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## The Canada Presbyterian.

TORONTO, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2nd, 1891.

THESE are the days in which we hear a good deal about the old flag. Judging from the manner in which many people speak they seem to have the impression that Canadians sustain the flag. That is a huge delusion. The old flag sustains us. All the old flag asks us to do is behave ourselves. At the present time that seems about enough.

ONE of the religious journals from across the lines says "We don't recollect that we ever knew a conversion in an ordinary week night prayer meeting." That may easily be. Perhaps you never attend "ordinary week night prayer meetings." Perhaps you belong to that class of professing Christians who run to special efforts and pose on platforms wherever there is a crowd but never darken the door of an "ordinary" prayer meeting no matter how near it may be. There is something highly suspicious in the use of that word "ordinary."

A WEALTHY American gentleman who intended leaving \$21,000 to Union Seminary has had the clause in his will changed and the money goes to Princeton. Dr Briggs does not suit him as a teacher of students. There will doubtless be more to follow. And the trouble caused by the Inaugural is not confined to finance. Seventeen of the twenty-eight students at Lane Seminary have published a declaration saying they have no sympathy with the destructive Higher Criticism. These young men were manifestly thinking of the time when they must come before the people as candidates. The New York Presbytery is not the only body to be settled with in the Briggs matter.

A GOOD brother in England desiring to illustrate the power of intercessory prayer stated the other day that when Mr. Spurgeon had been given up by his physicians, when medical skill had done all that was possible, and Mr. Spurgeon was in *extremis*, the prayer of the Church saved him. One of Spurgeon's doctors immediately declared over his signature that Mr. Spurgeon never was in *extremis*, that he never was given up by his doctors but that on the contrary they always held and expressed the opinion that the great preacher would recover. It is just such mistakes as the foregoing that lead so many people to think that clergymen can rarely be trusted to know the exact facts of any matter.

ONE of the speakers at the Woodstock meeting last week stated that political union with the United States is "in the air." The same remark is sometimes made about religion. We have never noticed, however, that religion in the air ever did any one much good. Religion never has much power over a man until it goes down into his heart and fits a permanent lodgment there. Annexation in the air will never do anybody much good or harm. It can be effective only when it takes firm possession of the minds and hearts of solid Canadian citizens. That consummation will not be reached in this generation if Canadians have the intelligence, self-control and self-respect that are indispensable to self government.

MR. BURNS, the agent of the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund, reports that the amount of subscriptions now secured exceeds \$100,000 and the amount paid in is over \$59,000. These results in the face of the hard times should inspire the Committee with hopefulness, and stimulate the members of the Church to a very decided effort to meet Sir Donald A. Smith's proposal, to enlarge the fund beyond the \$200,000. Many of those who

have carefully observed the trend of congregational contributions to the Schemes of the Church are convinced that the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund does not receive its fair share of the people's liberality. A little thoughtfulness would result in a decided improvement. The need certainly is great.

IN a recent address on "Celtic Patriotism," Principal Rainy gave it as his opinion that the Highlander ought not to waste his time in boasting of his patriotism so long as his own condition was capable of so much improvement by his own energies. There is a world of good sense in that short sentence. There are few more cruelly absurd exhibitions than that made by the man who vociferates about "his country" and "his fathers" while his children are starving for lack of food. Surely a man should care as much for his own living but hungry child as he cares for his dead grandfather. He is not responsible for the existence of his forefathers, but he is for the existence of his children. The best thing the Highlander can do is to say good-bye to the mountains that give his children no bread and come out to our prairies, where he and his can have enough and to spare. Heather is well enough in its way, but it never filled an empty human stomach.

THE clerical scandal in a western county last week should be a solemn warning to parents and guardians to keep young ladies under their charge from so called special services unless they are quite certain about the moral standing of those conducting such services. Even then there will be some risks but the risks will be reduced to a minimum. This additional warning should not have been needed. This is not the first time that such adventurers have used special services and the enquiry room for similar purposes. No doubt the fellow denounced everybody who did not take part in the "great work." Quite likely he more than hinted that some of the ministers around there were not converted. We should not be surprised if he and those co-operating with him set apart an evening for special prayer for unconverted ministers. The climax was reached when he convinced the unfortunate young woman that she should be immersed. How he would ring the changes on Bapto and Baptizo—"into" and "out of."

