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The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12th, 1891.

DR. BRADFORD, of Boston, has given his estimate of some of the distinguished preachers he heard in England. Among the Presbyterians Dr. Munro Gibson and John McNeil head his list. The latter he likens to Spurgeon in his manner of preaching and methods of interpreting Scripture; while he says of Dr. Gibson that he is a broad and cultured thinker and a man who is wielding a wide influence in England.

ONE of the clergymen who conducted service in the Spurgeon pulpit during the great preacher's illness, a few Sabbaths ago, strained a point, we think. When praying for Mr. Spurgeon's recovery he said, "Thy Church, Lord Jesus, can hardly do without him." Spurgeon is a great man, the greatest preacher in some lines that this century has produced, but the Church of God can do without him. The Church can do without Paul, and several other men who were even more eminent than Spurgeon. The Church of God can get on without any man. Men may come and men may go, but God's work goes on forever.

WHEN the air is filled with political or municipal scandal, thoughtless people always conclude that there is scarcely an honest man in the public service. They forget that we hear about the few dishonest ones while the faithful many are doing their duty unnoticed. A little official dishonesty in a country like ours makes more noise than a great deal of official rectitude. Whilst it is right and patriotic to punish every proved case of official wrong doing let it not be forgotten that there are hundreds of public servants in the country who are doing their work faithfully and well. Drawing universal conclusions from a few particular cases is grossly unfair as well as illogical.

WHEREVER people have been compelled to toil every day of the week there is a strong desire for an opportunity of enjoying Sabbath rest. In Germany where there has hitherto been so much laxity in the observance of the sacred day there is a vigorous movement in favour of change in this respect. In some parts of that empire it is rather singular that the movement has not the support of the ministers and the Churches. These are said to be indifferent. The proposed reform derives its strength from the business and industrial community. The Stuttgart Board of Trade has employed means to ascertain the views of business houses on the subject of Sabbath closing, and a very large majority of them are favourable to this much-needed reform.

ONE of the marks of the millenium, as described by Philip James Bailey in his "Festus," was the equalization of clerical incomes. The startling contrast which in the English Church is presented between incomes of the starving curates and some of the stalled bishops occasions the declaration that in the latter age lavish salaries will no longer "blaspheme the holy penury of the Son of God." Bishops and rectors enjoy large stipends but there is also a low-water mark in the English Church—how low it is will be seen from the fact that the "Clergy List" gives as the poorest living in that communion, Wainfleet, where the stipend is returned as one shilling, one penny, three farthings per week for ministering to a congregation of about three hundred. Many of our ministers have incomes that afford grand opportunities for the exercise of self-denial but none of them parallel that given in the "Clergy List."

IT is amusing to find a writer in the *Religious Review of Reviews* speaking of Renan as "facile princeps among the liberal theologians of France as Kuenan is among those of Holland." Scarcely by courtesy can Renan be assigned a place among theologians. Kuenan in a review of the brilliant Frenchman's latest work, "The History of the People of Israel," is more correct as to his attitude when he says:—

In this third part more than in the preceding ones, if I mistake not, is the hopeless scepticism of the writer revealed. Whether this frame of mind is the most desirable equipment for the historian of Israel will be especially made clear from a study of this part. In my view it yields a negative answer to the question. More sympathy for the religious belief of Israel's great prophets, so far from impairing the critical faculty, is the very first requisite for a correct estimation of their character and work.

To do their work well critic, historian and biographer must be in sympathy with their respective subjects.

IT does not speak well for professing Christians who, while at home are mindful of the proprieties, readily fall into the lax ways they find prevailing in the foreign lands they visit. There is obviously something in unsanctified human nature that readily accommodates itself to surrounding circumstances. It is a matter of complaint that English and American tourists in Europe who are known to be Sabbath-keeping at home, are too often unmindful of the obligations of the day when abroad. It is not in every case necessary to do at Rome as the Romans do. Such inconsistency works a double injury—to the spiritual nature of those who thus forget themselves and gives people with whom they come in contact an unfavourable idea of the religion they profess. English and American tourists doing their shopping in Berlin and Paris on Sabbath, who would shrink from purchasing wares in London or New York on that day, can hardly be described as heavenly-minded.

PEOPLE at a distance are pardonably disposed to quote with ironic inflexion the oft-repeated phrase "Toronto the good." Circumstances of late have added emphasis to the irony. The quiet of the Sabbath has been sadly disturbed by the enforcement of the by-law to prohibit public speaking in the Queen's Park. All without distinction had been permitted hitherto to exercise the fullest freedom—license even—of speech. It is needless to say that some of the more impassioned orators were prone to abuse their liberty. The City Council, with the impulsive haste that occasionally characterizes them, passed a by-law prohibiting all addresses in the public parks. Matters will right themselves in time. Why give the eccentrics who air their eloquence under the open sky a grievance? No one is involuntarily compelled to listen to them. The Park is not too large but there is ample room for all who care to speak, and for all who desire to be undisturbed by the harangues of the peripatetics who think they have somewhat to say.

