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TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1885.

FROM the Rev. R. J. Laidlaw, Hamilton, Convener of the Assembly's Scheme for Distribution of Probationers, we have received—unfortunately too late for insertion in this issue—a communication containing a proposed plan for the solution of the Probationers' Distribution problem.

WE club THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN and *Rural Canadian* at \$2 per annum. Already a large number of our readers interested in agricultural affairs have signified their desire to have the *Rural Canadian* along with THE PRESBYTERIAN; and we are still willing to enter the names of thousands of subscribers for both papers. This low clubbing offer places an excellent family paper and a first-class farm journal within the reach of every one, at a merely nominal price. Please mention this offer to your neighbours.

OUR friend Dr. Cochrane has sent us a copy of the minutes of the late meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, which was held in Melbourne on the 10th day of November last. A glance at the proceedings shows that our antipodean brethren are grappling with the difficulties and discussing the questions that demand our attention on this side of the globe. If the late meeting may be taken as an average one they seem to have a good deal more litigation than we have in Canada. Nor have they yet discovered that it is much better for all parties to have appeal cases heard by a judicial committee. They discuss these cases in open court and a motion, and at least, three amendments were made on the settlement of each one. Then a whole band entered their dissent in almost every case. Thirteen Presbyteries were represented in the court and the docket contained forty-nine articles of business. The funds seem to have been in a healthy state and so far as one can judge from Assembly minutes, the Church is in a flourishing condition. Success to our antipodean brethren say we.

EVERYBODY knows that Dr. Cuyler, of Brooklyn, believes in special services and in using special means at such services. He frequently holds revival meetings in his own church and avails himself of the assistance of evangelists. Speaking of this class of labourers, a few days ago, he is reported to have said:

I only wish that they would carry their torches oftener into the darkness of neglected districts, and not spend so much time in setting their extra lamps in pulpits and prayer meetings that ought to keep their own atmosphere well lighted.

That is a good point doctor. If these people have the consuming desire to save souls that they profess to have, why do they not go to these neglected districts? Why do they hover around towns and cities where there is a church for every two or three hundred people? Is their love for souls about which most of them speak several times in every service so weak that it cannot stand the strain put upon it by rough roads and bush life? Does their zeal wane under a diet of pork and green tea? Why do they loiter about cities and towns trying to coax people out of their own churches while there are scores of localities in which the Gospel is not preached at all? We have never seen one of these people that could give a straight answer to this question.

REFERRING to the dynamite outrages, the *Interior* says:

Our own people will have to take this dynamite medicine. There is nothing surer than that. Already it is employed by way of threat by striking operatives against manufacturers.

Mills will be blown up, and when the criminals are punished their confederates will try the court-houses and other public buildings, and the property of judges and jurymen. Dynamite in the hands of desperadoes presents one of the most dangerous problems ever offered to civil society.

True, and would it not be well for the government of the United States to grapple with the problem before the dynamite fiends try their murderous hand on judges and jurors. One thing is quite clear: If the dynamiters are not put down by the law of the United States the people of that country will take the law into their own hands long before the fiends have done as much damage across the lines as they have done in England. The most provoking feature in the criminality next to its utter cruelty is the fact that they take advantage of the law's delay and uncertainty to carry on their devilish operations. Englishmen believe in punishing all crimes by the strong arm of the law however long the operations may take. The Americans may adopt a much swifter method with the dynamiter. The first few miscreants caught are reasonably certain to ornament the nearest lamp-post or have half-a-dozen jailers put through them. Probably this short and sharp method may prove more efficacious than the one adapted by the English people.

IN a very instructive address on Church Music delivered in his own church the other day, the Rev. Mr. Macdonnell said:

One of my earliest recollections in connection with instrumental music is a meeting in 1860 in the old city of Kingston. I was a student at the time, and went to hear a capital debate—though the subject seems now a little ludicrous—on the question whether St. Andrew's Church, Toronto, should be allowed to introduce a little larger harmonium or not. The whole question of instrumental music was brought up by the fathers, who were determined to contend for principle. When one recollects the solemn predictions of disaster which were to befall the Church if this church were allowed to introduce a larger harmonium, the thing is now very absurd.

There were several other unfulfilled predictions made about the same time. When the negotiations were going on that led to the union of 1865, it was predicted that there would be a very serious split in the Free Church if the union took place. It was also predicted that the union of 1875 would produce a second Disruption. When leave was given to congregations that so desired to use hymns and instrument, it was said that a serious rupture would immediately occur. It was predicted that the Gaelic men of Huron, Bruce and other places would secede. As a matter of fact the first and, we believe, only split of any account that occurred because of the organ took place, not in Huron or Bruce, but in the great commercial city of Montreal. That secession was led, not by the Highlanders, so often alluded to during the agitation, but by the most learned man in the Dominion. These things are now matters of history, but they have a moral,—*never prophesy unless you have the gift.*

IS CIVILIZATION RETROGRADING?