MANY of the Presbyteries of the American Church are at work on the revised Confession sent down for their consideration by the General Assembly. Judging from the reports, the proposed new symbol is not more satisfactory than the old one, if as much so. Some think the revisers have gone too far. Others that they have not gone far enough. The acknowledged difficulties are so great that one leading Church paper suggests that the work be stopped at least for a time. It is easy to say, Revise the Confession, just as it is easy to propose a great many things, but when the actual work is undertaken the work is found much more difficult than many supposed. The old symbol is like a stone wall. You cannot knock any considerable part out of it without affecting the whole structure. Several Presbyteries propose to leave the Confession as it stands and publish a short supplementary statement of doctrines for use among the members of the Church. That is the plan, we believe, favoured by Principal Grant and others should the Canadian Church take any action in the way of revision. Our neighbours may yet come to that view of the case.

THE break down of the Scott Act, the dismal failure of the drastic election law to prevent bribery, the collapse of Prohibition at the last election in Iowa—these and similar failures in other places may be and we have little doubt are intended to teach men that the only effectual remedy for evil is the "glorious Gospel of the blessed God." Laws are good enough in their own place, but laws never did and never can purify corrupt human nature. Men who want liquor can and do get it in defiance of law. Men who are low enough to sell their votes will sell them if an election court were sitting in the next room. The tales told by experienced campaigners of the anxiety of even fairly respectable men to make something out of their votes are enough to make a decent citizen ashamed of his species. A correspondent writing from Iowa says that one of the results of the defeat of the prohibition candidate is the "overwhelming conviction that the moral sense of the State is not what it was thought to be." Exactly so. If the moral sense of

a country is low no amount of legislation can make it high. The lesson of the hour in Canada as well as in Iowa is to push on Gospel work with increased and intensified vigour. The Gospel has many a time been disparaged and belittled as a remedy for evil. Supposing we all get back to the Bible plan and see how it will work.

IF the movement in favour of political union with the United States ever amounts to anything serious Canadians will have themselves to blame. Open almost any Conservative paper and the first thing you eye meets is a column of denunciation of the Grits, in which they are pleasantly described as disloyal, unpatriotic, corrupt, hypocritical, and a number of other things which if true shows most conclusively that they are unfit to take part in the government of the country. The Grits are at least half the population of the Dominion and are in power in nearly all the provinces. Open a strong Liberal journal and you will find the Conservatives described in much the same terms as those in which the Conservative journals describe the Grits. Put the two descriptions together and what kind of a nation have you? It will not mend matters to say that all this is mere party warfare. The press of a country is always quite as good as the public that support it. To prove that the press exaggerates or falsifies is merely to prove that the people like literature of that kind. The fact is Canadians with their own hands have forged the weapons that Goldwin Smith can use in England and the United States with no small amount of power. If the thousandth part of what Canadians say about each other is true they have no future. If either half is as black as the other paints it we must soon become a Crown colony again and be governed from Downing Street or become part of the neighbouring union. There is one other thing that might be tried: Let each party speak with some measure of respect about the other and stop furnishing annexationists with the only effective weapons they have.

SENSIBLE citizens of all parties who are opposed to annexation should be able to give solid reasons against political union with our neighbours across the line. Loud talk about loyalty, and abuse of Mr. Solomon White, M.P.P., and Mr. Goldwin Smith, are not methods of warfare that impress thinking men favourably. Those who have heard Mr. White in Parliament and on the platform, know he is not the kind of man that can be put down by merely calling him hard names. Professor Goldwin Smith has the ear of a class of readers in England and the United States that few other Canadians can reach. His social standing is the highest, and his writings are read the world over. Coarse denunciation of a gentleman of Mr. Smith's standing and accomplishments will neither hurt him nor help British connection. If the discussion is to go on, facts must be met by facts, arguments must be met by arguments, figures must be put against figures, and the whole question threshed out in such a way as to convince all reasonable men that political union is not the best thing for Canada. Moral, social and sentimental considerations must be given due weight, for dollars and cents are not everything even in this age. Taking the material, the political, the social, the moral and religious aspects of the question into consideration we believe a perfectly overwhelming argument can be built up against political union. There is ample room on this continent for two nations. We have reason to believe that the best opinion on the other side favours two rather than one. Our neighbours have quite as large a country now as they have central power at Washington to keep in order. The friends of British connection have everything to gain by fair, manly, intelligent discussion. Mr. Mowat was quite right when he advised his friends to go to the Woodstock meeting and vote down Mr. White's proposals. Any other course would have been interpreted in favour of annexation. One thing should be understood all round—the annexationists can easily be beaten in argument, but hard names, low abuse and hysterical screaming will help them.

## PRISON REFORM.

DARK shadows attend the march of civilization. Its progress is not always onward in a line of unclouded brightness. The tramp dogs the steps of the millionaire; poverty, though on the other side of the street, keeps step with the advance in wealth, and moral progress is reminded that not far off crime is stalking onward. The prevalence