THERE is a vast amount of harm done in Canada and the United States by the habit many people have of denouncing public men in sweeping terms. With some people every member of parliament, every municipal councillor, every public man of every kind and grade is necessarily a bad man. To say that a man is a politician is in their opinion much the same thing as to say that he is a rascal. As a matter of fact the great majority of the men who serve Canada in political or municipal life are just as good as an equal number of men taken from any class or calling. There are as many Christian men in the Ontario Legislature as can be found in any body of men in the Province not distinctly religious. There is something singularly inconsistent in the conduct of ministers who denounce politicians as wicked in the most sweeping terms and then sit with a lot of them in the Synod or General Assembly. Some of our Methodist friends denounce politicians in the wildest terms and then put members of parliament into their pulpits to preach. There are several local preachers in the Ontario Legislature as well as a large number of Presbyterian elders.

IT is amusing to see some of the personages who assume to pose as exiles. The Pope, for instance, claims that he is exiled from his rightful place in what used to be considered his own do-

main. Whether he feels all the pathos he professes when referring to his self-imposed bondage within the Vatican precincts, others at all events perceive the humour of the situation. The Count of Paris, who visited Montreal a year ago, made an ostentatious pilgrimage to Ste. Anne de Beaupré, where the *soi-disant* miracles occur. Last week there was received from him a costly memento of his visit to be displayed before the gaze of admiring pilgrims, obviously with a view to effect. The priests will be proud of the devotion of the illustrious donor, and the Count will expect that he and the lost cause he represents will find a warm corner in the hearts of the devotees. The amusing part of the affair is the inscription on the trinket sent. It is "offered by Louis Philippe, Comte de Paris, Chief of the royal house of France, in exile." The exile is to be pitied.

THE worst thing about our system of settling ministers is that it has not only lost the confidence, but has become a source of grief to the most devout people in our vacancies. Ask any pious, devoted member of a congregation that has been a year vacant what he or she thinks of "candidating" and "calls," and nine times out of ten the reply is always the same. The really good people are wearied and often disgusted with the business while it proceeds, and not unfrequently disappointed when the business is ended. Of course there are people in every congregation who rather enjoy hearing candidates and voting for their favourite. It pleases a vain, conceited man mightily to sit in judgment on a new preacher every Sabbath. The talkative fellows like to meet in a corner grocery and discuss the "points" of the last candidate very much as they would discuss the points of an actor or public performer of some kind. The men who love the pre-eminence always enjoy the prospect of getting a man they can "run." While all this and much more not any better is going on, the spiritually-minded, praying people of the congregation are often being wearied and worried into voting for almost anybody in order to have the thing "settled." "We must get somebody" they say and they are often compelled to vote in a certain way and sign a call "for peace." The unfortunate minister sometimes finds out when it is too late that a goodly number of the people he has to depend on and work with never wanted him. The system manifestly needs some modifications.

AN EDINBURGH PREACHER.

THE remark is sometimes made that the great preachers have passed away, and that many pulpits are now filled by respectable mediocrities at best. Many unthinkingly accept this as a true statement of the case, bewail the decadence of the modern pulpit, and propagate the idea that preaching is in a fair way of becoming one of the lost arts. True, popular estimates of preaching vary. Much depends on the degree of culture and intelligence prevailing in a congregation. A man possessed of so-called popular gifts might preach to one audience with a high measure of acceptance, while the same discourse addressed to another congregation may be by no means either acceptable or instructive to them. On the other hand a preacher of fine mental discipline, scholarly attainments and earnest Christian spirit may preach to an audience with impressiveness and telling power; to a different assemblage the same preacher and the same discourse might appear dry, uninteresting and wearisome. There are still other preachers whose special qualifications enable them to preach discourses that are heard with interest by people of widely different degrees of culture. They are in touch with humanity; they have the faculty of presenting truth in a forceful and impressive manner that secures the attention of learned and unlearned alike. These qualifications, however, are comparatively rare and exceptional.

While some may be disposed to imagine that the palmy days of the pulpit are past, and that we have fallen on an age of respectable common-place, their opinion is not beyond the range of question. If they ask where are the Chalmerses the Gutheries, the Candlishes and the Cunninghams, where the Henry Melvilles, the Binneys, the Raleighs, the Beechers, etc., etc., it is no difficult matter to refer to the bead-roll of eminent occupants of the present day pulpits. Such as Maclaren of Manchester, Dale of Birmingham, C. H. Spurgeon, Principal Caird, Principal Cairns, John McNeil and many others whose names are familiar as household words. There is no room for despondency. He who holds