THE political refugee is often a picturesque individual, but in most cases a great nuisance. He is generally a lazy, impracticable, and therefore an impecunious vagabond. Yet not all of them. Kossuth and Garibaldi were political exiles, respected wherever they went. In countries where political freedom prevails the refugee is treated with the utmost indulgence. His vapourings and blood-curdling utterances are gauged at their proper value. In all cases, however, they are not harmless. The characterless partizan politician panders to the noble exiles who have found an asylum in the home of liberty. Exiles of Erin, particularly in the United States, because they have the politicians dangling after them, can talk dynamite with impunity, and manufacture it too, when and wherever they choose. They always find some spread-eagle champion in the United States Congress who can rant with the best of them. The more outrageous their utterances are, the wider is the publicity they obtain through the columns of the newspaper press.

Sensible people smile at the preposterous gasconade because to them it is harmless. Harmless in all cases it is hardly so. People of limited education, susceptible imagination, and poorly trained reasoning faculties are terribly misled by the sulphurous oratory of the dynamitards. They subscribe cheerfully to the so-called cause of patriotism their hardly-earned money, which they would decline to do for a more worthy object. In every community there are volatile and adventurous individuals ready to risk their lives

in attempts to blow up public buildings and spread ruin and wreck generally.

Wherever population is dense in the United States, Socialism and Fenianism are to be found in organized bodies. There is no fear that, if occasion should exist, the upholders of law and order would take care of them, but in the meantime they are working mischief, and at any moment, for the sake of enhancing their importance, reckless adventurers are to be found ready to perpetrate startling crimes.

A recent meeting of New York Anarchists reveals the kind of people who embark in such desperate enterprises. The moderate and extreme wings of New York Socialism met and contended for the control of the meeting. The Extremists were headed by Justus Schwab, a saloon-keeper, and Johann Most, the Austrian implacable. The policemen present were savagely attacked, but being reinforced, speedily cleared the hall. One of the ringleaders was arrested, and is held for trial.

It may not be necessary to interfere with freedom of speech; but, surely, it is compatible with all reasonable liberty that the manufacture and sale of dangerous explosives should be so guarded that dynamiters cannot procure them so easily as they have done hitherto.

It is clear from expressions of opinion so freely uttered by individuals who glory in the crimes of the dynamiters, that in the estimation of many, life is losing its sacredness. This is a painful evidence of moral decadence. The outburst of undisguised gratification with which the shouting at the self-constituted mouthpiece of Irish barbarism in New York has been so generally hailed in England and America may readily be understood, but it cannot be justified. That he should have been selected as a victim for retaliation in kind is not surprising. In the interest of society, in the sacred name of religion, private vengeance stands condemned. The imperial majesty of law ought to impartially protect the life of the most miserable poltroon as well as that of the Chief Magistrate from the dagger of the assassin or the bullet of the crank. No good cause is ever aided but always hindered by lawlessness. Dynamite outrages will not be lessened by the foolish attempt on the life of the subject who was shot down on the street. The waning fortunes of the man will be helped by it, and in his own circle, where he was gradually falling into contempt, he will be magnified as a martyr.

OUR DEBT TO THE SCOTTISH COVENANTERS.

SOME time ago a claim was put forth that to the Baptists, we on this continent are mainly indebted for the blessings of civil and religious liberty. It is claimed by some that in America Roger Williams was the first exponent of the great principles on which modern civilization is based. It is needless to add that the claim was not conceded. It is not denied that Roger Williams and those associated with him were stout champions of liberty of conscience, but they were not the first even on this continent who contended for the truth that God alone is Lord of the conscience.

In the last number of the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, the Rev. E. O. Frierson, of Norfolk, Virginia, gives a clear and accurate historical sketch of the Scottish Covenanters, and shows plainly that the cause of civil and religious freedom throughout the world owes much to those heroic defenders of truth and right when they were imperilled. This writer very justly observes that the Scottish people were no revolutionary enthusiasts. They only contended for their inalienable rights. For the retention of these they were willing to make many sacrifices. Like the early martyrs and confessors of the Christian faith they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, they wandered in deserts, they took refuge in dens and caves of the earth; they counted not their lives dear unto them.

The reviewer begins by referring to the natural characteristics of the Scottish people. He says that from the dawn of their history they have always evinced a determination to think for themselves. They were born to be free. This inborn love of freedom has evinced itself all through their history, in no way more decisively than in their heroic efforts to defend the rights of private judgment and liberty of conscience in matters of religion. He then goes on to state the leading and well known events in Scottish Church history, tracing the foundation of Christianity in Scotland to the labours of the Culdees—*cultores Dei*, wor-