speaking lightly of them. On the contrary, this writer says, "Every year and month and day they have become more precious, and all labour in developing their glorious import, and their significance in connection with every aspiration and hope of man, has become more absorbing." Say what we may of inaccuracies and contradictions, the divine element in these Hebrew scriptures cannot be obscured or rationally denied. Above the broad surface of uninspired literary achievement it glows and flashes with a superior radiance." Nay, they contend that they teach and hold this view in the interests of the truth, since by insisting on an infallible accuracy in every statement of scripture and a divine warrant for every act there recorded which now shocks our conceptions of God and right, we run the risk, should any flaw be discovered of having to give up the whole of the scripture as being in any portion of it the Word of God, and of cutting away the very foundation of belief in God and in what is the highest and only perfect